



Evidence Snapshot

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Promoting Healthy Eating at the Local Government Level

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Picture this: *A healthy food environment – where we live, learn, work and play. Our communities, towns and cities actively promote and attract healthy food retail outlets such as grocery stores, produce markets, and dairies with fresh fruit and vegetables; our environment supports local farmers, and promotes local agriculture, such as community gardens and edible forests; and free drinking water is available in public places. Imagine our communities, towns and cities built on a culture which ensures everyone has access to safe, affordable food. Imagine healthy eating and active living being the easy choice.*

Everyone has a part to play in making healthy eating a daily norm and in creating environments that make it the easy and affordable choice. Local government^a is uniquely placed to be able to create environments which will promote opportunities for healthy eating in the places we live, learn, work and grow. The vision, plans and operation of local government impact on our lives every single day.

Purpose of snapshot

This snapshot aims to equip those wishing to engage with local government with the rationale, evidence and tools for promoting healthy eating. The snapshot will also summarise why healthy eating is important and how local government could create supportive environments. Three different case study scenarios of engagement with local government to promote healthy eating opportunities for local communities are also included.

Method

A literature review which focuses on promoting healthy eating through supportive environments, and incorporating healthy eating into local government strategic and operational activities, underpins this snapshot. The review also includes a summary of findings from interviews conducted with a sample of individuals working with local government around healthy eating.

Building the evidence base

While the New Zealand evidence in this area is still emerging, this evidence snapshot is intended as an initial contribution and thought starter with a range of ideas and strategies on what could be implemented at a local government level to promote healthy eating. Our intention is that this snapshot will be built on in the future as the New Zealand evidence base grows.

Why should local government be involved in the promotion of healthy eating?

The impact of unhealthy eating

Unhealthy eating and obesity are an increasing threat to our society - both not only affect the health of individuals but also impact our economy, environment and communities⁽¹⁾.

What we eat and drink has a huge impact on our health and wellbeing, with poor diet accounting for one in every nine years of life lost⁽²⁾. Many of us are eating too many foods that are high in saturated fat, salt and sugar, and not enough fruits and vegetables. In fact, only 2 out of 5 New Zealanders meet the Ministry of Health's guidelines for fruit and 3 out of 5 for vegetable consumption⁽³⁾.

Globally, there is an increasing trend in overweight, obesity and non-communicable diseases. New Zealand is one of the most overweight nations worldwide⁽⁴⁾, with nearly two-thirds of adults and a third of children overweight or obese. The burden of obesity is not equally shared, with Māori, Pacific and those living in low socio-economic neighbourhoods more likely to be obese⁽⁵⁾.

A range of factors contribute to the rising rates of obesity and non-communicable disease, but changes to the environment where we live, work, learn and play over recent decades has played a significant role⁽⁶⁾. The food environment has become increasingly 'obesogenic' with a

variety of low priced energy dense, low nutrient foods widely available and regularly promoted⁽⁶⁾.

The impacts of unhealthy eating and obesity are expensive to society – economically, socially, environmentally, culturally and personally⁽¹⁾. For example in 2006 estimates put the cost of overweight and obesity to the New Zealand health system at \$624 million, in addition to \$225 million on lost productivity. It's been suggested that health care costs and lost productivity are now probably about \$1 billion annually⁽⁷⁾.

A healthy population is a fundamental economic asset. A population that is healthy is more able and more likely to fully participate in employment and contribute to a vibrant and productive local community. A community with high rates of obesity and non-communicable disease can create costly demands on the local economy.

Now, more than ever, with growing trends in unhealthy eating, obesity and non-communicable disease, healthy eating needs to be brought back into the daily lives of all New Zealanders.

^aLocal government in New Zealand consists of 11 regional councils, 61 territorial authorities (11 city councils and 50 district councils) and six unitary councils (which are territorial authorities with regional council responsibilities). Councils may also set up local or community boards (there are currently 116 community boards and 21 local boards, with local boards only operating in Auckland).

What can local government do?

The food environment can have a big impact on food and drink choices made^(8, 9, 10). Local government has an influence on food environments and can impact the access its citizens have to healthy food⁽¹¹⁾. Access to healthy foods is more difficult when communities have a low range of healthy and affordable food sources available locally such as supermarkets, markets and greengrocers⁽¹²⁾. Through policies and planning, services and facilities local government can shape the local food environment and promote healthy eating.

