

First, Catch Your Crayfish – Linking New Zealand Food Producers and Consumers for everyone's benefit.



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Executive Summary

New Zealand produces enough premium quality, safe food to feed approximately 40 million people (McCready, Tim. July 19th 2018). It could safely be assumed then that accessing such amazing quality food in the region or even country of production would be an easy ask. This is not always the case. Currently New Zealand's economy is heavily based around food and produce exports.

In a time when food quality and safety is top of mind for purchasers it would make sense to give local New Zealand residents ready access to the best and freshest of what we produce.

Top New Zealand chefs are beginning to search for and cook with premium quality locally produced and foraged produce but are finding it extremely hard to source a consistent supply. They are looking for premium local produce with a verifiable story to tell their customers.

To allow consumers and food service kitchens access to our best and freshest produce, New Zealand needs a system which links producer and customer with premium produce via short, profitable supply chains.

This report aims to answer the question "Does the formation of a sales platform linking food producers and consumers in New Zealand have merit?"

Shorter supply chains and closer linkage between producer and consumer will allow more communication, in-depth understanding and the formation of relationships to benefit all parties.

I recommend an industry good organisation undertakes an in-depth survey of New Zealand food producers asking about their potential utilisation of such a sales platform. Utilising these results, I recommend that group also facilitates the creation of a platform which is locally based with the minimal amount of administrative and financial setup requirements as possible.

I recommend that price remains an important consideration for participating producers, the value of the provenance and production story must be matched with affordability for consumers.

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“...eating is an agricultural act...to be interested in food but not in food production is clearly absurd’.
Wendell Berry (from Stone Soup, vol 7)

1.0 Introduction

Eat New Zealand’s CEO Angela Clifford told me a story about Kaikoura and crayfish. The Maori name Kaikoura translates in English to “place to eat Crayfish” (1). To me it sounds like the perfect place to go to eat fresh, local crayfish. That said, finding fresh, locally caught crayfish in Kaikoura is harder than it should be. Clifford, A (2019 pers. Comm.) had heard a story about Chinese tourists traveling to Kaikoura, the home of the beautiful crayfish they had eaten in China, to purchase and eat fresh fish caught locally. They couldn’t. Being problem solvers, they hired a local fishing charter to take them to sea to catch some crayfish. They then went back to their motel and cooked their catch in the motel room kettle.

How is it that, in the very place called ‘place to eat crayfish’ (Kaikoura), passionate, wealthy, food loving tourists aren’t even able to find fresh locally sourced fish that the small seaside settlement is named after? Why do we force tourists to cook beautiful fresh fish valued at over \$100 each in motel room kettles?

I had a conversation with a friend of a friend at a wedding recently. She criticised me (as a red meat producer) because she felt that if she wanted to eat the best red meat New Zealand had to offer, she had to go to Tokyo, New York, Berlin or London. She felt that the meat she purchased here in New Zealand was sub-standard to that which we take great pride in exporting to the world.

I noticed early in my research, a strong theme from the passionate, enthusiastic people involved in the food industry who attended the Eat New Zealand (Eat NZ) 2017 and 2018 Food Huis (2). When asked “What do you want to see for the future of New Zealand?” they almost all replied “a happy, healthy, vibrant country where top quality food is produced sustainably and supplied through short, profitable supply chains”. Interestingly, this sounded much like what I would have said if I was asked the same question from a sheep and beef farmers’ point of view.

This all got me thinking. I remember a lecturer at Lincoln University explaining that “in world terms, New Zealand is a small farm at the bottom of the earth...”. I found myself asking ‘Does the problem stem from our inwards view of ourselves as a food exporting nation?’ Surely, we as NZ food producers should be able to give local consumers regular access to the amazing, world class food that we take such pride in producing while fulfilling the wishes of the people at both ends of the value chain. Hence my project question is this; Does the formation of a sales platform linking food producers and consumers in New Zealand have merit?

I met with two amazing local chefs and talked to them about how and why they purchase the ingredients they do and what drives them to produce amazing food. I talked to Gravity Fishing who are fishing to order and selling direct to high end food service customers. I talked to sheep and beef farmers, dairy farmers and café owners who are selling their produce directly to consumers. I took a survey of 130 ordinary New Zealanders and asked them about their buying habits, what’s important when they are buying their food, their opinion on New Zealand’s food and whether they would utilise some kind of online food buying platform.

When questioned about current purchasing habits, only 10% of survey respondents currently purchased their food or produce directly off producers or growers. 97% of respondents said that they would buy directly off producers/growers if there was an easy to use platform linking them to growers available. 52% of respondents also said that knowing where their food was grown/produced was important but the majority (72%) of those respondents said that convenience was also very important. This indicates that there are customers willing to use a platform to purchase food directly from producers but it must be convenient and easy to use.

2.0 The Problem

Mr Shen and his wife have finally secured a booking at T'ang Court, Shanghai's only three Michelin starred restaurant, situated in the lavish Langham Hotel. Executive chef Justin Tang has prepared New Zealand crayfish with crab roe. Fresh, luxurious and flavoursome.

Mr Shen is the managing director of a large company which owns tourism operations around the world including one in Queenstown, New Zealand. On his way to business meetings in Queenstown, Mr Shen and his wife stop off in Christchurch. They hire a car and drive to Kaikoura. They have heard that this little seaside town is the home of that amazing crayfish they ate at the Tang Court Restaurant. Apparently, the name Kaikoura even translates to mean 'place to eat crayfish', definitely the place to go to eat this freshly caught delicacy.

