



Coversheet

Food Secure Communities: Strategic Approach and Update

Hon Carmel Sepuloni, Minister for Social Development

These documents have been proactively released.

24 June 2020, Report – Food Secure Communities: Strategic Approach and Update. Ministry of Social Development

29 June 2020, Aide Memoire - Food Secure Communities: Strategic Approach and Update. Ministry of Social Development

1 July 2020, Cabinet Social Wellbeing Minute, SWC-20-MIN-0085. Cabinet Office.

These papers provide detail of the new MSD Food Secure Communities programme that arose from Budget 2020 in response to the increased demand on foodbanks, food rescue and other community food services.

It expands on publicly available information on the MSD Food Secure Communities web-page:

www.msd.govt.nz/what-we-can-do/community/food-secure-communities/index.html.

Some parts of this information release would not be appropriate to release and, if requested, would be withheld under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act). Where this is the case, the relevant sections of the Act that would apply have been identified. Where information has been withheld, no public interest has been identified that would outweigh the reasons for withholding it. This is the key to the redaction codes used for this release:

- Section 9(2)(a): this information is withheld in order to protect the privacy of natural persons. The need to protect the privacy of these individuals outweighs any public interest in this information.

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Search Tags: Food Security, Food Insecurity, Foodbanks, Food banks, Food rescue, Food Secure Communities, Food waste.



Report

Date: 29 June 2020

Security Level: IN CONFIDENCE

To: Hon Carmel Sepuloni, Minister for Social Development

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Food Secure Communities: strategic approach and update

Purpose of the report

- 1 This report provides an overview of the MSD Food Secure Communities strategic approach, with a view to your sharing this with the Social Wellbeing Committee. It also provides an update on progress.

Recommended actions

It is recommended that you:

- 1 **Note** that food insecurity is a significant problem in New Zealand that has increased since COVID-19.
- 2 **Note** MSD's strategic approach to developing Food Secure Communities, and progress on implementing this.
- 3 **Note** that that a number of government agencies are coordinating on issues of food security, and a joint briefing to relevant Ministers is planned for early July.

Kelvin Moffatt
General Manager, Service and Contracts
Management
Maori, Communities and Partnerships

Date

Hon Carmel Sepuloni
Minister for Social Development

Date

Food insecurity is a significant problem in New Zealand

- 2 Food security is broadly defined as 'access by all people at all times to sufficient, safe, and nutritious food to maintain a healthy and active life' (World Health Organisation). Food insecurity exists when people have limited or uncertain availability of nutritionally adequate and safe foods, or limited ability to acquire personally acceptable foods that meet cultural needs in a socially acceptable way (Ministry of Health, 2019).
- 3 Food insecurity is associated with multiple indicators or poor health and wellbeing across the life course, including low birth weight and ill health in infancy and childhood, higher rates of unjustified school absences, and negative psychological consequences, such as anxiety and depression. It may also worsen other health inequalities that are apparent in disadvantaged groups such as a higher mortality rate, and higher rates of coronary heart disease, type-2 diabetes and some cancers.
- 4 Beneficiaries, low income earners, and those in social or rental housing (including Māori, Pacific, women parenting alone and people with disabilities), are most vulnerable to and likely to experience food insecurity.
- 5 Food insecurity for children is one of the Government's Child Poverty Related Indicators. In 2015/16, a survey on child food insecurity determined that 19% of children lived in households with moderate to severe food insecurity. (Ministry of Health, 2019).
- 6 In this survey, the least prevalent indicator of household food insecurity was the use of foodbanks and MSD hardship grants for food. The lack of use of food banks or grants by those experiencing food insecurity is associated with a range of factors including whakamā or shame associated with using these services.
- 7 This indicates that ensuring people and families have the means to acquire personally acceptable food themselves (e.g. through sufficient incomes and a reasonable cost of living) should be the primary means of ensuring food security in New Zealand. MSD's hardship grants for food (and other special needs grants), along with the provision of food through community food sources such as foodbanks are best seen as supplementary for use in crisis situations.

During the COVID-19 lockdown food insecurity increased

- 8 Over COVID-19, use of both foodbanks and hardship grants for food spiked. At its peak, The Salvation Army reported that calls to their foodbank increased ten-fold from 800 per week pre-COVID-19 to 8000. A survey of foodbanks by Kore Hiakai Zero Hunger Collective (Kore Hiakai) indicated that they were distributing at least double the amount of food during this period. To manage this situation, MSD made emergency payments to keep some foodbanks open; then Civil Defence and Emergency Management groups stepped up to support foodbanks and other community food services to meet the demand for food from the community.
- 9 MSD hardship grants for food followed a similar picture. The number of food grants in April 2020 was more than double the number of grants in March 2020 (around 292,000 grants).
- 10 Demand for food grants and use of foodbanks has now decreased from its peak but remains higher than pre-COVID-19 levels. It may take time to reliably understand the underlying trend, as there are a number of drivers which impact on demand. Any further increased unemployment and decline in incomes would likely result in ongoing elevated levels of food insecurity.

