The impact of COVID-19 on food insecurity in the Greater Sydney and Illawarra region

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Abstract

The COVID-19 pandemic has revealed and increased existing inequity in food access in Greater Sydney's food system, with a reported 78% increase in demand for food relief (Duke and Wright, 2020). The impact of COVID-19 is such that many people of all demographics face potential, or worsened, food insecurity. This report explores the impacts of COVID-19 in relation to four community food organisations operating in the Greater Sydney region; these are OzHarvest, Food Fairness Illawarra, Rozelle Neighbourhood Centre, and Community Greening. A series of interviews were undertaken with representatives from these organisations, and this report will identify and evaluate the specific themes associated with COVID-19's impact that these four organisations have observed. The underlying themes of COVID-19's impact are:

- Increase in demand for food relief, largely due to the emergence of those in need that previously had not needed food relief such as international students and families;
- Suspension or discontinuance of access to vital volunteers;
- Disruption to pre-existing food chains, most notably large supermarkets; and
- The desire to develop a more centralised information network amongst food relief organizations to better identify need and coordinate relief.

Our results indicate that COVID-19 has exacerbated food security in the instances it was already occurring, and also led to the emergence of new clients experiencing food insecurity.

We would like to thank the following organisations for their participation in this research:

Contents

Introduction

The combination of Australia's high living costs, such as rent and food prices, and lack of substantial wage growth has meant an increase in the amount of people experiencing food insecurity and seeking food relief (McKay et al, 2020). In response to Australia's food security crisis, many people are reliant upon charitable food organisations such as OzHarvest and FoodBank in order to address food insecurity. The support and donations that these non-governmental organisations use to carry out their mission is largely supported by the food industry (that is, supermarkets and restaurants) in terms of directly donated food, and government programs aimed at assisting charities (McKay et al., 2020).

Food insecurity occurs when factors such as socioeconomic status, physical ability, equitable access, environmental access, and cultural appropriateness are not met under normal and consistent circumstances, therefore leading to precarious access to food (Kent et al., 2020). Food insecurity is a social issue that, before the COVID-19 pandemic, affected approximately 4-5% of Australians; this is notable despite Australia's position as a food secure nation that produces more food than it consumes (Kent et al., 2020). Kent et al. (2020) provides a conservative estimate of food insecurity levels in Australia prior to COVID-19; other estimations sit closer to the 20% mark - the Foodbank Hunger Report 2019 puts the number of Australians experiencing food insecurity at 21%, or just over 1 in 5 Australians (Foodbank, 2019).

Individuals and organisations have both been subject to many government enforced COVID-19 public policy restrictions (that is, social distancing, suspension of non-essential work, mandatory self-isolation). Many organisations have consequently had to postpone or radically change their food relief programs to not only accommodate an increase in clientele, but to do so under strict government guidelines to ensure safety and limit the risk of transferring COVID-19 (as can be seen in Appendix 2). This has affected the very heart of charities: the volunteers. The impact on Sydney's volunteer infrastructure cannot be overstated, as was made clear by all organisations participating in this study who recorded a substantial drop in volunteers during the early stages of COVID-19.

The purpose of this report is to identify and highlight the impacts that COVID-19 has had on the community food sector within the Greater Sydney and Illawarra region, drawing on interviews with representatives from OzHarvest, Rozelle Neighbourhood Centre, Community Greening, and Food Fairness Illawarra. Additionally, this report aims to propose possible solutions that would mitigate any further negative impacts.

Methods

Setting

This report analyses data collected from four community food organisations and their operations in the Greater Sydney/Illawarra region.

Data Collection

This report gathered data from interviews conducted on behalf of Australia's Right to Food Coalition to assess the impact that COVID-19 has had on the operations of community food organisations in the Greater Sydney and Illawarra region and what those impacts have meant for the clients relying on these organisations for food relief.

The semi-structured interviews were conducted between 18 August 2020 and 27 August 2020, with staff members of the respective organisations. Interviewees were provided with an information and consent form; all 4 interviewees consented to be interviewed via video calls on the Zoom platform, and the answers provided to be used in this report. Prior knowledge of the organisations used in the study was obtained through website searches and was used to frame and construct relevant interview questions. The interviews were transcribed and then analysed according to major themes that arose.

