



About Food Security

This document provides a brief overview on food security. For more information – refer to the full *Food Security Toolkit* – available from www.ttophs.govt.nz/foodsecurity

What is Food Security?

The World Health Organisation defines food security as existing when:

“All people at all times have access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food to maintain a healthy and active life”¹

Food security is built on three pillars:

1. Food availability: sufficient quantities of food available on a consistent basis
2. Food access: having sufficient resources to obtain appropriate foods for a nutritious diet
3. Food use: appropriate use based on knowledge of basic nutrition and care, as well as adequate water and sanitation¹

Food security exists when there is a reliable supply and people have access to healthy foods that are culturally acceptable, nutritiously adequate, affordable and safe. The definition is also moving towards inclusion of sustainable production methods.

Why Improve Healthy Food Access?

Toi Te Ora Public Health Service (Toi Te Ora) is committed to improving and protecting the health of the communities in the Bay of Plenty and Lakes districts.

Food insecurity, limited access to healthy food, is associated with increased food-related chronic diseases.^{2,3} These diseases, such as obesity, diabetes, heart disease and some cancers, are significantly affecting individual's lives and putting pressure on our health care system.⁴ Collectively, the consumption of unhealthy food and excess energy intake account for 11.4% of overall health loss in New Zealand.⁴

Toi Te Ora recognises the benefits of investing early to support healthy behaviours and prevent ill-health.





What Determines What We Eat and Drink?

The diagram to the right⁵ describes key influences on our daily food and drink choices, including supply, demand, access and utilisation factors.

It is important to consider these factors when building food security or encouraging healthy eating.

How Do Our Surroundings Influence What We Eat?

Our food and drink choices are shaped by the complex world in which we live:

- By the kinds of food our parents make available at home
- By how far we live from the nearest supermarket or fast food restaurant,
- By the ways that governments and authorities develop relevant policies.⁶

In New Zealand, and many parts of the world, the ‘food environment’—the physical and social surroundings that influence what we eat—makes it far too hard to choose healthy foods, and all too easy to choose unhealthy foods.⁶

Some even call this food environment “toxic” because of the way it corrodes healthy lifestyles and promotes obesity.⁷



References

1. World Health Organisation. (2014) Food Security. <http://www.who.int>
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4. Ministry of Health. (2014) New Zealand Burden of Diseases, Injuries and Risk Factors Study, 2006–2016. <http://www.health.govt.nz>
5. Diagram sourced from: The Victorian Healthy Eating Enterprise. 2012. Healthy Food Connect: A Support Resource. (p.6)
6. Swinburn, B. A., Sacks, G., Hall, K. D., McPherson, K., Finegood, D. T., Moodie, M. L., and Gortmaker, S. L. (2011). The global obesity pandemic: shaped by global drivers and local environments. *The Lancet*, 378(9793), 804-814.
7. Harvard School of Public Health. Toxic Food Environment, Obesity Prevention Source. Accessed January 2015, available from: <http://www.hsph.harvard.edu/obesity-prevention-source/obesity-causes/food-environment-and-obesity/>

Toi Te Ora - Public Health Service is funded by the Ministry of Health and is the public health unit for the Bay of Plenty and Lakes District Health Boards. Toi Te Ora's purpose is to improve and protect the health of the population in the Lakes and Bay of Plenty districts with a focus on reducing inequalities.