

Background

Food security is commonly defined as a state in which “all people at all times have physical, social, and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life” (1). Food insecurity can occur at the individual, household, community or national level. Studies undertaken in developed countries over the last 15 years have shown that the prevalence of food insecurity ranges from 4 - 14% among population-representative samples, and up to 82% among disadvantaged groups such as ethnic minorities, single-parent families, and other vulnerable populations (2). The four pillars of food security are availability, access, utilisation and stability (1).

Access to nutritious food that is safe and culturally appropriate is considered a basic human right and is recognised as a key determinant of individual health and wellbeing (3, 4). Food insecurity is a complex problem, with the ability of individuals and populations to access healthy food influenced by a wide range of social, economic, and environmental factors (5, 6). As a result, actions to promote food access typically involve stakeholders from a range of government and non-government sectors in collaborative arrangements (5).

Food insecurity can have a major impact on short-term and long-term physical and mental health. It has been associated with lower household income, poorer general health, increased health-care utilisation and depression. These associations remained after adjustment for age, gender and household income (2). A Foodbank study suggested that children going to school hungry lose more than 2 hours a day of learning time, with ongoing impact on life chances (6). An Anglicare study in Wollongong revealed the serious impact of stress, anxiety and hunger on family relationships, social isolation and motivation (7).

In Australia, our food security workforce consists of a wide array of people: community development workers, dietitians, nutritionists, health promotion officers, social and welfare workers, policy-makers, researchers, environmental scientists, gardeners and growers, social entrepreneurs, local government workers and people working in planning and education, as well as community members.

Australia’s Right to Food (RTF) Coalition was established to organise a food security conference in Western Sydney in 2014. The RTF Coalition’s inaugural conference “Putting Food on the Table: Food Security is Everyone’s Business” was held on 13 & 14 October at Casula Arts Powerhouse. Over two hundred delegates came together to be inspired and initiate action on the governance, community, population and communication strategies that enable food security for all. Whilst the initial RTF Coalition was founded with a focus on Western Sydney, the conference delegates were policy makers, academics, community development and health professionals from all corners of Australia. Delegates highlighted the common challenges faced across communities and a desire for collaborative action.

This was the first gathering of the food security workforce in Australia under the umbrella of the Human Right to Food. Post-conference, delegates expressed a strong desire to continue to participate in the RTF Coalition in order to promote equitable access to nutritious food. After several rounds of consultation with delegates and broader stakeholders, the RTF Coalition was continued in 2015 with

advocacy and policy as its priority action areas. There is a national co-ordinating group with independent but linked local 'chapters' in NSW, Victoria, Tasmania, South Australia, West Australia and Queensland.

In tolerating such high and growing levels of food insecurity, Australian governments are failing in their obligations to guarantee the human right to adequate food and freedom from hunger. These rights are enshrined in Article 11 of the United Nations International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, which Australia agreed to be bound by on the 10th of December, 1975.

What are we aiming to achieve?

Mission

Australia's Right to Food Coalition exists to improve the health and well-being of all Australians by working to ensure *equitable access to nutritious food*.

Action Areas

To achieve our mission, the Right to Food Coalition has four key action areas:

1. **Collaborate across Australia to support collective advocacy efforts** to address the key determinants of nutritious food access
2. **Promote collaboration** across Australia's food security workforce to maximise collective impact
3. **Identify areas for policy-relevant-research** to enable evidence-informed decision making and policy development; **scrutinise public policy** and identify areas for action
4. Equip partners to strengthen their advocacy in their own spheres of influence

Strategies

Strategies used to achieve these action areas include

- Coordinate advocacy efforts at both a National level and a State/Territory level
- Facilitate a National conference every two to three years, with 1 day for advocacy
- Collaborate with new, or current, complementary initiatives
- Create a critical mass to support food security initiatives across Australia
- Utilise social media and the RTF website as a platform to engage the workforce and the general public to:
 - Raise public awareness and engage the general public to strengthen advocacy efforts
 - Aggregate and disseminate key evidence to debunk common myths eg. assumptions about people accessing emergency food relief
 - Tell stories, share case studies and disseminate evidence of successful interventions to enable replication of success throughout Australia
 - Develop co-ordinated responses from a FS perspective to relevant national issues

Who is involved?

Membership

Representatives from community agencies, the charitable food sector, academia and the public sector are members of Australia’s Right to Food Coalition. To be eligible for membership, potential members must agree to endorse the mission statement and action areas of the RTF.

Members can join the RTF Coalition without requiring invitation or nomination. There is no fee.

