

Australian Food System Policy Dashboard

FOOD SYSTEM HORIZONS FACT SHEET

Our ability to meet growing aspirations for Australia's future food system is going to depend, at least in part, on more coherent and connected policy across the range of sectors and actors involved in the food system. Policy coherence (the degree to which policies reinforce or contradict each other, see [Food Systems Horizons brief \[1\]](#)), can support deeper coordination across portfolios, as well as enable the anticipation and management of 'surprising' emergent interactions from the food system. Mapping the various policies currently shaping the Australian food system is a first step towards enabling greater policy coherence. To support this, the [Australian Food System Policy Dashboard](#) offers an interactive platform that maps current federal policies influencing the food system.

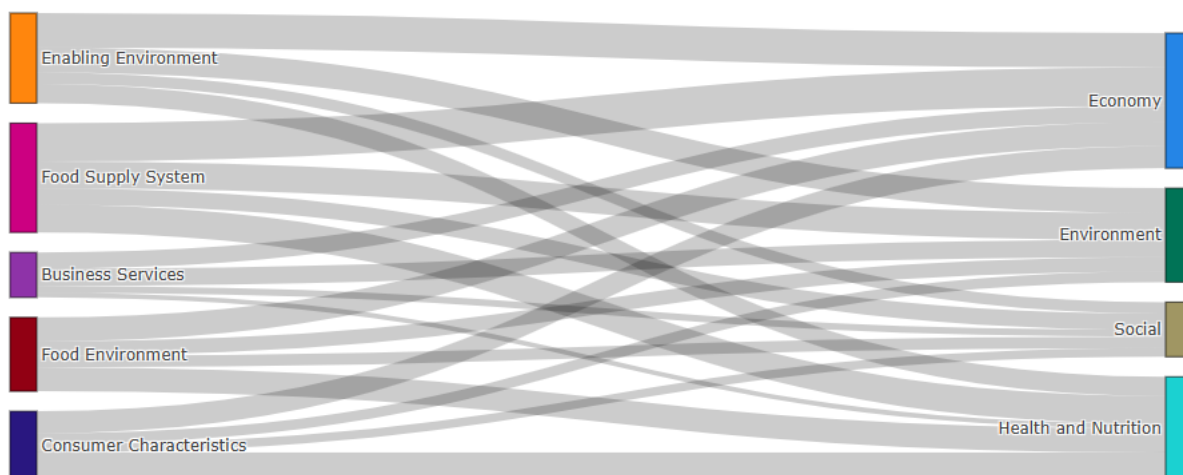


Figure 1 Screenshot of the interactive Australian Food System Policy Dashboard.

What is the dashboard?

The dashboard is an interactive tool that can be used to visualise and explore Federal level policies shaping the Australian food system¹ (see Figure 1). It maps 56 individual policy activities across 12² federal portfolios according to two primary aspects: 1) the food system *activity* that the policy directly influences, 2) the food system *outcome* the policy aims to achieve. High level food system *activities* considered in the mapping include the enabling environment, food supply system, food environment and consumer characteristics. High level food system *outcomes* include economic, environmental, social, and health and nutrition outcomes.

The dashboard includes filters that allow users to explore relationships between policy activities and outcomes based on set criteria. Both food system *activities* and food system *outcomes* are further

¹ The dashboard includes active policies as of June 2025.

² The dashboard lists these 12 portfolios and three additional statutory authorities (ACCC, ACMA and FSANZ) which fall within the remit of the included portfolios (Treasury, DITRDCA and DHAC respectively).

broken down into second tier categories. For example, within the food supply system, users can explore policies related to agricultural production or food processing, among others. Similarly, within environmental outcomes, users can explore policies that focus on biodiversity or greenhouse gas emissions, among others. Additional filters allow users to explore policies by responsible government portfolio, the target population for the policy, region and the type of policy (regulation, strategy, voluntary guideline etc). This layered structure provides a starting point for the exploration of synergies as well as potential conflicts in policy activities and food system outcomes.

Who is the dashboard for?

