clarence
VALLEY COUNCIL

March 2 2012

Reference: Foodlinks
Contact: Rodney Wright

NSW Environmental Trust
PO Box 644
PARRAMATTA NSW 2124

Dear Sir/Madam

Final Report 2008/USM/0016 Securing a Sustainable Food Future in the Northern Rivers.

It is with pleasure that Clarence Valley Council submits the final report to the Environmental Trust, for the USP funded project – Securing a Sustainable Food Future in the Northern Rivers.

The collaborative approach to delivery of this project, has been rewarded with full implementation of the business plan, with major achievements against the aims and objectives of the project.

We are also proud to announce that the project has delivered against 100% of the outcomes within the outcomes hierarchy within the business plan. This has been possible through commitment to collaboration, and the incredible level of support and passion shown by our communities, industries and organisations right across the region.

We take this opportunity to formally acknowledge our Council partners, and also to thank them for the role they have played in delivering this project.

It has been a project of many learnings, as well as many outcomes. We believe there is much to share with the Environmental Trust, other Councils, and other regions, on how to move the agenda of food security and community resilience forward in New South Wales. We have also developed many resources that could be shared, to allow other regions that do not have the privilege of a $2,000,000 grant, to use to begin to gain momentum in this area.

We offer the following insights for your consideration:

Learnings

- **Business Plan**

This has been an incredible tool to ensure the project remains focused, and has clear parameters for project delivery phase. We commend the

Locked Bag 23 GRAFTON NSW 2460
ABN 85 864 095 684 t 02 6643 0200 f 02 6642 7647 e council@clarence.nsw.gov.au w www.clarence.nsw.gov.au

Environmental Trust for mandating this tool and recommend it remains a formal part of project delivery in the future.

- **Outcomes Hierarchy**

This has also been a very comprehensive planning tool, and we support is future role in these projects. We would however, recommend that funding recipients are encouraged to focus on immediate and intermediate outcomes – especially in terms of reporting. Ultimate outcomes are very difficult to report against – given they are looking for longer term achievements.

Our final suggestion around the OH, is around the number and scope of outcomes required within this project. The original business plan was approved subject to the addition of outcomes, and whilst we have achieved against all of them, it has placed enormous pressure at the project delivery end with recording and reporting against so many. We believe, that many of them are quite similar in nature. Whilst we take full responsibility for the process/type and number of outcomes stated, it is a learning that should be shared.

Regional Resources

Fundamental to our business plan, was the strategy to leverage all existing resources (human, physical, financial and good will) in existence in the region. This strategy has been rewarded through the level of success achieved, and the knowledge that all projects can and will move forward in the future – with or without funding.

However, within the key focus area of Sustainable Agriculture – the strategy saw our project highlight the Department of Primary Industries (DPI), as our key partner in delivery. Our assumptions were based on leveraging the existing staff and their expertise, and to support them to deliver innovative on ground projects that would test old ways of thinking (and doing) and trial higher risk, but higher reward type project concepts.

Whilst DPI as a department were willing to work with us, it become immediately apparent just how few human resources they have at hand to support and deliver projects. Of most concern is the decline in number of skilled extension staff in the region (they have all left following decline in the staffing numbers over the years). This will remain a critical issue in addressing sustainable agriculture into the future – without in region expertise, primary producers have limited options for gaining support in transitioning to a low carbon way of farming that is truly sustainable in a triple bottom line way. We urge senior Environmental Trust staff to work with senior DPI staff (Director Food Security) to review this project (how it was delivered and the positive outcomes that can be achieved) and the need to invest in skilled extension staff for a continued move to more sustainable farming practices.

Resource Sharing

- **Communications Strategy and Communication Kit**

We have developed a comprehensive resource with templates, to help partner organisations embrace "one brand – one purpose" when implementing multiple projects across multiple locations, by a diverse range of user groups. Many community organisations have been extremely grateful for the support that this kit has afforded them, and have asked if they can adapt it to assist them to run other projects. We feel, that the kit has also absolutely strengthened the brand of the project, and in doing so, has increased the awareness and credibility of the project and all it has achieved. Many of the cluster participants, have also requested access to the kit. Many commenting, that whilst they can deliver great on ground projects, in the main they do not engage in an active strategy to promote their projects to the broader community.

- **Marketing Materials**

We have now developed multiple 15 and 30-second television advertisements, that have state-wide application. We have also many images, and marketing collateral (banners, posters, stickers, flyers, lookbooks etc) that could be shared with other organisations/communities/Councils – to assist them in rolling out a food security project.

- **Project DVD**

The project has produced three short DVD's (documentary style), which could be disseminated with marketing materials above, or could be used to promote the need for Council's to participate in the food agenda of the future.

- **Collaborative Governance Model**

The decision making process, project selection process (EOI, shortlist, pitch and selection), reference group creation (who, how, why) and all resources used in these processes, would be valuable tools for other Council's wishing to undertake a project of this size, and with this many partners.

- **Sustainfood Website**

The www.sustainfood.com.au site is a model that has endless applications, and promotion of this site, and expansion of it across NSW could be considered. Hits to this site have been in excess of 250,000 – 60,000 of those are unique hits, the rest are therefore repeat users over an 18 month timeframe. The site offers far more than content, it reflects a distributed leadership model, where multiple organisations working in the food security arena (or who want to be), contribute content and time to making the site a wealth of information. It has become a regional resource, and should be shared with others. We have taken many calls about who and how much it has cost to develop.

We would welcome the opportunity to discuss the project further with the Environmental Trust staff, and would also like to make a presentation at the Local Government Shires Association conference in the future on the resources above should that be considered appropriate.

Finally, we thank the Environmental Trust, for the courage and foresight to fund such an innovative project. We look forward to talking further with you in the future.

If you require further information please contact me on telephone 66450265.

Yours faithfully



Rodney Wright
Coordinator Environmental Services

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PO Box 1663 Ballina NSW 2478 | Phone: 02 6686 3972 | Fax: 02 6681 5196
info@northernriversfoodlinks.com.au | www.northernriversfoodlinks.com.au

Urban Sustainability Program (USP)

Northern Rivers Food Links 2009 – 2012

"Securing a Sustainable Food Future"



Final Report
5th March 2012

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Summary

Northern Rivers Food Links (NRFL) was a cooperative venture involving the seven local government areas and the local water authority in the Northern Rivers region of NSW. Northern Rivers Food Links has addressed climate change impacts associated with food production, distribution and consumption by reducing the reliance on food sourced outside the region, whilst also increasing more sustainable food production practices.
Funding provided by the NSW Environmental Trust has been invested throughout the Northern Rivers to plan, implement and support local food projects from 2009 to 2012.

The project is located in the Northern Rivers region of NSW, as depicted on the map below.



A summary of some of the major projects implemented and their outcomes achieved through the NRFL project is outlined below.

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> SOURCE IDENTIFICATION



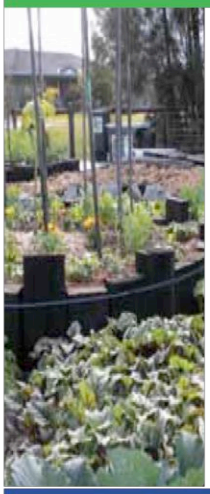
- This project involved 85 retailers right across the northern rivers, joining together to help customers quickly see what is locally grown and where it comes from within the Northern Rivers.
- These retailers display easy to read source identification labels (we are sure you have seen them!)
- Increased levels of local food stocked in store have been reported.
- Customers report the signs are really making customer choices easier to make.

> SUSTAINABLE FOOD DIRECTORY



- This project saw the development of a pocket sized guide to eating locally and organically in the Byron Shire.
- It's a veritable stocktake of local businesses that support local produce, free range eggs, fair trade and organic products.
- Launched in August 2011, the Sustainable Food Directory is being promoted to local residents and visitors in local media and on-line.
- 25 outlets in the Byron Shire area are stocking the Directory, with an initial print run of 5000 copies.

> YAMBA COMMUNITY GARDEN



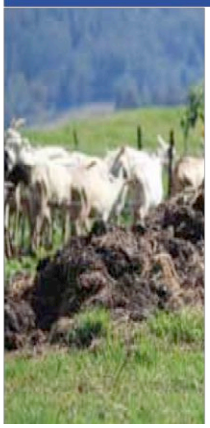
- Established by local garden enthusiasts, this community garden is founded on a commitment to promoting healthy active lifestyles.
- This garden opened in April 2011 with 70 members.
- The garden is a teaching and learning space for local schools and the community.
- Private gardens and shared beds, learning spaces, mobile food gardens, compost making spaces, and a wonderful worm farm make this a showcase community garden.

> VIRTUAL MARKETPLACE



- The Virtual Marketplace "My Food - Northern Rivers" phone application (the app) was developed in response to regional consumer demand for fast access to local food.
- As an extension of the Sustain Food website the app brings people closer to the source of their local food and information about the farm where the food is grown.
- From farmers markets to retailers and restaurants, the app puts the power of local food choices directly into the consumer's hand and is at the cutting edge of innovation around food security.

> BIOLOGICAL FARMING METHODS



- 4 farmers with a desire to improve their on-farm sustainability are reaping the rewards of this project through the development of on-farm organic waste composting and living mulch systems.
- The participants have been guided on best practice implementation and were provided support to improve long term soil health necessary for sustained quality food production.

> CITRUS INDUSTRY DISTRIBUTION MODEL



- 15 citrus grower industry association members have participated in a producer distribution model targeting over 70 pubs, clubs, restaurants and cafés in the Northern Rivers region.
- The growers generated local sales for locally produced limes which reduce food miles for this product.
- The model includes progressing opportunities for value added products particularly in the use of 'seconds' fruit.

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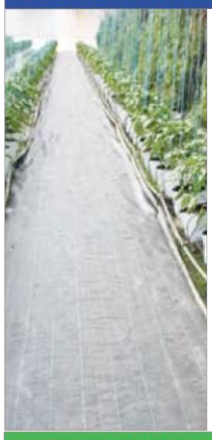

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> SKILLING THE COMMUNITY



- 40 inspirational demonstrations and workshops connecting the community to local food have been delivered in partnership with the region's community college network.
- More than 400 people have participated in sessions covering everything from composting and growing your own food to conserving and preserving local food.
- Showcase demonstrations on kitchen gardens, companion planting, cooking with local food and the importance of food miles and sustainability have featured in community events across the region.
- 300 children have been involved in local food awareness programs delivered throughout the region's shopping centres.

> IMPROVED GREENHOUSE PRACTICES



- Working with 4 greenhouse food producers in the region, this project has seen the incorporation of leading greenhouse practices into current growing systems.
- All aspects of greenhouse growing, including plant nutrition, pest and disease management, water quality, water use efficiency and run-off management have been addressed through innovative on-ground works.
- The focus of this project was to support growers to identify the key areas where environmental improvements can be achieved, and in doing so, how the long term sustainability of the farm can be improved.

> MULI MULI COMMUNITY GARDEN



- This community garden has fast become a social hub and talking point in this remote Aboriginal community.
- The Muli Muli community is enjoying the preparation of their two acres of community garden space with fruit trees, bush tucker and vegetables.
- The garden has a native bee hive, chicken coop, composting and food sharing systems.
- Each week high school students from the community come to the garden to work and learn.

> BALLINA VILLAGE SHOWCASE



- The Grocer, at the House With No Steps, offers customers 100% local food and is open 7 days.
- Over 50 local farmers supply their produce to The Grocer; with a mixture of fresh and value added produce.
- Educational display panels were developed to help the consumer identify what is grown locally and seasonally to help make buying local easy.

> NIMBIN FOOD SECURITY



The bar has been lifted on local food production across a catchment area of more than 5,000 residents in the Nimbin area with the introduction of:

- The weekly Blue Knob Farmers Market (which has become Nimbin's food security hub).
- Weekly Sharing Local Knowledge community skilling (workshops on everything from bee keeping to seed growing delivered by local people for local people).
- Nimbin Sustainable Local Food Day - a showcase of local and sustainable food.
- The region's first community owned mobile grain mill.

> NORTHERN RIVERS FOODLINKS DOCUMENTARY



- The NRFL documentary will be used by the NSW Environmental Trust, the 7 Northern Rivers Councils, and Rous Water to showcase the project and the amazing people who have implemented projects right across the Northern Rivers.
- This is a valuable record and tool for any other region looking to undertake a food security project for their community.
- To view a snapshot of the documentary visit www.northernriversfoodlinks.com.au

> SUSTAINABLE GRAZING IN THE CLARENCE



- 3 farm enterprises have achieved on-farm improvements to soil health and perennial native pasture conditions.
- Best practice water efficiency and improved water quality aims have been met through key works including a gravel stock watering point and alternative water source.
- Improved stock rotation within land capability has led to better pasture resilience and reduced grazing pressures.

> HEALTHY SOIL FOR FOOD PRODUCTION



- This project supported farmers to reduce the cost of food production, at the same time improve soil productivity and produce quality.
- 16 Tweed based farmers have trialed mulch, compost, chicken and cow manure on a variety of crops and pasture under local conditions, testing the impact this has on soil health, plant/food quality and yield.
- Farmers who participated in the trials were dairy, beef and small crop producers.

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> FARMERS MARKET NETWORK



- The Northern Rivers Farmers Market Network is a new collaboration established between the region's existing farmers markets.
- Farmers-stallholders and market coordinators share information and develop cooperative marketing ideas.
- A workshop was held to explore marketing and promotional initiatives that can be implemented in the region.
- The region's farmers markets sell on average 700 kgs of local produce per month, with demand for more.
- Belinda Jeffery, celebrated cookbook author and TV personality hosted a special Northern Rivers Food Links and NBN News feature series, 'Make it Markets'. The series explored farmers markets, eating food in season, food miles and getting to know the farmer behind your food.

> SUSTAINABLE FARM PLANNING



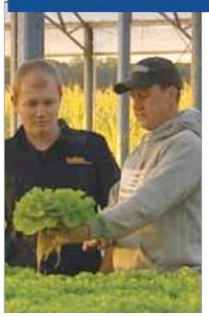
- 22 farmers have embraced a whole new way of thinking about farming for the future.
- Through the support of the project, farmers are now better prepared with greater knowledge on the effects of climate change on-farm and ways to integrate their farm systems, reduce inputs, reduce costs and mitigate against seasonal variations with better planning.
- Case studies featuring challenges faced on-farm by the participants were developed to assist the sharing of these experiences with the broader farming community.

> CASINO COMMUNITY GARDEN



- The Casino Community Garden has become a space for growing, learning and sharing, with numerous community groups involved.
- The garden's abundant harvest is already helping support the local soup kitchen and the youth cafe in Evans Head.
- A series of cooking classes were hosted during the project using the produce to improve knowledge about fresh healthy eating.
- The garden design features private allotments and demonstration areas.

> REGION DISTRIBUTION MODEL



- Distribution is a critical part of getting food from local farms into communities. Support was given to fast track the implementation of localised intra-region food distribution models.
- Commercial operator Fruitos delivered one of the distribution projects that has increased the volume of local food sourced from local producers.
- Fruitos reported an increase of 75% of local food sales since taking part in the project.

> KYOGLE SEEDS OF KNOWLEDGE



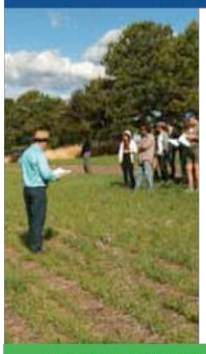
- The happy, smiling faces of Mummulgum school children say it all. Eight community gardens (six at school sites) have been established across the Kyogle Local Government Area.
- Garden projects have included installation of irrigation to a shade house, establishment of raised garden beds, fruit orchards and bush food areas.
- Education programs were hosted at the Community Centre and the local Youth Centre targeting growing and preparing nutritional seasonal food.
- Sustainable horticultural training was offered to parents of students enrolled in partner schools so they can assist both teachers and students in their new outdoor food garden classrooms.

> SUSTAIN FOOD & NRFL WEBSITES



- www.sustainfood.com.au and www.northernriversfoodlinks.com.au have kept the region up to speed 24/7 on what's happening with local food. With a combined monthly average of unique visitation of 2,350 that means there has been more than 56,000 people keeping track of the project.
- 195 local food producers have registered on sustain food, making it easier to find food grown in the Northern Rivers.
- More than 1500 subscribers to the NRFL newsletter over an 18 month period received regular updates on the project.

> SOFTER FARMING METHODS



- Based at Mallanganee, Mara Seeds is a certified organic farm and is a best practice example of soft farming methods.
- This project included large scale input trials testing the viability and effectiveness of chicken manure, fertiliser, compost, liquids and pellet manure on soil biology, soil chemistry and nutrient retention properties.
- An educational field day held in July 2011 was a huge success, with over 100 farmers attending.
- The trial results will assist on farm decision making about the cost of inputs, effects of soil health and yields in the years to come.

> LOCAL GOVERNMENT RESOURCE KIT



- Across the region, Councils have worked together to develop local food policy, procedures and practices to deal with emerging issues and opportunities associated with food security.
- 5 key strategic policies have been developed and are being implemented by the 7 participating Council's.
- The production of this kit demonstrates that Councils can successfully operate as both a regulator and facilitator of food security.

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> MULLUMBIMBY COMMUNITY GARDEN



- Close to the heart of the town centre, the community garden at Mullumbimby is more popular than ever, with the 2 hectare site transformed into a much loved community asset.
- The Village Showcase funding has enabled better accessibility to the site for all of the community, including all weather road access.
- Interpretive signage aimed at communicating key food-growing information, has been developed and goes hand in hand with the local food growing guide.
- New annual Local Food Festival in Mullumbimby saw 2000 plus visitors visit this regional showcase.

> BALLINA COMMUNITY GARDEN



- Ballina Community Garden has come along in leaps and bounds with the help of a fabulous group of more than 50 hardworking volunteers.
- The group's aim is to encourage sustainable organic gardening practices and community knowledge about growing and eating local food.
- The garden design has a strong focus on social inclusion with disability areas, food security training and school learning programs.

> MARKETING CAMPAIGN



- The opportunity to inform consumers and introduce a 'local food' priority to the region has been supported by four major marketing campaigns, each reaching more than 450,000 residents.
- The marketing campaigns were supported by skill building activities in shopping centres and at major events.
- The monthly local food page in seven community papers, and over 40 media stories and radio interviews has provided the community with project information. The project has also attracted national media coverage.
- A special news feature was filmed and went to air over 3 nights as part of NBN's 6pm news program.
- 2 Community Service Announcements were produced and aired by NBN.
- 5,000 NRFL brochures have been distributed throughout the region.
- 1,700 people have been involved in project events, launches and field days.

> TWEED LOCAL FOOD SYSTEMS



In the Tweed, local food is fast becoming a way of life with a series of projects contributing to the movement.

- The Stokers Siding Community Garden, located at the local primary school is a much loved project supporting community learning opportunities and making a contribution to village sustainability.
- For the residents at RSL Care Darlington, their new community garden has every-one enjoying the opportunity to grow their own fresh produce and share their food knowledge and connect socially.
- The food garden at the Salvation Army's Banora Point complex is an educational asset for the local school community, as well as a kitchen garden for the Salvos.
- The community of Burringbar have upgraded their community hall kitchen facilities to commercial grade, allowing it to become a community hub, where food knowledge and sharing is abundant.

> INTRA-REGION DISTRIBUTION MODEL



- This intra-region approach to distribution is reducing the food miles associated with three key Northern Rivers Food lines – avocados, stone fruit and macadamias.
- The project has the House With No Steps working with a number of major retailers to get food from the farm to the consumer-quicker and over a shorter distance.
- A White Paper has been developed profiling model outcomes, identifying future opportunities and documenting collaborative results created by each of the distribution models being progressed through the Northern Rivers Food Links Project.

> LANDSHARE IN THE NORTHERN RIVERS



- 80 people in the Northern Rivers have registered on Landshare Australia, a web based landholder and grower matching tool developed through the Northern Rivers Food Links Project.
- The website provides an avenue for people with underutilised land to register 'land to offer' as a way of encouraging an increase in local food production and often reaping the benefits of food supply in the process.
- For growers, the website has given them the opportunity to 'find land' suitable for growing their own food, where this would otherwise be a dream out of reach.
- The project has attracted national media attention as an innovative way of increasing the production of local food and giving people options on their pathway to more sustainable living

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Background to and objectives of the project

The Northern Rivers region is well placed to enhance the development of a local food economy and establish strategies to 'future proof' our urban communities against the rising costs associated with food supply.

The NRFL project has enhanced community resilience to climate change and peak oil impacts by establishing networks to keep food affordable and accessible and tapping into local production capabilities. The project has increased the awareness of Northern Rivers residents on the wide-ranging benefits of how to grow food sustainably, to ask for and consume locally grown food.

Project Aims

Northern Rivers Food Links sought to:

- Mitigate climate change impacts associated with food production and distribution by:
    - Addressing distribution inefficiencies that result in unnecessary 'food miles' for locally produced food.
    - Supporting take-up of more sustainable food production practices with particular emphasis on farming inputs, land-use management in a changing climate and off-farm environmental impacts.

- Strengthen community resilience to climate change and peak oil impacts by:
    - Reducing reliance on highly centralised food supply chains.
    - Creating a local food economy built on strong links between the regions food producers, distributors, retailers and consumers.

Project Objectives

The project sought to achieve the following:

- Enhancing the skills and tools of local government staff in the Northern Rivers to support the development of the local food supply network.

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- Enhancing community education on links between sustainability and buying food locally.
- Raising awareness of the community and businesses on how to improve soil health through increased organic waste recycling.
- Reducing organic waste to landfill by encouraging at source composting.
- Enhancing community food knowledge and healthy lifestyles by increasing access to and awareness of, fresh local food.
- Supporting a reduction of transportation costs and greenhouse gas emissions by shortening the food supply and distribution system in the Northern Rivers.
- Increasing community resilience to potential future food shortages by reconnecting urban communities with regional food production.
- Strengthening the Northern Rivers local economy through the development of a sustainable (viable) food supply system.

Governance

The scale of the project, and the involvement of the NSW Environmental Trust, 7 local Councils plus the local water authority, required a robust governance structure, including an independent Project Management Team.

All 7 Councils and Rous Water were represented on the Steering Committee, as was the NSW Environmental Trust. The range of stakeholders interested in the project throughout the region was harnessed through Reference Groups who provided content, expertise, made recommendations on local and regional project engagements and became NRFL ambassadors. An independent monitoring and evaluation consultancy was engaged to provide feedback on the performance and outcomes of the project.

The 7 local Councils and local water authority responsible for administering the project were:

- Ballina Shire Council
- Byron Shire Council
- Clarence Valley Council (as the lead Council)
- Kyogle Council
- Lismore City Council
- Richmond Valley Council
- Rous Water
- Tweed Shire Council

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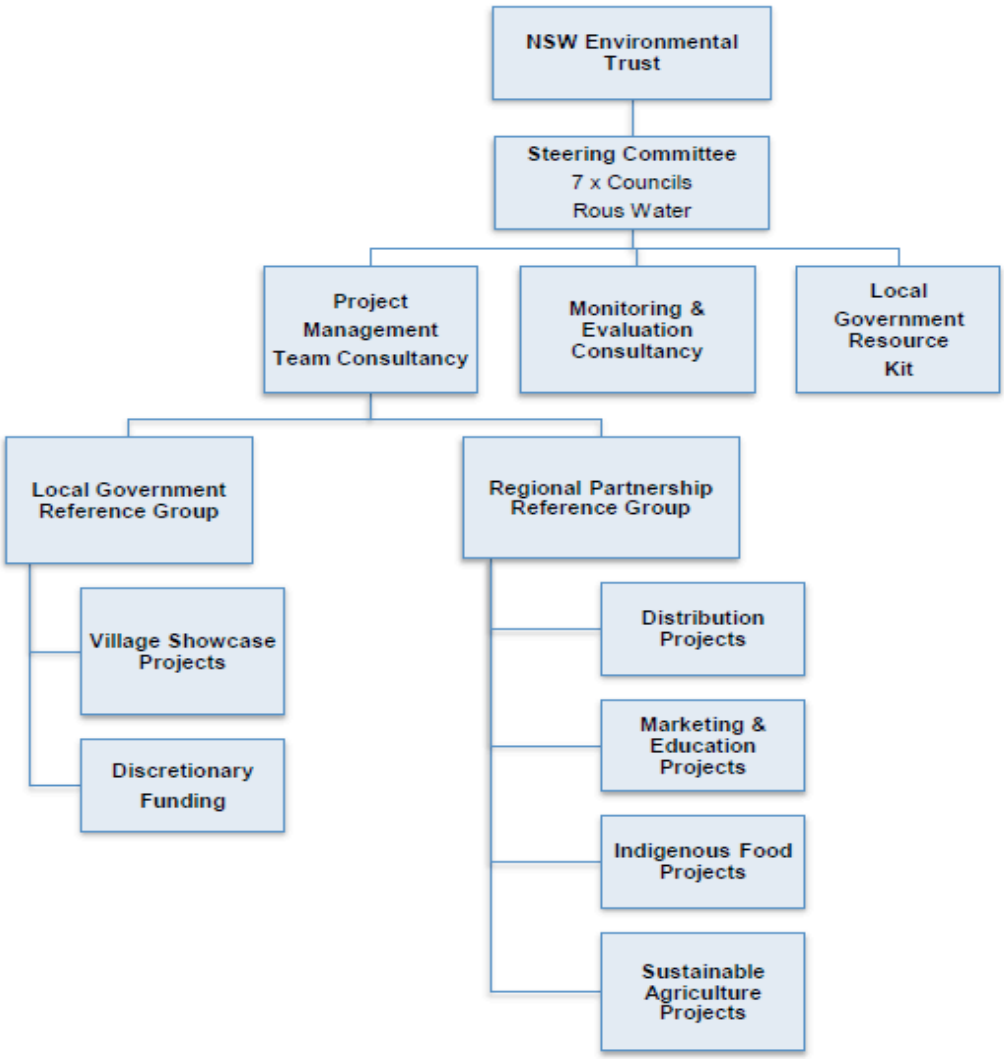


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The Project Management Team was responsible for the operational aspect of the project, and consisted of 4 members (3.5 Full Time Contractors) in the following roles:

- Project Manager
- Project Administrator
- Regional Project Officer
- Village Showcase Coordinator

The NRFL Governance arrangements of the Northern Rivers Food Links project are further summarised in the table below:



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Key Focus Areas

Production, distribution and consumption themes were seen as being equally important to be addressed to meet the project's environmental aims of mitigating and adapting to climate change. The themes were further divided into seven key focus areas. These focus areas were used to drive project identification and delivery. They are:



1. ***Village Showcase***
   The Village Showcase projects have enhanced local food chain systems and food security for the community at a grassroots level. They were community identified and implemented activities.

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2. ***Food Production and Distribution in Indigenous Communities***
   This project supported an Aboriginal community to begin food production, increase access to fresh, healthy foods and reduce reliance on the need for food to travel distances to get to their community.

3. ***Marketing and Education***
   The Marketing and Education program introduced strategies to improve the knowledge and skills of consumers, producers and distributors in the region. There was a focus on changing behaviours not beliefs.

4. ***Distribution***
   These projects delivered innovative, co-ordinated initiatives with the intent of trialing models that could decentralize and localise the food supply and distribution system throughout the region.

5. ***Local Government Resource Kit***
   This was the development and implementation of food related policy, procedures and practices to deal with emerging issues associated with food production within the seven local government areas.

6. ***Sustainable Agriculture***
   Through on-farm initiatives, this project added value to services and programs already being delivered in the region, whilst addressing opportunities for primary producers to make their farms more financially and environmentally sustainable.

7. ***Discretionary***
   The Discretionary funds were allocated to support activities, which may have not received funding or provided existing Local Project Teams with additional funding to enhance their outcomes.

   Therefore, projects funded through the Discretionary Budget have been reported within six Key Focus Area categories of:

   1. Village Showcase Projects
   2. Food Production and Distribution in Indigenous Communities
   3. Marketing and Education Program
   4. Distribution Projects
   5. Local Government Resource Kit
   6. Sustainable Agriculture Projects

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Project Activities Undertaken

Business Plan Milestones

The following project milestone table outlines the approved project activities. Implementation of the project was divided into the following stages:

- Establishing the project
- Raising awareness about the project
- Delivering focus areas
- Expanding awareness of the project
- Evaluating the outcomes of the project
- Final reporting (both from Local Project Teams and the overarching project report)

Of the 44 scheduled activities listed below, 1 was not achieved. A modified approach was employed for this milestone. This represents a 98% success rate for the approved project activities undertaken.

Milestone	Methodology Employed	Progress	Success
Appoint Steering Committee	Constitution, Council General Management approval for membership	Completed	✓
Advertise for Project Manager	Competitive tender process	Completed	✓
Appoint Project Manager	Contract executed	Completed	✓

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Milestone	Methodology Employed	Progress	Success
Partnership agreement signed	Council General Manager meeting with all 7 Northern Rivers Councils	Completed	✓
Advertise for Project Officers	Competitive tender process	Completed	✓
Project Inception Meeting	Steering Committee meeting	Completed	✓
Seek EOIs for Reference Groups	Targeted invitation, Expression of interest proforma	Completed	✓
Commence development of website	Website brief, Request for quotations, Contract and implementation by successful website contractor	Completed	✓
Conduct Official Launch	7 Launches in each Local Government Area	Completed	✓
Recruit and appoint Reference Groups	Selection by Steering Committee	Completed	✓
Appoint Project Officers	Contract executed	Completed	✓
Commence development of Local Government Resource Kit	Development of Scoping Brief	Completed	✓
Commence development of marketing strategy	Consumer Research survey throughout the Northern Rivers region	Completed	✓
Conduct Inception meetings of LGA Reference Groups	Individual briefings, Communications training	Completed	✓
Conduct inception meeting of Regional Partnership Reference Group	As above	Completed	✓

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Milestone	Methodology Employed	Progress	Success
Seek proposals for Innovative Distribution Models	Expression of interest, individual meetings, project plan and budget, endorsement Steering Committee and Regional Partnership Reference Group, Contract	Completed	✓
Seek proposals for Virtual Marketplace	As Above	Completed	✓
Present Milestone 1 Report to the Trust	Information collection and collation for all projects	Completed	✓
Launch website	Northernriversfoodlinks.com.au website launched May 2010 sustainfood.com.au: media, project partner and community presence through invitational event	Completed	✓
Conduct Focus Group on Sustainable Agriculture to identify way forward	Peer Review Panel established. Process ratified by the Regional Partnership Reference Group	Completed	✓
Seek EOIs for Village Showcase Projects	Advertisements, E-food link, internal communication, information sessions	Completed	✓
Develop concepts for Indigenous Food Production Projects	Scoping and individual liaison with indigenous organisations, endorsement Indigenous Elders, Steering Committee and Regional Partnership Reference Group, Contract	Completed	✓
Seek EOIs from organisations and individuals or combinations for delivery of Sustainable Agriculture project	Advertisements, E-food link, internal communication, information sessions	Completed	✓

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Milestone	Methodology Employed	Progress	Success
Commence development of innovative distribution models	E-food link, internal communication, network establishment	Completed	✓
Complete Marketing Strategy	Research survey of Northern Rivers residents, media articles, shopping basket comparison, development of four targeted marketing campaigns	Completed	✓
Implement Marketing Project	Four marketing campaigns established for implementation throughout the project, the establishment of the sustainfood.com.au and northernriversfoodlinks.com.au websites	Completed	✓
Commence Sustainable Farming Agriculture projects	4 successful sustainable agriculture funding recipients endorsed by the Steering Committee and Regional Partnership Reference Group, contracts exchanged	Completed	✓
Approve and commence Village Showcase Projects	7 Village Showcase funding recipients endorsed by the Steering Committee and Local Government Reference Group, contracts exchanged	Completed	✓
Commence Indigenous Food Production Projects	Steering Committee endorsement, contracts offered	Completed	✓
Present Milestone 2 Report to the Trust	Information collection and collation for all projects	Completed	✓

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Milestone	Methodology Employed	Progress	Success
Commence Skilling the Community	Expression of interest, project plan and budget, endorsement Steering Committee and Regional Partnership Reference Group, Contract	Completed	✓
Commence training and workshops on LGA Resource Kit	Local Government Area scoping workshop	Completed	✓
Seek EOIs for Discretionary Projects	-	Not Completed	Alternate strategy employed
Launch Virtual Marketplace	The My Food App project developed through	Completed	✓
Approve Discretionary Projects	-	Completed	✓
Conduct progress review of all project activities	Milestone reports/local project team site visits	Completed	✓
Present Milestone Report 3 (Progress Report) to the Trust	Information collection and collation from all projects	Completed	✓
Conduct Discretionary Projects	5 successful recipients sought Discretionary funding. Either top up funding was allocated to existing projects or new projects meeting further outcomes were engaged	Completed	✓

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Milestone	Methodology Employed	Progress	Success
Review Business Plan	Business Plan reviewed and updated with: o Gantt Chart o Budget o Milestone timetable	Completed	✓
Conduct progress review of all project activities	Progress reports submitted from Local Project Teams	Completed	✓
Project Milestone Report 4	Information collection and collation for all projects	Completed	✓
Conduct progress review of all project activities	Final reports submitted from Local Project Teams	Completed	✓
Project Milestone Report 5	Information collection and collation for all projects	Completed	✓
Project Milestone Report 6 (Final Report)	Information collection and collation for all projects	Completed	✓

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Activity Summary

Project Activities

The complex nature of the project meant the ability to achieve the immediate, intermediate and ultimate environmental outcomes had to be addressed in a tiered approach.

The following diagram outlines how the project activities have been delivered over 3 tiers:

1. NRFL project as a whole
2. The projects Key Focus Areas
3. The Local Project Teams responsible for delivering on-ground projects



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This multifaceted process achieved numerous outcomes, which include the following:

- 130 plus on ground projects delivered
- 524 partnerships formed
- 16,674 people directly involved
- 1297 people attending a wide range of educational training and workshops
- 922 people involved with community gardens
- Reduction in Co2 with in trialed project models
- Shortened supply chain within trialed project models

Focus Area Activities

The strategies to strengthen community resilience to the impacts of climate change in the Northern Rivers has been achieved through the development and strengthening connections between local food producers, distributors, retailers, consumers, the community, and through the delivery of the Key Focus Areas. The major achievements and outcomes of each project Key Focus Area are listed in the Key Focus Area Reports below.

The information provided in the Key Focus Area Reports was obtained through the receipt and assessment of each of the Local Project Team final reports in November 2011. These final reports can be found at www.northernriversfoodlinks.com.au or can be viewed on the disc provided as an Appendix to this report.

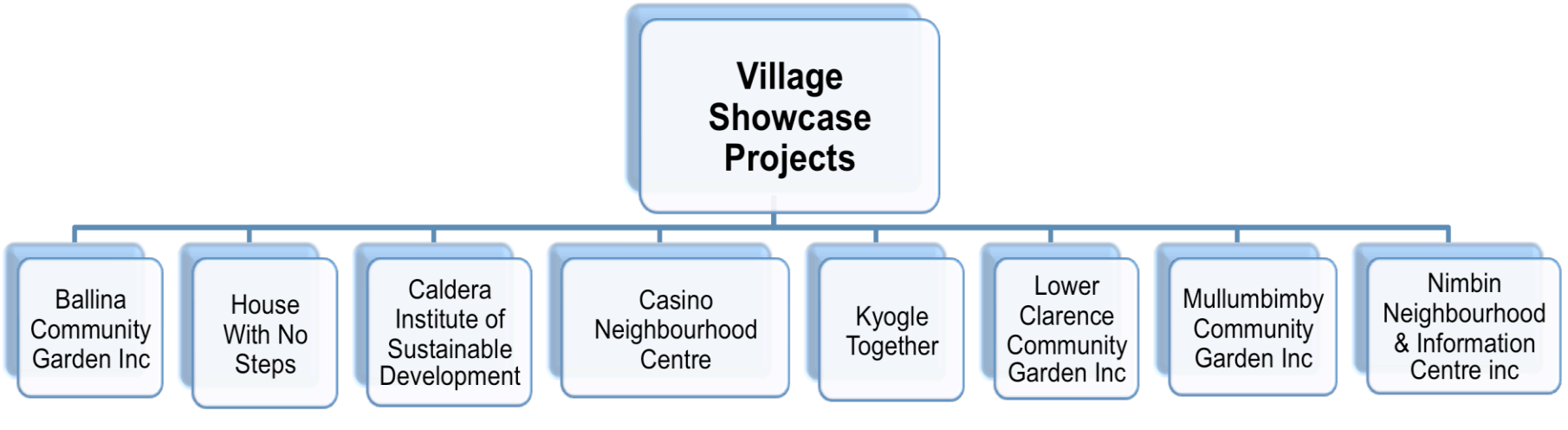
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Village Showcase Local Project Teams



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Village Showcase Key Focus Area Report

Focus Area Name	Summary of the Focus Area
Village Showcase Contractor list: ▪ Caldera Institute of Sustainable Development ▪ Ballina Community Garden Inc ▪ House with No Steps ▪ Kyogle Together ▪ Casino Neighbourhood Centre ▪ Mullumbimby Community Garden Inc ▪ Lower Clarence Community Garden Inc ▪ Nimbin Neighbourhood and Information Centre Inc **Financial Statement** Total Project Budget: **$357,200.00** Total Inkind/Cash Contributions: **$1,304,083.00**	The Village Showcase was developed in the business plan to support a whole of community approach to food security and food access challenges in the Northern Rivers. It was flexible enough to foster best practice approaches to projects, sharing of knowledge between towns and villages across the region, but was able to be localised to meet the needs of the specific Local Government Area's. The Village Showcase has resulted in major projects in each LGA. These projects have reflected the communities desire to support community gardens and build capacity at a grass roots level to enable more sustainable local food systems. Whilst the business plan specified duplication of project types was undesirable, the funding of numerous community gardens throughout the region has proven to be highly successful. Each community garden developed and implemented reflects the individual needs of communities involved and are vastly different in each Local Government Area. The Village Showcase approach facilitated broad community engagement; objective community needs analysis and shared visions to emerge. This enabled smaller projects to be grouped together under the umbrella of a larger Village Showcase project. Networking opportunities for Village Showcase project participants resulted in a strengthened network of local community groups, farmers markets, community gardens, community kitchens, schools and other education providers. This network will be fundamental beyond this project, ensuring continued community commitment to food security in the Northern Rivers.

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Evaluation – Outcomes

The Village Showcase focus area has supported a diverse range of community driven projects.

- 10,185 people have been engaged through the project.
- 117 organisations have been directly involved.
- A total of 17 community gardens received assistance through the project. The gardens are a combination of school, and community asset gardens.
- 5-community food focussed events, such as farmer's feasts and community picnics have been delivered across the region.
- NRFL support enabled the establishment of the Blue Knob farmers market, resulting in an average of 593 kg of local produce being sold at the market per week.
- A community grain mill was purchased. The resulting consumer demand for fresh grain has driven an increase of grain being grown in the region, with 493 kg being milled in 8 months.
- 92 workshops encompassing growing and cooking local food, composting and worm farming have been provided to the community
- The upgrade of the Burringbar community hall kitchen has increased the number and the range of local food producers accessing this asset.
- Approximately 8.5 hectares of land is now dedicated to community gardening activities.
- 1149 people are directly involved with these community gardens with 25 socially disadvantaged groups utilising the community gardens.
- 485 school students have participated in the gardens and workshops.

Objective	Tick
Enhance the skills and tools of local government staff in the Northern Rivers to support the development of the local food supply network	✔
Enhance community education on links between sustainability and buying food locally	✔
Raise awareness of the community and businesses on how to improve soil health through increased organic waste recycling.	✔
Reduce organic waste to landfill by encouraging at source composting	✔
Enhance community food knowledge and healthy lifestyles by increasing access to and awareness of, fresh local food.	✔
Support a reduction of transportation costs and greenhouse gas emissions by shortening the food supply and distribution system in the Northern Rivers.	✔
Increase community resilience to potential future food shortages by reconnecting urban communities with regional food production.	✔

Stakeholders
Community Colleges
Farmers Markets
TAFE
Schools

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Visual Documentation



Yamba Community Garden was developed in the Clarence Valley. This amazing garden has been built by a passionate group of volunteers. It demonstrates many different types of gardening methods, such as the wheelie bin gardens pictured above. The garden has become a social and educational hub for the community.



Ballina Community Garden has assisted with embedding sustainability in the region by providing a venue for sustainability education relating to local food and food security. The community has embraced the garden with 68 members involved, even before the official opening day.



Kyogle VS has delivered a disseminated project with the development of 6 school gardens, and 2 community gardens across the shire. This has increased access to fresh food for the communities involved, who also participated in workshops about growing and using local food.



The House with No Steps has developed a distribution hub supplying the community with local food 7 days a week. The Grocer has over 50 local farmers supplying their produce; with a mixture of fresh and value added produce. The community has embraced the Grocer, with over 21,000 customers in a 2-month period.

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The Nimbin Food Security VS was very innovative, delivering a solutions focused project. Including assistance to Blue Knob farmers market, community surveys and events and the purchase of a grain mill for the community.
"The project was highly successful and we have been please to work with the Foodlinks team" Nat Meyer, Nimbin Neighbourhood Centre Inc



Tweed VS project consisted of a number of elements that together help build an integrated community based approach to supporting, improving and promoting, local food sustainability and the food chain system. The elements included upgrading a community hall kitchen to commercial standard, school and community asset gardens, and an indigenous bush food garden.



The Richmond Valley Village Showcase delivered the Casino Community Garden. Community support and involvement in the garden has exceeded all expectations and the garden has become a hub for a broad spectrum of stakeholders. The harvest from the garden has been distributed to 6 emergency food relief services.



