



Mana Kai

A framework for kōrero on enhancing Aotearoa New Zealand's food system

He mana kai e toitū ai te ora o te ao

It is through mana kai that we
gain long term sustenance for
planet and people

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A woven basket, likely made of bamboo or reeds, is shown floating in a body of water. The water is a deep blue color, and numerous bubbles of various sizes are visible around the basket, suggesting it is being moved or is part of a dynamic scene. The lighting is soft, creating a serene and somewhat ethereal atmosphere.

Introduction

Introduction

Food is central to life in Aotearoa New Zealand. It underpins the cultural identity of Tangata Whenua and the many diverse communities that have chosen to call New Zealand home. It significantly influences the health outcomes of every New Zealander.

Our natural resources (land, water, soils, oceans, flora and fauna) and our people produce food for domestic consumption and export. The exports we send to world are a vital source of wealth and prosperity, helping to fund the schools, roads and hospitals that underpin our society. As a consequence, the food system lies at the heart of many of the key challenges the Government has identified as priorities for its second term in office.

This document introduces the Mana Kai Framework, an approach to initiating a national discussion on enhancing the outcomes delivered by Aotearoa New Zealand's food system. A successful dialogue will contribute to healthier people, thriving communities and vibrant cultures; the preservation of productive ecosystems; a prosperous and increasingly resilient agri-food sector; and the just transition to a zero carbon future that benefits all New Zealanders and enables us to meet our international obligations.

Understanding the strengths and weaknesses inherent in our food system will provide the opportunity to identify solutions that could contribute to solving some of the biggest challenges facing our country today. We recognise that the scope of such a dialogue has the potential to be transformational to Aotearoa New Zealand however it is too big a conversation for even the government to convene on its own. Success will only be possible if government ministries and agencies, local authorities, iwi, the private sector, civil society, community groups and our research and training institutions pull together in initiating and engaging in a unique national conversation.

Our focus objective is to:

1. Inform and catalyse public discourse about the importance of food systems to achieving a broad range of social, environmental, and economic goals utilising the Mana Kai Framework and then to listen carefully to the contributions made by each participant.

This lays the foundation for our subsequent objectives to:

2. Analyse the contributions made during the dialogues to identify key themes which can be used to co-design strategic responses to key themes that will contribute to transforming how our food system delivers better health, societal, environmental and economic outcomes for all New Zealanders utilising the Mana Kai Framework to frame this analysis.
3. Design and launch keystone initiatives for each of the key strategic themes that arise from the dialogues to assist in transforming Aotearoa New Zealand's food system for the benefit of all New Zealanders. Keystone initiatives are likely to be coordinated collections of commitments by stakeholders working in or around the food system to develop and implement catalytic activities within the next three years.

Our approach reflects the unique character of Aotearoa New Zealand and embeds Te Ao Māori (a Māori worldview) through every step of the process and every meeting. The Leadership Group (outlined on page 18) have committed to the use of this approach and have developed the Mana Kai Framework as a platform to shape every interaction.