<p align="center">National Right to Food Coalition <i>Quarterly teleconferences attended by representative from State chapters</i></p>							
<i>NSW Chapter</i>	<i>Victorian Chapter</i>	<i>QLD Chapter</i>	<i>SA Chapter</i>	<i>ACT Chapter</i>	<i>NT Chapter</i>	<i>Tasmanian Chapter</i>	<i>WA Chapter</i>
<i>Quarterly meetings</i>	<i>Quarterly meetings</i>	<i>Quarterly meetings</i>	<i>Quarterly meetings</i>	<i>Quarterly meetings</i>	<i>Quarterly meetings</i>	<i>Quarterly meetings</i>	<i>Quarterly meetings</i>

This membership structure also enables the development of ‘special interest groups’ or ‘communities of practice’ as they emerge. This enables RTF Coalition members to connect with members from various Chapters who are working in a common field (eg. Research, Charitable Food Sector).

Members can contribute to the RTF Coalition in a number of ways:

1. Attending and contributing to State/Territory-based RTF Coalition Chapter meetings
2. Chairing or providing secretariat for their local Chapter meetings
3. Joining RTF Coalition subcommittees eg communications and conference committees
4. Reporting on latest evidence or practice relating to the goals of the Coalition
5. Being an RTF representative in the media and/or other public forums
6. Coordinating and/or undertaking projects relevant to the four RTF action areas, that help to achieve the mission

Membership is ongoing however the role of Chairperson and Secretary for each Chapter is for a 12-month term. These roles are filled by nominations made by members at each Chapter.

Roles and Responsibilities

Members of the RTF Coalition commit to:

- Progress the mission by contributing to the action areas
- Attend and contribute to as many local Chapter meetings as possible
- Support advocacy and other actions undertaken by the RTF
- Contribute information on food security related events, articles, initiatives
- Being an FS advocate in the community or workplace

Terms of Reference

National RTF Coalition

Drafted December 2015, Approved ____, Due for Review ____

Chapter Chairpersons commit to:

- Attending all Chapter meetings (or arranging a suitable replacement if necessary)
- Preparing and disseminating meeting agendas
- Participating in National RTF Coalition teleconferences (or briefing a replacement)
- Providing an accurate and relevant representation from local Chapter meetings
- Overseeing planning, implementation and reporting of local RTF actions

Chapter Secretaries commit to:

- Providing secretariat for Chapter meetings (or arranging a suitable replacement if necessary)
- Writing and disseminating minutes from each Chapter meeting

How will the mission be achieved?

Meetings

Australia's RTF Coalition is structured into state/territory based chapters.

Each chapter is independent, and free to discuss and nominate local priorities for action.

Opportunities for joint action and advocacy will be discussed at national meetings

Chapter meetings are held approximately bi-monthly or quarterly and the Chairperson and Secretary from each chapter is also expected to participate in the 6-weekly National teleconference.

Funding and resources

RTF is not an incorporated organisation. RTF funds are currently held by the Sydney Food Fairness Alliance on behalf of the Coalition.

RTF Coalition costs involve:

- Hosting for 6-weekly National teleconference
- Bi-annual conference expenses
- Hosting and licence fees for social media

Support for the RTF will be sought from participating members and organisations, eg for use of rooms, phones, computers.

Amendment/Review Process

These Terms of Reference require annual review from the date of approval. They may be altered to meet the current needs of RTF Coalition members, by agreement of the majority of members.

Reviewed TOR must be presented at each state/territory-based chapter for comment and feedback prior to approval.

References

1. FAO. Declaration of the world summit on food security. Rome: Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations; 2009. Available from: http://www.fao.org/fileadmin/templates/wsfs/Summit/Docs/Final_Declaration/WSFS09_Declaration.pdf.
2. Cited in Ramsey R, Giskes K, Turrell G and Gallegos D. Public Health Nutrition: 15(2), 227–237. Published online 7.9.2011.
3. Wilkinson R, Marmot M. Social determinants of health: The solid facts. 2nd ed. Denmark: World Health Organization; 2003. Available from: http://www.euro.who.int/_data/assets/pdf_file/0005/98438/e81384.pdf.
4. United Nations. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights New York, NY: United Nations; 1948 [cited 2015 Aug 30]. Available from: <http://www.un.org/en/documents/udhr/>.
5. Ericksen P. Conceptualizing food systems for global environmental change research. Global Environmental Change. 2008;18(1).
6. Friel S, Ford L. Systems, food security and human health. Food Security. 2015;7(2):437-51.
7. <http://www.foodbank.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/Foodbank-Hunger-in-the-Classroom-Report-May-2015.pdf>.
8. Anglican Diocese of Sydney, Social Policy and Research Unit. When there's not enough to eat. State of the Family Report Volume 2.2012.