

I AM HOME

A WELLBEING EVALUATION OF
FOOD NEXT DOOR CO-OPERATIVE
IN MILDURA

Report prepared by
Regenerative Communities
September 2021

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We live, work and play on the lands of the Latji Latji and Ngintait. We acknowledge the First Peoples of the Millewa Mallee as the traditional custodians of the water, land, animals and spirit of this Country. This land on which we dig our hands into the soil and dream of a better future, always was and always will be Aboriginal land.

Project team:

Rachel Kendrigan- Regenerative Communities Director
Tess Spaven- Regenerative Communities Social Researcher
Eliza Crosbie- Independent Social Researcher
Jules Kangeta- Food Next Door Community Support Project Officer and Translator
Kieran Mangan- Artist Interpreter
Olivia Dun- Food Next Door Advisory Board
Deb Bogenhuber- Food Next Door Executive Officer

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For more information please contact:

Deborah Bogenhuber
Food Next Door Executive Officer
hello@foodnextdoor.org.au
www.foodnextdoor.org.au

Report prepared by Regenerative Communities
Rachel Kendrigan
hello@regenerativecommunities.com.au
www.regenerativecommunities.com.au

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Image: Maize and vegetable crops at the Food Next Door Community Demonstration Farm, 2021.
Photo credit: Food Next Door



FOREWORD

I am genuinely happy to write this foreword, not only because I am working at Food Next Door Co-op, but because I believe deeply in the contribution of what they are doing, and the value of helping and supporting the migrant community to find their sense of belonging in the community by giving them access to land and grow food.

Food Next Door trains migrant farmers on how to grow food here in Australia by providing them with different skills such as using equipment, appropriate crops to grow in local weather and suitable times to plant crops by using a farming calendar. I believe that what the farmers are learning from Food Next Door will be transmitted generation to generation, and in turn this will help the new migrants to contribute to the social and economic development of the community of Mildura.



Food Next Door wanted to evaluate the wellbeing and know the impact of their work on the migrant community of Mildura, so they decided to contact and work on the project with Regenerative Communities. We enjoyed working with the Regenerative Communities team, as they conducted their research aligned with our values.

In this report you will find the results from the research with some quotes from the migrant farmers, and you will find out how happy and grateful farmers are to get support from Food Next Door, what they have and what they are still missing or need for the farm activities to continue. The needs for the farmers are huge and Food Next Door's means are limited. We hope this report will help bring more resources to this meaningful project.

Jules Kangeta, Food Next Door Community Support Project Officer
September 2021

Image: Jules Kangeta at the Food Next Door Community Demonstration Farm, 2021.
Photo credit: Food Next Door

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The *I am Home* report comes at a critical time, demonstrating the important positive impacts that growing food together can have on the wellbeing of a local community. As a local person myself, belonging to Mildura, my personal involvement in Food Next Door since 2016 has been a major influence in developing my own capacity to think and work in our region in a way that is regenerative.

When we embark on a research process that is regenerative, we first ask *how are we thinking about this*, before we start the doing. By firstly setting values for the research process, we consider the potential impacts of the research on the project team, the research participants and the community. We don't just think about what we need to extract, but what we will give back in reciprocity.

Multiple research methods during this evaluation provided a variety of platforms for people to participate in the research in a way that was most comfortable for them. It was important to allow participants to take part in shaping what wellbeing means to them, rather than us defining it for them.

Using a wellbeing language & definitions guide alongside Food Next Door's ethos, we adopted seven wellbeing themes that we felt were most relevant to evaluate how Food Next Door impacts wellbeing at an individual and community level. Through a survey we established a sense of how people involved in Food Next Door related these wellbeing themes to their own experience when participating in or supporting Food Next Door's activities.

By conducting one-on-one interviews with migrant farmers, we aimed to ensure that we created space for them to express their views and to define wellbeing in their own terms. We were welcomed into their homes and shared food, laughter and stories together. The findings from these interviews have been developed into wellbeing themes that reflect the insights from the interviews.

As the image of the Food Next Door community being an alive ecosystem emerged, we worked with an artist interpreter to creatively represent the insights we gained from people in various roles across Food Next Door. Our 'Wellbeing Map' shows the reciprocal wellbeing benefits that are created by the people involved in Food Next Door, for each other. Every role is essential and important.

We discovered above all, that what Food Next Door provides for its members and supporting community, is a family. And, for new migrants to Australia who are enabled via Food Next Door to be who they are and practice what they know- farming, they feel they are playing an important and enriching role in that family. And this is what makes them feel *I am home*.

Rachel Kendrigan, Regenerative Communities Director
September 2021

ABOUT THIS REPORT

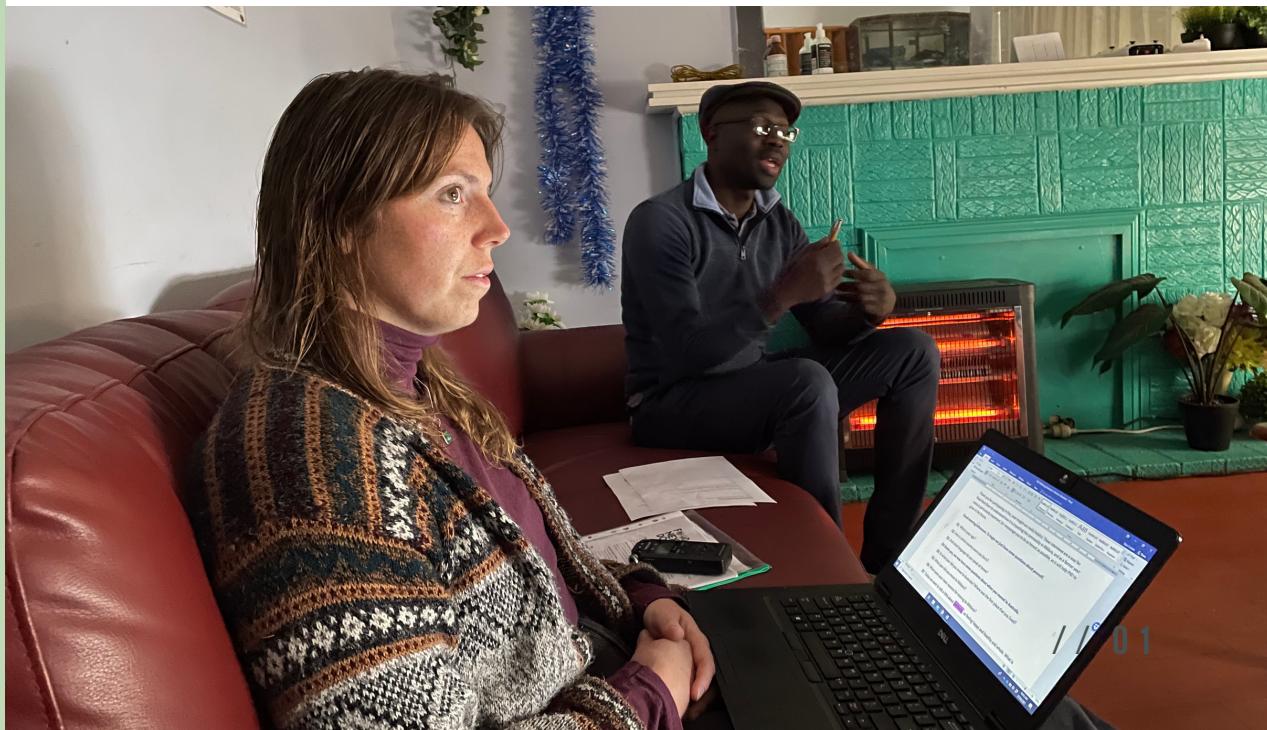
This report has been developed for Food Next Door, to evaluate wellbeing outcomes associated with their project *Building community and sustainable local economies through food: Food Next Door Community Demonstration Farm*, funded via Regional Development Victoria.

Regenerative Communities was engaged to conduct the evaluation and produce this report, along with creative summary to share with the community.

