

Introduction

South Kaipara has many natural resources, productive lands and food producers, but at the same time people and whānau in the community are experiencing food insecurity – finding it difficult to afford and access good food. Currently, food production, distribution and consumption is being done in private and isolated from the community as a whole. The goal was to create a food plan through building connections, and through mobilising existing people, skills and resources in the local community.

The Community Think collective was contracted by the <u>Kai Collective Te Awaroa¹</u> to assist them in creating a community-led food security plan for the South Kaipara region. They have been involved in making sure that the community is at the heart of it.

Community Think and Kai Collective have been working in partnership over several months, involving as many different parts of the community as they could to develop a food plan. This plan needed to be reflective of the different people who made up the community, their histories, and their future imaginings of an alternative place where all people and whānau have food security.

The plan needed to be easy to understand, practical in its use, inspiring and starting at the point of where people are at. This involved using concepts and language that intersected with people's everyday lives, and a process which was tangible and practical.

Process

¹ The Kai Collective is an existing and ongoing project involving a group of social service providers who currently distribute food parcels to the community. They have been involved in the initial stages of building this food plan alongside the community and will continue to offer support to the projects that come from the food plan. Their hope is that this plan will lead to a reduction in people needing to access food parcels.

A coordination group was set up with various organisations and groups including Kindred Family Services, Kai Collective Te Awaroa, South Kaipara Men's Trust, Helensville District Health Trust, Helensville Community Recycling Centre, Whiti Ora o Kaipara Charitable Trust, Auckland Council and Ngā Maunga Whakahii o Kaipara. They were joined by Community Think and met regularly at Te Whare Oranga o Parakai.

Community Think works with the 'Theory U' which involves a process of not jumping from issue to solution right away, but instead working down the 'U' to unpack and unlearn what it is we currently know, and to then repackage this to form new ideas and test them. The Food Plan was co-created with the community, meaning that it has evolved through collective ideas being produced and practiced.

A&P Show

Early on in the process, we tested our approach at the Helensville A&P show on Saturday 27 February using some simple questions to engage the community:

- What makes it hard for you to get good food at the moment?
- What helps you to get good food at the moment?
- What would make it easier for you to get good food in the future?

The A&P show was an opportunity for us to test these questions with the community, and to gather what kinds of responses we would get. It also let us know that going to a big event such as the A&P show was only going to access and engage with certain parts of the community. From this experience, we worked up an idea that would allow people to use their own existing networks to engage and embrace varying ideas and experiences in the community.

Food talks

What could be done to increase our community's access to good food?



South Kaipara Food Plan Facebook image post: what could be done to increase our community's access to good food? We ran food talks from April-May 2021. The idea of food talks is based on the Industrial Areas Foundation table talks and listening campaigns which are tactics of community organising involving deep listening and conversations around a table.²

A kit³ was produced to provide guidance for local people who volunteered to host food talks, which included an instructional video.⁴ Prezzy cards were offered to cover the costs of hosting a food talk to make it more accessible.

People were encouraged to invite friends, family members, neighbours or networks to engage in a facilitated discussion around a set of questions, and to record people's responses to feed back into the Food Plan.

² <u>https://www.citizenshandbook.org/iaf.pdf</u>

³ https://docs.google.com/document/d/1KgyQ8Ptzh9DV8Y895memdHj9fjw6Ph9LRCctvnOXx7U/edit#

⁴ <u>https://vimeo.com/542470195</u>

The key questions were refined from the A&P show:

- What does good food mean to you?
- What supports your community to get good food?
- What makes it hard for your community to get good food?
- What could be done to increase your community's access to good food?

The food talks were launched during a community meal held on Tuesday 27 April at Helensville

War Memorial Hall. Around 50 people attended and engaged in the food talks. This inspired those who attended to go off and run their own food talks in the community.

The food talks that happened in the community provided rich stories and experiences to feed into the plan. These included conversations with kuia and kaumatua from five different marae in the community. An online survey was also created to engage with those who might not be able to attend a table talk. Other events occurred including a pop up morning tea at Helensville Library, and engaging people at market days. There were also some one-on-one conversations with key people in the community. Overall, we've had around **250 community voices** which have input into the thinking around the food plan.



People sitting around tables in Helensville Memorial Hall for a community dinner and food talks. Rowan is standing and facilitating the event.

