

Issue and System

The issue my group focused on was food insecurity in Aotearoa. The 2020/21 New Zealand Health Survey showed that 14.9 percent of children lived in households where food ran out sometimes or often, and 13.7 percent lived in households where they ate less because there was not enough money. This shows that food insecurity is a major issue in New Zealand. Even though the country produces enough food to feed the population many times over, between 10 and 20 percent of people still experience food insecurity. The main cause is not a shortage of food, but poverty and the high cost of living, which make it hard for households to access the food they need. At the same time, huge amounts of food are wasted across the supply chain and in homes. This waste also adds to New Zealand's greenhouse gas emissions, especially methane.

All of this shows that the food security system is broken. Food insecurity is not happening because New Zealand does not have enough food. It is happening because the system that should get food to people is not working properly. That is why charities like Everybody Eats and Kaibosh are so important. They step in to patch the holes in the system by rescuing food that would otherwise be wasted and redirecting it to people who need it.

Everybody Eats rescues about 12 tonnes of food every year. They work with local suppliers and organisations such as Kaibosh and Duck Island, which help them get surplus food that is still perfectly good to use. The organisation depends heavily on volunteers and funding. Eighty percent of their operating costs come from donations and grants, and the rest comes from events and catering. Kaibosh plays a similar role in the system. They collect food that would have been thrown out and redistribute it to communities.

Both organisations keep the food security system going in ways that the government currently does not fully support. Even though they help feed people directly, the government does not provide funding to Everybody Eats. This makes it hard for them to keep operating. Jack, the owner of Everybody Eats, said, "I say to people in the city, come for dinner and pay. If you did pay for your meal, that is literally the best thing you can do." This shows how desperate the organisation is for financial support, because many diners do not pay anything. They serve a three-course dinner with a suggested koha of ten to twenty dollars, but the average amount people give is only around five dollars. Because so few people pay enough to cover costs, only about 30 percent of diners cover their meal. This means Everybody Eats has had to use Thursdays as an event space just to make up the shortfall.

Additionally, the government also has a major role in the food security system. They control the policies and funding that can either support or ignore food rescue groups. Without government support, charities like Everybody Eats and Kaibosh will not be able to operate sustainably and help those who need help, even though these organisations struggle financially while trying to fix problems that come from the wider system. Overall, the food

security system includes people, resources, and rules that work together to deliver food. Right now, the interactions between cost of living, waste, and funding show gaps that charities, like Everybody Eats are trying to fill, but that still need lots of support.

The Social Action

The action supported food security systems by promoting a community-based solution (Everybody Eats) that tackles the issue in a sustainable way. Everybody Eats helps reduce food waste. They use food that supermarkets or organisations would usually throw away, like vegetables that don't look "normal" or perfect. The system that needs support and that we supported is the food security system, which includes all the people, groups, and resources that work together to make sure everyone has enough food and that minimal food is wasted. By choosing an action that helped one of the key charities in the system in our local community, we were directly supporting how the system is meant to work.

We did two things as part of our social action. Firstly, my group and our friends attended a dinner at Everybody Eats. Here, we listened to Jack speak. He talked about where they source their food from, how they tackle and minimise food waste, etc. One of the ways they do this is by using smaller portions for their meals. This means there isn't too much on the plate to be thrown away. By gaining this information and education, this would help shape our future behaviour and also be able to feed this information directly back to our families. Also, we paid for our food. I contributed \$30, which is enough to cover my meal and help someone else in need. This financial contribution is incredibly important for them to be able to keep doing what they are doing. This is a direct way of supporting the system, because funding allows food rescue groups to stay open and keep reducing waste while feeding people.

Also, because we had identified that the government were a key part of the system, our group chose to email MPs to raise awareness and ask for government support for Everybody Eats. We invited them to come and see how Everybody Eats helps people by giving free or low-cost meals made from rescued food. By contacting MPs, I hope they will develop a better understanding of the issue of food insecurity and the importance of charities within the system in terms of being able to offer immediate, on-the-ground support to people who need it. This means our social action also tried to influence the system at the decision-maker level, not just the community level. The outcome we are hoping for is that the government will consider giving more support and funding to organisations like Everybody Eats. We took screenshots of the emails we sent to MPs, and photos were taken when we were at Everybody Eats. Sending emails was a realistic way to act. It showed that we are aware of the struggles many face, and that we want to help. Emailing might have had only a small impact, but we did what we could. I worked in a group of four, and everyone helped add to the emails.