They arrive in Kaikoura, check into The White Morph: Heritage Boutique Hotel and book their evening meal at The Lobster Inn. It has a giant lobster clinging to the outside wall so this must be the place to find fresh local crayfish. When they ask their waitress where and when the lobster on the menu was caught, she cannot tell them. The staff cannot even guarantee that the fish they will be served has been caught right here off the Kaikoura coast. Numerous questions run through Mr and Mrs Shen's heads;

If this fish was not caught in the area called "place to eat crayfish" then where was it caught?

Was it delivered fresh?

Who caught the fish and how far has it travelled to get here?

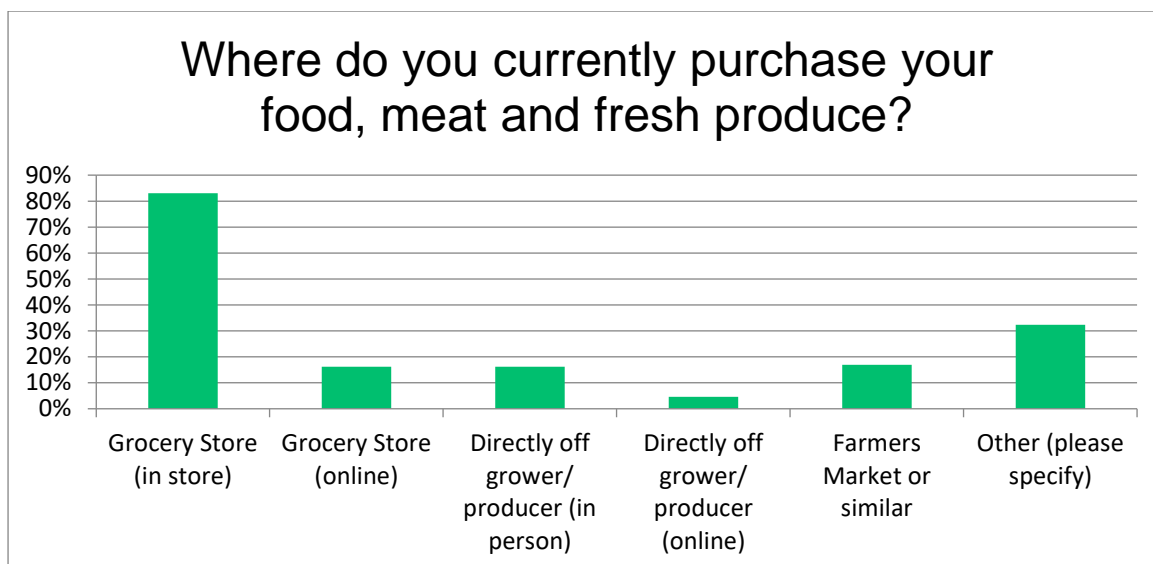
Why, when I'm sitting in a restaurant with a giant crayfish on the wall, in a town called 'place to eat crayfish' can I not get a locally caught fish?

Where are locally caught fish going?

Are there enough fish being left/released to ensure a sustainable fishery for future generations?

Are the fishermen and women able to run profitable, sustainable businesses?

New Zealand produces top quality food and exports most of it all over the world. Our country has been built on this agricultural production and is renowned for producing safe, premium quality produce. But New Zealanders have lost touch with the farmers who produce our food.



Graph 1. Survey responses to question “Where do you currently purchase our food, meat and fresh produce?” (n=130)

When asked “Where do you currently purchase your food, meat and fresh produce?” 83% (108 of 130) respondents said they purchase food in person at a grocery store. Only 21% said that they purchased directly off producers and 17% responded that they shopped at farmers markets or similar.

When Greg Bruce was writing his story “The Future of Food” for New Zealand Geographic, it took him a week to track down the potato grower who had grown the Agrias for his meal ‘Cocos Beef cooked w chefs veges’. That grower farmed just half an hour south of Auckland, where he had eaten. Finding the beef farmer who had raised the beef component was a different story though. There was no traceability any further back than the processing plant where the animal was processed.

In an age where consumers are becoming more conscious of what they are eating, why can’t local customers have ready access to product with imbedded brands and stories so that consumers know where their food has come from and how and why it was produced and producers know where their produce has gone?

“In the old days, you’d be able to get all your food and fibre locally and you would be able to observe and you would understand the ethics of the people. These days, in the world food and fibre exchange system, you’re half a planet away from where it’s produced and this sets up all of the issues about care and responsibility.” Greg Bruce, New Zealand Geographic Issue 129, Sep - Oct 2014

3.0 Method

I wanted to get insights from people who were likely to utilise a system linking producers and customers from both the food service sector and the general public.

I interviewed two well-known South Island chefs who are passionate about creating top quality food experiences with local produce. Giulio and Lucas were recommended to me by Eat NZ as a result of their passion and struggles finding local produce.

I talked to four producers who were currently selling food products direct to consumers about their experiences and recommendations. I selected a range of producers who sold different products and who had success supplying consumers directly. I approached Catlins Coast Premium Meats, Oaklands Milk and Lushingtons Café because I was aware that they were selling produce direct to customers utilising different sales methods. I talked to Gravity Fishing after a recommendation from Eat NZ due to their modern harvest and sales methods.

I put together a survey which was shared on Facebook and via email. I utilised my network of friends to ensure that a broad cross section of society was able to take the survey, not just rural based people similar to me.

I then looked at the themes that respondents talked about, graphed absolute answers where given and used some direct quotes from the survey in my report.

4.0 Background

4.1 The 'idea'

My idea is for an easy to use, interactive online platform where customers were able to shop for the fresh, quality local produce that they required. They would purchase their produce directly from the farmers growing and producing the produce with no 'middle men'.

This platform would allow:

1. Produce with imbedded positive stories, provenance and brands to flow direct to customers through short supply chains.
2. More understanding from customers of where their food comes from and the processes required for food to move from paddock to plate.
3. Profits to flow directly to producers through short value chains ie. No 'middle men'.
4. Customers to have more timely access to fresh seasonal produce without the fear of receiving just the products that don't make export grade.
5. Producers and consumers to create a direct feedback communication loop for the benefit of both parties.

