

Uta Bauer

27 November 2009

Committee Secretary
Senate Standing Committee on Agricultural and Related Industries
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600
Australia

Submission to the Senate Select Committee on Agricultural and Related Industries Inquiry into Food Production in Australia

Thank you for the opportunity to make a submission to the Inquiry into food production in Australia. This is a subject I am very passionate about since my husband and I started our own investigation into good health and the role food plays in this. It is a complex subject but starts with the availability of nutrients in our food which, unfortunately, is lacking. All disease has a biochemical basis and those biochemical reactions depend on the right inputs being available in the body. If those inputs are not available, our health starts to suffer. This is what we depend on food to provide but increasingly, this is not the case. Many factors are contributing to this such as poor farming practices and over processing of food. It is something I believe the Government needs to pay close attention to if we are to reduce the huge burden on the health system of the plethora of preventable diseases that are on the increase. As a society we have forgotten how important food is to provide nourishment and good health. We continually cheat ourselves with substandard foods that are nothing more than a bit of protein, carbohydrate and fat and fail to relate that to the increasing ill health that we suffer. We have devalued food and want the cheapest food without thinking of its quality and effects on our health. As Hippocrates said *"Let food be your medicine and medicine be your food"*.

Here in WA we have amongst the oldest and most minerally depleted soils on Earth. A prime example is selenium, a well know anti oxidant. Our soils are deficient in selenium¹. Deficiency in selenium is associated with many conditions such as heart disease, high cholesterol, arthritis, cancer and even depression². Zinc is another important mineral. Zinc is needed in over 200 reactions in the body from DNA synthesis to production of serotonin and most importantly stomach acid, without which we can't properly digest our food to access all the minerals for absorption. WA soils do not contain sufficient zinc³. When superphosphates, which contain cadmium, are used, the cadmium competes with zinc. Cadmium is a toxic heavy metal that is taken up by plants when there is not sufficient zinc. So we have a situation now where the plants are zinc deficient and so to will be the animals and humans that feed on those plants but they will be at risk of the adverse affects of cadmium on health².

I gave Senator Heffernan a book when I attended the public hearing in Perth on March 24th called We Want Real Food by Graham Harvey. The title speaks for itself. We should all want real food, which is food rich in nutrients. I hope that at least some of the committee members have been able to read it. In all the reading my husband and I have done, this book had the biggest impact on us. In a nutshell, this book tells us that the health of the soil is paramount. Unhealthy soil = unhealthy food. Even organic foods can be lacking if they aren't grown on mineral rich soils. Rock dust is becoming increasingly popular here in WA as a way to improve our nutrient deficient soils such as the Bassendean sands that form much of the farming land^{4,5}. All gardeners are urged to apply it for a natural boost to the soil⁶.

Not only do we have to contend with substances such as white bread where the modern milling practices remove many of the nutrients⁷, but food additives and genetically modified plants that have a

host of detrimental health impacts^{8,9}. Our Food Standards Australia and New Zealand (FSANZ) regulatory authority is failing in its duty to protect Australians from unhealthy food. FSANZ issued a press release about the compulsory fortification of flour with folate that contained this statement: *'As it isn't possible for women to consume enough folic acid from a well balanced diet, we have now made the addition of folic acid compulsory for bread-making flour'*¹⁰. This statement should be ringing alarm bells. If, according to FSANZ, we can't even get sufficient folate from a well balanced diet, what else are we missing out on? There is also much controversy about the fortification¹¹. As the recent labelling review by FSANZ will show, consumers are dissatisfied with the inadequate labelling and testing of foods. Those of us trying to purchase good quality food are thwarted by FSANZ regulations because we can't trust the labels to tell us everything we need to know in order to make an informed choice.

Senator Nash asked Dr Pollard at the hearing I attended her opinion of what should be the level of government intervention and what form should it take. In her response she said "The role of government is to protect and promote public health and provide a community that is able to do that." Here in WA there is a wonderful project run by the Eon Foundation¹² that has enabled remote indigenous communities to be responsible for growing their own fresh food. A simple intervention with a profound effect. This is one way how the government could easily make a huge difference to the health of Australians in remote areas.

