

Acknowledging Indigenous Leadership in Food Systems

1. What problem is your proposition addressing?

Acknowledging and empowering indigenous people and businesses in food systems can help shift towards nature-positive food production and more equitable social and health outcomes. It is essential that there is international recognition of the important role of indigenous participation and knowledge in enabling transitions to more sustainable and prosperous food systems. This is an opportunity to shift towards more sustainable, resilient and inclusive food systems by empowering decision making at local cultural and environmental contexts. Sharing of frameworks, programmes and initiatives in Aotearoa New Zealand can help the international shift to recognising indigenous leadership in food systems.

2. How does your proposition address the problem?

The proposition is that by sharing power with indigenous people and providing for their participation in decision making will facilitate nature-positive food production. In Aotearoa New Zealand, an example of this is the emerging co-governance arrangements with indigenous Māori people which provides a strong local context for food producers. New planning rules recognising the vital importance of water require farmers and growers to put the health of waterbodies first and then the health of people, before considering other uses of water. Te ao Māori (the indigenous world view) tends to look at systems holistically, and there is great opportunity to reimagine our food system through the lens of this traditional indigenous knowledge. A significant philosophy we could learn from is the intergenerational nature of indigenous planning, which seeks to enhance the land and build the capacity of the people and the business over the long term.

3. Is this a new solution or an existing solution that needs scaling?

In New Zealand, Māori trade and business has been strong since before European settlers arrived, and Māori agribusiness, production and processing are major drivers of our economy. Traditional knowledge on food production, harvest and disposal represents an existing solution that needs support and scaling to realise and convey the potential nature-positive solutions to the food system.

4. Which organisation/s, institution/s or groups of individuals are associated with the solution?

The New Zealand Government works directly with Treaty Partners, Crown Research Institutes, communities, food industry within Aotearoa New Zealand. Many opportunities exist to recognise and support indigenous leadership in food systems, and New Zealand case studies that can be shared with the international community with the aim of deepening international commitment to acknowledge and grow indigenous leadership in food systems.

- **Hua Parakore** is the world's first indigenous organic certification and has been used across Aotearoa to recognise Māori leadership in organic growing, as well as in Hawai'i. It has been developed by Te Waka Kai Ora (National Māori Organics Authority) and recognises 6 key kaupapa (philosophies/ principles) for the process of growing kai (food) from Māori traditional

Knowledge.

- **The International Māori Agribusiness Programme** works with Iwi (tribes) and their organisations and businesses acknowledging their leadership in transforming the Māori economy and New Zealand primary sector advancement.
- **The Ahuwhenua Trophy** is a prestigious annual award that celebrates excellence in Māori farming, and reflects the importance of Māori agribusiness within the New Zealand economy. At the end of the food cycle, New Zealand Government's Waste Minimisation Fund supports food rescue initiatives **Para Kore** and **Kai Ika** to repurpose and redirect food waste to families and community groups in the local region, promoting food security and diverting organic waste from landfill.
- Māori collectives and enterprises participate directly and strongly in New Zealand's food production and the sector is embracing a Māori world view. Fit for a Better World, New Zealand's primary sector strategy, centres on the concept of te Taiao, which emphasises a deep connection, respect and dependence on nature.
- New Zealand has recognised in law several **Treaty settlements** that establish co-governance over natural resources between Māori and the Crown (Waikato River, Whanganui River, Te Urewera) and enable greater participation and sovereignty for Māori resource management.

5. What is the scientific evidence that supports your proposition?

Mātauranga Māori (Māori traditional knowledge and science) describes a connection to the land, seas, and water of Aotearoa New Zealand, and there is research that shows the link between taking indigenous approaches to farming and food production in New Zealand in addition to Western ones, and improved environmental and social outcomes. It is particularly vital in ensuring the transition from conventional agriculture to more innovative and regenerative methods.¹

6. Is this idea applicable to a particular geography, demography, landscape or other type of setting?

It is most appropriate for countries to acknowledge, empower and support indigenous methodologies and leadership within the local context (i.e. at local catchment levels) in order to shift world views and share power for nature positive food production. The kaupapa (philosophy) of traditional wisdom can be integrated and learned from internationally, particularly in other indigenous cultures.

7. Who are the main actors that would put this action into place?

The opportunity to promote nature-positive food systems through empowering indigenous communities, businesses and tribes sits primarily with government. In the New Zealand context, the Government is guided by the Treaty of Waitangi document on co-governance and partnership around resources. Central and local government, through long term, joint management arrangements and transfer of powers to tangata whenua (local indigenous people of the land)² and direction of funding, have the capability to restore power to indigenous food models.

8. Source and process

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1 Bruce-Iri, P., Murupaenga-Ikenn., Kepa, M., Pittman, B. 2020. Whakaora ngā whenua whāma: Utilising mātauranga Māori and Western science to protect and restore the soil on rural farms in Te Tai Tokerau. DOI: 10.13140/RG.2.2.23514.16329

2 For example see the Whakaraupō/Lyttelton Harbour catchment management plan

3 For more on Te Awa Tupua Whanganui River Settlement – Iorns Magallanes, C. 2015. Nature as an Ancestor: Two Examples of Legal Personality for Nature in New Zealand. DOI 10.4000/vertigo.16199