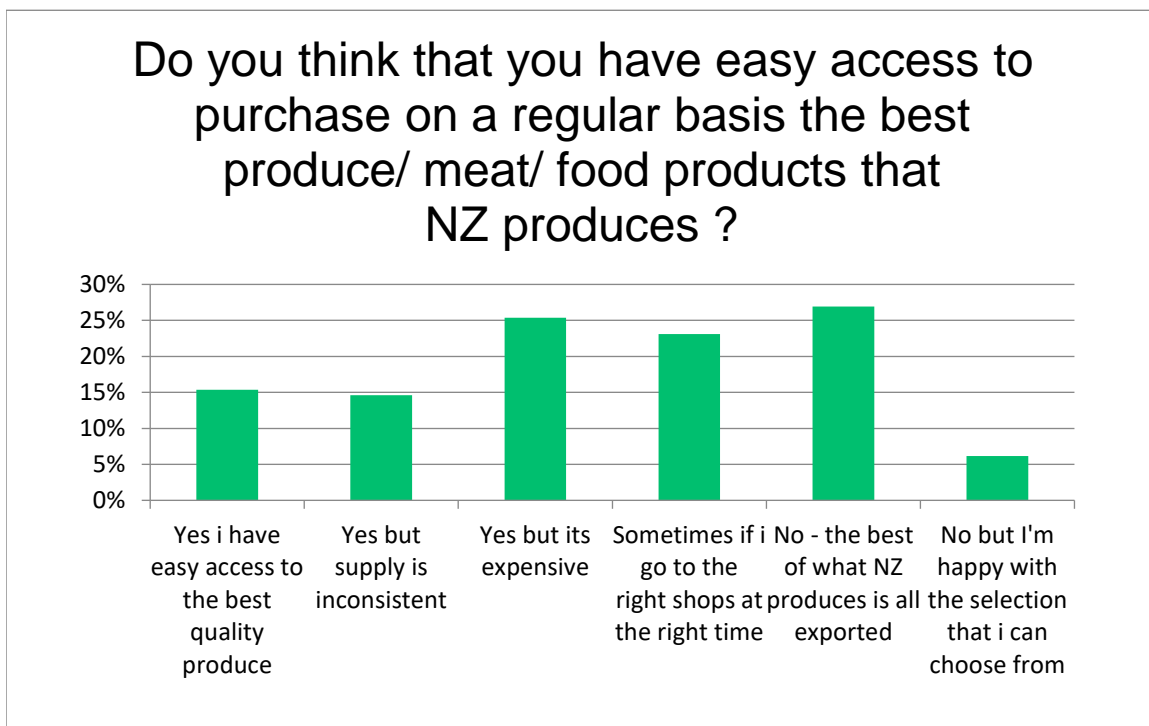
The platform would work in a similar way to a farmer's market in that producers would sell directly to consumers. It would not require attendance at markets but would aim to allow a similar "producer – customer" relationship while also providing a remote link between the two parties.

Producers could either advertise goods they had produced/grown or produce/harvest goods to order.

When asked “Where do you currently purchase your food, meat and fresh produce?”, only 38% of survey respondents currently purchased their food or produce directly off producers or growers or from farmers markets. 97% of respondents though, said that they would buy directly off producers/growers if there was an easy to use platform linking them to growers available. 52% of respondents also said that knowing where their food was grown/ produced was important but the majority (72%) of those respondents said that convenience was also very important. This indicates that there are customers willing to use a platform to purchase food directly from producers but it must be convenient and easy to use.

4.2 New Zealand Producers and Customers.

One criticism of New Zealand farmers is that we produce what we are able to and are good at producing and then export that product to high paying customers the world over. This is a result of our development in the early 20th century into a food and fibre producing nation for export to Britain. In 1942, New Zealand residents were even put on to food rations to maximise exports. This is regardless of the fact that New Zealand produced many times more primary produce than we could consume internally (Veart, D. 2008).



Graph 2. Survey responses to question “Do you think that you have easy access to purchase on a regular basis, the best produce/ meat/ food products that New Zealand produces?” (n=130)

When asked whether they felt they had easy access to the best produce, meat and food products that New Zealand produced, 23% of survey respondents said that they sometimes had access to the best of New Zealand’s produce while 26% of respondents felt that the best of our produce was exported.

Whether this is true or not is difficult to ascertain but there were comments made throughout the survey around lack of premium quality local produce being made available for New Zealand consumers.

4.2.1 Catlins Coast Premium Meats

Catlins Coast Premium Meats was started in early 2018 by Carey and Tracey Hancox. They have two private accommodation lodges on their Catlins sheep and beef farm. Many of their lodge guests were enquiring as to where they could buy meat produced on the farm. Tracey and Carey then built two butchery rooms on farm and started Catlins Coast Premium Meats. Lambs are slaughtered by a toll processor under contract and then butchered and packed on-farm. In their first year of trading they processed 500 of their own home-grown lambs for sale to lodge guests and the general public. Demand has far out-stripped their ability to supply and process lambs. They have made the decision that only approximately 500 lambs per year will be processed even though there is demand for more to ensure they keep up the quality of product and also so that they can spend time with their family. Carey made the comment that he and wife Tracey are currently farmers, butchers and meat marketers, three very different and diverse roles requiring separate skill sets.

Demand for Catlins Coast Premium Meats has grown mainly via 'word of mouth' but if the business was to expand, Carey said that they would look to use a sales platform to market their produce and to engage with customers. Carey and Tracey are farmers who have learned to butcher and process their meat. Marketing is another role with a separate skill set required and they commented that any platform that helps them to market their meat and communicate with customers will be beneficial for their business.