The dashboard is intended for use by policy makers, researchers, industry and civil society groups. It serves as a first step in identifying relevant food system policies across diverse portfolios and their points of intersection across food system activities and outcomes. The dashboard also demonstrates how a simple, visual and interactive tool allows the user to begin to navigate a complex policy landscape. This type of tool has many potential applications in other complex systems and areas of policy (see section on 'Next Steps').

Use cases for the dashboard

The following use cases demonstrate the types of broad policy questions the dashboard can help answer. These examples show how a user can search and filter relevant policies, view them in the summary table, or download them as a list, to support further exploration or deeper policy coherence analysis. See section on 'Next Steps' for discussion of possible future applications of the dashboard.

Use case 1: What is the distribution of policies against food system activities and outcomes?

In terms of food system *activities*; all policies identified targeted the **food supply system** (encompassing agricultural production/fisheries, storage, transport, processing, retail and consumption), with 43 policies targeting the **enabling environment** in which the food supply system operates (including institutions and infrastructure, see Figure 2). The **food environment** is targeted by 38 policies, **consumer characteristics** by 34 policies, and 22 policies target the **business services** related to food systems.

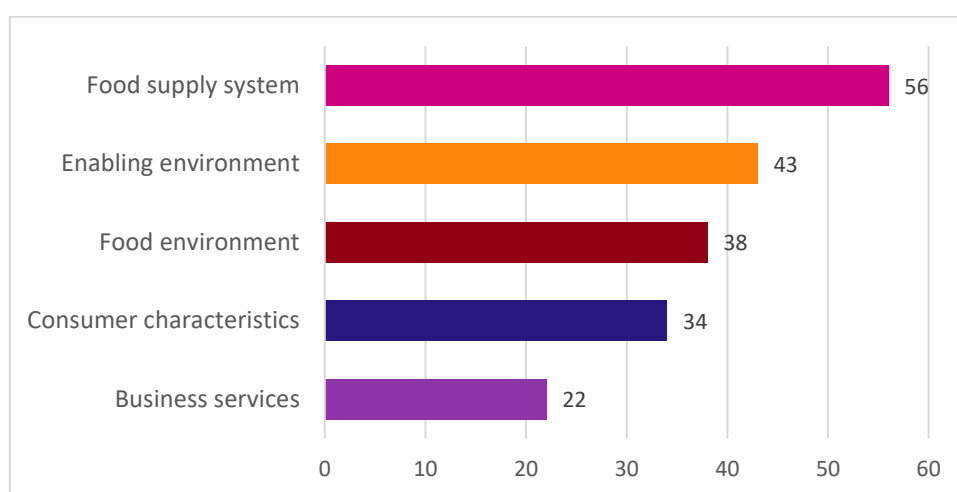


Figure 2 Distribution of food system activities targeted by identified policies (n=56).

In terms of food system *outcomes*; the majority of policies were focused on **economic** outcomes (40/56), followed by **health and nutrition** outcomes (29/56), **environmental** outcomes (28/56), and **social** outcomes (17/56) which are the least represented (see Figure 3).

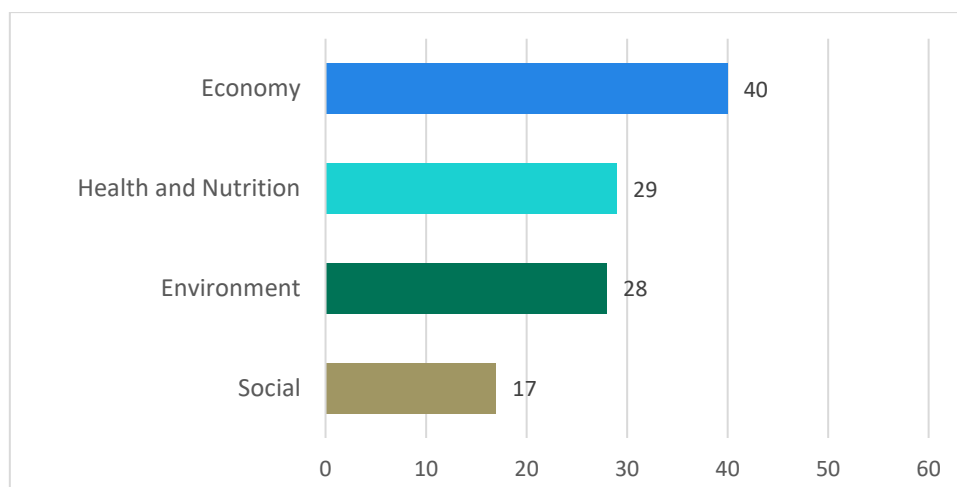


Figure 3 Distribution of food system outcomes targeted by identified policies (n=56).