Playback Theatre



Facebook event promotion for Food Stories - an improvision theatre event for the Southern Kaipara Food Plan. Text is on a drawing of a theatre stage with the Food Plan logo which is a kete full of fresh food.

At the end of this process, Playback Theatre was used to test out the themes that had grown from the food talks. This use of improvised theatre was important to help synthesise the information that had been gathered. A group of local people were trained for 2 days and then delivered a performance to a local audience. About 30 people participated in this event and the stories that came out were rich and nutrient, grounded in experiences and histories of place. These stories captured the themes that have been used to underpin this plan.



A group of community members and the Community think collective engage in improvised theatre. People are on different levels and are laughing. Stories from 30-50 years ago started to surface. One story was about a local church minister who would pick families up and they would go down to the sea shores and collect seafood. Another story was of a local orchard owner who found ways of sharing their produce locally, having very strict regulations at the time from the then Apple and Pear Board. There were stories of people coming together, cooking and sharing food, relishes and delicious preserves.

This was a creative way to engage with the community. It demonstrated that the desire right here and now in 2021, is deeply connected to experiences, experiments and aspirations of the past carried on through the memories of community members. People also

shared their knowledge of pick-your-own – places to get your persimmon, eggs, berries and the places on the side of the road that sells the best tomatoes. This evoked the question – how do we place all this community knowledge in one place for people to find? This is where the idea of food maps grew.

Process reflections

This process meant that rather than it being a one way community research project where Community Think went and asked people what they wanted in a food plan, it was people in the community themselves asking their own friends and their own networks. People in the community already have the knowledge and ideas needed to produce a plan, they just needed to be brought together in conversation.

This process of food talks and improvised theatre enabled us to get our hands in the soil and really feel what was going on that perhaps we wouldn't have normally gotten to by holding big community events, or by doing individual interviews. The process of people connecting with each other created its own energy and its own lifeforce that meant that a snowball effect happened and the sense of ownership over the food plan was widely spread throughout the community.

The relationships already formed by the Kai Collective Te Awaroa in the community helped with the ease of the process and meant we could draw on their great relationship and communication skills.

Through these existing relationships we also got some local media pick up in the Helensville News⁵ and the Helensville Community News.⁶ The Facebook page set up for the South Kaipara Food Plan also enabled engagement with the community but also with other organisations and groups working in the food security/ food sovereignty space.⁷

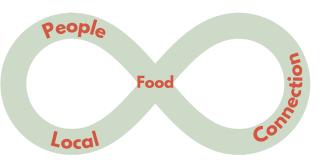
There have been some connections made with mana whenua in the Kaipara area. There have been discussions with Ngāti Whātua o Kaipara about a plan to potentially bring together local hapū to talk about the food plan. There have also been conversations with Haranui Marae and engagement at Rewiti Marae markets, and relationships with Ngā Maunga Whakahii o Kaipara. There could have been more direct engagement with mana whenua as well as mātāwaka groups from the beginning of the process. There is an understanding that this needs to be meaningful relationships with mana whenua in their struggles for tino rangatiratanga over their lands and food sources, rather than just inviting participation in Pākehā led initiatives.

The process of making this plan has formed a volunteer coordination group, and identified other people from the community who are interested to become part of the coordination group, or to support projects in the community. While there is a need for coordination, we also wanted to create a plan so that people in the community can pick up different projects. We know that some urban gardening has been picked up, along with the drawing up of maps where fresh food can be found. We also know that marae in the area are already doing kai projects.

Main themes

Overview

As we start to make sense of all this raw information from community members talking to each other, our understanding of the role that food, and the role that people have in the community becomes clearer. We pictured an infinity circle where **people**, **connection and local first** all feed into each other, and people's understanding of food. These are the key ingredients to strengthen food security in a region.

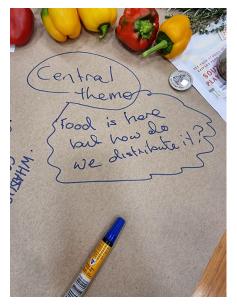


Connected to this infinity circle are four main themes which grew from the conversations had between people in the community:

⁵ https://www.helensville.co.nz/helensvillenews/issues/2021/Helensville-News-June-2021.pdf

⁶ <u>https://helensvillecommunitynews.co.nz/in-search-of-good-food/</u>

⁷ https://www.facebook.com/southkaiparafood/



1. Relationships: How can we build and nurture connections between people? Centering our relationships with each other first, rather than the food.