"Northern Rivers Food Links has assisted the Mullumbimby Community Garden in its evolution immensely. By upgrading and further developing basic infrastructure at the garden, we are now able to reach out to a far broader section of the community with our message of sustainability and empowerment."
Jeannette Martin, Mullumbimby Community Garden

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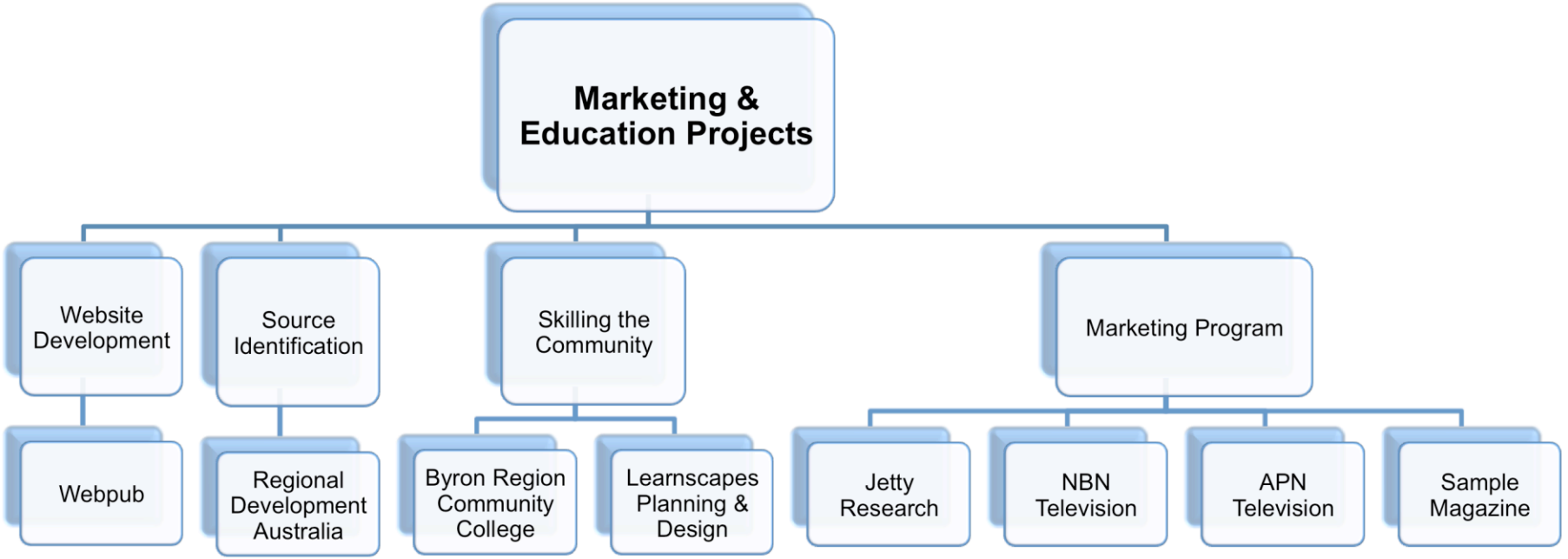
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Marketing and Education Local Project Teams & Contractors



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Marketing & Education Key Focus Area Report

Focus Area Name	Summary of the Focus Area
Marketing & Education Contractor list: ▪ Jetty Research ▪ Regional Development Australia ▪ Byron Region Community College ▪ Learnscapes ▪ Sample Magazine ▪ APN/Northern Star ▪ NBN Television ▪ Webpub **Financial Statement** **Total Project Budget: $300,600.00** **Total Inkind/Cash Contributions: $327,646.00**	The Marketing and Education Focus Area of the Northern Rivers Food Links Project was an intensive program of newspaper, magazine, television and radio media and web-based promotion complimented by significant participation in skilling workshops, demonstration events and shopping centre demonstrations to raise awareness of the benefits of local food production, distribution and consumption. Key actions were identified through the Northern Rivers Food Links business planning process including a marketing campaign (and consumer research), source identification, website development and skilling the community. Subsequently the following activities were implemented to influence consumer behaviour and attitudes towards local food: ▪ **Research of consumer attitudes** – a random telephone survey of 500 people (evenly distributed across the region) was conducted at the outset of the project and again upon project completion providing key benchmarking data and influencing the development of marketing messages. ▪ **A Marketing strategy** was developed to influence consumer behaviour and raise awareness of local food and food security issues, based on the social marketing foundations of 'make it fun, easy and popular.' The strategy also outlined key media requirements, support activities and implementation partners. ▪ **A series of 4 Marketing campaigns**; 'Grow Your Own Food 12 Week Challenge', 'Know Your Farmer-Know Your Food', 'Is it Local?, Is it grown in the Northern Rivers?' and 'Make it Markets' were promoted via all media. Marketing activity was further boosted by a monthly local food page editorial, various advertising, extensive editorial support and Community Services Announcements aired on television. ▪ **2 websites** were developed www.northernriversfoodlinks.com.au (a project information website) and www.sustainfood.com.au (a marketing, education, resources and directory website). ▪ **A source identification** program was developed and implemented in partnership with 85 retailers. ▪ **A skilling the community program** delivered 40 workshops across 7 local government locations and was further enhanced by demonstrations at local food events and a shopping centre education series.

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Outcomes

Skilling the community

- 40 community based skilling workshops/demonstrations were conducted across the region, attracting 582 participants over 17 topic areas, including: composting and worm farms, how to grow your own food, getting started in organic veggie growing, cooking and preserving local food and backyard chooks.
- Interactive skilling demonstration/displays were presented at 5 regional shopping centres and attracted 583 participants.
- 5 Local food events (with audiences of 10 – 200) showcased local food cooking demonstration, how to create edible gardens and featured sustainability speakers.

Source Identification

- 108 retailer assessments were undertaken with 85 retailers committing.
- 193 producers were added to the producer's database.
- 98 producers and 83 retailers participated in an attitudes survey in 2010.
- Data collected across the 83 retailers reflects a local food stock change from 5.58 to 6.92 average rating.
- Labelling with source identification was evaluated with a positive influence on sales across 4 retailers participating in the purchasing pilot program.

Campaigns

- The GYO campaign attracted 1012 registrations (equating to an average of 3000 participants) and allocation of 10,400 square meters of backyard gardens.

Website

- Northern Rivers Food Links website attracted 224, 175 hits (June 10 - Nov 11)
- Sustain Food attracted 118, 001 hits (Aug 10 – Nov 11)

Outputs

- Consumer attitudes and behaviours benchmarking data.
- Source Id Kit – signage, shelf wobblers, tips and hints, local food resources.
- 12 Week step by step guide to growing your own food in the Northern Rivers.

Objective	Tick
Enhance community education on links between sustainability and buying food locally	✓
Raise awareness of the community and businesses on how to improve soil health through increased organic waste recycling	✓
Reduce organic waste to landfill by encouraging at source composting	✓
Enhance community food knowledge and healthy lifestyles by increasing access to and awareness of fresh local food.	✓

Stakeholders

- North Coast Area Health Services
- Southern Cross University
- Community and Neighbourhood Centres
- Retailers
- Producers
- Consumers
- Trainers
- Media

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Visual Documentation



The Sustain Food Website www.sustainfood.com.au was launched on



Know your farmer, Know your food campaign attracted 140 producers to register their produce on Sustain Food (John Atkin – face of the campaign)



Grown Your Own Food 12 Week Challenge Campaign attracted over 1000 registrations



Source Identification program signage being used by retailers to promote Local Food choices

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Skilling the Community – Wadsy Worm Farm Workshop at Lismore



Skilling the Community – Composting Workshop at Nimbin



Local Food events featured cooking demonstrations using food from local producers and cooking food grown in your home kitchen



Skilling the community – Shopping Centre display captures 583 participants

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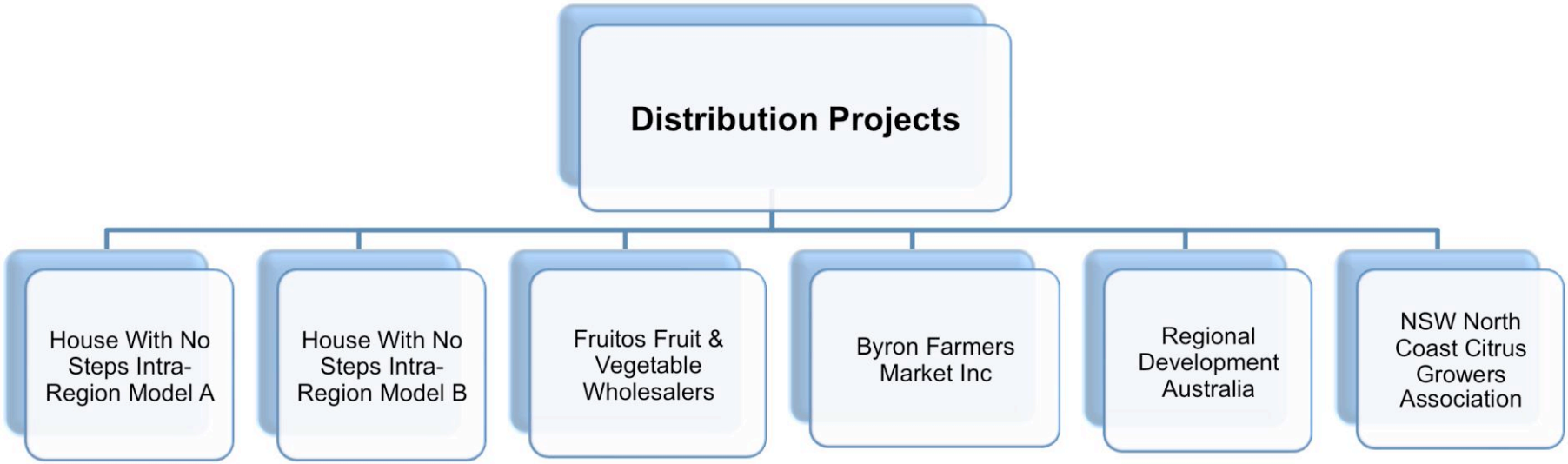
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Distribution Local Project Teams



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Distribution Projects Key Focus Area Report

Focus Area Name	Summary of the Focus Area
Distribution Projects Contractor list: ▪ House With No Steps ▪ Fruitos Fruit & Vegetable Wholesalers ▪ NSW North Coast Citrus Growers Association ▪ Regional Development Australia ▪ Byron Farmers Markets **Financial Statement** **Total Project Budget: $160,000.00** **Total Inkind/Cash Contributions: $130,000.00**	The Northern Rivers Food Links Business Plan identified inefficient food distribution systems as an important issue in meeting food security goals. The plan identified a large proportion of food grown in the Northern Rivers was being sent outside of the region to major metropolitan distribution centres, and then re-imported for sale through various outlets. In an attempt to curb this pattern, and shorten the supply chain a range of intra-region distribution models were trialled. They were: ▪ **House With No Steps Intra-region distribution model** – this project targeted larger retail chains and had a goal to get "ten lines off road", however, both supply and risk challenges reduced this target to three key lines; Avocados, Stone Fruit and Macadamia. HWNS had existing central packing facilitites necessary to act as a distribution hub, and no investment in infrastructure was required. However the model identified a lack of capacity in attracting local food supply and an inability to enter into a financial arrangement with growers (which proved integral to the model). This resulted in a reduction of contractor funds and major project modifications. ▪ **Fruitos Wholesale Fruit & Vegetables Intra-region distribution model** – with existing trucks and some 200+ food service clients, this model was based on a simple replacement goal – replace like product bought from Brisbane/Sydney markets with locally grown produce. ▪ **NSW North Coast Citrus Growers Produce/Industry model** – a cluster of 15 citrus growers trialled the pooling of second grade citrus through a direct delivery model (farmer to food service). ▪ **A Distribution White Paper** was prepared by an independent consultant. This was commissioned in direct response to the complexity and challenges faced by the contractors attempting to implement the above models. ▪ **MyFood Northern Rivers Phone App (Virtual Marketplace)** – was the development of an internet tool to connect consumers to local food. ▪ **Northern Rivers Farmers Market Network** – establishment a professional development network for farmers markets operators.

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Challenges

- Underestimation of the strength and complexity of existing (long-held) grower supply contracts with metropolitan agents. Farmers were forced to make an 'all or nothing' business decision. This proved too high a risk for local farmers.
- Farmers respond to price as highest priority. Out of region markets offering higher price point resulted in major challenges for local distributors to get consistent and competitively priced supply.

Outcomes

- NSW North Coast Citrus Growers established a distribution model with 35 new customers over a 7 month period, reporting the following outcomes:
  - 450kg of citrus delivered per week to local customers
  - Reduction in produce transport of 270km per week, saving 74kg of CO2 per week
  - Financial savings of $1250 in transport costs and $5,301 in packaging costs
- House with No Steps established supply to 4 IGA stores, 2 fruit shops and Fruitos resulting in 76.6 tonne of produce being retained for the local market. The project has engaged 20 local producers with an estimated monthly savings of 250km in travel.
- Fruitos model reported the following results:
  - 23.86 tonne of produce per month replaced with local produce, compared with 1.5 tonne prior to the trial
  - 41 new local farmers/growers, with 23 lines of local produce secured
  - 740km per month travelled instead of 18,592km per month prior to trial
  - 80 restaurants uptake of the 'local produce' awareness point of sale.
- 671 downloads of the Virtual marketplace MyFood NR phone app and 303 businesses/organisations registered.
- 47 Northern Rivers Farmers Markets organisers met to further regional marketing initiatives.

Objective	Tick
Support a reduction of transportation costs and greenhouse gas emissions by shortening the food supply and distribution system in the Northern Rivers.	✓
Increase community resilience to potential future food shortages by reconnecting urban communities with regional food production.	✓
Strengthen the Northern Rivers local economy through the development of a sustainable (viable) food supply system.	✓

Stakeholders

- Local food producers
- Local retailers and restaurants
- Local media
- Farmers Markets
- Northern Rivers Food
- NSW Trade & Investment

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Visual Documentation



The Fruitos team ready for action (photo taken after marketing development session with NRFL PMT)



Fruitos with a local lettuce grower picking up stock.



North Coast Citrus Growers taking a load of limes to their local clients



Preparing local avocados for intra-region distribution at House with no Steps.

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Staff at House With No Step sorting produce for the intra-region distribution network.



Virutal Marketplace - MyFood Northern Rivers Phone App



Launch of the Virtual Marketplace MyFood Northern Rivers Phone App on 19 October 2011 with 160 people



The network of Farmers Market Stallholders and Market Managers from across the region attending the Jane Adams (Australian Farmers Market President) Marketing Workshop on 14 November 2011

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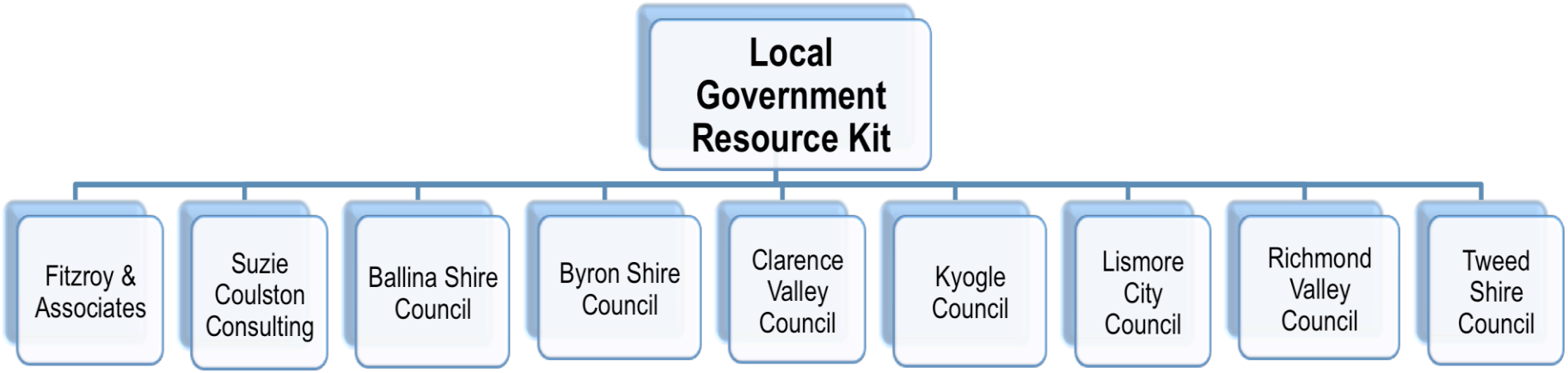
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Local Government Resource Kit Local Project Teams & Contractors



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Local Government Resource Kit Key Focus Area Report

Focus Area Name	Summary of the Focus Area
Local Government Resource Kit Contractor list: ▪ Lismore City Council ▪ Tweed Shire Council ▪ Clarence Valley Council ▪ Ballina Shire Council ▪ Byron Shire Council ▪ Richmond Valley Council ▪ Kyogle Council **Financial Statement** Total Project Budget **$42,805** Total Inkind/Cash Contributions **$15,045**	The business plan identified the need for Councils across the region to be supported and trained with the development and implementation of food related policy, procedures and practices to deal with emerging issues associated with food production. The project resulted in the development of the following policy templates: ▪ Community Gardens ▪ Farmers Markets ▪ Edible Streetscapes ▪ Road Side Stalls ▪ Sustainable Catering Resources were also developed including: ▪ Community/customer self-assessment checklists ▪ Staff checklists ▪ Application forms ▪ Guidelines ▪ Resource lists To assist with training, a Food Security forum was run in each of the seven Local Government Areas (LGA) for Council staff and Councillors to ensure a comprehensive understanding of the range of challenges and opportunities in this emerging area. Further, five Councils moved to implementation phase, with projects that included: ▪ Endorsement of policy by Councillors ▪ Further training through tours of other LGA projects ▪ Amendments to Development Control Plans (DCP) ▪ Lodgement of Development Application (DA) for trial farmers markets

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Outcomes

- Five new policy templates developed for all 7 Councils in the Northern Rivers
- Ballina Shire Council identified a site for a Farmers Market in consultation with industry and community, and a six month trial has commenced
- Amendment to DCP for Council consideration in Richmond Valley Council. Once approved this planning tools will have the requirement for a two square metre per dwelling for multi-unit developments (in any workable combination of personal or communal) food garden plots. When adopted, this will make them a leader in this field in Australia.
- 40 hours of Tweed Shire Staff time given towards community garden fact finding. This resulted in the measurable change in staff attitude from an average of 5.8/10 to 7.4/10 in terms of the "need to establish community gardens".
- Amendment of Clarence Valley Council market garden has been endorsed by Council and is on public exhibition, a draft Community Garden Policy had been prepared and ready to go to Council for consideration. The commencement of a new farmers market at Yamba is now underway.

Local Government Land Use Planning for Food Security Forum

- 104 attendees across the 7 forums
- Equivalent of 172 hours of council staff spent in the forum sessions
- 21% of participants had been directly involved in the development of the template policies within this project
- 55% of the participants indicated that the forum had heightened their ability to make a personal contribution to progressing food security policy within their respective councils.
- 74% of the participants stated they had increased collaboration since January 2010 in the region in the area of Food Security or general sustainability projects.
- 37% had been involved in amending planning documents – LEP, DCP, Policy or plans
- 46% had fielded enquiries from the community and 42% from industry, on food security related projects.

Objective	Tick
Enhance the skills and tools of local government staff in the Northern Rivers to support the development of the local food supply network	✓

Stakeholder
Council Staff
Councillors
NOROC
General Managers Group
Steering Committee

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"The Local Government Resource Kit is an excellent example of Council regional collaboration and working together to develop policies, practices and procedures, to deal with emerging issues associated with food production now and well into the future. Councils have a role of facilitator, regulator and enabler and this kit will also serve as a resource for all Councils to enhance Council Local Environmental Plans (LEP) and associated Development Control Plans (DCP), to ensure a sustainable food future for the region."

Wayne Halcrow, Steering Committee Member Richmond Valley Council



Ballina Shire Council General Manager Paul Hickey, Councillor Sharon Cadwalder and Steering Committee representative Skye McNamara at the LGRK Forum



Graeme Williams, Steering Committee Representative from Byron Shire Council in front of the Council Chamber Food Garden



Councillors and Staff at the LGRK Forum at Kyogle Council

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Kellie Walters from the Environmental Trust and Rod Wright from Clarence Valley Council, both Steering Committee reps, discussing the benefits of local produce and the role Council's play in enabling innovation.



Tweed Shire Council staff hearing about the Ocean Shores Community Garden journey



Mayor of Lismore City Council cooking up a storm at the launch of the NRFL project.

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Food Production and Distribution in Indigenous Communities Local Project Team



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Food Production and Distribution in Indigenous Communities Key Focus Area Report

Focus Area Name	Summary of the Focus Area
Food Production and Distribution in Indigenous Communities Contractor list: ▪ Muli Muli Local Aboriginal Land Council **Financial Statement** Total Project Budget: **$50,000.00** Total Inkind/Cash Contributions: **$7,900.00**	The Northern Rivers Food Links business plan identified Food Production and Distribution in Indigenous Communities as a key focus area. The approach was to liaise with regional stakeholders who already managed indigenous projects for advice on approach to project development and implementation. Through this process a number of indigenous projects were assessed on their suitability for the NRFL project, this included site visits of the earmarked projects. This process identified the Muli Muli Community Garden project as having the greatest chance for success in the time frame that was available following the consultation and identification process. The goals of the Muli Muli Community Garden Project were to establish a substantial food garden for the community which would continue to produce food after the term of the project and would engage the community in education about healthy food, composting, organic growing and their potential to improve health in the community. Muli is a significantly disadvantaged community socio-economically, and there are high levels of diabetes and poor health. The Muli community is in a remote area and vegetables are trucked to Woodenbong at considerable expense making it impossible for the community to afford to purchase their fruit and vegetables from local stores. The intention of establishing the garden was to minimise travel of fresh food and to ensure that it is plentiful and freely available. The long-term goal is to create a food secure community with improved health.

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Evaluation – Qualitative and Quantitative

A major achievement of this project has been engagement of a wide cross-section of the community in various ways. The 2-hectare garden is now growing a wide range of fresh fruit and vegetables, as well as bush foods.

The harvest from the garden is being distributed throughout the community through a shared box lot model, substantially increasing the community's access to, and consumption of fresh food.

15 Woodenbong high school students from the community participated on a weekly basis in mini-workshops and to work in the garden laying paths, plantings seedlings, watering and mulching.

Formal workshops by Djanbung Permaculture Institute were delivered to community members on the following topics:

- Garden design
- Planning for crop rotation, no dig gardens, soil testing and using compost
- Raising seedlings from seed

Additional workshops were delivered at the community garden based on keeping native bees, with a hive provided to the garden, and a chicken coop also being built and integrated into the garden. Training was then provided on keeping chickens.

An additional outcome from the project has resulted in 2 community members extending their project management, reporting and governance skills by working side by side with the project officer.

Objective	Tick
Raise awareness of the community and businesses on how to improve soil health through increased organic waste recycling	✔
Reduce organic waste to landfill by encouraging at source composting	✔
Enhance community food knowledge and healthy lifestyles by increasing access to and awareness of, fresh local food	✔
Support a reduction of transportation costs and greenhouse gas emissions by shortening the food supply and distribution system in the Northern Rivers	✔
Increase community resilience to potential future food shortages by reconnecting urban communities with regional food production	✔

Stakeholders

Trade and Investment
TAFE
Permaculture Providers
Job Services Australia Providers

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Visual Documentation

"We would like to thank the Muli Muli Community for their hard work in building their garden so that it becomes an integral part of the Community in terms of food production, education of the younger population and enjoyment of growing their own fresh food."
John Hession, Kyogle Shire Council











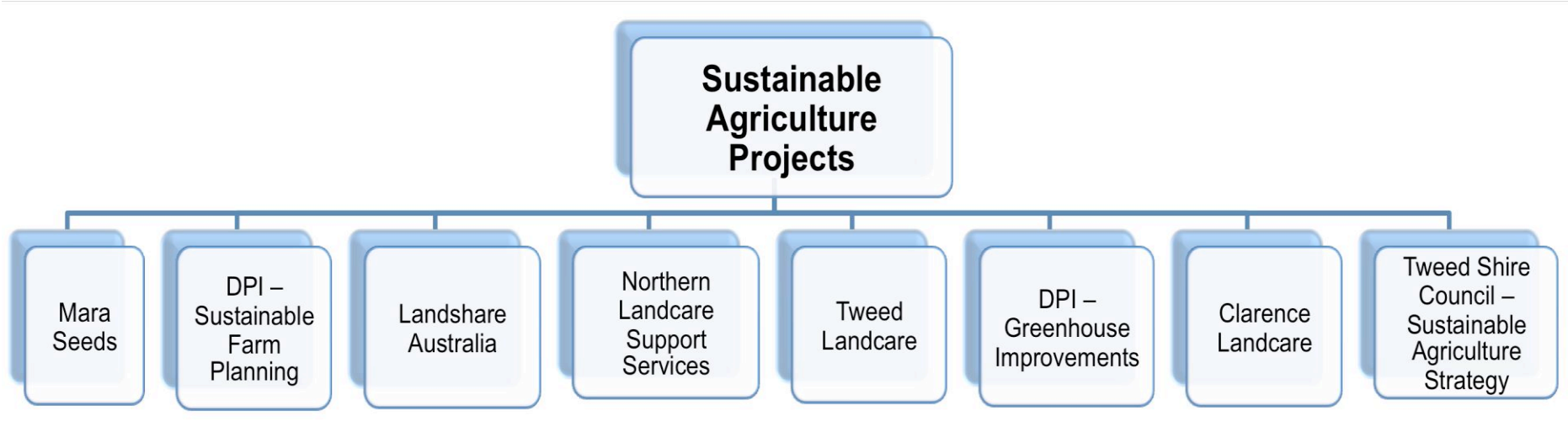
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Sustainable Agriculture Local Project Teams



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Sustainable Agriculture Key Focus Area Report

Focus Area Name	Summary of the Focus Area
Sustainable Agriculture Contractor list: ▪ Mara Seeds ▪ DPI – Sustainable Farm Planning ▪ Landshare Australia ▪ Northern Landcare Support Services ▪ Clarence Landcare ▪ Tweed Landcare ▪ DPI – Greenhouse improvements ▪ Tweed Shire Council **Financial Statement** **Total Project Budget: $244,500.00** **Total In-kind/Cash Contributions: $283,620.00**	The Sustainable Agriculture Projects have delivered on the aims of the NRFL Business Plan with 8 regional stakeholders delivering the following projects encompassing 52 on-ground landholder project sites. ▪ Softer farming methods – 6 input trial sites on 2 crop cycles over 35ha ▪ Sustainable farm planning – 22 farm enterprises across the region developed farm management plans ▪ Landshare Australia - 135 Northern Rivers based members to increase urban food production ▪ Biological farming methods into conventional systems – 4 farms running living mulch trials and on-farm compost production from waste materials ▪ Sustainable Farm grazing – 3 farms implementing major works improving water quality and soil health ▪ Soil Health for commercial food production – 17 farmers trialling compost applications under Northern Rivers conditions ▪ Greenhouse management improvements – 4 farm enterprises reducing the amount of chemical use in pest reduction through more sustainable methods and operational improvements. ▪ Sustainable Agriculture Strategy – engaging with over 40 local stakeholders directly in development The concepts of sustainable agriculture have been embraced by participants and shared with over 500 immediate stakeholder attendances at information sessions, farm field days and sustainable agriculture forums and a much wider audience of over 10,000 stakeholders if you include project newsletters and industry publications showcasing projects and their outcomes. The project's Sustainable Agriculture Forums were run over 4 regional locations and attracted over 200 participants demonstrating the importance of the project outcomes to a large number of farming enterprises and the importance of private enterprise, Government and community Landcare groups working together. A common challenge for all projects has been the project timeframe as compost application for soil health results are best monitored over a longer timeframe, however all participants are committed to the longer term monitoring and evaluation of their sites.

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Outcomes

- 275 participants attended Farm Field days across the region
- 23 farms participated in on-farm composting and compost application activities
- Farmer's attitudes towards compost have shifted in a positive direction throughout the project. However, revealed compost transport costs would impede widespread uptake.
- 200 participants attended the Sustainable Agriculture Forums across 4 locations
- 2 farms have made enough on-farm compost to carry them through the next 12 months.
- 32,000 Tweed LGA residents received targeted communications regarding the Tweed Sustainable Agriculture Strategy.
- Farm participants contributed over 2000 hours in-kind towards the project and other farm resources.
- Camphor Laurel was successfully shredded and used in on-farm compost with other farm waste products.
- 6 growers achieved a significant reduction in chemical use on-farm
- 2 growers improved water use

Surveys of field day participants for Sustainable grazing indicated the following;

- 80% of participants are more confident in conducting their own farm trials
- 80% of participants are more confident in using pasture cuts to measure pasture production

"Soil test analysis results of carbon, nitrogen and sulphur showed an encouraging and positive trend towards increased analysed parameters. However it is safe to assume (and supported by relevant scientific literature) that long term results and improved soil health with soil amendments such as those applied as part of this project should be used for at least 3-5 years", **Claire Masters**, Tweed Landcare Soil Health for Food Production project

"The project has developed the capacity of NSW DPI's local staff to offer specific advisory support to greenhouse growers on the North Coast. The participating growers have made strategic improvements to their farm operations as well as developing their skill and knowledge base in many aspects of greenhouse management", **Abigail Jenkins** – DPI, Improved Greenhouse Management.

Objective	Tick
Raise awareness of the community and businesses on how to improve soil health through increased waste recycling	✓
Reduce organic waste to landfill by encouraging at source composting	✓
Increase community resilience to potential future food shortages by reconnecting urban communities with regional food production	✓
Strengthen the Northern Rivers local economy through the development of a sustainable (viable) food system	✓

Stakeholders

- Food producers and rural landholders
- Department of Primary Industries
- Landcare groups
- Northern Rivers Catchment Management Authority
- TAFE

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Visual Documentation



Mara Seeds
Farm Field Day - 22 July
150 participants
at the trial site



Mara Seeds
Farm Field Day – 22 July
Compost production site



David Dvash's Greenhouse
at Mullumbimby
- new matting installed to
prevent pests



Sustainable Farm Planning
Participant, Derek Palmer
with his zucchini Crop

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Soil Health for food production – Tweed Landcare on site taking a soil sample for testing



Bob Jarman from Northern Landcare Support Services going the extra mile for monitoring and evaluation of on-farm compost development with the biological farming methods projects



Sustainable Grazing project site shot on Lawson's property showing the gravel watering point for cattle



Landshare Australia website attracts national attention (Phil Dudman with Natalie Barr on the Ch7 Sunrise program)

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Monitoring and Evaluation Plan

The monitoring and evaluation process was approached as a continuous improvement and learning process. The common experience with community driven projects is that monitoring and evaluation is seen as a largely bureaucratic exercise. Whilst at times, it has been onerous on the Local Project Teams; the data sets collected have ensured a rigorous and comprehensive analysis of the projects success.

Given the complexity of the project, monitoring and evaluation of progress has been conducted at both:

- The overall project level
- Project activity level.

Monitoring and Evaluation has been the joint responsibility of:

- The Steering Committee
- The Project Management Team
- Local Project Teams (Individuals and organisations involved in developing and delivering project activities).
- External monitoring and evaluation consultant

To reinforce and support the monitoring and evaluation process, the project contracted an 'independent' monitoring and evaluation consultancy firm who was primarily responsible for:

- The provision of advice to the project management team at the outset of the project on appropriate performance indicators based on the outcomes hierarchy for each project.
- The provision of feedback and suggestions to the Project Management Team on how to improve the functioning of the project.
- Direct feedback to the Steering Committee on the general effectiveness of project activities and the project management team.
- The measurement and reporting of the overall projects success based on the project activities achievements against the outcomes hierarchy.

Overall Project

The monitoring process was continual and incorporated key reporting points which integrated with the schedule of Milestone Reports required by the NSW Environmental Trust.

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Overall project monitoring and evaluation focused on identifying progress against the project Outcomes Hierarchy. The Project Management Team continuously monitored and evaluated the project activities and reported to the Steering Committee on progress, and, in conjunction with them, identified any remedial action required.

The following actions were taken by the Project Management Team to ensure monitoring and evaluation of the overall project was achieved:

- Communications training with Local Project Teams and Contractors
- Focus Area meetings with Local Project Teams
- Monthly Project Management Team meetings
- Risk assessment strategies and recommendations to the Steering Committee
- Regular Steering Committee and Reference Group meetings
- Monthly budget reconciliation with the lead Council
- Monthly status reports submitted to the Steering Committee
- Monthly budget reports submitted to the Steering Committee
- Midterm meetings with the lead Councils finance team

Project Activity

The Steering Committee and the Project Management Team established the standards and framework for monitoring and evaluation of each project activity. This detailed:

- Project communication protocols
- The timing and structure of project reports (including project milestones and projected outputs)
- The performance indicators to be reported against the Outcomes Hierarchy
- Suggested methods of obtaining the baseline and ongoing data.

The process of monitoring and evaluation varied according to the type of project activity but was consistently tied to the Outcomes Hierarchy, the Environmental Trust reporting milestones and the progress and final report template.

Reports to the Environmental Trust

Milestone Reports have been provided to the Trust on the following contracted dates:

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- 1st April 2010
- 1st June 2010
- 1st December 2010 (Progress Report)
- 1st May 2011
- 1st November 2011
- 5th March 2012 (Final Report)

Reports to the Steering Committee

The areas for reporting to the Steering Committee have been defined by the Project Management Team in conjunction with Steering Committee members. The reports included:

- Monthly budget report (with respect to committed expenditure, actual expenditure and the deficit/surplus);
- Status of the project and individual project activities;
- Issues report (including areas of concern, specific problems, and any action that needs to be taken by the Steering Committee); and
- Risk management report (which specified any changes to the major risks identified since the issues report and modification to the strategies put in place to manage them).

Reports to the Project Partners

Each Steering Committee member was responsible for providing regular reports to the Partners they represent (e.g General Managers, Councilors) in the form determined by the relevant Partner.

Reports to Reference Groups

The key stakeholders were represented on Reference Groups. The Reference Groups met on a regular basis and received detailed progress reports on the project activities.

Issues covered in the reports included:

- Status of the project and individual project activities; and
- Issues report (including areas of concern and specific problems)

Outputs of the monitoring and evaluation process

Through the rigorous management structure employed, high level outputs of the monitoring and evaluation function included:

- 2 comprehensive project monitoring reports

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- A comprehensive evaluations of schedule C
- An Outcomes Hierarchy Evaluation Report
- An Aims, Objectives, Outcomes and Learning report
- 2 consumer research surveys conducted, 500 Northern Rivers participants contacted for each survey
- Anecdote circles conducted with 16 participants
- An evaluation survey of 200 participants
- Progress and Final reports from Local Project Teams

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Partner Communication & Participation

The matrix below depicts the involvement of the following partners:

- Environmental Trust
- General Managers Groups
- 7 x Councils & Rous Water
- Reference Groups
- Contractors
- Local Project Teams
- Project Partners

Partner	Consists of	Project Participation
NSW Government	The NSW Environmental Trust	○ Attendance at project Steering Committee meetings ○ Regular correspondence with the Project Management Team & Steering Committee ○ Assessment of 4 milestone, 1 progress and 1 final report ○ 4 project grant payments to the lead council for Local Project Team funding
Local Government	Councilors, council General Managers & staff	○ Representing NRFL at numerous government, industry and project events ○ Representation and NRFL spokesperson at bi-annual regional meetings
	Steering Committee	○ Contract Management of the Project Management Team ○ Funds approval for all key initiative applicants ○ Attendance at 21 steering committee meetings

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Partner	Consists of	Project Participation
		○ Endorsement of 4 milestone, 1 progress and 1 final report submitted to the Environmental Trust ○ Attendance at 2 invitational Environmental Trust Urban Sustainability Project Cluster meetings ○ Representing NRFL at various industry and project events
Project Management Team	Project Management Team	○ Over 130 on-ground models being contract managed by the Project Management Team ○ Attendance at 21 steering committee meetings ○ Attendance at 2 invitational Environmental Trust Urban Sustainability Project Cluster meetings ○ Delivery of 4 milestone, 1 progress and 1 final report submitted to the Environmental Trust ○ Involvement in all aspects of Local Project Team, Contractor & Project Partner funding application recommendations ○ Preparation of monthly financial & progress reports to the Steering Committee
Reference Groups	Local Government & Regional Partnership Reference Group	○ Attendance at 7 Reference Group meetings hosted by the Project Management Team ○ Direct involvement in the application approval process for applicable on-ground initiatives
Contractors	Contractors to support the development, implementation & evaluation of the project	○ A comprehensive Communication and Marketing Resource Kit ○ Numerous project collateral development ○ 2 Monitoring & Evaluation assessments of the project

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Partner	Consists of	Project Participation
Local Project Teams	Community & Industry Groups engaged to deliver: ▪ Village Showcase Projects ▪ Sustainable Agriculture Projects ▪ Distribution Projects ▪ Food Production & Distribution Projects ▪ Skilling the Community ▪ (Discretionary Projects)	○ Local Project Teams commenced on-ground works in September 2010 resulting in over 130 on-ground projects in November 2012 ○ Regular reporting to the Project Management Team on activity progress ○ Numerous field days, events & training hosted & attended by the Local Project Teams ○ Project Communication Training with all key initiative Local Project Teams at the outset of funding ○ Final report and financial acquittal training provided towards the conclusion of Local Project Teams contracts. ○ Attendance at 4 project networking days ○ 7 Project Partner Newsletters have been sent to our contracted Local Project Teams between October 2010 – January 2012
Project Partners	▪ Media & Industry Groups engaged to deliver: ▪ Marketing & Education Program & Campaigns	○ 4 project media campaigns developed reaching 450,000 residents ○ 2 Community Service Announcements reaching 450,000 residents ○ Monthly 1 page features and editorials in the Northern Rivers leading newspapers reaching 300,000 residents ○ 2 websites with an average monthly unique visitation of 850 – 1,500

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Formal Communication

Agenda and Minutes and Associated Documentation distributed for each Steering Committee meeting
Focus Area Briefs were developed by the Project Management Team as a monitoring tool for each project activity
Discussion Papers were developed at the outset of project engagement
PowerPoint Presentations for each meeting
Monthly Budget Reports were submitted to the Steering Committee for review and comment

Informal Communication

Phone calls – A dedicated phones line was established at the outset of the project
Emails – A dedicated information email and individual Project Management Team emails were established at project commencement

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Stakeholder Engagement & Participation

The matrix below depicts the key stakeholders with an active interest in participating in the outcomes and outputs achieved through the project.

Stakeholder	Role in Project
Bundjalung Elders Council	○ Consultation regarding Indigenous project, endorsement for project selection
Chambers of Commerce	○ E-blast recipients ○ Guest speaker at Chamber functions across the region ○ Distribution of information to their members
Coffs Harbour Food Futures	○ E-blast recipient ○ Meetings to update on project and share resources ○ Cluster meeting interaction
Community Colleges	○ Project delivery of skilling within Marketing and Education focus area
Department of Education and Training	○ Engaged through their participation in Sustain Northern Rivers – quarterly project briefing ○ Hosted the SUSS forum – NRFL ran teaching sessions
Department of Environment and Climate Change (DECC)	○ Steering Committee representatives ○ Participated in filming of the project documentary ○ Cluster meetings ○ Review and assessment of all progress reports and final report

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Stakeholder	Role in Project
	○ Mentor role to the lead council and project management team
Department of Primary Industries (DPI) (A part of the Department of Industry and Investment)	○ Project delivery of sustainable agriculture
Department of State and Regional Development (A part of Industry and Investment NSW)	○ Member of the regional partnership reference group ○ Attended functions ○ Co-funded i-phone app (Virtual marketplace)
Farmers Markets	○ Project recipients - farmers market network ○ Participated in media campaign ○ Participated in TVC production
Fish Coops	○ Initial consultation during business planning phase ○ Presented project concepts for consideration
Groundswell	○ Shared resources ○ Cluster meeting interaction
Horticulture and beef producers	○ Project delivery of sustainable agriculture projects ○ Participants in Sustainable Agriculture events and field days
Illawarra Biodiversity and Food Project	○ Share resources ○ Cluster meeting interaction

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Stakeholder	Role in Project
Job Services Australia Providers	○ None
Landcare	○ Project delivery – sustainable agriculture ○ Participants in Sustainable Agriculture events and field days ○ Regional Partnership Reference Group members
Local Employment Coordinator	○ Quarterly briefings on progress
Mainstream Retailers	○ Project participants – Source Identification
Major food processors (eg NORCO, Northern Rivers Meat Company, Sunnybrand Chickens)	○ Regional Partnership Reference Group members ○ e-blast recipients
North Coast Area Health Service (NCAHS)	○ Regional Partnership Reference Group members ○ e-blast recipients ○ Co-funded sustainfood website ○ Members of SNR – quarterly project updates
North Coast Environment Council	○ None
North East Waste Forum	○ Provided with support with media opportunities ○ e-blast recipient

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Stakeholder	Role in Project
Northern Rivers Catchment Management Authority	○ Sustainable Agriculture events and field days ○ e-blast recipient
Northern Rivers Food (auspiced by Regional Development Australia)	○ Consultation with staff and board ○ Co-development of website ○ e-blast recipient
NR Social Development Council	○ Members of SNR – quarterly project updates
Permaculture Training Providers	○ Project delivery – Indigenous Project, Sustainable Agriculture projects, village showcase projects, skilling within marketing and education focus area ○ e-blast recipient
Rainbow Region Community Farms Inc and other Community Farms	○ Project participant – Farmers market project
Regional Development Australia	○ Project delivery – source identification, virtual marketplace, distribution projects ○ e-blast recipients ○ Events
Rural Financial Counselling Service	○ Project briefings from PMT
Southern Cross University	○ Members of SNR – quarterly project updates ○ Member of Regional Partnership Reference Group

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Stakeholder	Role in Project
Specialist Retailers	○ Project delivery – source identification, distribution projects ○ e-blast recipients
Sustain Northern Rivers	○ Major partner, project delivery of website: sustainfood.com.au ○ Will play lead role in future roll out of food security projects in the region.
TAFE	○ Members of SNR – quarterly project updates
Tweed Richmond Organic Producers Organisation (TROPO)	○ e-blast recipient ○ Requested to be on the Regional Partnership Reference Group (declined)
Value added food producers	○ e-blast recipients ○ Project delivery – catering of events across the region
Youth Environment Society	○ Members of SNR – quarterly project updates ○ Ran the SUSS forum – NRFL ran teaching sessions
Community members (regional and national)	○ 1500 people are registered on the Northern Rivers Food Links database. ○ Twenty-Five E-Food Link Newsletters have been sent to recipients on the Northern Rivers Food Links database between March 2012 and January 2012. ○ In excess of 1700 attendees at project events, workshops and field days ○ 5000 project brochures distributed throughout the region ○ Monthly project media via television and newspaper reaching 300,000 residents locally and a further 150,000 out of region

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Stakeholder Communication Tools

Website (www.nothernriversfoodlinks.com.au)
The project website was live as of the 12th of May 2010. It communicated information about the project to residents of the northern rivers. It also supplied fact sheets; applications and information sheets to the community.
The website is now archived, but outlines the projects outcomes including the final reports for each Local Project Team and the overarching NRFL final report.

Website (www.sustainfood.com.au)
The Sustainfood website was launched on the 6th August 2010. It communicates information about the local food network within the Northern Rivers region including: a comprehensive producers database, local food initiatives, information on growing, preserving and cooking local food and a recipe index from the local community.

Brochure
Trifold DL brochure was developed and printed that communicated the objectives and aims of the Northern Rivers Food Links project.

Banner
Project banners were developed for events and demonstrations.

Signage
Project signs were developed for use at events and demonstrations.
A further forty project signs were developed and distributed to our Local Project Teams to display at events and on project sites to promote project participation.

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Conference Kit

The conference kit was developed for project partners to use as a presentation tool post Northern Rivers Food Links. The Conference Kit includes:

- A project compilation brochure (lookbook)
- Conference cards
- Project banner and conference banner
- Project documentary DVD conference versions

Informal Communication

Phone calls – A dedicated phones line was established at the outset of the project

Emails – A dedicated information email and individual Project Management Team emails were established at project commencement

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Monitoring

Project Management Team Monitoring

External Monitoring of the Northern Rivers Food Links project was completed twice throughout the project, initially in September 2010 and again in June 2011. This process was performed by the external monitoring and evaluation contracted agency, appointed to review and report on the Project Management Team and overall NRFL projects performance. This was facilitated over a two-day period, and all members of the Project Management Team were interviewed with all systems and processes audited. The findings were presented to the Steering Committee for endorsement on both occasions.