As specified in the Food Next Door Benefit management plan, the evaluation research was focused on measuring the benefit- *Improved wellbeing of new migrants and the broader community*.

The evaluation was conducted between February and September 2021 by Regenerative Communities with support and guidance from Food Next Door. It involved a survey (43 respondents), one-on-one interviews with new migrant farmers (11 interviewees) and a co-created participatory mapping activity (12 contributors).

Image: Eliza Crosbie and Jules Kangeta conducting interviews with migrant farmers, June 2021. Photo credit: Regenerative Communities



EVALUATION TEAM

Regenerative Communities is an independent community development service. We bring together communities using a holistic approach to foster collective wellbeing, increasing potential for rural and regional towns to thrive.

Our team have a long-standing relationship with Food Next Door as well as the Burundian and Congolese communities of Sunraysia. We have a passion for applying a whole-systems viewpoint and the way that we work is strongly aligned with Food Next Door's values. Working alongside Food Next Door on this evaluation has allowed us all to reflect, grow and be energised together in a way that we couldn't have done alone.

The Food Next Door wellbeing evaluation and report was led and prepared by Rachel Kendrigan, Director of Regenerative Communities. Tess Spaven is a social researcher for Regenerative Communities and provided valuable input and support throughout each step of the process. Eliza Crosbie, an independent social researcher, came to us through our networks and travelled to Mildura to conduct the one-on-one interviews with migrant farmers.

Jules Kangeta is the Community Support Project Officer for Food Next Door. They were the essential cultural and language conduit allowing us to be able to effectively communicate with, connect and listen to the African participants. Kieran Mangan, a local Artist Interpreter, gave our data life through creative imagery in our wellbeing map. Deborah Bogenhuber, Executive Officer of Food Next Door and Olivia Dun of the Food Next Door Advisory Board, were involved in establishing evaluation values and plan, and provided ongoing guidance throughout the research process.

RESEARCH VALUES

To begin the wellbeing evaluation process, Regenerative Communities held an initial meeting with the Food Next Door team in February 2021, to create a shared understanding of the values behind the evaluation research.

We discussed how we would ensure that we kept those values alive during the evaluation process. In order for our research to move away from extractive, procedure driven methods, we needed to determine how we could create a process that was alive, regenerative and energising in nature for all involved. The key outcome of this meeting was establishing the following values to guide the evaluation:



PURPOSE STATEMENT

We considered how Food Next Door is nested within the local community and associated sectors to understand what the impact of the evaluation would be.

Food Next Door is based in Mildura, which is part of the Sunraysia region. Sunraysia is a social and economic region that is characterised by a horticultural food bowl which services Australia and the world. Stretching over the New South Wales/Victorian border, the district relies heavily on the waters of the Murray River to grow food.

Mildura also sits within the federal electorate of the Mallee and is a major regional centre for regional Victoria.

The Food Next Door project crosses over several sectors and is relevant to current research and community development within regional settlement, regenerative farming, community farming, intercultural development and local food systems.

The following purpose statement was developed to reflect the holistic considerations of how the evaluation project is nested in a broader context:

We are designing an alive process to evaluate the wellbeing outcomes of Food Next Door,

in a way that generates knowledge, empowering Food Next Door to share their story,

so that we can increase engagement and support from relevant sectors across Victoria.

METHODOLOGY

The wellbeing evaluation adopted a mixed methods approach using a survey, interviews and a co-created participatory mapping activity to creatively represent the views of Food Next Door members and supporters.

A background on Food Next Door can be found on pages 09-10.

The core purpose of the evaluation was to identify the wellbeing outcomes of Food Next Door. The evaluation team began our research by exploring definitions of, and ideas about wellbeing. We developed seven themes of wellbeing that we felt were most relevant to explore for Food Next Door. The intention was to use these themes to establish a baseline to start building our understanding of how Food Next Door members and customers related to the themes.

A summary of the seven wellbeing themes can be found on pages 11-12.

We started the evaluation process by exploring the seven wellbeing themes via a survey. We were able to develop a deeper understanding of how people related their wellbeing to Food Next Door, as well as providing them with an opportunity to define wellbeing for themselves.

See pages 13-18 for Evaluation findings part one: Survey.

The data gathered from the survey results was then used to inform the development of the questions used during the one-on-one interviews with migrant farmers involved in Food Next Door. The interviews aimed to gather a more comprehensive individual response, and we were able to provide a safe and culturally appropriate space for participants to express their personal experiences and ideas.

See pages 19-34 for Evaluation findings part two: Interviews.

Our final piece of research was a participatory mapping activity with an artist interpreter. The aim was to deepen our understanding of how every persons role within Food Next Door impacts the wellbeing of others involved, and represent these shared ideas of wellbeing in a creative and accessible way.

See pages 36-38 for Evaluation findings part three: Wellbeing map.

RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

People involved in Food Next Door often identify with more than one role within the organisation. The following table shows how many contact points were made across the three evaluation methods with each Food Next Door role.

| | Survey | Interviews | Mapping | Total |
|-----------------------|--------|------------|---------|-------|
| Landholders | 1 | | 1 | 2 |
| Migrant farmers | 8 | 11 | 1 | 20 |
| Out of the Box grower | 3 | | 2 | 5 |
| Staff and contractors | 5 | | 1 | 6 |
| Volunteers | 6 | | 2 | 8 |
| Board members | 4 | | 3 | 7 |
| Advisory board | 2 | | 3 | 5 |
| Customers/supporters | 18 | | 3 | 21 |

PROMISE TO PARTICIPANTS

It was important to the evaluation team to consider how we would engage with research participants. We used the research values to determine the following promises to participants:

- All research participants have access to this report.
- Interview participants will receive a copy of their interview recording.
- Allow research participants to be anonymous if they wish.
- The findings from this evaluation will be interpreted, via poetic inquiry, into a children's book. The book will be illustrated by a local artist using bi-lingual text and will be distributed in the Mildura community.
- Highlights from the research will be shared via Food Next Door's and Regenerative Communities' social media accounts, and with local media outlets in the form of a media release.
- A meeting will be held with migrant farmers to provide a verbal summary of this report in Swahili.

ABOUT FOOD NEXT DOOR

Food Next Door is a co-operative community farming organisation who match under-utilised farmland with landless farmers. This supports small-scale regenerative farming, the growing of cultural and innovative crops and the engagement of people from diverse backgrounds, to supply food to local households in the Mildura region, part of the horticultural food bowl of Sunraysia."

Co-operatives are organisations owned by members for the benefit of members. They are different from other organisations because their priority is to have social and economic impact. Food Next Door also aims to have an environmental impact. Co-operative memberships within Food Next Door include growers, customers, landholders and volunteers. Since 2016, Food Next Door has supported members of Mildura's Twitezimbere Burundian community to grow maize, when the Sunraysia Burundian Garden pilot project was established on an acre of donated land.

The primary aim of Food Next Door is to relieve the suffering or distress experienced by newly arrived migrants and refugee groups, particularly those without access to land and who are living in rural and regional areas. Food Next Door achieve this by supporting these groups to re-engage in farming and the growing of crops, including their traditional foods. These foods include maize, which is a staple ingredient in their diet, as well as peanuts, white eggplants and varieties of beans and peas.

Image: Volunteers and farmers gather at the Sunraysia Burundian Garden, 2017. Joel Sindayigaya, Josephine Nyiratunga, Salvator, Rachel Kendrigan, Dean Lampard, Sevilla Furness-Holland, Callum Milne, Ben Dunn.
Photo credit: Food Next Door





Food Next Door currently support three farms – the River Farm and Community Demonstration Farm in Mildura Victoria, and the Community Connections Farm in Meroo Meadow NSW. New migrant farmers from Burundi and Congo are participating in training programs to support them to learn about farming in the local climate. They are growing cultural foods for their own community as well as vegetables for Out of the Box each week.