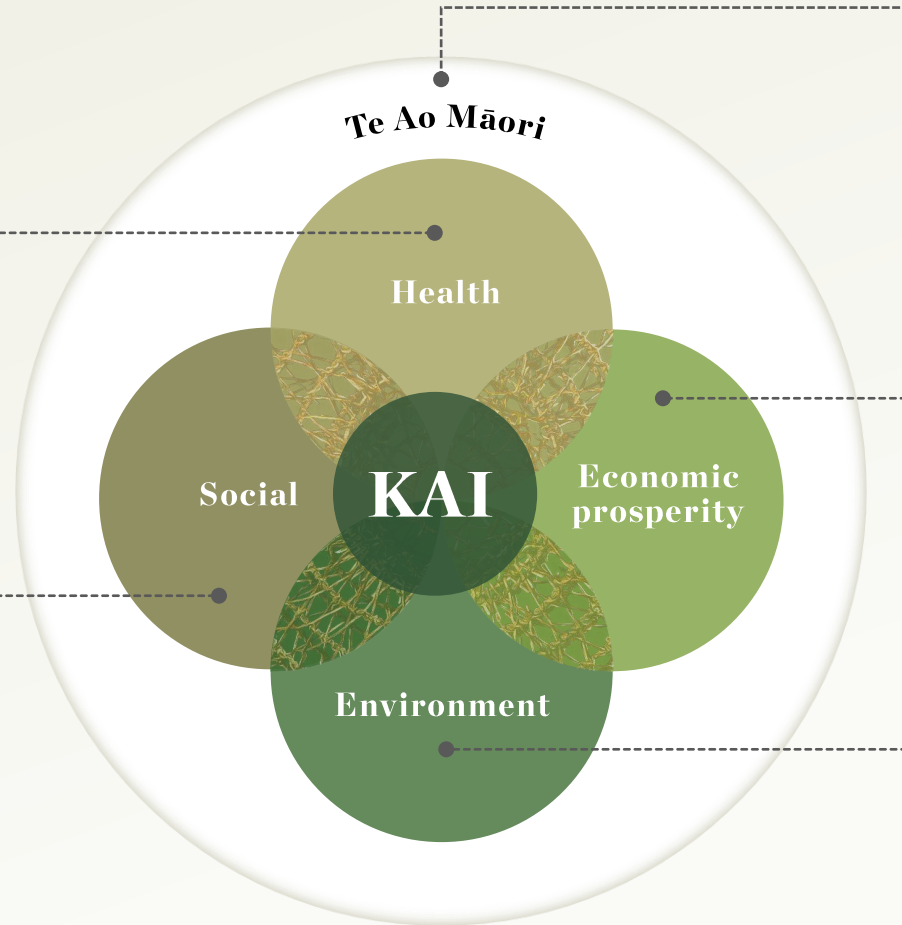
The approach also reflects guidance provided to Member States participating in the UN's upcoming Food Systems Summit, the UN Food and Agriculture Organisation's framework document on sustainable food systems, the European Environment Agency's report on accelerating the transition of core systems (incl. food), and our comprehensive review of food strategies developed around the world since 2003.

The overall purpose of this Mana Kai document and framework is to facilitate the reinsertion of Mana into our food system, and create momentum of energy and a critical mass to empower food stakeholders to engage in constructive dialogue which will shape solutions for the future.

We believe that transformational change to Aotearoa New Zealand's food system has the potential to create better outcomes for some of the government's highest priorities. We believe it can only be achieved by a 'whole of society' effort. We look forward to discussing our proposal with you and working together to create a productive, sustainable, inclusive, healthy and resilient food system grounded in the principles of Te Tiriti o Waitangi and Te Ao Māori.

Fit with government priorities

THE RT HON JACINDA ARDERN, Opening of the 53rd Parliament



The Government will implement improvements, as the health of NZers is being hampered by a system that needs fundamental reform.

Recognising the role that an effective food system can play in transforming health outcomes for all communities in Aotearoa should be central to the government's response to the Health and Disability System Review.

Te Ao Māori plays a large part not just in defining who we are as a nation, but in setting us apart from the rest of the world. The Government is committed to focusing on wellbeing and creating a fairer New Zealand.

The Mana Kai Framework facilitates a dialogue on our national food system grounded in the principles of Te Tiriti o Waitangi and Te Ao Māori and focuses the conversations on how our food system can stand out globally in delivering for all. Enhancing New Zealand's food system has the potential to improve health outcomes, equity and prosperity for all New Zealanders.

As well as creating jobs, the Government will remain focused on growing the incomes and wages of New Zealanders, especially those earning the least. It will work to implement the primary sector strategy Fit For a Better World to accelerate the productivity, sustainability and inclusiveness of the primary sector.

Enhancing New Zealand's food system has the potential to improve health outcomes, equity and prosperity for all New Zealanders.