2. Equalising: How do we create food systems and spaces where all people can access good food? And where people can share knowledge and skills, and feel valued equally?

3. Mobilising: Organising around our existing strengths and mobilising people in the community who can contribute.

4. Local first: What is going to put locals on the map? Making use of food producers in the community, and the land to make projects happen.

> Photo of vivid on paper saying: 'Central Theme: Food is here but how do we distribute it?'

1. Relationships

"Power to the people."

Relationships are already at the heart of how people in South Kaipara care for each other – people give each other lifts, and help out their friends who are struggling with mental health. Building on these existing relationships, we can nurture connections that are sustainable. Food can sometimes help us come together, and then in other situations it is our relationships that help us access food.

"Work as a collective to solve these problems."

"Being able to ask your neighbours, having the relationships for community connection, good networks, generosity, volunteers, building relationships."

2. Equalising

"Loss of land – not growing food – lack of access to traditional food sources – lack of knowledge on how to grow, hunt, gather – health impacts when traditional food sources are diminished."

All people should have access to good food, however, there are structural barriers to this access such as colonisation (land theft and dispossession), lack of essential services such as public transport, low incomes (benefit levels and wages), mental health, and climate change

with unsustainable food production processes contributing to this. All of these structural barriers are present in South Kaipara, but are sometimes invisible. We do not want to create a food plan which upholds and reinforces existing power dynamics.

"Commercialisation of traditional food sources e.g. Toheroa - these beds have been destroyed for generations (possibly forever)."

"Different people have different needs. I have all the access I need. However, there are those who don't. Some just don't have the money, so better wages."

One of the most important themes that emerged from the food talks was how to address unequal access to good food through equalising – how do we create a food plan to redistribute and restore so that there are not those who have an abundance of good food, while others are living in poverty?

There was also deep concern about people not having transport to access good food, this included a lack of public transport and inability to afford to run a car. People felt that even if there were good food systems, there needed to be easy ways to access them. This included a lack of income to afford other essential services such as power, water, fridges and ovens to cook and store food.

"Having no transport would be a key issue for people to access good health, low cost food."

'Getting around the stigma around needing support.'

There was a lot of conversation around people experiencing shame, and having their dignity removed when accessing food parcels. The concerns around income, shame and lack of access were particularly strong with single mothers who do unpaid hard work, and have to make sacrifices to feed their families.

Sole parents rely heavily on their community to help them through this time especially in a context of inadequate income support from the government. There are ongoing impacts on sole parents not having autonomy over food and on their children who were very aware of the sacrifices being made.

"Low income becomes a stress, and there's a lot of decisions that have to be balanced. Unexpected big bills that take away people's \$ buffer." What came out of our conversations was the need to create a food plan which was equalising – to create food systems and spaces where all people can access good food. This needs to be done in a way where people can share their knowledge and skills, and feel valued equally.

3. Mobilising

"Not [currently] tapping into the right networks of people/producers who can possibly help."

This led us on to this idea of mobilising. There are a lot of existing strengths in South Kaipara, and there are a lot of people who have knowledge and information, but how do we join it up? How do we organise around the existing strengths and the people in the community that want to contribute? It's getting really intentional about pausing and creating the space to organise and bring people together in a collective and cohesive way.

4. Local first

"Knowing where to access good food when gathering. We used to know lots of spots growing up but it has all changed now or we don't have access anymore. People have fruit trees, [there could be] a system where people can give away their fruit so people can take."

We are only going to mobilise people in the community if we have a localised food plan which is particular to the community. There's already a lot of food producers in the community and there is a lot of land to make projects happen. It's about what we can do to make what is already available in the community more visible, to build relationships between food producers and community members, and to mobilise together to use the land that already exists to make projects happen.

People talked about there being surpluses of food in the community such as orchards and fruit trees where food was rotting, and people showed a desire to distribute this. This is already happening in the community with people dropping off fruit to the schools or sharing with their neighbours but this is something people could mobilise around further. People also discussed having excess land that they do not not have the time, skills and energy to grow on, but with a community farming initiative expressed that this land could be made available.

"A lot of land is underutilised could have community gardens growing on it, garden co-ops"

"Public planting of fruit trees, foraging, planting food forests in public places."