4.2.2 Oaklands Milk

Julian Raine and his family own and operate Oaklands Milk from their 500ha dairy farm on the outskirts of Nelson. Oaklands produces premium quality A2 milk which is pasteurised on-farm and sold directly to customers via four differing avenues;

- Three self-service vending machines in the Nelson area
- A home delivery service delivering to Blenheim, Picton, Nelson and surrounding towns.
- A food service delivery run to over 100 cafes and restaurants in the Marlborough – Nelson area.
- Direct to three local icecream manufacturers and two small cheese makers.

Oaklands pride themselves on their environmental credentials so use only re-useable glass milk bottles for their vending machine and home and food service delivery runs.

Oaklands continually strive to 'do the right thing' and 'do things right'. They have developed an extremely loyal client base in the Nelson-Marlborough areas and have grown by at least 40% per year for the past six years.

4.2.3 Roots Restaurant

Roots Restaurant in Lyttleton was a small restaurant owned and operated by Giulio Sturla. He focused on producing premium quality food using as much locally produced or foraged produce as

possible. This combined with the fresh, premium quality NZ meat and fish gained the Roots team many significant national accolades. Giulio said to me that Christchurch locals were only a small part of his clientele and that tourists (people from outside of Christchurch) made up the largest proportion of his customers. Roots was a destination restaurant.

Giulio said that he believed NZ needed 7-day a week farmers markets in our large cities. The current once a week markets limited the clientele that could shop at them and was inconvenient to the majority of shoppers. Add to this he feels the range of products in our supermarkets are of inferior quality to that that our farmers are proud of producing. If a more accessible farmers market type sales platform was available, farmers would be able to add scale to their direct sales businesses and customers would have more convenient access to high quality produce.

4.2.4 Ode Restaurant

Lucas Parkinson from ODE restaurant in Wanaka uses only 100% organic, ethical, sustainable, seasonal produce from local growers. He is finding it extremely hard to find reliable local sources of produce for his restaurant (this isn't helped by his insistence that produce must meet his strictly enforced organic ethical and sustainable criteria). He made mention of having to change his menu 55 times in a 12-month period because of produce supply issues.

4.2.5 Lushingtons Café

Sophie Duff and Miranda Sinton own and operate Lushingtons Café in Ashburton. To create a point of difference in their café, the sisters began to sell lamb grown on their family farm in Montalto, inland Canterbury. The cafe purchases lambs weekly direct from the farm and has them processed and butchered locally in Ashburton. Popular cuts are offered for sale fresh with less popular cuts cooked in the café and sold as frozen take home meals. Sophie and Miranda are lucky that they have a regular and reliable supply of meat for the café which eliminates supply issues. The fresh and cooked lamb is popular with the café easily selling 3 lambs per week.

4.2.6 Gravity Fishing

Nate and Anna Smith run Gravity Fishing based in Bluff. After growing up in a fishing family, Nate bought his own boat and started fishing on contract for large scale seafood companies. He noticed his catches were decreasing and margins were very thin. When he talked to his elder family members discovered that catches had been declining for decades.

He set out to change the fishing industry and the ways that fish are harvested by increasing customer awareness about the fishing industry. He now catches only to order. He only catches fish using hook and line and targets certain species, in specific areas, through specific seasons.

Gravity sells to order direct to high end restaurants and wineries on a weekly basis. All fish is packed in re-useable cool boxes with reusable ice packs and woollen insulation and is couriered door to door.

Gravity has targeted high end restaurants and wineries in New Zealand because it allowed them to price fish at a sustainable level for the business to get established. They now fields calls on a weekly basis from prospective new customers in New Zealand and Australia.

4.3 Overseas sales platform examples

Food systems which differ from the 'conventional' systems have been analysed at length since the late 1990s. So called 'alternative food networks' have sprung up around the world aiming to "connect people who are concerned with the morals of their consumption practices in some way with those who want a better price for their food, of who want to produce food in ways counter to the dominant (or conventional) market logic" (Maye & Kirwan, 2010). Such networks include; charity food shops, Famers markets, box schemes, food co-ops and CSA (community supported agriculture) schemes. The reoccurring themes observed when researching these systems were personal relationships, sustainability and quality.

4.3.1 Community Supported Agriculture

Community supported agriculture (CSA) is a term first used in the mid 1980's by Vander Tuin after he and others started a CSA project in Switzerland. CSA revolves around close relationships developed between the producer and consumer of food products. Customers pay a subscription to harvests of one or more farms and in return are provided with regular deliveries of produce from said farms. It means that customers are much closer to the producers of their food and that they are sharing some of the risk involved in food production. When weather or growing conditions are not favourable and harvests are poor, the customer share some of that loss with the producer.

In some models, customers can be shareholders in farms and therefore have decision making rights meaning decisions are made by the shareholding group for the groups' mutual benefit. Other systems are based on a partnership model so customers will trade labour for food. When the producers are experiencing busy periods, customers will work for the producer in return for a discount on their subscription.

4.3.2 REKO

REKO was started in Finland in 2013 by Thomas Snellman after seeing a similar system in France. REKO is an online sales platform linking producers and consumers directly through Facebook pages. Producers advertise what they have available through the private REKO Facebook pages and customers send their orders back to the producers through the same page. Customers then pick up their purchases directly from the producer at a meeting area in a local town. This is a simple uncomplicated system with minimal administrative requirements.

Testimonials from producers online are full of praise for the REKO system. One producer says that his conversations with large supermarkets usually revolve solely around the price of produce. Conversations with customers through the REKO system revolve around the products themselves, not the price.

