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Food the focus of COVID-19 study

Food is the focus of a new University of Tasmania survey launched today as part of [The Tasmania Project](#), led by the Institute for Social Change.

The food survey is asking Tasmanian residents whether they have been able to buy enough safe and healthy food to meet their needs during COVID-19, how they have shopped for food, and how food access and supply could be different in the future.

“COVID-19 has undoubtedly impacted our food access and supply,” Director of the Institute for Social Change Professor Libby Lester said.

“Important debates are underway about supply chains, levels of foreign investment and certification schemes, all of which will impact Tasmania’s future.

“The food survey will help researchers, industry and policymakers understand what Tasmanian residents want for the future in terms of food access and production in the State,” she said.

The survey is a cross-University initiative involving researchers in health, political economics, fisheries, and aquaculture.

Dr Emily Ogier, Marine Social Science Research Fellow at the [Institute for Marine and Antarctic Studies](#), and Dr Katherine Kent, Research Fellow at the University of Tasmania’s [Centre for Rural Health](#), are collaborators on the project.

“Access to fresh seafood for Tasmanians has changed during the COVID-19 pandemic,” Dr Ogier said.

“Crays previously exported to overseas markets have been sold to Tasmanians directly by the fishers. And local oyster farmers have had to find new online ways to get their product to locals given the restrictions on retail food outlets.”

The survey will build on public health researcher Dr Kent’s [recent collaborative research](#), which compared the perceptions and uptake of locally grown produce in Tasmania and the Bunbury community in Western Australia.

“Our previous research showed that Tasmanians prefer locally grown food, but there are many barriers to buying it, one of which is not knowing the origins of the fruit and vegetables we buy,” Dr Kent said.

“Strengthening our local food systems by buying Tasmanian grown food may be the answer to feeding us well and stimulating our local economy.

“The food survey will help us learn from this experience to make sure that Tasmania is well prepared for any crises or disasters in the future,” she said.

To participate in the survey, go to utas.edu.au/tasmania-project.

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