The Government will bolster its pursuit of carbon neutrality by investing in world leading research that helps us to reduce emissions and support farmers to improve freshwater quality, protect biodiversity and reduce emissions of GHG's.

The future prosperity of our food and fibre sector relies on ingraining Te Taiao into how our farmers, growers, fishers and producers think and act in relation to the climate, land, water, ocean, soil, flora and fauna on a day-to-day basis.

Government will be guided by its values, and by its commitment to the wellbeing of people, looking beyond GDP to find our measure of success. This is about supporting our diversity and creating a New Zealand where all people feel safe, have equal access to opportunities and do not experience discrimination.

Ensuring New Zealand's food system delivers beneficial outcomes to all New Zealander's who are directly and indirectly involved in the food and fibre sector through their careers, their living environment, and the food that they eat each day.

A woven basket, likely made of bamboo or reeds, is shown floating in a body of water. The water is a deep blue color, and numerous bubbles are visible around the basket, suggesting it has just been dropped or is moving through the water. The lighting is soft, creating a serene and somewhat ethereal atmosphere. The basket is positioned on the left side of the frame, and the text is centered over it.

Context and timing

Context and timing

The health, environmental, social equity and economic outcomes that Aotearoa New Zealand is achieving have come into sharp focus in the last year as we have come together as a nation to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic. Increased awareness of the both the challenges and opportunities in front of us have catalysed calls for work to be done on the development of a National Food System Roadmap

New Zealand exports high-quality food in sufficient quantities to feed around 40 million people per year . Despite this high-level of domestic food production, 1 in 10 New Zealanders were not food secure in 2019, believed to have doubled to 2 in 10 during Covid-19, or 1 million people¹.

An unintended consequence of New Zealand's export market focus is that it places our people in a position of competing on the international price of the food that we produce. This same economic model places many farmers into a challenging situation. Producers are trying to increase production to face rising debt levels to pay off investments in infrastructure that is sometimes no longer perceived as compatible with sustainable outcomes.

For the general public, high housing costs further limit available household income for food expenditure. The challenges presented by these characteristics of the food system and economy are compounded due to unequal access to knowledge about healthy eating, poor mental health outcomes, and exposure to advertising of unhealthy foods. As a result, food insecurity in New Zealand manifests as obesity (1 in 3 adults)², other non-communicable diseases, and a high child food insecurity rate (20%)³.

Meanwhile, the pressure placed on ecosystems has undermined their ability to sustain themselves and consequently, the food producing activities we depend on to thrive. It is estimated that we are losing 192 million tonnes of soil per year, over 44 per cent of which is attributed to pasture; our farming and fishing practices has degraded biodiversity, with over 80 per cent of land vertebrates classified as threatened; just 40 per cent of our freshwater lakes and rivers are swimmable all the time; and agriculture accounts for 48 per cent of New Zealand's gross greenhouse gas emissions⁴.

Human health concerns and environmental problems stemming from the food system have come to the fore globally in recent years. This has led to calls being made for a rethink of the food systems to ensure they works effectively for both human and planetary health. When transitioning our food system, we need to ensure we transform it in a way that provides a real shift towards nourishing our societies in a more equal manner.

Food and fibre sector leaders discussed the planetary boundaries, regenerative agriculture and feeding our five million first at the Te Hono Bootcamp at Stanford University in July 2019. Eat New Zealand have been holding a series of national ConversatioNZ featuring perspectives on the future of Aoteroa's food system.

The government's Food and Fibre sector vision, Fit for a Better World, calls for food producers to move rapidly to a low carbon emissions society, restore the health of our water, reverse the decline in biodiversity and at the same time, feed our people and create prosperity which benefits all New Zealanders. While this forms a valuable starting point to redesign a better food system, to see it transpire, given the 'divide' that exists between those who write policy and those who best understand issues and solutions on the ground, a broad national dialogue is a must.