The qualitative monitoring process completed, followed a five step program as follows:

STEP 1
All responsibilities assigned to the Project Management Team were identified from a detailed review of the project business plan and collated into data collection templates.

The data collection templates were then grouped into five areas of operational activity:

1. Project operations
2. Key Focus Areas
3. Project management team
4. Reference groups
5. Contractors

These five areas of operational activity formed the basis of reporting.

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STEP 2
The supply of data collection templates to the Project Manager.

STEP 3
Interviews were conducted with all members of the Project Management Team to determine status of delivery on business plan responsibilities.

STEP 4
Phone contact was made with a random sample of the NRFL Steering Committee members to seek views and comment on the Project Management Teams performance.

STEP 5
A performance report was presented to the Lead Council and Steering Committee on the findings.

Schedule C

As part of the NSW Environmental Trust Agreement, schedule C has been completed as a measurement of the environmental benefits that have been achieved for this project.

Schedule C is attached below. No targets are present for year 1 or 2, although targets were projected for year 3 and approved by the NSW Environmental Trust. Actual project achievements are also recorded.
NB: Where no measurement or prediction is made, this reflects outcomes that were not part of the scope of this project.

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Grant reference No. 2008/USM/0016

Section 1
Improved land management

1. Will your project have land management impacts? If YES complete this spreadsheet If NO, go to Section 2.

	Question	Unit of measurement	Baseline measure	Year 1 projected	Yr 1 achieved	Yr 2 predicted	Year 2 achieved	Yr 3 projected	Year 3 achieved	Project total projected	Project total achieved
1	**What area will be regenerated as a result of your project?**	Square metres									
2	*** What will be the NEW area regenerated each year?**	square metres									
3	*** If your project will be regenerating a natural area, identify the type of environment your project will focus on? Please select one or more types from the following list:** Terrestrial (rainforest, bushland, rangeland, desert) Riparian (rivers, creeks and their riparian vegetation) Wetlands (freshwater wetlands, upland wetlands, estuarine wetlands, coastal lakes) Marine and estuarine waters Agricultural and urban land	Main type from drop down list									
4	**If you have more than one type of natural area, add it here**	Type 2									
5	**Of the project area described above, what is:**										
5a	**The area from which introduced plant species will be removed?**	Square metres weeded									
5b	**The area from which introduced animal species will have been removed?**	Square metres									
5c	**The target species for which habitats will have been improved or enhanced?**	Describe									
5d	**The area *revegetated?***	Square metres									
6	*** As part of your revegetation, what is the number of plants planted?**	Number									
7	**As part of your revegetation, what is the number of plants established?**	Number									

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Schedule C | Environmental Trust outcomes predictions | Your project measures

8	**What is the % survival rate of plants?**										
9	**Of the above total area, what will be the NEW area planted each year?**	Square metres									
10	**Of the above total area, what will be the area maintained each year?**	Square metres									
11	**Will any vegetation corridors be established as a result of your project?**	Total square metres of corridor									
	If so, estimate the extent of the corridor	Total square metres of connected vegetation									
12	**Will your project be restoring or rehabilitating Aboriginal owned land or sites of cultural significance? If so, please estimate the extent of the area**	Square metres									
13	**Will you, your organisation or your project *stakeholders* be adopting improved agricultural land management practices as a result of your project?**	Numbers of land managers adopting							68	30	98
14	**Does your Project mainly intend to manage waste through: Clean up activities? Reducing waste production? Increasing resource recovery?**	Choose from the drop down list								By increasing resource Recovery?	By increasing resource Recovery?
15	*** If your project involves the *management of waste*, please provide an estimate of the total waste reduced or removed?**	Tonnes							110		110
16	*** If your project involves *site remediation* please provide an estimate of the total area undergoing remediation?**	Square metres									
17	**How many *conservation covenants* on private land will be signed as a result of your project?**	Number of covenants/ agreements									
18	*** What is the area protected under *conservation covenants* on private land as a result of your project?**	Square metres									

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Schedule C | Environmental Trust outcomes predictions | Your project measures

Grant reference No. 2008/USM/0016

Section 2
Improved water management

2. Will your project have improved water management impacts? If YES complete this spreadsheet If NO, go to Section 3.

	Question	Unit of measurement	Baseline measures	Year 1 projected	Yr 1 achieved	Yr 2 projected	Year 2 achieved	Yr 3 projected	Year 3 achieved	Project total projected	Project total achieved
19	**If stormwater is to be recycled and used for non-potable purposes as a result of your project, please provide an estimate of the volume of stormwater to be recycled.**	Kilolitres									
20	**What volume of water will be saved through conservation and efficiency improvements implementation as a result of your project?**	Kilolitres							774 KL		774 KL
21	**What percentage of this project funding is likely to result in a measurable improvement in the catchment water quality?**	% of this project funding intended to improve CWQ									
22	**Please identify how the improvement will be measured referring to the notes at the end of the document. Please provide details of these measurements predicted and achieved.**										
23	**What is the area of the project site that supports sediment and erosion controls?**	Square metres									

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Section 3

Grant reference No. 2008/USM/0016

Improved resource conservation

3. Will your project include improved resource conservation impacts? If YES complete this spreadsheet If NO, go to Section 4.

Question number	Question	Unit of measurement	Baseline measures	Year 1 projected	Yr 1 achieved	Yr 2 predicted	Year 2 achieved	Yr 3 projected	Year 3 achieved	Project total projected	Project total achieved
24	**Materials consumed**	Tonnes or cubic metres weekly/monthly/per annum									
25	**Range of different materials recycled**	Number of different materials recycled									
26	**Quantity of materials recycled**	Tonnes or cubic metres for each material									
27	**Will your organisation adopt additional sustainable practices as a result of your project? Please provide a short written response identifying what will be done**	Number of new sustainable practices and list							Shorten food supply chain, reduce travel, efficient use of water and and energy, better use of waste		Demonstrated how the food supply chain can be shorted; distributing all grades of produce (brought potential 41 new growers and 5 new retail customers), direct sales of all grades of citrus, on line sales, increased farmers markets, 85 retailers promoting and selling more local produce, new on site local produce store. Reduced KM travelled by distributors (e.g 1 by 6,300KM), estimated over 110T + organics removed from waste stream
28	**What percentage of materials used in your project will have recycled content? Please provide an estimate**	% of materials used that contain recycled content									

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Section 4

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Improved quality of the environment

4. Will your project include improved quality of the environment impacts? If YES complete this spreadsheet if NO, go to Section 5

Question number	Question	Unit of measurement	Baseline measures	Year 1 projected	Yr 1 achieved	Yr 2 predicted	Year 2 achieved	Yr 3 projected	Year 3 achieved	Project total projected	Project total achieved
29	**Will there be a reduction in direct and indirect greenhouse gases as a result of your project? If yes, please indicate the volume using the calculator developed by the Australian Greenhouse Office.**	Tonnes of CO_2								53400 tonne	12 month equivalent 151,950kg e or just under 152 tonnes. Note: AGO doesn't include heavy goods vehicles so Freight Metrics data used for the 2 larger distributors.
30	**Will you reduce the community's exposure to any of the following?**										
30a	**Chemicals**	Yes/No								No	
30b	**Radiation**	Yes/No								No	
30c	**Noise**	Yes/No								No	
30d	**Dust**	Yes/No								No	
30e	**Waste**	Yes/No								No	
30f	**Odour**	Yes/No								No	
30g	**Vibration**	Yes/No								No	

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Grant Reference No 2008/USM/0016

Section 5

Increased community knowledge, participation and action taken to address environmental issues

5. Will your project include increased community knowledge, participation and action? If YES complete this spreadsheet. If NO, go to Section 6

Question number	Question	Unit of measurement	Baseline measure	Year 1 projected	Yr 1 achieved	Yr 2 predicted	Year 2 achieved	Yr 3 projected	Year 3 achieved	Project total projected	Project total achieved
42	* How many individuals will your project reach?	Number of individuals					100,000		124,175	100,000	224,175
43	How many will be new participants?	Number of individuals					100,000		124,175	100,000	224,175
44	* How many people in total will be engaged through the year?	Number of individuals					600		400	1000	16,674
45	Of these people, please indicate:										
45a	How many Trust funded staff will be employed as part of the project?	Number of individuals					5		5	5	5
		Number of hours contributed					7750		5750	12480	13500
45b	How many non-Trust funded paid are part of the project team?	Number of individuals					1		1	1	1
		Combined hours contributed					950		1075	700	2025
45c	How many will be volunteers?	Number of individuals					60			50	610
		Combined hours contributed					1300			500	58,513
45d	How many primary students will be involved?	Number of individuals					50			200	301
		Combined hours contributed					200			600	225
45e	How many secondary students will be involved	Number of individuals					0			100	397
		Combined hours contributed					0			200	198.5
45f	How many tertiary students will be involed	Number of individuals									0
		Combined hours contributed									0
45g	Please distinguish between primary, secondary and tertiary.	describe majority					Secondary		Secondary		Secondary
		Combined hours contributed									698
45h	* How many people will be sharing, giving or receiving, traditional Aboriginal knowledge and *Caring For Country*?	Number of people									

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Environmental Trust Outcomes Predictions

Question number	Question	Unit of measurement	Baseline measure	Year 1 projected	Yr 1 achieved	Yr 2 predicted	Year 2 achieved	Yr 3 projected	Year 3 achieved	Project total projected	Project total achieved
46	**How many individuals in your target audience will your communication and dissemination strategy reach?**	Number of people					542			600	450,000
47	**If training is an aspect of your project:**										
47a	**How many people will be trained as a result of your program?**	Number of individuals					0			100	786
47b	**How many training sessions will you run?**	Number of sessions					0			20	124
47c	**How many training sessions will a Registered Training Organisation be engaged in the delivery of your training?**	Number of sessions that a Registered Training Organisation will be engaged					0			20	40
48	**Will your project be addressing the priority themes identified in *Learning for Sustainability: NSW Environmental Education Plan 2007–10?***										
48a	Climate change	Yes/No								yes	yes
48b	Total water cycle management	Yes/No									
48c	Total water cycle management	Yes/No									
48d	Biodiversity conservation	Yes/No									
48e	Landscape management	Yes/No									
48f	Sustainable production and consumption	Yes/No								yes	yes
48g	Pesticide and chemical management	Yes/No									
48h	Air quality	Yes/No									
49	**No of partnerships established to incorporate Aboriginal land management techniques?**	Number of partnerships									
50	**Will you be establishing any partnerships that you hope to maintain beyond the life of the project?**	Number of partnerships								10	Formal partnerships = 40 Informal partnerships = 524

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Section 6

Grant Reference No 2008/USM/0016

Improved sustainability and environmental performance of stakeholders

6. Will your project include improved sustainability and environmental performance of stakeholders? If YES complete this spreadsheet

	Question	Unit of measurement	Baseline measures	Year 1 projected	Yr 1 achieved	Yr 2 predicted	Year 2 cchieved	Yr 3 projected	Year 3aAchieved	Project total projected	Project total achieved
51	**How many organisations do you anticipate you will engage to improve the environment?**	Number of organisations								30	249
52	*** What are the names of the *stakeholder* groups you hope to engage in your project?**	Make a list								Identified Stakeholders listed in Final Report section: Stakeholder Engagement Participation	524 partnerships
52a	**Please list the stakeholder groups and the number of participants in each**										
53	**Of these, how many organisations were:**										
53a	**Contracted?**	Number of organisations								25	140
53b	**Engaged on a voluntary basis?**	Number of organisations								20	109
54	**How many organisations will adopt more sustainable policies and practices as a result of your project?**	Number of organisations								20	524
55	**Will your organisation work to change public policy and adopt improved representational decision making processes?**	Yes/No								yes	yes

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Aims, Objectives, Outcomes & Learning Report

The report overleaf provides a narrative on the achievements of the project against the outcomes hierarchy. It should be read in conjunction with the outcomes hierarchy report in the next section of this document. This report was prepared by an external consultant contracted for this role.

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Project Evaluation Report Part Two
Aims, Objectives, Outcomes and Learning
for

Northern Rivers Food Links Project
"Securing a Sustainable Food Future"

Prepared by:
The Storey Agency Pty Ltd
January 2012
www.storeyagency.com.au

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Thank you

To all the individuals who took the time to contribute to this evaluation report: With over 200 contributing to the survey alone we cannot thank you individually. Thanks to all the project leaders across the region for all their work in data collation and for individuals who contributed time and knowledge to the anecdote circles and increased my own knowledge of the region and the wonderful and complex world of food from field to fork and all the stops on the way. Finally, the report could not have been compiled without the assistance of the NRFL project management team particularly the Project Manager Samantha Muller and Project Administrator Rachel Summers. Thank You.

Definitions and abbreviations

Outcome Hierarchies

NSW Environmental Trust funded projects make use of outcome hierarchies for evaluation. This method has its own terminology, which is explained here in the context of the Northern Rivers Food Links project.

Immediate outcomes: During the planning stage of the project the immediate outcomes were identified as those that could be realistically achieved after 12 - 18 months on ground work (which would be by June 2011 - Dec 2011)

Intermediate outcomes would be sought for 2-4 years time (June 2014)

Ultimate outcomes might have a timeline of 5 plus years (June 2015+).

Northern Rivers Food Links project terminology

NRFL – the Northern Rivers Food Links project

Focus Area – a broad area of focus as outlined in the NRFL Business Plan. There were seven focus areas. Some are directed to stakeholder groups within a specific industry – such as sustainable agriculture or local government resource kit whilst others are broadly about methods of effecting change such as marketing and skilling the community. Local Projects are grouped under focus areas.

Project Leader / Team Leader – people representing organisations delivering discrete projects as Local Project Teams.

Local Project Teams – the teams on the ground delivering projects through the various focus areas.

Project Management Team – Project Manager, Project Administrator, Village Showcase Coordinator, Regional Projects Coordinator, engaged by and reporting to the Steering Committee

Steering Committee – the seven councils and Rous Water delivering the NRFL grant. The lead and administrative council was Clarence Valley Council.

Disclaimer

Whilst all care and diligence has been taken in the preparation of this report The Storey Agency Pty Ltd does not warrant the accuracy of the information contained within the report and accepts no liability for any loss or damage that may result from reliance on the information contained in the report.

Notes

1. Due to the extensive reach of this project in the region and high level of involvement in many different ways and at different scales of locality, with its 130+ food security projects and supporting services and the additional activities going on through those projects, self identification as to ones role in delivery differed from the role assigned at the project team level. Ultimately, this is not an issue, as everyone is working towards the same goals. However, for evaluation purposes it does present a challenge when trying to analyse data according to sector. Any statements “project leaders suggested” are sourced from the anecdote circles, survey or hard copy reports other than where the data source is noted.
2. Multiple data sources have fed into this report. They rely heavily on the project leaders in the field and NRFL project management team for accuracy, collation and provision.

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Executive Summary

This report provides the findings of the external evaluation of the Northern Rivers Food Links (NRFL) project, delivered by Ballina, Byron, Clarence Valley, Kyogle, Lismore, Richmond Valley and Tweed Shire Councils and Rous Water over two years between 2010 and 2012 and funded by the NSW Government Environmental Trust.

Working within the project vision "*That the Northern Rivers leverages its strength as a socially, ecologically and economically resilient region, capable of withstanding the impacts of climate change and peak oil on local food supply and costs. Greenhouse gas emissions, from food production and consumption, will be minimised by reducing reliance on markets outside the regional for food supply*" all eight project objectives have been achieved.

1. The skills and tools of local government staff in the Northern Rivers to support the development of the local food supply network have been enhanced.
2. Community education on links between sustainability and buying food locally has been enhanced.
3. Awareness of the community and businesses on how to improve soil health through increased organic waste recycling has been raised.
4. The amount of organic waste sent to landfill by project participants has been reduced and at source composting encouraged.
5. Access to and awareness of fresh, local food has been enhanced with a resulting increase in food knowledge.
6. A reduction in distance travelled to distribute food, and the resulting reduction in greenhouse gas emissions has been supported. Participating distributors have trialed a shortened food supply and distribution system within the Northern Rivers.
7. Urban communities have had the opportunity to reconnect with regional food distribution in order to increase resilience to potential future food shortages.
8. Viable food supply systems have been trialed and demonstrate the ability for an increase in economic returns within the region for distributors.

By analysing qualitative and quantitative data from project participants, the steering committee and project management team, the evaluation shows that this was a successful project with the following highlight findings.

Planning instruments have been amended to support food security in the region

- A local Government Food Security Policies Resource Kit has been developed: 86% of the 104 members of local government attending the launch said that it helped them to progress food security. Changes to planning instruments to support food security across the region are already underway.

Composting is increasing

- Over 20, on-farm composting trials have been run; by dairy, beef and small crop farmers, including banana and rice growers with improvements in soil condition emerging. As referenced in the case studies, at least 22 farmers, representing 31 agricultural industries have adopted more sustainable on farm practices.
- Within the community, 43% of survey participants reported that they have significantly decreased the amount of organic materials they now send to landfill

Access to fresh locally grown food has been enhanced

- The eight Village Showcase projects (one in each council LGA) and one in the Muli Muli Aboriginal Community have particularly brought this objective alive through provision and enhancement of 17 community gardens for seniors, young people, and the general community.
- Fresh locally grown food is now regularly available not only for members of community gardens but also through schools, a soup kitchen and a youth café.
- Two new farmers markets have been established at Nimbin and Ballina. The Nimbin markets had opened 71 times by the end of the project and retailed over 4 tons of locally grown produce. In addition, 50 new stall-holders are participating in the 14 regional farmers markets
- 30% of the 500 respondents to the regional wide telephone community survey believed that sourcing locally grown produce was easier than it was before the start of the project.

Purchase of locally grown fresh food has increased

- 71% of project survey respondents reported that the amount of local foods their household buys had increased since January 2010
- 61% project survey respondents said that the amount of produce they purchase from farmers markets has increased since January 2010.
- 73.5% of the 85 retailers across the region that have worked with the project to increase their stock, and promotion of, local and regional foods reported an increase in their sales.
- "The Grocer" opened at Alstonville at the House With No Steps selling a range of local produce. Twenty one thousand customers came through the doors in in its first month of trading.

Alternative food distribution systems have been successfully trialed

- Alternative systems of food supply intended to shorten the distribution chain and retain local food in the region have been successfully trialed during the project. New markets for local produce and new growers have been found. Participating distributors Fruitos and Citrus Growers Association are retaining 24 tons and 1.8 tons per month respectively in the region and House With No Steps has retained 51.5 tons fresh produce during the project.

Distribution trial participants were able to reduce their greenhouse gas emissions by sourcing more fresh food locally for sale within the region

- In addition to retaining more produce in the region, transport emissions related to the distribution of the product involved in the trial have decreased for the trial participants. Fruitos, for example, are now travelling an average of 740km/month compared to 18,592km/ month as the frequency of their trips to the fruit and vegetable markets at the major cities has been extensively reduced.

All of these activities were backed up with an extensive regional media and marketing campaign that ran for the duration of the project.

A key feature of the project was bringing together multiple local project teams including Federal and State Government Agencies (Regional Development Australia –Northern Rivers and the NSW Department of Primary Industries), all of the Local Councils, Rous Water, industry associations, not for profit organisations and community colleges. They worked productively with individual businesses and community groups across different, yet connected elements of the food chain ('from field to fork'). They addressed different aspects of the food chain: from land use planning and policy to soil conditioning; through growing food sustainably to reducing negative impacts on the environment whilst improving yield; through identifying alternative food distribution systems, assisting retailers and consumers with sourcing local foods including in store labeling (source identification), learning about food seasonality and, of course eating food. Closing the loop, the project included composing – at both household and farm scale. Over 16,000 people are estimated to have participated in this project – securing a sustainable food future for the Northern Rivers.

The findings are presented in two complementary documents: The comprehensive findings – this report, and the outcome hierarchy – as a stand-alone data report. Both should be used to gain a full picture of the impact of this project in the Northern Rivers.

Introduction

December 3-4th Sydney Morning Herald made timely reading for compiling this evaluation report.

"Australia became a net importer of fruit and vegetables during the millennium drought. This could already be a signal in terms of our ability to feed ourselves under a changed climate." Dr Mark Howden, Chief Research Scientist, CSIRO Climate Adaption Flagship goes on to say. ….."Our food task may even be more important than the energy task….we're not passive receivers in this. We're not disempowered in the face of change. We can do a lot to reduce the risks and increase the opportunities…Food systems must shift to better meet human needs and, in the long term, balance with planetary resources. This will demand major interventions, at local to global scales, to transform current patterns of food production, distribution and consumption……"[1]

This is the very work that the Northern Rivers Food Links (NRFL) project is contributing to. During 2010-11 it has established a strong footing for the Northern Rivers stakeholders interested in regional food security. For the government agencies, businesses, industry sectors and individuals who wish to progress food security in the region the NRFL project has built excellent foundations including building the community's capacity and interest to spring board to further action.

The estimated over 16,000 people who have made this project work at so many different levels and across so many aspects of the food chain should be rightly proud of their achievements. The success of the Northern Rivers Food Links project is apparent in many ways as will be indicated in this report. It has delivered across all its objectives and has with key players created a robust platform for continued food security related work in the region.

This is an opportunity that should be grabbed with both hands.

From farm to fork - using 28 different discrete, yet interlinked projects, connected through seven focus areas[2] Northern Rivers Food Links which was managed by a steering committee representing the seven councils of the Northern Rivers and Rous Water [3] has reached into and influenced positive change in multiple aspects of the food chain in Northern Rivers. 'Multiple' is the key word: the project has operated at multiple points, at multiple scales and from multiple perspectives (or focus areas) within and related to the food chain.

The project evaluation can demonstrate that influence from multiple perspectives; the perspective of individual consumers; the consumption choices they make at point of sale and the places they choose to shop as well as their involvement in growing vegetables at home or in a community garden (sometimes for the first time). The perspectives of retailers and vendors at farmers markets, the perspectives of community organisations supporting the local delivery of new and or revitalized community gardens across the region – some of which are delivering fresh food to their communities – and up into the perspectives of distributors large and small who travel across the

[1] In "Hard to swallow but food security threat is very real" Paddy Manning, p14 Weekend Business, Sydney Morning Herald, 3-4 December 2011.

[2] Distribution, Indigenous Project, Marketing and Education (including Skilling the Community), Village Showcase, Sustainable Agriculture, Discretionary Funding and the Local Government Resource Kit.

[3] Ballina, Byron, Clarence Valley, Kyogle, Lismore, Richmond and Tweed Councils and Rous Water

region and those of the agricultural community involved with on farm research and trials of more sustainable farming practices with dairy, greenhouse and cattle farmers. It also draws on the perspectives of the project manager and steering committee themselves.

The councils of the steering committee hold a central role, not just by steering the project but also as a result of the work they have done within the councils; developing and implementing food related policies, planning instruments, resources, procedures and practices – all of which are required to further food security practices within the region. The work culminated in series of Local Government Land Use Planning for Food Security forums held in November 2011.

Knitting this project together, connecting the different interests and perspectives in the community, has been the increased level of understanding of the complexity of how food is produced, distributed and consumed within the region (and with regard to distribution on into the rest of Australia). In addition interest in food ranging from how it is grown, who it is grown by, how to grow, how to grow more sustainably, and how to provide local food to local people has undoubtedly increased right across the region. The facts and figures to support these statements are contained in the outcome hierarchy and the body of this report.

The project has achieved stronger links between producers, distributors, retailers and customers: Through awareness raising activities such as social marketing, right through to face-to-face learning events and workshops, media coverage and press and radio features. Evaluation has shown that people are interested in regional and local food. Whilst major changes to the local food economy are not yet fully apparent as those are longer-term goals, the community is definitely well on the journey.

When it comes to sustainable food production practices, the agriculture participants appear to have relished the opportunity to get involved, and expressed gratitude for the opportunity to trial some new 'softer farming' methods and prepare property management plans. Many of these initiatives, whilst only appearing to require relatively low financial investment from the NRFL project (through the NSW Government) were, due to the financial constraints and generally risk adverse nature of the sector, otherwise out of reach for many farmers. There is certainly scope and a cry for DPI to continue the supportive work they have done during the project.

The steering committee and project management team are of one voice in that the distribution aspect of the project has been the element that has been most challenging. The Distribution White Paper was compiled to document these challenges and should be reviewed by organisations and agencies taking this work forward in the region.

Major lessons learnt by the steering committee and project management team through the project's life and evaluation have been, in the main, related to aspects of food distribution and how change might be brought about by using the existing main food distribution system more cleverly rather than pushing it to change. The system (i.e. the major supermarkets who control it) has to have a clear reason to change. That reason has not yet been clearly enough articulated for them. It might be articulated if consumer demand calls loudly and frequently enough for local produce to be on their local supermarket shelves. The ability to provide this is, in turn, contingent on there being sufficient growers within the region to 'feed the system'. Excellent progress has been made in both of these aspects of the project.

The project has met its objectives; often over and above expectations; sometimes in different ways than anticipated. An unexpected outcome would have to be the level of pride and pleasure expressed by multiple project stakeholders in connecting to and with other communities and individuals within the region – all around food and food security for the region and its people.

Structure of the evaluation report

The evaluation findings are provided in two complementary reports.

This report takes both a summative approach (judging the overall value and effectiveness of the project asking did the project do what it set out to do?) and a formative approach (asking what can we learn? What might need to be considered in the future?). Its main intent is to afford learning from the experience. It finds community and Council willingness and interest to continue this valuable work in the future. The evaluation further considers not only the funded timeline of the project but also the considerable steps made towards longer term more complex change relating to food security.

The outcome hierarchy is contained in a separate stand alone, yet complementary report. It has been populated with data that reports against the project indicators to enable a stand-alone scan of the project outcomes, findings and statistics.

Key findings at a glance

This project has, according to the objectives and outcome hierarchy been wholeheartedly delivered according to the requirements of the funding body. It has delivered on the project objectives and demonstrates impact according to the intended outcomes over not only the immediate (18-24 month) timeframe but also with regard to steps towards the longer term horizons of 2-5 years (Intermediate timeframe) and ultimate (five year plus) timeframes.

Findings include:

- Alternative/complementary distribution systems have been trialled including by existing distributors who previously used the major markets in the capital cities. Comparative data provided by those participating distributors shows that more food grown in the region has been retained in the region by those distributors this year compared to last year;
    - House With No Steps (an employment and training opportunity centre for people with disabilities who are a major grower in the area and now known as Summerland Farm) have retained 16% of their avocado crop (or 51.5 tonnes of produce) and 7% of their stone fruit crop (or 25.1 tonnes of produce) in the region
    - Fruitos (a vegetable and fruit wholesaler and distributor whose goal is 'to find a home for every piece of produce') estimate that they are now retaining nearly 24 tonnes of fresh produce a month in the region; and
    - The Citrus Growers Association is now delivering 1.8 tonnes of citrus product a month within the region increasing returns for their members.
- That within the broad community of the Northern Rivers (rather than those who participated directly in the project), there was a significantly increased association (from 54% to 64% of

500 respondents taking part in the Jetty Research telephone survey) to the phrase 'locally grown' produce as being from the Northern Rivers than before the project. In addition, 30% of those 500 respondents believed that sourcing local produce was easier now that it was prior to the Northern Rivers Food Links project. However three in four believed labelling of local produce remained inadequate.

- That the Blue Knob farmers market at Nimbin, whose set up was supported through the NRFL project has, since July 2010, sold about 4.2 tonnes of locally grown produce to local people and opened 71 times.
- That there are 41 medium-large producers/growers in the region who are able to provide the volume of produce required to service retailers and restaurants and who are willing to supply local outlets using Fruitos distribution (pending price negotiations)
- That at least 85 retailers have voluntarily engaged with the project (85 through RDA-NR) and increased the amount of local or regional produce they handle, labelled and sold.
- That more local produce is being supplied to smaller local IGA stores, and larger fruit and vegetable outlets (Farmer Charlies, Pirlo's Fruit Barns), restaurants and clubs as well as to householders.
- That the agricultural and production trials of softer farming methods are looking very promising despite dealing with floods during the project. 19 producers in the region have focussed on changing to more sustainable food production practices
- That the councils have developed food security policies and amended existing policies or plans to support more sustainable food practices. 104 local government representatives have received training on the Local Government Resource Kit for food security policies that was developed by, and for, the local government sector.
- That 17 community gardens have been established in the project right across the region. Growing more local food by, with and for local people.
- That a regional farmers market network has been established. Professional development and training has been provided through this network as well as research conducted on habits and purchasing preferences of consumers with regard to farmers markets.
- That there has been a reduction in organic waste going to landfill of up to 1,384 square metres
- That nearly 1300 people have attended food related educational and learning events
- That four major marketing campaigns have underpinned the information and education programs to introduce local food as a priority. Each has reached nearly 450,000 residents. Monthly local food pages featured in 7 community papers and over 40 media stories and radio interviews contributed to raising community awareness of and interest in local food. More than 56,000 people (unique hits) tracked the project via the websites www.northernriversfoodlinks.com.au and www.sustainfood.com.au (total hits over the life of the project was 342,176).
- A documentary will be used to showcase the project and assist other regions interested in undertaking a food security project.

This is just a taster of findings. This report will also be peppered with quotes to illustrate change and participants' experiences. Starting here.

"*For a litmus test [about people growing their own food] if the number of little box trailers and people coming over our weighbridge to pick up compost is an indicator ….its just absolutely going*

through the roof - people growing their own food. Its on…it's happening." Stuart Larsson, Mara Seeds.

"Being involved in the sustainable grazing project has helped us work towards our goal to increase biological activity of the soil, reduce negative impacts on natural resources and provide a healthier farming system in the long term" Ross Lawson, Glenugie Creek landowner. Via project report)

"We always wanted to do it. Buy more local produce and support local producers. It makes me feel good… It's a lot easier to sell it to our customers when they know its local….. I think we are a better organisation for it" (Sam Stewart, Fruitos).

"The best environmental initiative since Landcare. Well done" (Survey respondent)

"The legacy is a heightened awareness around food security – which is no longer a foreign concept" (Samantha Muller, NRFL Project Manager).

Background to the evaluation

This report was commissioned by and is prepared for the Project Steering Committee – namely the seven councils and Rous Water. It is also prepared for, by extension, the NSW Environmental Trust as the funding body. However it is hoped that parties interested in the future of food security, sustainable agriculture and consumer and retailer behaviour related to local food sourcing and retailing – particularly within the Northern Rivers community (such as Sustain Northern Rivers) will also find it useful.

The NSW Environmental Trust requires the use of an outcome hierarchy as a planning and evaluation tool. The project was planned and designed with a strong eye on the future and what would happen once the funding concluded. It was designed and delivered taking an approach that starts (immediate outcomes) with increasing understanding of barriers to communities adopting more sustainable behaviours related to food, increasing knowledge of the local government sector about the importance of addressing food production issues within their policies and procedures and general increasing awareness and knowledge; of sources of local food, benefits of consuming local food, increasing skills in cooking and storing/preserving food topped off with increasing awareness of the environmental and economic impacts of food production and distribution. (These were given a 18-24 month on ground timeline. The duration of project under its current funding enabled 18 months on ground.

The program logic then suggests that the intermediate outcomes will lead the Northern Rivers community on into the ultimate outcomes – or goals of the project in a period of 5 plus years. The intermediate outcomes selected by the project management team to bridge the gap are about system and behavioural changes – relating to both food production and procurement and the infrastructure required for those changes. A period of 2-4 years was thought appropriate for these to be put in place – i.e. after the Environmental Trust funding concludes.

The project management team were advised to put these dates against the levels of the outcome hierarchy they had populated to assist with this direction setting, understanding of expectations and scoping of specific projects.

The ultimate outcomes (with a timeline of 5 years+) are directed towards an improved quality of the environment, increased availability and consumption of affordable sustainably produced food, improved health of the population and increased connectivity of society through food. So whilst the funding only supports the early work, the planning and evaluation methods are intended to frame the work in the longer term (as is required for environmental and societal change and by the funding body). The outcome hierarchy should therefore read from the bottom up if the reader wants to look at the most immediate work first.

Data is provided for all objectives and actions identified in the outcome hierarchy – but whilst that indicates the vast amount of work achieved during the project it does not take away the fact that time is needed for the stakeholders to learn, consider, test assumptions (and trial findings for the agricultural work) adapt, learn and ultimately embed change. The reader should therefore also consider the project in the context of a timeline of 5 years plus as laid out in the outcome hierarchy

in the complementary report for embedding change and normalising new behaviours (which is the intent of the NSW Environmental Trust grants).

Context and structure of the project

This project received funding of $1,999,080, plus an additional $58,452.76 in interest, for the development and subsequent implementation of the NRFL Business Plan. The context for developing the project was research from the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) that identified three major challenges that threaten food security and nutrition. Climate change, using food crops as a fuel source and rising food prices. Major weather events in the Northern Rivers had resulted in significant crop losses at the time.[4]

The project was reviewed against these threats and refined in its business planning phase. It has addressed the issues – though use of crops as fuel sources was not addressed and nutrition held a more subtle position in the project. Certainly the major weather events continued in the region during the project with Murwillumbah receiving its heaviest November rain in 40 years. And in December 2010 extensive flooding in Kyogle, Lismore and other parts of the region as well as the national banana industry centred in Queensland meant that food production was severely affected. (Up to 75% of the banana industry's crop was lost through Cyclone Yasi, in February 2011).

Following the community and industry consultation phase conducted by the steering committee and project management team prior to developing the business plan, it was apparent, that, due to the complexity and interconnectedness of issues regarding the project objectives, a project structure was needed that would:

- allow a regional approach for delivery
- enable multi-stakeholder views, approaches and activities to take place
- and do so in a complementary manner.

A critical element contributing to the success of the NRFL project is its design and structure around the focus areas (see footnote 2) and the streams of "production, distribution, consumption" Whilst these are explained in more depth in the final project report prepared by the Project Manager it is worth noting here that she felt that structuring the project this way enabled both rigour and flexibility when working with multiple perspectives, interests and perceptions about what is important regarding the ultimate objectives of the NRFL project.

The identification of a number of focus areas, which together articulate a holistic approach to the regional food system, has enabled those with interests in different parts of the food chain to work together whilst often operating as discrete projects.

The steering committee and project management team are commended for this approach, which on reflection and after discussion with the project management team worked extremely well to organise the extensive variety of activities and projects that they were managing.

[4] Northern Rivers Food Links Business Plan 2010

Project Vision, Aims and Objectives

"That the Northern Rivers leverages its strength as a socially, ecologically and economically resilient region, capable of withstanding the impacts of climate change and peak oil on local food supply and costs. Greenhouse gas emissions from food production and consumption will be minimised by reducing reliance on markets outside the region for food supply."

The overall project aims were to:
Mitigate climate change impacts associated with food production and distribution by:

- Addressing distribution inefficiencies that result in unnecessary 'food miles' for locally produced food.
- Supporting take-up of more sustainable food production practices with particular emphasis on farming inputs, land-use management in a changing climate and off-farm environmental impacts. And:
- Strengthen community resilience to climate change and peak oil impacts by:
  - Reducing reliance on highly centralised food supply chains.
  - Creating a local food economy built on strong links between the regions food producers, distributors, retailers and consumers.

The project objectives were to:

1. Enhance the skills and tools of local government staff in the Northern Rivers to support the development of the local food supply network.
2. Enhance community education on links between sustainability and buying food locally.
3. Raise awareness of the community and businesses on how to improve soil health through increased organic waste recycling.
4. Reduce organic waste to landfill by encouraging at source composting.
5. Enhance community food knowledge and healthy lifestyles by increasing access to and awareness of, fresh local food.
6. Support a reduction of transportation costs and greenhouse gas emissions by shortening the food supply and distribution system in the Northern Rivers.
7. Increase community resilience to potential future food shortages by reconnecting urban communities with regional food production.
8. Strengthen the Northern Rivers local economy through the development of a sustainable (viable) food supply system.

Project Timeframe

The project ran for 24 months; 3 months start up, and establishment of project teams across the region; 18 months on ground (to November 2011) and 3 months evaluation and reporting.

Theories informing the approach to project evaluation

As outlined above the approach to evaluation taken in this project has been one of program logic with the outcome hierarchy being the organising framework.

Data collection methodologies have been directed to the collection of both qualitative and quantitative data. In light of the tight on-ground time for work and bearing in mind the project is intended to set up alternative ways of growing, distributing and consumer choices the evaluation

has, where possible, sought to test the reasons for making change. The intent has been to seek the narrative (and even world views) behind the actions so that future iterations of the project can build on those societal and sectorial concerns rather than just viewing them as project outcomes and reporting facts and figures.

What did we know about the attitudes of the broad community?

To provide pre- and post information on the community at large Jetty Research were commissioned to undertake a community wide awareness and behaviour telephone survey which was carried out pre (May 2010) and post (September 2011) the project intervention using a telephone survey of 500 grocery buyers with a minimum of 60 interviews in each local government area.

The pre- project survey findings were also used to inform aspects of the NRFL project design.
These included the factors in determining where people shopped for fresh food. Freshness and quality of produce topped the list, with supporting local retailers at third position followed by being able to purchase locally grown produce in fourth. Variety and seasonally available foods were also important. The survey also identified what the term 'locally grown' meant to them. 54% respondents mentioned the Northern Rivers. 78% also selected (from a choice of 3 statements) " I buy locally grown produce if value and availability are right." Limitations to buying more locally produced foods included; availability or supply (37%) and the belief that the prices were too high (20%). 93% said that they would be more likely to buy food produce if it was labelled "grown in the Northern Rivers" and 91% said that 'locally grown' would increase their propensity to purchase. Only 27% thought that local food was adequately identified at their main retailers.[5]

With regard to retailers, in October 2010, Regional Development Australia (Northern Rivers) reported on a survey of 104 retailers (supermarkets, general stores, greengrocers, fishmongers and butchers) that was undertaken between July and September to identify what they considered to be locally grown or produced foods, how they sourced local stock and any challenges faced with that regard. They also explored attitudes to local food, and source identification[6] practices.

The findings of these two studies informed both the marketing and media, and the source identification aspects of the project. In particular, the Source Identification project was informed by the Jetty findings that

- 78% of consumers but locally grown produce if value and availability are right
- 15% of consumers make a point of always buying local
- 20% of consumer cited price as a barrier to buying local
- 91% and 93% said that labelling 'locally grown' and 'grown in the Northern Rivers' would increase their propensity to purchase.

[5] Jetty Research (June 2010) Consumer Awareness and behavior survey relating to production, distribution and consumption of local foods. Commissioned by NRFL

[6] "Source identification is not branding. Rather it is a means of communicating the origin of the food to support informed consumer decision-making and a consumer driven desire to choose local foods" Regional Development Australia-Northern Rivers (October 2010) Source Identification Strategy Survey of Food Retailers. Prepared for Northern Rivers Food Links Project

Evaluation methodology

In addition to using program logic, the evaluation has drawn on most significant change theory[7] and the use of anecdote circles[8] to draw out some of the program stakeholders' perspectives. These methods have been used to endeavour to 'see behind' some of the drivers for action, and identify values that might be carried forward into the next phase of this work. The theory is that a diverse body of anecdotes might together represent the true situation better than a few stories that one might gather in simple interviews.

In concluding the evaluation theory and methodology - consideration of stakeholder relationships and the known or assumed capacity of the project delivery partners is worth a mention. In considering future application of this food security and climate related work, project proponents and managers are recommended to undertake capability and interest assessments[9] with existing and/or potential delivery partners (of all scales and sectors) when developing the project. This may have been done to some extent in the development of NRFL, but is recommended to be repeated, by whoever takes the work forward as it will enable the parties to look at their different abilities and interests or strengths in effecting behavioural and systemic change.

Extraneous variables

A number of extraneous variables have been identified (including by Jetty Research, p7) that were operating parallel to this project. Others will also exist. Some will have been accommodated in individual local project's risk management. It is likely that these will have impacted differently on different stakeholders perceptions, attitudes and actions as well as the ability to undertake changes to land management practices.

The external variables identified by Jetty that may have affected consumer attitudes and behaviours to fresh food shopping include:

- The so-called 'milk price war' launched initially by Coles (January 2011) and subsequently matched by the other major retailers and extended to other food and grocery staples
- Falling consumer confidence. Evidenced by Westpac's National Consumer Sentiment Index which had been falling sharply and continuously since the first quarter of 2010
- (Possibly) the placing of "Farmer Charlie's" chain of green grocers into receivership (May 2011) leading to the closure of three Northern Rivers stores. [10]

Further external variables and influences include:

- The global financial crisis and the resulting contraction in business willingness to take risks
- The major wave of wet weather and flooding – which particularly affected the agricultural projects trials and may have affected attendance numbers at farmers markets.
- The need to engage multiple government departments in the project including regional development, agriculture & environment who were themselves going through change during the project as a result of a change of leadership in NSW Government.

[7] Developed by Jessica Dart and Rick Davies. See for example http://mande.co.uk/docs/MSCGuide.pdf
[8] For more on anecdote circles see http://www.cognitive-edge.com/method.php?mid=41
[9] For example using outcome mapping or partnership expectations and capability assessment
[10] For more detail see Jetty Research (October 2011) *Final Report: Consumer awareness and behavior survey relating to production, distribution and consumption of local foods in the Northern Rivers: Wave Two Survey*

The final yet central comment on the context for the project is that it was extremely ambitious in scope and with a less driven and committed project management team (who were working off site from any of the councils and full time on the project) might be unlikely to have achieved the same level or extent of results in this time frame.

This observation was also made by the Chair of the Steering Committee who said *"I didn't think we'd achieve the on ground projects we set out to…..[but] we delivered everything in the business plan and beyond. "*

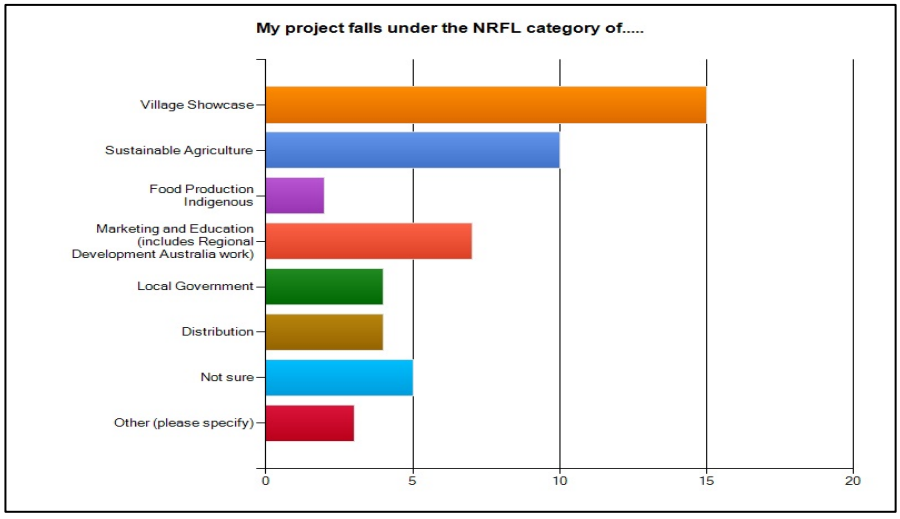
Key stakeholders and methods of engagement

Stakeholders and data collection

For evaluation purposes the "Northern Rivers Community" (evaluators words) was broadly considered at five levels with increasingly narrow focus and involvement. The first three are community /project participants as identified in the evaluation plan and the final two the steering committee and project management. They are listed with the broader pool (with it may be expected) least knowledge of the detail of the project first and the Project Manager (with most detailed knowledge) last. This stakeholder analysis informed the selection of evaluation method.