Local government can create supportive local environments that enable and encourage people to incorporate healthy eating into their daily lives through:

- Incorporating healthy eating considerations into council strategic and operational plans, such as Long Term Plans or developing a stand-alone food strategy.
- Providing a range of healthy food and drink options within council owned facilities and at council events.
- Community/neighbourhood planning: consider access to healthy food when planning to make it easier for citizens to access affordable, culturally appropriate, nutritious food and water fountains in their community.
- Providing leadership, and bringing agencies and community groups together to improve the health and wellbeing of their communities, such as developing a local food policy council.
- Information dissemination or awareness raising.

The benefits of promoting healthy eating

Healthy eating and maintaining a healthy weight are important contributors to an individual's overall physical health and wellbeing. However, the benefits of healthy eating also extend beyond the health of individuals and provides a number of wider community benefits likely to be of greater interest to local government.^(1, 13-15)

These benefits include:

- Increased liveability of the local government area.
- Benefits to the economy through purchase of local produce and accessing local business.

- Improved community wellbeing, social inclusion and quality of life.
- Increased vibrancy and an enhanced community appeal to drive economic prosperity.
- Benefits to the environment – sustainable living and mitigating climate change.
- Increased productivity, and a reduction in absenteeism in local workplaces.

Healthy children do better:

Healthy eating is essential for optimal health, growth and cognitive development of children⁽¹⁶⁾; and it can also influence a child's opportunity to learn and education outcomes⁽¹⁷⁾. The values, habits and behaviours developed during this period often influence behaviours in adulthood⁽¹⁸⁾.

Healthy people do better:

Healthy eating reduces the risk of mortality, obesity, heart disease, stroke, type 2 diabetes, some cancers and metabolic syndrome⁽⁵⁾.

Healthy workplaces do better:

Providing and promoting healthy foods and drinks can have a positive impact on staff health and wellbeing. A healthy workforce is linked to employees that are happier, more productive, more resilient and have less absenteeism^(19, 20).

A healthy population drives a stronger economy:

Improved healthy eating and reduced obesity rates would save the economy through direct health costs and indirect costs associated with productivity, absenteeism, suffering, lost income and taxes⁽¹⁾.

Appendix One provides an overview of the requirements and core functions of local government, as set out in the Local Government Act 2002⁽²¹⁾ and notes other relevant legislation. While there are no explicit requirements for local government to promote healthy eating, there are many opportunities to frame the argument for the promotion of healthy eating in a way that aligns with central and local government priorities.

These opportunities include:

- The requirement for local government to act for and on behalf of their communities.
- The requirement for local government to meet the current and future needs of communities for good quality infrastructure, local public services and performance of regulatory functions in a way that is most cost-effective for households and businesses.
- The contribution that a healthy population makes to central government's broader agenda to build a more competitive and productive economy.
- Recognition as a progressive and responsive organisation.
- The contribution that healthy eating makes to the liveability, sustainability and environment of their local community.

A number of factors that can influence the involvement of local government in the promotion of healthy eating are^(11, 22-27):

- **Evidence:** A strong business case which presents relevant local evidence of the issue is important for local government action. Raising awareness of the health and economic burden, showing the issue is of local concern, and providing cost-effective solutions are more likely to get local government engagement than health statistics unrelated to the local community. For local government, evidence needs to be more than just health statistics. While this may help put healthy eating on the agenda, cost-benefit data is more likely to be convincing. Demonstrations of good practice and success by presenting case studies, especially from other local governments, can be useful to support your case.
- **Language and presentation:** Strategically communicating using council language and presenting data in a simple way can help to gain buy-in and establish local relevance of the issue for council. It's also important to present data in ways that identifies how local government action could impact on the issue you are highlighting.

