

[Embargoed for publication until 00.01am Tuesday 5 April 2011](#)

VICTORIA'S FOOD SECURITY NOW TO 2060: REPORT LAUNCH

A VicHealth funded study, *Victorian Food Supply Scenarios: Impacts on availability of nutritious diets*, will be launched today (5 April) at **11am** at the **3 Pillars National Sustainable Food Summit at Etihad Stadium, Melbourne**.

The researchers used CSIRO computer modelling to create an intriguing 'what if' snapshot into Victoria's food future to assist policy makers and food and agricultural sectors in future planning options.

Researchers from the Victorian Eco-Innovation Lab (VEIL) at the University of Melbourne have created and projected three possible food supply scenarios to 2060, factoring in exports, imports, climate change, food production practices, fuel and water use, waste, environmental awareness, population growth and economic growth.

The Australian-first research has built an evidence base for examining how cumulative changes in complex modern food systems can impact on the fruit, vegetables, meat, grains and milk that ends up on our tables. Rapid climate change and concerted efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions have been assumed in all scenarios.

The three scenarios examined in the project are:

1. Adjustment scenario. Production of food is focused on getting the highest return, with land preservation a low priority. Food is more likely to be exported for top dollar than reserved for locals. If we don't produce enough, food is imported from wherever in the world it can be efficiently and cheaply produced.

Results: A significant deficit of fruits, nuts and vegetables by 2030 that worsens by 2060. There is a large surplus of milk and plenty of beef and lamb to go around, but the sufficient cereal grains in 2030 have become an import requirement (for Victoria) by 2060. There will be more than enough dairy and meat for the population, even taking into account crop losses from extreme weather events. Energy and water insecurity accelerates and in the long-term greenhouse gas emissions grow.

2. Control scenario. Allocation of land and resources is nationally monitored and carefully managed by governments to seek food and energy security from domestic supplies.

Results: In 2030, there is sufficient or surplus in all food groups – including fruit and vegetables. But by 2060, the reallocation of grazing land for fresh produce leads to a shortage of milk, with lamb also in short supply. Australia retains a grain surplus but Victoria begins importing after 2030. Energy security is high, but early reductions in greenhouse gas emissions are not maintained. Water is threatened.

3. Do it Yourself scenario. Food production and distribution relies on a series of networks, with greater interaction between consumers and producers, increasing diversity of products and social pride in 'local food'. Innovation and experimentation are encouraged. Great environmental awareness and rapid greenhouse gas emissions reduction.

Results: Adequate supply of all foods in 2030, except cereal grains which are being diverted to biofuels at great rates. In 2060, fruit and vegetables are still sufficient but the gradual decline in milk and lamb production means there is less than needed. By 2060, there is not even enough oil crop to cope with both biofuel and food demand. While energy security remains problematic, greenhouse gas emissions are reduced and stabilised and pressure on waterways is reduced.

/.....continues next page

The researchers say this pilot project is “the tip of the iceberg” for future food policy and planning and emphasises that careful planning now is needed to avoid shortages of nutritious food in decades to come.

Lead researcher on the project, Kirsten Larsen from Melbourne University’s Victorian Eco-Innovation Lab said while the modelling can never be ‘crystal ball gazing’, it does provide a strong case for urgent intervention.

“This project demonstrates just how fragile and intertwined the food and environmental ecosystem is,” she said. We can’t predict the future, but we can say for certain that swift action taken now can reduce the chances of nutritious food shortages in the future,” Ms Larsen said.

VicHealth spokesperson, Associate Professor John Fitzgerald, added that the research is particularly timely.

“Given the State Government’s leadership to secure the food production capacity of Victoria, this report will contribute to ongoing discussions around the future availability of fresh, nutritious food,” A/Prof Fitzgerald said.

“Food security has a big impact on health. VicHealth funds vital research and programs like this one, which will ultimately help to inform food policy, so that fresh, nutritious food is available for everyone.”

The full research report and an executive summary are available at www.vichealth.vic.gov.au and www.ecoinnovationlab.com/research/food-supply-scenarios

Media contact: VicHealth Jane Gardner, 0435 761 732 / 03 9667 1319; or Melbourne University, David Scott 0409 024 230.

NOTES TO EDITORS

- Kirsten Larsen, Prof Chris Ryan (VEIL at University of Melbourne), Associate Professor John Fitzgerald, VicHealth spokesperson, are all available for interview.
- This project is a collaboration between VicHealth, VEIL, Deakin University, Melbourne University, the CSIRO and the Victorian Department of Planning and Community Development.
- To arrange press passes to the Sustainable Food Summit for the launch of this report, please contact Jane Gardner 0435 761 732.
- The [National Sustainable Food Summit](#), organised by the 3 Pillars Network, brings together over 250 food and agriculture experts from the public and private sectors, science, academia and business - to explore ways of creating a more integrative and adaptive approach to food across the entire supply chain.