Food Next Door also established Out of the Box in 2017 which is a weekly local produce box subscription. All produce is sourced from small scale farms within a 150km radius of Sunraysia. Produce is grown using organic and regenerative practices. Growers set their own prices and volunteer contributions to the operations allow Food Next Door to support a fair wage for growers whilst having accessible prices for customers.

The Community Water Bank was initiated by Food Next Door in 2019 and is a non-for-profit venture that seeks to cultivate - through the use of donations - a portfolio of water rights to assist active sustainable farming, direct-to-consumer food consumption and the health of river systems.

Food Next Door Organics is a Participatory Guarantee System (PGS), an organic certification system where the members of the PGS audit and certify other member's farms to the national organic and biodynamic standard. This builds a recognised and trusted brand for consumers in the local community without expensive auditing and levy fees of other third-party accreditors for the farmers involved.

WELLBEING THEMES

There are many definitions and theories of wellbeing, drawn from a range of disciplines. For the purposes of this evaluation we referred to the *Wellbeing language & definitions guide 2017* written by the Blueberry Institute and developed by the Mental Health Commission of NSW in consultation with the NSW Wellbeing Collaborative and other stakeholders. The guide provides a resource to enable cross agency and community level collaboration on wellbeing—considering wellbeing at the community, organisational and individual levels.

The *Wellbeing language & definitions guide* outlines several domains of wellbeing. We assessed the associated terms and metaphors for each, before designing our own seven themes that we felt were most relevant to evaluate how Food Next Door impacts wellbeing at an individual and community level. Our seven themes have been established as a baseline for this evaluation, as well as future evaluations that Food Next Door will conduct.

PHYSICAL WELLBEING

Physical wellbeing relates to being or having access to methods to remain physically fit, and feeling safe from injury or illness whilst participating in activities. Having adequate nutrition and exercise are important factors to feel strong and well in one's body. As part of Food Next Doors mission is 'nourishing people,' we felt it important to measure the impact of accessing local food on physical health, as well as how participating in activities helps with physical fitness.

ECONOMIC WELLBEING

Economic wellbeing relates to having adequate financial resources, and a sense of independence and autonomy over one's financial situation. It also refers to having freedom of choice and access to employment and housing opportunities. Making ends meet and the ability to achieve goals for a person and their family is important for economic wellbeing. In regards to Food Next Door, we are interested in how being part of a strong local economic system may have impact on individuals sense of wellbeing, and what opportunities Food Next Door offers to members that may have a positive impact on their economic circumstances.

CULTURAL WELLBEING

Cultural wellbeing relates to feeling safe to express one's culture, and the strength in diversity that can be fostered in our community by sharing our cultures. Overcoming challenges within an organisation such as language barriers, cultural differences, decision making processes and ways of participating can lead to a sense of cultural wellbeing in individuals and communities. This theme of wellbeing is important for Food Next Door as an organisation that works interculturally.

SPIRITUAL WELLBEING

Spiritual wellbeing is associated with an individual feeling a sense of purpose in their life, that they are contributing to something meaningful which is enabling growth and healing for themselves and their community. A connection to something bigger than the self- such as art, nature and community is important for spiritual wellbeing. We wanted to explore how being involved in Food Next Door potentially brings meaning to people's lives.

MENTAL WELLBEING

Mental wellbeing relates to factors of mental health such as feeling strong, resilient and productive. Learning new things, having positive interactions and cognitive functioning are important for mental wellbeing. Feeling respected and acknowledged by others are contributing factors to a healthy mind. Emotional intelligence and self-awareness are great indicators of mental wellbeing. In regards to Food Next Door, we were interested in how learning new things and working together impacts the mental wellbeing of those involved.

SOCIAL WELLBEING

Social wellbeing is reflected in a community that is connected, supportive, caring and inclusive. Feeling appreciated, fostering trust and having positive collaborations are all important contributors to social wellbeing. For an individual, growing social capabilities through making connections, contributing and practicing kindness fosters social wellbeing. As Food Next Door is a community focused organisation we felt it was important to measure what the social wellbeing impacts are on individuals as well as the community.

ENVIRONMENTAL WELLBEING

Environmental wellbeing involves feeling connected to, and living in harmony with the Earth. Meaningful, regular interaction with nature and taking positive steps towards regenerating the environment are important elements for environmental health. Also, building ecological capability and understanding your impact contributes to environmental wellbeing. As part of Food Next Doors mission is to 'nurture land,' we felt environmental wellbeing was a vital theme to explore within the evaluation.

EVALUATION FINDINGS

PART ONE: SURVEY

The Food Next Door Wellbeing Survey was conducted in March and April, 2021. Responses were collected online, on paper and one-on-one with a translator for those who needed English support. We recruited participants via the Food Next Door e-newsletter database, social media, Out of the Box customer pick up and directly approaching new migrant farmers. The survey included open ended and rated questions asking how the person feels about their involvement in Food Next Door.

The aim of the survey was to establish a sense of how Food Next Door impacts on the physical, economic, cultural, spiritual, mental, social and environmental wellbeing of its members and the broader community. There was an internal survey for members of the Food Next Door co-operative, and an external survey for customers and supporters. This was to ensure we captured the perspectives of those directly involved in Food Next Door, as well as to gain insight into the wellbeing impacts on the broader community.

43 people responded to the surveys:

- 27 members of Food Next Door including migrant farmers, Out of the Box growers, volunteers, staff, board members and advisory board members responded to the internal survey
- 16 Out of the Box customers or Food Next Door supporters responded to the external survey
- Ages ranged from 30-60+ with females representing 63% of respondents

For the purpose of evaluating the Food Next Door Benefit Management Plan indicator *improved wellbeing of new migrants and the broader community*, we looked at the data from the perspective of:

- 9 total respondents identified as **new migrants** to Australia from Burundi and Congo
- 34 total respondents identified as **established residents** in the Sunraysia community (broader community)

THROUGH THE OPEN-ENDED SURVEY QUESTIONS, WE DISCOVERED THE FOLLOWING ABOUT HOW PEOPLE DEFINE WELLBEING, WHY THEY JOINED FOOD NEXT DOOR AND HOW BEING A PART OF FOOD NEXT DOOR MAKES THEM FEEL.

New migrants defined wellbeing as having what you need, in particular employment and access to food, as well as feeling comfortable and satisfied in life. They joined Food Next Door to gain knowledge, meet people, feel a part of the community and to grow/access cultural foods. New migrants expressed that their involvement in Food Next Door has made them feel better, part of and contributing to the broader community, and proud of making a difference. They have most enjoyed their connections with people and the food.

Established residents take a holistic view of wellbeing - a balance of mental, physical and spiritual health. Wellbeing to them means having purpose and fulfilment, healthy relationships and community connections as well as feeling calm and content. They joined Food Next Door to support the local food system, be connected with the community, for volunteer or employment opportunities and to access fresh organic produce. Established residents feel joyful and optimistic, purposeful, accepted and valued as part of a family. They have most enjoyed the relationships they have formed and eating better food.

WE ANALYSED THE MOST FREQUENTLY USED WORDS IN THE RESPONSES TO THE OPEN ENDED QUESTIONS TO CREATE WORD CLOUDS:

Fig 1: What does wellbeing mean to you?

Fig 2: Why did you decide to join/support Food Next Door?

Fig 3: How does your involvement in/support of Food Next Door make you feel?