- **Relationships:** Developing close working relationships with council staff is essential to gain buy-in, support and leadership to promote healthy eating at a local level. Finding a champion or advocate within council and forming collaborative working relationships with council and across departments, are both extremely beneficial.
- **Working collaboratively:** Joining forces with other allies in your sector to form advocacy/ representative groups can be very effective. This adds to your voice and gives council one point of contact to enable engagement with the health sector.
- **Community engagement:** Community buy-in and lobbying can be very powerful and sometimes more influential than the evidence-base. Local government has the unique ability to give individuals a voice in community matters. Community input can not only help target policy intervention, but also make policies promoting healthy eating more successful once implemented. Having a 'community health champion' promote a policy may also help to increase its effectiveness.
- **Central and local government priorities:** Reframing the case for healthy eating to align with central and local government priorities, such as liveability and economic development, can also be effective.
- **Policy priority/provision of funding:** When a policy area is supported by central government, funding is often more accessible at a local government level. Requirements under local government legislation, as well as national and region specific legislation can influence local government priorities.
- **Council structure and support:** A local government structure with strong leadership, communication, and support for cross-departmental collaboration is more likely to enable policy responses that address the broader determinants of health.
- **Leadership:** Local leadership ideally needs to be supported by national leadership and investment to have the greatest impact. Placing the healthy eating agenda at the heart of both central and local government priorities would have a direct impact on the opportunities for everyone to benefit.
- **Effective communication:** Ensuring all parties working on a project have the same priorities and perspectives is important to avoid working at cross purposes. Agreement on the purpose early in the process is likely to result in better outcomes.

Evidence shows that local environments can encourage people to adopt and maintain healthier lifestyles^(14, 27). Even when individuals are motivated, healthy lifestyle changes are difficult to adopt and maintain if they are not supported by the local environment, as they influence the context in which people live, work and play⁽⁸⁾. What we eat has a strong link to availability and access^(27, 28). Local government can be a part of the solution in creating environments that encourage healthy eating in the following ways.

Working towards healthy food systems^b

Supporting a healthy local food system can increase the liveability of the local community, promote local economic development, decrease obesity-related health care costs and promote environmental sustainability into the future^(29, 30).

Some examples of how local government could support the local food system include ^(12, 14, 15, 26, 31, 32):

- Working collaboratively to build a healthy local food system through the development of a local food policy council /local food network^c.
- Conducting a local food assessment to feed into council policy and plans, and broader community initiatives.
- Inclusion of local strategies that improve access to healthy food in council planning processes.
- Developing policy and plans that contribute to improving access to healthy food in their local community.
- Creating and supporting local community gardens. This could be extended to become a 'knowledge garden' where people also learn new skills, grow food and cook together.
- Maintaining a database of local markets, free produce, and community gardens for the local community.

- Marketing a 'buy local' campaign for local produce and supporting the communication strategy of local food initiatives eg. food rescue and healthy food and drink programmes.
- Facilitating local fruit tree planting on public and private land where the fruit is available free to the public and the trees are looked after and maintained by the local community.
- Supporting local food re-distribution programmes that deliver excess healthy food to food relief centres to increase access to food and reduce local food wastage.
- Supporting local food co-operatives which support the bulk purchase of local produce at affordable prices.
- Supporting the development of 'local food hubs' which make it easier for people to access fresh, seasonal foods by improving local food distribution channels and facilities for farmers to sell into local markets.

^bLocal food system: Is a network of activities and organisations involved in growing, processing, manufacturing, transporting, storing, distributing and consuming food locally, as well as waste, recycling and sustainability. For more information refer to Appendix Two.

^cFood policy council or local food network: An organised group of people working collaboratively to build a healthy local food system. It ideally includes stakeholders from across the food system and representation from a wide range of sectors including government, health and environmental sustainability. Food policy councils typically focus on land-use planning, urban agriculture, food retail access, food waste management and economic development. For more information visit http://www.ttophs.govt.nz/food_policy_council

Local government can be a part of the solution in creating environments that encourage healthy eating.

Healthy eating in local government owned facilities and events

Local government can also support a culture of healthy eating within their own workplace. On average, adults spend about one third of their working life at work and for those who work full-time this means at least one meal a day is consumed at work⁽¹⁹⁾. Given the amount of time local government employees and citizens spend in council facilities and at council events, it makes local government an important setting to influence healthy eating in their community.