1. Northern Rivers Community 'at large': As noted earlier, Jetty Research conducted a pre and post community wide household telephone survey across the region with a minimum of 60 interviews in each local government area of grocery buyers aged over 18 and designated as the main grocery buyer in the household. (500 sample size).
2. Project participants and interested parties. The online survey prepared by The Storey Agency and conducted in September 2011. Distributed through all project stakeholders and participants and advertised in local media. (220 sample size). Whilst the survey in its entirety contained over 100 questions, these addressed the whole spectrum of the project. Most individuals would have spent up to 10-15 minutes on the survey. Those who retail and produce or produce and distribute would have spent longer. Of the 220 respondents, the majority 41% took part in one or more events/activities but did not receive funding, 31% received funding either directly as a project leader or indirectly (i.e. they did not deal with the NRFL project management team directly) 10% were involved as steering committee or in an advisory capacity. Of 18% who marked 'other' 6% were community observers, with the rest being project participants. Of the 50 survey respondents (out of 220) who had led or coordinated a project either as a direct contractor or part of a contracted team most were from Village Showcase

Focus area that survey respondents were involved with (#50 respondents)



(15), followed by Sustainable Agriculture (10), Marketing and Education (7) not sure (5) Local Government (4) Distribution (4) Those who were 'not sure' or 'other were able to be re-classified as marketing and education (2) and Village Showcase (1).

Within the project participants and interested parties are a specific group - the 85 retailers participating in the Source –Identification Project led by Regional Development Australia – Northern Rivers. Information on and from this sector was provided in the pre-project survey (as noted in earlier section of the report) and the Source Identification project reports.

3. Project Leaders. In addition to responding to the survey, project leaders were engaged for evaluation through two methods:
    a. Firstly face to face: A series of group conversations using anecdote circles brought together a selection of project leaders from Village Showcase, Sustainable Agriculture and Distribution projects to provide their feedback and collectively consider the changes they had experienced in small groups. Two project stakeholders unable to attend those sessions conducted either a telephone interview or a face- to- face interview
    b. Collated data from all project final reports
    c. Finally through assessment of and provision of feedback on progress reports and a desk top review of a selection of final reports.
4. Steering Committee members were invited to contribute to a focussed conversation towards the end of the project and to complete the project survey.
5. The final evaluation stakeholder was the Project Manager who (in addition to ongoing dialogue for the duration of the project) was interviewed after the project leaders and member of the steering committee.

A final evaluation stakeholder group was the members of the NRFL project management team. The team members other than the Project Manager were not interviewed for the final evaluation. They were however interviewed for monitoring and evaluation purposes twice; shortly after the evaluator joined the project (as the project was shifting from planning and finance allocation into on ground delivery) and for the mid-term review.

Limitations for the evaluation

The outcome hierarchy had been signed off prior to The Storey Agency being engaged. In reviewing the outcome hierarchy we recommended a reduction in its size and scope, however changes were not possible at that stage. We therefore identified approaches and indicators that could help the project management team measure progress on the many objectives. As a result it still contains numerous indicators with often, minor nuances, which with such a diverse range of projects being delivered in many cases by volunteers had ramifications for project delivery and relationships. An evaluation plan was prepared when The Storey Agency was brought on board to try and simplify the process for many on ground projects.

Despite these challenges, a very valuable data set has been collated through the project. The information can be mined, in the coming years, by those who take this valuable work forward. Resources and key data gathered through the project will be available through the website.

The NSW Environmental Trust requires completion of a Schedule C template – which contains a menu of indicators that can be selected according to different environmental issues that are being

addressed in their grant programs. However, few of these were core or appropriate indicators for the topics addressed by the NRFL project.

For the sustainable agriculture project participants generally many of the indicators are not particularly useful over the short term. This is not the fault of the project design or the selection of indicators. Rather that the NRFL funding represents seed funding and "seed timing" for some of the sustainable agriculture projects due to amount of on ground time. A period of several years would be required to confidently demonstrate the on ground environmental changes. Despite that early indications are very positive, as this report will show.

Literature & data sources

Quantitative data was collected by project leaders and collated and provided for the outcome hierarchy report by the NRFL project management team. It was also collected through the project survey and Jetty survey. Qualitative data was collected through the project survey, anecdote circles and interviews and by reviewing final project reports.

Data sources informing the evaluation are the Jetty Research surveys – wave one and two (pre and post intervention (500 responses), RDA-NR retailers survey, the survey of the project community (participants, leaders and interested parties (220 responses), a selection of requested final reports, all project progress reports (Milestone 3), interviews with NRFL Project Manager, a focus group with Steering Committee, three anecdote circles held with representatives of Village Showcase, Distribution and Sustainable Agriculture projects, project websites and the project data workbook collated by project management team from final reports.

Evaluation Findings: Objectives, Outcomes and Aims

This section of the report provides a *selection* of evidence to illustrate how the overall project objectives and intended outcomes and longer term aims have been, or are in the process of being, met – bearing in mind the longer term aims of the project for the region.

- It considers the evidence of changes made or underway in the context of the project objectives, project aims and the experiences of those involved. It also talks about a selection of the project outcomes over the immediate, intermediate and ultimate time horizons.
- It further provides evidence that the initial stages of work required in order to bring about the longer term project aims of the steering committee for the region are underway.
- It should be read with the Outcome Hierarchy.

The outcome hierarchy – which is available as a separate document lists data against each of the project outcomes. It has been populated as requested by the Project Manager to enable a stand-alone scan of the whole project for the steering committee. It should, however be read with this section of the report, as together they provide a more rounded picture of the project and its influence within the Northern Rivers. To avoid repetition and contain the report, data provided in the outcome hierarchy is not generally repeated in this section.

This report also complements the Schedule C reporting requirements for the NSW Environmental Trust. Those data sets are contained in a separate document that along with this document forms part of the project final report.

The evaluation findings substantiate that this region has through the duration of this project undergone a very positive change in its relationship to food security matters – with the Northern Rivers Food Links project playing a very influential role in that change. Changes to the food distribution have been trialled. A considerable amount has been learnt about distribution by those involved. Changes to farming methods are underway. Attitudes and practices of consumers are changing positively. Early positive environmental outcomes are apparent. Community are engaged with localised food solutions and people who have been involved intend to continue this work.

A comment about data: Percentages are generally provided with regard those who answered a specific question rather than those participating in the survey. This is due to the variety of projects and activities that people were involved with. Data will be written as, for example, 89% of 197 respondents report growing fruit/vegetables at home. Statistics are rounded up or down to the nearest whole number so may add up to more than 100.

A comment about feedback from stakeholders is also warranted here: Responses about the project were overwhelmingly positive and demonstrate extensive interest, passion and considered thought about food security and all its components within the NRFL project and the community. However, in a project of this size involving over 1600 individuals in many different ways, there are always going to be people who are already very passionately aware of and involved with the issues being addressed and/or who prefer different approaches to be taken. Whilst most respondents to the evaluation were able to report changes in learning or in their approaches to the food chain, just a few commentated negatively about the project. However their numbers were insignificant.

With so many contracted projects being co-ordinated through NRFL, an unexpected beneficial outcome was that some project leaders reported having learnt more about project operations, running community meetings and/or working in multi stakeholder projects.

Stories of change

This section of the report provides summaries of some of the stories shared through the evaluation process whereby project leaders and survey respondents were invited to provide comment on their most significant experiences/insights gained during the project. They are used to illustrate change from the perspective of the participants in the context of their own drivers and interests. Not necessarily expressed in terms of project goals, objectives and aims. Stories included come from both project leaders who attended the anecdote circles and from survey respondents.

Survey Respondents Significant Experiences

In thinking about the **most significant experience/insight about food security** in the Northern Rivers survey respondents had during the project (unprompted question)….. The following five broad topics were the most frequently mentioned significant experiences/insights (172 survey respondents)

1. Community coming together/meeting & learning from others/ community building (23)
2. Working with commercial & regulatory powers and dealing with the barriers/obstacles/penetrating the major retailers (14)
3. The need for local basic foods to be available in the face of threats of natural disaster (12)
4. Pride in achievement of growing/harvesting food (10)
5. Importance of supporting the growers/farmers and their role (10)

These were followed by; Sustainable on farm practices (9) Importance of retaining productive land for agricultural (7) and consideration of the capacity to grow/produce the majority we need for our community (7).

The participants in the anecdote circles (who were all project leaders) discussed a range of experiences that had been significant for them. These should be of interest to those organisations who are taking the work forward in the coming years. The project leaders talk about a different sense of themselves and their communities, being able to help; help shift consumer attitudes to food, help people grow and eat fresh produce, help people to come together and experience community and helping people learn and experience different ways of producing food.
A selection of answers to the question "What has been your most significant experience or change" are provided here to illustrate these experiences.

Some of the most significant changes expressed by project leaders …..

<table>
<tr><td colspan="2">"Probably the surprise at the volume of local produce that we have chosen to sell instead of interstate or inter-region…It was quite amazing when we did our survey for the sample month to see the shift in our buying compared to last year from just under 2 tonnes to just under 24 tonnes. We always wanted to do it - buy more local produce and support local producers. It makes me feel good. The attitudes are a lot better. It's a lot easier to sell it to our customers when they know its local….. I think we are a better organisation for it" (Sam Stewart, Fruitos).</td></tr>
<tr><td>"The social interaction that's come out of the garden, people who were lonely, or didn't get out at all. We have 10 people now who come along. A bit like the mens' shed, but it's mixed male and female. We have interactions between age groups too, from 85 – down to toddlers and pre-schoolers. I think that was a good thing…and because Yamba is an area with units – the fact that people can come and grow their own veg in an organic way and can take their produce home." (Ron Jurd, Yamba Community Garden)</td><td>"We have seen a marked increase in people coming to the community garden since we have built our compost toilets, created signage, and made roads and pathways through taking part in the FoodLinks project. It's almost as if infrastructure has given us credibility. Of course, our "Food for All" communal gardens where we grow food to share and our 72 allotments leased by our members are also major contributors to our success. We regularly have people visiting from all over, including interstate, who have heard about MCG and come to check out what we have achieved. It seems that our reputation as a model of a successful, vibrant community garden is expanding. (Jeanette Martin, Mullumbimby Community Garden)</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">…..How farmers are taking a new look at soil health as the basis for their production…. seeing soils as a living thing, with improved water quality, better nutrient cycling and vegetation cover so less erosion. It's big picture looking at soil which is of major significance in the north coast. Why it comes about is the war with NPK and chemical based fertilizers [farmers] are starting to look at how they can incorporate these biological-farming ideas in our farms. That's been</td></tr>
</table>

exciting. For the community and environment it's reconnecting the wider environment with the farm. We've moved away [in the past] we've looked at the farm – planted in the soil and the soil just held them up and now we're starting to reconnect the whole thing – the environment the soil the production and getting the whole thing to live in an living ecosystem. Not forgetting the dollar in the whole cycle; there has to be a return at the end for the farmer- getting a return as well as look after the land. (Bob Jarman, Northern Landcare Support Services)	
"The overall most significant change for the Nimbin community, apart from the fact that we've **increased local food production, distribution and consumption over the past two years,** is a **bolstering of community confidence**; that we are being taken seriously around this issue outside of our own community. Something that has been our passion for 35 years is now recognised in the mainstream, which validates our community, and the work we've been doing. To finally be contracted to deliver something that we are good at, and that had previously not been widely acknowledged, was an incredible morale boost that **enhanced the community's philosophy and commitment to food security issues**" (Nat Meyer, Nimbin Neighbourhood Centre)	"We've had 8 gardens …..everyone involved has learnt a tremendous amount about sustainable food production. Lots of people had no experience with gardens. In some communities there were **kids who don't get a lot of fresh produce, let alone know where it comes from. That was a huge benefit…….Each garden became a site for community engagement - we've got people coming out of their houses now, we've got health benefits – people eating the food, just coming together…….[its been] positive for everyone**… where we are there can be negativity about what is possible, so its felt like overnight for a lot of folks to see the changes [we've made]. Some were new gardens: in parks - where people didn't [previously] use the space - so it's contributed to beneficial aspects around safety as they are now multi use spaces. The partnerships and relationships will sustain as well as the gardens. [That's] a community benefit on top of the garden" (Margaret Hughes, Kyogle Together Inc.)
"We wanted to look at developing different types of community gardens: One is in an RSL retirement village, one a kitchen garden at the Salvos headquarters and one an Aboriginal plant use garden at a local high school…..Elders yarning sessions were run as part of the development of the Indigenous garden. They were **a huge success with the Indigenous students and encouraged the school in supporting those students.** In other projects, we value added to our small Foodlinks food supply chain component and, in partnership with Destination Tweed and the Murwillumbah District Business Chamber, created a Round Table of restaurants, producers, and the retailers to cooperatively work on advancing a range of projects." (Anne Duke, Caldera Institute)	"The most significant change from our part is…. **public awareness of softer farming practices and the likely outcomes**. The **vehicle has been NRFL and the councils involved to make this information publically available with no bias.** We had independent people in to do the analysis, which took the doubt out of it. It's significant as far as the community goes because its promotion of organic or less nasty inputs to still achieve a financial outcome and the awareness of food quality outcomes. Our litmus test – the field day, 150 people registered – but close to 200 came of – all ages. What was alarming was the age of **people there, many were well in the 50s and really searching for information – they just don't get that sort of information these days as its not publically available. There will be more of those field days over the next 3-4 years**". (Stuart Larsson, Mara Seeds).
"Informing consumers about their local food options. [This] came about through the source identification program and the Food Northern Rivers ap (phone application). Significant because hopefully the work done through these programs **should facilitate a shift in consumer attitudes and an interest in local food**"(Georgina Gold, Regional Development Australia, Northern Rivers)	"….we now have a fully functioning website that acts as an on line **land matching tool for growers and landowners in the Northern Rivers**….and people know about it. Its **significant because more privately owned land in our region will be made available for the purpose of producing food to feed our community**, reducing food miles and helping to secure our food future. (Phil Dudman, Landshare Australia).

Project Objectives - findings

To deliver the project's overall aims (see page 13), eight objectives had been selected for the project to deliver. These in turn informed the project's design - namely the seven focus areas – and the outcome hierarchy for evaluation. These eight objectives are now evaluated one by one.

Data regarding the project aims and outcomes can be found in the following section and detailed data sets on all indicators are contained in the outcome hierarchy.

1. Enhance the skills and tools of local government staff in the Northern Rivers to support the development of the local food supply network.

The 'Local Government Resource Kit: Food Security Policies' was developed by members of the seven councils and Rous Water through the NRFL project to provide tools that could enhance the skills of local government staff regarding food policy. Launched in November 2011 at a series of 7 well-attended forums (104 council staff and elected representatives) the kit contains resources, specially developed within the region. The kit covers materials including 5 policy templates to support edible streetscapes, farmers markets, community gardens and roadside stalls. Nearly 30% of attendees had been involved with the development of the resources, which ensures their relevance and applicability. 59% of them had contributed to the development of the community gardens policy and 50% to the farmers' markets policy. 61% of attendees found the forum content excellent and 35% good (96% positive rating). The overwhelming majority of participants thought the session had helped them with progressing food security policy work at council with 86% rating that help at 3 or higher out of a possible score of 5.

Comments made on councils' role in planning for food security included:

- "Very important as role models for this brilliant program"
- "We need councils to plan for food security now and in earnest"
- "The role of council needs an airing – stewardship, leadership and development. This means that Councils need to operate above minimum standards"
- "Facilitating the use of public lands for productive food users"
- Surrounding councils should work together to guarantee 'green food' avoid waste and keep food fresh"

Whilst the adoption of policy requires sign off by the elected body, 28% of forum attendees were able to say that their council was planning to adopt a food security policy and 37% had already been involved with amending planning documents (LEP, DCP, policy or plans). In addition 46% of attendees had fielded enquiries from the community and 42% from industry on food security related projects.

The resources should be of use to all councils in NSW. It is recommended that they be made available across the state via the NSW Environmental Trust and the LGSA and that the steering committee continue to champion the use of the kit across the region.

With regard to networking around food security in the region between and amongst staff and councillors, 74% of forum participants reported that their levels of collaboration generally had increased since January 2010 with 55% working with staff /councillors from other councils in the region. Council representatives also felt that since January 2010 their awareness of the economic and environmental impacts of food production and distribution had increased (47% substantially and 45% somewhat with only 4% staying the same).

Within the life of this project over 100 key local government staff and representatives reported gaining greater awareness of food production and distribution impacts and are now better able to make changes to local government practices to improve food security in the region.

The reader is referred to the immediate, intermediate and ultimate outcomes section of the outcome hierarchy for data relating to improved knowledge and understanding of council staff and making changes to policy and practice to support food security.

2. Enhance community education on links between sustainability and buying food locally.

Byron Community College (BCC) was the primary contractor for delivering the community education program "Skilling the Community." This was specially developed by BCC through the NRFL to build on and enhance existing available training in the region that was relevant to the NRFL project objectives. This approach has enabled and supported the development of partnerships across the region with not only other community colleges but also community gardens (some of them fledgling) and community groups. 14 'passionate tutors' (BCC words) were engaged and 16 partnership arrangements required. A capacity building approach was taken, commencing with a train the trainer model for the future presenters/trainers from 5 of the local government areas – who were then able to deliver community education sessions and workshops within their own areas.

LGA	Workshop participants	Demonstration participants	Total
Regional	16	5 (online event)	21
Richmond Valley	12	100	112
Byron	83	40	123
Lismore	84	26	110
Ballina	37	25	62
Tweed	68	30	98
Kyogle	23	n/a	23
Clarence	33	n/a	33

Attendance at the Skilling the Community events in each of the Local Government Areas (table taken from BCC report)

Topics addressed through 7 demonstrations, 1 on line session and 32 workshops delivered in the community education package ranged from getting started with organic backyard food growing to introducing permaculture, creating a food forest in sub-tropical areas, backyard chooks, composting magic and sourcing, preparing and preserving seasonal food.

In addition to the learning outcomes arising from this part of the NRFL project, the on ground legacy is; a planted vegetable and herb garden at Byron Youth drop in centre, a biochar garden and worm farms in wheelie bins at Lismore Community Garden, a planted garden at Grafton Community Garden and an established compost station at Murwillumbah East Primary School.

BCC reports that "a significant outcome has been the increased motivation and capacity for the community colleges throughout the region to continue to offer courses on local food themes as part of their ongoing program" They also found that towards the end of the project as the momentum had been built, that they could not meet the demand for course delivery. A great example of increased interest in the topic!

In store labelling for Northern Rivers Produce



Regarding linking sustainability and actually turning that understanding or awareness into purchasing habits which is the intent of this objective - Byron Community College reported on a couple of key indicators relevant to this objective.

Of the 203 program participants, **65% felt that, since January 2010 the availability of local food had increased** (46%) or increased substantially (19%) with no answer (28%). For these project participants – who we know have taken part in education and learning programs related to different aspects of a sustainable food supply **- it also translates to an increase of household purchase of local food. 65% participants reported an increase (42% somewhat, 23% substantial) in the amount of locally produced food that their household purchases.** (21% gave no answer).

This compares favourably to the 30% respondents in the general public survey conducted by Jetty Research who said it was now easier to source locally grown produce than it was 18 months ago (i.e. prior to the NRFL project). 15% felt it was more difficult. 46% felt it was about the same.

Whilst we see both the general public (Jetty) and the cohort attending learning events feeling that it was now easier to source local food, the percentage increase for the project cohort is more than double that of the general public (65% /30%). This is a reflection of the learning gained in the project.

In addition to the education run by BCC, a number of events have been held within the different project communities around the region to enhance local community education on links between sustainability and buying food locally. These included film sessions, talks, open days, working bees, and workshops. They range from pop up days in food malls to promotions at the regional agricultural shows, open days for community members and school children at a range of the community gardens and a schools specific event.

"We believe we have seen a significant increase in local food in our community compared to when we commenced the project. Stakeholders who had no connection at all to one another are now well connected and this is likely to continue" (survey respondent)

" I already had a personal interest in local and regional food economies, but having NRFL project in operation in the region certainly raised the profile of these issues and made possible a range of very useful workshops and courses in sustainable agriculture/sustainable living" (survey respondent)

The reader is referred to the immediate and intermediate outcomes section of the outcome hierarchy for data sets that indicate changes in learning, awareness and education and links between sustainability and buying food locally. Comments are also made in section 3 of this report.

3. Raise awareness of the community and businesses on how to improve soil health through increased organic recycling

In this instance businesses are considered to be the food producers involved in the sustainable agriculture focus area.

3.1 Awareness was raised in the food producers, growers and farmers sector using a number of approaches:

- The Sustainable Farm Planning and Sustainable Grazing projects particularly supported agriculturalists in learning about softer farming methods that improve soil health.
- Awareness about soil health moved to action on the three sustainable grazing project farms, by changing the way pasture is used for grazing by trialling rotational grazing, redirecting stock access to watering points on the creek, tree planting, providing water troughs and trialling different pasture crops. DPI staff worked closely with the farmers throughout the project.
- The Sustainable Farm Planning project produced whole of farm sustainable management plans for 20 farms and prepared case studies that will be of use for other interested farmers. Soil health is key to this. They are available on the NRFL website.
- The Clarence Valley Sustainable Grazing project also reported on attitudes and interests to composting following their field day. A number mentioned that the most important message of the day was related to compost: soil improvement, farming in a more natural way, benefits of natural compost, that soil improvement leads to cattle improvement and compost trials.
- At the same field day 90% (18) had found the session on conducting composting trials very useful, 95% the session on soil biology and composting very useful and 80% (16) are more confident in conducting their own on farm trials for products such as compost (Clarence Valley Sustainable Grazing Project Report p36).
- 82% of respondents to the Sustainable Farm Planning evaluation (which had a 55% response rate) said that the program helped them with soil management and 82% said that they intended to build soil carbon. Comments included that it "provided good info on forecasting and carbon measurement in soils and forest."
- Mara Seeds sustainable agriculture project established a demonstration site for softer farming methods. It compared effectiveness, performance and sustainability of a range of available agriculture broad acre inputs on two crops – soy bean and wheat. Six treatments were compared using six different plots within a 35 hectare site (control, compost, compost plus trace elements, raw chicken manure, pelleted manure product and standard fertilizer. [11] The open day for the industry attracted 150 people from a wide field. As a result of the adverse weather conditions during the trial, whilst results are available, the trial is being continued by Mara Seeds after the project concludes.

[11] Biochar had been hoped to be included by Mara Seeds, but due to lack of availability within Australia and cost to import, was dropped from the study.

" "Being involved in the sustainable grazing project has helped us work towards our goal to increase biological activity of the soil, reduce negative impacts on natural resources and provide a healthier farming system in the long term. **We now have improved water efficiency and a system in place to monitor pasture health, have planted around 70 local trees and provided 2 alternative stock watering points**. The use of natural inputs to our pastures including organic compost is being trialled and we anticipate this will help improve soil health along with pasture and livestock condition in the long term." Glenugie Creek landowner and field day host Mr Ross Lawson.	"**It's not very often that we have the opportunity to bring together such a wide range of experts on soil health, beef production and pasture health** to the Clarence Valley. Participants took full advantage of this occasion and asked lots of questions which made for some very interesting discussions in the field." (Julie Mousley, Clarence Valley Sustainable Grazing Project Officer in Clarence Valley Landcare media release - Floodplain Field Day Supports Valley Graziers, October 2011) My most significant experience has been….."the value of on farm composting" (survey respondent)
I've got visions of what will happen with soils that go well beyond where we are now. I've spent 20 years looking at it and getting more data and evidence is important. Average age of farmers is 56 – **they are not going to change very quickly unless they see a significant result. They'll follow if they see results – but there haven't been a lot of leaders out there**. It becomes more evident every day" Stuart Larsson, Mara Seeds.	"Compared with results from before we began cell grazing....**on all measures there has been real improvement, particularly on organic carbon.** We intend to follow up next year with more soil testing to assess our grazing management" (Pasture management assessment progress at Rilla's subdivision on Redbank Farm owned by Sullivan & Blazejowski (Clarence Valley Clarence Landcare Sustainable Grazing project report p101)

It is also recommended that any opportunities to extend the work done with, for and by the agricultural sector in this project should be strongly considered by the participating agencies, particularly DPI. Similar recommendations can be found in the November 2011 report "Achieving Food Security in the face of Climate Change: A summary for Policy Makers" published by the CGIAR Research Program on Climate Change, Agriculture and Food Security.[12] Their recommendations include significantly raising the level of global investment in sustainable agriculture and food systems in the next decade.

3.2 Awareness in the community about using composting to increase soil health has been raised

There is an active and interested composting community in the Northern Rivers. Most Village Showcase Projects and the Skilling The Community projects also included learning about or improving management of compost.

In an unprompted question in the survey (Q98, 172 responses) "What do you know now that you didn't know before?" the top mentioned topic (35 mentions) was soil health (including composting, mulching, worm farming and biochar).

"For a litmus test [about people growing their own food] if the number of little box trailers and people coming over our weighbridge to pick up compost is an indicator ….**its just absolutely going through the roof - people growing their own food. Its on…it's happening."** Stuart Larsson, Mara Seeds.

Data sets related to soil health and action by landholders can be found in the ultimate and

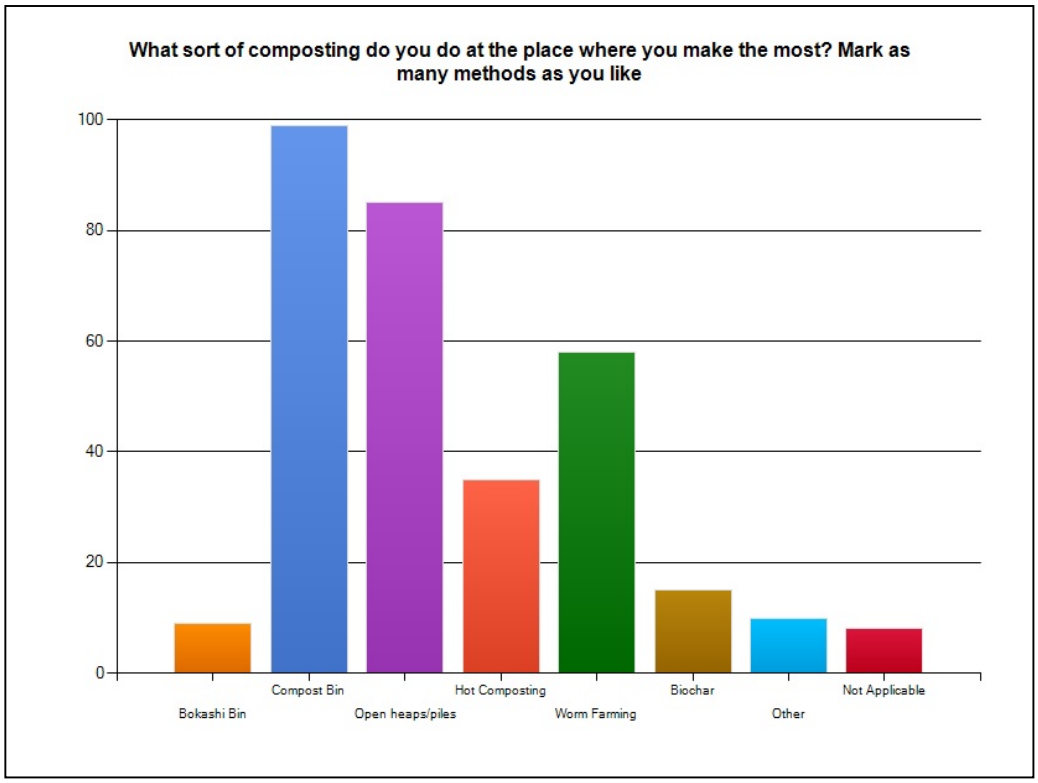
[12] http://ccafs.cgiar.org/news/commission-sustainable-agriculture-and-climate-change/global-commission-charts-pathway

intermediate outcomes sections of the outcomes outcome hierarchy.

4. Reduce organic waste to landfill by encouraging at source composting

At source composting was already quite extensive in the project community – 85% of the 195 survey respondents (to Q13) already compost, but it has increased, particularly for the sustainable agriculture participants who are trialling different methods of composting over a number of years – with the investment from NRFL providing the launch for the trials. See objective 3 for some of those comments. With regard to the broad project community up to 1,384 square metres organic material has been diverted from landfill. 43% (71/164) of survey respondents reported that the amount of organic material they send to landfill has decreased since January 2010, 50% said it stayed about the same (survey Q18). Measuring the amount of decrease is a challenge for people – but the NSW Environmental Trust Schedule C measures. A scale measure was therefore used. Of 75 people who said theirs had reduced and provided a figure, most (31) suggested a reduction of less than a tonne (17) or less than a cubic metre (14) in the past year.

Whilst many of the community were already composting there are still new composters coming through "I was only a beginner garden before attending the organic gardening workshop, but it has given me a greater level of confidence" (survey respondent).



164 respondents provided information on the types of composting they do, either at home or business. Compost bins, open-heaps and worm farms are the most common. Additional methods used mentioned were: dried out cow manure, liquid compost and teas, chooks, 3 bin rotation system, wicking and humanure!

The reader is referred to the intermediate and ultimate outcomes section of the outcome hierarchy for a range of data sets referring to at source composting.

5. Enhance community food knowledge and healthy lifestyles by increasing access to and awareness of fresh local food

Community food knowledge through access to and awareness of fresh local food has been enhanced using a range of methods. These include the education program (covered at objective 2), increased use of farmers markets and the media and marketing campaign as well as the in-store marketing and source identification. The consumption of fresh healthy food is one element of a healthy lifestyle.

The website http://www.sustainfood.com.au/ was established to enable consumers to find out about and connect with others around eating & growing (including seasonal produce) and sourcing local foods. Extensive sources are available for the community including producers, farmers markets, farm gate sales, community gardens, restaurants and retail outlets. The local food mobile platform "My Food My Northern Rivers" was developed through RDA-NR and enhances a number of the functions available on www.sustainfood.com.au enabling users to search for local items by proximity. Launched towards the end of the project it had been downloaded 671 times at the time of preparing this report. The sustainfood website will be maintained by RDA- NR.

An extensive media and marketing campaign ran throughout the project using television, radio, print and on line media. It included the recruitment of media identities Phil Dudman and Belinda Jeffery as project ambassadors who wholeheartedly supported and promoted the project and it's goals. A series of campaigns ran at different periods over the project's life. These included "Grow your Own" "Ask Is it Local" "Know Your Farmer" and "Make it Markets" and reached more than 450,000 residents. A documentary has also been completed to assist other regions interested in food security.

All of these mechanisms were intended to increase awareness and access to local food.

Project survey respondents were asked unprompted about their recall of various marketing and media for the project (Q100, 172 respondents). To explore the recall in more depth respondents were asked what they could tell us about any of the adverts. Of 14 different (unprompted) categories of recall raised [13] in the open-ended part of the question the top three mentioned were:

1. ABC radio adverts/coverage
2. TV programs/adverts
3. Press adverts or editorial.

These were followed by the Grow your Own campaign and "the TV ad with the kid."

[13] Whilst question 100 had an error in that people could not say 'none' if they did not remember any adverts the majority of respondents did recall adverts; In the open section of the question mentions were (not in order); logo recognisable, producing food in all weather, children, farmers markets/meeting producers/farmers, asking where food is grown, "Ask is it local," grow your own challenge, the tv ad with the kid, recognising people in ads (farmers/friends), nothing/don't pay attention, in-store signage, ABC radio, ACE pamphlet and TV programs/adverts.

With regard to the broader Northern Rivers community, the post project survey (Jetty Research) found consumption of fresh fruit and vegetables largely unchanged. Respondents also continued to rank factors such as "supporting local retailer" and "being able to purchase locally grown produce" as important factors in determining where to shop for local food. Whilst their shopping habits showed a preference for supermarkets they did make a significant shift – up 10% from 54% – 64% in their association of the phrase 'locally grown' with the Northern Rivers. In addition 30% believed it was easier now to source local produce than it had been 18 months previously (i.e. prior to the project). In just 18 months this can be considered a major shift in the whole community.

"A lot of people talk to me about Food Links. There's big awareness. Impressive awareness. **A lot of people talk to me about the success of the project. Which is fantastic in such a short period. The biggest winner - and that involves everyone involved - all the people involved, from all the projects to the people running it - is the awareness of the issues on a local basis.** " Phil Dudman, ABC TV.	
"I think some of the TV advertising has been excellent. It has really driven the point that healthy foods is where we are." (Stuart Larsson, Mara Seeds).	"Using prime time spots has been really beneficial, really strong. A lot of retailers have seen the ads. The message has gotten across." (RDA-NR and Fruitos joint conversation)

Increasing access to fresh local foods has been a key intent of many of the Village Showcase Projects. Eight Village Showcase projects have been delivered across the region, with at least one in each of the Local Government Areas involved in the project.



For example the Kyogle Seeds of Knowledge project has established eight gardens alone, six of which are in school sites. The local youth centre and community centre have run sessions on growing and preparing seasonal nutritious foods. On top of that they have made sustainable horticulture training available for parents of students of the participating schools so that they too can be involved.

A food growing guide has been prepared by Mullumbimby Community Garden as well as making the garden more accessible through the installation of pathways, all weather road access and interpretive signage. 2000+ people attended the launch of the gardens in late 2011.

Yamba Community Garden has 70 members and welcomes both senior and younger members of the community. Because Yamba is an area with units they are "proud of the fact that people can come and grow their own veg in an organic way and can take their produce home." (Ron Jurd, Yamba Community Garden)

One of the communities who has made a major shift with regard to the availability of fresh food is the Muli Muli Aboriginal Community, located in the far north west of the region. They were contracted to prepare and grow food gardens, and have two acres under cultivation including fruit trees, bush tucker and vegetables. Weekly sessions involve the high school students in the garden.

They report that two unexpected outcomes for the community have been "understanding of the direct benefits of eating fresh vegetables and fruit [and] **community health and wellbeing has improved considerably".**

Casino Community garden helps support the local Loaves soup kitchen, the Lend a Hand Food Aid Service, Casino Emergency Relief Service and Mid-Richmond neighbourhood youth training café. It features private allotments and demonstration areas and hosted a series of cooking classed to improve knowledge about healthy eating.

In Ballina LGA, the new store with educational displays on local produce "The Grocer" at Alstonville is making it easier to learn about food at the same time as purchasing local produce.

In Tweed, four locations and organisations are further contributing to the local food movement; Stokers Siding Community Garden (located at the primary school), RSL Care Darlington, where residents are able to connect socially and enjoy the opportunity to grow their own produce, at the new Salvation Army food garden at Banora Point complex – where both the clients of the Salvation Army and the local school community will benefit from the kitchen garden. Lastly, the Burringbar community have upgraded the community kitchen facilities to commercial grade, allowing it to become a hub for the community.

Through these examples we can see communities who may not have previously accessed a great deal of fresh local food on a regular basis, being able to do so as a result of NRFL.

The project has also worked to increase consumer access to local foods through the promotion of and increasing the availability of farmers markets as well as through endeavouring to influence the traditional food distribution system and retail network. Comment on the distribution system including farmers markets can be found in objectives 7 and 8 and in the section on the project aims.

The reader is referred to the outcome hierarchy for data on media campaigns, website use, grower registration numbers, training hours, knowledge of growing food, perceptions of access to fresh food and ability to source locally produced food.

6. <u>Support a reduction of transportation costs and greenhouse gas emissions by shortening the food supply and distribution system in the Northern Rivers</u>

Participating distributors – House with No Steps, Fruitos and the Citrus Growers Association have certainly supported a reduction in greenhouse gas emissions and food transportation costs during the project. Each reported reduced emissions from their own travel in collecting and distributing the fresh fruit and vegetable items that they worked within this project (limes, lemons, sweet potato, bananas, avocado, a selection of herbs and salad vegetables, corn, zucchini, strawberries and eggs).

They were able to shorten the supply chain (from field to fork) by sourcing local growers who could provide sufficient consistent product, and then connecting with retailers and restaurants that wished to stock and retail local product.

The project afforded greater understanding of the food distribution system, which operates nationwide and is particularly price sensitive resulting in produce – wherever it is grown - going to where the best price can be realised for the grower (be it Melbourne, Adelaide, Sydney or Brisbane). Both consumers and growers are affected by and affect that price.

What has therefore occurred here is a series of bold moves and trials of alternative methods of getting produce to consumers (via retailers or restaurants) that bypass the major markets. These methods could not replace the major distribution system, but do provide alternatives. The amount of product the participating distributors were able to retain in the region was impressive. The trials afford useful learning, particularly for the businesses that took the risk and participated. A number of recommendations were made in a distribution white paper, that documents the learnings about the distribution system trialled within this project.

See outcome hierarchy ultimate outcomes for data sets on greenhouse gas emissions, reduced km travelled and tonnage of produce retained in the region.

See the next section on longer term project aims for further discussion of the distribution system.

Looking more closely at one community's food needs and shortening the food supply and distribution system; in Nimbin a local baseline survey conducted indicated that less than 5% of local food needs were being met by local produce (Nimbin Food Security report). By the conclusion of the project 45% respondents had increased their own food production (since January 2010) and nearly 41% of respondents to their community survey (155 responses in all), said they grow food that is surplus to their requirements. This infers that the community could potentially meet most of their local fresh food needs, though further exploration of the variety of foods grown would be needed. By the end of the project a spot survey on the main street (59 responses) also found that 64% respondents had increased their consumption of local foods (which is in line with most datasets provided for this report) and 77% actively source local food.

The purchase of a table-top grain mill for the region through the Nimbin project secured a local supply of flour for the community. Previously locally grown grains (including wheat and rice) had to leave the region to be milled. A grain buyers group is now forming and the mill is in use with an estimated 80 users (at 30/11/11) of which 30 are regular users.

"The grain mill has added another dimension to buying local due to the availability of fresh flour" (survey respondent)

The steering committee also commented on the effect of the mill and noted that the project has enabled connections between the west and east of the region whereby grain growers from the west are using the mill and providing grain to buyers in the east of the region. (For more information on the mill see the Nimbin Project Final Report).

Staying in Nimbin region, and the shortening the food supply chain, the Blue Knob farmers market – one of two whose set up was supported through the NRFL project (1st held 3 July 2010) had opened 71 times at the time of reporting (30/11/11) with an average of 16 stalls attracting 20 producers and 130 customers per market. An average of 593 kg is sold per market day making a total of 4.2 tonnes local food produced and sold within the region between July 2010 and November 2011.

7. Increase community resilience to potential future food shortages by reconnecting urban communities with regional food production

The project has connected urban communities with regional food production through media and marketing events (such as Know Your Farmer, Know Your Food) as well as events that enable face to face connections for food growers and consumers. For many people this has been rewarding and in some cases enlightening. Project participants have gained awareness of the range of produce grown in the region. In fact, learning about how much produce is or could be grown and where it is grown was the third most cited learning through the project survey (see page 49/50, for more detail).
Insights gained through the survey include:

- "How much food is produced along with the wide variety and quality"
- "The connectivity of food and society"
- "It has been interesting to realize just how much food is available locally. I'm also concerned about supporting local agriculture and preserving/balancing agricultural land versus development/land clearing issues."
- "How food is tied in so much closer with community than money. We have seen the strength of the community and social aspect motivate people to change"
- "I was aware of the local industries, but I have been enlightened when they have all come together of the volume of local produce and talent in the local area"

"….[I've observed]greater **pleasure people are getting from connecting with the farmer and where the food comes from**. I've seen that in the past 12 months. It's been an exciting change"(Phil Dudman, ABC North Coast)

With regard to connecting urban communities with the opportunity to grow on unused land the Landshare project works to connect people with vacant land that can be used for growing with those who wish to grow. "Our personal experience has been that the FoodLinks opportunity has been fantastic for us – for getting the website up and running and getting publicity out there. We've had very good publicity which proves the interest in the project. We only launched in Feb this year [2011]. We've had 150 or so sign ups in the local area and 1500 nation wide. We've had matches in other parts of the country – the demand is across the country. It will be a few years yet before we get the close geographical matches [because of the great distances between participants]. (Phil Dudman, Landshare).

67% survey respondents (Q197) reported an increase in their knowledge of the benefits of eating local foods (25% saying it had increased a lot and 43% a little).

See all sections of the outcome hierarchy for data relating to local branding, numbers for engagement in activities and events, farmers markets, individuals understanding of the benefits of consuming locally produced food and knowledge of how to source it.

8. Strengthen the Northern Rivers local economy through the development of a sustainable (viable) food supply system

Six main methods or systems of food supply (listed below) have been employed during this project providing multiple options for supplying food. Whilst 303 businesses are listed on the Virtual

MarketPlace mobile application it has not been evaluated here as it was launched towards the end of the project. Therefore the strands or approaches to a sustainable and viable food supply system that the project has strengthened are reported (in no particular order) to be:

- The distribution facility for selling all grades of produce which has brought 5 new retail customers on board and sourced a potential 41 new growers to service the system (Fruitos and HWNS projects)
- A process for direct selling of citrus products – primary and secondary grades – some of which previously had 'no home' and were left to rot. Citrus Growers Association have developed a commercially viable delivery/distribution system with sufficient critical mass to continue after the NRFL project
- The website developed as a sales and marketing opportunity for growers to promote their produce – and for consumers to source produce www.sustainfood.com.au is hosted by Sustain Northern Rivers
- Farmers markets. The 14 farmers markets have been extensively promoted during the project as well as the farmers market professionals building their own professional capacity through training events. 2 new markets have been established. 50 new stallholders are now selling produce since the project started. 7,431 individuals are reported to have attended local produce/farmers markets. In addition the newly established Blue Knob Farmers market at Nimbin has been supported by NRFL.
- RDA – NR have worked with 85 retailers across the region from butchers to grocers, fishmongers and supermarkets to promote regional fresh foods and increase their stock of local produce. 73.5% reported increased sales (61% reported increase sales of between 0-25% and 12.5% 0-50%)
- Community members are producing fresh fruit and vegetables through the community gardens, not only for themselves but also for distribution within the community
- "The Grocer" retail outlet has been opened at Alstonville at the HWNS retailing a range of local produce.

Citrus Growers Produce ready for distribution.