Ultimately, we need a 'people's food movement'. This document provides a possible approach to the co-design of a strategic framework for our food system, anchored in Te Ao Māori. One that will support multiple key government priorities, and take us a step closer to the health and wellbeing of our people and our natural environment.

Why now?

COVID-19 disruptions, the proportion of our children living without enough healthy, affordable food; unsustainable rates of adult obesity; polluted waterways; market competition are all wake-up calls that our food system simply is failing to reflect our values and national aspirations.

NZ stakeholders have called for a 'productive, sustainable, inclusive, and resilient food system' and a Roadmap to help get us there.

Context and timing – urgent food system challenges

The choices we're currently making about how we produce, process, market, consume and dispose of our food is a key factor in contemporary human, economic, environmental and community health challenges. At the same time, we have extensive traditional knowledge, and have developed global expertise and innovation that we can apply to address the challenges ahead.

Key challenges

Human health

In 2019, 1 out of every 10 New Zealanders was not food secure. That is, they did not have access to a sufficient quantity of nutritious food to lead a healthy and active lifestyle. Covid-19 is believed to have doubled this to 2 out of 10, or 1 million New Zealanders¹. Our Food insecurity also results in New Zealand having the third highest rate of obesity in the OECD and increased risks of NCDs, such as diabetes and heart disease, occurring. In turn, these outcomes place pressure on the health system, and hinder equal access to educational, employment and life opportunities⁶.

To address these challenges, our government is increasingly looking to address root causes. Its Healthy Families initiative, for instance takes a systems change approach by identifying the underlying causes of poor food choices and poor health and making changes in schools, workplaces, food outlets, sports clubs, marae, businesses, and other organisations to create healthier environments for all.

Economic health

Our food system, which generates a significant number of jobs and export dollars, is already being impacted by climate and sustainability-related risks. Consumer expectations are shifting, our producers and retailers are experiencing disruption from 'green innovations' and digitalisation of production systems, and the physical climate and sustainability related risks are increasing across all food system functions. In response to these challenges, we struggle to access the necessary talented and skilled people to support the growth and innovation demanded of the sector.

In response to these challenges, public and private sector actors are increasingly stepping into the opportunity for New Zealand-grown foods to generate holistic value – to communities, the environment and the climate – and to meet consumer expectations. For example, the Ministry for Primary Industries is currently investigating regenerative agricultural practices that work in a New Zealand context, the end goal being a food system that is resilient, low-carbon, restores health to natural capital, and creates long-term value.

Environmental health

Business as usual farming practices have eroded soil, water, ecosystem and climate health. Our food system generates around 48% of gross emissions has a significant impact on water quality. We lose 192 million tonnes of soil lost every year from erosion and have low biodiversity on our farms. Seabed trawling and dredging has a major impact on our seabed habitats and species⁴.

Increasing awareness of these issues – by consumers, civil society, government and the agri and marine sectors – is driving change to a more sustainable food system. Positive steps take the form of industry leadership, such as the Food and Fibre sector's ambition to transition farmers to regenerative practices that enhance ecosystem services; the increasing adoption of sustainable diets by consumers; and government regulations, notably the National Policy Statement for Freshwater Management and the scheduling of agriculture to join the Emissions Trading Scheme by 2025 at the latest.

Community health

Māori, Pasifika, Women and low-socio economic communities are disproportionately affected by food insecurity. Rural communities face impacts from sustainability and climate-related risks³. Urban communities (esp. lower socio-economic groups) are highly vulnerable to shocks to food supply chains, as demonstrated during the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020.

Pockets of community-led initiatives are working across Aotearoa to close the gap between communities that do and communities that don't have food security. Local Marae and urban market gardens, for example, have been utilising Māori and urban land respectively to grow produce to meet community-wide needs for affordable and nutritious food. In rural areas, farmers are increasingly banding together in facilitated discussion groups such as those initiated by the Red Meat Profit Partnership. These groups explore specific outcomes such as technology implementation, environmental practices and improved efficiencies, contributing to farm business resilience in the face of climate and sustainability related risks.