Results and Discussion

Disruption to food supplies

All community food organisations that were interviewed reported being negatively impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. It is notable that during the initial outbreak of COVID-19 in these local regions (March 2020), there was a significant decrease in the volume of donated food sourced from supermarkets due to the panic-buying incidences all over Greater Sydney and NSW. OzHarvest was particularly impacted by the reduction in supermarket donations, largely due to OzHarvest's reliance on supermarket donations which account for approximately 60% of its rescued food. Likewise, Food Fairness Illawarra observed that their clients were affected by the initial panic-buying situation, and commented that this highlighted the fragility of Sydney's food system. It also revealed how ill-equipped these regions are to handle catastrophic disruptions such as the March 2020 panic-buying, which overwhelmed normal business functions, and consequently impeded peoples' ability to access food. Evidence for this was given by the organisations that rely heavily on food rescued from businesses (namely, OzHarvest, and by extension Rozelle Neighbourhood Centre). Representatives of Food Fairness Illawarra and Community Greening, both suggested that building localised food systems might help combat these vulnerabilities. Food Fairness Illawarra suggested that increasing local food production in the Illawarra region would not only increase the amount of nutritious food available in the area, but would also create more jobs for locals, and potentially raise income levels - both of which facilitate food security. Community Greening also noted the importance of localised food systems, noting the role that community gardens and growing your own food can play in building these systems.

Shift in demand for food relief

There were varied answers from each organisation when asked if the proportion of people requesting help with food security had also risen. Both Rozelle Neighbourhood Centre and OzHarvest had seen a significant increase in clients using existing food relief programs, whilst also taking advantage of new programs that came into existence after the increased need was identified. For example, OzHarvest introduced pop-up markets aimed at international students who represent a portion of the population that had not traditionally needed targeted food relief prior to COVID-19 in Sydney. Both Food Fairness Illawarra and Community Greening observed the shift in demographics surrounding those now experiencing food insecurity. Whilst neither of these two organisations deal directly with food relief programs themselves, Food Fairness Illawarra observed this shift in demographic through their work with the many food relief organisations connected to their coalition, and Community Greening through the members of their community gardens.

To clarify, the organisations participating in this study each observed an increase in people experiencing food insecurity who were not traditional recipients of food relief programs prior to COVID-19. Specifically, the numbers of families, and working people who lost their current employment due to the economic downturn COVID-19 has caused, made up a significant portion of new clients. All four organisations observed this trend in relation to their own organisation, and also noted that international students and the elderly were amongst the new groups in need of food relief. Berbel Franse (a Health Promotion Officer for Healthy Cities Illawarra, and representing Food Fairness Illawarra), stated in her interview that this significant rise of international students experiencing food insecurity is because they have, "fallen in-between the governments support structure", referring to the fact that international students have been unable to access any welfare payments whilst also having little to no work. A valid point that needs to be addressed moving forward, is the stigma that can be associated with needing food relief. Food Fairness Illawarra indicated that this can act as a deterrent to those who are part of the new demographics that are now food insecure. Franse stated in her interview that this was a new challenge they had to deal with, "Actually being able to communicate or inform them [international students] where they can receive support without finding themselves in a situation of shame".

On the other hand, some prior clients who were receiving Centrelink benefit payments before COVID-19 were seen to be withdrawing from various food relief programs, for example recipients who were receiving the Newstart Allowance prior to COVID-19 and then started receiving higher payments with the JobSeeker Payment. This supports findings by the Australian Council of Social Service (2020), that the significant increase in Centrelink benefit payments meant that an increased number of people were able to afford to buy food directly from supermarkets instead of receiving donated food from charitable organisations or their community gardens.

Volunteers

A serious and unfortunate consequence of COVID-19 and its subsequent government safety measures is the significant loss of volunteers available to carry-out the daily operations and activities that food charities rely on to function. Transporting rescued food, delivering food hampers, and running community kitchens are all examples of the essential daily routines of

these community food organisations, and all of these activities rely on volunteers to carry them out. This decrease in volunteer staff has impacted almost every facet of food relief programs. Rozelle Neighbourhood Centre has seen a decrease in volunteers from 120 in the service of 'Peninsula Caring' (a program started in response to COVID-19 whose volunteers largely consisted of people whose employment was affected by COVID-19) at the start of the pandemic down to 5 as people have had to return to work. However, despite this, Rozelle Neighbourhood Centre has not decreased their relief services. Food Fairness Illawarra noted that a number of the organisations they work with in the Illawarra region have had to decrease their numbers of volunteers and staff due to social distancing regulations. For example, due to the size of the venue at Warrawong Community Kitchen they can only have a maximum of 20 people inside at one time, and have had to cut down the number of volunteers to allow for more community members to actually come for the lunch service they provide. The most common reason given for this decrease in volunteers is the demographic that volunteers belong to, specifically, the elderly where it was in their best interest to self-isolate and avoid contact with people as much as possible. It should be noted that some organisations, such as OzHarvest, have seen volunteer numbers rise at some points during the COVID-19 pandemic, attracting assistance from a range of individuals, such as those who have lost paid employment.