The Grocer at Alstonville,





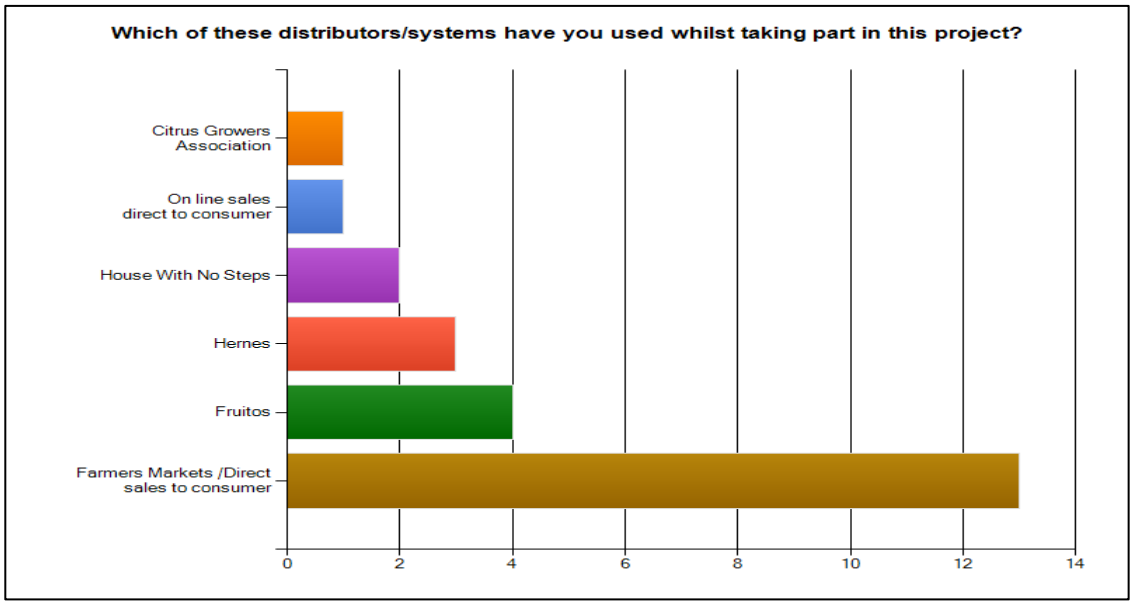
Challenges and opportunities relating to food distribution were the topic of a commissioned white paper. This is referenced several times in this report and is recommended reading. Additionally a report on the opportunities for farmers' market operators to grow their sector of the fresh food buying market, was prepared by Byron Farmers Market for the newly established Farmers Market Network.

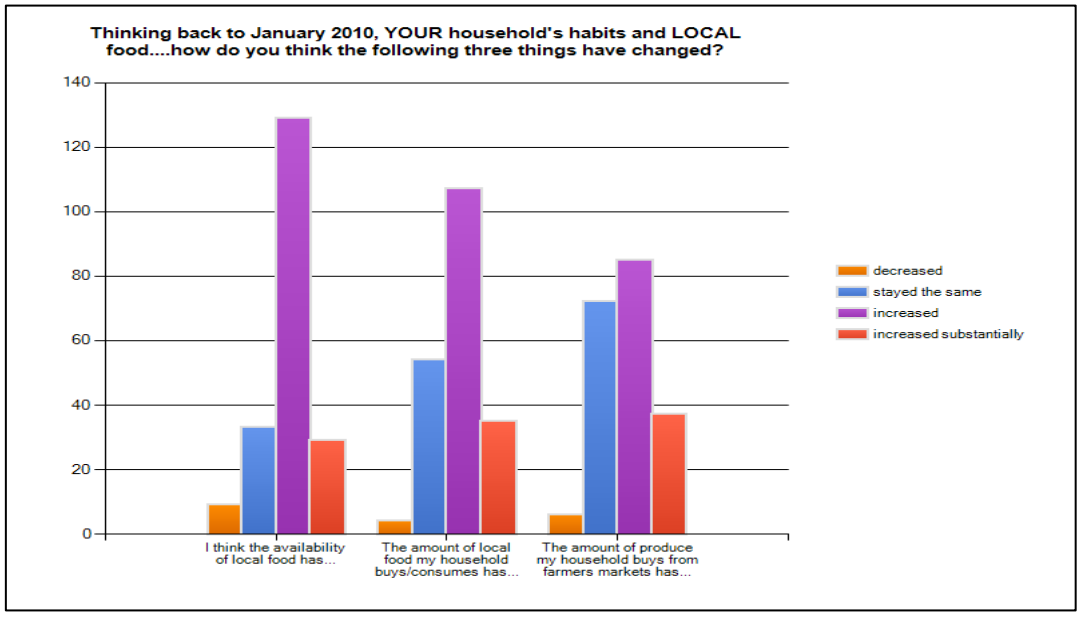
My most significant experience/insight was….When the wet season (floods) affected the food available everywhere and the farmers markets was (sic) one of the few places to get fresh vegetables, it made a big impact. Also, Blue Knob farmers market seems to me to be a landmark in creating really local food security in a way that made sense to me (survey respondent)

The reader is referred to the outcome hierarchy for detailed statistics on a wide range of indicators related to the food economy including sales at farmers markets, retailers stock changes, attendance

at farmers markets, food distribution systems availability and use, as well as resident access to and purchase of local foods.

The two following charts show the distribution systems used by 17 self identified food producers in the project survey and household perceptions about the availability of local food being provided through the food system.





- With regard to distribution systems 13 responding producers use farmers markets/direct sales to consumer
- The community thought that local food availability had increased, that their household purchased more and that they also purchased more from farmers markets.

Longer Term Project Aims – indications of change over the longer term

As stated earlier the project aims for the future are to mitigate climate change impacts associated with food production and distribution by:

- Addressing distribution inefficiencies that result in unnecessary 'food miles' for locally produced food.
- Supporting take-up of more sustainable food production practices with particular emphasis on farming inputs, land-use management in a changing climate and off-farm environmental impacts. And:
- Strengthen community resilience to climate change and peak oil impacts by:
  - Reducing reliance on highly centralised food supply chains.
  - Creating a local food economy built on strong links between the regions food producers, distributors, retailers and consumers.

The evaluation process and experiences of those involved provided insights to these aims. Comment is provided here to assist with planned or future work on these topics and is generally broad in scope. It is expected to be of greatest interest for those taking the work forward.

Mitigate climate change impacts associated with food production and distribution by addressing distribution inefficiencies that result in unnecessary 'food miles' for locally produced food.

The distribution side of this project has afforded a number of learning opportunities (and frequent frustration) for all involved. Whilst some 'gentle prodding' of the system – and at the edges - has occurred and different localised models of distribution have been trialled successfully for a short while, perhaps the greatest learning is about food distribution itself – particularly for those who work within it on a daily basis. The following quote indicates learning from one aspect of the trial and the importance of the size of the growing market to be able to 'feed' the distribution system – i.e. that the system needs to be addressed from multiple points.

> " The HWNS distribution project remains at an early point in determining whether it will ultimately be a sustainable model. Take up of available fruit lines in sufficient quantity during their respective seasons is developing well. However the majority of the success has been achieved in the smaller retail outlets. This can be a relatively inefficient model to distribute into (delivering 1 or 2 lines to multiple sites several times a week). For it to become a sustainable model, produce lines would need to increase, and deliveries consolidated or able to be combined with existing systems." (House With No Steps Final Project Report p16).

Food miles when considered in the context of climate change and reducing greenhouse gas emissions related to food production and distribution should also not focus only on transport emissions. Studies have been undertaken of the total carbon footprint of food production in the U.S.A. [14] that have shown transportation to be of minor importance, compared to the carbon emissions resulting from pesticide and fertilizer production, and the fuel required by farm and food processing equipment. However, transportation needs may be different in USA due to their different sizes of town centres and locality of production areas and they may be more 'chemical

[14] Christopher L. Weber* and H. Scott Matthews Food-Miles and the Relative Climate Impacts of Food Choices in the United States in Environmental Science and Technology, Publ, American Chemical Society http://pubs.acs.org/doi/full/10.1021/es702969f

heavy' than Australian growers. For more on the Australian context for food miles see the ABARE publication "Issues in food miles and carbon labeling"[15]

The NRFL project management team also anticipated as part of the risk assessment when developing the indicators, that transport emissions might be increased in the short term as a result of a fleet of smaller vehicles networking across the region collecting and delivering produce – and of course realised that the project would not be setting out to change the national freight haulage system – which would still be operating. What has happened is that transport emissions have been reduced on lines that have been used during the trial project. If those actions were scaleable up then the long distance haulage emissions might be reduced further. However, that is all dependent on the types of, and quantities
of, produce available.

In terms of evaluation data for the greenhouse emissions the author looked at how many less trips would be made to the national markets of either Sydney, Adelaide, Melbourne and Brisbane by either the distributor themselves (in the case of Citrus Growers and Fruitos) or Hernes Freight Services (in the case of House With No Steps (HWNS) as Hernes take HWNS produce to the markets). As these trips are dependent on where the best price can be realised for the grower on a specific day, Sydney was selected as the proxy to identify the greenhouse gas reductions.

All three participants in the distribution trial; Fruitos, Citrus Growers and House with No Steps have both reduced their transportation and increased the amount of regionally produced food that is grown and distributed regionally without it first going through any of the major markets. Fruitos particularly have reported a reduction in their KM travelled to and from the major markets by 17,852KM month. This is a major change to their practices. HWNS report that their changes have reduced KM travelled to the major markets by approximately 6,300KM or 7 full truck loads and Citrus Growers have reduced KM travelled by approximately 1,080KM a month. They have done this by working extensively on seeking new markets locally – sometimes for grade 2 or 3 produce as well as sourcing producers who can reliably provide sufficient produce to meet the needs of the retailers or restaurants.

As the food distribution system does not only comprise the major end of the system, comment must be made on the food being produced and sold with only a very short mileage. The NRFL project has supported the development of and initiated two new farmers markets that enable producers to take produce direct to buyers. Each of these producers is likely to be driving to and from market as will the people attending the farmers markets. Their respective vehicle emissions are dependent on their vehicle, but from the food's perspective it is travelling far fewer kilometres than that going via the major markets. As stated previously, the Blue Knob market reports to have sold a total of 4.2 tonnes of local produce between July 2010 and November 2011.

Please refer to the ultimate outcomes section of the outcome hierarchy for data sets on greenhouse gas emissions, alternative food distribution systems, number of producers and retailers using the alternative systems and perceptions of residents about their ability to access local food through those systems.

[15] Hogan and Thorpe (2009) "Issues in food miles and carbon labelling" ABARE
http://adl.brs.gov.au/data/warehouse/pe_abarebrs99001677/foodmiles.pdf

"Businesses respond to whatever demand is there. That's what businesses do. So just worry about the demand. Don't worry about anything else…….If everyone in Ballina went to Ballina Woolworths and said we want Ballina broccoli – Woolworths would respond……If Woolworths could see they would get more business in Ballina then….the system would respond. It is so code driven and organised, I bet if they wanted to say tomorrow we'll have 50 different strawberries from 50 labelled regions I bet they could do it." (Murray Richardson, Distribution White Paper, interview)

Mitigate the effects of climate change by supporting take-up of more sustainable food production practices with particular emphasis on farming inputs, land-use management in a changing climate and off-farm environmental impacts.

One of the challenges raised during the evaluation for the farming community and primary producers had been the recent [prior to this project] tightening of government support in the region to assist with trials and actions to take up more sustainable food production practices. The support made available through this project, particularly by DPI was therefore very well received.

Challenges for the agricultural sector

Participants of the sustainable agriculture anecdote circle discussed a number of challenges for the farming sector. Out of this discussion, three challenges that they felt could and should be addressed in the future were raised. These are pertinent for taking the work of the early adopters involved in the NRFL project on into the broader farming community.

1. Age of farmers and in many cases the resistance of the farmers to change "*Youngest farmer at field day….is trying to make a living with 4 kids [this is the] first support he's ever had – $4,000. To make the break [with existing habits] is not that easy. They still need dollars to live. Biological farming methods are starting to take off, but we have to look at the people getting it right on the ground [to show leadership and that it can be done] - the Stuart's [Stuart Larsson] of the world".* Bob Jarman, Northern Landcare Support Services P/L.
2. Financial viability Whilst food supply is critical to the whole society little support to remain financially viable is provided. Drought after drought – and flooding after flooding with resulting crop failures has forced farmers to be even more risk adverse. The group suggested that many farmers are, as a result, mortgaged to such an extent they cant make a mistake so don't take a risk. They suggested that farmers who have received funding and discounted professional advice through the NRFL project were extremely grateful for the opportunity – which reinforces the data provided through DPI and Northern Landcare Support Services project reports.
3. A general societal lack of understanding of how agriculture works and the tight margins in which the industry operates – perhaps as we have become mode disconnected from sources of fresh food production.

Similar recommendations can be found in the November 2011 report "Achieving Food Security in the face of Climate Change: A summary for Policy Makers" (ibid page 26).

Demonstrating systemic change and mitigating the effects of climate change over the short term is not feasible which is why this is one of the longer-term aims. However, quotes provided here demonstrate what can be achieved within the sector and on farm with, what might be considered, a low to medium level of financial investment. Were it continued over a longer period, or revisited in a few years some robust and reliable data that would tell a locally based story for other farmers to make the change would be available.

- Formal and informal networks developed through this project should be continued in whatever way they can be.

Despite the project having little on ground time and being challenged by flooding – there are still **early indications of the ability to mitigate the likely impacts of climate change** - of which flooding just may be one.

"Compared with results from before we began cell grazing....**on all measures there has been real improvement, particularly on organic carbon.** We intend to follow up next year with more soil testing to assess our grazing management" (Pasture management assessment progress at Rilla's subdivision on Redbank Farm owned by Sullivan & Blazejowski (Clarence Valley Clarence Landcare Sustainable Grazing project report p101)	"Growers participating in the Improved Greenhouse Management project received one on one support to take on elements of Integrated Pest Management (IPM) most useful to them, guidebooks, and committed to at least a trial period of formal pest insect monitoring within their crops. One participating farm **used the support of our project to make a major conversion from an intensive spray regime for controlling pest insects to a regime focused on biological controls**.
"…one of the difficult things for the agriculture industry – is that it is not a wealthy sector on the whole. **People don't change, they are scared to make a mistake**…..often agriculture is not that hard to adopt it, mother nature does most of it" Stuart Larsson, Mara Seeds.	"There is an **interest in more biological growing methods throughout the whole north coast – with conventional farmers**. They are looking at it – not saying they are adopting wholeheartedly, but they are looking at it" Bob Jarman, Northern Landcare Support Services P/L.
"Glenugie Creek landowner and field day host Mr Ross Lawson said "Being involved in the sustainable grazing project has helped us work towards our goal to increase biological activity of the soil, reduce negative impacts on natural resources and provide a healthier farming system in the long term. **We now have improved water efficiency and a system in place to monitor pasture health, have planted around 70 local trees and provided 2 alternative stock watering points**. The use of natural inputs to our pastures including organic compost is being trialled and we anticipate this will help improve soil health along with pasture and livestock condition in the long term." **……**	"I've got visions of what will happen with soils that go well beyond where we are now. I've spent 20 years looking at it and getting more data and evidence is important. Average age of farmers is 56 – **they are not going to change very quickly unless they see a significant result. They'll follow if they see results – but there haven't been a lot of leaders out there**. It becomes more evident every day" Stuart Larsson, Mara Seeds.

For indicators and data related to farming practices and land management see ultimate outcomes in the outcome hierarchy.

Strengthen community resilience to climate change and peak oil impacts by reducing reliance on highly centralised food supply chains by creating a local food economy built on strong links between the regions food producers, distributors, retailers and consumers.

This is a more complex long - term outcome. Comment on progress regarding the aim of improving community resilience is provided using three different topics; farmers markets, strengthening links between producers, distributors, retailers and consumers and the food economy for second and third grade produce. Community resilience itself was not assessed.[16]

[16] Community resilience is dynamic and often described as having three properties:
- Resistance – the degree of disruption that can be accommodated without the community undergoing long term change (i.e. a highly resilience community can withstand considerable disruption before undergoing long term change)
- Recovery – the communities ability to pull through or bounce back to pre-disaster state (a resilient community returns to, or moves beyond its pre-disaster state more quickly than an less resilient one) and;
- Creativity – the community's ability to build on learnings of a crisis or disaster. A highly resilient community will

Farmers Markets

One option for reducing reliance on centralised food supply chains and developing the local food economy is of course for farmers and producers to sell direct. This frequently allows them to gain sufficient income and also to meet customers direct, which for many brings satisfaction. It does mean trucks driving around the region from market to market – but may in the future mean less large trucks coming up and down from the major national markets. Convenience shopping (or non-convenience) is an issue that faces the farmers markets as we don't 'pop in on the way home from work' and the saturation point for produce and consumers that will push price competition is not yet known. That said – 42% participants in the evaluation rated farmers markets highly as a reliable source of regional produce and 61% (122/200) reported that the amount of produce their household purchases from farmers markets has increased or increased substantially since January 2010.

Blue Knob Farmers Market, Nimbin



"Three of my farmers [are involved in farmers markets]- Silas sells his local produce and relies on that for his total income. The cheese guys have seen a niche – dairy farmers that are now goat farmers– a lot of that is sold locally. Frank the rice grower, packages and sells his own rice at the markets as a biological farmer. He also uses the Nimbin mill." Bob Jarman, Northern Landcare Support Services P/L.

Strengthening links between the producers, retailers distributors and consumers across the food chain

This has been a very successful element of the project.

The project has worked extremely hard and effectively to build strong links across the food chain bringing together the personalities, producers and consumers of food, and to enable consumers to find producers and niche producers to find their consumers specifically through the marketing and education focus area. The Sustain Food website www.sustainfood.com.au developed through the project enables connections between consumers and retailers, food producers, farm gate sales, retailers, restaurants and community gardens. This has been complemented by an extensive media and marketing campaign profiling growers and farmers markets as well as encouraging consumers to ask "Is it local?" The campaign was aided by the involvement of ABC and Nine NBN as well as local print media enabling extensive reach into the community.

Ongoing investment of energy in marketing and education related to local foods and food security in the future was recommended by several project leaders as many felt it had been one of the most effective parts of the project in terms of enabling change in the broader community.

adapt to its new circumstances and learn from the experience.

Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs http://www.fahcsia.gov.au/sa/communities/progserv/Pages/business_continuity_pandemic_planning.aspx [accessed 03/02/2012]

For further comment and quotes related to education and marketing please see the outcomes section of this report which follows.

Retailers like the agricultural and farming sectors - often work on tight and narrow margins making them risk adverse and more sensitive to short-term rather than long -term concerns. Whilst 95% of participants in the RDA-NR project already stocked some local foods, influencing the retail sector (other than the farmers markets) to make more change presents a number of challenges, many of which are addressed in detail in the RDA –NR report.

"Retailers are not interested in shifting the way they do business unless there is a risk free option – which essentially this project offers. For many retailers…unless there is a financial /supply risk free option there is no point in shifting your business operations" (Katrina Luckie, RDA-NR).

Having said that, a number of key changes were effected by RDA –NR across the 85 retailers representing butchers, greengrocers, supermarkets, general stores and 'other' retail sectors they worked with.

- 73.5% reported sales of local foods having increased between 0-50%
- The level of food stocked by retailers participating in the RDA-NR Source Identification project increased from an average rating (established by RDA-NR) of 5.93 – 6.92
- The shelf-wobbler, Northern Rivers Food posters and "be part of something special" laminated items were highly successful and used frequently by retailers
- The source identification case management program had a significant impact on increasing the amount of source identification of local food from an average rating of 3.89-5.92 (RDA-NR final project report)

Self identified retailers (12) in the project survey cite public awareness and demand as the main reasons for them stocking more local produce.

The distribution anecdote circle in discussing ideas about risk free options for retailers that could be considered for the future, considered the use of a similar model to that applied in supermarkets whereby sales representatives place really well branded products and marketing in store. With data showing some increased sales and that retailers across the region are making use of the project's in store point of sale branding to assist in driving consumer demand this is an approach that could be considered for the future. Again as mentioned elsewhere in the report if a suitably strong narrative as has been started through the NRFL project is there for retailers - they can, do and will make the change.

For a range of statistics on farmers markets, including amount of produce being sold at farmers markets, patronage at farmers markets, as well as food distribution systems and availability of local food see intermediate outcomes in the outcome hierarchy. For statistics on the marketing and education focus area see immediate outcomes.

For indicators and data sets relating to the retail sector – branding, stock and sales see ultimate and intermediate outcomes in the outcome hierarchy

A local food economy for second and third grade produce

The Citrus Growers Association (CGA) and Fruitos have both attempted to find markets for produce that has, up to now, been left to perish or 'not had a home' – and thereby make changes to the existing retail – distribution – producer system. Both have had some successes.

" Returns to CGA's growers have improved with an average increase in sales revenue of 41.39 – 41.79 p/kg of fruit sales having been achieved. The significant improvement in volume and price of 2nd grade product sold (81% of limes sold were 2nd grade) has resulted in better returns for the CGA members" (CGA project report). This has been achieved through seeking new markets, new branding, expanding the distribution area and expanding the product lines. CGA report that it had previously been difficult to sell 2nd grade profitably at the national markets. So they have shifted from driving up and down to Sydney to focussing on regional outlets and reaped the rewards.

Fruitos ongoing goal is to "find a home for every piece of produce" Much of their work in the 6 months that they have been involved in the project has been spent clearly distinguishing which segments of farmers/producers can meet the supply levels required and targeting those. They now have a database of 41 qualified growers who will be able to service their customer base (smaller retail outlets, restaurants and food services and households). This research has the potential to make even more local produce available for the local retailer and consumer.

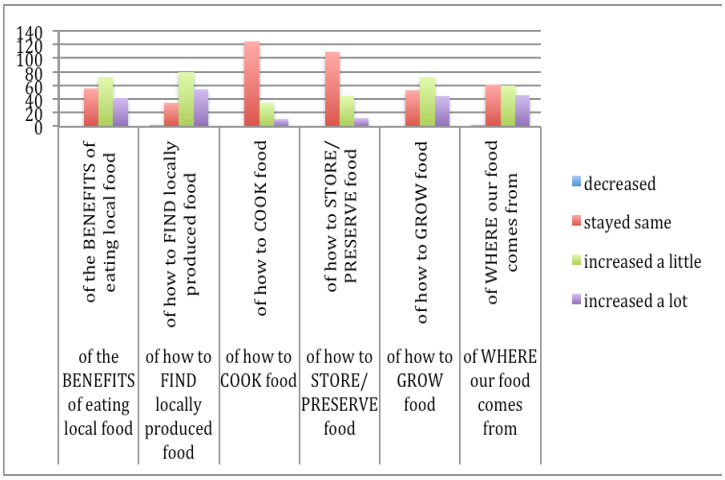
For indicators and data sets related to supply of local produce and the local food economy see intermediate and ultimate outcomes in the outcome hierarchy.

Project Outcomes: Immediate, Intermediate & Ultimate

In line with the outcome hierarchy evaluation framework as is required by the NSW Environmental Trust, this section of the report explores the evidence available regarding the desired project outcomes. The reader should also refer to the outcome hierarchy as this project has a considerable number of outcomes it was working to achieve.

Immediate Outcomes: Is there evidence?

On the shorter timeframe: immediate outcomes, is there evidence of increased knowledge and understandings: about barriers, about policy work, and how to find locally produced food, then use it and how to produce or grow food? **Yes**.



See outcome hierarchy for indicators and detailed data sets.

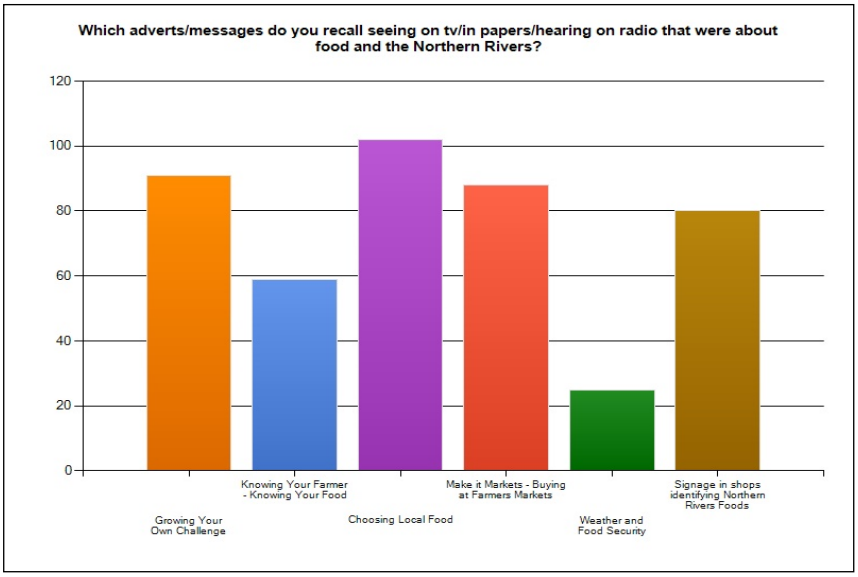
For the larger project community knowledge of:

- The benefits of eating local food has **increased**
- How to find locally produced food has **increased**
- How to cook food has **stayed the same**
- How to grow food has **increased**
- Where our food comes from has **increased** **(Q97 172 respondents)**

Survey respondents were asked unprompted about their recall of various marketing and media for the project (Q100, 172 respondents). Whilst the question had an error in that people could not say none, they had the option to state that in the next question which asked if they could tell us anything about those media. Of 14 different categories of recall raised in the open question the top three were:

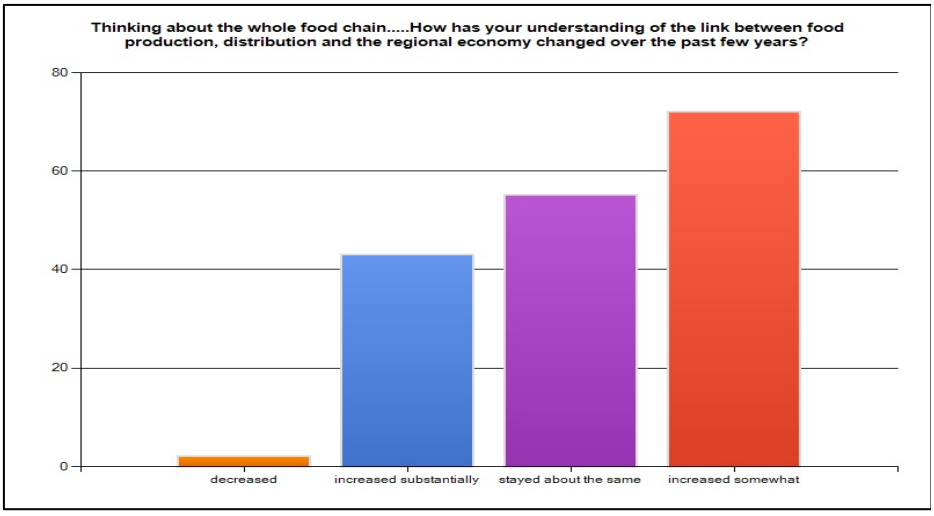
1. ABC radio adverts/coverage
2. ABC programs/adverts
3. Press adverts or editorial

These were followed by the Grow your Own campaign and "the TV ad with the kid."



"I think some of the TV advertising has been excellent. It has really driven the point that healthy foods is where we are". (Stuart Larsson, Mara Seeds).
" …using prime time spots has been really beneficial, really strong. A lot of retailers have seen the ads. The message has gotten across." (RDA and Fruitos joint conversation)
"A lot of people talk to me about Food Links. There's big awareness. Impressive awareness. I talk to a lot of people. **A lot of people talk to me about the success of the project. Which is fantastic in such a short period. The biggest winner - and that involves everyone involved - all the people involved, from all the projects to the people running it - is the awareness of the issues on a local basis.** " Phil Dudman, ABC TV.

In thinking about the whole food chain – production, distribution and the local economy respondents considered how their understanding of the links between these had changed…..



67 % of 172 survey respondents said that their understanding of the link between food production, distribution and the regional economy had increased (42% increased and 25% increased a lot) over the past few years. 32% that it had stayed the same.

Respondents were then asked why they had said that. Reasons were analysed and collated under 16 broad topics or themes. The five top reasons/areas of understanding mentioned with numbers of mentions in brackets were:

1. There was not change in understanding/had always been interested (37)
2. Understanding of the system and processes of local food production/distribution/food miles and the relationship with the food chain (27)
3. Being more aware/involved as a result of the advertising/available education opportunities and increased interest (17)
4. (a) Being more aware of the economics/costs/impacts of the food system (10)
   (b) General unspecified comments about being more aware/having more knowledge (10)
5. More insights into how food is processed (7).

Comments illustrating individual's change in understanding include:

"My understanding of the food chain has changed regarding…. the food production and transport practices current in Australia. I **think my awareness has expanded from a personal preference for local and organic food to an understanding of the benefits to community of local and sustainably produced food**" (survey respondent)

"We received a lot of positive feedback from Greg, **making us feel that the issues we have are not that bad, but manageable when applying the appropriate methods**. We have yet to implement all that was suggested to us but **we intend to give everything a go**." Sue and PJ Cole, Wells Crossing Farm.

"The suggestions you make are very **well considered in relation to the challenges of both climate change and the need to adapt management practices that provide water efficient outcomes as well as carbon capture to sustain productive capacity**" Ken Tucker, Coutts Crossing. To Greg Reid, DPI.

Intermediate Outcomes: 2-4 years. Is there evidence the project is on the way?

Regarding the intermediate outcomes (2-4 years) is there evidence of the community being on the journey towards increased use of organic waste and/or compost in food production and expanding markets for these? And increased patronage and spread of farmers markets and production and consumption of local food? **Yes.** *See outcome hierarchy for indicators and detailed data sets.*

<u>Compost</u>

- "A number [of landholders at field day] mentioned **the most important message of the day was related to compost: soil improvement, farming in a more natural way, benefits of natural compost, soil improvement leads to cattle improvement** & compost trials"
- Sufficient numbers (111 or 56%) of survey respondents suggest that they could use more composted materials than they are able to access currently. Of those **66% said they would buy compost/organic materials.**

Farmers markets

"They [John and Jenny McKavanah from near Kyolge who are one of the case studies for sustainable farm planning] try and sell their produce locally, direct to the consumer. Jenny says '**Farmers markets make all the effort worthwhile'. Producers are able to meet consumers - people who directly appreciate the role of farmers**."

This is a region that certainly likes farmers markets. In answer to the question (4) where can you **shop confidently knowing you can get local or regional food 42% of 200 respondents mentioned markets** of one form or another. The following word cloud was drawn from survey input in answer to the question.



In addition to the survey statistics, a competitiveness study undertaken on behalf of the Northern Rivers Farmers Market Network through NRFL provides insights to shoppers' habits and interests. Whilst a relatively small geographical scale research project (Distribution Projects: Northern Rivers Farmers Market Network Initiatives) it has shown potential for the farmers' market customer base to expand as consumer awareness about food, quality and impacts on the environment becomes more widely considered.

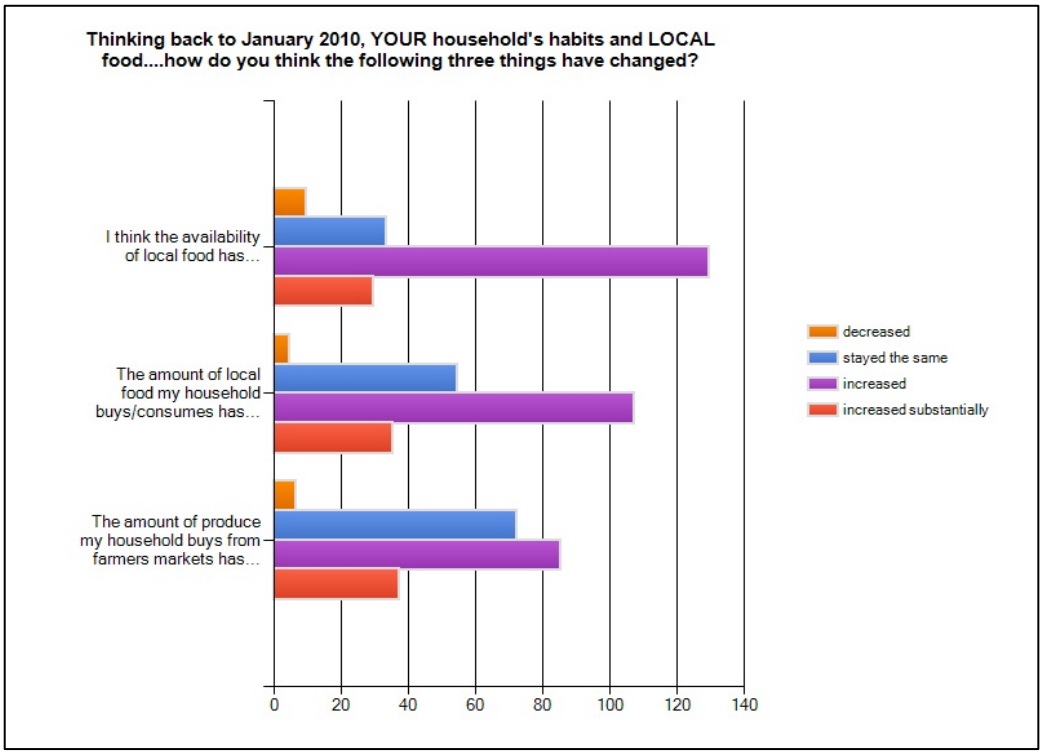
They found that **the factors that are important for people in deciding where to shop for people who do not shop at farmers markets are broadly - convenience, price and variety. For those who do choose to use farmers markets they are health, local/organic produce availability and atmosphere.**

"If the most important factors for consumers are convenience and price, then the Farmers' Market will have a difficult time always being the perfect location, as price varies based on seasonality and availability, and the Market is not extremely convenient for grocery shopping. However, if consumers decide (which many already have) that the freshness and quality of products, the atmosphere of the shopping location, and their health and well-being are the most important factors, then shopping at the Farmers' Market will be an easy decision." (Dunn, for Northern Rivers Farmers Market network)

Availability of locally produced food for consumers

Early research undertaken by RDA – NR indicated that there was (at the time) insufficient capacity and quantity of producers and product within the region to get the distribution system up and running – and thereby increase stock in the retailers. In addition confusion amongst the stakeholders about the extent of the existing known growers market producing sufficient product to supply larger retailers consistently meant that some energy had to be directed towards advertising for, and finding, growers who would take part in the trial. 41 growers have now been sourced so if the practices started in the first 18 months of this project are continued and consumers continue to ask for local produce then the community should certainly be able to see more locally produced product available in their shops. This will supplement the producers who already make product available direct to smaller retailers, and to consumers though www.sustainfood.com.au

"**I am just generally much more aware of sourcing my food locally, feel more confident to inquire about it, I know my farmers markets, I also know MUCH more about what's seasonal and what's not**" (survey respondent to question what do you know now that you didn't know before)



The 200 respondents to the question about their thoughts on local food availability and their purchasing habits demonstrated an increase across the board.

The farmers market study and project community survey found similar responses to the amount of produce their household purchases from farmers markets. However, these contrast with the findings from Jetty Research across the whole Northern Rivers community.
Jetty survey respondents are shopping less at farmers markets (regular used down 32% to 22%).

A really positive indicator of a shift in the broader community identified by Jetty was the 10% shift from 54% to 64% associating "locally grown" with "Northern Rivers" which would appear to be a massive shift in such a short period of time.

Community gardens

Locally grown food has of course also been made available through the community gardens initiated, expanded and running right across the council areas. Seventeen new gardens have formed and pleasure in home growing produce is expressed across all data sources. The community gardens also bring social benefits, which were noted by many.

Some comments on community gardens and their value from a societal perspective from survey respondents and project leaders include:

- "We have seen the **strength of the community and the social aspect motivate people to change**" "the **social interaction that's come out of the garden**, people who were lonely or didn't get out at all…."
- "Its great to learn from and share knowledge with other gardeners" and "the **amount of interest and passion generated by the project to get people growing their own produce has been significant**."
- And more specifically with regard to social benefits "extra community gardens have started as a result of this project (Tabulam, Bonalbo and Urbenville)"
- Extension work has also occurred including **garden volunteers going into the community to assist residents who are unable to look after their gardens** and hope has even been expressed that domestic violence may be reduced as a result of the increased sense of worth occurring for people in the community.

Ultimate outcomes: 5 + years. Is there evidence that direction is set?

Regarding the ultimate outcomes – looking 5 + years ahead: Is there evidence that any early changes have been made for the community and the environment? Any evidence of the local councils taking a co-ordinated approach to regional sustainability issues related to food and any change in sustainability performance of stakeholders or increased social cohesion? **Yes**.

Data sets can be found in the ultimate outcomes section of the outcome hierarchy.

Social cohesion

With regard to social cohesion there are definitely reportable benefits coming from projects – both in terms of direct support for those at risk and networks to support one another within sectors (such as the farmers market network and a newly established forum www.ausfarmersandgrowers.com set up by participating farmers Sue and PJ Cole "in the hope that we can bring farmers and growers together on a regular basis to share skills and knowledge. Also we want to provide support and friendship so producers don't feel alone when things go wrong…".

Project leaders expressed a range of social benefits when asked in the survey: What are you proud about doing in this project?

- "Providing **fresh food or meals to an average of 100 disadvantaged people** per week"
- "Assisting local **businesses collaborate**."
- "The workshops gave **basic skills to a lot of people** to set up and maintain a home food garden."
- "That we have been successful in engaging a range of different groups and services that participate on a regular basis; people with disabilities, mental illness, high school students, job training services, Aboriginal community members and local community families and individuals"
- "**10 young people trained in growing food and giving to charity**"
- "Got youth in the garden"
- "**Growers got one on one support** to take on elements of IPM (Integrated Pest Management) most useful to them"

- "Farmers markets representatives were able to meet each other (most for the first time) and **begin to share their experiences, realising that many of their challenges were the same**" (survey respondent)
- "Loaves Soup Kitchen. Lend a Hand Food Aid Service. Casino Emergency Relief Service, Mid – Richmond Neighbourhood Centre youth training café and emergency relief"

Work by the local councils

In addition to providing leadership for this project, extensive work has been undertaken by the councils across the region with regard to policy and planning instruments; reviewing and amending them, as well as developing the new templates to support sustainable agriculture and food security in the region. 169 members of staff have contributed at least 368 hours in addition to the 1642 hours contributed by the members of the steering committee.

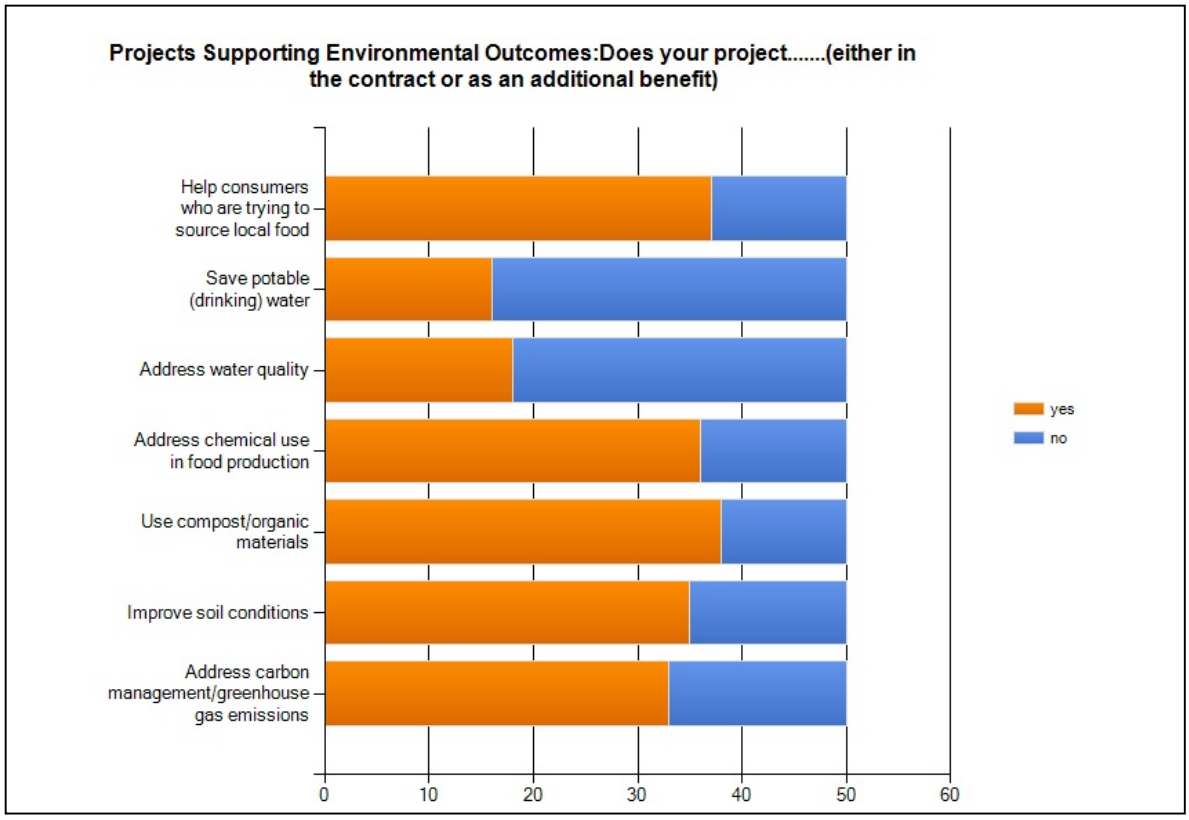
The policy and planning changes will support the longer-term focus on food security. One example of this is Richmond Valley Council's proposed DCP amendment that will require a two-square metre plot per dwelling in new multi-unit dwellings for food gardens.[17] This is thought to be a first in Australia.

The Local Government Kit will contribute to continuing this support. Over 100 senior managers and elected representatives attended forums run by NRFL, farmers markets have been supported and changes made to council procurement practices in order to support local food choices. So not only has the project been supported within the LGAs but also foundations laid to continue in the future.

Environmental Changes

Environmental changes have been reported by both project leaders and participants. Project final reports contain all the details. The following chart shows the environmental outcomes project leaders felt their work contributes to. Orange (on the left) are the outcomes that their work contributes to. Blue (on the right) those that they consider they do not contribute to It shows that whilst projects addressed a range of environmental outcomes, focus was on assisting consumers in sourcing local food, using compost/organic materials, addressing chemical use in food production and addressing carbon management/greenhouse emissions. Water quality and savings were a lesser component.

[17] Under consideration by Council at time of writing



Looking more specifically at some of the environmental changes taking place on the land, early indications are that change is on the way, and in some cases already apparent.

- "The estimated capacity [of the dam – repaired through the NRFL project] is 745 cubic metres or **745,000 litres**. Total spent so far on the repair is $4,500"
- "**Water no longer sheets off the hill**, but is absorbed……"
- "About 5500 kg DM/ha was removed from Emma's during the period assessed. As this is the first production from that area that we have achieved it represents a **net gain in production**" (Redbank Farm, Participant in Clarence Landcare Sustainable Grazier Project).
- **Relieving grazing pressure on Glenugie Creek** and **improved water efficiency** has been possible through installing a 20,000L tank and 500L stock trough at Reily's Farm (R+D Lawson) as watering points
- Fencing to enable **rotational grazing and new water troughs** have been installed at Baringal Dairy – R & J Barnier as part of their move to more sustainable grazing tactics and **to relieve pressure on floodplain back swamp**.(Clarence Valley Sustainable Grazing report p37)
- Whilst DPI report that it is too soon to be able to draw any conclusions… " it may be possible to attribute any gains in production or environment to the changes made with the [NRFL] project. ……."**cattle looked better, pasture growth has improved**"…."The action of the landholder monitoring and recording observations, noting management strategy, environmental changes and production changes in both pastures and animals has provided him with the skills and tools to make more informed management decisions….will enable sustainable food production in a healthier environment, able to better withstand flooding occurrences. **The change in farm management and infrastructure to rotational grazing should ensure: greater groundcover of pastures, less degradation to soils by "bogging",**

reduced runoff increased organic matter retention greater utilisation of wet pastures greater flexibility to respond to climatic/environmental events. This will lead to a more resilient and healthy environment. (DPI report on Baringal Monitoring and Evaluation: Clarence Sustainable Grazing Projects)

- "The [DPI sustainable farm planning] provided good information on forecasting and carbon measurement in soils and forests…..[providing]….**very competent and professional approach to issues that are the key to sustainability…there should be more programs like it to promote agriculture**" (collated feedback from sustainable farm planning participants).
- "….**built a kiln to convert thinnings and prunings into biochar carbon….to improve production and soil carbon in the horticultural areas**" (Dolph Cook) and [intends to]"make biochar to add to his soil and has constructed a circular biochar kiln. …also intended to make **'smoke water' that will assist with disease control and harvest synchronization"** (Doug Rowling)
- "Andrew Leslie (Macadamia Farmer, DPI sustainable farm planning) now intends to use forecasting tools like POAMA to **adjust his opportunity crops to the main chance each year….using the information and sampling tools provided** during the farm visit [he] intends to benchmark the carbon in his soils and trees so that he retains the option of selling carbon credits"

What do participants say they have learnt? What will they do in the future?

