

Macedon Ranges Food Forum

Summary Report

May 2024



MACEDON RANGES FOOD FORUM

Join us, along with local food relief agencies, community gardens, businesses, schools, community organisations, and growers to explore how we can work together to build a resilient, healthy and fair food system in the Macedon Ranges.

Cost of living pressures and climate impacts are putting increasing pressure on our community, with food, its access, production and distribution, especially impacted.

WHAT WE'LL DO

- Connect:** Get to know others across the Macedon Ranges who are involved in the food system.
- Discover:** Learn about what a resilient food system looks like, drawing on examples of local initiatives and beyond.
- Create:** Identify the strengths, challenges and importantly, the opportunities to strengthen the food system here in the Macedon Ranges.

WHAT WE ASK OF YOU

- Be prepared to contribute to discussion.
- Share your knowledge, experience and perspective and listen to those of others.
- Work together to identify opportunities that will help strengthen our local food system.

Join us for two workshops

Each session offers unique opportunities to connect, discover, and help shape the future of our local food system.

Attend both or just one – all are welcome and a healthy lunch will be provided.

30 APRIL 2024 9:30AM - 1:30PM ROMSEY MECHANICS INSTITUTE	6 MAY 2024 9:30AM-1:30PM WOODEND COMMUNITY CENTRE HALL
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RSVP by COB 22nd April to rfry@mrsc.vic.gov.au, including any dietary requirements

We'd love to see you at these important workshops. Everyone is welcome, feel free to spread the word!

If you're unable to attend, we will also seek your input in other ways.



Why we gathered

The Macedon Ranges Food Forum was convened to gather growers, community organisations, community groups, community gardens, businesses, and schools to explore how we can work together to build a resilient, healthy, and fair food system in the Macedon Ranges.

Two forums were held over two weeks: one in Romsey on 20 April and one in Woodend on 6 May 2024.

The forum was a chance to connect with each other, discover what others are doing and identify the local assets, challenges, and opportunities to strengthen our local food system.

What was generated drew from the diverse wisdom and skills of those who came. It is created by you, and it is our hope that it continues to grow and evolve from you too.

Who was involved

A total of 42 people attended the forums: 16 in Romsey and 26 in Woodend.

Of the people who attended, they represented 19 organisations, community groups, businesses, schools, and community, including:

Community Volunteers	Benetas Macedon Ranges Health
Macedon Ranges Shire Council	Kyneton Community House
Macedon Ranges Shire Councillors	Woodend Neighbourhood House
Macedon Village Farmers Market	Romsey Neighbourhood House
Malmsbury Village Farmers Market	Lancefield Neighbourhood House
Leaf, Root, Fruit	Producers
Kyneton High School	Vic & Tas Organic Crop Protectants
Macedon Ranges Sustainability Group	Sustain
Healthy Loddon Campaspe (HLC)	Sunbury Cobaw Community Health
Loddon Mallee Public Health Unit	SAKGF

A project team came together to plan and promote the forum to the community. This included representatives from Healthy Loddon Campaspe (HLC), Sunbury Cobaw Community Health and the Loddon Mallee Public Health Unit. Chelsey Cooper from Liminal by Design facilitated the sessions.

What was created

Asset maps

When we begin to understand what strengths exist within our community, we are better positioned to build on what is already strong. Using the [Asset Based Community Development framework](#) to create an asset map of our local food system, we discovered how much is already in place locally. One participant noted how this snapshot also helped lift us out of our individualised work and identify ways to share information, resources, and spaces to optimise the work being done in our communities.

Below is a capture of the assets identified across the five asset areas. The ones featured in this table are specific examples of what was captured, rather than generalised themes or groupings. Full visuals of the maps with all comments captured can be found in the appendix.

Individuals	Place based assets
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Farmers Market Managers; Connections, coordination, marketing - Community Garden Coordinators; managing people, garden skills, patience, relationship building - Neighbourhood House Individual Volunteer Drivers - Volunteers in MRSG – individual skill sharing - Teachers – passing knowledge on - CWA – connectors - Community lunches (cooks, coordinators) – sharing, bringing people together, connectors - Volunteers with passion and commitment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Nature strips: Woodend, Veg on the Verge - Neighbourhood Houses Community Gardens (Lancefield, Kyneton, Woodend, Romsey (developing), Macedon (planning)) - Planter boxes in town - Community Gardens: Churches, Gisborne; Kyneton High Schools - Private Land Assets – Kyneton Backyard Growers, Open edible gardens - Farmers Markets – Kyneton, Woodend, Macedon - Food Swaps: Kyneton, Woodend - Libraries – seed swaps - Farms – opportunities for land share
Associations	Institutions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Neighbourhood houses; community lunches, community gardens - Veg Action Group - Farmers Markets - Woodend Permaculture Garden, now owned by Woodend Community House - Kyneton Community Garden - Kyneton Kindness Collective; foodbank, nutritional education - Woodend Foodbank; nutritional recipes using ingredients available, cook ups that people don't know how to cook 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Farmers markets - SAKGP - Schools: Riddells Creek, Malmsbury, KPS, KSC, SHC, OLR, Tylden, Newham - Watts - Supermarkets - Nurseries - Foodbanks: Lancefield, Care Works Gisborne, Woodend, Kyneton Caring Community - Neighbourhood Houses: Lancefield, Romsey, Kyneton, Woodend, Riddells Creek, Gisborne
Connectors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - SCCH - HLC - LMPHU - MRSC – local government - MR Sustainability Group - Malmsbury Sustainability Group - Libraries: seed libraries, info sessions, books, programs - Jaara Corp - Traditional Owners Corporations - Hospitals
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - MRSG and Action groups – sustainable Malmsbury / Veg Action - Duncan – Leaf, Root, Fruit - Jason – Healthy Landscapes - Local Councillors – Jennifer Anderson and Janet Pearce - Neighbourhood House Managers - Kyneton Backyard Growers - Permies at the Pub - MR Permaculture FB group - FB Group – MR Foodies - Kyneton Transition Hub 	