It is clear that the survival of community food organisations relies largely on the ability of volunteers to engage in normal volunteering duties. However, as in-person volunteering has drastically declined, this report proposes that a new kind of volunteering be subscribed to as much as possible, that of 'virtual volunteering' (Lachance, 2020). Obviously not all volunteering duties are suitable in a virtual format, such as food deliveries, however administrative duties such as logistics and management may be able to be appropriately converted into a virtual format. This transition would create both opportunities and challenges for organisations (Lachance, 2020), namely challenges around adapting their services in order to maintain effective food relief.

Partnerships and Coordination

Another key theme that was discussed by every organisation interviewed, was the importance of partnerships and collaborations with like-minded organisations. Both Food Fairness Illawarra and OzHarvest emphasised the role that collaboration with other organisations and local councils played in their responses to the impacts of COVID-19. Food Fairness Illawarra made it clear that they would not have been able to respond in the way that they did without active collaboration with Shellharbour Council, OzHarvest, FoodBank, and Australia's Right to Food Coalition, to name a few. OzHarvest, Food Fairness Illawarra, and Rozelle Neighbourhood Centre each independently spoke of increased collaboration and coordination amongst food relief organisations, councils and groups as key to addressing food insecurity moving forward. The responses of these organisations have positively highlighted that increased collaboration between these groups can assist with funding, sourcing and relocating volunteers, local food rescue, storage, and transportation and distribution of food and resources.

It became clear from these interviews that each organisation brings their own strengths to the table - whether that be with a focus on sourcing and rescuing local food that would otherwise go to waste, or identifying those in need in the community and coordinating the

distribution of food to these people. Franse acknowledged in her interview that Food Fairness Illawarra's key contribution throughout COVID-19 has been to take the lead, coordinate responses from different organisations, and information provision. OzHarvest, however, has played a vital role in hands on food rescue and distribution. Ben Sensicle, representing OzHarvest, stated they have, "increased their food support by about 50% in terms of the food going out". This highlights the different strengths and contributions different organisations may have to offer. Smaller organisations also often need, or are even dependent, on the support of larger organisations for the functioning of their organisation. For example, Susan Hawkeswood from Rozelle Neighbourhood Centre stated in her interview, "urban food relief organisations in the urban area like us, are fully dependent on retailers and food distribution centres like OzHarvest". Working together has ensured, and will continue to ensure, that these groups are able to establish food security in the most effective way possible. Ben Sensicle from OzHarvest raised the important point that having as much of the food relief sector working together as possible will help gain attention and action from the government for assistance with funding and resources: "getting a clear picture of the need out there and then having as much of the sector collaborating in a robust way will help governments react and then we can get that food out which will help the situation".

These interviews revealed the importance of a more centralised coordination of food relief and food security initiatives. Participants' responses indicate the need for the coordination of the resources available from these organisations on a larger scale, potentially by geographic areas. One suggestion was the development of a website or database where individuals or groups could post what resources they have available or what resources they are in need of; for example: excess food, volunteers, and modes of transportation. The point was raised by multiple respondents that the coordination and distribution of fresh produce was a key challenge throughout COVID-19, as fresh produce has such a short shelf life. As such, the development of a website as previously described would be an effective strategy to cope with this challenge. The effectiveness of Food Fairness Illawarra, already acting as a coalition of food security initiatives within the Illawarra region, serves as a prime example of the importance of such centralised coordination. They have been able to develop a 'Low Cost and Free Food Directory' that is available to the public on their website, and is a great example of the way in which their centralised coordination has been able to simplify the process of accessing food relief services for members of their communities. To further emphasise the importance of a coordinated response, Franse stated herself in her interview, "I think our rapid, collective response to the COVID situation highlights the importance of a well functioning and coordinated food security coalition".