In addition to seeking answers to populate the outcome hierarchy a few questions were added to the survey – which was answered by 200 people in the broad project community - to gain some input and ideas for future iterations of the project. These, like the significant change stories have a participant centred approach. These supplement the learnings about the project provided in other reports including those from Jetty Research on community attitudes, White Paper on distribution, the producers research conducted by RDA at the start of the project and the farmers market research conducted by Byron Farmers Market Inc

<u>What do you know now that you didn't know before?</u>

"NRFL has brought the issue to the forefront of issues that need to be acted on as a priority" (survey respondent).

Towards the end of the survey (Q 98, 172 responses) participants were asked unprompted what they know now that they did not know before the project. This supports a review of what participants have learnt, according to their own perspectives and needs, and in an informal way assesses knowledge gained against the project learning objectives. 14 different areas or topics were identified during analysis. The top five do relate closely to the project objectives of awareness and action for improving soil health, enhancing community food knowledge, encouraging at source composting, community education on links between sustainability and buying food locally; as well as increasing access to fresh local food and reconnecting communities with regional food production.

The **top four topics that people report to have learnt about** (with 3 topics sharing 4th position) with number of mentions in brackets are:

1. Soil health, composting, mulching, worm farming and biochar (35)
2. How to grow, around seasonality and weather, specific crops and farming ideas, and planting techniques (25)
3. How much local produce there is/can be, and how many growers there are (19)
4. (a) How to find local food, where it is grown and sold, and difficulties for retailers (14)
   (b) How interested people are generally and within the sectors about food/food security/growing food (interest in both risks and benefits) (14).

(c) Sustainable agriculture and gardening techniques; companion planting, drip irrigation, non-spraying, crop rotation, permaculture (14

<u>And with an eye on the future…</u> <u>what would people be willing to do to continue to work towards a sustainable food supply in the Northern Rivers?</u>

At least 150 respondents intend to continue activity. Answers included;

"I will continue to broaden my knowledge and put into practice as much of this as is possible. This project has created contacts that I have been able to ring for advice, which has improved my land practice. I hope to be involved with information events and field days where possible and happy to provide our land for trials if needed" (Orchard grower, Elizabeth Hanna)

Examples of what other people will continue to do are….

- Shop at my local farmers market. Continue to **grow organic food** myself and with friends. **Share what I know** with others about the importance of fresh, healthy, nutritionally dense, local food.
- Continue to **lobby** for the lowering of barriers to local meat and dairy products to **give small farmers and conscious consumers a legal option.**
- **Keep growing**. Seek out / create grower forums.
- Facilitate updates for the website, **involvement in an food security project**
- **Educate** others to grow food. **Participate** in community gardens
- Growing food and sharing my experiences with others: **Organise** a farmers market, organise training seminars and workshops, reduce GM foods coming into the area, help organise other farmers markets
- **Advocate** for local urban and peri urban based organic and biodynamic sustainable food systems with closed energy loops**; teach** same, **assist** implementation of new employment programs
- **Maintain fresh grazing paddocks and good water + shade** and identify and pests and act to rectify
- **Continue to compost, make it work for our business. We are then protecting our environment.**

Evaluation Findings: The Outcome Hierarchy

The outcome hierarchy forms the second half of this two-part report and is available as a separate report. The outcome hierarchy was the key organising and evaluation framework developed for the Northern Rivers Food Links project objectives. As such it contains indicators and detailed data related to activities and outcomes over the short (just longer than the funded duration of this project or 18-24 months) intermediate (achievable in 2-5 years) and long term (in this project considered as 5 years plus) outcomes. To enable a stand- alone assessment of the project it is more heavily populated than some project managers and evaluators may be familiar with.

Both the outcome hierarchy and this report will be used within the project final report to the Environmental Trust to draw a full picture of the reach, influence and many successes of the Northern Rivers Food Links Project.

Bibliography/References

- Project Final Reports – available from Northern Rivers Food Links website www.northernriversfoodlinks.com.au
- "Achieving Food Security in the face of Climate Change: A summary for Policy Makers" published by the CGIAR Research Program on Climate Change, Agriculture and Food Security.
- Regional Development Australia – Northern Rivers (October, 2010) "Source Identification Strategy: Survey of Food Retailers" for Northern Rivers Food Links
- Project participant survey (September 2011)
- Collated data from project reports provided by the NRFL team.
- Jetty Research (June, 2010) "Consumer awareness and behaviour survey relating to production, distribution and consumption of local foods"
- Jetty Research (October, 2011) "Consumer awareness and behaviour survey relating to production, distribution and consumption of local foods. Wave Two Survey






PO Box 1663 Ballina NSW 2478 | Phone: 02 6686 3972 | Fax: 02 6681 5196
info@northernriversfoodlinks.com.au | www.northernriversfoodlinks.com.au

Evaluation

Project Evaluation Report – Outcome Hierarchy

The Outcomes Hierarchy report, completed by the external consultant contracted for this purpose, is attached overleaf. It provides easy to read quantitative responses of the ultimate, intermediate and immediate outcomes of the project against the performance indicators and the information source.

NSW GOVERNMENT | NSW Environmental TRUST
This project has been assisted by the New South Wales Government through its Environmental Trust.

Project Evaluation Report - Outcome Hierarchy

for

Northern Rivers Food Links

Securing a Sustainable Food Future

Prepared by

The Storey Agency Pty Ltd

January 2012

www.storeyagency.com.au

This project has been assisted by the New South Wales Government through its Environmental Trust.

Thank you

To all the individuals who took the time to contribute to this evaluation report: With over 200 contributing to the survey alone we cannot thank you individually. Thanks to all the project leaders across the region for all their work in data collation and for individuals who contributed time and knowledge to the anecdote circles and increased my own knowledge of the region and the wonderful and complex world of food from field to fork and all the stops on the way. Finally, the report could not have been compiled without the assistance of the NRFL project management team particularly the Project Manager Samantha Muller and Project Administrator Rachel Summers. Thank You.

Definitions and abbreviations

Outcome Hierarchies

NSW Environmental Trust funded projects make use of outcome hierarchies for evaluation. This method has its own terminology, which is explained here in the context of the Northern Rivers Food Links project.

Immediate outcomes: During the planning stage of the project the immediate outcomes were identified as those that could be realistically achieved after 12 - 18 months on ground work (which would be by June 2011 - Dec 2011)

Intermediate outcomes would be sought for 2-4 years time (selecting 4 years or June 2014 as a measure date)

Ultimate outcomes might have a timeline of 5 plus years (June 2015+).

Northern Rivers Food Links project terminology

NRFL – the Northern Rivers Food Links project

Focus Area – a broad area of focus as outlined in the NRFL Business Plan. There were seven focus areas. Some are directed to stakeholder groups within a specific industry – such as sustainable agriculture or local government resource kit whilst others are broadly about methods of effecting change such as marketing and skilling the community. Local Projects are grouped under focus areas.

Project Leader/Team Leader – people representing organisations delivering discrete projects as Local Project Teams.

Local Project Teams – the teams on the ground delivering projects through the various focus areas.

Project Management Team – Project Manager, Project Administrator, Village Showcase Coordinator, Regional Projects Coordinator, engaged by and reporting to the Steering Committee

Steering Committee – the seven councils and Rous Water delivering the NRFL grant. The lead and administrative council was Clarence Valley Council.

Disclaimer

Whilst all care and diligence has been taken in the preparation of this report The Storey Agency Pty Ltd does not warrant the accuracy of the information contained within the report and accepts no liability for any loss or damage that may result from reliance on the information contained in the report.

Notes

1. Due to the extensive reach of this project in the region and high level of involvement in many different ways and at different scales of locality, with its 35 food security projects and supporting services and the additional activities going on through those 35 projects, self identification as to ones role in delivery differed from the role assigned at the project team level. Ultimately, this is not an issue, as everyone is working towards the same goals. However, for evaluation purposes it does present a challenge when trying to analyse data according to sector. Any statements “project leaders suggested” are sourced from the anecdote circles, survey or hard copy reports other than where the data source is noted.
2. Multiple data sources have fed into this report. They rely heavily on the project leaders in the field and NRFL project team members for accuracy, collation and provision.

Introduction

This report provides the findings of the external evaluation of the Northern Rivers Food Links (NRFL) project, delivered by Ballina, Byron, Clarence Valley, Kyogle, Lismore, Richmond Valley and Tweed Shire Councils and Rous Water over two years between 2010 and 2012 and funded by the NSW Government Environmental Trust.

The evaluation findings of the Northern Rivers Food Links project are provided in two documents:

1. This document, the outcome hierarchy has been populated with data that reports to indicators selected for the project's intended outcomes to enable a stand-alone scan of the project outcomes, findings and statistics.
2. The evaluation report covers in detail the project objectives and the outcomes that have been achieved. It explores the learning that participants have reported in relation to growing and producing food, and to regional food security. It finds community and Council willingness and interest to continue this valuable work in the future. The evaluation report further considers not only the funded timeline of the project but also the considerable steps made towards longer term more complex change relating to food security within the Northern Rivers region. It is peppered with participants' stories as well as project statistics to reflect not just the on ground outcomes but also the experiences of the participants in the Northern Rivers community.

The reader is recommended to use both documents.

Working within the project vision "*That the Northern Rivers leverages its strength as a socially, ecologically and economically resilient region, capable of withstanding the impacts of climate change and peak oil on local food supply and costs. Greenhouse gas emissions, from food production and consumption, will be minimized by reducing reliance on markets outside the regional for food supply*" evaluation will show that all eight project objectives have been achieved.

The project has not only achieved its short term objectives, but evaluation finds evidence that changes have commenced with regard to the core aspects of longer-term environmental management, behaviour change and food security for the region as identified in the project vision.

Reading this outcome hierarchy

The outcome hierarchy was the key organising and evaluation framework developed for the Northern Rivers Food Links project objectives. As such it contains indicators and data related to activities and outcomes over the short (just longer than the funded duration of this project or 18-24 months) intermediate (achievable in 2-5 years) and long term (in this project considered as 5 years plus) outcomes. It is more heavily populated than many outcome hierarchies.

The outcome hierarchy provides data as evidence of the achievement of the eight project objectives.

1. *The skills and tools of local government staff in the Northern Rivers to support the development of the local food supply network have been enhanced.*
2. *Community education on links between sustainability and buying food locally has been enhanced.*
3. *Awareness of the community and businesses on how to improve soil health through increased organic waste recycling has been raised.*
4. *The amount of organic waste sent to landfill by project participants has been reduced and at source composting encouraged.*
5. *Access to and awareness of fresh, local food has been enhanced with a resulting increase in food knowledge.*
6. *A reduction in distance travelled to distribute food, and the resulting reduction in greenhouse gas emissions has been supported. Participating distributors have trialed a shortened food supply and distribution system within the Northern Rivers.*
7. *Urban communities have had the opportunity to reconnect with regional food distribution in order to increase resilience to potential future food shortages.*
8. *Viable food supply systems have been trialed and demonstrate the ability for an increase in economic returns within the region for distributors.*

Outcome hierarchies are prepared for projects with an eye on long-term systemic change. They are developed in three stages: Ultimate outcomes, intermediate outcomes and immediate outcomes. In the case of this project the immediate outcomes are those achievable during the funding period (or 18-24 months from the start), intermediate are expected to be achievable within 2-5 years and the ultimate outcomes for 5 years plus.

Outcome hierarchies therefore should be read from the bottom (or end) upwards. The left hand column contains the outcomes that the project seeks to achieve for each stage; the second contains the question to be asked; the third indicators and the final column – the findings.

Northern Rivers Food Links Outcome Hierarchy Data findings December 2011

Data provided indicates that immediate outcomes have been met and intermediate outcomes are already well on the way despite a 5 year horizon.
Data also indicates that changes have commenced with regard to the core aspects of longer-term environmental management (5 year + i.e. post 2016), which the project was looking towards.
Data on the immediate project outcomes is found at the end of the document, whilst that to support the longer term intent of the project can be found at the top.

Some of the changes recorded have taken place on farms, others on smallholdings or at community gardens or within the commercial distribution and retailing of food, whilst others are taking place through people managing small domestic plots and/or within their day to day decisions and activities within the home. Change is happening across the spectrum.

outcome	questions	indicators	data/findings (data sources are written in bold)
Ultimate Outcomes 5 year +		* some are funding body requirements. Others locally selected	Data sources are listed at the top of each row. Data is sourced from (a) Northern Foodlinks Project Survey, distributed via all project leaders and participants during September 2011. 220 responses. Referred to as project survey (b) Final Project Reports. Data was accumulated from these by the Project Management Team and provided to the evaluator in collated form. Referred to as Project Team (c) Specific Final Project Reports. Referred to as Project Reports (d) The broad Community Survey. A telephone survey of 500 household grocery buyers conducted in September 2011 across the region by Jetty Research with a minimum of 60 interviews in each LGA (e) Steering Committee. A focus group was held with the steering committee to provide personal insights to the project. (f) face to face group meetings (anecdote circles) with project leaders.
Improved quality of the environment.	How many landholders/participants have adopted better environmental practices?	Number of land managers /participants adopting better environmental practices	**Project Survey** 128 survey respondents who provided information on changes they had made to personal habits at home or work after participating in this project: (Q95) the following percentages of changes are reported. (a) improved soil health 77% (98) (b) improved water quality 41% (53) (c) reducing greenhouse gas emissions 59% (76) (d) reducing amount of organics going to landfill 72% (92) (e) choosing local food 85% (109)

			(f) conservation of potable water 55% (70) Of the 50 people who self identify as project leaders (at Q92), i.e. not just the NFRL project leaders (see the definitions in the main evaluation report) the following report that their projects are contributing to a) improved soil health 70% (35) (b) improved water quality 36% (18) (c) reducing greenhouse gas emissions 66% (33) (d) reducing amount of organics going to landfill 76% (38) (e) helping consumers who are trying to source local food 74% (37) (f) water conservation 32% (16) Project leaders were also asked to identify outcomes that they are proud of. Environmental management outcomes included " 63% of responding farmers program felt the program made their operation more sustainable" 73% responding farmers instituted management changes and 75% responding farmers intend to increase soil carbon (property planning consultant to NRFL project) **Project Reports - Agricultural/land managers and growers** 143 of 212 attendees of the Sustainable Agriculture Forums (May 2011) thought the knowledge gained would influence their on farm environmental practices with regard to: (a) improved soil health 97% (79) (b) improved water quality 75% (62) (c) reducing greenhouse gas emissions 76% (63) (d) reducing amount of organics going to landfill 70% (58) (f) conservation of potable water 72% (60) 27 farmers and 4 greenhouse food producers and have been directly involved with the project. 22 farmers through sustainable property management, one running large scale softer farming method trials, and 4 developing on farm organic waste and living mulch systems. Case studies are available.
	How many urban food producers have implemented sustainable food production practices?	Number of urban food producers (including community gardens, householders and value added producers)	**Project Team** 616 - this includes 500 reported participants of the extensive program run by Nimbin Community Centre. They note that all the producers at the Blue Knob Farmers Market are committed to sustainable food production and practices including organics,,biodynamics and recycling.

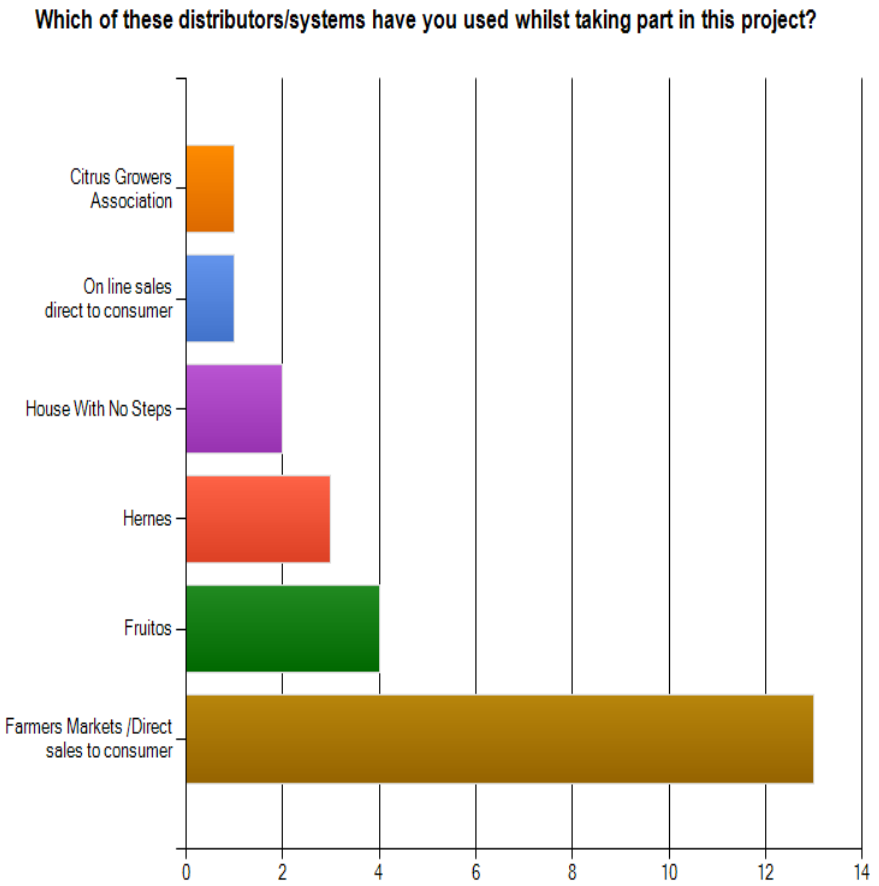
		adopting better and sustainable practices	
	How much water has been saved through conservation and efficiency implementation	Kilolitres of water saved	**Project Survey** Of 50 people who self identify as project leaders (at Q92), therefore not just the contracted NRFL project leaders. 32% (16) report that their projects are saving potable water. **Project Reports** 7 funded projects directed to water efficiency and conservation report saving a total of 774,000 litres (including 20,000 Reilly's Farm, 745,000 Redbank dam when full) Project leaders expressed the following water efficiency outcomes of which they were proud "Improvements to on farm water efficiency – immediate" (Q 93) The greenhouse growing system….water efficiency is increased" "Biochar saves water as it acts like a sponge" "The community has more of an understanding about….and the importance of water conservation and mulching in the food growing cycle" "saving potable water - our project will use recycled water.
	Has water quality improved?	Number of project activities addressing water quality.	**From project survey** Of 50 people who self identify as project leaders (at Q92) 36% (18) report that their projects are addressing water quality issues. However few examples are provided regarding actions. **Project team** 7 funded projects addressed water quality. **Project Reports** DPI sustainable farm practices project addressed a range of water quality issues including; water monitoring, water use efficiency, flooding, drainage and infiltration, water logging, flood damage to crops. Activities included tree proposed for drainage, planting of specific crops in wet zones and/or to improve drainage and break up clay (for example plantain which also serves as winter fodder) and agisting flood prone areas to stock. Through the Northern Landcare Support Services Biological Farming Methods Project 4 farms have improved water quality though using less chemical fertilizer (and avoiding run off) creek bed management, weed control, including increasing ground cover, and exported less nutrients as a result of recycling. The Clarence Landcare Sustainable Grazing Agriculture Project also worked on water quality. The three sites have installed water troughs, stock has been redirected to defined watering points, and off stream watering points (tank and trough) identified. **Project Survey** - I have gained a greater understanding of the effect on and filtering of water through plants and soil (small scale fruit grower/producer) survey respondent #203

		Reduction in contaminants.	**Project Survey (1)** Respondents noted they were proud that they had "Reduced nutrient inputs to waterways" (Q93 – 3) Learnt that..."Chemicals for pest control can be reduced by organic methods and companion planting Activities includes " chipping a tree that was a threat to our waterways" Plus that they had been "Improving water quality" **Project Survey (2)** The Improved Greenhouse Management project had a key focus on Integrated pest management, a key 'toolkit' in reducing overall chemical use, and the toxicity of chemicals used, while maintaining crop production.
	Have total direct and indirect greenhouse gases been reduced?	Tonnes reduction in direct and indirect greenhouse gases from food production.	**Yes: Measures relate to transportation of food. Amount of produce retained is also reported.** Distributing locally can mean increased KM driving within a region depending on the previous delivery model and scale of distributors operations. However reductions are evident here. **House With No Steps** working as both a grower and marketing group (whereby other growers bring produce to HWNS that is then 'bundled' and taken to Sydney, Melbourne or Adelaide markets depending who is paying the best rates) use Hernes Freight Services to transport the produce to the markets. Greenhouse gas emission calculations for one trip to Sydney of 900 km in one day for the Hernes truck are (using scope 2 emissions calculated by Freight Metrics www.freightmetrics.com.au) are 1,233 kg Co2 per load. HWNS have now retained 100 pallets of food (weighing 76.6 tonnes) within the region that would otherwise have travelled out. With each Hernes truck taking about 14 pallets of produce this represents (100/14) 7 less out of region trucks trips or loads. So, during the project the diversion of produce from Sydney markets has **saved 7 x 1,233 = 8,631kg Co2 emissions** and **reduced km travelled by approximately 6,300km** (7 x 900km). However, during the project they are now undertaking some distribution within the region - which they were previously not doing (as all product previously went out of region). They report their regional travel has increased by 200-500km/month - which is still far less distance than Sydney, let alone Adelaide. **Fruitos** - who connect growers to retailers and restaurants within the region where possible but also purchase from the markets report that the food that they are now buying for their clients from the Northern Rivers region rather than being purchased from other parts of Australia is **now travelling an average of 740km/month compared to 18,592 km/month** (when they sourced lines from other market hubs). This means their pre-project transport greenhouse gas emissions for the food's travel were approximately 11,888 kg Co2 per month (resulting from 18,592 KM travelled per month). Their emissions resulting from the food travelling just 740km/month during the project are 960KG Co2 per month. **A reduction of 10,928kg Co2 emissions and a reduction of approximately 17,852km in km travelled per month for the produce has been achieved.** Fruitos also report that the 23.86 tonne of produce on average they purchase from local suppliers represents one semi-trailer load of produce per week being sourced from local suppliers rather than the Brisbane or other markets.

			Citrus Growers Association have **reduced their km travelled by approximately 1080km/month** (or 270km per week) making a **saving of 296kg Co2 a 4 week month** (or 74kgs Co2 emissions per week).They reduced their km travelled between the Northern Rivers and Sydney markets by between 222-646km per month using April, July and October 2011 for their travel diaries. See the individual project reports for more detail on distances travelled. Co2 emissions calculated using Freight Metrics online calculation tool for freight vehicles [http://www.freightmetrics.com.au] and the Australian Green Vehicle Guide http://www.greenvehicleguide.gov.au for Citrus Growers' Toyota HiAce van]. **Weight of product retained** With regard to quantity of produce retained nearly 16% of HWNS avocado product has been retained in the region (9,360 trays weighing 51.5 tonnes) - exceeding the estimate they thought they might achieve of 11% of the total crop. 7% of their stone fruit crops (5,016 trays, weighing 25.1 tonnes) has been retained - exceeding their estimate of 4.6%. 23.86 tonnes/per month is estimated to be retained in the region by Fruitos - predominantly a broad range of salad and herb crops, sweet potato, bananas, avocado, corn, zucchini strawberries and eggs. Citrus Growers are now delivering approximately 1.8 tonnes locally grown citrus products within the region (including Gold Coast) per month. In Nimbin the Blue Knob Farmers market - whose set up was assisted through NRFL - has opened 71 times since 3 July 2010. Their average food sales are 593kg per market, representing around 4.2 tonnes of locally produced product that has been able to be sold within the region (71 x 593kg)
	Has there been a reduction in organic waste going to landfill?	Decrease of organic waste diverted to landfill.	**Yes** **Project Survey** 43% of respondents (71/164) reported that the amount of organic material they send to landfill has decreased. 50% (82/164) that it had stayed about the same. (q18) Of the 75 who answered the question “by approximately how much have you reduced the amount of organic material you send to landfill in the past year” Most respondents (31/75) suggested a reduction of less than tonne (17) or less than a cubic metre (14) Note: most people find it difficult to measure therefore scales were used of less than, and between e.g. 5-10 square metres) In total survey participants reported up to 1,384 square metres being diverted. In addition 3 respondents reported diverting over 20 square metres Plus up to 77 tonnes reported by 22 respondents. 2 people reported diverting ‘over 20 tonnes’ Comments made by respondents included a few noting the difficulty of estimating/measuring/’guestimating’ this. (It is a NSW Environmental Trust Schedule C indicator)

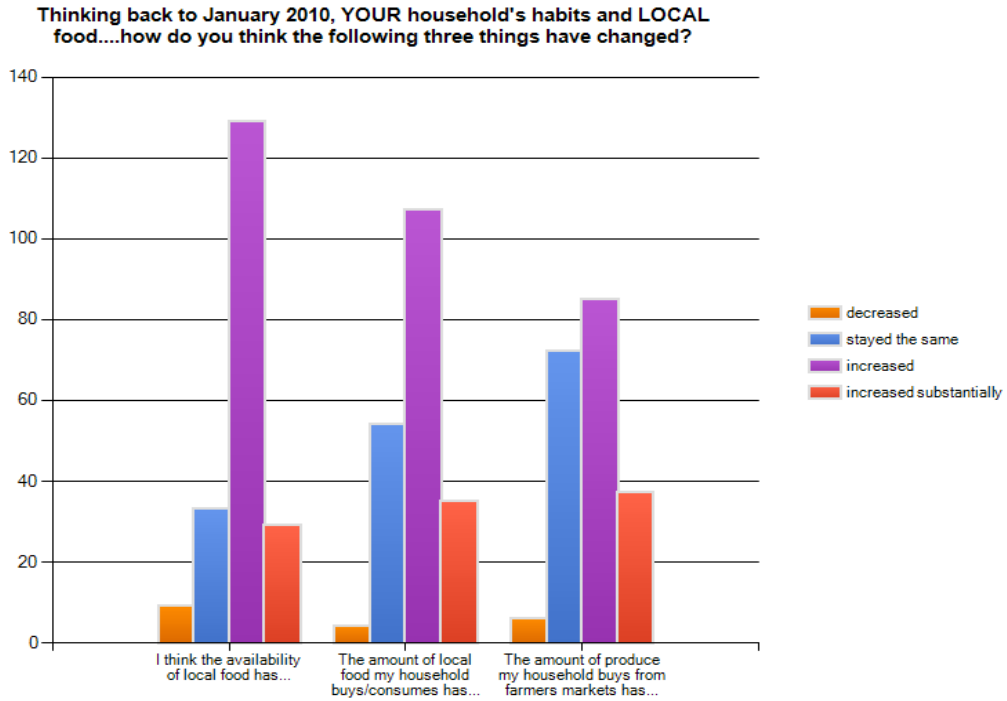
			Project Reports Kyogle Village Showcase and SA I&I Greenhouse Management projects both reported substantially reducing the amount of organic materials they send to landfill, with Tweed Landcare and the Yamba Village Showcase reporting the amount had been somewhat reduced.
Increased availability and consumption of affordable sustainably produced local food	Are alternate food distribution systems available? (note not outlets)	Number and types of distribution options that have been put in place to enable access to local food	**Yes alternative systems are available** To enable access to local food: Whilst 411 local distribution options can be reported to have been put in place this includes the 85 retailers stocking local produce, and 303 organisations listed on the virtual market place application. If we look at the type of distribution systems a more comprehensive picture can be drawn. 6 main methods or systems employed during this project are collectively providing multiple new systems of distribution: • A distribution facility for selling all grades of produce has been trialled for 6 months (Fruitos) bringing 5 new retail customers on board and a potential 41 new growers to service the system. • A process for direct selling of citrus products - both primary and secondary fruits. New markets have been established by the Citrus Growers Association that have allowed the Association to establish a commercially viable delivery/distribution system with sufficient critical mass to continue. • On line sales and promotional opportunities for growers and sourcing opportunity for consumers via the virtual marketplace http://www.sustainfood.com.au/ 193 producers make their product available to the consumer. • Farmers markets have been promoted extensively in the project. 7,431 individuals are reported to have attended local produce/farmers markets during the period. And 50 new stallholders are selling produce through this distribution system since the project started. • RDA have worked with 85 retailers to promote and increase their stock of local produce • Community gardens are producing fresh fruit and vegetables not just for members but being distributed within the local community • "The Grocer" has been opened in Alstonville at the HWNS site retailing a range of local produce and had 21,000 customers in the first month of trading
	Are these options used by producers and retail?	Level of activity. Increase in locally produced food being sold through local retailers.	**Yes activity has increased** **Project Reports** 5 new retail customers have come on board for Fruitos in 6 months. Citrus Growers have gained 35 new customers in 7 months. HWNS who work at the large end of the scale have worked with IGA, ALDI and Coles supermarkets. However they report consistent supply as remaining the key to penetrating these markets. HWNS have also invested time in achieving a supplier code from Woolworths which will enable them to supply to Woolworths from 2012.

			The regional restaurant sector have been supplied with 25.1 tonnes of stonefruit and 51.5 tonnes of avocados distributed by HWNS and Fruitos. 8 avocado growers (from a possible 14) and 12 stonefruit growers (from a possible 15) have provided this produce via HWNS. Fruitos have sourced approximately 23.86 tonnes of product a month from a number of local suppliers. HWNS have not been able to achieve the local stock of macadamia nuts in retail outlets, due to low volume this year, but will look to introduce in 2012. Distribution and Source Identification Project Leaders (focus group and project reports) identified that whilst an increase in activity can be reported with regard to this outcome, there was a challenge for the program designers in that information about the capacity and ability of growers within the region to provide sufficient quantities on a regular enough basis to serve the larger retailers was not able to be sufficiently articulated for all NRFL stakeholders. The knowledge gained through this project about the regional capacity is an unexpected learning that would be worthwhile investing time in for the next version of this project - should it continue to work on distribution models. Is there sufficient quantity of produce being grown by enough producers to keep feeding 'the hungry beast' of the larger retailers and the every day consumers? **Retailers in RDA-NR project** Retailers were also asked if they sell local produce. 95% respondents (75/79) said yes. This figure aligns with the RDA 2010 survey which found that 95% (79/83) of retailers surveyed said that stocked local food in mid 2010. The end of project survey also asked the extent to which sales had changed. 73.5% reported that their sales of local food have increased between 0-50%, of which 61% report that their sales of local foods have increased by 0-25%. 14 retailers reported no change. (RDA-NR) **Project survey findings** Of the 12 survey respondents who commented on their stock: 92% (11) reported that the amount of local food they stock has increased. 8% reporting that it remained the same. They report that sales have increased by up to 25% for 33% (4) of the retailers, between 25-50% by 42% (4) and 50-75% by 17% (2) retailers. 1 reported a 100% increase – as a new business. The prime reason for increase in sales suggested by survey respondents who are retailers, is public awareness and demand. Other mentions were 'not previously trading', having a larger harvest than the previous year and selling lines that were not previously available. This is a small sample and the difference between this sample and RDA should be noted. The Nimbin project members conducted a survey of 12 cafes in Nov 2011 to explore their purchasing habits:. 8 source produce directly from the producer. 7 use some local produce, 1 uses mostly and 1 uses all local produce. In addition their butcher has increased stock of local product by 5% and commitment been given by Nimbin Organics and Nimbin Emporium to retail local food.

		Number of retailers using the regional distribution systems (via distributors records past 6 months)	**Project Reports** 47 retailers are using the regional distribution services being trialled through the project. In addition the virtual marketplace has 85 retailers listed.
		Number of regional producers using regional distribution system (past 6 months)	 Graph showing use of distribution systems (also addressed in body of report)

			17 respondents to the project survey identified as producers. In addition to identifying which of the distribution systems that the NRFL focussed on that they used, these producers also named bulk milk processor, abattoir and cattle yards, direct to retailer and Aussie Orchards as distributors. Project reports indicate that 106 producers use the 3 physical distribution systems (HWNS, Citrus Growers and Fruitos). In addition 193 producers are listed in the virtual marketplace website which received 224,175 hits.
	Is local branding influencing the market?	Number of growers and producers using branding/certification. Awareness of labelling amongst consumers	**Yes - local branding is influencing the market.** **Project Reports - growers and producers** 193 growers and producers use some kind of branding/certification of their produce through the Virtual Marketplace. 79% retailers (63/79 retailers asked through RDA work) identify their produce (source identification) as being local or from Northern Rivers. The business card sized "be part of something special" point of sale signs proved to be effective for RDA-NR retailers. Having been mailed the signs (rather than put in place by RDA staff visiting the store) just over 48% (41/85) used these signs " an incredibly positive indicator. as retailers used their initiative and displayed the signs without direct intervention.... Likely to be a result of the marketing and education drive conducted by NRFL and is reflected in the data about retailers increased interest in source identification over the course of the project" (RDA-NR). 40% retailers involved in the RDA source identification expressed an increase in interest in food labelling. **Project Survey - retailers/distributors** Of the 13 respondents who self identified as retailers/distributors of local produce (Q24) there has been a 30% increase in use of labelling/marketing of produce as local since the project started. Reasons include: "Show I harvested from the local area, my plantation" "Encourage customers to advertise to their customers with regards to where the produce comes from to show they support local farmers" and "promote the region & differentiate the product" **Consumer behaviour - driven by labelling** With regard to the main food retailers and the adequacy of labelling the perception of the broad community is that local food is not adequately labelled at the main retailers (73% - up from 70% at the commencement survey). It might be drawn that the work of NRFL in encouraging people to look for labels and to ask where food is from has permeated this viewpoint. People perhaps now better know what to look for and are not seeing it in the major stores. "For example two respondents to question "What do you know now that you did not before replied "I am generally much more aware of sourcing my food locally, feel more confident to inquire about it" and " Labelling to look out for including Northern Rivers Food logo"
	Are residents more able to access local food?	Purchase of locally produced food - resident perspective	**Yes residents are more able to access local food: Within the project communities the reported amount of local food purchased has increased. Proportions vary between 54% (Nimbin) -65% (Skilling Program) and 71% (Project survey) though this shift is not yet seen in the broader NR community.** **Project Survey - householder perspective** Of the 200 respondents who considered changes to their household habits since January 2010

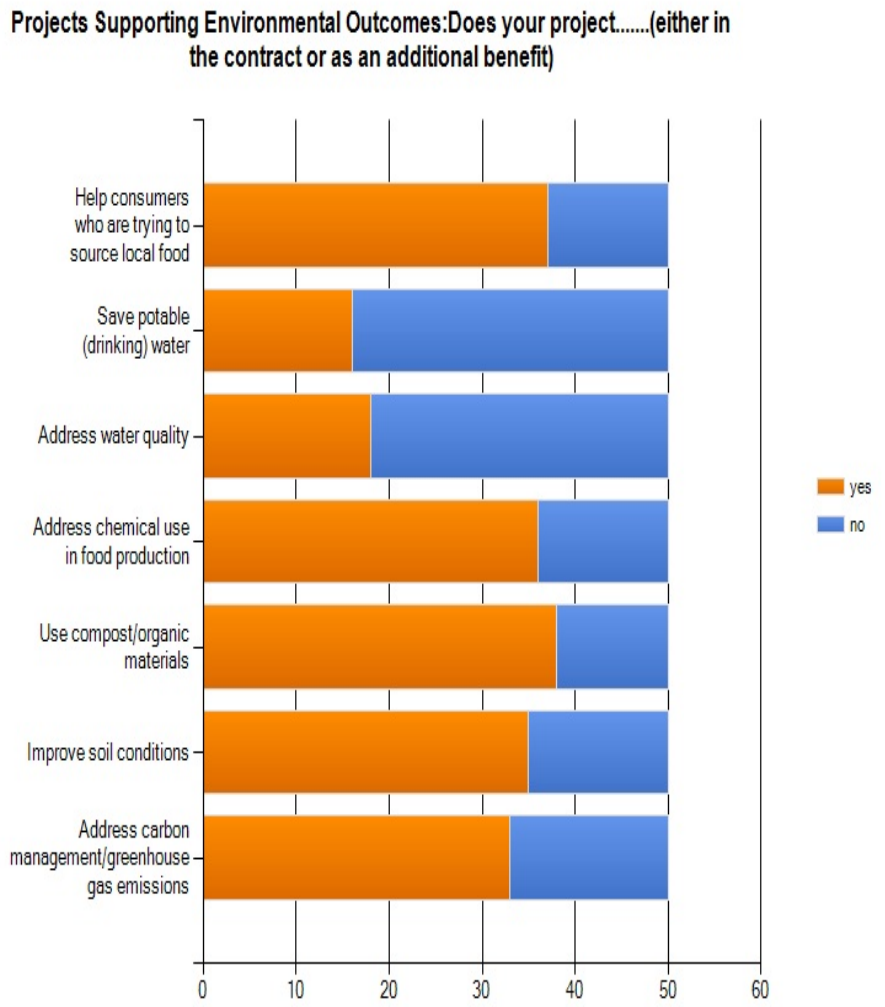
			79% (158/200) think the *availability of local food* has increased (129) or increased substantially (29) 71% (142/200) report that the *amount of local food* their household buys or consumes has increased (107) or increased substantially (35) and 27% (54) report that it has stayed the same. 61% (122/200) report that the *amount of produce their household buys from farmers markets* has increased (85) or increased substantially (37) 36% report that it has stayed the same. **Project reports** With regard to habits of people taking part in the Skilling the Community project run by Byron ACE (40 events engaging 582 people of which 356 took part in one or more of 32 workshops) 65% (132/203) report that the *amount of local food* their household buys has increased (86) or increased substantially (46). 13% (27) report that it has stayed the same. 21% did not answer. The Nimbin project undertook a couple of community surveys. 54% respondents to their street based consumer survey (59 total) said their household consumption of local food had increased in the past 2 years. This is slightly different to the response to their community sustainability survey (155 people, Sept/Oct 2011) where 76.5% reported that their household consumption of local food had increased (59%) or increased substantially (17.5%) since January 2010. When asked where they could shop confidently knowing they could get local or regional foods of 200 who answered, the overwhelming response was markets, farmers markets, local markets or named markets. Other retailers receiving mention more than once were IGA (generally and/or named stores including Ballina & Pottsville) Santos, Causleys Yamba, local grocers/butchers/fruit shops. Ecomart Northern Rivers Coop, service station/mechanics, farm gate, Yamba Shopping fair & Aldi and “a man called Tom who sells honey near Goonellabah” **Jetty Survey** Whilst the community who have been engaged with the NRFL project report an increase in the amount of local food they buy/consume and purchase from farmers markets, the community wide sample interviewed by Jetty saw a reduction from 32% to 22% shopping at farmers markets, and a lower proportion mentioning local grocers or fish cooperatives compared to June 2010.There are multiple drivers at stake that influence point of sale decisions: The Jetty community wide survey indicted that whilst shoppers continue to rank "supporting local retailers" and 'being able to purchase locally grown produce" as amongst the most important in determining where to shop for fresh food - it has not yet translated into a change of purchasing behaviour for the general community. As the outcomes listed here are for 2016 + then we might consider the behaviour of the early adopters (project community) as indicators in how the broad community might be expected to shift their behaviour in coming years (should there be no other influencing factors). For more immediate outcomes that may point towards branding influencing the market see end of this document -

			immediate outcomes
		Purchase of locally produced food - consumer perspective	**Project Survey**  Survey (Q 2, 200 respondents) - purchase and thoughts on availability of local food. Graphs can also be found in the body of the report.

