

Together we can make it happen....

Health for all South West Queenslanders



The sustainability of rural and remote regions, like South West Queensland, relies on people being healthy and active.

There are many opportunities for individuals, industry and government to work together on local projects that can improve the availability, accessibility and affordability of vegetables and fruit in South West Queensland.

The aim of Food outback is to increase the:

- Affordability of vegetables and fruit.
- Availability of a variety of quality vegetables and fruit.
- Accessibility of vegetables and fruit.

This information is being distributed across South West Queensland to promote informed discussion within communities and with appropriate industry and government sectors. Together we can further explore possible actions to reduce the costs and increase the quality and variety of vegetables and fruit available in the region.

Feedback is sought from interested groups. Queensland Health's South West Population Health Unit will be:

- Investigating who is interested in addressing the issues.
- Eliciting any other information on food supply to the region.
- Raising awareness about food supply issues.
- Stimulating further thinking about what needs to be done to improve the food supply.
- Promoting action to improve the food supply.

How can I get involved?
Register your interest in this project, contact the:

South West Population Health Unit
18 Wills Street
Charleville Q 4470
Ph: (07) 4656 8100
Fax: (07) 4654 2615
Email foodoutback@health.qld.gov.au

/// For more information contact

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18 Wills Street
Charleville Q 4470
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/// Food outback

*Available, affordable and accessible
vegetables and fruit in South West Queensland*

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health • care • people

/// The food supply to South West Queensland can be improved!

Many of the factors influencing food supply fall outside the role of the health system. Partnerships and collaborative effort is required between industry, state and local government departments, local businesses and community organisations to achieve the necessary change to improve the food supply and increase consumption of vegetables and fruit across South West Queensland.



Vegetables and fruit in South West Queensland

South West Queenslanders, like other Queenslanders, are consuming less than half the recommended amount of vegetables and fruit each day required for good health.

Queensland Health research studies conducted during the past two years investigated the consumption and supply of vegetables and fruit in South West Queensland.

These results show low consumption of vegetables and fruit.

People living in South West Queensland pay more for their vegetables and fruit and have less choice of consistently good quality fresh vegetables and fruit compared to major cities and large towns in Queensland.

The nutrients provided by vegetables and fruit are all essential for a healthy lifestyle. Consistently consuming limited amounts of any food group increases the risk of poor health. The fact is, eating more vegetables and fruit may be the single most important dietary change needed to improve health and reduce the risk of disease.

Eating adequate vegetables and fruit everyday can help protect you against:

- coronary heart disease
- some forms of cancer
- overweight and obesity
- constipation.

Vegetables and fruit can also help to:

- reduce blood pressure and blood cholesterol levels
- improve and help control of diabetes.

More can be done to increase vegetable and fruit consumption in South West Queensland.

Increasing consumption requires action in two areas:

- increasing demand through changing peoples' attitudes, knowledge and skills
- addressing the environmental factors affecting intake including availability, quality and price of the food supply.

Food transport

Getting it outback

Food supplied to South West Queensland is largely sourced from Brisbane and is transported to the region using a combination of rail and road freight. It can take up to two or three days for food to arrive. Vegetables and fruit are highly perishable produce and are most likely to suffer as a result of long transport routes. Temperature and humidity management are essential to maintain the quality of fresh produce during transportation.

How can we work together?

Maintain and improve quality food transport systems to South West Queensland at affordable prices.

- Investigate group buying strategies to identify potential cost savings and use group buying software for greater efficiency.
- Investigate if subsidies are required to make vegetables and fruit affordable.*
- Apply best practice for transport and handling of perishable food to remote locations.*

* strategies where health can assist other agencies with specialist advice
 ** strategies where health has a lead role

Local food stores

Buying it fresh

The majority of vegetables and fruit eaten in South West Queensland are purchased from local stores. Vegetables and fruit can be purchased fresh, frozen, tinned or dried.

Stores require appropriate storage and shop front display facilities to maintain quality of fresh vegetables and fruit. Display, promotion and pricing practices affect consumer purchasing practices.

How can we work together?

Maintain consistent availability of a variety of affordable and quality vegetables and fruit in local food stores.

- Encourage stores to use the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC) store charter or develop store nutrition policies.*
- Maintain/up-grade cold storage and display facilities for vegetables and fruit.
- Develop mentoring relationships between store managers/wholesalers to share knowledge of vegetables and fruit marketing and sensible infrastructure investment.*
- Provide training on vegetables and fruit storage, display, pricing and promotion.*
- Encourage local takeaway food stores to provide healthy food options, including vegetables and fruit.*

Healthy Food Access Basket Survey 2004

The cost and availability of basic healthy foods in South West Queensland was measured using the *Healthy Food Access Basket Survey 2004*. This statewide survey is a cross-sectional survey of the cost and availability of a set number of items in 'the healthy food basket.' The variation in costs and availability are compared across areas of Queensland.

Higher cost

The cost of vegetables and fruit was 7.3 per cent higher in stores across South West Queensland compared to other Queensland stores.

Lower availability

There is a limited range of basic vegetables and fruit available for purchase in South West Queensland

Local food production

Growing your own

There is very limited commercial production of vegetables and fruit in South West Queensland. Some people grow vegetables and fruit in their own backyard and some towns have also started local community gardens. Growing vegetables and fruit in South West Queensland is possible, it just requires a little know how.

How can we work together?

Increase the availability of fresh vegetables and fruit in South West Queensland through local production.

- Encourage the establishment of household gardens by providing basic training in household vegetable and fruit production.*
- Support the development of community/school gardens run by local organisations.*

Demand for healthy food

Eating more

Increasing demand for healthy food promotes and supports the changes to the local food supply. As well as ensuring good quality healthy food is available, it is essential to increase people's:

- awareness of the health and local economic benefits of increasing their vegetable and fruit consumption
- perception of the benefits of eating vegetables and fruit
- knowledge of the recommended minimum intakes of vegetables and fruit
- knowledge, skills and confidence to select and prepare convenient, low cost, tasty vegetable and fruit.

How can we work together?

Increase demand for healthy food among the community in South West Queensland.

- Supporting community based programs that promote healthy eating in various settings.**
- Using in-store promotions, specials and display techniques to promote both fresh and frozen vegetables and fruit.*
- Supporting vegetable and fruit social marketing campaigns and ensuring they reach South West Queensland.**
- Promoting existing healthy eating programs within the community eg. Lighten Up, Living Strong, Fun not Fuss with Food, Growing Strong.**

South West Queensland Nutrition Survey 2004

The South West Queensland Nutrition Survey 2004, investigated the consumption of vegetables and fruit and food buying practices amongst people living in South West Queensland.

Low consumption

- 14.6 per cent ate the recommended daily 5 serves of vegetables
- 43.1 per cent ate the recommended daily 2 serves of fruit.
- Only 75 per cent of South West Queenslanders ate the recommended amounts of **both** vegetables and fruit each day required for good health

Preference for fresh produce

- Fresh vegetables and fruit were eaten daily
- Preserved vegetables and fruit such as frozen, tinned/bottled, dried and juices eaten less than once a week

Knowledge of consumption guidelines

- Only six per cent of South West Queenslanders correctly identified the number of serves of vegetables recommended each day (five serves)
- 37 per cent reported the correct response for recommended daily fruit serves (two serves) from their closest local store

Sourcing vegetables and fruit

- Most people (90 per cent) get their vegetables and fruit from the local stores across South West Queensland
- Some people (30 per cent) also grow some of their own vegetables and fruit
- Most people (60 per cent) took less than half an hour to get their shopping home
- Most people (80 per cent) shopped weekly