Customers talk about the benefits of being able to purchase fresh local produce directly off the grower, being able to support growers without middle men and the sense of community with the REKO market. Consumers also have access to artisan or specialist products that are not stocked in supermarkets.

The advent of REKO has also resulted in conversations about what 'ethical production' actually means to different people. Customers have more appreciation for how their food is produced and are able to have an influence on producers and their production methods

REKO is a free service and pages are facilitated by volunteer administrators. Being run through Facebook means there is no software to run and therefore no cost to set up. It also does not require large and often expensive market areas like traditional farmers markets and producers and consumers are able to meet when and where it suits them. REKO has no set 'rules' and relies on producer – consumer relationships to control the quality and ethics of the produce sold.

(3, 4 & 5)

4.4 New Zealand sales platforms

4.4.1 Hokoloko – Taranaki

Hokoloko is an online platform based in Taranaki where producers advertise their food products or ingredients to customers who have a registered account. Customers place their orders from Friday to Monday each week. The suppliers then all meet at one location in New Plymouth the following Wednesday for customer collection. "HokoLoko seeks to put an end to lacklustre grocery shopping experiences and make you proud of what you're eating by simply connecting you to what you feed yourselves and your families." (6)

Central to the HokoLoko idea is the people. Connecting with the producers is imperative so they have created a space where both ends of the supply chain are able to meet.

Hokoloko takes a small percentage of each sale as commission to facilitate the running of the online platform and for marketing. Hokoloko is based around an online platform but seems to require a significant administrative work load. It provides suppliers and customers a common collection place and time but lacks the ability for customers and producers to make their own arrangements for sales and collections at a place and time which might suit either party better.

4.4.2 Farmers Markets

Currently Farmers Markets in New Zealand are traditional affairs where producers congregate at a common location at specified times to sell their wares to customers. The personal relationships developed and resulting communication between producer and buyer at markets are powerful and important for both parties. Having a large number of retailers in one place at one time will also suit some customers.

Producers must be at that location at that time to sell and customers must be able to shop at that location at that specific time to purchase. Markets also require relatively large areas to accommodate the number of stalls all in one place at one time which are often expensive to hire.

5.0 Discussion

Five themes emerged throughout my discussions with producers, customers and in comments from my survey.

1. Relevance and Context
2. New Zealand's Food Story
3. Shorter Supply Chains
4. Food Waste
5. Price

Below, I discuss the five themes which I believe will be the most significant benefits to result from the formation of a sales platform linking New Zealand food producers and customers.

5.1 Relevance and Context

It is 1984 in Naples, Italy. A cold, wet depressing day was made even more miserable for Steve after an argument with his travel companions. He found himself enjoying a wine in a humble, cosy tavern warmed by a huge wood fired pizza oven. He decided to cheer himself up with a simple mozzarella and tomato pizza. The simple fresh flavours were amazing and stick with him to this day. Fresh Mozzarella with tangy sweet tomato sauce, so simple yet so delicious. He ate many more pizzas that night feeling a complete sense of place after eating and drinking like a local in the ancient city.

Just 6 months later, Steve arrived in Ensenada in Mexico. Strolling the hectic streets alone and hungry, he stopped at a small food cart. It was crammed between the heaving foot path and the road where those in traffic seemed to have little regard for self-preservation. Interesting and new aromas drew him to analyse a menu he had no hope of reading due to his inattention in his fifth form Spanish class. Pointing to what looked like a thin pancake with meat and tomatoes as a topping, he ordered his dinner. He watched as the Mexican man behind the counter fried then skilfully sliced a marinated piece of meat. It was then placed atop the 'pancake' with fresh tomato and chilli then garnished with a large pinch of a fragrant green herb. The eating experience that followed would be etched in his mind for the rest of his life. Steve had just eaten his first fresh corn tortilla taco, a big moment for a small-town boy from little old New Zealand. A warm, soft corn tortilla, tender spicy flavoursome beef topped with coriander. Whenever Steve smells coriander his mind is taken straight back to that moment. It was an amazing sensation in experiencing real local food in that hot dusty raw location in Mexico.

These are real memories of Steve Logan, owner of Logan Brown Restaurant. It highlights the power of a simple, fresh eating experience and the importance of relevance and context in regards to food

stories. These meals were made with fresh, local ingredients and were a highlight of the culture and cuisine of each country.

New Zealand produces world class food for millions of customers the world over (McCready, T. July 19th 2018). We must ensure that our local consumers and food service sector have access to the best local produce to highlight our culture and provide relevance and context to our cuisine.

5.2 New Zealand's Food Story

“NZ's food is still food; it doesn't need to be over processed” Quote survey respondent

5.2.1 Regional food stories

In my survey I asked the question “What (and where if you want to be specific) would you recommend a tourist ate in NZ if they wanted to eat some amazing NZ food?”

Of the 122 responses, 28 (23%) used a specific region or regional food reference in their answer (e.g. Bluff oysters, West Coast whitebait, Kaikoura kaimoana, Central Otago Pinot Noir, Hawkes Bay fresh fruit and vegetables, Waiheke Island wine and cheese). New Zealand has numerous regional food stories which we, as consumers associate with quality, tasty food. Compare that to 9 specific brand mentions (e.g. AngusPure, Te Mana Lamb) and 5 specific dish references (eg Roast Lamb, Whitebait Fritters).

“Hare backstrap salad for entrée, Medium Rare Beef Ribeye then Chocolate Whiskey cake to finish. Where: In the Kiwi home that grew it. We need our growers to be able to prepare and cook their own produce to the highest standards so it can be shared with friends, family and visitors. Don't just leave it to the restaurants.” Quote Survey Respondent

One comment that stuck with me from one of my many conversations with Angela Clifford, Eat New Zealand's CEO was ‘food is all about context and relevance to people and places.’ In Steve Logan's stories about the pizzas in Italy and tortillas in Mexico, he admitted that it was as much the location, the people, the history and the events leading up to those meals that helped to create the experience. The food was an important part but it wasn't the only factor influencing the experience.