This also involves creating projects that can scale up and meet the needs of many people in the community. This could look like moving beyond community gardens to urban farming and

public food forests where people can access free food. This could also look like the creation of food cooperatives so that local produce can be sold directly and affordably to the community.

When we talked about these high level themes with our coordination group we realised that what was really needed here is a **very strong backbone of people as the coordination group**.

A strong backbone

While we hope that people will autonomously take up some of the ideas of this plan, it is essential to have coordination and organisation to help make these projects sustainable – both operationally but also nurturing the strategic direction of the food plan.

A coordination group needs to be more than social service providers, it needs to have representatives from across the community who are passionate about wanting to make this food plan happen, and ensuring that what we make happen is achievable, practical, tangible, and holds to a vision for a thriving South Kaipara.

The people we talked to in the community wanted to see this coordination group close to the ground. They want to understand this food plan as a working and living document which is cooked up with the ingredients they already have. As the draft food plan is being circulated, people who are interested in bringing ideas to life are coming forward. Supporting them to have ownership and direction is an essential part of transitioning from the social service model of coordination used in the development phase of the plan, into an empowering community-led experimenting and implementing phase.

Possible actions

Possible actions is split into two sections:

- Projects that people in the community can take up
- **Operational** aspects of this plan such as coordination and funding.

Projects

These projects grew from ideas that the community suggested, and all involve the main themes of relationships, equalising, mobilising and local first. There are **four main projects** that are fleshed out in this plan below:

- Public food forests, urban farming and community gardens
- Food maps
- A food hub
- A food van

PUBLIC FOOD FORESTS AND URBAN FARMING

Public food forests and urban farming are ways of growing food in existing spaces which can then be distributed for free to spaces where people in the community can access. **Steps:**

- Identify areas where people are signalling that they would like to do some growing e.g. the Anglican Church, Gary's 1 acre, hapū and marae, council land, schools.
- Education and skill sharing e.g. workshops from Whenua Warriors⁸ or other collectives who have been successful in growing food which is affordable and accessible
- Work collectively to create a plan that utilises all of the land, and grows crops that are able to be distributed amongst the community in a way that is useful.
- Start small with one or two spaces for growing (capacity can be built later).
- Build volunteer capacity and a schedule of who is available when.
- Acquire resources (gardening tools, fruit trees and seedlings).

Costs:

- A call should be made for tools, compost, plants, seedlings and other resources to be donated.

Time:

- Maintaining food forests and urban farming can be very time consuming, and need to start small with the idea it will scale up.
- Volunteers can contribute the time that they have.
- There will need to be some time dedicated in the beginning to getting the project up and running.

Success factors:

- A coordinated response to growing and community ownership, and a deepened understanding of how to access the produce. Might be that a group of volunteers look after all the gardens and forests, and the people who volunteer get to take produce home
- A place where the excess produce can go to be picked up. It might be the community pantries, a community restaurant or a food hub
- It is important that the food is free, accessible or cheap to everyone no matter what income to minimise people feeling any shame around it
- People can contribute resources or time, and are treated equally.

FOOD MAPS

There are already existing spaces such as pick-you-own, and spaces where people can access free or cheap fresh food that the community has already identified during these conversations. There could be maps created which show all the current and potential spaces for food to be grown and collected.

Steps:

- Make a public call out for people to identify the addresses or location of different affordable food spaces, using existing knowledge in the community to start adding to the map. A group of volunteers to organise this information.
- Design a digital or physical map
- If a digital map is to be created, make a call out to networks if there are people who might have skills in creating a digital map. Find a home for the physical/digital map (website?)
- A group of volunteers responsible for updating the maps.

Time:

- Design and implementation stage may take several months.
- Once it is set up, a dedicated time each week, or month to update the map.

⁸ <u>https://whenuawarrior.co.nz/</u>

Success factors:

- The maps should be able to be modified and added to as the food plan is implemented and more projects emerge.
- The maps should be visible and accessible to the community (could be online and/or could be a centrally located space).