Some examples of how local government could provide a supportive healthy eating environment in council owned facilities and events include ^(14, 24, 33):

- Development and implementation of a healthy eating policy for council owned facilities (cafes, kiosks, vending machines, catering) and sponsored events. This could be implemented in a stepwise approach to get some quick wins over a period of time.
- Surveying/engaging staff and community members to see what healthy food and drink options they would like to have available for purchase in council owned facilities and recreation spaces.
- Work with suppliers with current contracts to encourage the provision of healthier food and drink options.
- Incorporate their healthy eating policy into new contracts or contracts due for renewal with food and drink vendors/suppliers.
- Publicising and marketing healthy food and drink options available in council owned facilities and events.
- Increasing access to drinking water and/or water fountains in council facilities and events, recreation grounds, and public spaces.

Food and the built environment

Creating supportive environments for healthy eating is also influenced by the design of the local built environments. Local government is responsible for local urban planning and land use, impacting the location and types of foods and drinks available locally. Local government has a mandate to meet the current and future needs of communities for good quality infrastructure, local public services and performance of regulatory functions in a way that is most cost-effective for households and businesses.

Some examples of how local government could provide a supportive built environment for healthy eating include^(12, 26, 31, 34):

- Ensuring local strategies, policies and plans support and encourage an increase in the availability and access to healthy food such as local markets, supermarkets and greengrocers. For example this could be through incentivising healthy food retail in an area.
- Creating communities that support healthy eating through street layout, land use, and location of food outlets, markets and supermarkets.
- Ensuring planning applications for new developments prioritise access to healthy food.
- Evaluating food retail mix and accessibility; require planning documents to take into account the co-location of residential areas and fresh food outlets.
- Conduct a geographic information system (GIS) food environment map of fast food outlets, and healthy food stores to build an awareness of the current local food environment.
- Ensuring local strategies, policies and plans support and encourage a decrease in the availability and access to unhealthy food such as fast food outlets.
- Ensuring land use planning such as district plans, local strategies, policies and plans support and encourage local healthy food production, supply and protection of agricultural lands from residential expansion.
- Encouraging mothers to breastfeed, through the provision and promotion of well-designed breastfeeding friendly places and parent rooms in council owned facilities.
- Incorporating healthy eating considerations into planning and design requirements when developing new or renovating existing council cooking/kitchen/cafeteria facilities e.g. adequate bench and refrigeration space for fresh food preparation and storage, kitchens that can be used for community cooking skill development, not installing deep fryers.
- Increasing access to water and/or water fountains in council facilities and events, recreation grounds, and public spaces.
- Creating welcoming areas for people to have picnics and eat packed lunches in council facilities, recreation grounds and public spaces.
- Ensure there is public transport or active transport links to community buildings and healthy food spaces.

Creating supportive environments for healthy eating is also influenced by the design of the local built environments.

What is the effectiveness of interventions in promoting healthy eating?

The use of relevant good quality local data and evidence is most likely to influence local government stakeholders when presenting a business case, rather than broader evidence⁽²⁶⁾.