Rick Stein writes of Fleurs Place in Moeraki, ‘...Fleurs Place has an unbeatable setting. There's water on three sides, fishing boats bobbing in the harbour, the famous Moeraki boulders across the bay and, to the north, the open sea. Fleur uses only the freshest of local ingredients - indeed, fishing boats land their catches right into her restaurant’ (7). Clearly, the food is only part of the experience of eating at Fleurs Place.

The story of the Chinese tourists having to hire their own fishing charter to catch fresh crayfish before cooking it in a motel room kettle is the opposite end of the experience spectrum. Imagine if those same tourists had received their so desired fresh local fish, coupled with the amazing location

that is Kaikoura and local Kiwi hospitality. The story would be that of an amazing experience with the location and food to match. Context and relevance once again.

Regional food stories are hugely powerful. These combined with nostalgic, emotional stories that are conjured up when time, place and food are all in harmonious balance have potential to create the most powerful (and often unintended) experiences imaginable.

The ability for local customers and restaurants to have ready access to fresh, local produce is imperative in giving consumers the ability to create their own culture and memories relating to food and place.

4.2.2 Feast Matariki

In Maori culture, Hakari (feasts) are traditionally used to demonstrate the hospitality or mana of a tribe or whanau. Lavish feasts are created for special gatherings (hui) including; weddings, funerals, the conclusion of harvest and Matariki. Hakari were often grand affairs with many tonnes of food being displayed on huge stages (whata).

Eat New Zealand (Eat NZ) has launched New Zealand's first food celebration; Feast Matariki. Traditionally Maori celebrated the arrival of the Matariki (Pleadies) constellation by gathering together and feasting to celebrate the bounty which was provided by the water, earth, ocean and air.

Matariki is a time to celebrate the current harvest, food, friendship and the promise of next years harvest. Eat NZ are encouraging kiwis all over Aotearoa regardless of their cultural background to gather and celebrate a uniquely New Zealand food celebration. It is the perfect time to embrace our cultural heritage and enjoy some of the world class food that is grown, harvested, caught and produced in our amazing country. It makes sense then that kiwis are given ready access to the premium produce that is produced in our unique country.

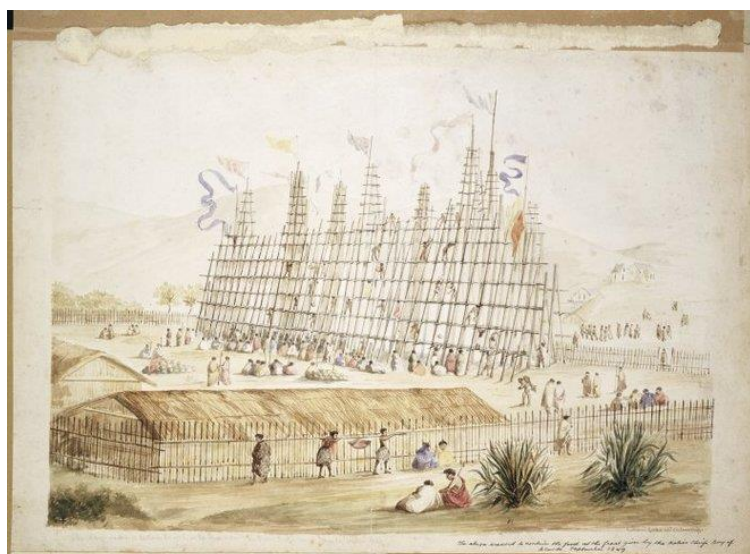
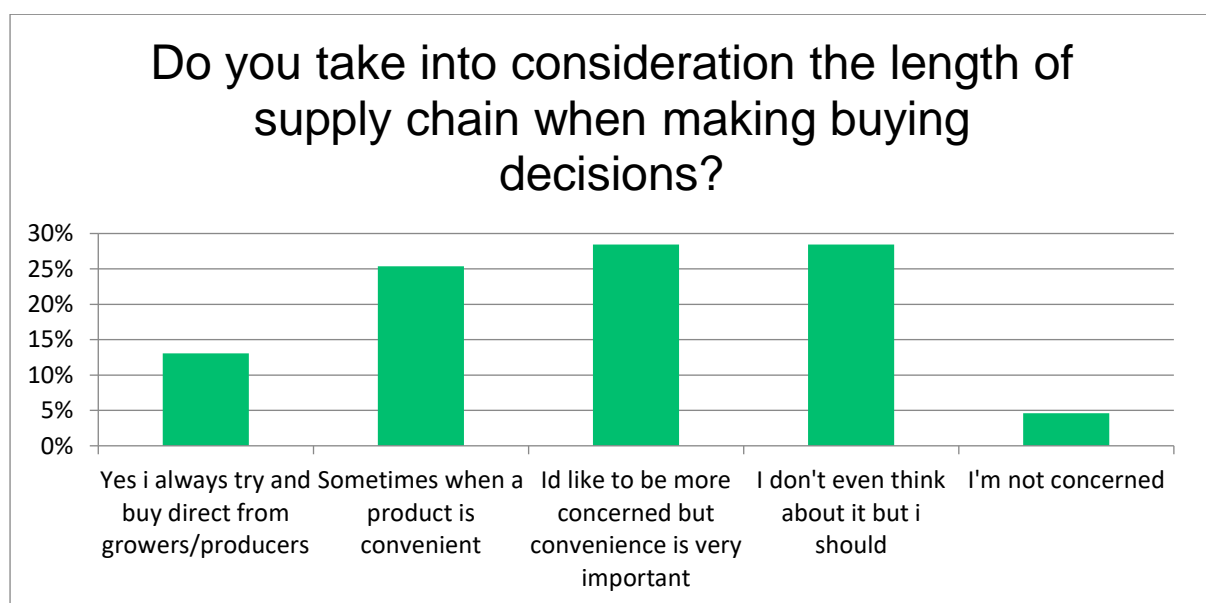


Photo 1. Clarke, Cuthbert Charles, 1818-1863. The stage (whata) erected to contain the food at the feast given by the native chiefs, Bay of Islands, September 1849.