Information Provision

The importance of clear information provision was another recurring theme identified by respondents. This includes clear and regular communication between organisations, and also extends to the provision of information regarding food relief services and nutrition information to the public. This information also needs to be tailored for each community's needs and differences. For example, Philip Pettitt discussed Community Greening's ongoing efforts in incorporating aspects of local Aboriginal language into some of their resources and lessons, although the process has been slowed down due to disruptions from COVID-19. This pandemic has made it clear that thorough and adequate communication is needed

between service providers in order to quickly identify any disruptions that could impact their ability to provide for their community. Such scenarios could include, if an organisation is struggling with volunteer numbers, if their operating times have needed to change, if they're unable to source enough food and produce, if they've had to change locations, and so on. Food Fairness Illawarra has organised a regular meeting (via phone) with 48 food organisation representatives to exchange information related to COVID-19 and food security in order to gain an understanding of the scope of the situation within Illawarra, and coordinate accordingly their response to the situation. As previously mentioned, Food Fairness Illawarra have also developed a 'Low Cost and Free Food Directory' which is regularly updated to ensure accurate information is available for their community members who are in need of help.

Not only is information provision regarding services important, but also providing information concerning food, nutrition, and health literacy. Philip Pettitt from Community Greening raised the point that often the most vulnerable community members do not have adequate food literacy, in that they may not know how to cook or store fresh produce and prevent it from going to waste, or affordable ways to buy it, grow their own, or know where to source it from a community garden. Providing a range of free print and online resources surrounding these topics could potentially help community members to gain some more independence in their own food security (if their situation allows for it). Community Greening is already in the process of developing an online resource and manual for this purpose, which would be extremely beneficial for their community members. However, these resources need to be developed with the specific needs and differences of each community in mind, such as language barriers or low literacy levels.

Limitations

As with any research study, there were a number of limitations to this research that need to be addressed. To start, due to time constraints, only four interviewees were able to be secured for this study. This is a limited number of perspectives that were able to be analysed, and therefore not all perspectives of different groups and regions within the Greater Sydney and Illawarra regions are documented in this study. For further research and understanding of the full extent of the impact of COVID-19 on food security and food relief services within these regions, a greater number and variety of interviews would have to be conducted with differing representatives. For future studies, beneficial perspectives to cover would be those with a focus on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander groups, asylum seekers and refugees, and more regional and/or rural communities.

Another limitation was the fact that each respondent represents only one perspective of the impact of COVID-19 on their organisation. In terms of the interviewees, it is unreasonable to expect a single person to capture every way an entire organisation has been impacted; therefore they may not be privy to certain impacts that may have occurred.

Finally, a major limitation of this research was the method by which the interviews and prior research were conducted, being that all activity was conducted online due to limitations imposed by COVID-19. Specifically, all interviews were conducted via Zoom, which can have its own limitations, those being an impact to the interviews due to time constraints, technological issues, and lack of natural social interaction.

Conclusion

It is in all likelihood that COVID-19 will not be at its end in the year 2020, and that Greater Sydney and Illawarra will see a continuation of food insecurity in the region. This report shows that despite an increase in food relief demand and a drop in volunteer participation, community food organisations providing emergency food relief have been able to adapt to meet the changing circumstances during COVID-19. This impact has been lessened for already vulnerable populations as well as newly emerging ones, such as international students. However, the ever-increasing number of clients receiving food relief will require a proportionate increase in programs and resources in future, to adequately meet this ongoing demand.

It is of considerable importance that food literacy amongst the general population, especially the vulnerable, be taught in an accessible and culturally-safe manner, both in digital and face-to-face settings. Nutrition and food information must be tailored to each community's unique needs. Furthermore, reducing the shame and stigma around receiving food charity, would be a positive step in the right direction. Social media, as well as other public forms of conversation, could be utilised to show food relief in a positive light with clientele from varied backgrounds to foster acceptance.

One of the most devastating impacts of COVID-19 has been the drop in volunteer assistance in the community food sector. It is imperative alternative arrangements for volunteers be devised so that food relief operations may continue as normally as possible in the event of unexpected or significant future disruptions to the food supply chain, possibly through 'virtual volunteering'.

Strengthening and simplifying food supply chains, such as via shortening and localising food chains, may also provide some protection for food relief organisations and their clientele in the event of a major disruption. As seen early on during the COVID-19 pandemic; using local food sources could provide stability to the local area. The involvement of the government in the continuation of food relief organisations via the implementation of new or improved policies, strategies, and the provision of additional resources and funding, would be beneficial.

This research has also highlighted the importance of fostering and developing partnerships and coordinated efforts between community food organisations. Every organisation has their own strengths and weaknesses, and by working together, can develop a deeper understanding of the current situation of food insecurity and ultimately share their resources in more productive and effective ways. There was unanimous agreement across all four interviews that collaboration was one of the most important things.

