



30 April 2010

Submission to Senate Enquiry into food production

I wish to add two important issues to the deliberations of the Committee, these being the home production of food and the potential of consumer driven changes to the food system.

The contribution from home production of food is often overlooked due in part to the dispersed nature of production as well as the fact that it is not sold and hence relatively invisible in the formal economy. However, its impact is significant. In the most recently available statistics, home production of fruits amounted to just over 4% of total production and vegetables was in excess of 5%, whilst eggs were even higher at almost 20% (Australian Bureau of Statistics 1992 Home Production of selected foodstuffs). The capacity for this to increase is significant. For example, in the crisis created by World War II it was estimated that home production contributed 50% of the food eaten. The emerging importance of home production would seem to suggest the following two areas for immediate action.

- The Australian Bureau of Statistics be commissioned to provide an update of their 1992 publication titled the Home Production of Selected Foodstuffs.
- Home production through private and community gardens be provided with ongoing and dedicated policy support.

Consumer driven changes to food production system may have an impact on human health and the natural environment that is even greater than the potential from genomic and agronomic advances. For example, recent research from the UK has identified those behavioural changes which will have a significant and immediate impact on making diets more sustainable:

- Reducing consumption of meat and dairy products
- Reducing consumption of food and drink with low nutritional value
- Reducing food waste

Other areas identified in this report include increasing consumption of fresh fruits and vegetables (particularly seasonal and field grown), consuming fish from sustainable sources, and increasing consumption of foods produced with respect for the environment (such as certified organic food) (Sustainable Development Commission 2009 Setting the table, London). Hence it is important that Australia develop its own consumer behavioural change goals that would lead towards a healthy sustainably sourced diet. I am sure others will be better placed to identify who should be responsible for carrying forward action in this area.

I wish the committee all the best with their deliberations and please feel free to contact me if you require further details regarding any of the issues discussed in this submission.

Yours sincerely,

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