5.3 Shorter supply chains

*“To be even more confident in the food you eat, you need to buy it from the person who grew it.”
David Veart. 2008*

BBCGoodFood.com named hyper-local foods as one of their 15 major food trends to watch for 2018. Celebrity and Michelin starred chefs around the world are creating dishes using ingredients foraged and produced within walking distance of their restaurants (8) (much like those at Roots and Ode Restaurants).



Graph 3. Survey responses to question “Do you take into consideration the length of supply chain when making buying decisions?” (n=130)

When asked whether they took into account of the length of supply chain when buying their food and produce, only 13% of applicants said that they always thought about supply chain length and how many times ‘the ticket was clipped’ between production and point of sale. 27% of those surveyed said that they thought about supply chain length ‘sometimes when it was convenient’. A further 28% of respondents commented that they would like to be more concerned about supply chain length but convenience is important.

“We are an agriculture-based country and have the ability to grow and sell direct to consumers or suppliers. I feel that the supply chain doesn’t need to be so long. More profit should be going into the growers’ pocket as they are the people doing all of the hard work.” Quote, survey respondent

Food supply convenience and ease of purchasing was a theme that came up throughout the survey. Further discussions with survey respondents highlighted that even with the best of intentions, people are time poor and having ready, easy access to their supplies was as much of an important factor as length of supply chain.

A platform which links producers and consumers would allow consumers ready access to fresh locally produced food and allow both seller and buyer to be flexible in how and when transactions take place and how and when deliveries or collections are made.

5.3.1 Communication along supply chain

Throughout my survey there was a reoccurring theme around the lack of transparency and information pertaining to a food products production methods, provenance and length of supply chain. Many customers have little or no idea of what is required in the production or harvest of the food it is that they are purchasing.

“Greater supply chain transparency would increase first my appreciation for supply chain length and subsequent concern” Quote, survey respondent

Having a closer producer – customer relationship will allow that information to be passed from producer to consumer more readily, often at or before the point of sale.

Nate Smith of Gravity Fishing, Bluff observed this lack of understanding at an early stage of his business development. When asked about public perception, Nate says “it feels like the public perceive fishermen as evil, raping and pillaging the oceans, lining their pockets with millions of dollars”. He has made it his mission to change that perception and show what happens on his boat and with the fish he catches. He now has an open invitation to any chef or restaurant manager who purchases his fish to join him on his boat for a fishing trip off Bluff. He has taken a number of New Zealand and Australia’s most well-respected chefs for a days fishing and is amazed by the relative lack of understanding from a profession whose job is to feed people and tell the stories of that food.

“They leave here with a whole new respect and understanding for what wild caught fishermen go through to provide them with their fish. It gives them a hugely powerful, accurate and genuine story to go with their food about where, when, how and by whom the fish was caught”. Nate Smith, Gravity Fishing.

The people who join him fishing are able to tell their customers about their first hand experience instead of relying on the marketing material provided by large seafood companies. He also uses social media to connect directly with customers. He often videos and photographs fish coming out of the water that are caught to order for a specific customer and posts those videos on Facebook and Instagram for the world to see. This has garnered Nate a huge amount of respect from many high-end restaurants and vineyards throughout New Zealand.



Photo 2. Gravity Fishing keeping in contact with a customer by sharing photos of their fish caught to order on Instagram.

Oaklands Milk have found the regular contact with customers invaluable. CEO Julian Raine has the company's 0800 number linked straight to his cell phone so hears each and every call made to that number. He also does one delivery run a fortnight to cafes and restaurants to keep in touch with those customers. Where the company struggles to meet a customer's expectations, he can therefore address the issue immediately. In certain cases, he explains farm or company procedures to concerned customers to increase their understanding of the supply chain. Julian uses the example of feeding Palm Kernel Extract (PKE) which they stopped feeding to their herd as soon as they started supplying direct due to negative connotations that has with customers. Oaklands Milk take great pride in doing the right thing because it's the right thing to do and sharing those stories with their customers. Their annual volume growth of over 40% for the last four years is testament to their hard work and quality product.

Increased supply chain communication has been beneficial for Ode restaurant, their suppliers and their staff. When local market gardens who supply vegetables to Ode have bumper harvests or unsold produce, the restaurant buys that produce and on-sells it to restaurant staff at cost. This ensures staff have ready, affordable access to quality organic produce and means the producer is able to benefit from good harvests.

Shorter supply chains give food producers the ability to tell genuine stories to, and develop meaningful relationships with customers allowing those customers to have a better understanding and respect for the hard work required in food production.

5.4 Food waste

According to research by Love Food Hate Waste NZ, New Zealanders throw away over 157,000 tonnes of food each year totalling about \$1.17b worth.

Food is wasted in many different ways including;

- failing to conform to optimal shape, size, colour specifications by retailers
- coming close to or passing 'best before dates'
- waste after point of sale due to spoilage or 'left overs'.

Food waste is a bigger issue than just the actual food which is wasted. All of the resources, (land, fuel, fertiliser, human effort) that has been used to produce that food has also been wasted.