Finally, COVID-19 has brought to light the fragility of food security within Australia. This pandemic has highlighted just how suddenly food security can change within a country or state - whether that be in relation to the security of food supply chains or the demographic of those experiencing food insecurity. While community food initiatives need to be well equipped and funded to deliver effective support for those experiencing food insecurity, attention needs to be paid to ensuring all Australians can access healthy food at all times.

References

Australian Council of Social Service, 2020. *I Can Finally Eat Fresh Fruit And Vegetables*. [online] Australian Council of Social Service. Available at: <https://www.acoss.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/200624-I-Can-Finally-Eat-Fresh-Fruit-And-Vegetables-Results-Of-The-Coronaviru.._.pdf> [Accessed 24 September 2020].

Department of Health, 2020. *Coronavirus (COVID-19) Information For Employers*. Australian Government.

Duke, J. and Wright, S., 2020. *Record 1.4 Million People Relying On Food Charity As Recession Bites*. [online] The Sydney Morning Herald. Available at: <https://www.smh.com.au/politics/federal/record-1-4-million-people-relying-on-food-charity-as-recession-bites-20200701-p55821.html> [Accessed 24 September 2020].

Foodbank, 2019. *Foodbank Hunger Report 2019*. Available at: <https://www.foodbank.org.au/research-reports/?state=nsw-act> [Accessed 2nd September 2020]

Kent, K., Murray, S., Penrose, B., Auckland, S., Visentin, D., Godrich, S. and Lester, E., 2020.   Prevalence and Socio-Demographic Predictors of Food Insecurity in Australia during the COVID-19 Pandemic. *Nutrients*, 12(9), p.2682.

Lachance, E., 2020. COVID-19 and its Impact on Volunteering: Moving Towards Virtual Volunteering. *Leisure Sciences*, pp.1-7.

McKay, F., Haines, B., Beswick, H., McKenzie, H. and Lindberg, R., 2020. The prevalence, severity and experience of food insecurity in Australia: An investigation of food aid use. *Health & Social Care in the Community*.

Appendix 1 - Annotated bibliography

Carey, R., Murphy, M. and Alexandra, L., 2020. COVID-19 highlights the need to plan for healthy, equitable and resilient food systems. Cities & Health, pp.1-4.

Carey et al. reports on the effects that COVID-19 has had on food systems in Australia's urban environment. The article assesses the responses to the pandemic by different cities and evaluates their effectiveness in mitigating the disruption to food supply systems. It concludes that there is a deficiency in how efficient and effective responses have been within cities and urban centres. The article outlines possible measures that could be put in place to mitigate negative impacts to the food supply system such as those seen by COVID-19. The pandemic has revealed the weaknesses of global food supply chains due to disruptions to international trade and transportation. Their main solution revolves around reducing the reliance of global food supply chains and instead localising Australia's food system in order to create resilient short food supply chains that link consumers directly to local farmers.

The authors assert that governments at all levels are lacking in their responsibilities and are not doing enough to ensure equitable access to healthy foods for consumers and have suggested that utilising local food relief efforts and movements would be beneficial to softening the impact of sudden changes to food systems experienced by urban areas. They argue that in order to establish these resilient short food supply chains, communities need the assistance and support of city authorities and municipal governments.

This article is written for those in the social sciences community, decision-makers, and the general public who wish to remain informed. This article is useful to decision-makers because it offers solutions and techniques that would help mitigate the effects of sudden changes to cities' food systems, and also helpful to ordinary citizens as it emphasises philanthropic food movements as integral parts of mitigating the harmful effects of food shortages and lack of volunteers during COVID-19.

O'Kane, G., 2020. COVID-19 puts the spotlight on food insecurity in rural and remote Australia. Australian Journal of Rural Health, 28(3), pp.319-320.

This article centres around food insecurity at a local level whilst also highlighting the impacts of household food insecurity of disadvantaged populations, namely those who live in rural areas. The author, O'Kane (2020) argues for the recognition of unequal access to healthy food during the time of the pandemic with consistent referrals to how COVID-19 has only exacerbated the already existing inequalities in healthy food access.

The article conveys its message about recognition by gathering the conclusions and data of existing studies, for example the statistics stating the percentage of Australians living with food insecurity was taken from another article in the Australia Journal of Rural Health. The conclusions drawn from this article are such that on a long-term basis, charitable organisations and individual efforts cannot be relied upon to provide relief to those with food shortages and who experience food insecurity in general but instead the local governments must utilise their own discretion and manpower to ensure long-term reprieve from food insecurity.