FOOD HUB

A food hub would create a central point for all the food activities to feed off each other. It would become known as the place to go whether it is for gardening, cooking, education, or sharing knowledge and food. This place would be welcoming and be a space people can easily access. This is a place where the different food activities might cross pollinate. This is a place where people could go to be filled up on energy through collective solidarity and action. It may end up resulting in a people's supermarket or a restaurant. But really it's a place where gathering can take place and people can create a critical mass to support the food initiatives. **Steps:**

- Make a plan which takes into consideration, what kind or space you need? Is it accessible and welcoming? Is it affordable and sustainable?
- Coordination group to view possible spaces in the community
- Funding application or fundraising for leasing the space.

Cost:

- Depending on the space and property owner this could be costly. There will need to be secure income before accessing a lease.
- Other ongoing costs: electricity, internet, water

Time:

- Finding the right place may take some time, but it is important to find a suitable place.

Success factors:

- It is important that any hub would equalise some of the playing field. The food hub could have a membership fee as part of sustaining itself where some people pay a financial contribution, but others can contribute through non-monetary forms such as volunteering hours. Or another way could be that some people might pay for their own fee and pay for someone else's fee (pass it on fee).
- Having someone who is responsible for maintaining the relationship with the property owner. Having a group of people responsible for taking care of the space.

We know that having a Food Hub might not address some of the issues around access such as Transportation.

FOOD VAN

The food hub could have a van that can drop off food co-op boxes, pick people up for meetings or classes, or could organise pick-you-own tours where people come in and a bus goes to the different road-side stalls and pick-your-own places. This is really based on what was done all those years ago in the community where the minister put everyone into a truck to collect kaimoana. It's something about bridging resources needed between people in their homes, and the hub.

Steps:

- Make a call out to see if there is anyone in existing networks who may be able to donate a van e.g. businesses in the area replacing their work vehicles. Get some quotes together for a van if not.
- Funding application for the van project.
- Find some drivers who will be able to participate in the various.
- Create a schedule for the use of the van (a log book).

Costs:

- A second hand van is around \$15,000-\$40,000 this is quite costly.
- The ongoing costs of registration, WOF and gas to keep the vehicle going.

Success factors:

- Need to have a policy written up which clearly outlines the processes for the van's use and function.
- Need to make sure that there is a designated home for the van.

YOUR OTHER PROJECT IDEAS:

- Food co-operative
- Cooking classes
- Backyard gardening clubs
- Lobbying to take GST off vegetables
- Community pantries
- Marae kai
- Everyone eats, community kitchens

Operational

There has been an interim coordination group who has been involved in getting this food plan moving. The next actions could be:

- Create a transparent process for getting a new coordinator
- Increase the diversity in the group to include more voices from the community
- Create a system for redistributing resources (funding etc.) and decision making power

Who is this plan for?

This food plan is for the community of South Kaipara! The people, whānau and collectives in the community should have the autonomy to pick up different projects suggested in this plan, and feel ownership over them.

This means that while a coordinating group could be helpful to redistribute funding to these various projects, there also needs to be a redistribution of power away from social services providers to community members.

There is potential that multiple groups will form from the plan that can work collaboratively towards shared goals.

Where to from here?

Through our approach of working alongside the existing knowledge in the community to form this food plan, we have started to sow the seeds of a future where everyone in South Kaipara has access to good food. This plan in itself can be picked up and used by anyone in the community who is interested.

The plan might support a funding application to get the food hub up and running, or to purchase a van. It might help direct a group of people who are interested in coordinating and taking action. It might create that moment of pause and reflection to think about what relationships currently exist and how new relationships can be formed within the community to make this happen.

There are four main areas that we think would be great for a funding application, that would create a starting point for this food plan to flourish:

- 1. <u>Funding for a coordinator and a coordination group</u>: This resourcing may be for a part-time paid coordinator to help implement this plan, and to support the volunteer coordination group that has come out of making this plan
- 2. **Resourcing of the activities and ideas:** Funding applications to support activities run by the community.
- 3. **Funding for a shop front:** This will allow the Food Hub to have a home.
- 4. <u>Resourcing for a van:</u> To address transport issues in the community.

Community Think Recommendations

 Mana whenua need to be involved in the further development and implementation of the South Kaipara Food Security Plan, including any applications for resourcing. A joint application for funding should be made with manawhenua: There should be resourcing going towards Māori having tino rangatiratanga over their lands and food systems. It is important that partnership happens at the beginning stage of funding, so that there is shared power and resources, rather than funding being distributed to Māori whānau and communities by predominantly tau iwi service providers.