Source: www.lovefoodhatewaste.co.nz

"If global food waste was a country, it would be the third largest producer of carbon emissions behind China and the USA" (9)

Shorter supply chains will give producers more confidence to produce what consumers want via more transparent information flows from customers. Production and/or processing changes will be able to be communicated in a timelier manner decreasing wastage. In some instances, it will also allow production to order, potentially eliminating presale wastage entirely.

Ode restaurant in Wanaka has almost eliminated their kitchen food wastage. Total restaurant wastage sits at under 1% by weight, most of which is single use plastics. At restaurants that Ode's Executive Chef and Owner Lucas Parkinson has previously worked at, food wastage was regularly as high as 34%.

Ode has been able to achieve low wastage levels by using a set menu and compulsory bookings but also by being able to purchase small amounts of specific fresh produce off small local producers when those products are required. If they were to purchase off a food wholesaler, there would be minimum purchase sizes to adhere to and the produce may not be as fresh so would often have a shorter shelf life. As a result of their close relationships, all food scraps are returned to local food producers to be fed to chickens or pigs or for composting.

Gravity fishing has completely eliminated its on-boat product wastage due to catching to order and selling direct to customers. Specific fish species are targeted and caught on a hook and line. An ancient quick kill technique called ikijimi, rapid chilling in ice baths and 'belly down' packing has meant that fish caught by Gravity Fishing are fresher and have a longer shelf life than other commercially caught fish. All fish are sold whole meaning that customers have the ability to utilise every part of the fish. Prior to operating this system, owner Nate Smith fished on contract for large scale fishing wholesalers where he was paid for skin on, bone in fillets. The rest of the catch was wasted. To provide 1kg of Blue Cod fillets he would have to catch approximately 2.6kg of fish

meaning that approximately 60% of his gross catch of Blue Cod was wasted. Now every fish that is caught is landed and sold whole.

5.5 Price

“Don’t worry about the money, quality is everything” Quote Giulio Sturla. Pers. Comm.

Price is always a factor in our food buying decisions. Many people said in responses to my survey that price was a major factor when purchasing their food. Responses to the question “Is the profitability of the producer/grower a concern/decision making factor when you are buying your food products?” varied from ‘Yes – its important to know that they are financially sustainable’ to ‘No – price is key, I tend to shop for specials’.

Research undertaken in 2014 found that purchasing a typical family’s weekly vegetables at a farmer’s market was approximately 22% more expensive than the equivalent purchase at a super market (\$138 vs \$113). Researchers stated that the farmers market only sold local produce and that while some produce was cheaper than at a supermarket, certain products were significantly more expensive so pushed the overall price up. (Stewart, M. March 26th 2014)

“...the prices we often pay for “fresher, local, organic” a.k.a. quality, is lately unjustifiable, especially for families. Though I want to know more, if I can't afford it. That knowledge won't bring significant change to my purchase choices” Quote, survey respondent

For Gravity fishing the price received for fish caught have increased between 4 and 15 times per kg depending on fish species. When fishing for commercial seafood companies he was paid approximately \$1.00/kg for Tarakihi filets. He now charges \$13.40/kg for the whole fish delivered anywhere in the South Island. His last commercial fishing catch of Striped Trumpeter prior to starting his own business was purchased by a wholesaler for 1c/kg. He now charges \$28/kg for the same fish. On June 6th 2019, Wellington Seamarket was advertising Tarakihi fillets for \$34.95/kg and Trumpeter fillets for \$32.95/kg (10).

Oaklands Milk have increased their on-farm per litre milk price through selling direct to customers. Oaklands vending machines provide the most direct and cost-effective supply method but this service does not give the company the personal relationships that have been instrumental in its development.

6.0 Conclusions

The questions I have attempted to answer is: Does the formation of a sales platform linking food producers and consumers in New Zealand have merit?

There are likely to be tangible benefits for New Zealand's regional food stories with recognisable regional food products being readily available to consumers. This will aid in fostering New Zealand's existing culture and cuisine and will allow people to create their own stories with relevance and context to the region and its food.

Shorter supply chains will allow increased communication between food producer and customer and therefore will increase transparency of a products production methods and provenance. It will also allow consumers to be more aware of New Zealand's food production systems and producers to be more aware of customer requirements and opinions. I believe the communication and flow of information both directions along the supply chain will be the most valuable benefit to result from shorter supply chains.

Closer links between producers and consumers has the potential to reduce food waste by allowing food service customers to order and purchase more suitable quantities of produce. The shorter supply chain also means that customers will be able to relay their requirements to producers who may be able to tailor production or processing to reduce waste.

The price paid by customers is likely to be similar to current supermarket prices. Certain products will be cheaper but others will have a higher asking price. Price will need to be a consideration for producers as food cost is a significant purchasing decision making factor.

Current platforms available appear to be effective in linking food producers and consumers in the areas in which they are active. It appears that a system that is simple and uncomplicated will be more flexible and able to be utilised by a wider audience.

I believe that creating a sales platform that links consumers with food producers does have merit. It will go a long way to narrowing the physical and knowledge gap between food producer and consumer.

I believe that with the creation of a sales platform "a happy, healthy, vibrant country where top quality food is produced sustainably and supplied through short, profitable supply chains" will be attainable.

7.0 Recommendations

I recommend a more in-depth survey be undertaken looking into the potential uptake from food producers who would use such a sales platform.

Depending on results of the above survey, I recommend that a platform be created which is locally based with the minimal amount of administrative and financial setup requirements as possible much like the REKO system. In an attempt to ensure that a simple, locally based and effective platform is created, I recommend that the survey and platform creation be undertaken by an industry good organisation (such as Eat New Zealand or the Outstanding NZ Food Producer Awards) and not by a government department.

I recommend that price remain an important consideration for participating producers as consumers are largely driven by price and the value of the provenance and production story must be matched with affordability for consumers.

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