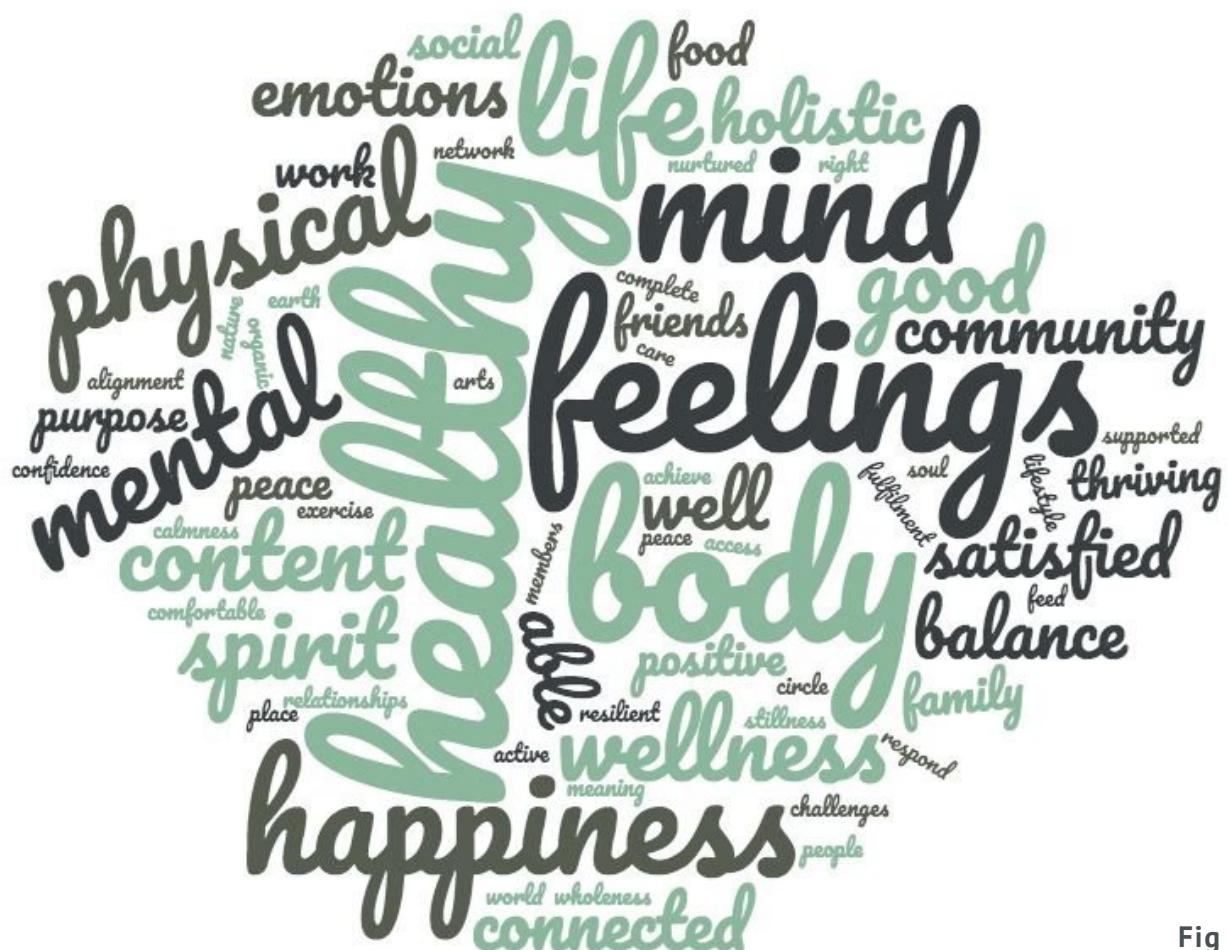


Fig 1



Fig 2



Fig 3

THE FOLLOWING SUMMARISES THE RESULTS OF THE SEVEN WELLBEING THEMES WE EXPLORED IN THE SURVEY. WE POSED STATEMENTS ABOUT EACH THEME, IN WHICH WE ASKED SURVEY PARTICIPANTS TO INDICATE ON A SCALE IF THEY STRONGLY AGREE, AGREE, NEUTRAL, DISAGREE OR STRONGLY DISAGREE. FROM THE RESULTS WE ESTABLISHED AVERAGE RESPONSE LEVELS WHICH ARE REFLECTED BELOW. RESPONSES ARE REFLECTED FROM NEW MIGRANTS, ESTABLISHED RESIDENTS AND OVERALL RESPONDENTS.

PHYSICAL WELLBEING

We posted a set of statements to survey participants about how they feel their physical wellbeing is impacted from participating in or supporting Food Next Door activities. On average, all survey respondents *strongly agreed* that Food Next Door has enabled them better access to fresh, healthy and culturally appropriate food. New migrant respondents *strongly agreed* that their involvement in Food Next Door has improved their physical fitness, and they feel their physical health is protected when participating in activities. On average, established resident respondents *agreed* with those statements.

ECONOMIC WELLBEING

We provided a series of statements to survey participants regarding economic wellbeing, in relation to how their involvement in or support of the Food Next Door economy makes them feel.

On average, all survey respondents *strongly agreed* that they are making a positive impact on the local economy through their involvement in Food Next Door.

In regards to involvement in Food Next Door helping people feel resilient and supported during tough times, new migrant respondents *strongly agreed* and established resident respondents on average *agreed*. On average all respondents *agreed* that Food Next Door has a positive impact on their sense of security and self-reliance.

CULTURAL WELLBEING

We posed a set of statements to survey participants regarding to how they felt about their culture when participating in Food Next Door, and how they feel about cultural wellbeing within the Food Next Door community.

New migrant respondents *strongly agreed* that they feel safe to express their culture within Food Next Door, their culture is understood and valued, and that there is harmony amongst the diverse cultures within Food Next Door. They also *strongly agreed* that being involved with Food Next Door has improved their ability to produce and access foods that are culturally appropriate.

On average, established resident respondents *agreed* they too feel safe to express their culture, their culture is understood and valued, and that there is harmony amongst the diverse cultures within Food Next Door. Customers and supporters in particular *strongly agreed* that they are learning about other cultures through their support of Food Next Door.

SPIRITUAL WELLBEING

We presented a series of statements to survey participants to measure how being involved in or supporting Food Next Door impacts on their spiritual wellbeing.

On average, all survey participants *strongly agreed* that they are contributing to something meaningful through participating in or supporting Food Next Door, and *agreed* that undertaking Food Next Door activities is healing. New migrant respondents *strongly agreed* that they feel a sense of purpose through participating in Food Next Door, and Food Next Door support them to reach their full potential. For established residents, on average they *agreed* they feel a sense of purpose through participating in Food Next Door and they are supported to reach their full potential.

MENTAL WELLBEING

We created a series of statements to gain reflections on how people feel about their mental wellbeing from participating in or supporting Food Next Door.

On average all survey respondents *strongly agreed* that through engaging with and participating in Food Next Door activities they are learning new things and growing their knowledge. New migrants *strongly agreed*, and on average establish residents *agreed*, that their mental health has improved, they have a voice, their confidence has increased and they feel productive and energised through their participation in Food Next Door.

SOCIAL WELLBEING

We posted a series of statements to survey participants about how they are weaving connections in the community, and how these relationships impact their social wellbeing. Established resident respondents *agreed* they are meeting new people and finding a sense of belonging through Food Next Door. They also *agreed* that there is trust, recognition and respect within the Food Next Door community. New migrant respondents *strongly agreed* that they are building trusting relationships, they can demonstrate their knowledge and skills, and are respected and recognised for their contributions. They also *strongly agreed* they are finding new connections and have a sense of belonging through their participation in Food Next Door.

ENVIRONMENTAL WELLBEING

We posed statements to the survey participants about how being involved in Food Next Door contributes to their environmental wellbeing, through connecting to land and their food. All survey participants *agreed* they feel better connected to the land and their food through Food Next Door. New migrants *strongly agreed* they are better connected to their food and are having a positive impact on regenerating land through their involvement in Food Next Door. Customers and supporters on average *agreed* they feel better connected to the land and their food through their support of Food Next Door.

EVALUATION FINDINGS

PART TWO: INTERVIEWS

The evaluation team conducted one-on-one interviews with Food Next Door farmer members from Burundi and the Democratic Republic of Congo in June, 2021. The interviews took place in the farmers homes, some with family members present. Most farmers speak Swahili or Kirundi at home so we arranged a trusted interpreter for all interviews. Interviews were recorded (with permission) and transcribed. Interviewees quotes have been attributed to pseudonyms, unless they have specifically requested to be referred to by their real name, and have been translated into English.