		Purchase of locally produced food - retailers perspective	**Yes - Retailers say purchases of local food have increased** **Project Reports - retailers perspective** 61% (rounded) of retailers responding in the RDA-NR project reported an increase in sales of local foods of between 0-25% and 13% (rounded) reported an increase in sales of local foods of 25-50%. **Project Survey - retailers perspective** Of 33 respondents who self identified as **sellers of food** (shops, farmers markets, co-ops or supermarkets) 39% (34) reported selling locally produced foods. Of 12 who answered the question about their sales of local foods since January 2010, 92% (11/12) reported that sales had gone up. 33% (4/12) reported an increase of 0-25% 42% (5/12) reported an increase of 25-50% 17% (2/12) reported an increase of 50-75% None reported an increase of 75 -100% 8% (1/12) reported an increase of 100% plus. Whilst this sample size is low, their increases are significant in and of themselves for the individual businesses. Reasons they suggested for the increase in sales were increased awareness and demand from consumers (8 mentions); a committed focus on selling locally; new business (not previously trading) and selling fruit that had not been previously available.
Improved health through increased access to affordable healthy foods	Are residents eating more healthy, locally produced food	Consumption of fresh fruit and vegetables	**Whilst the selected NSW Health data and Jetty Survey do not report increase, project participants report increased purchase of local foods - which infers that it is being eaten.** Fresh fruit and vegetable consumption in the region is largely unchanged between both waves of surveying and the 2009 NSW Health Population survey for the North Coast residents. **Muli Muli Aboriginal Community Project Report** Muli Muli report that an unexpected outcome has been "understanding of the direct benefits of eating fresh vegetables and fruit. Community health and wellbeing has improved considerably". **Project Survey and Project Reports** Whilst the broader community may not yet be eating more according to the NSW Health survey (as reported by Jetty Research), participants of projects and respondents to the project survey both report increased purchase/consumption of local produced food - e.g. 65% of participants (203) of the training programs run by Byron Community College and 71% of the survey respondents (200) report an increase or substantial increase in their household purchase/consumption of local food.
Increased connectedness	How many individuals are	# of project teams	**Project Team Statistics** Connections have been made in multiple ways in this heavily networked project which has brought together

between consumers and producers of food through participation in food production and distribution initiatives, including socially disadvantaged groups.	involved in activities?	formed.(from NRFL PM) # of partnerships formed and maintained through project implementation .(from NRFL PM) # of students involved/hours contributed.(from NRFL PM) # socially disadvantaged groups # hits on NR Food website	individuals, community groups, volunteers, businesses, industry and local and state government bodies. Statistics from project leaders indicate that •91 project teams and 524 partnerships have been formed (in the main informally). •698 students have been involved, along with 31 groups working on behalf of people who are socially disadvantaged. •In addition to face to face involvement, the online engagement with the Northern Rivers Food website - through which people could access recipes, source food and take part in various community challenges reached 224,175. **Steering Committee and Project Survey - Connectedness** • Members of the Steering Committee identified the following tangible impacts of the project with regard to connectedness and the development of critical infrastructure related to food security in the region; relationships, community gardens, local government connection & resources. Starting a conversation with people who otherwise wouldn't have been involved, relationship development, outcomes in the community, distributors are more amenable, retailers are cluing up, the new community gardens are in place and offering training opportunities, the sustain northern rivers website hosts the resources for growers, providers, consumers, and the sustainable agriculture sites will have data at the conclusion of their trial periods (some of which are after this report) that will support the sustainable agriculture work. Connecting the west/east of the region and the different growing climates and produce; and the potential of the Nimbin grain mill for rice and grain growers in Kyogle area. • Project leaders expressed their pride in work they have done with regard to social connections. Examples are " building significant social change; grown from engaging one TAFE program to five across sustainability, social action, disabilities (arts project) ....." "the establishment of the community garden has been able to provide fresh produce to 6 welfare outlets within the Richmond Valley which provided fresh food or meals to an average of 100 disadvantaged people per week" (Casino Community Garden) "Assisting local businesses to collaborate" "farmers market representatives were able to meet each other (most were meeting for the first time) and begin to share their experiences, realising many of their challenges were the same" "personal contact with Tweed farmers"
		# of individuals engaged through the project. # of volunteers involved/hours contributed.	**Project Team** The project team estimate that 16,674 people have been involved. A wide range of involvement has occurred from regular and dedicated participation in working bees and hours spent doing on ground works (such as through VSC, Sustainable Agriculture and distribution projects) to attendance at the Harvest Festival and readership of Sample magazine. Events run through the project management team include training for contractors and project leaders (65

		# of individuals attending local markets.(from student) #of community garden groups formed. # of individuals involved in community gardens. # of individuals attending education and training workshops	attendees over 6 sessions), 5 x Sustainable Agriculture Forums (212 attendees), Edible Garden event (250 attendees) the 7 x Local Government Resource Kit training days (104 attendees) and for year 7- 10 a SUSS forum (45 attendees). 55,257.5 and 1,245 event management /other hours (56,502.5 total) community volunteer hours have been contributed (steering committee hours and student donated hours are recorded elsewhere). Many of the project leaders and their respective organisations donated considerable hours to this project demonstrating the level of conviction and commitment to the region and the various aspects of food security. 7,431 individuals are reported to have attended local produce/farmers markets during the period. 17 community garden groups have been formed. 922 people have been involved with community gardens through this project. 1297 people have attended a wide range of education and training workshops **Project Survey** From the 220 project survey respondents (the direct project community): 151 people had attended one or more workshops/events/working bees with just under 10% of those attending more than 10 sessions.
Improved sustainability and environmental performance of stakeholders	Has the sustainability and environmental performance of stakeholders improved?	Number of organisations adopting more sustainable policies and practice.	**Yes - environmental performance has been improved**



Survey

109 respondents representing both householders and organisations report changes to their practices (Q95)

Project Team

88 organisations have adopted more sustainable practices

Project Reports

•At least 19 producers 15 through DPI and 4 through Northern Landcare Support Services (NLSS) have

			adopted more sustainable practices representing 31 agricultural industries. (DPI project reports) Case studies on the development of 12 sustainability focussed property management plans as well 3 case studies on changes to practice to improve the sustainability practices of greenhouse growers have been prepared by DPI and are available on the northern rivers food links website. •82% of DPI Sustainable Farm Planning participants have already made changes to their land management practices. •Policies have been amended by the participating councils (see immediate outcomes) •Changes resulting from outreach work (such as training days delivered by project contractors to the agricultural sector) is unknown but might be anticipated (e.g. by the 30 attendees of the compost field day held by NLSS) •In terms of changes made to personal habits at home or work the following changes were reported by the survey respondents (Q95) The graph and associated comment can be found in the body of the report
		Number of organisations engaged through the project. Number of organisations contracted. Number of organisations engaged on a voluntary basis.	**Project Team** • 1756 organisations have been involved in this project. The scale of involvement ranges from for example; over 300 organisations involved with Fruitos Distribution, 305 involved with RDA-NR Source Identification and 509 involved with the virtual market place (mobile application) through to 76 with Landshare, 25 the sustainable food directory and 6 with Yamba Village Showcase. •140 organisations have been contracted; and •109 organisations engaged on a voluntary basis.
Adoption by local government of recommendations of changes in policy and practices	Have Local Governments implemented policy and/ or changes to practices to support the production and distribution of local foods	Amendments to LEP's, DCPs and other relevant documents. Number of changes implemented. Number of planning instruments amended.	**Yes** Measures put in place by the councils to continue to support local sustainable food systems after the project concludes include: • Policy changes: After the training was provided for the Local Government Resource Kit (104 attendees, 83 evaluation forms) 28% of the 83 people who completed evaluation forms said their council planned to adopt a food security policy, 66% were unsure and only 4% thought not. 32 Planning Instruments have now been amended. At the time of preparing this report, Clarence Valley Council has a draft community garden policy on public exhibition and Richmond Valley Council are considering changes to a DCP that will require 2 square metres per dwelling in multi-unit dwellings to be allocated for food garden plots. • 31 attendees said that they had made specific changes to LEP, DCP, policies or plans to bring about a positive impact on local food production, consumption or distribution. Specific named changes that have been made since Jan 2010 include; Draft Sustainable Agriculture Policy (Tweed), changes to council procurement

			policies to support local food procurement (BCC ethical catering policy supporting local products and produce, Tweed Shire Council's changes are in progress, and local produce and products are preferred at Ballina Council); new policy on edible streetscapes and the intent to develop DCPs for new developments that have space for community gardens. In addition several councils are specifically are working supporting farmers markets. * 39 attendees have fielded queries from the community and 35 from business/industry. These include queries about funding, town planning, community gardens, loss of agricultural land, sustainable agriculture strategy, developers 'being educated about food security issues', waste management farmers markets and from other members of staff. • Regarding formal collaboration arrangements (all the project partners) for post project. Steering Committee chair reports that General Managers have recently been briefed on a model for a sustainable officer role to be hosted by NOROC and funded through NOROC for 12 months, ongoing collaboration with RDA and closer relationship with Sustain Northern Rivers will continue. Tweed Agriculture Strategy has bee prepared for collaborative delivery and EHOs have been discussing collaboration and consistency with regard to the regional management of local farmers markets.
Increased capacity for local Government, partner organisations to continue to support local sustainable food systems	Is there capacity to continue to deliver strategies and actions after project?		**Yes** Capacity has been developed to continue to deliver strategies and projects • Policy changes have been made (see line above) • The policy and toolkit training has provided additional capacity across the region that will enable councils to continue to deliver strategies and actions after the project as over 100 staff and elected representatives from across the councils have been exposed to issues related to food production through forums for local government. • Budget has been allocated to sustainable food systems work for 2011-12 /2012-13 by some of the steering committee councils and Tweed Council has a sustainable agriculture full time position that will continue after FoodLinks and coordinates the delivery of the Sustainable Agriculture Strategy • Regarding formal collaboration arrangements (all the project partners) for post project. SC chair reports that General Managers have recently been briefed on a model for a sustainable officer role to be hosted by NOROC and funded through NOROC for 12 months, ongoing collaboration with RDA and closer relationship with Sustain Northern Rivers. EHOs have been also discussing working collaboratively to enable consistency with regard to the regional management of local farmers markets. **Department of Primary Industries** As a government agency DPI played a key role in supporting land managers and producers to change on farm practices. Their direct involvement and positive evaluation by participants raises the consideration of how they might continue to offer sustainable property management advisory services - and how - if necessary - continue to subsidise the service. 88% of respondents said that the program gave them more confidence to continue farming, 82% have already made changes following the advice received and 73% said that it has

			helped them be more sustainable. 100% said that the reports were useful. 55% said that the program was very worthwhile and 45% worthwhile.
	Have networks been developed?	# and type of Networks developed.	**Yes** 7 networks have been developed: Environmental Health Officers are working together with regard to markets, local food businesses in Byron Council area are networked, the web based sustainable food network has been established, along with a community garden network a Tweed Shire Council internal sustainability network, and further networking with Sustain Northern Rivers. **Steering Committee** Report intent for a funded position within NOROC for 12 months to continue this work and the networking established
	Has NR Food gained members?	NR Food membership #s.	**Yes** Membership of Sustain Northern Rivers has increased by 57 since June 2010.
Local government actively engaged in coordinated approach to regional sustainability issues related to food.	Has the regional alliance of Councils developed strong collaboration to further food related sustainability issues within the NR region?	# of meetings attended. # of Councils regularly attending Steering Committee meetings. # of Council staff engaged/hours contributed to the project	**Yes** **Project Team** 7 local councils and 1 water authority regularly attend meetings. 5 councils were able to attend 80% or more meetings with Clarence, Tweed and Ballina attending 100%. 169 members of council staff have been engaged. Contributing at least 368 hours Steering Committee hours are 1642.5 **Steering Committee** As noted above the potential for a full time position funded by the councils to continue the work through NOROC has been put to the General Managers (late Oct).
INTERMEDIATE OUTCOMES -			**Achievable 2-5 years time**
Increase in community gardens # and level of production through	Have additional community gardens been established throughout the region?	# of community gardens established. # of individuals involved in	**Yes** **Project team** •17 community gardens established through the project. • Approximately 922 people have been involved with the community gardens and 615 people are involved currently: Many of whom are able to take home and or distribute to others fresh, locally grown produce for consumption.

the region		community gardens.	
Increased residential food production	Are more householders growing fruit and vegetables?	Number of additional households growing fruit and vegetables.	**Yes the amount of fruit and vegetables grown by the residential community has increased.** **Jetty Survey:** Proportion of respondents growing their own food was essentially unchanged between baseline and post project survey (62%- 63%) Range of product items grown mentioned rose by approximately 15%. Jetty suggests that this might mean that whilst the % of respondents growing may not have changed those who are growing have increased the amount of produce they grow. **Project Survey:** 89% of respondents (of 197) report growing fruit/veg at home. In terms of land area 30% of respondents (of 168) are using more than 25 square metres for growing and 22% between 5-10 square metres. 68% of respondents (168) who answered the question about changes to amounts grown report that the amount of fruit and or vegetables they grow has increased since January 2010. 39% increasing somewhat and 29% increasing the amount substantially. **Project Management Team** 1012 people registered for the Grow Your Own Challenge (from Aug 10 - Nov11) registering intent to cultivate 10,400m2 land for vegetables and fruit. No direct follow up has been undertaken to find out what has been cultivated, but the project survey responses act as a surrogate and provide an indication of what might be happening: 14% project survey respondents (24 of 168) took part in the Grow Your Own Challenge. The two most common amounts of land they have under cultivation for the project are 5-10 square metres (6 respondents (25% of 24) and more than 25 square metres (also 6 respondents (25% of 24). These are followed by 1-3 square metres (17% or 4 of 24 respondents). So if as few as 10% of the Grow Your Own participants followed through an additional approximate 1,040m2 may now be under cultivation. **Project Reports** 73 known additional households are now growing fruit and or vegetables as well as the 1012 who committed to the Grow Your Own Challenge.
Increased consumption of locally produced	Are more households cooking, storing	Number of additional households	Refer to immediate outcomes

food in **households**	and preserving locally produced food?	cooking, storing and preserving locally produced food.	
Increase in quantity of locally produced food supplied to local markets/consumers	Is more locally produced food being supplied to local markets?	Quantity of locally produced food being supplied to local markets.	**Yes** **Distributors** Volume of local produce bought & sold and retained in the region has increased. An average of 23.86 tonnes of produce a month is now being purchased from growers in the region by Fruitos and on sold within the region. Compared to same time last year this represents an increase of 22.3 tonnes/month. In addition the market share has shifted for Fruitos: from 100% sales to wholesale market pre-project to 84% to wholesale, 8% retail and 9% domestic sales. It should be noted that these changes have been realised in 6 months as Fruitos were only brought in to the project in May 2011. Citrus Growers report an increase of 19% of first grade limes produced and sold within the region between March and October 2011. Plus an increase of 81% of second grade limes being sold within the region. 2nd grade limes were previously unused as no market was available for them. They would have been left to rot. "New customers have been established enabling Citrus Growers to establish a commercially viable deliver/distribution system with sufficient critical mass to continue" (reference Citrus Growers Project Report and Marketing Strategy). 25.1 tonnes of stonefruit and 51.5 tonnes of avocados that come through the HWNS centre have been retained in the region during the project. **Project Survey** Of 17 respondents who identified as a grower/producer /distributor (at Q42)…. 47% (8) report supplying more NR food to NR outlets without it first going out of the region than before the trial. 30% (5) about the same amount and 24% (4) unsure. None have supplied less than before the trial.
Increase in retailers stocking locally produced food	Are more retailers stocking and selling locally produced food?	Number of local businesses buying local food produce.	**Yes** **RDA- Retailers** For the 85 retailers participating in the RDA - NR source identification project, average stock levels increased from a median of 5.58 to 6.92. (A scale was established at the assessment visit to rate the average level of food stock). Whilst the goal was to increase stock across the sectors (including 22 greengrocers, 22 butchers,

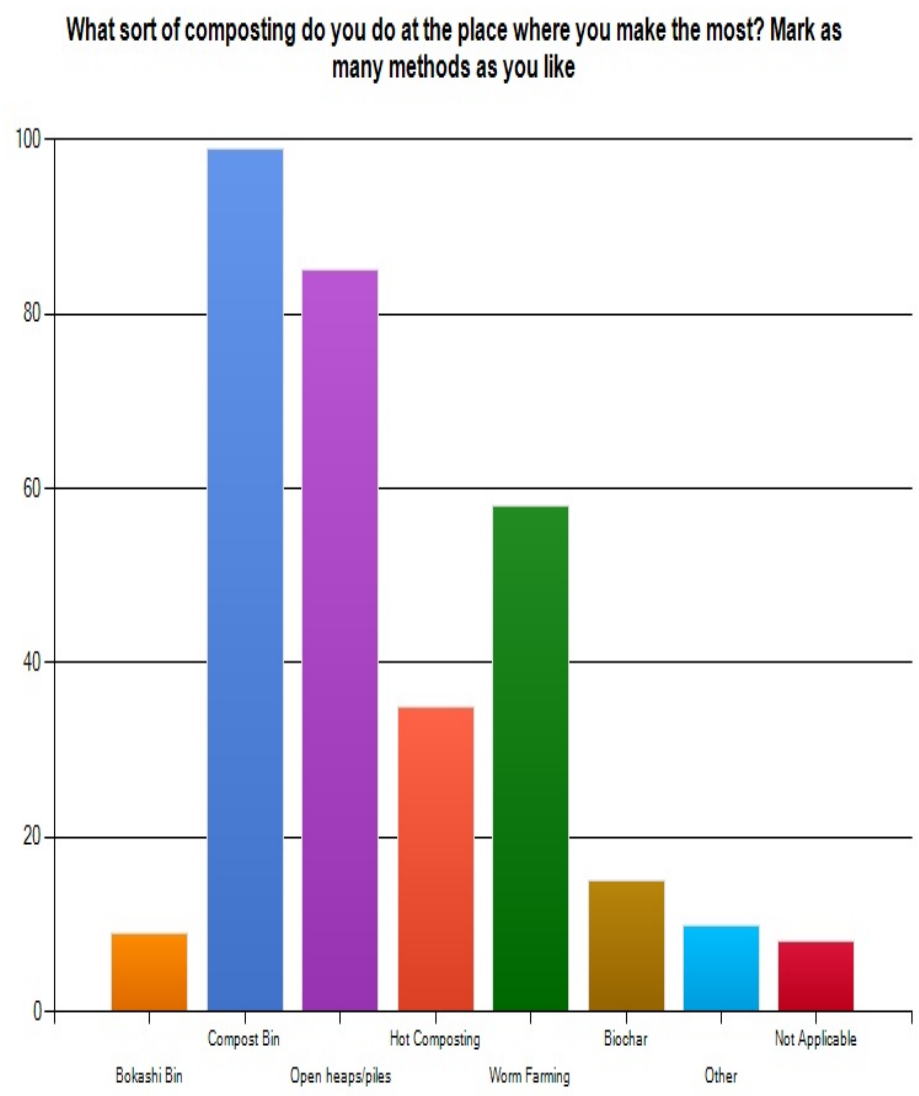
		Reported shift in stock Reported shift in sales	supermarkets and other retailers) to an average rating of 7.71 the figure achieved was 6.92. This is an increase on base stock levels (though not as high an increase as the target the retailers set themselves). Sales also increased. 61% retailers report increases of 0-25% and 12% an increase of between 25-50%. **Project Survey** 33 respondents reported that they sell local produce (which may include retailers, distributors, farmers markets and growers). Of those 12 commented on their sales. 97% (11/12) reported that since January 2010 their overall sales of local northern rivers food had increased. Of these 33% by between 0-25%, 42% between 35-50% and 17% between 50-75%. 7 of the 12 sell direct to consumers: 4 of those are selling more at community markets since participating in this project.
	Perception of availability of locally produced food		**Perception of availability has increased** **Project Survey** Of 200 project survey respondents 80% think the availability of local food has increased (65%) or increased substantially (15%). 17% think it has stayed the same and 5% decreased (note rounded figures).They further report that the amount of local foods their household purchases or consumes has increased (53.5%) or increased substantially (17.5%). 27% reported it had stayed the same and 2% a reduction. (Q2) **Jetty Survey** •A statistically significant shift has taken place in the association of the term "locally grown" with "grown in the northern rivers" during the project with a change of 54% to 64%. •30% of respondents thought it was easier to source locally grown produce than it was 18 months ago (April 2010) and 46% the same. 15% thought it was more difficult. Byron residents were more likely to say it was easier to find local produce, with Ballina and Tweed residents least likely to think this. (Jetty report p22) •Respondents to the Jetty survey rated "supporting local retailers" as a key factor in determining where to shop for fresh food for both pre and post project surveys. "Being able to purchase locally grown produce" "variety of produce" and 'buying seasonal produce" also rated highly. Despite this the survey showed a shift from use of independent retailers to supermarkets (Coles/Woolworth/Aldi/BiLo) for fresh fruit and vegetables demonstrating the gap in our espoused and actual behaviours.
Increased geographical spread of farmers markets and volume of locally produced food sold through them	Have farmers markets been established in parts of the region where they previously didn't exist?	Number of local farmers markets	**Yes** **Project Reports** •2 new markets have been established at Ballina and Alstonville (where House With No Steps is located). •This brings the number of farmers markets in the region to 14. In addition to increasing the number of farmers markets, the project has worked to strengthen the market network. In addition to undertaking research and providing training for those involved in farmers markets the Northern Rivers Farmers Market Network (newly established) have produced marketing materials including a map that advertises all the markets across the region for locals and tourists alike.

Increased patronage of consumers in farmers markets	Are more people attending farmers markets?	Number of individuals attending local farmers markets.	**Yes from three data sources, No from the Jetty Survey** **Farmer Market Survey** •13 market representatives provided their perception of attendee numbers at farmers markets compared to January 2010. 62% thought patronage had increased substantially, 8% somewhat, 23% that it had stayed about the same and 8% declined. **Project survey** Similarly to the farmers market survey, the project survey respondents (200) reported an increase in purchasing with the following changes made since January 2010 regarding the amount of produce their household buys from farmers markets (Q2) 61% increase (42.5% increase somewhat, and 18.5 increase substantially). 36% reported that the amount remained the same, and 3% that it had decreased. **Jetty survey** Looking at the broader community, Jetty saw a decrease in regular use of farmers markets (Q Where do you usually shop for your fresh fruit and vegetables?) 22% down from 32% **Project Team** •7,431 individuals are reported to have attended local produce/farmers markets during the period. This will enable future measuring of attendance as the work progresses in the future.
	Perceptions of sales at markets	Perceptions of quantity of sales/purchases by vendors and purchasers	**Perception is that sales have increased** **Farmers Market Survey** 23 market representatives provided their perceptions on how sales had changed at farmers markets compared to January 2010. 22% thought sales had increased a lot, 39% increased somewhat 30% remained about the same and 4% that they had decreased. **Project survey** As noted above, 61% purchasers at farmers markets reported an increase in the quantity of local food they buy.
Expanded markets for organic recycled material	Is overall use of recycled organic material increasing?	The number of projects utilising recycled organic material.	**Yes use of recycled organic materials is increasing across the project community** **Project Reports** 33 projects are using recycled organic matter. Including 10 through the Kyogle Village Showcase, 5 in the Tweed Village Showcase, 4 through the NLSS Biological Farming and 17 through the Tweed Sustainable Agriculture Trials are using recycled organic materials. "As a result of the Village Showcase project there are over 400 school students composting their waste at school" (Kyogle Village Showcase - Seed of Knowledge to Good Health). Organic materials are also being used in a sloping site: " In the case of the Muli Garden Project because of a relocation of the garden to a sloping site beds needed to be created and built up. The process we used was to mox, then lay down thick mulch, then put mushroom compost on that and then cover with mulch over that. Into that we make holes and when we put in a seedling, it goes into another handful of organic compost mixed with soil"

			"Two of our farms have produced enough compost to last them for 12 months" (NLSS)
		Number of producers using organic waste products.	**Project Survey** Of 19 respondents who identified their involvement in the project as land use and food production, 18 make and or use compost: Of these 11 make and use compost through their commercial venture or on farm. "The compost is great: Keep it coming. Cubic meters delivered to commercial farms [are] ace. Need compost to assist Landcare and community garden projects" (compost workshop participant) "We have on farm ingredients at hand.....[use] open heaps/piles...have diverted over 20 metres from waste stream.....[highlight /lowlights of the experience being] the break down of wood chip to make compost and the use of on farm cow manure" "[we will] continue to compost, make it work for our business. We are then protecting our environment"
		Increase in organic waste to worm farm and other recycling facilities.	**Project survey** Of 174 survey respondents who answered the question (Q18) 43% (71) have seen a decrease in organic materials they send to landfill in the past year. 50% said it has stayed about the same. This means an increase in either composting on site or sending to council managed facilities. However, data infers that people are in the main managing their organic waste on site. Only 5 respondents mentioned use of council composting schemes. Of those, reasons for using council schemes cited were reduce greenwaste, resource re-use, council compost is cheaper and reduce waste to landfill. One workshop participant said " Have sold/traded compost to fellow gardeners (excess)" **Project reports** Project methods of composting include on farm composting of harvest waste, living mulch trials and on farm composting of waste resources (such as camphor laurel. Reasons include "need to develop alternative to chemical fertilisers that increase organic matter and increase soils health (need a soil that is alive) (NLSS)

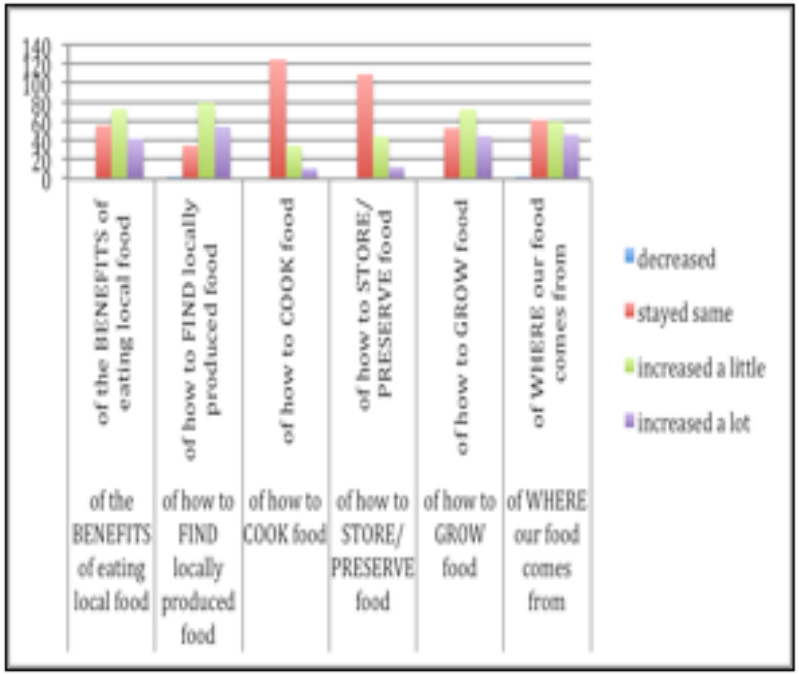
	What is local government doing to support an increase in recycling/reuse of organic materials	Reported # and type of government interventions to support increased markets for organics	**Councils** Member councils provide mulch to the community either for sale or free. However they identify issues with quality from different providers. Participants of the Local Government Focus Group all provide a 'drop off' organics facility. Byron, Tweed and CVC collect organics from households, units, commercial and business sectors. Tweed Shire Council collects from households, units, businesses but not commercial properties. Byron does not provide organics collections. Ballina collects from households and units. Community members across the region continue to be able to attend composting workshops that are provided though the North East Waste Forum and council waste educators.
	Increased use of organic waste and/or compost in food production	Number of projects engaged in active composting.	**Project reports** 12 projects are actively engaged in composting. The Sustainable Agriculture projects are particularly trialling long-term changes to support soil health. **Project survey** Experiences of composting include "….. Orchard benefits, tree health, quality, increased production, reduction in erosion" (Grower, House With No Steps) "Weed suppression and increased biodynamic activity in the soil. This will hopefully increase tree health and productivity" (small scale grower who received compost during project) **Project Survey** The methods of composting used by 164 respondents cover the following, compost bin, open heaps, hot composting, bokashi bins, worm farming and biochar. Additional methods in use identified by respondents are dried out cow manure, liquid compost and teas, chooks, 3 bin rotation system, wicking and humanure.
		Expanded markets for organic recycled material	**Project Survey** In exploring interest in the community market place for councils or others to facilitate additional markets/opportunities for recycled organic materials 66% (127) respondents said they would buy compost/organic materials. 34% would not. (Q21) "Transport costs to bring compost from outside Tweed Shire are prohibitive i.e. too expensive. We need to be making compost in industrial quantities here in Tweed from our own waste materials" (Sustainable Agriculture participant).
		Increase in landholders and conducting on farm composting (also covered above)	**On farm composting is being increased in this project.** 19 Tweed based farmers (dairy, beef and small crops) received compost through the project and trialled a variety of composting methods on crops and pasture to test yield and soil impact. Considerable work is also being undertaken through the actions of the sustainable farm planning project, softer farming methods project, the sustainable grazing and Northern Landcare Support Services (NLSS) projects. Composting trials through NLSS include living mulch under organic bananas (Silas Long) compost for rice crop (Frank Boyle, who has also been able to have his rice milled using the Nimbin mill) goat compost to

			be spread on farm (Nimbin Dairy) and camphor laurel shredding (Goolmangar Farm). At Mara Seeds, trials are also continuing with soil inputs - including compost). Results on soil improvements will be forthcoming after the NRFL project concludes. **Project Survey** Of 19 respondents who identified their involvement in the project as land use and food production, 18 make and or use compost: Of these 11 make and use compost through their commercial venture or on farm. Comments include: " It's an integral part of our farming operation"(Commercial fruit/veg grower - organic) "At the moment we still have to find a proper way to "deal" with our waste produce, the method that was suggested is not working the way we thought it would so that's a definite lowlight as we invested quite a bit for it. We will have to look at a way to make it all work..... though we had not much waste as prices were good enough to send second grade to markets.(small scale producer) #49. "I've learnt the value of on farm composting" "we enjoyed getting our compost right - previously we didn't have the right ration of carbon" **Projects report learning about composting** With regard to composting, 12 projects have run training related to composting. Tweed Landcare project reported the following changes for participants "90% found workshop very useful 95%found workshop on soil biology very useful 80% more confident in conducting own farm trials 80% more confident using pasture cuts to measure pasture production 10% said they would adopt composting and mulching 65% said they were interested in improving their higher country with new pasture or compost application"

		Increase in urban food producers conducting on farm (or at source) composting.	 **Project survey** 85% (165) of survey respondents make or use compost. Only 15% do not

	IMMEDIATE OUTCOMES		Achievable 18-24 months. i.e. Dec 2011-June 2012
Increased awareness of the environmental and economic impacts of food production and distribution	Does the community have a deeper understanding awareness of food ecology i.e., Soil Health, water conservation and reuse, sustainable crop management techniques		Two questions in the survey point to these changes for the broad project community: **Project survey (1)** In response to a question "what do you know now, that you did not know before the project (Q98) the most frequent mentions (35 of 172 respondents) fall into the category of soil health (encompassing composting, mulching, worm farming & biochar) sustainable agriculture and gardening techniques including permaculture, irrigation methods and pest and land management came in joint 3rd (14 mentions) **Project survey (2)** 172 survey respondents reflected on how their understanding of the link between food production, distribution and the regional economy had changed over the past few years (Q101). Changes cannot be directly attributed to the NRFL project but provide context. 25% said it had increased substantially 41% increased somewhat 32% stayed about the same 1% decreased. The same respondents also demonstrated their understanding. It fell into 16 broad categories. The most common mentions were: 1. Reporting no change in understanding/predominantly because they had been interested/active a long time (37) 2. Reported understanding of system/process of food production/food miles/links between production and distribution and relationships in that system (27) 3. Reporting more awareness/interest/ involvement through availability of/exposure to information/advertising/education courses (17) 4. More awareness of economic aspects, costs, impacts on the food system (10) 5. Non-specific general increase in their knowledge/awareness (10). All other categories demonstrate the types of understanding gained regarding the food chain. All received less than 10 mentions (overseas impacts on food economy, consolidating existing knowledge, having children, understanding of importance of maintaining soil health, importance of farmers markets, purchasing decisions, distribution only, impacts of supermarkets only, importance of teaching)
	Do individuals have a better understanding of the benefits of	Number of individuals reached by communication	**Project Management Team** 100,252 reached by communications campaign from Local Project Teams, 450,000 (data from media partners). Example numbers of individuals reached through projects include; 441 for Kyogle Village Showcase & 303 for Yamba Village Showcase. Other activities reached larger one off audiences, such as Harvest Festival

	consuming locally produced food?	/dissemination/ awareness campaign. Training hours, attendee numbers, and key learning outcomes	(2,000) and newsletters were distributed throughout the region via the project team and local project teams (for example 308 newsletters for Richmond Valley Council's Village Showcase l) **Project Survey** Of 172 respondents (Q97) 67% reported an increase in their knowledge about the benefits of eating local food (25% of these saying it increased a lot and 43% a little) 32% reported it had stayed the same. **Project Report** 867 'in kind' hours have been contributed by Byron Regional Community College and Learnscapes. Better understanding about the importance of consuming local food is demonstrated by statements such as "I am more aware of supporting local industries" "buying local saves transport fuel costs and also supports our local farmers makes us a happier community" "we have been practicing buying local for a long time but now there is more awareness in the general community and media which makes it easier to access local produce" "[the] implications of a worldwide recession [and] the significance of buying local produced produce is the only thing that makes any sense"
Increased knowledge of sources of locally produced food	Do individuals have increased knowledge of how to source locally produced food?	Number of individuals reached by communication /dissemination/ awareness campaign. Number of workshops / training days. Number of attendees. # website hits on Sustain Food website # hits on the Sustain Food Producers site	**Yes - individuals have increased knowledge of how to source locally produced food with between 30% (Jetty survey) and 78% (project survey) reporting an increased in their knowledge of how to, or saying that it was easier to, source locally produced food.** **Project team** Numbers of individuals reached by communications /dissemination/awareness campaign = 44,624 Number of hits on the Sustain Food website = 118,001 (from Aug 10 - Nov11) Number of hits to the Sustain Food producer database = 2,622 (from Aug 10 - Nov11) The reported shift in knowledge of how to source food locally was similar across a number of data sources. Details below: **Project Reports** The Learnscapes skilling project reported that of 583 participants 63% report an increase in their knowledge of how to source local food, (36% substantially, 27% somewhat) 23% that it stayed the same and 14% a decrease in their knowledge of how to source locally produced food. The Skilling the Community report from Byron Community College reported that of the 203 program participants, 65% felt that since January 2010 the availability of local food had increased (46% or increased substantially 19% No answer 28%). For this sector, it also translates to an increase of household purchase of local food - with 65% reporting an increase (42% somewhat, 23% substantial, no answer 21%). The Village Showcase projects engaged different sizes of community according to local conditions. Nimbin Community Centre for example report that 1,000 individuals would have been reached by the awareness campaign their community whereas Muli Muli Aboriginal Community - mid way between Woodenbong and Urbenville, with a total population of around 200 achieved 18 attendees at 13 workshops. **Project survey** Q97: 78% respondents reported an increase in knowledge of how to find local food (of these 32% saying it increased a lot). 21% reported no change. Whilst most said that their knowledge of where their food comes

			from stayed the same (36%) the combined total of those who reported their knowledge had increased a little or increased a lot is 63% making an overall sector increase **Jetty Telephone Survey** 30% respondents said it was now easier to source locally grown produce than it was 18 months ago (i.e. prior to the NRFL project). 15% felt it was more difficult. 46% felt it was about the same. Byron Shire residents were most likely to claim it was easier, and Ballina and Tweed residents least likely to believe this. More residents in Tweed believed it had become harder (22%) rather than easier to source local produce in the past 18 months. **Retailers Knowledge** 85 retailers were assisted with finding local producers by RDA including by using the producers database on Sustain Food website. (RDA-NR report p15). 'Produce search' is the fifth most visited page on the Sustain Food website (2,332 visits Aug10-Oct 11) Towards the end of the project RDA were also commissioned to produce a phone app to assist people in sourcing locally produced food whilst on the move.303 businesses are using the app (193 producers, 85 retailers, 15 markets and 10 restaurants). It has been downloaded 671 times. Due to the recency of this work it is too early to report any influence of this tool.
			Project Survey; Knowledge shifts of the benefits of eating local food, knowledge of how to find local food, how to cook food, store/preserve food, grow food and where it comes from (172 responses Q97)**.** 

Increased skills in food production	Do individuals have increased knowledge of how to grow food	Training hours, attendee numbers, and key learning outcomes	**Yes** **Project survey** Q97 As with knowledge of where food comes from, whilst the highest single sector was that reported knowledge stayed the same 68% reported that their knowledge of how to grow food had either increased a little (42%) or a lot (23%) **Project Team** At least 168 hours of training was delivered on growing/producing food with 496 attendees and at least 29 workshops/training days (hours not provided) being delivered by Village Showcase Projects including Kyogle, Mullumbimby and Muli Muli Community Gardens. In addition the Byron Community College have delivered over 200 hours of training on growing, cooking, storing and preserving food to 582 people. Nimbin Community Centre have delivered 42 'sharing local knowledge' sessions at the weekly farmers markets to an average 20 people per session (840 total) The NRFL Edible Garden event attracted 250 people with 51% respondents saying they were inspired to create an edible garden if they did not already have one. 22% attendees also learnt new skills. **Examples of learning outcomes** "…the practical application. Well organised and very informative. I have more inspiration to grow my own food and more confidence" (Byron Community College attendee) "I really learnt a lot from the organic gardening course. I really took a lot away from it. I liked seeing how easy drip irrigation is to set up" (survey respondent) "The website has helped with growing tips" "That I'm not the only one who cares about how food is grown" (see evaluation report for more on participant learning)
Increased cooking, storing and preserving skills	Do individuals have increased knowledge of how to cook, store and preserve food?	Training hours, attendee numbers, and key learning outcomes	**Yes - for those who did attend courses/events** **Project Reports** Byron ACE who managed a large part of the skilling the community focus area reported 41% (of 203) stakeholders had increased their knowledge of this topic. Of these 24% increased somewhat and 15% increased substantially. (61% did not report the change). As noted above, Byron Community College have delivered over 200 hours of training on growing, cooking, storing and preserving food to 582 people. **Project Survey** Survey respondents (Q97) reported that knowledge of cooking, storing and knowing where food comes from broadly stayed the same or increased a little: 172 individuals reported that their knowledge of how to • cook and store/preserve food saw little change (74% said stayed the same and 20% increased a little) • store/preserve food saw little change (65% staying the same and 27% increased their knowledge a little)
Improved knowledge and understanding	Do council staff and councillors have a better	Reported change in understanding	**Yes** **Project Management Team** The understanding since Jan 2010 of senior staff and councillors of the links between council activities and

council staff and councillors of the importance of addressing food production issues in policies and procedures	understanding of the links between council activities and policies and food production?	by senior staff and councillors # hours Steering Committee spend on the project (in kind) # of hours of in house support per council	policies and food production has increased.47% reporting it has changed substantially and 45% somewhat at the Local Government Forum. In addition Tweed Council measured understanding of the need to establish community gardens with a group of senior executives and staff before and after visiting community gardens. Their rating of the need to establish community gardens increased from 5.8/10 to 7.4/10. **Steering Committee Meeting** 100% of the members of the steering committee who participated in the focus group (4 councils) felt their understanding of councils role regarding food production /security has increased somewhat (100%). Examples they cited include: a move to whole of farm approach for sustainable agriculture extension work (Clarence Valley Council). The steering committee are highly aware of local government's role in supporting sustainable agriculture in face of reduced levels of support for regional sustainable agricultural work by some departments of the NSW State Government. Tweed Council has identified and is addressing gaps in their management framework that can improve support for food production: They have been undertaking land capability assessment in the LEP process to identify what is the best use of certain soil types and land aspects with the intention to lead to better land use planning. Byron Council report increased sensitivity to barriers to preference local produce such as interpreting the Trade Practices Act. **Project Management Team** 7 Local Government Forums were held during November 2011 to progress understanding of food security and the role of councils. Of 104 attendees 83 evaluation forms were received. Participants rated the helpfulness of the session for progressing a food security policy (1-low and 5 - high). 13% rated 2, 47% rated 3, 39% - 4 and 1% - 5. Making 87% rating it a success. 71% of attendees had contributed to the development of the Local Government Resource Kit - Food Security Policies. (For more detail see evaluation report) 1,642.5 in kind hours have been contributed by the steering committee. In addition to the steering committee hours, 368 hours were contributed by Council staff. Activities included undertaking policy research and reviews and participating in the Local Government Toolkit project and forum.
Increased understanding of the social / physical / environmental / economic barriers for communities adopting more sustainable behaviours	What are the barriers to sustainable behaviour related to food in NR?	# and type of barriers identified. # and type of actions to address barriers	The project has addressed barriers relating to the 7 focus areas (Distribution, Marketing and Education, Indigenous Communities, Village Showcase, Sustainable Agriculture, Discretionary Funding and the Local Government Resource Kit) using capacity and skill building, networking, technology (e.g. the grain mill) policy changes, trials of different approaches (land management and distribution), marketing, and mentoring/professional advice to various sections of the food chain ('from farm to fork'). See report for more details. **Distribution Reports** It would be fair to say that grappling with the complexity of the food distribution system, and the competing needs and drivers of retailers, producers and marketing groups and distributors and the system's inextricable link with the national network has been a major area of learning for the steering committee, project

related to food			management team and project leaders in the distribution and retail focus areas. **Consumer behaviour** Whilst we may espouse certain behaviours or preferences for our behaviours, we do not always follow through. Whilst the evaluation indicates major shifts in habits in some sectors and communities involved in the project, broader community change will require continued interventions at a number of levels; including values based messages, price based, experience based and convenience based. **Nimbin Food Security Project** Identified three barriers that they addressed to differing scales during the project 1. Complexity of food regulations 2. High grain dependence 3. Little support for small/medium scale production **Steering Committee** At the end of the project the Steering Committee members who participated in a focus group identified the following barriers that they could address in the future: 1. Distribution. They see collection and distribution of local produce as the main barrier that needs to be addressed in the next stage of this work. 2. Whilst they would like to provide a food scraps collection they see the service fees that would need to be applied as a barrier. 3. Reviewing arrangements between the state and local government sector regarding waste levies. They see their role as needing to address the barriers and to continue to lead and support the community in normalizing food sustainability behaviours.
	How can local government and partner organisations better support the community to progress towards food sustainability?	Number of recommendations endorsed and actioned by LG	**Project Management Team** 32 planning instruments have been amended, and 42 changes made by the councils to better support the community in progress towards food security. Measures identified that have been have put in place by the councils include: DCP for a new multi-unit facility to have 2 metre square food gardens, the councils have committed to continue to support food producers beyond the life of this project, adoption of community garden policies, reviewing and adopting market policy (developed through the NRFL project), providing local food distribution services, preparing a DA for a new farmers market site, running local food resilience workshops, providing website information and promoting the benefits of seasonal produce, farmers markets and the Grow Your Own campaign. **Steering Committee** Council representatives felt that with regard to making land available for food production that because of the

			State Government standard LEP requirements there is "not a whole lot more we can do locally about increasing or locking up more agricultural land".
Significant changes experienced/ highlights			**Steering Committee**: "Didn't think we'd achieve the 35 on-ground projects we set out to. We've delivered everything in the business plan – and beyond" **Project Manager** "If anyone said what's the moment of brilliance of this project I'd say thinking about it in terms of production - distribution - consumption tied to the seven focus areas"



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Embedding Sustainability

Sustainability principles have been embedded in many ways across so many organisations in the region that have been involved in this project in some way.

On-Ground Examples

At a local project level, we have organisations that have reported the following increase in sustainability awareness and outcomes throughout the delivery of their projects:

Distribution Project – Fruitos Regional Distribution Model

Fruitos as an organisation is extremely committed now, more than ever, to find a more environmentally friendly & sustainable food supply channel for our business & the Northern Rivers region. We make a commitment to continue to source new food producers in our region well beyond the final project completion date & also to continue to contact our ever-growing number of local farmers who have contacted us as a result of the marketing we have been undertaking. We know there is a demand from our large & varied customer base to supply them with local produce when available & economically viable which we will continue to meet & service into the future. We have set up systems in place to call certain growers each week, which will also be in place well after the completion of this project.

We are also looking to invest into sourcing or creating environmentally friendly biodiesel fuel to power our fleet of delivery vehicles.
This will take some serious time & money investment but will also meet a major the objective of this project which is to reduce greenhouse emissions whilst also providing Fruitos with a unique point of difference from its competitors. With already an established database of customers who use copious amounts of vegetable oil to cook with, we are in the process of setting up a used-oil pick-up service, which will ultimately power our delivery vehicles & reduce our fuel expenses in the long run.

Village Showcase Project – Nimbin Food Security

The project forms part of NNIC's greater community development project - Towards a Sustainable Nimbin. The Food Security Project has assisted to give our sustainability work forward momentum as community members can see actual outcomes and results and feel encouraged to become involved.

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The links between producers and consumers have increased considerably and key relationships have been formed between the Blue Knob Farmers Market (now incorporated), Nimbin Emporium, Nimbin Organics, Nimbin A&I Society, Frank Boyle, Brett Slater, numerous small scale food producers and the Nimbin Food Security project.

The Blue Knob Farmers Market is now well into its second year and will continue to provide incentives and supports for local small-scale food production.

To the extent that the project has increase local food production and our local food reliance it will embed sustainability into our community.

Sustainability as a concept is already well embedded in our community, however the details of how to achieve it can be overwhelming and concrete projects such as this assist to maintain and build momentum around sustainability initiatives. Further, this project has enabled an increasingly sophisticated understanding within our community of food security issues.