The Mana Kai Framework

An approach to initiating a national discussion on
enhancing the outcomes delivered by Aotearoa
New Zealand's food system

Mana

(Energy, Power, Presence)

Mana originates from the natural world. It is the energy, power, presence, and essence that has a divine origin and is imbued in all things, both animate and inanimate.

It is mana that gives humanity the ability to act in a specific way to help maintain its relationship with the natural world and ourselves. It is through this interplay that we witness the increase or decrease of mana.

Mana is also represented in food as the ability to host and care for people is what can increase and decrease the mana of individuals, whānau, communities and the nation. The fact that New Zealanders are struggling to provide quality food to all New Zealanders is a mana issue that contributes to poverty and a failing system.

Atua

(Gods and Spirits)

Atua is the metaphysical energy of the unseen that is often translated as god or gods and Atua are the foundation of all things Māori.

Their names reflect elemental expression in the natural world and Atua are reflected in all other things including the human body.

The connection of food to Atua is what gives food its mana. It is through this component of mana that humans source our primary prestige and pride from the whenua. In the Māori worldview, it is the connection to the mana of the Atua, of whenua and how food is produced or gathered that adds to the quality which is referred to as 'te makuru' or succulence or abundance (in this context) of kai.

A close-up photograph of a hand reaching down to touch the surface of water. The hand is positioned on the left side of the frame, with fingers slightly spread. The water is dark and shows ripples around the point of contact. The lighting is soft, creating a calm and contemplative atmosphere.

Tuakana /Teina

(Senior/Junior relationships)

A Māori worldview acknowledges that humanity are the teina (junior) of creation and as a result it is our responsibility to respect and pay deference to all other things, both animate and inanimate.

This concept of tuakana (senior) and teina is key to the Māori social order. This social order extends past humanity to the natural world and is why Māori refer to other parts of the universe as our tuakana, mātua (parents) or tūpuna – our relations. This links directly to our whakapapa (genealogy) where everything in the universe has a whakapapa and humanity are at the end of the pecking order.



Ngā Nuinga

(Abundance)

The Māori worldview focuses on there being enough for everyone and although allocation of resources may differ (based on location), it is those communities' responsibility to share access and trade to ensure the notion of abundance is maintained.

It is through this “Nga Nuinga” (abundance) mindset that mana is given a chance to increase and, as a result, ensures a responsibility to share and trade.



Tāruke

(Crayfish Pot)

Tāruke is a traditional Māori wickerwork trap used to catch many varieties of seafood (most often kōura / crayfish). Made with natural materials – the pakiaka (aerialroot) of the kiekie and aka pirita (supplejack).

It is a symbol for our framework of our interwoven circular ecosystem, with all elements connected and no bias over others.

It also celebrates the harmonious relationship of using natural resources to help harvest other kai, the gathering of knowledge for our food Roadmap and our roopu – Aotearoa Circle.

The Mana Kai Framework

We are committed to ensuring that te Ao Māori, Mātauranga Māori, the principles of Te Tiriti o Waitangi, and Māori stakeholders share in shaping all aspects of this kōrero surrounding Aotearoa New Zealand's food system and the resulting strategic framework and actions: from defining their overarching purpose, to prioritising and co-creating equitable solutions.

We believe this engagement is essential because:

- Mātauranga Māori includes a wealth of knowledge about our cultural, natural, physical and social environment, as well as traditions of stewardship and Traditional Ecological Knowledge (including skills, practices, and innovations/ technology passed down through generations) to inform potential solutions;
- Māori and iwi are disproportionately effected by food-related issues, and a just transition demands their active involvement in solutions;
- Māori value-based business models are often naturally 'triple bottom line' and can provide authentic insights into viable transition pathways and Māori are key players in regional economies, especially the agri-food sector;
- Te Ao Māori provides a 'unique to Aotearoa' lens for understanding the shortcomings of our current food system and envisioning holistic solutions;
- We recognise that Government is committed to engaging with Māori 'to produce better quality outcomes and strengthen the legitimacy of decisions;'
- We respect the principles of Te Tiriti o Waitangi.

