

Building Effective Partnerships with Councils – the Coffs Coast Local Food Futures Alliance








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What is the Coffs Coast Local Food Futures Alliance?

A community-council-agency collaboration. Formed initially around a funding opportunity (DECC Urban Sustainability Grant) but committed to joint working for the foreseeable future. The founding partners are:

-  Bellingen Local Food Network (BLFN)
-  Coffs Region Organic Producers Organisation (CROPO)
-  Bellinger Landcare (BL)
-  Coffs Harbour Regional Landcare (CHRL)
-  Bellingen Shire Council (BSC, Strategic Planner)
-  Coffs Harbour City Council (CHCC, Sustainability, EDU)
-  North Coast Area Health Service (NCAHS, Health Promotion / Nutrition)



Vision

“The Coffs Coast region has a showcase sustainable local food economy that supports healthy, connected, strong and resilient communities who actively care for each other and their environment.”



Mission

“We will promote and support the development of a strong local food economy based on sustainable agricultural practices so that all residents of the Coffs Coast have equitable access to affordable, fresh, healthy food into the future. We will value and utilise local knowledge.”



Principles

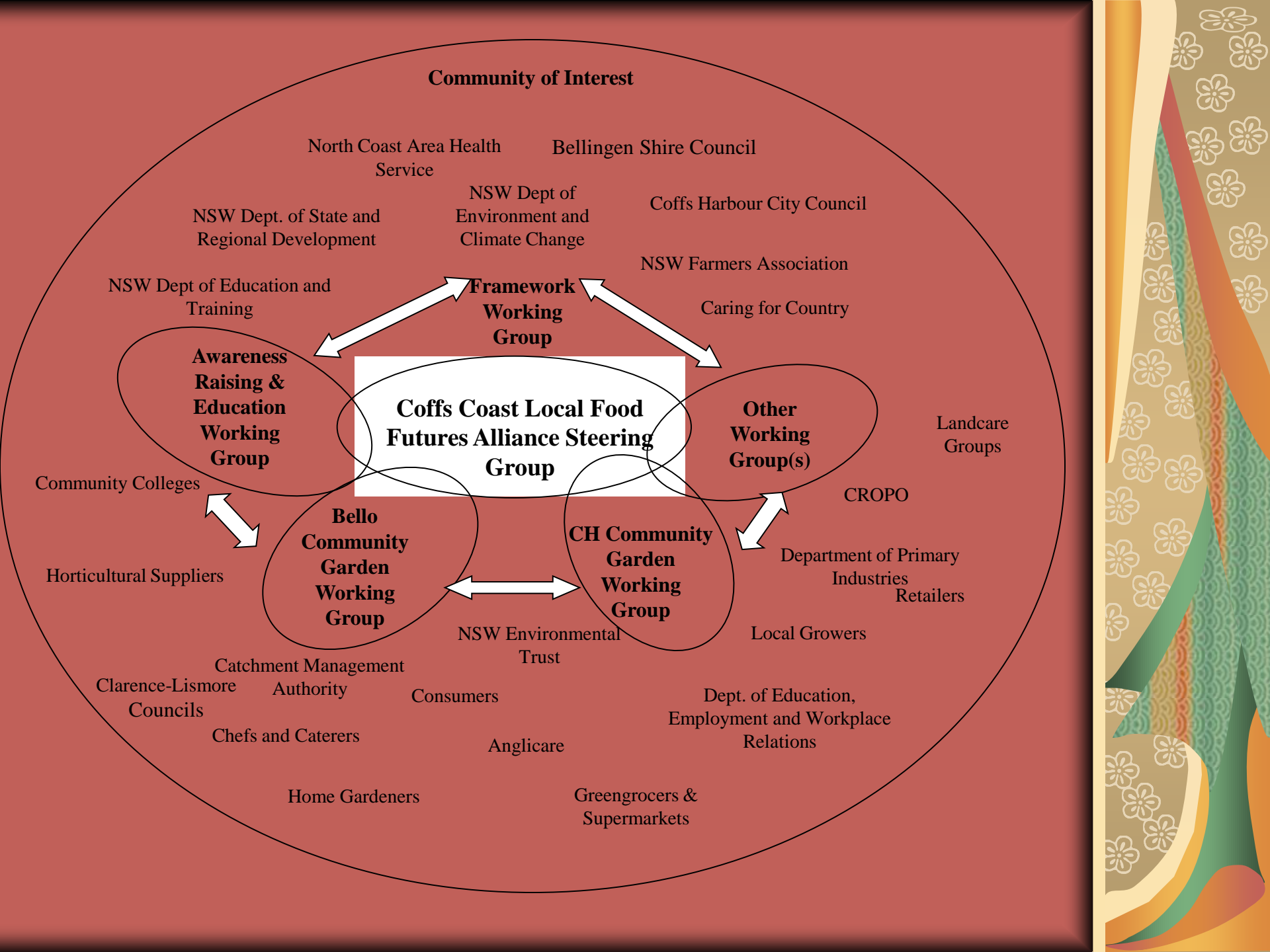
- **We believe in the rights of all peoples to have access to affordable, fresh, healthy food**
- **We believe that access to fresh local food improves health & well-being**
- **A strong local food economy supports sustainable livelihoods through job and wealth creation**
- **Sustainable agricultural practices are paramount to long-term environmental and human health**
- **Reconnecting ourselves with our food reconnects ourselves to the environment & each other**
- **We value diversity, creativity and innovation**
- **We support grassroots movements that share our vision**
- **We believe in the principles of social justice, equality and sustainability**