MSD is taking a strategic approach to building Food Secure Communities

- 11 In Budget 2020, the government invested \$32 million over the next two years through MSD to provide support for foodbanks, food rescue and other community organisations who are distributing food. Civil Defence Emergency Management Groups are currently stepping down from supporting foodbanks, and this funding ensures that longer-term support can take over.

Funding (\$m)	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22
Addressing increased demand for foodbanks, food rescue and community food services	2.0m	10.5m	10.5m
Communities developing & implementing plans for food secure communities		0.5m	0.5m
New Zealand Food Network: bulk food storage & distribution		2.75m	2.75m
Aotearoa Food Rescue Alliance: umbrella group for food rescue		0.25m	0.25m
Kore Hiakai Zero Hunger Collective: umbrella body for foodbanks and community food services		0.4m	0.4m
MSD staff to implement the programme		0.6m	0.6m
Total	\$2.0m	\$15.0m	\$15.0m

- 12 MSD has taken a strategic approach to supporting communities to become food secure building from consultation on a preferred approach with key foodbanks, food rescue organisations and the philanthropic sector, as well as with other government agencies.
- 13 **Appendix One** provides an overview of Food Secure Communities approach.
- Community level support will address the additional demand for food in communities, and support the creation of food secure communities.
 - National level support from three organisations will help to improve sector practices, capacity and capability, and massively increase the rescue and redistribution of surplus food.
 - Partnerships across government, and with the philanthropic and private sector will support the long-term sustainability of the approach.

Addressing the additional demand for food in communities

- 14 Foodbanks, food rescue and other community food services can apply for funding to meet the increased demand for food in their community over the next two years. Funding is a contribution towards meeting this demand, and can be used flexibly, e.g. to purchase additional food stocks, or for staffing costs etc. There are two funds for this purpose:
- A \$2 million transition fund to support providers to transition from Civil Defence to MSD from June – August 2020.
 - A \$21 million response fund to support providers with their increased demand over the next two years.
- 15 People usually present at foodbanks requesting food, but the underlying reason for their situation is financial concerns. As a result, we are prioritising funding for services

- who have good processes in place for connecting people and whānau to support such as Building Financial Capability services and Work and Income service centres.
- 16 MSD has received 168 applications requesting a total of \$6 million in funding for the Transition Fund and has just approved 135 of these for partial or full funding which is now being rolled out.
 - 17 Applications for the Response Fund close in early July.
 - 18 Applications have shown that over COVID-19 many smaller foodbanks run by older volunteers closed, while iwi / Māori and Pacific organisations began to provide food for whānau and families for the first time. The latter organisations are very well placed to provide such support but will need to consider what is sustainable over the longer term.

Growing food secure communities

- 19 While there is an accepted need for foodbanks at present because of high levels of food insecurity, many across the sector are also recognising that having to access food through a foodbank does not contribute towards solving food insecurity. A series of hui led by Kore Hiakai in 2019 agreed that a priority for the sector was to consider more positive and mana-enhancing ways to support people and families to be able to access food in their communities.
- 20 To support communities to consider what this means for them, MSD has put aside \$1 million in funding over two years for communities to work together to create long-term, sustainable food security in their community. Our intention is that these will include a wide range of different groups with an interest in community food security – for example, local councils, iwi, hapū and local marae, food in schools' programmes; community gardens and maara kai; local food producers and community food enterprises. Plans are expected to influence how the second year of the response funding is spent, as community food services consider how they contribute to creating a food secure community.
- 21 This will mean that people and families vulnerable to food insecurity have a more positive experience in accessing food; and that communities are better positioned to manage future shocks to food security when MSD's funding comes to an end.
- 22 The philanthropy sector has expressed interest in supporting and aligning to this part of our strategy. In turn, we have indicated that MSD funding is able to be used to build on existing community food security initiatives.

Kore Hiakai Zero Hunger Collective: Building sector capability for foodbanks and community food services

- 23 Kore Hiakai Zero Hunger Collective is being funded \$0.8 million over two years as a national umbrella body for foodbanks and community food services. Kore Hiakai is a collective made up of the three City Missions, the Salvation Army, the New Zealand Christian Council of Social Services, and Vision West. Its focus is on addressing the root causes of food insecurity. It is leading work on supporting providers to consider what mana-enhancing practice will look like for them and will work alongside MSD in supporting the work of communities in their plans to become food secure. It will also gather and align data from the sector, with a view to having a better understanding of the extent of community food distribution.

Increasing the use of food rescue and recovery

- 24 The University of Otago Food Costs Survey 2019 estimated the minimum basic cost of food per week for a family of four living in Auckland was \$216 per week. Since then, food prices increased 4.4 percent to the year ended April 2020, the largest annual

movement in over eight years. MSD estimated that if food insecurity doubled, then an additional 125,000 families (or 500,000 individuals) would require food parcels 5% of the time (two weeks per year). Using the 2019 costs, this equates to a cost of at least \$54 million or 21 million meals costing at least \$2.57 per meal.