Use case 2: What are the relationships between policies and different target populations?

The dashboard includes filters that allow users to explore relationships between policy activities and outcomes based on set criteria. For example, filtering by *Target Population* shows that different groups are linked to different policy activities and policy outcomes.

- The majority of policies aimed at children are health and nutrition policies (19/22), followed by economic policies (11/22), and social and environmental outcomes (6/22 each). These policies are mainly concerned with food environment, consumer characteristics, and food supply systems.
- Policies relating to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples are evenly distributed across economic, environmental, social, and health outcomes (11,11, 9, 7 of 18 respectively), with policy activities mainly concerned with the food supply system (18/18) and enabling environments (13/18).

Further insights can be generated from combinations of filters or drilling down into second-tier categories of *activities* and *outcomes*.

Use case 3: Which government portfolios are currently involved in policies that influence food environments?

There are nine federal portfolios responsible for 38 policy activities shaping food environments. These activities are evenly distributed across economic and health and nutrition goals (25/38 for each), with fewer directed at environmental (15/38) or social outcomes (12/38). This highlights the diversity of portfolios that shape specific aspects of food systems and the importance of appropriate coordination mechanisms when considering changes in specific policy areas.

Use case 4: What role do the central agencies play in relation to food system policy?

The central agencies (including the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet, Treasury and Finance departments) are responsible for 7 (out of 56) food system policy *activities*. All of these *activities* are focused on economic *outcomes* (7/7), with fewer policies influencing environmental (3/7), health and nutrition (2/7) and social *outcomes* (2/7).

How was the dashboard developed?

Relevant food system policies were identified through existing literature and web searching. Two recent systematic reviews were used to provide the baseline list [2, 3], and this was supplemented with additional web searches to identify new policies that have since come into effect (up to June 2025). Food system activities and outcomes were based on existing food system frameworks – see glossary [4, 5]. Mapping of each policy was completed by the first two authors of this brief and validated by a third researcher. Policy types were classified using Australian government typologies that guide regulatory and policy impact analysis [6, 7] (see glossary for more detail).

Each individual policy can map to multiple food system *activities* (e.g. the enabling environment and business services) and *outcomes* (e.g. health and social outcomes), so the total number of activities and outcomes are greater than 56. Similarly, many policies contain multiple activities that include more than one form of approach to governance, regulation, or action, meaning a single policy can receive multiple policy type classification. No distinction was made between a policy's primary *activity* or *outcome* compared to a secondary or minor *activity* or *outcome*. This was done intentionally to allow for exploration of maximal synergies across policies and to minimise subjectivity (if any policy mentioned a food system activity or outcome, it was included in the mapping – see glossary).

Only policies that were directly related to food system *activities* or *outcomes* as defined by the above-mentioned frameworks were included. The included policies are not necessarily an exhaustive list of all relevant food system policies; however, it provides a strong foundation and there is scope to include additional policies in future revisions of the dashboard. Mapping of policies is based on the content of the policy document in terms of intention. The mapping does not consider how well any specific policy is being implemented or is achieving desired impacts – though this would be a useful expansion of the policy dashboard in future.

Next steps

The initial aim of this tool was to generate collections of food system policies on given areas of interest that cuts across all relevant departments of Federal government. This provides a first step towards more granular analysis of policies that could be used to assess coordination and coherence between policies across departments. The design of the dashboard provides a high level of flexibility for adding additional policies as well as criteria for cross-cutting analysis. This makes it adaptable for including a greater breadth of policy interests, such as sustainability more broadly. Incorporating state and local government policies would enable assessment of vertical coordination and coherence between policy areas. The tool could also be adapted for other complex policy areas and different levels of government such as circular economy, environmental policy, or renewable energy. We welcome feedback and suggestions on how to improve the content, utility and usability of the dashboard.