What we've heard:

"The food plan would be so much stronger if it was done in partnership with hapū and iwi."

"People want to see a plan that captures the principles of partnership and which includes a redistribution of resources and wealth."

"Māori play a very important part in Helensville."

"It's typical that often mana whenua are invited after the process has begun. It would be good for Māori, hapū and iwi to be included from the get go to be able to have a say in the types of processes they want to use."

2. The Food Security Plan needs to be owned by a wide cross section of the community. The entity overseeing the plan needs to represent a variety of interest groups and cannot be seen to be dominated by one group or sector: While there may be a coordinating group, you want the wider community to have ownership over this plan and feel they are able to pick up different projects.

What we've heard:

"This is a great opportunity for people to put their bit in and create something bigger than one person or one organisation could do. It is fantastic the thought of there being lots of different things happening, and there being a central coordinating point which people can return to."

"I've got interest in just one aspect of this, and like that I can just carve off something I'm interested in and do what I want with it."

"It's really important that this plan is owned by everyone, that it doesn't feel like one organisation is controlling it."

3. <u>Redistributing resources to the community</u>: Think carefully about how different groups could be involved in this food plan and how funding could be allocated to these different groups. Particularly those with new and innovative ideas. Distribute resources and funding to different community-led projects that blossom from this plan and avoid resources being stored by a single entity.

Make sure that resources and funding available for roles such as co-ordinator are allocated in an open, transparent and contestable manner.

What we've heard:

"Hope no one's trying to build an empire here"

"It would be good if lots of different people were involved, and the funding was spread really widely"

"I'm interested to see how the not-your-usual projects may be able to get funding, there are some really off-beat out-there ideas, it would be good if they had a chance too."

4. <u>Keep the broader structural issues in mind</u>: While food security should involve the community creating a sustainable food system to ensure that people have access to good food, it is also important to not have this responsibility solely placed on the

communities most impacted by inequality. The government also has a responsibility to ensure people have access to good food. This means organising around some of the more structural issues – benefit and wage levels, climate change, and supporting a future built on Te Tiriti o Waitangi.

What we've heard:

"It would be good if we could also use this plan to address things that really get in the way of accessing food. I mean, if people don't have enough money to live off, it doesn't matter what they do, they're always going to be food insecure."

"It's time that we thought about how working with everyone having enough to eat involved more things than just people growing things and having access to food, we have to think about the impact of climate change." SOUTH KAIPARA IS KNOWN FOR GOOD FOOD. EVERYONE IN THE COMMUNITY HAS FOOD SECURITY. THROUGH MOBILISING COLLECTIVELY, CONNECTING LOCAL PRODUCERS WITH THE COMMUNITY, AND FORMING STRONG RELATIONSHIPS, FOOD IS REDISTRIBUTED EQUITABLY.

HAPU AND IWI MAORI HAVE TINO RANGATIRATANGA OVER THEIR LANDS AND TRADITIONAL FOOD SOURCES. MARAE ARE SPACES WHERE FOOD SOVEREIGNTY CAN BE EXPRESSED.

PUBLIC FOOD FORESTS AND URBAN FARMING ARE THRIVING AND PROVIDE FREE FOOD FOR THE COMMUNITY. THERE ARE MANY VOLUNTEERS COMMITTED TO MAINTAINING, PROTECTING AND CARETAKING THESE FOOD SOURCES.

THE NEWLY FORMED FOOD HUB PROVIDES A CENTRAL SPACE FOR FOOD ACTIVITIES IN THE COMMUNITY. IT IS A SPACE WHERE PEOPLE CAN LEARN, COOK, GROW AND SHARE TOGETHER.

THERE IS A COMMUNITY VAN THAT PICKS PEOPLE UP AND TAKES THEM TO COLLECT LOCAL FOOD, OR TO THE HUB TO ATTEND A CLASS.

NEW FOOD ACTIVITIES ARE ALWAYS EMERGING, AND OLD FOOD IDEAS ARE BEING REVIVED. THE FUTURE OF SOUTH KAIPARA IS ONE WHERE ALL PEOPLE ARE FLOURISHING BECAUSE THEY HAVE ACCESS TO GOOD FOOD.

FOR MORE INFORMATION, EMAIL THE INTERIM CO-ORDINATION GROUP AT SOUTHKAIPARAFOOD@GMAIL.COM.

