



An Australian Government Initiative



Regional
Development
Australia

MID NORTH COAST

Norfolk Island Food Supply

Community Summary

May 2025

Overview

In May 2025, a community-wide survey was conducted to better understand how Norfolk Islanders grow, buy, and access their food. This report outlines the key findings and presents suggestions gathered from the community on how to strengthen the local food system.

Key Insights

Survey responses reflected a deep familiarity with Norfolk Island's food system, with the majority of respondents having lived on the island for an extended period. The data identifies the following key insights:

- **48%** of our food comes from local sources (average across all respondents)
- Nearly **74%** of respondents grow some of their own food
- Food prices and freight costs are our biggest concerns
- The nutritional quality of local food is our greatest strength
- Traditional food sharing remains an important part of our community

Home Food Production

A significant portion of Norfolk Islanders supplement their diets through home-based food production:

- Vegetables – 61%
- Fruit – 54%
- Eggs – 30%
- Fish – 30%
- Other – 19%
- No home production – 26%

Examples of food grown or caught include bananas, citrus fruits, sweet potatoes, tomatoes, herbs, fish, eggs, and pork. Residents praised the freshness and quality of local food, though many noted the high cost of establishing and maintaining home gardens.

"The soil in most areas on Norfolk is perfect for growing. However the cost of doing so is prohibitive to many."

"We work to make our home/property a food bowl for our family. We have always planted new fruit trees, propagated, seed saved etc. Rock fishing or boating is part of our life."

Barriers to Food Production

Despite enthusiasm for growing food, several obstacles were identified:

- **Water availability:** Especially during drought periods
- **High input costs:** For seeds, fertilizers, animal feed
- **Limited land:** As agricultural land is converted to housing
- **Time constraints:** Balancing work and food production and cost of living pressure
- **Pests:** Including wild chickens, rats, and insects

"We couldn't survive if we had to purchase everything we eat."

"The drought has made a huge impact on my fruit trees - less citrus this year than ever before."

Strengths and Weaknesses in the Food System

Survey participants were asked to rate elements of the local food system. Key strengths and concerns emerged as follows:

Strengths

- Nutritional Value of Local Food – 76% of respondents saw this as a strength.

"Picked today, on the plate today. You can't beat that."

- Lack of Fast Food Chains – 74% viewed this positively.

"It's refreshing and healthy for us not to have any fast food chain outlets."

- Community Food Sharing – 68% identified this as a strength.

"It is a cultural and traditional practice to share. This also broadens varieties accessible to all and lowers costs."

Weaknesses

- High Food Prices – 75% rated this as a weakness.

"Lack of ships, high price of freight and fuel, drought, water shortages all impact."

- Unreliable Freight and Shipping – 41% identified this as a problem.

"The weaknesses is we rely on transportation of most of our items by boat which is so unreliable and costly."

- Seasonal Availability – Highlighted as a source of stress and scarcity.

"Seasonal. It becomes a fight to get it, literally. People waiting for suppliers to deliver then grab as much as they can even if they don't need it."

Strengths & Weaknesses of Our Food System

■ Strength ■ Weakness ■ Both ■ Unsure

Nutritional value of local food



Lack of fast food chains



Sharing food with community



Ability to grow my own food



Local food availability



Making a living from food production



Current food supply



Price of food



Community Ideas for Improvement

Participants offered a range of practical solutions aimed at addressing the challenges in our food system:

Freight and Shipping

- Subsidise freight costs for essential foods
- Improve reliability of shipping services
- Explore a freight equalisation scheme similar to that of Tasmania

"Access to the same freight equalisation scheme that Tasmania enjoys."

Support for Local Growers

- Grants for start-up costs and equipment
- Education and training for growing on Norfolk Island
- Reduced rates for agricultural land
- Support for younger farmers

"Infrastructure and development funding for the existing large food producers. In particular so that produce can be grown for extended periods of the year locally."

Governance and Resilience

- Immigration controls
- Biosecurity processes refined and improved
- Subsidised water tanks
- Support for irrigation systems
- Improved water management

"There needs to be a federally funded water security scheme. EVERY property owner should be entitled to a one off subsidy for water tanks."

Food Processing & Preservation

- Community processing facilities for seasonal surpluses
- Shared freezing and storage facilities
- Support for food preservation education

"The sustainability hub proposed a food processing facility which would be amazing. But it is unfunded."

Recommendations

To ensure a more resilient and sustainable food system for Norfolk Island, the following actions are recommended:

1. **Improve freight systems and subsidize costs** to enhance the affordability and reliability of both imported food and agricultural inputs.
2. **Support local producers** through grants, infrastructure development, and policy measures to ensure the viability of agricultural production.
3. **Develop community preservation facilities** to better manage seasonal surpluses and extend the availability of local produce throughout the year.
4. **Enhance water security** through subsidies for water storage, improved irrigation systems, and sustainable water management practices.
5. **Implement succession planning for agricultural production** to address the aging population of farmers and ensure the continuation of local food production.
6. **Protect agricultural land** from conversion to residential use and support the maintenance of productive farming areas.
7. **Consider the carrying capacity of the island** in population management strategies to ensure the sustainability of the food system.
8. **Balance the focus on local production with the realities of import dependency**, working to create a resilient system that leverages both local and imported food sources.
9. **Expand Education and Capacity Building Programs** as knowledge and skills gaps in production, preservation, and sustainability practices were identified as significant constraints.
10. **Map Food System Governance to Identify Enablers and Barriers** because bureaucratic and regulatory barriers were identified as significant constraints to system improvement.

Based on the Norfolk Island Community Food Supply Survey, May 2025

Created in collaboration with Regional Development Australia Mid North Coast