Gaps and Challenges

To see and understand the full picture of the current situation in our local food system, it's also important to identify the gaps and challenges within it. Attendees had the opportunity to capture what they saw as gaps in the system, challenges, or areas in need of improvement.

At the second forum, held in Woodend, attendees had the opportunity to build on what was captured in Romsey. This included adding to the list, or placing a dot next to any comments they also felt were gaps or challenges. The entries marked with (*) indicate those with additional dots from the Woodend forum. These entries have been grouped in themes.

Access to healthy food	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tuckshops at school and sports venue to offer healthy food (no fried foods) * • First Nations food • Overfed and obese – but malnourished on blood biomarkers due to lack of nutrient dense food • Supermarkets to change their 'impulse buy' food • Adults who need to be feed via a feeding tube only being offered commercially made formula with no real ingredients. Tube dietitians aiming to change this with educating safe tube feeding food prep
Support for producers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Farm succession planning issues • Support for farmers to sell direct to consumers • Abattoir security – small producers of livestock do not have security to have their animals processed
Eating habits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anecdotal: 70-80% of men I see in clinic do not consume the recommended serves of 2x fruits per day * • Eating habits of teenagers! • Teenagers who have never tried a fruit or veg living off carbohydrate and protein foods • Understanding the values of the consumer and the context about their purchase choice
Schools / Clubs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engaging with schools when many are time poor and overstretched with resources • Funding for running kitchen garden programs in schools * • Ongoing support to schools / sport groups to offer better options that make money for their effort * • Unhealthy school food environments – unhealthy canteen options • Educating sports clubs about healthy food = better performance
Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of time and knowledge (to cook healthy food) ** • Engaging with lower socioeconomic areas who may lack knowledge, time, \$ ** • Education – promote different skills and job sectors • Shift / renew thinking of boards of educational providers – new members, new ideas
Policy and funding models	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Getting approval from Council for various things such as community gardens * • Policies at local, state and federal level don't allow for equity

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For voluntary groups funding often covers activities but not people! This tires organisations / volunteers • Sustainable models not reliant on individual or external funding • Tax the large meat and dairy industries for the environmental pollution
Promotion and connectivity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of awareness of other groups and individuals – ‘Connectivity’ * • Farmers markets working together and with outside support to promote ‘eat fresh’, ‘eat local’ – debunk myth that it costs more * • Food swaps not reaching the people who need more access to fresh fruit and veg most * • Excess veg made available to those who most need it (and how to cook it) *
Support, Engagement – Community & Volunteers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Burn out of volunteers and leaders ** • Engagement – community & volunteers
Other	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Get Council to actively promote eating veg meals 3-4 nights/week • More in Gisborne as growing / new population • Food systems needed to meet the whole of life.

Ideas

Once we gained a fuller understanding of the current food system, there was an opportunity to talk about ideas or issues people wanted to explore further. Those who proposed an idea or issue were given a template to capture their thinking, with time given for people to visit ideas they wanted to talk about more.

Thirteen ideas were generated across two forums.

The list of ideas is below, with images of the original work located in the appendix.

How to overcome ‘time’; everyone puts time as a barrier	Making a similar networking event a regular occurrence
Regional food hub (i.e. similar to Choku Bai Jo model)	Community cook-ups
Community breakfast clubs for school aged children (primary school)	Teaching people the basics of growing a garden they can consume, not just look at
Making food swaps / food shares more accessible	Promotional campaign (affordability of farmers, etc)
How to fund a school garden program	How to increase the value people put on healthy eating, recognising limited time, knowledge, and resources (whole food plant-based diet)
Open edible gardens; develop shire wide participation	Use of private land (esp rural living) for food production to share with others (expanded also to smaller lot farm zone and sharing larger lots)
Romsey community space for learning, growing and gathering	