We interviewed eleven migrant farmers across nine interviews, with a balanced representation of male and female participants. Six farmers were from Congo and five from Burundi. There was a wide variety of experiences represented across the interviews. Six farmers arrived in Australia recently (in 2018 or later) and Mildura was their first place of residence. Five farmers had arrived in Australia 10-15 years ago and first settled in Adelaide, Newcastle or Sydney and relocated to Mildura at various times from 2009-2015. The appeal of residing in Mildura was expressed as a quiet, rural community with potential farming opportunities.

Four farmers have been involved in Food Next Door from the beginning of the pilot project, and seven farmers had more recently begun farming with Food Next Door. All farmers are involved in the Community Demonstration Farm or the River Farm, and visit anywhere from once a fortnight to four times a week.

We asked the farmers how they had heard about Food Next Door and why they joined. Most farmers explained they had found out about Food Next Door on arrival in Mildura through their connections with the local African community. The appeal to join Food Next Door was the opportunity to be growing cultural foods without chemicals. Everyone interviewed identified strongly with being a farmer back home in Africa, and some had made attempts to farm via other avenues in Australia but had not had success.

WELLBEING DEFINED

During the one-on-one interviews, each farmer was asked to define what wellbeing means to them. They explained the following factors as being important for their wellbeing:

- Sleeping well
- Doing physical work
- Education for kids
- Space to be farming
- Living in peace
- Eating organic food
- Having what you need (housing, food, clothes)

These results are very similar to what was found in the survey.

The interviews were analysed to see which wellbeing themes emerged. The following seven core themes and sub-themes discussed by the farmers were drawn from the interviews, and these findings are discussed in more detail in the sections following:

IDENTITY

- Touching soil
- Farming is what I am

BODY

- Blood flowing
- Food is medicine

FOOD ACCESS

- Now I don't miss
- Support myself
- Nourish my family

COMMUNITY

- Creating networks
- Help me understand
- We listen

FARMING

- What the farm gives me
- I can

SHARING

- Share our culture
- Sharing harvest
- We are famous

HOME

- I have arrived
- I am home

IDENTITY

THE THEME OF FARMING BEING A CORE PART OF INTERVIEW PARTICIPANTS IDENTITY EMERGED FROM THE INTERVIEWS THROUGH THE WAY THEY DESCRIBED GROWING UP TOUCHING SOIL AND GROWING FOOD IN THEIR AFRICAN COUNTRIES OF ORIGIN.

TOUCHING SOIL

Farmers spoke of growing up in the dirt, being born a farmer and working with their hands every day. The feeling of touching the soil at the Food Next Door Community Demonstration Farm or River Farm is like being back at home in Africa. Being in contact with dirt is essential for overall health and their identity.

*“Back home we used the same hand and **touching soil**. When I get here, I told myself I would feel sick because I don't have something to do, getting my hand and doing this physical work. When I get to do this **touching soil**, is normal and is good thing yes I enjoy it.* - Venantia

*“It's [touching soil] something I grow up doing it.... In Australia, kids they grow up playing with something [toys] to get their knowledge but back home you grow up with dirt. Mum got the farm and you sit there you play with dirt nothing else, so I grow up growing food, it's something that's in **my whole life experience**.* - Joselyne

FARMING IS WHAT I AM

Farmers shared that their identity is based strongly on being a farmer, and the opportunity to practice this in Australia via Food Next Door has helped them feel more like themselves.

*“For me, farming, I was born a farmer and **farming is in my blood** you know, farming is what I am, and when I am farming I enjoy it because it is me.* - Mucherumu

*“When I moved to Mildura it was because in Sydney I could not do the job I did back home [farming], I was unable to find the job I like. I decided to come and visit the regional area and it was here in Mildura that I found a farm and that people were farming. Because back home my job was farmer and so this was a good place for me to live because I could **do what I am**.* - Joel

BODY

THROUGH THE INTERVIEWS WE FOUND CONSISTENTLY THAT PHYSICAL ACTIVITY WHILST FARMING HAS GREAT BENEFITS ON THE CONDITION OF FARMERS BODIES. IN ADDITION, EATING ORGANIC, CULTURALLY APPROPRIATE FOODS WAS IMPORTANT FOR THEIR HEALTH.

BLOOD FLOWING

Farmers told us that their doctors recommend doing sport or going to the gym, but farming is the exercise that they are most comfortable and familiar with. Being at the farm means they are less sedentary, allowing blood to flow through their bodies, resulting in them feeling more physically fit and able.

If you're not farming you're at the same place, you can feel your body no good, and maybe the blood stops flowing. But when you are doing this work you improve your health and then you feel like your body is like your blood, go through well. Because some disease you can get when you are just at the same place and don't do physical activity, you can fall easily sick. But by doing this [farming] you keep healthy. - Kabera

Working with hand it's like doing sport because the blood it flows easily in the body, it makes me feel good you know. - Jeremiah

FOOD IS MEDICINE

Farmers feel that eating foods with no chemicals is more nutritious and that since being involved in Food Next Door they are now eating a healthier, more diverse diet including maize, beans and vegetables. Food is medicine and is good for the gut and the heart. They explained their digestive system is used to their cultural foods and they feel that changing the diet can make you sick.

We eat for a living and food is important in human wellbeing, all round wellbeing. What we grow is organic not with chemical it's healthy food, it builds our body our health. Its healthy for your body having this food which heals your body. It's good to have this food for the community. - Kubota

Some of the food is medicine to us, you won't know until you touch it and practice and eat it and see the difference its medicine it's good for you, it's good for your body, good for your guts, good for your blood, good for your heart good to have it. - Joselyne

FOOD ACCESS

HAVING ACCESS TO CULTURALLY APPROPRIATE FOODS HAS A FLOW ON OF BENEFITS FOR THE INDIVIDUAL AND THEIR FAMILIES. THIS THEME EMERGED THROUGH CONVERSATIONS ABOUT HOW FARMERS ARE BETTER ABLE TO SUPPORT THEMSELVES AND THEIR FAMILIES BY GROWING FOOD.

NOW WE DON'T MISS

Farmers said their children are more comfortable eating food more commonly available in Australia, but for them they are really missing the cultural foods they grew up with. Being a part of Food Next Door means they do not have to miss their cultural foods anymore, therefore they feel happy and less stressed. For example, previously accessing fresh maize meant travelling to Adelaide or Melbourne. Maize flour is available to buy locally in Mildura but it is imported with high food miles. Since becoming involved in Food Next Door they can now access fresh maize locally and have begun mill it to produce small amounts of flour using their own resources.

*“For me getting this cultural food makes me happy and makes me feel happy. Even if the kids for now they start using the foods they find here, but for me it's hard and without getting this cultural food for me **it's like I miss something.** - Jeremiah”*

*“You don't miss nothing from home like before, I was thinking how can I eat eggplants where can I get them from? I miss this, I miss banana, I miss maize, **now we don't miss.** Now I can still have maize mill just from me only me touching it. I get them from farm to home and mill totally takes just 10 minutes. - Joselyne”*

SUPPORT MYSELF

There is reduced stress associated with having access to cultural foods. Growing cultural food is very important as it reduces the stress associated with trying to find these foods, as they generally can't be found in a supermarket. Growing food at home isn't always possible because of space limitations or public housing restrictions. Thanks to Food Next Door, farmers are benefiting financially as they are able to save some money by growing their own food. They feel a sense of security in producing what they need.

*“Regarding food we don't have any problem or any stress by getting food. We are getting some [financial] support through Centrelink but it's not really enough, but as we are farming food it's like it helps us completing what we have, and we don't have any kind of stress about getting food. We can't live without stress but regarding food **we don't have any stress.** - Kabera”*

[Food access] helped a lot helped me to support my family and myself. For example, the first time I harvest the peanut, I [didn't have to go] again to the supermarket to buy peanut. What I could spend buying peanut I spend on other things or save it. When I harvest, the food or the money I could spend in one or two months I could spend it in four or six months because I already have something to harvest. - Bosco

NOURISH MY FAMILY

Three farmers mentioned that Food Next Door brings joy, love and happiness to their families. All farmers said that Food Next Door has a positive impact on their family. In particular being able to share the produce with their children and taking family members to the farm to help. This demonstrates how the impacts of Food Next Door expand beyond its immediate members.