The author emphasises that not only do disadvantaged populations experience the burden of food insecurity, but within those populations are further inequities as is seen in the Aboriginal Australian population who experience many factors that contribute to food insecurity such as remote living and rising food prices. This article is of use to other academics in the field of social science but also to decision-makers in local government who hold the responsibility of ensuring equal access to food in rural areas; the target audience for this article are academics, policy-makers, and intelligent but uninformed general public based on its accessible language. Limits of the article are a lack of elaborate solutions.

Pearlman, J., 2020. Covid-19 Exposes Vulnerability Of Australia's Food Security. [online] The Straits Times. Available at: <https://www.straitstimes.com/asia/australianz/covid-19-exposes-vulnerability-of-australias-food-security> [Accessed 7 August 2020].

The author, Pearlman (2020), focuses his attention on the vulnerabilities in the manufacturing processes of Australia's food supply chain. The position of the author is clear in that he highlights the reliance Australia has on other countries to produce its food, not necessarily to consume it. For example, the author outlines the essential services such as machine, chemical, and plastic production that foreign companies undertake that are then used by Australian food suppliers.

The author asserts that whilst Australia can produce enough food to feed its own population, it would be to the detriment of the region such as in Indonesia and the Pacific Island nations, and that securing food and essential manufacturing processes on a regional-scale is the best option for safeguarding against food shortages in the region. In terms of methods for obtaining data and information, the author relies on the expert opinions of those within the political sphere and in the food industry as is seen by the quotes from Andrew Henderson, an agriculture sector consultant, and also Dr Geoffrey Annison, deputy chief executive of the Australian Food and Grocery council. Furthermore, the author makes use of other news articles that have a similar topic such as seen with the referenced article from The Saturday Paper.

The strengths of this text are that it is accessible to a wide audience, using basic and clear language with no jargon, and it is clear that the general public is the target audience. The limits of this text are that it is relatively short and utilises only a few sources for information.

This article relates to the theme of responsibility that is seen in Intercultural Communication; to clarify, the article's main focus is on the regional cooperation and interrelationship between the nations of the Pacific, Australia included, whose actions during this time of pandemic could have far-reaching consequences for smaller nations, such as those of the Pacific Islands, and also for countries such as Indonesia who currently import most of Australia's wheat. The author's point of making clear the association between the Pacific region is to offer a solution that is regional in nature.

Hatfield-Dodds, S. and Gooday, P., 2020. Don't Panic: Australia Has Truly Excellent Food Security. [online] The Conversation. Available at: <https://theconversation.com/dont-panic-australia-has-truly-excellent-food-security-136405> [Accessed 6 August 2020].

This article stands in contrast to many others that claim food insecurity within Australia as a result of COVID-19. However, a limit in this article is the lack of localised data and evidence

as the article states that Australia is one of the most food-secure countries in the world. Whilst that might be true, it does not account for the specific populations within Australia such as those living in rural areas, Aboriginal Australians, low income households, and other disadvantaged populations.

The author's position is made clear by the title of the article, using relevant references to current events as is seen by the reference to 'panic buying'. The author continues this theme throughout the article as it is stated that panic buying is not responsible for food shortages but instead the logistics of the food supply chain are at fault. The target audience for this article is the general public, made clear by its accessible language and by the lack of multiple sources in which data is sourced. The scope and objective of this article is to placate fears regarding nation-wide food shortages during COVID-19 using concise points and quantitative data.

Queensland Farmers' Federation. 2020. Australia's Food Security Locked Down During COVID-19 Pandemic. [online] Available at: <https://www.qff.org.au/presidents-column/australias-food-security-locked-covid-19-pandemic/> [Accessed 7 August 2020].

This text's aim is to be informative and to educate the reader on the current food supply situation happening within Australia. The author is an organisation that represents collectively the interests of its members, namely the farming primary producers of Queensland. This report acknowledges that there has been a food shortage in the supermarkets due to COVID-19 yet asserts that the food supply chains are adapting to the changes.

The conclusions that are stated within this article are drawn from examining secondary sources specifically regarding nation-wide food security such as seen with the statistics on food imports and exports. This article relies heavily on the statistic stating that Australia imports only 11% of its food for consumers as it is a main theme throughout the article. The intended audience for this piece is the general public interested in national food security and members of the Queensland Farmers' Federation.

The strengths of this article are its analytical nature that clearly and concisely communicated information using accessible language whilst at the same time achieving its goal of mollifying doubts regarding food security for Australia. Weaknesses of this article are such that it lacks information about local food security and population-specific food security.