- Several key features of local environments are associated with healthy eating. These include⁽¹⁴⁾:
 - Healthy food destinations in close proximity to places of residence, schools and work including local shops, community gardens and public transport
 - Reduced density of food outlets selling unhealthy foods
 - Availability of places to buy and grow healthy food eg. farmers markets, community gardens and orchards and edible plants
 - Availability of breastfeeding friendly spaces and parent rooms
 - Access to drinking water in public spaces
- Research indicates that the best approach to begin to support a local food system and improve healthy food access is collaborative action through the development of a food policy council⁽³²⁾.
- Food policy councils have been in existence for decades in the United Kingdom, Canada and North America, with the number continuing to grow⁽³⁴⁾. Food policy councils have proven to be an effective means of achieving positive food systems change for the benefit of communities, low income and vulnerable groups, producers and local businesses⁽³¹⁾.
- The presence of supermarkets in neighbourhoods is associated with a higher fruit and vegetable consumption⁽¹⁴⁾, lower body mass index (BMI) and lower obesity rates among citizens⁽²⁷⁾.
- Community gardens have benefits that include positive effects on social capital and positive health consequences in terms of increased access to, and consumption of fruit and vegetables and increased physical activity⁽³²⁾.
- A recent New Zealand unpublished thesis found that city councils have the capacity to develop food and nutrition policy when there is a widespread awareness and prioritisation of food environment issues in the agenda of three key groups: the community, elected members of council and council staff⁽²⁴⁾.
- Providing and promoting healthy foods and drinks in the workplace can have a positive impact on staff health and wellbeing. A healthy workforce is linked to employees that are happier, more productive, more resilient and have less absenteeism^(19, 35).
- Nelson City Council⁽³⁶⁾ and Marlborough District Council⁽³⁷⁾ have both adopted and implemented a sugar free beverages policy for council workplaces.
- Dunedin City Council has recently adopted Healthy Eating Guidelines which address healthy vending, healthy catering, and food marketing and promotion, in council owned and managed facilities. This includes the exclusion of sugar sweetened beverages⁽³⁸⁾.
- Hutt City Council have made the decision to not have deep fryers in the kitchen in their new Walter Nash Centre⁽³⁹⁾.
- Some authorities overseas have limited the number of fast food outlets through their planning rules⁽²⁷⁾.
- No council in New Zealand to date has tried to limit fast food outlets through their planning and zoning rules and it is unclear if this is possible under the Resource Management Act (RMA) 1991⁽⁴⁰⁾.

What can you do?

The key take home message from this snapshot is: *Everyone has a part to play in making healthy eating a daily norm and in creating environments that make it the easy and affordable choice. Local government has an important influence in shaping the local food environments where their citizens live, learn, work and grow. What we eat and drink is linked to what is available and easily accessible. Local government is uniquely placed to be able to create environments that encourage healthy eating and improve access to healthy food through policies, planning and development, and through the management of council facilities and events.*

Here are some ideas of how you can get involved in getting healthy eating on the agenda at the local government level:

- Get in touch with your local public health unit, they may already be developing work with local government to promote healthy eating or have key relationships and support to offer you. It's important to reduce duplication and join forces to act strategically.
- Get to know your local council. Visit the council website to understand the structure, vision, and priorities as well as the plans, policies and bylaws that might impact on healthy eating.
- Develop relationships with local council staff, ideally at different levels including councillors and policy makers, and across council departments. Take every opportunity to get to know your local council staff. By developing strong relationships your organisation is more likely to be seen as an important partner to local government.

- Make yourself or your organisation useful to local government. Show them you can add value to the planning process by providing skills and knowledge in the area of healthy eating and public health.
- Find a champion, a councillor or staff member who understands the importance of healthy eating and/or health, who can provide support and inside information.
- Frame your ideas and advocacy to align with council priorities, it is more likely to be acknowledged in the planning process.
- Get involved in your local council's planning process. Council budgets and spending are driven by long term plans so it is important to be part of the planning process. Be visible, attend meetings and become familiar with the planning process so your considerations are included in these plans and budgets. Once plans and budgets are set there is little flexibility to add other work until the next planning round.
- Provide benefits and solutions to local government for investing in healthy eating, and explain how your ideas are going to help with council priorities.
- Look for alternative or creative ways of funding your ideas. Do not expect council to fund everything.
- Use the wording and references used in this snapshot and literature review to write submissions on long term plans, annual plans and other relevant plans, policies and bylaws that impact on healthy eating. All submission opportunities are posted on council websites so be sure to check regularly.
- Where possible, try to frame submissions in a positive way. Give support for the positive things council is doing and support it to be 'bolder'. Provide constructive and reasoned feedback and ensure your submission is supported with local evidence. Follow up with an oral submission, this is particularly important as councillors are present.
- You are more likely to get engagement with council if you are positive. Try to avoid being negative and critical of council plans and work.
- Maintain regular open communication with your council contact and give them a 'heads up' when writing submissions to ensure there are no surprises.
- Link with other like-minded organisations, like Agencies for Nutrition Action, which can provide advice in writing submissions.
- Link with other organisations to help promote your message. Think outside the square and team up with organisations outside of your sector.
- Work with the community and get locals to help you deliver your message and raise awareness.
- No matter what your role or whether you work nationally or regionally, you can encourage local government to be more proactive in promoting healthy eating for either your own local area or the area you work in.
- Demonstrate best practice to local government through sharing of relevant case studies and good news stories. Where specific New Zealand local government case studies/evidence may not be available try presenting relevant information from another setting such as a workplace. Share successful policies, tools, implementation strategies with other agencies.