Back home we used to do that [farming] and when we know that what we harvest, what we do, this is helping the family. This part of my work, what I get from Food Next Door has helped me to nourish my family. - Venantia

What we produce we eat it in our family and it has a good impact for our families. We have children. It is important that our children have access to cultural foods. It's good to teach and continue having these foods. Kids grow to eat, and keep eating that [cultural food] and know that is from where we are from. - Kabera

Image: Joselyne Ntahomvukiye sharing ugali and cultural foods at a Food Next Door gathering.
Photo credit: Food Next Door



COMMUNITY

THERE WAS A STRONG THEME WHICH WAS CONSISTENTLY RAISED IN RELATION TO HOW FOOD NEXT DOOR HAS HELPED NEW MIGRANTS ESTABLISH CONNECTIONS IN THE SUNRAYSIA COMMUNITY, WHICH PROVIDE THEM WITH SUPPORT ACROSS VARIOUS ASPECTS OF THEIR LIVES. THE POSITIVE COMMUNICATION WITHIN THESE RELATIONSHIPS MEANS FOOD NEXT DOOR HAS BECOME LIKE A FAMILY FOR THOSE WHO ARE INVOLVED.

CREATING NETWORKS

Food Next Door helps farmers to create connections within the African communities in Mildura as well as with established residents in the broader community. Most farmers found their way to Food Next Door through the existing African community in Mildura and then built more connections from there through farming activities, workshops and training, meeting staff and volunteers and people visiting the farm.

*You know when you meet with other people it's like health[y] for you because you make story, you're laughing, you meet other people. Food Next Door help me to meet other people, Congolese, Burundian and other people and I feel like I'm **part of the community** and when I am with other people I feel happy, I feel healthy in my body. - Venantia*

Through meeting or farming and workshops we did, we knew the people. Food Next Door allow us to have this connectedness with other people and create networks so through Food Next Door I know Jules [Food Next Door staff] and now I know you. It brings people together and creates a sense of belonging. Makes me feel like I'm part of Mildura and it's helped me to feel like I'm not stigmatised. - Bosco

HELP ME UNDERSTAND

Meeting other Africans has been helpful when integrating into the local community. They can help with shopping, transport, and general communication. The day-to-day activities and interactions associated with having farm work gives farmers a reason to connect with others. This is found through ride sharing, problem solving, and assisting others in obtaining items needed. Building relationships with established residents is also helpful as new migrant farmers feel supported in other aspects of their lives.

*The way which this connection makes me feel like home, is the help I am getting from the people I meet through Food Next Door. For example, I can call or text Ben saying I'm going to the farm could you give me a ride? Ben just come to pick me and give me a ride to the farm so this makes me feel like I'm home, because **through this connection I have help**. - Kubota*

“Yes, there is a lot of things that have helped me to understand in my everyday... my Dad was in aged care I called Natasha [Food Next Door Advisory Board member] and she helped me a lot. The broader community and Food Next Door **help me to understand** what I need to know, they help me a lot. When I was away from Mildura my Dad passed away and they helped me. - Venantia”

WE LISTEN

There was acknowledgement that there are language barriers associated with working across cultures. However, all farmers feel that they have a voice and they are heard within Food Next Door. Everyone is invited to meetings and gatherings and there is no segregation, everyone is together. Even if farmers have limited English language skills, they are still invited to participate in meetings and to take on roles such as becoming board members. Translation is arranged for Kirundi and Swahili when needed. Good communication creates a sense of close relation to others.

“We are like a family and **we listen to each other**, respect each other from the farm to the staff there is good communication. - Joselyne”

“We had this language barrier and we couldn't get the land, but we get the land that has been offered by someone, Jen [landholder], and now I feel like I have a relationship with Jen. It's like Jen is one of my relatives. I feel like it's my sister, it's like my mother or my sister because when we are at the farm she comes to visit us just comes to **talk to us like a friend**. - Kubota”

Image: Food Next Door farmer members sharing their produce at Out of the Box, 2021. Arcade Bucumi, Pierre Kadahari, Leonidas Ndagije, David Majambere, Maria Nyirakamana, Jules Kangeta, Joselyne Ntahomvukiye. Photo credit: Food Next Door



FARMING

LEARNING HOW TO FARM IN AUSTRALIAN SOILS AND CLIMATE EMERGED AS AN IMPORTANT WELLBEING THEME, AS IT HAS ENABLED FARMERS TO BUILD CONFIDENCE. HAVING SOMETHING TO CONTRIBUTE TO AND DEDICATE TIME TO PROVIDES MOTIVATION AND INSPIRATION WHICH IMPACTS OTHER AREAS OF THEIR LIFE.

WHAT THE FARM GIVES ME

Getting out of the house and having something to do has a positive impact on farmers wellbeing. The majority of farmers interviewed do not have employment, and some are studying English. Seeing the results of their farm work is inspiring and motivating. They have agency and freedom to do what they so strongly identify with.

*When I am at the farm it gives me, **it inspires me** to do other things and to see other things which we can improve as we are working, we need this new thing, we need to improve this. It brings me new ideas how to do things. It brings me new ideas about new projects about farming. - Joel*

*Once I go there [farm] **I have different thoughts** to the thoughts I have at home. My body will be active, and I left the farm with something to eat. I play with the food and dirt as well. I feel I'm somewhere I love. - Joselyne*

Image: David Majambere harvesting at the Community Demonstration farm, 2020.
Photo credit: Food Next Door



I CAN

Farmers have seen the great impact that using green manure, compost and different planting methods have on improving the soil, as they observe it change in colour. They are becoming more capable of farming in a changing climate, learning a wide range of farming skills to support their practice. Irrigation was not required in Africa, so learning about water in Australia has been essential to running the farms. The farmers are used to using hand tools and growing food without chemicals, so staying true to these methods is important. To be participating in training through Food Next Door and now sharing this knowledge with others helps farmers feel confident as they practice and become better at farming here in Australia.

*“We had a lot of training in Food Next Door and this is like give me confidence because tomorrow we start a new course, myself I will teach the young people about food system and climate change that is because of knowledge from Food Next Door. Its [training] helped me to feel confident it's helped me to **feel that I can**, you know I can. - Kubota”*

*“Back in Africa we don't use irrigation, so now I know how I can turn off and on water, how to manage water and really, we learn a lot not just about farming but in general Australia, because in talking we can learn something from someone we didn't know before. When we joined Food Next Door they teached us how to farm how to do something, we learn this training we get, this knowledge we get helps us to have a good harvest because **we practice what they teach us**. - Joel”*

Image: Joselyne Ntahomvukiye and Bosco Katembo turning on water at the Community Demonstration Farm, 2019. Photo credit: Food Next Door



SHARING

THERE WAS A STRONG DESIRE AMONGST THE FARMERS INTERVIEWED TO BE SHARING WITH THE BROADER COMMUNITY THEIR CULTURE, THEIR FOOD AND THEIR STORY. THEY CAN SEE THE POTENTIAL IMPACTS RIPPLING OUT FROM THEM TO THEIR FAMILIES, TO OUR COMMUNITY AND ACROSS THE WORLD.

SHARE OUR CULTURE

Having access to land provides a space for farmers to practice and promote their culture. Hosting events and workshops, and cooking for Food Next Door events has been a great way to share their culture. One farmer expressed that it is meaningful for them to be able to wear traditional clothing, speak their own language and practice their own customs when participating in Food Next Door activities.