The Grain Mill is working well to raise awareness of our greatest bio-regional food security vulnerability and a new appreciation of grain and grain products. This has led to an increasing consumption of local grain, particularly from producers Brett Slater as well as Frank Boyle. Frank has reported to us that this has increased the viability of his local medium scale dry land rice production and that his primary market is Nimbin itself.

Sustainable Agriculture Project – Sustainable Farm Planning

The project has identified attributes of sustainable farms and promoted these at landowner forums. Case studies arising from the property plans have identified strengths and weaknesses which are drawn to the attention of participating landowners through individual reports and to landowners generally by publishing the case studies on the NRFL web site. New approaches to solving problems have been exchanged and powerful risk management tools such as POAMA have been widely promoted.

Regional Collaboration

One of the outstanding successes of this project has been the regional commitment to collaboration on sustainability.

Right from project commencement, this project worked with Sustain Northern Rivers (SNR), a collaborative platform for action on climate change. SNR



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evolved to accelerate change in Northern Rivers communities to more sustainable ways of living and working.

During the life of the project, their membership has grown to 26 and now includes all 7 Councils involved with this project. This organisation, has grown exponentially over the past two years in its capacity and credibility to deliver on its charter.



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Recently, the SNR members voted to contribute funds to enable food security issues and solutions as highlighted through this project, to be carried forward in the region. This includes:

$50,000	NOROC ($6,250 per Council – 7 Councils are SNR members)
$10,000	North Coast TAFE
$2,500	RDA – Northern Rivers
$1,000	Northern NSW Local Health District (Formerly NSW Health)
$3,959	SNR
$1,000	Northern Rivers Social Development Council
$500	Northern Rivers Tourism
$1,000	ACE Community Colleges
$500	Byron Community College
$500	EnviTE Inc
$500	Nimbin Neighbourhood Centre
$200	Pottsville Beach Neighbourhood Centre
$200	Mid Richmond Neighbourhood Centre
$71,359	**Total Funding**

In Kind Contributions

$11,520 RDA-Northern Rivers per year to host the position
$27,000 The Northern Star Pty Ltd to support a communications plan

SNR member involvement (estimated at over $200,000 last financial year)

Council Collaboration

From the governance structure, through to the systems and processes needed to run a project of this scope and size, the commitment shown by the partner Council's has gone beyond simply delivery of a grant. The project has proven, that boundaries can be put aside for the greater good of the community, and the planet. That willingness to finding a way forward, is far more powerful than can ever be measured or legislated for. That commitment to true and lasting change means taking risks, but through innovation, those

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risks can me mitigated. Finally, that the solution for the future lies with our leaders, followers, organisations and individuals.

The model for this project, has allowed all of this to occur and more. Its success will ensure that future collaborative projects have a way to be implemented in equally meaningful ways. It has proven, beyond doubt, that the whole is more than the sum of its parts.

“The local government resource kit is an excellent example of Council regional collaboration and working together to develop policies, practices and procedures to deal with emerging issues associated with food production now and well into the future. Councils have a role of facilitator, regulator and enabler, and this kit will serve as a resource for all councils to enhance LEP, and associated DCP, to ensure a sustainable food future for the region”
Wayne Halcrow, NRFL Steering Committee Member, 2012.

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Delays and or Difficulties Encountered



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Scope and Scale

From the number of organisations involved, through to the number of projects selected for on ground activities, the scope and scale of this project was ambitious.

Whilst all of the outcomes of the business plan have been achieved, the main difficulty has been the quantity of administration required in contract management, financial management, and outcomes reporting.

Project partners have been placed under intense pressure to deliver on their contracts, and this caused tension at times between parties.

Summary: The business plan was ambitious in terms of scope and scale to be achieved in the timeframe.

Timeframe

Whilst the project was for a period of three years, the first year had a focus on writing the business plan and getting approval from the Trust for its implementation.

The second and third years were then used to identify and deliver projects ie a total of 21 months. The final three months of the project focused on financial acquittal and final reporting.

It was literally not possible to commence all projects at the one time, and therefore implementation of the seven key focus areas had to be staggered.

For the focus area of Sustainable Agriculture, this meant that some projects had six to twelve months on-ground, making it difficult in some cases, to see tangible results from the efforts of all parties. However, the longer-term returns will certainly still be achieved.

The tight timeframes placed pressure on all parties to get systems, process and project development correct the first time, every time. Timeframes had no contingency planning capacity. There were instances when it was difficult to select the right project needed to meet outcomes, in the allotted time (from the business plan). For example, the process to select an Indigenous project was scheduled for 2 months in the planning phase, however it took almost 8 months to identify and contract a community to deliver this aspect. This meant that the time on ground to deliver was much shorter than planned for, and this in turn, placed pressure on the community to move at a much quicker pace than they were used to.



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Summary: Short timeframes reduce capacity for contingency planning. Outcomes can be achieved, but they require significant passion and dedication to deliver from all partners.

Stakeholder diversity and expectations

During the business planning process, many stakeholders were identified and consulted to develop the framework for delivery.

Personal (and professional) opinion and beliefs weighed heavily into the topic of food security - and reflected in expectations about what should and should not be included within the project eg local, organic, biodynamic, sustainable, ethic, vegetarian etc

Therefore a difficulty for this project has been asking the early adopters to support the project even if it is (in their opinion) not moving the issue of food security forward fast and far enough. Conversely, the general consumer was hearing about the challenges of food security for the first time – and needed to be given clear, simple actions to move the initiative forward.

These difficulties drove the way the communication strategy was implemented. A significant amount of time was needed to focus on this aspect. In hindsight, additional resources should have been allocated to this part of the project during the planning phase.

Summary: Communicating with stakeholders and partners is a major aspect of project delivery, and needs to be planned and budgeted for.

Contract Versus Grant

This project relied on other organisations within the region to deliver on ground activities. We believe that because the grant money was held by local government, it was difficult to convey to organisations that they were not being 'funded' to deliver their own project – rather, that they were being contracted by the council collaboration to deliver NRFL project outcomes. This was not a delegated funding strategy.

The outcomes were negotiated between NRFL and the individual organisations – and these were then set through contracts based on milestones and set budgets. When organisations were held accountable to their project outcomes and contractual obligations, there was definitely negativity felt by the contracted partners towards the project management team.



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The community and non-profit organisations in general, had the most difficulty in understanding this concept. It resulted in some instances, with our project partners being resentful of the perceived lack of flexibility allowed in the delivery of their contracted activities. There were also instances when project partners did not communicate changes in their project (and spending), which impacted their payments and put the project management team in a position where they had to refuse payment until the contracted activities were delivered.

The project model used for NRFL, was very different to grant funding for community based projects. The capacity of organisations to respond to the model was not adopted as well as hoped. However, it has to be said, that in the end, all partners did deliver and the project has achieved in all areas.

Summary: It is difficult to engage contractors with government grant money, without it appearing to be “giving or divesting a grant”. Lack of understanding around this, can create conflict.

Capacity for delivery

The complexity of the issues coupled with the scope of the project, the level of reporting and accountability required to deliver this project on time and budget, was beyond the capacity of some non profit organisations.

Additional support was provided by the project management team, however, those organisations most in need of the support often did not attend.

Analysis of organisational capacity should have been more overt in the project selection phase.

Summary: Many community and non-profit groups lack the organisatoinal capacity to deliver ambitious and innovative projects. Organisational capacity and attitude to innovation should be considered when selecting project contractors that have to be delivered within short timeframes.

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Modifications

Project Commencement

Phase two of the project commenced with the approval of the business plan and the execution of contracts with the Project Management Team on the 23rd March 2010. As the business plan projected the project commencement to occur in January 2010, an updated project timetable was submitted to the NSW Environmental Trust reflecting a revised timeline.

Local Government Project Officer Contract

After three months, the Local Government Project Officer terminated his contract with the project. The decision was made by the Steering Committee to divide the existing role into two, due to the diverse skill set required between writing policy for Local Government, and coordinating community projects. The contract for the Village Showcase Coordinator was executed on the 28th July 2010. A contract for the Local Government Resource Kit phase 1 was executed in February 2011, with phase 2 commencing in July 2011.

Discretionary Projects

The Business Plan determined there would be two rounds to identify Discretionary projects. It was decided to postpone discretionary projects until the end of 2010, due to the delay of the NRFL project commencement. Given the time constraints, the Steering Committee endorsed an alternate strategy for the Discretionary Budget allocation.
The Discretionary funds were allocated to organisations that were already delivering on-ground works, or to activities that met the projects objectives, but did not receive funding through other Focus Areas.

Budget Variations

In light of individual Local Project Team requirements for their activities, 4 formal budget variations were sought from the NSW Environmental Trust against the NRFL approved budget. This was primarily for line item category movements, so as to accurately reflect each Local Project Teams anticipated spend.

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Project Timetable

Milestone	Milestone Commencement Date	Milestone Completion Date
Appoint Steering Committee	15-Nov-09	17-Nov-09
Advertise and appoint Project Manager	30-Nov-09	15-Mar-10
Advertise and appoint Project Officers	31-Jan-10	15-Mar-10
Partnership agreement signed	31-Jan-10	31-Jan-10
Project Inception Meeting	31-Jan-10	30-Mar-10
Project Milestone Report 1	1-Apr-10	1-Apr-10
Develop and launch website	15-Apr-10	15-Jun-10
Conduct Inception meetings of LGA Reference Groups	15-Apr-10	30-Apr-10
Seek EOIs and appoint Regional Partnership Reference Group	30-Apr-10	30-May-10
Develop marketing strategy	30-Apr-10	30-Jun-10
Seek EOIs for Village Showcase Projects and approve projects	30-Apr-10	30-Jun-10
Develop concepts and conduct Indigenous Food Production Projects	1-Jun-10	30-Nov-11
Conduct Official Launch	30-May-10	30-Jul-10
Conduct inception meeting of Regional Partnership Reference Group	28-May-10	28-May-10

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Milestone	Milestone Commencement Date	Milestone Completion Date
Conduct Focus Group on Sustainable Agriculture to identify way forward	28-May-10	28-May-10
Project Milestone Report 2	1-Jun-10	1-Jun-10
Develop LGA Resource Kit and deliver training	1-Sep-10	30-Nov-11
Seek EOIs for delivery of Sustainable Agriculture program	7-Jun-10	25-Jun-10
Seek proposals, develop and implement Innovative Distribution Models	30-Jun-10	30-Nov-11
Seek proposals, develop and implement Virtual Marketplace	30-Jun-10	30-Nov-11
Conduct marketing campaign	1-Jul-10	30-Nov-11
Conduct Skilling the Community Projects	30-Sep-10	30-Nov-11
Conduct Village Showcase Projects	2-Aug-10	30-Nov-11
Conduct Sustainable Agriculture Projects	28-Sep-10	30-Nov-11
Conduct progress review of all project activities	1-Nov-10	30-Nov-10
Seek EOIs and approve Discretionary Projects (alternate strategy employed)	N/A	N/A
Project Milestone Report 3 (Progress Report)	1-Dec-10	1-Dec-10
Conduct Discretionary Projects	1-Feb-11	30-Nov-11

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Milestone	Milestone Commencement Date	Milestone Completion Date
Review Business Plan	28-Feb-11	28-Feb-11
Conduct progress review of all project activities	1-May-11	30-May-11
Project Milestone Report 4	1-May-11	1-May-11
Conduct progress review of all project activities	1-Nov-11	30-Nov-11
Project Milestone Report 5	1-Nov-11	1-Nov-11
Project Milestone Report 6 (Final Report)	5-Mar-12	5-Mar-12

Permits or Approvals

None required

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Financial Statement

The NRFL project has been delivered as a two-phase program. The first phase was the development of a project business plan in 2009, which identified the key initiatives and strategies to be applied during the project delivery phase. The project delivery phase was carried out from 2010 to 2012.

The Department of Environment and Climate Change, through the Urban Sustainability Program within the NSW Environment Trust, has provided funding of $1,999,080 for the project including:

- $75,606.00 for the development of a project business plan.
- $1,923,474.00 for delivery of the projects Key Focus Areas.

Budget allocations were made for each of the Key Focus Areas and Project Management. The budget allocation was as follows:

1. **Village Showcase Local Projects** (Budget - $350,000)

2. **Marketing and Education Program** (Budget - $285,600)
   - Further divided between the following programs:

     i. Skilling the Community $50,000
     ii. Marketing Program $145,600
     iii. Website Development $30,000
     iv. Source Identification $60,000

3. **Distribution Regional Projects** (Budget - $160,000)

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4. **Local Government Resource Kit** (Budget - $35,000)

5. **Food Production and Distribution in Indigenous Communities** (Budget $50,000)

6. **Sustainable Agriculture Regional Projects** (Budget $235,000)

7. **Discretionary Projects** (Budget $89,080)

8. **Communications Strategy** (Budget $20,000)

9. **Project Evaluation & Accounting** (Budget $39,500)

10. **Project Administration & Management** (Budget $659,294.00)

A further $58,452.76 was achieved as interest accrued on project funds. This money was rolled into the delivery of additional Discretionary projects.

During the business-planning phase, additional Cash and In Kind contributions from stakeholders, agencies and community groups had been projected at $568,640. Through the commitment and dedication of project participants, the Cash and In Kind contributions recorded at December 2011 reached $2,209,965.

The Financial Statement below presents the finalised Northern Rivers Food Links budget expenditure as of the 21st February 2012.

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FINAL FINANCIAL REPORT - ENVIRONMENTAL TRUST GRANTS - 2006 ONWARDS

GRANTEE ORGANISATION NAME: Clarence Valley Council

GRANT NO: 2008/USM/0016

NOTE: The project budget should reflect the most recent variation approved by the Trust (if applicable). The amounts shown below should be GST exclusive.

	TOTAL APPROVED PROJECT BUDGET			ACTUAL EXPENDITURE				VARIATION			
	OTHER SOURCES FUNDING	TOTAL TRUST GRANT	WHOLE PROJECT BUDGET	EXPENDITURE OF FUNDS FROM OTHER SOURCES	EXPENDITURE OF TRUST FUNDS	EXPENDITURE OF INTEREST ACCRUED ON TRUST CONTRIBUTION	TOTAL EXPENDITURE OF PROJECT	VARIATION TRUST FUNDS	% VAR TRUST GRANT	VARIATION PROJECT BUDGET	% VAR PROJECT BUDGET
Direct Project Costs											
Salaries - officer/s		24,394	24,394		27,315		27,315	2,921	0%	2,921	0%
Salary Oncosts		0	0				0	0	0%	0	0%
Consultancies		1,211,737	1,211,737		1,218,105		1,218,105	6,368	0%	6,368	0%
Materials		253,797	253,797		262,819		262,819	9,022	0%	9,022	0%
Transport Costs		23,635	23,635		23,792		23,792	157	0%	157	0%
Insurance		8,910	8,910		9,015		9,015	105	0%	105	0%
Project Publicity		103,506	103,506		102,155		102,155	-1,352	0%	-1,352	0%
Other (detail)	568,640	241,787	810,427	2,209,965	284,510	58,453	2,552,928	42,724	2%	1,742,502	66%
Subtotal	**568,640**	**1,867,766**	**2,436,406**	**2,209,965**	**1,927,710**	**58,453**	4,196,128	59,944	3%	1,759,722	67%
Administration											
General Administration		79,364	79,364		79,364		79,364	0	0%	0	0%
Accounting Costs		5,700	5,700		5,700		5,700	0	0%	0	0%
Project Documentation		0	0				0	0	0%	0	0%
Project Evaluation		46,250	46,250		44,759		44,759	-1,491	0%	-1,491	0%
Other (detail)			0				0	0	0%	0	0%
Subtotal	**0**	**131,314**	**131,314**	**0**	**129,823**	**0**	**129,823**	-1,491	0%	-1,491	0%
Interest		**58,453**	**58,453**	**0**	**0**	**58,453**					
TOTAL	**568,640**	**2,057,533**	**2,626,173**	**2,209,965**	**2,057,533**	**58,453**	**4,325,951**	0	**0%**	1,699,778	**65%**

Project Income	
Grant Money Received	1,999,080
Interest Earned	58,453
Subtotal	**2,057,533**

CERTIFIED BY-NAME: Ashley Lindsay

POSITION IN ORGANISATION: MANAGER FINANCE + SUPPLY

SIGNATURE:

DATE:

Note for community organisations: Independent certification must be submitted with this report as per your reporting guidelines.

clarence
VALLEY COUNCIL

21 February 2012

Reference: Foodlinks
Contact: Rodney Wright

NSW Environmental Trust
PO Box 644
PARRAMATTA NSW 2124

To Whom it May Concern

In-Kind Explanatory Notes – 2008/USM/0016

In addition to the Final Financial Report provided in the NSW Environmental Trust format on the preceding page, the explanatory notes detail contributions reported as Expenditure of Funds from Other Sources, against the Other (detail) line item.

The approved Business Plan 2009, a range of key stakeholders identified a collective value of $568,640 of in-kind and/or cash contributions that they were willing to be used to implement food security projects in our region.

It is with great pleasure that Clarence Valley Council, as lead council for this project, announces it has exceeded this target by more than three times the value – with a total of $2,209,965 achieved.



This has resulted in a total investment in our region of $4,267,498 – grant funds from the Environmental Trust, plus cash/in-kind provided by the community, industry, partner organisations and other funding bodies.

A detailed breakdown of cash/in-kind received throughout the life of the project is attached preceding the Trust final financial report.

If you require further information please contact me on telephone 026643 0804.

Yours faithfully

Ashley Lindsay
Manager Finance & Supply

Locked Bag 23 GRAFTON NSW 2460
ABN 85 864 095 684 t 02 6643 0200 f 02 6642 7647 e council@clarence.nsw.gov.au w www.clarence.nsw.gov.au

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Project Name	Inkind Total Hours	In Kind CONTRIBUTIONS (November 11)
VILLAGE SHOWCASE		
Byron	13534	$356,400
Kyogle	7920	$220,800
Ballina HWNS	1975	$143,596
Ballina Community Garden	1360	$46,528
Lismore		$63,000
Richmond Valley	12948	$305,424
Clarence Valley	1380	$42,000
Tweed	4469	$126,335
TOTAL	**43586**	**$1,304,083**
INDIGENOUS		
Muli Muli	316	$7,900
TOTAL	**316**	**$7,900**
DISCRETIONARY		
Byron Sustainable Food Directory	30	$7,400
Sample Magazine	125	$5,000
NRFL Documentary		
Byron Harvest Festival	30	$7,400
Sustainable Agriculture Strategy	394	$23,640
TOTAL	**579**	**$43,440**
SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE		
Mara Seeds	602	$57,706
Landshare Australia	2,000	$95,000
I&I – Farm Planning	408	$16,345
Clarence Landcare	1049	$26,225
I&I – Greenhouse Food Production	208	$33,978
Tweed Landcare	592	$24,360
NLSS	512.5	$23,861
TOTAL	**5371.5**	**$277,475**
DISTRIBUTION		
North Coast Citrus Growers	276	$8,350
Fruitos	80	$3,200
HWNS A	1675	$56,100
HWNS B		
Caroline Dunn	133	$2,205
Virtual Marketplace		$25,000
TOTAL	**2164**	**$94,855**
SOURCE IDENTIFICATION		
RDA	2006	$102,998
TOTAL	**2006**	**$102,998**
SKILLING THE COMMUNITY		
Byron Community College	636	$28,000
Learnscapes	231	$12,648
TOTAL	**867**	**$40,648**
MARKETING		
NBN		$82,000
APN		$102,000
TOTAL		**$184,000**
LOCAL GOVT RESOURCE KIT		
Ballina Council	12	$720
CVC	0	
Lismore Council	132.5	$2,795
RVC	11.5	$1,140
Tweed Council	40	$1,600
LGRK Forum	172	$8,790
TOTAL	**368**	**$15,045**
Events/Community & other contributions	1245	**$43,606**
Steering Committee Spend	1642.5	**$95,915**
Project & SC/event Total	**58145**	**$2,209,965**

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Visual Documentation

Find following the Northern Rivers Food Links project compilation booklet, which has been developed as a showcase tool for conference and event attendance. The compilation provides a short summary of successes achieved throughout the life of the project.



Project Aim

Northern Rivers Food Links project aimed to:

Mitigate climate change impacts associated with food production and distribution by:

- Addressing distribution inefficiencies that result in unnecessary 'food miles' for locally produced food.
- Supporting take-up of more sustainable food production practices with particular emphasis on farming inputs, land-use management in a changing climate and off-farm environmental impacts.

Strengthen community resilience to climate change and peak oil impacts by:

- Reducing reliance on highly centralised food supply chains.
- Creating a local food economy built on strong links between the regions food producers, distributors, retailers and consumers.

Partners

- NSW Environmental Trust
- Clarence Valley Council (as the lead Council)
- Ballina Shire Council
- Byron Shire Council
- Kyogle Council
- Lismore City Council
- Richmond Valley Council
- Rous Water
- Tweed Shire Council
- Project Reference Groups
- Local Project Teams

Project Objectives

1. Enhance the skills and tools of local government staff in the Northern Rivers to support the development of the local food supply network.
2. Enhance community education on links between sustainability and buying food locally.
3. Raise awareness of the community and businesses on how to improve soil health through increased organic waste recycling.
4. Reduce organic waste to landfill by encouraging at source composting.
5. Enhance community food knowledge and healthy lifestyles by increasing access to and awareness of, fresh local food.
6. Support a reduction of transportation costs and greenhouse gas emissions by shortening the food supply and distribution system in the Northern Rivers.
7. Increase community resilience to potential future food shortages by reconnecting urban communities with regional food production.
8. Strengthen the Northern Rivers local economy through the development of a sustainable (viable) food supply system.

Printed on 100% post consumable waste

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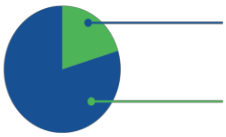
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Major Outcomes

Total Grant Funds $2,057,533



$568,640
Total in kind/cash target

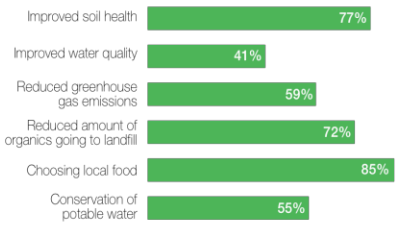
$2,209,965
Total in kind/cash achieved

The top four topics that people report to have learnt about during the life of the NRFL project:

1. Soil health, composting, mulching, worm farming and biochar
2. How to grow, around seasonality and weather, specific crops and farming ideas, and planting techniques
3. How much local produce there is/can be, and how many growers there are
4. (a) How to find local food, where it is grown and sold, and difficulties for retailers
   (b) How interested people are generally and within the sectors about food/food security/growing food (interest in both risks and benefits)
   (c) Sustainable agriculture and gardening techniques; companion planting, drip irrigation, non-spraying, crop rotation, permaculture

Source - NRFL project survey

128 of the 200 respondents from the NRFL project survey reported the following improvements in environmental practices:



Project Involvement

16,674 people have been directly involved in the NRFL project.

130+ on-ground projects have been delivered

56,503 volunteer hours spent on the project

524 partnerships have been formed throughout the life of NRFL.

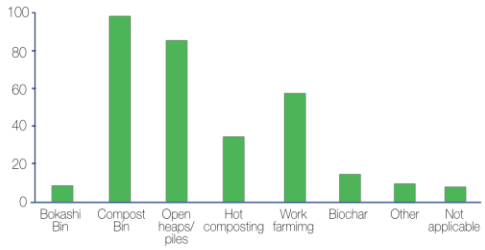
698 students have been involved in the project, along with **31** groups working on behalf of people who are socially disadvantaged.

17 community gardens have been established.

922 people have been involved with community gardens through this project.

1297 people have attended a wide range of education and training workshops.

165 of the 200 respondents from the NRFL project survey provided information on the types of composting they do, either at home or in their business.



31 Council project participants said that they had made specific changes to LEP, DCP, policies or plans to bring about a positive impact on local food production, consumption or distribution in their Councils.

79% think the *availability of local food* has increased or increased substantially since 2010

71% report that the *amount of local food* their household buys or consumes has increased or increased substantially since 2010

61% report that the *amount of produce their household buys from farmers markets* has increased or increased substantially since 2010

Source - NRFL project survey

97%

of retailers who completed the NRFL project survey reported an increase in locally produced food being sold



82%

of DPI Sustainable Farm Planning project participants have already made positive changes to their land management practices

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Village Showcase Projects

- **10,185** people have been engaged through the project with **117** organisations directly involved
- **17** community gardens have received assistance
- **92** workshops encompassing growing, cooking, composting and worm farming have been held
- **8.5** hectares of land is now dedicated to community gardens.

Food Production and Distribution in Indigenous Communities

- Establishment of a **2** hectare garden incorporating Australian native bush foods and fresh fruit and vegetables and a bee hive
- **15** local school children have been engaged throughout the life of the project.

Local Government Resource Kit

- **5** new policy templates were developed for all **7** Councils in the Northern Rivers
- Amendment of Clarence Valley Council market garden has been endorsed by Council and is on public exhibition. The commencement of a new farmers market in Yamba is now underway.

Sustainable Agriculture

- **275** participants attended Farm Field days across the region
- **23** farms participated in on-farm composting and compost application activities
- **200** participants attended the Sustainable Agriculture Forums across **4** locations
- **32,000** Tweed LGA residents received targeted communications regarding the Tweed Sustainable Agriculture Strategy
- **135** Northern Rivers based registrations on the Landshare Australia website.

Marketing and Education

Skilling the Community

- **40** community based skilling workshops conducted attracting **582** participants over **17** topic areas
- **5** Local food events showcasing local food cooking demonstrations, how to create edible gardens and featured sustainability speakers.

Source Identification

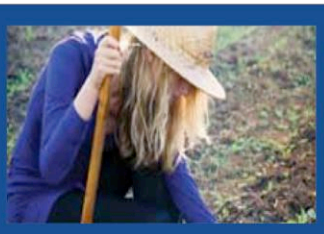
- **108** retailer assessments undertaken with **85** retailers committing
- **195** producers registered on the producers database
- Labeling with Source Identification was evaluated with a positive influence on sales reported from the **4** retailers participating in the purchasing pilot program

Website

- NRFL website attracted **224,175** hits from June 10 – Nov 11
- Sustainfood website attracted **118,001** hits from Aug 10 – Nov 11.

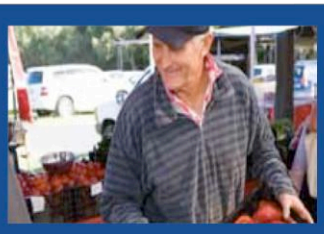
Distribution Projects

- NSW North Coast Citrus Growers established a distribution model with **35** new customers over a **7** month period, reporting **450**kg of citrus delivered per week to local customers
- House with No Steps established supply to **4** IGA stores, **2** fruit shops and Fruitos resulting in **76.6** tonne of produce being retained for the local market. The project has engaged **20** local producers with an estimated monthly savings of **250**km in travel
- Fruitos established an Intra-Region distribution model which replaced **23.86** tonne of produce per month with local produce, compared with **1.5** tonne prior to being involved in the NRFL project
- **671** downloads of the Virtual marketplace MyFood NR phone app and **303** businesses/organisations registered.



43%

of the NRFL project survey respondents reported that the amount of organic material they send to landfill has decreased



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TESTIMONIALS

"*The social interaction that's come out of the garden,* ***for people who were lonely, or didn't get out at all. A bit like the mens' shed, but it's mixed male and female.*** *We have interactions between age groups too, from 85 – down to toddlers and pre-schoolers. I think that is a good thing…and because Yamba is an area with units – the fact that* ***people can come and grow their own veg in an organic way and can take their produce home is fantastic."***

Ron Jurd | Yamba Community Garden)

"*Probably the surprise at the* ***volume of local produce*** *that we have sold instead of interstate or inter-region…It was quite amazing when we did our survey for the sample month to see the shift in our buying compared to last year from just under 2 tonnes to just under 24 tonnes. We always wanted to do it - buy more local produce and support local producers. It makes me feel good. The attitudes are a lot better.* ***It's a lot easier to sell it to our customers when they know its local . . . I think we are a better organisation for it."***

Sam Stewart | Fruitos

"*. . . we now have a fully functioning website that acts as an on line* ***land matching tool for growers and landowners in the Northern Rivers*** *. . . and people know about it. Its* ***significant because more privately owned land in our region will be made available for the purpose of producing food to feed our community,*** *reducing food miles and helping to secure our food future."*

Phil Dudman | Landshare Australia

"*The project has developed the capacity of NSW DPI's local staff to offer specific advisory support to greenhouse growers on the North Coast. The participating growers have made strategic improvements to their farm operations as well as developing their skill and knowledge base in many aspects of greenhouse management."*

Abigail Jenkins | DPI, Improved Greenhouse Management

"*I am just generally much more aware of sourcing my food locally, feel more confident to inquire about it, I know my farmers markets, I also know MUCH more about what's seasonal."*

NRFL project survey respondent

"*My understanding of the food chain has changed regarding . . . the food production and transport practices current in Australia.* ***I think my awareness has expanded from a personal preference for local and organic food to an understanding of the benefits to community of local and sustainably produced food."***

NRFL project survey respondent

"***The Local Government Resource Kit is an excellent example of Council regional collaboration and working together to develop policies, practices and procedures, to deal with emerging issues associated with food production now and well into the future. Councils have a role of facilitator, regulator and enabler and this kit will also serve as a resource for all Councils to enhance Council Land Environment Plans (LEP) and associated Development Control Plans (DCP), to ensure a sustainable food future for the region."***

Wayne Halcrow | Steering Committee Member Richmond Valley Council

www.sustainfood.com.au






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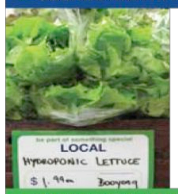
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Northern Rivers Foodlinks Celebrates Regional Success

This LOOKBOOK provides a snapshot of 28 food security projects implemented as part of the Northern Rivers Food Links project. For further information on the projects achievements visit **www.northernriversfoodlinks.com.au**

> SOURCE IDENTIFICATION



- This project involved 85 retailers right across the northern rivers, joining together to help customers quickly see what is locally grown and where it comes from within the Northern Rivers.
- These retailers display easy to read source identification labels (we are sure you have seen them!)
- Increased levels of local food stocked in store have been reported.
- Customers report the signs are really making customer choices easier to make.

> SUSTAINABLE FOOD DIRECTORY



- This project saw the development of a pocket sized guide to eating locally and organically in the Byron Shire.
- It's a veritable stocktake of local businesses that support local produce, free range eggs, fair trade and organic products.
- Launched in August 2011, the Sustainable Food Directory is being promoted to local residents and visitors in local media and on-line.
- 25 outlets in the Byron Shire area are stocking the Directory, with an initial print run of 5000 copies.

> YAMBA COMMUNITY GARDEN



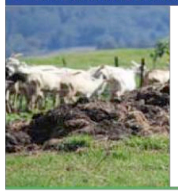
- Established by local garden enthusiasts, this community garden is founded on a commitment to promoting healthy active lifestyles.
- This garden opened in April 2011 with 70 members.
- The garden is a teaching and learning space for local schools and the community.
- Private gardens and shared beds, learning spaces, mobile food gardens, compost making spaces, and a wonderful worm farm make this a showcase community garden.

> VIRTUAL MARKETPLACE



- The Virtual Marketplace "My Food - Northern Rivers" phone application (the app) was developed in response to regional consumer demand for fast access to local food.
- As an extension of the Sustain Food website the app brings people closer to the source of their local food and information about the farm where the food is grown.
- From farmers markets to retailers and restaurants, the app puts the power of local food choices directly into the consumer's hand and is at the cutting edge of innovation around food security.

> BIOLOGICAL FARMING METHODS



- 4 farmers with a desire to improve their on-farm sustainability are reaping the rewards of this project through the development of on-farm organic waste composting and living mulch systems.
- The participants have been guided on best practice implementation and were provided support to improve long term soil health necessary for sustained quality food production.

> CITRUS INDUSTRY DISTRIBUTION MODEL



- 15 citrus grower industry association members have participated in a producer distribution model targeting over 70 pubs, clubs, restaurants and cafés in the Northern Rivers region.
- The growers generated local sales for locally produced limes which reduce food miles for this product.
- The model includes progressing opportunities for value added products particularly in the use of 'seconds' fruit.

> SKILLING THE COMMUNITY



- 40 inspirational demonstrations and workshops connecting the community to local food have been delivered in partnership with the region's community college network.
- More than 400 people have participated in sessions covering everything from composting and growing your own food to conserving and preserving local food.
- Showcase demonstrations on kitchen gardens, companion planting, cooking with local food and the importance of food miles and sustainability have featured in community events across the region.
- 300 children have been involved in local food awareness programs delivered throughout the region's shopping centres.

> IMPROVED GREENHOUSE PRACTICES



- Working with 4 greenhouse food producers in the region, this project has seen the incorporation of leading greenhouse practices into current growing systems.
- All aspects of greenhouse growing, including plant nutrition, pest and disease management, water quality, water use efficiency and run-off management have been addressed through innovative on-ground works.
- The focus of this project was to support growers to identify the key areas where environmental improvements can be achieved, and in doing so, how the long term sustainability of the farm can be improved.

> MULI MULI COMMUNITY GARDEN



- This community garden has fast become a social hub and talking point in this remote Aboriginal community.
- The Muli Muli community is enjoying the preparation of their two acres of community garden space with fruit trees, bush tucker and vegetables.
- The garden has a native bee hive, chicken coop, composting and food sharing systems.
- Each week high school students from the community come to the garden to work and learn.

> BALLINA VILLAGE SHOWCASE



- The Grocer, at the House With No Steps, offers customers 100% local food and is open 7 days.
- Over 50 local farmers supply their produce to The Grocer; with a mixture of fresh and value added produce.
- Educational display panels were developed to help the consumer identify what is grown locally and seasonally to help make buying local easy.

> NIMBIN FOOD SECURITY



The bar has been lifted on local food production across a catchment area of more than 5,000 residents in the Nimbin area with the introduction of:

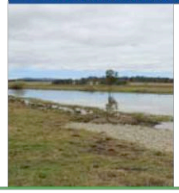
- The weekly Blue Knob Farmers Market (which has become Nimbin's food security hub).
- Weekly Sharing Local Knowledge community skilling (workshops on everything from bee keeping to seed growing delivered by local people for local people).
- Nimbin Sustainable Local Food Day - a showcase of local and sustainable food.
- The region's first community owned mobile grain mill.

> NORTHERN RIVERS FOODLINKS DOCUMENTARY



- The NRFL documentary will be used by the NSW Environmental Trust, the 7 Northern Rivers Councils, and Rous Water to showcase the project and the amazing people who have implemented projects right across the Northern Rivers.
- This is a valuable record and tool for any other region looking to undertake a food security project for their community.
- To view a snapshot of the documentary visit www.northernriversfoodlinks.com.au

> SUSTAINABLE GRAZING IN THE CLARENCE



- 3 farm enterprises have achieved on-farm improvements to soil health and perennial native pasture conditions.
- Best practice water efficiency and improved water quality aims have been met through key works including a gravel stock watering point and alternative water source.
- Improved stock rotation within land capability has led to better pasture resilience and reduced grazing pressures.

> HEALTHY SOIL FOR FOOD PRODUCTION



- This project supported farmers to reduce the cost of food production, at the same time improve soil productivity and produce quality.
- 16 Tweed based farmers have trialed mulch, compost, chicken and cow manure on a variety of crops and pasture under local conditions, testing the impact this has on soil health, plant/food quality and yield.
- Farmers who participated in the trials were dairy, beef and small crop producers.

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FARMERS MARKET NETWORK



- The Northern Rivers Farmers Market Network is a new collaboration established between the region's existing farmers markets.
- Farmers-stallholders and market coordinators share information and develop cooperative marketing ideas.
- A workshop was held to explore marketing and promotional initiatives that can be implemented in the region.
- The region's farmers markets sell on average 700 kgs of local produce per month, with demand for more.
- Belinda Jeffery, celebrated cookbook author and TV personality hosted a special Northern Rivers Food Links and NBN News feature series, 'Make it Markets'. The series explored farmers markets, eating food in season, food miles and getting to know the farmer behind your food.

SUSTAINABLE FARM PLANNING



- 22 farmers have embraced a whole new way of thinking about farming for the future.
- Through the support of the project, farmers are now better prepared with greater knowledge on the effects of climate change on-farm and ways to integrate their farm systems, reduce inputs, reduce costs and mitigate against seasonal variations with better planning.
- Case studies featuring challenges faced on-farm by the participants were developed to assist the sharing of these experiences with the broader farming community.

CASINO COMMUNITY GARDEN



- The Casino Community Garden has become a space for growing, learning and sharing, with numerous community groups involved.
- The garden's abundant harvest is already helping support the local soup kitchen and the youth cafe in Evans Head.
- A series of cooking classes were hosted during the project using the produce to improve knowledge about fresh healthy eating.
- The garden design features private allotments and demonstration areas.

REGION DISTRIBUTION MODEL



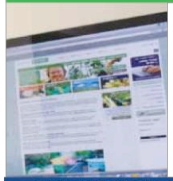
- Distribution is a critical part of getting food from local farms into communities. Support was given to fast track the implementation of localised intra-region food distribution models.
- Commercial operator Fruitos delivered one of the distribution projects that has increased the volume of local food sourced from local producers.
- Fruitos reported an increase of 75% of local food sales since taking part in the project.

KYOGLE SEEDS OF KNOWLEDGE



- The happy, smiling faces of Mummulgum school children say it all. Eight community gardens (six at school sites) have been established across the Kyogle Local Government Area.
- Garden projects have included installation of irrigation to a shade house, establishment of raised garden beds, fruit orchards and bush food areas.
- Education programs were hosted at the Community Centre and the local Youth Centre targeting growing and preparing nutritional seasonal food.
- Sustainable horticultural training was offered to parents of students enrolled in partner schools so they can assist both teachers and students in their new outdoor food garden classrooms.

SUSTAIN FOOD & NRFL WEBSITES



- www.sustainfood.com.au and www.northernriversfoodlinks.com.au have kept the region up to speed 24/7 on what's happening with local food. With a combined monthly average of unique visitation of 2,350 that means there has been more than 56,000 people keeping track of the project.
- 195 local food producers have registered on sustain food, making it easier to find food grown in the Northern Rivers.
- More than 1500 subscribers to the NRFL newsletter over an 18 month period received regular updates on the project.

SOFTER FARMING METHODS



- Based at Mallanganee, Mara Seeds is a certified organic farm and is a best practice example of soft farming methods.
- This project included large scale input trials testing the viability and effectiveness of chicken manure, fertiliser, compost, liquids and pellet manure on soil biology, soil chemistry and nutrient retention properties.
- An educational field day held in July 2011 was a huge success, with over 100 farmers attending.
- The trial results will assist on farm decision making about the cost of inputs, effects of soil health and yields in the years to come.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT RESOURCE KIT



- Across the region, Councils have worked together to develop local food policy, procedures and practices to deal with emerging issues and opportunities associated with food security.
- 5 key strategic policies have been developed and are being implemented by the 7 participating Council's.
- The production of this kit demonstrates that Councils can successfully operate as both a regulator and facilitator of food security.

MULLUMBIMBY COMMUNITY GARDEN



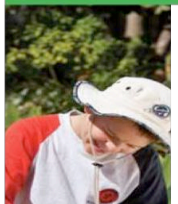
- Close to the heart of the town centre, the community garden at Mullumbimby is more popular than ever, with the 2 hectare site transformed into a much loved community asset.
- The Village Showcase funding has enabled better accessibility to the site for all of the community, including all weather road access.
- Interpretive signage aimed at communicating key food-growing information, has been developed and goes hand in hand with the local food growing guide.
- New annual Local Food Festival in Mullumbimby saw 2000 plus visitors visit this regional showcase.

BALLINA COMMUNITY GARDEN



- Ballina Community Garden has come along in leaps and bounds with the help of a fabulous group of more than 50 hardworking volunteers.
- The group's aim is to encourage sustainable organic gardening practices and community knowledge about growing and eating local food.
- The garden design has a strong focus on social inclusion with disability areas, food security training and school learning programs.

MARKETING CAMPAIGN



- The opportunity to inform consumers and introduce a 'local food' priority to the region has been supported by four major marketing campaigns, each reaching more than 450,000 residents.
- The marketing campaigns were supported by skill building activities in shopping centres and at major events.
- The monthly local food page in seven community papers, and over 40 media stories and radio interviews has provided the community with project information. The project has also attracted national media coverage.
- A special news feature was filmed and went to air over 3 nights as part of NBN's 6pm news program.
- 2 Community Service Announcements were produced and aired by NBN.
- 5,000 NRFL brochures have been distributed throughout the region.
- 1,700 people have been involved in project events, launches and field days.

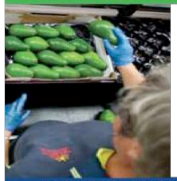
TWEED LOCAL FOOD SYSTEMS



In the Tweed, local food is fast becoming a way of life with a series of projects contributing to the movement.

- The Stokers Siding Community Garden, located at the local primary school is a much loved project supporting community learning opportunities and making a contribution to village sustainability.
- For the residents at RSL Care Darlington, their new community garden has every-one enjoying the opportunity to grow their own fresh produce and share their food knowledge and connect socially.
- The food garden at the Salvation Army's Banora Point complex is an educational asset for the local school community, as well as a kitchen garden for the Salvos.
- The community of Burringbar have upgraded their community hall kitchen facilities to commercial grade, allowing it to become a community hub, where food knowledge and sharing is abundant.

INTRA-REGION DISTRIBUTION MODEL



- This intra-region approach to distribution is reducing the food miles associated with three key Northern Rivers Food lines – avocados, stone fruit and macadamias.
- The project has the House With No Steps working with a number of major retailers to get food from the farm to the consumer-quicker and over a shorter distance.
- A White Paper has been developed profiling model outcomes, identifying future opportunities and documenting collaborative results created by each of the distribution models being progressed through the Northern Rivers Food Links Project.

LANDSHARE IN THE NORTHERN RIVERS



- 80 people in the Northern Rivers have registered on Landshare Australia, a web based landholder and grower matching tool developed through the Northern Rivers Food Links Project.
- The website provides an avenue for people with underutilised land to register 'land to offer' as a way of encouraging an increase in local food production and often reaping the benefits of food supply in the process.
- For growers, the website has given them the opportunity to 'find land' suitable for growing their own food, where this would otherwise be a dream out of reach.
- The project has attracted national media attention as an innovative way of increasing the production of local food and giving people options on their pathway to more sustainable living

THANK YOU

Thank you to our partners, project teams and supporters. We wish you well in the future as your take your passion and commitment to food security forward for our wonderful region.

northern rivers foodlinks securing a sustainable food future

NSW GOVERNMENT | NSW Environmental TRUST

This project has been assisted by the New South Wales Government through its Environmental Trust.






PO Box 1663 Ballina NSW 2478 | Phone: 02 6686 3972 | Fax: 02 6681 5196
info@northernriversfoodlinks.com.au | www.northernriversfoodlinks.com.au

Appendices

With respect to the environment the report appendices are provided in electronic format for review.
The following items have been provided as an addition to the Visual Documentation evidence of project achievements and project activities:

- Northern Rivers Food Links Documentary (DVD)
- Compilation of project marketing campaigns (DVD)
- Local Project Team final reports (CD)
- Media articles and media release samples produced and distributed throughout the life of the project (CD)



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