Opportunities for further research and evaluation

In contrast to the large amounts of evidence around promoting physical activity at the local government level, less is known about promoting healthy eating at the local government level, particularly in the New Zealand context. There is a real opportunity for well evaluated local programmes and projects in this area to inform future practice.

Here are some opportunities for further research:

- Thoroughly evaluated interventions, strategies and policies addressing healthy eating at the local government level to guide future best practice.
- Showcase healthy eating initiatives, policies and projects with local government and like-minded organisations to share best practice – what worked well and what didn't. This is an opportunity for everybody working with local government to contribute to the growing body of evidence in this space.
- Further opportunities for more New Zealand research include:
 - The impact of local government planning and regulation on healthy eating.
 - Local food issues regarding the food supply and access to healthy foods and drinks.
 - Local food environment elements impacting food and drink choices.
 - Implementation and impact of local government food and drink policy.
 - Implementation and impact of local food policy councils/local food networks.
 - Long-term cost effectiveness and economic benefits of healthy eating initiatives in local government.

[Local Government New Zealand: overview of how local government works](#) (NZ)

[A guide for health promoters: working with communities to participate in the submission process](#) (NZ)

[Supporting a public health perspective in local and regional government](#) (NZ)

[Growing healthy communities: a food security toolkit for local government including information on food policy councils](#) (NZ)

[Wider Economic and Social Costs of Obesity to New Zealand: A discussion on the non-health impacts of obesity](#) (NZ)

[Workplace food service resources: catering guide, policy template and marketing of healthy food and drinks](#) (NZ)

[Food and nutrition in your workplace: a range of how to guides such as negotiating a catering contract and healthy snack boxes and vending](#) (NZ)

[Developing healthy food environments](#) (NZ)

[Healthy Auckland Together](#) (NZ)

[Nelson City Council sugar sweetened beverages policy](#) (NZ)

[Active Healthy Communities: a resource package for local government to create supportive environments for physical activity and healthy eating](#) (Australia)

[Local Government and food security: an evidence review](#) (Australia)

[Healthy Food Connect: A support resource and case studies](#) (Australia)

[Healthy places: Wellbeing in the local environment](#) (UK)

[NICE local government briefings](#) (UK)

[Planning healthy-weight environments](#) (UK)

[Law and policy innovation for the common good](#) (USA)

Case studies

A separate case study document provides three different scenarios of engagement with local government to promote healthy eating opportunities for local communities.

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The purpose, functions, duties and structures of local government bodies in New Zealand are determined by a number of national and region-specific legislation. The most specific to local government is the Local Government Act 2002 which outlines the purpose and role of local government, its powers and accountability⁽¹⁷⁾.

Local Government Act 2002

The Local Government Act 2002 has undergone two sets of amendments since 2002. The first amendment to the Act was in 2010 and included the introduction of core services for local government to obtain 'better control of council costs, rates and activities'. As part of performing its role, local government must have particular regard to the contribution the following core services make to its communities:

- a) network infrastructure^d
- b) public transport services
- c) solid waste collection and disposal
- d) the avoidance of mitigation of natural hazards
- e) libraries, museums, reserves, recreational facilities, and other community infrastructure^e.

The second amendment in 2012 significantly changed the purpose of local government. Local government's focus on promoting the social, cultural, economic and environmental wellbeing of communities (the 'four well-beings') was removed from the purpose statement.

The new purpose for local government is to 'meet the current and future needs of communities for good-quality infrastructure, local public services, and performance of regulatory functions in a way that is most cost-effective for households and businesses'.

The purpose statement also requires local government to 'enable democratic local decision-making and action by, and on behalf of, communities'. The rationale for these changes to the Act was to 'contribute to the government's broader agenda to build a more competitive and productive economy, and improve the delivery of public services, by focusing councils on operating more efficiently and doing the things only councils can do'.

Planning

Councils are required under the Local Government Act to produce long term plans and annual plans for their local area and budgets are allocated according to these plans. Most councils are guided by these plans and have little flexibility to work outside of them.