Australian Government Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment, 2020. ABARES Insights. Analysis of Australian food security and the COVID-19 pandemic. Issue 3.

This report was released by Australia's Bureau of Agriculture and the Environment and was accompanied by a media release by The Hon David Littleproud MP (Minister for Agriculture, Drought and Emergency Management). This report was released with the purpose of reassuring citizens that Australia should be confident in their food security. The report claims that Australia's food supply, which is ranked in the top 10% of countries under the World Food Summit's Global Food Security Index, is not at risk because of COVID-19. This claim is based on the fact that Australia produces approximately three times the amount of food that is consumed, and that 70% of agricultural production is exported. This argument is flawed for two main reasons. Firstly, if Australia is exporting 70% of their agricultural production then

that could negate the fact that they are producing more food than is being consumed. However, more research would have to be done into how much food is being consumed compared to how much food is needed to be consumed by Australians. Secondly, the fact that there is enough food being produced and circulated within Australia does not necessarily mean that it is being distributed equally. It does not account for vulnerable groups that access enough nutritious and culturally appropriate foods, for example remote communities, low-income households, migrants or international students. The fact that as of 2019, before the start of the pandemic, the Foodbank Hunger Report 2019 which reported 21% of Australians were experiencing food insecurity, is evidence of this lack of accountability for the unequal distribution of food within Australia. This report also argues that the 'unexpected surge' of panic buying early in the pandemic is not a reflection of food shortages and thus is not an indication of increased food insecurity. Again, this logic doesn't take into account the way it may have impacted those vulnerable populations who were unable to afford to bulk buy and may have experienced food insecurity as a result.

This report does acknowledge that Australian agricultural producers do rely on imported products and global supply chains for their own production. It acknowledges that it will be necessary for both producers and governments to monitor and accommodate for any disruptions to these processes that could impact productivity for Australian producers. It also acknowledges that Australia imports approximately 10% of their domestically consumed food, and any disruptions to these supply chains could impact Australians. This touches on the food insecurity that certain groups could face if they are unable to have access to culturally appropriate foods.

Carey, R., Murphy, M. and Alexandra, L., 2020. Insights From Melbourne, Australia During COVID-19: Civil Society Leading The Response To Strengthen The City Region Food. [online] Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. Available at: <http://www.fao.org/in-action/food-for-cities-programme/news/detail/en/c/1275112/> [Accessed 8 August 2020].

This article provides insights into the responses of government and local movements in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. The subheadings used within the article provide a sensible pattern for the flow of information as is seen by the information regarding government reactions and local reactions that are separated by subheadings.

The authors are appropriately critical throughout the article, stating that state governments have lacked in their response times as over a million Australians became unemployed and their vulnerability increased. On the other hand, credit is given where earned as is seen by the mention of the Victorian Government's reassignment of food markets as 'essential services' thereby making them accessible to the public even at the height of COVID-19. However, the main purpose of the article is to provide insight into the community efforts that are instead alleviating a lot of the food security burden on disadvantaged people within the Melbourne region. For example, food relief movements are being created and promoted using social media, and community gardens, that have been closed to the public due to social distancing restrictions, are being used to grow food for these food relief movements. The sources used in this article are from government reports, university studies, and food relief movement websites. It is clear by the language of the article that it is intended for a

wider audience, as is also made clear by its appearance on a charitable organisation's website. This article mainly relies on the theme of responsibility at the local level.

Fedunik-Hofman, L., 2020. How Does A Global Pandemic Affect Our Food Supply Chain?. [online] Australian Academy of Science. Available at: <https://www.science.org.au/curious/people-medicine/how-does-global-pandemic-affect-our-food-supply-chain> [Accessed 3 August 2020].

This article explores the impact of COVID-19 on supply chains and suggests how looking at emerging data-based solutions could make these supply chains more secure. Fedunik-Hofman (2020) details how every step in the global food supply chain has been disrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic and offers solutions for managing the vulnerabilities of each of these steps - primary production, transportation and warehousing, wholesale and food processing, and retail. One of their solutions offered is to increase traceability of produce throughout the supply chain using blockchain technology. This is an online platform that could potentially increase the visibility of the origin or state of produce in increasingly complicated supply chains. She suggests online sales as a potential solution for primary production, particularly via online livestock sales and auctions. Greater flexibility with storage and inventory management is needed to avoid empty shelves during unexpected or unusual events similar to the COVID-19 pandemic.