Glossary of terms

Food system activities

Food system *activities* reflect all the processes in the lifecycle of the production, processing, transport, marketing, retail, and consumption of food, and the waste management involved at each stage [4].

FOOD SYSTEM ACTIVITIES	DEFINITION	SECOND TIER ACTIVITIES
Enabling Environment	The food supply system is embedded in an enabling environment that creates the conditions in which the system functions. Transport, regulation, institutions and research infrastructure are part of this environment.	– Transport Networks – Regulations – Research Infrastructure – Institutional arrangements
Food Environment	The food environment comprises of a number of determining environmental factors, such as the extent to which a product is advertised or the information on labels or quality seals determines the consumer's relationship to that product.	– Food Labelling – Nutrient Quality and Taste – Physical Access to Food – Food Promotion
Food Supply System	The value chain is at the heart of the food supply system: value is added in each step of the chain, from production, storage and transport, and processing, to retail and consumption.	– Food Retail and Provisioning – Food Consumption – Food Processing and Transformation – Agricultural Production / Aquaculture / Fishing – Food Storage, Transport and Trade
Business Services	Business services, while not at the heart of the food value chain, provide services and goods to the actors in the chain. This can involve training, agricultural inputs, technical support or financial services.	– Extension Services – Agro-chemical Providers – Technological Support – Financial Services
Consumer Characteristics	The characteristics of consumers, who – through their knowledge, available time, resources (purchasing power), age, sex, culture, religion, etc. – develop certain preferences that influence their food choices.	– Knowledge – Time – Purchasing Power – Preferences

Food System Outcomes

Food system *outcomes* are the effects that emerge from food system activities. In food systems, feedback loops between activities and outcomes create drivers that maintain or change the functioning of the food system [5].

FOOD SYSTEM OUTCOMES	DEFINITION	SECOND TIER OUTCOMES
Economics	Economic outcomes refer to the results and impacts of the food system on different parts of the economy including trade, labour, and businesses.	– Trade / Markets – Labour / Wages – Income / Profits
Health and Nutrition	Health and nutrition outcomes reflect how food system activities affect the safety of food and health status of individuals, groups, and populations.	– Food Safety – Healthy Diets – Obesity / Non-communicable Diseases
Environment	Environmental outcomes relate to the range of different impacts on the environment that are generated by food system activities.	– Land & Soils – Fossil Fuels / GHGe – Biosecurity – Biodiversity – Animal Welfare

FOOD SYSTEM OUTCOMES	DEFINITION	SECOND TIER OUTCOMES
		– Climate – Food Waste
Social	Social outcomes reflect how the functioning of the food system affects the security, work, routines, relationships, culture, and empowerment that shape the lives of individuals, families, groups, communities, and populations.	– Food Security – Livelihoods – Equity

Policy Types

The list below is generated for the purpose of guiding language and usage for this dashboard. There is currently no definitive typology for Australian policy though guidance can be found through some Federal government documentation^{1,2}. These definitions do make distinctions between legally and non-legally binding arrangements but are not exhaustive of all the different types of policy instruments available for government.

POLICY TYPE	DEFINITION
Legally binding regulations	Regulations that are legally enforceable
Non-binding guidelines, voluntary schemes or devolved to states	Government supported guidelines, voluntary arrangements, and governance processes that are not bound by law, including voluntary schemes, and policy recommendations devolved to states.
Market-based solutions	Policies that aim to achieve desired outcomes by facilitating the market ⁶
Education campaigns	Policy that involves raising awareness of a particular topic
Self-regulation	Rules and codes of conduct formulated and enforced by industry ^{1,2}
Quasi-regulation	Government influences non-mandatory arrangements adopted by industry ^{1,2}
Co-regulation	Arrangements are enforceable but are generally managed by industry ^{1,2}
Direct regulation	Government prescribes arrangement and can enforce compliance of regulations ^{1,2}
Strategy	An overarching plan linking one or more policy goals to a set of approaches for delivery
Government action	Policies that involve specific government actions e.g. monitoring, statistics, research, infrastructure

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Recommended citation

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Access the Australian Food System Policy Dashboard:
<https://foodsystemhorizons.org/insights/policy-dashboard/>

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