The Leadership Group has worked to develop the Mana Kai Framework which presents a Māori worldview of the food system and its connection to the land, our natural environment and our people.

Mana Kai is the responsibility of humanity to care for the environment so that the environment and its food can care for us.

Mana Kai has both physical and metaphysical components. These components result in both quality food, the importance of giving back to the environment and having a sustained spiritual connection to the natural world.

The Mana Kai Framework embodies:

- **Mana o te Whenua** – Natural energy of the environment;
- **Mana Kai** – Sustenance from food; and
- **Mana o te Tangata** – Harvesting and fair distribution of food.

Mana o te Whenua

Natural energy of the environment

Mana o te Whenua focuses on the environmental factors that impact on the production of food, both in the wild and through human assistance (ie: agriculture, horticulture etc). Mana Whenua also factors in the need for humanity to change behaviour to ensure we tackle environmental issues, particularly climate.

Whenua is the physical manifestation of Atua. Through our shared genealogy we are related to the environment and must treat it in a way we would expect to be treated in a familial relationship. It is through the communication with and treatment of the Mana o te Whenua that we practice true kaitiakitanga through guardianship and giving back to the natural world.

Mana Kai

Sustenance from food

The connection of Atua like Tangaroa with the ocean and Rongo for cultivated food is an essential part of how we pay deference to the environment, for what it provides and our relationship as food producers with the food we produce.

As an example, a farmer will have a respect for the land that may not be obvious to environmentalists, but it is a respect based on the knowledge of their land, localised climatic factors and the relationship they have with special places on their farm. This all contributes to Mana Kai, and often farmers have taken direct steps to improve mana whenua.

Likewise, respect for animals may be strongly evident as part of the slaughter process for animals. This also contributes to Mana Kai because there is a consciousness associated with the mana of living things and knowing that you are taking a life, a respect and connection between Tuakana-Teina moves past theory where we make the death a quick and humane death.

Mana o te Tangata

Harvesting and fair distribution of food

Mana o te Tangata, in this context, is about how we care for each other and the importance of fair distribution. Mana o te Tangata focuses on the need to care for the whole of humanity and ensure that there are no groups of people disadvantaged or forgotten throughout the food system.

Mana o te Tangata aligns with the Sustainable Development Goals of the United Nations. In fact, Mana Kai necessitates that societal goals and food goals are the same and not different. This will require a whole of system approach rather than only a food system approach.



Mana Kai development and pathway forward

Owner



Funders



Co-Secretariat:



The Mana Kai document has been developed through an iterative process and with engagement of business representatives and individuals across the food and fibre sector.

Those businesses directly involved through the Leadership group are displayed here, but our Leadership Group and their broad engagement through this process so far has cast an even wider net to empower a range of diverse voices to be heard.

However, there are still many more perspectives to hear. This continued engagement is critical in supporting the purpose of this document, informing and catalysing public discourse about the importance of food systems while also listening carefully to the contributions made by each participant of groups across Aotearoa New Zealand.

The Mana Kai document provides a platform to shape a truly people-led food dialogue embedded within Te Ao Māori.

To develop the strongest foundation, there are some key topics and themes to be discussed through the Mana Kai framework. This includes:

- Capturing the broad definitions of the food system.
- Understanding what food means and represents to all stakeholders of the food system.
- Exploring the expectations from the food system and its role in communities across Aotearoa New Zealand.
- Identifying the food-related issues, risks and opportunities within the food system.
- Clarifying what contributions are required to improve the food system and the outcomes it delivers to all New Zealanders, in addition to understanding the role of the Mana Kai movement in identifying and delivering solutions.

Leadership group representation:



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