- 25 However, the growing food rescue movement has provided an opportunity to reduce this cost substantially by redistributing good quality surplus food. Our modelling for the Food Secure Communities is to provide 21 million meals at 71c per meal either through food rescue or direct purchase of food by foodbanks. This will also result in approximately 6,200 tonnes less food going to landfill, and 2,238 tonnes fewer CO2 emissions. MSD is supporting two national-level organisations to enable this, as well as providing direct funding to food rescue organisations in communities.
- 26 We are working together with the Ministry for the Environment through their Waste Minimisation Fund on this. This year the Fund is prioritising services essential to the COVID-19 recovery, including food recovery and distribution. MSD and MfE working together over the next few years will help ensure food rescue organisations have the infrastructure and resources they need will help prevent future shocks for foodbanks such as that just experienced under COVID-19.

New Zealand Food Network: Bulk surplus food distribution

- 27 MSD is providing \$5.5 million over two years to establish the KiwiHarvest-led 'New Zealand Food Network' (NZFN) across New Zealand by August this year. NZFN is providing a one stop shop for national level food producers and manufacturers to donate high quality, healthy surplus food for distribution to food rescue organisations and other food hubs around New Zealand – including to remote areas such as the East Cape or Far North. NZFN aims supply 3000 tonnes of food in its first year and 5,000 tonnes in the second year with a retail value of around \$59 million over the two years. By the second year, it will distribute the equivalent of 14.3 million meals per annum.
- 28 A good example of the benefits of the NZFN arose when animal welfare concerns arose for pig farmers who were not able to get pork to market under Level four lockdown. To mitigate this issue the Government, through the Ministry for Primary Industries, purchased an amount of this excess processed pork that could not (because of COVID-19 restrictions) be sold in the usual way. The meat was then distributed to foodbanks, iwi and hapū around New Zealand by KiwiHarvest / NZFN. Many families and whānau greatly appreciated the good quality kai during a time of hardship.
- 29 We are currently in discussions with the NZFN about potentially providing an additional service to bulk purchase food at discounted rates on behalf of foodbanks, at their request.

Aotearoa Food Rescue Alliance: Building food rescue capacity and capability

- 30 MSD is also supporting the establishment of the Aotearoa Food Rescue Alliance (AFRA) – an umbrella group for food rescue organisations. Food rescue organisations have grown organically over the last 8-10 years with minimal government support. While it is now servicing most of the country, there is inconsistency in terms of infrastructure and capability. With the establishment of the NZFN, many food rescue organisations will be needing to scale up fast – from managing crates of food from local supermarkets, to managing pallets donated from national food producers.
- 31 AFRA aims to increase the capacity of food rescue organisations to collect and distribute food across New Zealand, to align data collection and reporting, share policies and best practice, and to provide a coherent voice for the sector. Food rescue in low socio-economic areas will be a priority for AFRA.

- 32 We expect that as a result of MSD support for food rescue through AFRA and direct community support that we will be able to increase the existing capacity of food rescue organisations to rescue good quality food by 30%, thus an additional 3.45 million meals (on top of the existing estimated 11.5 million meals they already deliver).

Cross government coordination on food security

- 33 MSD's work on Food Secure Communities is a significant contribution towards wider government efforts to address food insecurity.
- 34 Prior to COVID-19, MSD, the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet and other agencies had begun discussions about taking a more coordinated approach to work on food security. DPMC have led this work which is related to making progress on the Child Poverty Related Indicator which measures child food insecurity.
- 35 Since COVID-19 this work has taken on a greater level of importance and focus across a number of government agencies, including DPMC, the Ministry for Primary Industries, Ministry for the Environment, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Health, Te Puni Kokiri as well as MSD. Agencies are working together on how we coordinate our respective work programmes. A briefing to relevant Ministers is planned for early July and will focus on current and planned actions across government that support food security, and cross-cutting matters such as the underpinning measurement framework.

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Responsible manager: (Kelvin Moffatt, General Manager, Services and Contract Management)

See separate Appendix One



Cabinet Social Wellbeing Committee

Minute of Decision

This document contains information for the New Zealand Cabinet. It must be treated in confidence and handled in accordance with any security classification, or other endorsement. The information can only be released, including under the Official Information Act 1982, by persons with the appropriate authority.

Oral Item: Food Secure Communities

Portfolio **Social Development**

On 1 July 2020, the Cabinet Social Wellbeing Committee:

- 1 **noted** that there were significant food insecurities over the COVID-19 pandemic lockdown period, worsened by circumstances such as income inadequacy and housing issues, and that food security would likely to continue to be a concern for some population groups and communities;

- 2 **noted** that a number of work streams are currently underway to help struggling people, families, and whānau to access affordable, nutritious, sustainable, and culturally appropriate food, including through funding allocated in Budget 2020 to support food banks.

Jenny Vickers
Committee Secretary

Present:

Hon Kelvin Davis
Hon Grant Robertson
Hon Chris Hipkins
Hon Carmel Sepuloni (Chair, part of item)
Hon Stuart Nash
Hon Jenny Salesa
Hon Damien O'Connor
Hon Kris Faafoi
Hon Tracey Martin (Chair, part of item)
Hon Peeni Henare
Hon Willie Jackson
Hon Aupito William Sio
Jan Logie, MP

Officials present from:

Office of the Prime Minister
Officials Committee for SWC
Office of the SWC Chair