*We can say that Food Next Door give us the opportunity to **share our culture**, when we grow food that is our culture. When we harvest we call people everyone comes and we share the food, we share with people we share our culture. Sharing with other people makes me feel like part of the community, I'm home. - Binyongo*

*Food Next Door used to organise the face-to-face meeting, board members or other people and Food Next Door used to tell me to cook African food, and this is good to show my culture and it was good and **help me to feel free** because I am meeting with not just Food Next Door members but other people through that. - Kubota*

SHARING HARVEST

Sharing with other families in the local African community is an important element of farming cultural foods. Farmers even receive requests for food from African people living outside of Mildura. Sharing the harvest with the community is important to create a sense of belonging and home. It brings everyone together. This includes selling produce as a way to connect with customers.

*The access to the land and to grow food has a good impact for the community because we live, we eat for a living. We can't live without eating and growing food for the community is really important to grow food and **nourishing people**. - Joel*

“ It [sharing harvest] brings joy with community because for those who don't have an opportunity to farm, or because of other things, we give them what we harvest and **it brings joy** in their family and in the community. - Mucherumu ”

WE ARE FAMOUS

Having access to land allows the African community to be known. Sharing the Food Next Door story via social media, TV and radio has allowed the community to share their culture and be seen and recognised by the broader community, as well friends and family still living in Africa who see the stories and are inspired.

“ This is good for the community when we harvest because we share with other community members and even when we grow, eating, other community members asking where are you getting this, people are interested in what we are growing and this **makes Food Next Door famous**. - Sifa ”

“ Having land and farming **allowed the community to be known**. This community is doing this, if someone is eating something it's like this is from this community. It has made our community be known like to be famous, it's good. - Bosco ”

Image: Kubota Songa is interviewed by Kyla Brettle for a podcast, 2021. Photo credit: Food Next Door



HOME

DURING OUR INTERVIEWS WE HEARD FARMERS DESCRIBE HOW PARTICIPATING IN THEIR ACTIVITIES WITHIN FOOD NEXT DOOR HAVE HELPED THEM TO FEEL SETTLED IN AUSTRALIA. BEING A PART OF FOOD NEXT DOOR HAS CREATED A GREATER SENSE OF BELONGING, AND HAS ALLOWED THE FARMERS TO FEEL THAT THEY ARE VALUABLE CONTRIBUTORS TO THE SUNRAYSIA COMMUNITY.

I HAVE ARRIVED

Farmers are learning about Australian culture in relation to foods that Australian people like to eat, how to farm in the Australian climate, understanding our soils and learning how water works. Having access to land, being able to farm and produce traditional crops has enabled farmers to feel at home in Australia. Being a part of Food Next Door has built connections in the community that have created a sense of belonging.

*“When I get land, I feel yes **I have arrived now**, because we used to farm when I was back in the camp. I spent 12 years in the camp of doing the same, and getting this land it's like I have arrived and definitely feels like I belong. - Venantia”*

*“After dropping the kids to school, I don't have anything else to do. But having this land to farm has given me opportunity to do something, do something by myself and this shows me that Australia is a good country where someone can get the land to farm. It gives me this **sense of belonging** and it gives me this sense that Australia is a good country. - Jeremiah”*

I AM HOME

Being part of the broader community is important to create a sense of being at home. There was an overwhelming sense of this from all farmers. This appears to be key for retaining migrants in our community and is what ultimately will ensure the long-term sustainability of the Food Next Door project and refugee settlement in Mildura.

*“It [Food Next Door] brings people together to know everyone and feel like we belong. Yes, I feel like this is home I feel like I belong here. **This is home** and I won't move anywhere else. - Mucherumu”*

“My involvement with Food Next Door has allowed me to meet with other people and Food Next Door as a community it brings us together. By working with other people, it gives new connections and network and now I feel I am home, I am part of this community through what I am doing. - Joel”



Image: Food Next Door farmers Joel Sindayigaya, Peter Webb and Bosco Katembo, proud of the maize crop, 2019. Photo credit: Food Next Door

THE FUTURE

In our interviews with farmers we received numerous suggestions for improvement for Food Next Door in the future, to continue to nurture wellbeing for farmers and our community.

MORE LAND

Eight Farmers indicated that access to more land (with irrigation attached) would enable them to grow more diverse crops, practice their skills, spend more time farming, support their families more, share bigger harvests, invite more member participation from their community, appeal to other migrants to move to Mildura and to welcome other migrant groups to become involved in Food Next Door. Having government support to purchase land would give them a sense of security.

We need more land if people they still own a space they don't use please they could give it to Food Next Door because we have many farmers. - Joselyne

MARKET FOR PRODUCE

Six farmers spoke about their desire to be sharing more produce with the local community as well as growing to become distributors of organic food across Australia. Some consumer education is required for the broader community on how to cook and prepare African cultural foods, and vice versa. Having local maize would reduce the current food miles on consumption. Ideas included potentially expanding farming to include animals and having a weekly market stall to sell produce.

If Food Next Door can then tell us what to grow for the people and maybe we can export other places and Food Next Door can be well known. - Binyongo

FUTURE GROWTH

Four farmers mentioned resources they think are needed to help Food Next Door grow. Continued government support was referenced in regards to financial support and buying permanent land. This would enable more human resources such as more farm mentors/trainers. This would in turn enable other migrant communities to be a part of the project. There is potential for Food Next Door to become a model locally and across Australia.

What I can just add on this is if the government could continue supporting us or strengthen us so that we could be known everywhere and this project Food Next Door could be a model for other people. They could be inspired by Food Next Door and doing what we do by supporting us. - Joel

MILLING

Four farmers suggested that obtaining their own milling machine would greatly increase the impacts of the maize growing for their community. Currently they are paying someone locally to access a mill. Ugali, made from milled maize, is a staple food in their diet therefore growing the maize is not enough, the milling is also essential.

Currently amongst the farmer members, they have a small maize milling machine. The farmers have expressed an interest in having Food Next Door support them to increase their maize milling capacity through the purchase of a larger maize milling machine and by helping them to establish a maize flour milling business.

We are living by eating ugali, I can't even spend three days without eating ugali. When we harvest the maize, we don't have anywhere to mill it. What we ask Food Next Door... is to find a milling facility, so we can easily access this facility to mill the maize and get maize flour.

- Jeremiah

ENGLISH LANGUAGE SKILLS

Two farmers suggested that help with practising English would be beneficial to the project, in particular for older participants. Ideas included learning language skills that are relevant to the project through farming and cooking activities that include English language practice.

Maybe what we can do to improve that is if we get organise once a month or once a quarter meeting between English speakers and Swahili speakers. It could be talking over lunch or doing something together, using conversation maybe that could help. Informal meetings to practice English. For example, if we could have a kitchen at the farm and then once a month invite people and everyone cooking together. - Kubota

TRANSPORT

One farmer suggested that transport would be beneficial to help more members be farming.

The first thing I can ask Food Next Door or improve in the future it's important for us is the transport. Most of us new arrival don't have transport to go to the farm and going to the farm is really hard. People who don't have transport they are disappointed sometimes they can't join Food Next Door because of the transport, they can access the land but they can't go there.