This article is not highly academic in nature, and easily accessible and straightforward for the average reader. It's straight to the point, and outlines the impact of COVID-19 on global supply chains as succinctly as possible to provide a basic understanding of the issue to viewers.

Rosier, K., 2011. Food Insecurity In Australia: What Is It, Who Experiences It And How Can Child And Family Services Support Families Experiencing It?. [online] Child Family Community Australia. Available at: <https://aifs.gov.au/cfca/publications/food-insecurity-australia-what-it-who-experiences-it-and-how-can-child> [Accessed 3 August 2020].

This practice sheet is extremely useful in identifying the key components of food insecurity, groups or individuals who may be more susceptible to food insecurity, and the potential reasons behind food insecurity. Rosier (2011) goes on to clearly outline the relationship between food insecurity and child and family services in Australia. This is a useful source for seeing food insecurity as more than a standalone issue - it allows the reader to see the way food insecurity can interact with other areas in everyday life.

This source was written for those working in child and family services. It highlights the prevalence of the issue amongst Australians in order to prepare these workers should they be working with any families or children experiencing, or vulnerable to, food insecurity. It clearly states the effects food insecurity can have on children and families, which gives anyone working in these areas clear signs to look out for. It also offers explanations for certain issues or behaviours that they have already noticed with children that they have worked with, but were previously unable to explain and help. For example disruptions to academic achievement and obesity often occur as a result of food insecurity. Finally this source offers solutions and services that child and family service workers may use or

implement to assist the families they work with that may be vulnerable to food insecurity, such as education, assisting with resources for transport or bulk buying, providing information and referral.

Appendix 2 – Government Guidelines

Source: Department of Health, 2020. *Coronavirus (COVID-19) Information For Employers.* Australian Government.

What should employers do to reduce risk of COVID-19?

You should identify reliable sources of information such as health.gov.au and stay up to date with the most recent advice on COVID-19.

You should provide information to all employees and contract staff on relevant official advice and procedures to prevent the spread of COVID-19. This includes domestic and cleaning staff, where applicable.

If your work is continuing you should take steps to minimise the spread of COVID-19 in the workplace and protect staff.

You should undertake a formal risk assessment process and apply a hierarchy of appropriate controls. These will be specific to your work, your workplace and your workers. Possible controls include, but are not limited to:

- Employers should have policies, procedures and technology to support employees to work from home, if possible.

- Employees are supported to work from home, if possible

- Social distancing is supported (i.e. by changing staff numbers, staggering working hours, or having staff work from home)

- Try to ensure 4 square metres per person and 1.5 metres between people, wherever possible, including in recreational areas such as tea rooms.

- Discouraging car-pooling between employees to and from work

- Promoting good hand hygiene by providing hand washing facilities and/or alcohol-based hand sanitiser and appropriate waste receptacles

- Undertaking frequent cleaning and disinfection of work spaces, particularly objects and surfaces that are frequently touched

- Holding only essential meetings, and doing so via video conferencing, phone, or outside in the open air if possible

- Modify your roster or staffing to reduce staff interactions (i.e. smaller groups, staggered rosters)

- Avoiding non-essential travel

- Train staff on hand and respiratory hygiene and social distancing

- Educate your staff about the early signs and symptoms of COVID-19 and the need to stay home if unwell

- Develop a policy that requires staff to stay home if unwell

- Supporting employees to adhere to official advice about how to help reduce the spread of COVID-19

Vulnerable employees

If you have employees who may be at increased risk of a serious infection, they should be supported to work from home where possible. If working from home is not feasible, a risk assessment should be undertaken for the vulnerable employee/s. Risks need to be assessed and addressed, depending on the worker, the workplace and the work. This may include re-assigning vulnerable employees to roles where they don't need to have contact with others, such as non-customer-based roles. If the risk cannot be appropriately addressed, employers and employees should consider alternative arrangements such as leave.

People who are likely to be at higher risk of serious illness if they are infected with the virus include:

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people 50 years and older with one or more chronic medical conditions[1]
- People 65 years and older with one or more chronic medical conditions[1]
- People 70 years and older
- People with compromised immune systems[2]

How can we help prevent the spread of coronavirus?

Practising good hand and sneeze/cough hygiene is the best defence against most viruses. You should:

- Wash your hands frequently with soap and water for 20 seconds, or use alcohol based hand rub including before and after eating, and after going to the toilet
- Cover your cough and sneeze, dispose of tissues and wash your hands afterwards
- Avoid close contact with others
- Stay more than 1.5 metres from people wherever possible