Objectives of the USP Grant

- To develop a local food strategy for the region
- To carry out a programme of community education and awareness-raising
- To establish 2 model community gardens as showcases of sustainable living





Achievements to date

- SWOC exercises carried out in Coffs & Bellingen
- Draft Local Food Futures Framework produced for discussion and consultation
- Education & Awareness-Raising Working Group established; activities commenced
- Community Gardens working groups established; potential sites identified; public discussion commenced
- Partnerships formed to work on projects for Community-Shared Agriculture Initiatives in Bellingen & Coffs Harbour



Education & Awareness-Raising

- 2nd Bellingen Local Food Film Festival (2009); Coffs Coast Local Food Film Festival (2010)
- Permablitz activities underway in Bellingen;
- Development of speaker programme – Robert Pekin as first speaker (July 2009)
- Eden at Home / Backyard gardening courses – to be delivered through TAFE & Community Colleges
- Farm-gate Trail – marketing & tourist initiative highlighting leading farms
- Coffs Coast Local Food Directory & Seasonal Food Calendar



Local Food Futures Framework

2010 - 2020

Draft developed in internal workshops and discussions amongst Steering Group members.

Aims are to:

- generate awareness about the issues surrounding local food;
- create interest in, and enthusiasm for, participation;
- identify a 'road map' for action;
- show commitment from Local Government, State agencies and Community groups;
- allow for other agencies and organisations to identify how they might contribute; and
- build partnership and networks around our mission and objectives.








Framework Target Audiences

- Community Groups
- Education and Training organisations
- Funding bodies
- Government Agencies (State, National)
- Individual community members
- Local businesses
- Local Councils (Councillors and staff)
- Non-Government Organisations
- Organisations in the food supply chain








Contents of Framework

-  **Why do we need a Local Food System?**
Global, national and local drivers for change,
Scenarios & Implications, and Our Response
-  **Local Context:** What is our Local Food
Supply Chain & who are the key players in it?
What is missing from our Local Food System?
What are our Strengths, Weaknesses,
Challenges and Opportunities?
-  **A Strategic Approach:** Identify key strategic
areas and mechanisms to act upon them.
-  **Links and further information**
-  **References, Glossary, Key Players, Key
Initiatives**






Future Developments & Directions: Eight Strategic Areas

-  **Policy:** Coordinated and coherent action at all levels of government. “Make the local food choice the easier choice for policy makers”.
-  **Food Alliances:** Recognise & act on the cross-cutting nature of food & agriculture. No agency or institution exists with overall responsibility for all the relevant issues, hence the need for a community-government-business Alliance.
-  **Leadership:** Support, recognise and nurture leaders within the food and farming systems.
-  **Knowledge and skills:** support the development of new research capabilities. Emphasise the practical application of knowledge to enhance quality of life for all.
-  **Farming/ Food Supply Chain:** explore viable alternatives within resource and climate constraints, e.g. CSAs / Urban Farms



Eight Strategic Areas (cont'd)

-  **Infrastructure for Local Producers:** Land, access to necessary inputs on reasonable terms, storage facilities, processing facilities, efficient distribution networks.
-  **Community Education & Awareness-Raising:** Help consumers make the choice to support local, sustainable agriculture – local branding, seasonal calendars, local food directories, film festivals, etc.
-  **Strengthen Community Actions:** Build the capacity of existing and new community groups and initiatives, make sure they are properly resourced, and empower community representatives to participate effectively in the development and implementation of key policy decisions and actions.



Closing comments

Benefits of Participation in the LFFA:

- Opportunity to participate in & shape policy formation;
- Building of lasting relationships with Council staff, elected officials and other actors in the wider community of interest;
- Access to funding for community groups;
- Strengthens individual and group capacity.

Costs of Participation in the LFFA:

- Substantial time investment, not reflected in funds available;
- Dynamics of Project management can place an emphasis on bureaucratic processes, which drains energy away from community activism;
- Access to financial resources for one community group can create resentment amongst other groups and individuals in a small community.
- Length of council decision-making processes (eg DAs) can be de-motivating around attempts to establish community gardens