The issue of GM foods has been covered by other submitters but I would like to present a few facts about GM crops here as well. According to The UN Food and Agriculture Organisation, there are over 1 billion starving people in the world¹³. The pro GM lobby has claimed that GM crops will feed the world. Clearly they are not. With the increased use of herbicides and pesticides GM crops are requiring¹⁴, what other detrimental effects are they having on us? Pesticides and herbicides are reliant on fossil fuels which, as we know, are in dwindling supply. We need farming practices to be more sustainable and less reliant on fossil fuels as concluded last year by an international panel, the International Assessment of Agricultural Knowledge, Science and Technology for Development¹⁵.

Senator Heffernan is right when he says 'in the future what is in the fridge is more important than what is in the garage' but I believe it should always be the case. He also asked of Dr Pollard "what are the foods that you would like us to encourage people to eat?" My answer is quite simply foods created on fertile soils. The Weston A. Price Foundation elaborates with a list of dietary guidelines that includes¹⁶:

- Eat whole, natural foods.
- Eat only foods that will spoil, but eat them before they do.
- Eat naturally-raised meat including fish, seafood, poultry, beef, lamb, game, organ meats and eggs. (author's note - ie not fish farms and feed lots)
- Eat whole, naturally-produced milk products from pasture-fed cows, preferably raw and/or fermented, such as whole yogurt, cultured butter, whole cheeses and fresh and sour cream.
- Use only traditional fats and oils including butter and other animal fats, extra virgin olive oil, expeller expressed sesame and flax oil and the tropical oils-coconut and palm.
- Eat fresh fruits and vegetables, preferably organic, in salads and soups, or lightly steamed.
- Use whole grains and nuts that have been prepared by soaking, sprouting or sour leavening to neutralize phytic acid and other anti-nutrients (author's note – phytic acid inhibits the uptake of minerals).
- Include enzyme-enhanced lacto-fermented vegetables, fruits, beverages and condiments in your diet on a regular basis.
- Prepare homemade meat stocks from the bones of chicken, beef, lamb or fish and use liberally in soups and sauces.

In 1912, Nobel Prize winner Dr Alexis Carrel stated that *"Minerals in the soil control the metabolism of plants, animals and man. All of life will be either healthy or unhealthy according to the fertility of the*

soil.” Dr Charles Northern testified to the US congress in 1936 that “*Lacking vitamins, the system can make use of minerals but lacking minerals, vitamins are useless.*”⁷ If we want healthy Australians, we need to start by addressing soil health and fertility so we can produce REAL food that will nourish us.

Regards,

Uta Bauer B.Sc(Hons), CA

1. <http://www.usyd.edu.au/agric/acpa/people/budi/selenium.htm>
2. Nutritional Medicine: Fact and Fiction, Dr Igor Tabrizian; www.nutritionreviewservice.com.au
3. http://www.summitfertz.com.au/trace_elements1.htm
4. http://www.agric.wa.gov.au/objtwr/imported_assets/content/lwe/land/b4359.pdf
5. <http://www.abc.net.au/catalyst/stories/s350770.htm>
6. Sabrina’s Little Book of Gardening, Sabrina Hahn, Fremantle Press
7. We Want Real Food, Graham Harvey, Robinson
8. <http://www.additivealert.com.au/>
9. Genetic Roulette: The Documented Health Risks of Genetically Engineered Foods, Jeffery Smith, Yes! Books
10. <http://www.foodstandards.gov.au/newsroom/mediareleases/mediareleases2009/vitaminfoliacidmust4449.cfm>
11. <http://www.smh.com.au/news/cancer/health-risk-fears-as-fortified-flour-faces-acid-test/2006/07/13/1152637794000.html>
12. <http://www.eon.org.au/projects.asp>
13. <http://www.globalresearch.ca/index.php?context=va&aid=14032>
14. http://www.organic-center.org/science.pest.php?action=view&report_id=159
15. <http://www.i-sis.org.uk/GMFreeOrganicAgriculture.php>
16. <http://www.westonaprice.org/basicnutrition/dietguidelines.html>