How the action supported the system

Our action supported the food security system by taking practical steps that directly helped Everybody Eats continue their work. By promoting their mission, we supported a charity that is already filling the gaps in the broken food security system. Our action helped them provide food to people who need it, and it also helped with reducing food waste by supporting a place that rescues food that would otherwise be thrown out. This shows a direct impact because our contribution helped the system work better at both ends: feeding people and preventing waste. As I noted earlier, every meal they make costs \$5.00 so a koha of \$30 like I made, helps feed 5 other people. Because my group also donated the same, all together we feed an extra 20 people a meal from just that one sitting. This is a small but real impact, because extra meals and less waste show different parts of the system can work together more effectively. It also shows how community action can support the capacity of food rescue groups inside the system and feed those suffering from food insecurity.

We also supported the system by trying to involve our local politicians. We contacted our MP to raise awareness about the issues around food insecurity and the lack of government funding for organisations like Everybody Eats. Encouraging political leaders to pay attention is important, because the government has a major influence on the food security system. If MPs know more about Everybody Eats, it could lead to changes like funding, policy support or even just more public attention. This means our action tried to shift the system at a policy level, not only at the charity level. Even if the impact is delayed, raising awareness with decision makers can change the rules and resources that shape the whole system.

We received a positive response from Barbara Edmonds' office, and she agreed to meet with us and have dinner at Everybody Eats. Even though this dinner has not happened yet, it still shows that our action has already had an impact. By emailing her and explaining how Everybody Eats works as a social enterprise restaurant, we raised awareness at a political level. We described their all-inclusive environment, their pay-what-you-can koha system and the financial challenges they face because not everyone can pay. We also explained how important it is for the government to support food rescue charities. Even though the outcome is not known yet, there are possible future impacts such as government funding, support with advertising or even more collaboration with the organisation. It also gives the Labour Party a chance to show support for community-based solutions to food insecurity, which MPs often value because it shows they are involved in real issues. If this leads to any support, it would strengthen the system by making food rescue more stable and reliable over time.

Another positive impact is the effect our action had on our wider community, especially our school community. By talking about our project, sharing what we learned and encouraging others to think about food waste and food insecurity, we helped raise awareness among people who may not have known much about these issues. This means our action went further than just helping Everybody Eats directly. It also made more people in our community notice how serious food insecurity is and how organisations like Everybody Eats and Kaibosh help the system. Some people we talked to said they would like to volunteer, donate or visit Everybody Eats themselves, which means our action may create a ripple effect. Raising

awareness is an impact because it helps shift attitudes, and it can lead to more community support in the future, which may lead to more volunteers, donations and more informed choices – which would all improve the resources and support that can be used to reach more people and therefore make more of a difference on the system of food security and in turn help to solve the issue of food insecurity.

Evaluation of Suitability:

Our approach to this issue was appropriate. Emailing MPs and raising awareness about Everybody Eats was a suitable action. By emailing, we might have introduced the government to a restaurant they didn't even know existed. It was a way for us to voice our opinions to major decision-makers in our country. Emailing MPs is such a small action, and I felt like we wouldn't be taken seriously. I'm glad Barbara and her team responded because she is a big part of this social action. I hope that we get something out of this in terms of funding for Everybody Eats.

[Throughout the response the student provided photographs and email artefacts as evidence of their personal involvement in the group social action]

Grade: Merit

For Merit, the student needs to explain a social action undertaken to support or challenge a system.

In addition to the Achieved requirements to describe the social action and its aim in relation to the social action, Merit involves explaining the impacts of the social action in supporting or challenging the system. Evidence must be used to support the explanation.

The student selected food insecurity as the social issue and used evidence from the New Zealand Health Survey to show its scale. They described how poverty, high living costs, and food waste contribute to the issue, explaining that gaps in the food security system, rather than a lack of food, create hardship. They outlined the roles of Everybody Eats and Kaibosh, noting their reliance on rescued food, volunteers, and donations. The student also described their social action, including attending a dinner, making a financial contribution, and emailing MPs to raise awareness. They provided suitable evidence, such as photographs and email screenshots.

The student explained the impacts of their social action on the food security system by showing how their group's contributions supported both the immediate work of Everybody Eats and the wider functioning of the system. They explained how paying above the suggested koha directly increased the organisation's capacity to feed more people and calculated the impact of their combined donations, showing an understanding of how increased financial resources strengthen the system's ability to provide meals and reduce waste. They also explained how attending the dinner and learning about food rescue processes influenced their future behaviour.

Beyond the community level, the student explained how emailing MPs aimed to support and influence the system at a policy level by raising awareness of food insecurity and the lack of government funding for food rescue groups. They discussed how gaining a response from an MP's office showed an early impact and how increased political attention could strengthen the food security system through possible policy changes.

To reach Excellence, the student needed to evaluate the suitability of their social action by considering how effective and long-lasting its impacts were. They could have further developed why emailing MPs is an appropriate strategy within a democratic system, explaining how constituents raising concerns can influence policy and create more durable change. They could also have evaluated the limits of attending a single dinner and discussed how ongoing actions, such as encouraging repeated community support, might create stronger long-term impacts on the food security system.