- Bosco



Image: Food Next Door volunteers helping Joel harvest carrots whilst talking about wellbeing, 2020.
Belinda Rogers, Cr Helen Healy, Joel Sindyigaya and Rachel Kendrigan
Photo credit: Food Next Door

EVALUATION FINDINGS

PART THREE: WELLBEING MAP

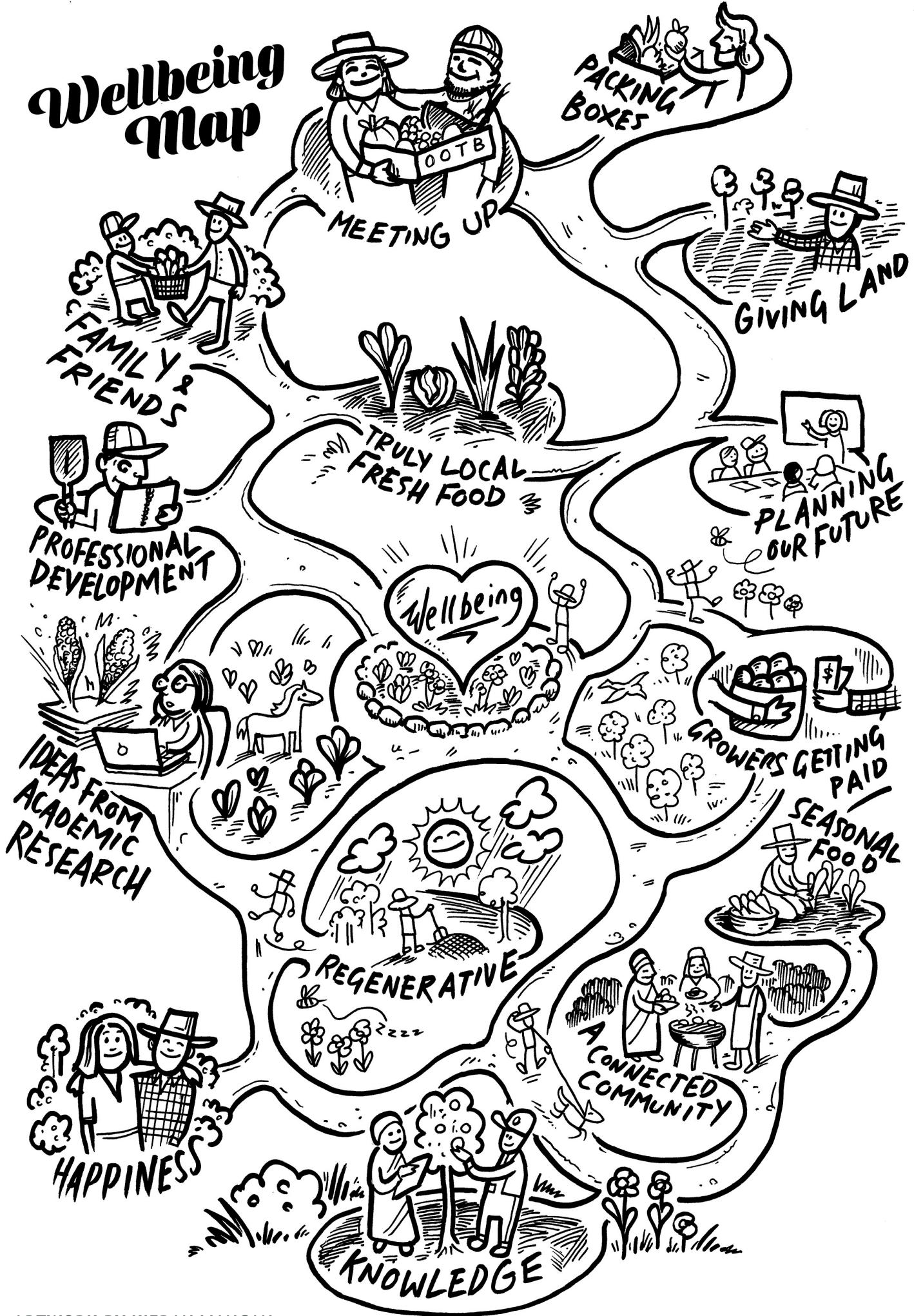
A theme that stood out to us throughout the survey and interviews was the connections that Food Next Door creates in our community, and how much people involved value the relationships they have built through their involvement.

The image of the Food Next Door community being an alive ecosystem- a ‘guild’ emerged. The people form a web of reciprocal relationships that co-create a whole. Each individual plays a role in a larger system, where there are reciprocal wellbeing benefits created for each other through each individual contribution.

In September, 2021 we spoke further with customers, volunteers, farmers, staff, board members, advisory board members and landholders. We collected their thoughts on how their role in Food Next Door impacts the wellbeing of others involved. The feedback was collected via email, phone and in person. Working with an artist interpreter, we mapped what the reciprocal relationships are within Food Next Door.

Our wellbeing map demonstrates how each role within Food Next Door creates and stimulates the conditions for wellbeing for everyone who participates in or supports the organisation, as well as the impacts on the broader community.

Wellbeing Map



Customers provide a market for produce and income for growers. They encourage and support volunteers through their interactions. They receive nourishment of healthy local produce, they are learning to cook seasonally and creatively. They feel a part of the local food community.

Volunteers are essential to enable growers to grow, customers to eat and staff to work. They help educate customers about cooking and eating seasonally. They receive opportunities to learn new skills and be social with like-minded people.

Out of the Box growers provide seasonal, healthy produce and regenerate our land. They not only receive an income but they know who is eating their food. They receive feedback and are developing their growing skills.

Board members provide governance and strategy to help us plan our future. The shared vision is held by them. They receive the opportunity to grow professionally and be active in pursuing issues they care about.

Advisory board members provide their specific specialist skill sets to strengthen Food Next Door. In turn they feel like they are a part of something that is meaningful and having real life impacts on people and land.

Researchers capture and enrich the Food Next Door story, providing rich qualitative data about the impacts of the project. They get to experience their research coming to life, as people and places are impacted through what they discover.

Staff provide essential structural support, holding the whole vision and operations like glue. They receive job satisfaction and professional development as they gain new knowledge and experience through their roles.

New migrant farmers provide us with opportunities to learn the true value of embracing the innovation and skills of migrants in our community. In return, they feel a sense of belonging and home in our community.

Landholders provide access to the soil in which hands work, food is grown and laughter is shared. In return they see their land regenerated, there is a community of plants, people, birds and insects on their property.

CONCLUSION

The title of this report *I am Home* was inspired by the continuing emergence across all evaluation methods and contributors, that what Food Next Door has created goes beyond its functions. Food Next Door has created a new community in Sunraysia, that feels to its members like a family.

Before Food Next Door there was a lack of a local food community in Sunraysia. What we are now seeing is that threads of connection are being formed in the community between people who may not have met otherwise. A passion for supporting local food, regenerating land and eating healthy is what brings everyone together.

Our environmental wellbeing is fostered by growing food together, in a way that is regenerative. By building a community of supporters we ensure that our local soils and land is being cared for and restored. Our social wellbeing is enriched through the connections we make in the community. Sharing our cultures through food and learning more about each other's ways of knowing and being creates a truly diverse community. Everyone involved in Food Next Door has the opportunity to grow their knowledge, and this is what builds our confidence and creates mental wellbeing. When we are farming and volunteering with our hands in the soil and using hand tools, we are using our bodies and that gives us physical wellbeing. Because new migrants can grow their staple foods, growers set their own prices, and we are contributing to building a local food economy where we are creating the conditions for economic wellbeing. Being a part of Food Next Door brings meaning and purpose to our lives, we are aware that we are part of something bigger than ourselves.

The Food Next Door family is not limited by age, cultural background, education, gender or abilities. Every person who participates contributes valuable input into creating a healthy community, and healthy soils in Sunraysia. This is reflected in the Food Next Door mission: *Nurturing Land, Nourishing People.*

THANK YOU

“Thanks Food Next Door first, it's outstanding for migrant people. It's amazing I was in Australia for six, seven years without doing what I'm doing today. Thank you for being able to find somewhere for people to do the work that we used to do back home and thank you for your time doing this interview. It's a pleasure to all the community because it's like they look after us when they come to visit the farm. And we thank the government and the organisations who have been helping, we are really happy how we get donations for water from the community we appreciate it we really appreciate so much. No water no crop, no water no food, no water no life that's all I can say. - Joselyne”

Interview participants:

Bosco Katembo
Jean & Justine Mberabagabo
Jeremiah Rurageze
Joel Sindayigaya
Joselyne Ntahomvukiye
Kubota Songa
Pierre Kadahari
Sifa Julita & Binyongo Masumbuka
Venantia Mukantare

Wellbeing Map co-creators:

Britt MacNamara
Catherine Threlfall
Fabiola Barba Ponce
Hannah Sycamore
Jennifer Douglas
Joselyne Kadahari
Jules Kangeta
Natascha Klocker
Olivia Dun
Reece Cameron
Sidsel Grimstad
Trish Kelly