Long term plans are the key planning tool for councils and set priorities for the medium to long-term. Long term plans are for a ten year period and renewed every three years. They must include information on activities, goods or services provided by a council, and specific funding and financial management policies and information⁽⁴²⁾.

Annual plans focus on year-to-year budgets. Councils prepare an annual plan in each of the two years between long term plan reviews and set out what the council plans to do in the next 12 months to achieve its goals.

Councils are required to establish consultative processes around their planning and policy-making activities. There are also opportunities for community boards and for Māori to have direct participation in planning.

Treaty of Waitangi

The Local Government Act 2002 recognises and respects the Crown's responsibilities under the Treaty of Waitangi by placing some specific responsibilities on councils. These responsibilities are intended to facilitate participation by Māori in local authorities' decision-making processes. The Act includes requirements for councils to:

- ensure they provide opportunities for Māori to contribute to decision-making processes.
- establish and maintain processes for Māori to contribute to decision-making.
- consider ways in which they can foster the development of Māori capacity to contribute to decision-making processes.
- provide relevant information to Māori.
- take into account the relationship of Māori and their culture and traditions with their ancestral land, water, sites, wāhi tapu, valued flora and fauna, and other taonga⁽¹⁷⁾.

Other relevant legislation

Health Act 1956

The Health Act explicitly states 'it shall be the duty of every local authority to improve, promote, and protect public health within its district'. The Health Act directs local authorities to appoint environmental health officers, to identify and abate nuisances that may be harmful to health, and to make bylaws to protect public health. Local authorities must provide for sanitary works including drainage, sewerage and water works. The Director-General of the Ministry of Health can also direct local authorities should population health become jeopardised⁽⁴¹⁾.

Resource Management Act 1991

The Resource Management Act (RMA) sets out how the environment should be managed. It guides how natural and physical resources are to be managed sustainably to enable people and communities to provide for their social, economic, and cultural wellbeing and for their health and safety. The Act sets out the functions, powers and duties of local government, and the resource consent and designation process. Through the RMA, local government is responsible for granting resource consents for proposed changes to the use of land, the coast, the water ways and discharges to them⁽⁴²⁾. The government is in the process of reviewing the RMA with the Resource Legislation Amendment Bill (the Bill) undergoing consultation.

^d Network infrastructure: refers to the provision of roads and other transport, water, wastewater, and storm water collection and management.

^e Community infrastructure: means a) land or development assets on land, owned or controlled by the territorial authority to provide public amenities; and b) includes land the territorial authority will acquire for that purpose.

What is a local food system?

The food system refers to all the activities involved in feeding a population, from the farm gate to table⁽³⁴⁾.



A local food system includes food production and distribution that is geographically localised, rather than national or international (i.e. the food is grown, raised, harvested and distributed closer to consumers homes)⁽³¹⁾.

A local food system is the local activities involved in growing, manufacturing, transporting, storing, distributing and eating foods locally, as well as waste, recycling and sustainability⁽³⁰⁾.

The local food system affects everyone in society and it overlaps with aspects of health, society and the environment⁽⁴⁴⁾.

Why look at local food systems?

The food system is essential to health and we depend on a safe and adequate food supply. Food systems are becoming an emerging issue driven by the growing trends in unhealthy eating, obesity and non-communicable disease, the impact to local food supplies from climate change, peak oil and the limited availability of land and water, as well as the economic potential of strengthening local food systems⁽¹²⁾.

All of the activities in the food system from farm gate to table do not occur in isolation and can all affect healthy eating in a variety of ways. Through understanding and working with the local food system, health professionals, local government, researchers, policymakers, business owners and the community can foster positive changes⁽⁴⁴⁾.

Supporting a healthy local food system can⁽³⁰⁾:

- Increase the liveability of the local community through improving access to healthy food.
- Promote local economic development through the purchase of local produce and accessing local business.
- Promote environmental sustainability into the future through accessing local food and mitigating climate change.
- Decrease obesity-related health care costs.

Local government can be a part of the solution in creating environments that encourage and support local healthy food systems. A number of examples of how local government could support this are outlined in the section 'How and where can local government intervene to promote healthy eating?'