



THE BEST PRACTICE GUIDE FOR
Early Childhood Education
and Care Food Environment

Sustainable Food Practices

MODULE 5



The Best Practice Guide for Early Childhood Education and Care Food Environment

Module 5: Sustainable Food Practices

This Sustainable Food Practices (SFP) module is one of a series within *The Best Practice Guide (BPG) for Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) Food Environment, birth to 5 years*. The SFP module provides practical, evidence-informed guidance aligned with the Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF) v2.0 and the National Quality Standard.

Suggested citation

Sustainable Food Practices Consortium. (2026). The best practice guide for early childhood education and care food environments: Module 5: Sustainable food practices (Version 1.0). Edith Cowan University, Perth, Western Australia. <https://doi.org/10.25958/5aqk-as84>

Developed as part of the Nurturing Healthy Futures project, funded by Healthway and led by Edith Cowan University, Western Australia. The Guide can be located at: <https://ecec-best-practice-guide.com.au>

© Edith Cowan University 2026

Except where otherwise noted below, this Guide is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International Licence (CC BY 4.0). You are free to share and adapt this material, including for commercial purposes, provided appropriate credit is given, a link to the licence is included, and you indicate if changes were made.



<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>

Dr Ros Sambell

Edith Cowan University +61 8 6304 5424
270 Joondalup Drive r.sambell@ecu.edu.au
Joondalup WA 6027

Design & layout: Beckon Designs

Disclaimer

- General guidance for ECEC (birth to 5 years) does not replace medical/dietetic/speech pathology/other allied-health advice.
- Advice may not be applicable to a particular individual's needs and should always be considered having regard to medical advice provided to an individual.
- Where concerns exist about a child's safety, wellbeing, growth, development, swallowing or health, seek timely medical advice per your service escalation procedures. For emergencies, call 000.
- Follow applicable laws, regulations and service policies, work within the scope of practice.
- References to EYLF/NQS are for alignment; state/territory frameworks may use different terms.

Licence exclusions and use

This Guide is best practice guidance mapped to the National Quality Standard and the Early Years Learning Framework. It is not an accreditation, certification or compliance standard. No service, provider, product, program or course may describe itself as accredited by, certified against, endorsed by or compliant with this Guide. Edith Cowan University encourages adaptations to remain consistent with the intent and purpose of the Guide. Any adaptation must clearly indicate that changes have been made and must not suggest that Edith Cowan University endorses the adaptation or the person or organisation using it.

This Guide includes external links for reference. In providing an external link, Edith Cowan University does not accept responsibility for, or endorse, the content or condition of any of those links. Links were current at the date of publication.

The Creative Commons licence does not apply to the Edith Cowan University or Healthway logos. Third-party material reproduced with permission, including images and quoted material, is not covered by the licence and remains the property of its respective owner.

Acknowledgement of Country

We acknowledge and respect Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the traditional custodians of the lands on which this guide was created across Australia, and recognise and respect the significance of their communities, cultures and histories.

Foreword

'Nurturing Healthy Futures Best Practice Guide' – launching September 2026

Early childhood is a powerful window for shaping lifelong relationships with food, health, and community. Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) services play an essential role in nurturing these foundations – not only by providing meals, but by creating environments where children feel safe, included, curious, and connected. The 'Nurturing Healthy Futures Best Practice Guide' has been developed to support this vital work.

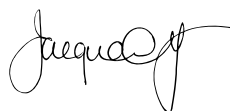
This guide brings together practical, evidence based strategies to help ECEC services reflect and enhance the food environments they offer across metropolitan, regional, and remote communities. Funded by Healthway and delivered by Edith Cowan University, it reflects extensive consultation, research, and collaboration with educators, health professionals, families, and community partners. The result is a resource designed to be both aspirational and achievable – supporting services to embed nourishing, culturally responsive, and sustainable practices in their everyday routines.

The guide is organised into a set of interconnected modules that together form a holistic approach to food provision and learning in ECEC. It provides practical guidance on everyday mealtimes practices, menu planning and meal quality, food safety, and food education, alongside strategies to strengthen partnerships with families and embed best practice into service-wide systems to support consistency, sustainability, and long-term impact.

Together, these modules acknowledge that safe and supportive food environments are not created through single actions, but through everyday choices, relationships, and shared commitments. They recognise the diversity of communities in Australia and the importance of culturally safe, inclusive approaches that honour children's identities and family traditions.

By adopting the practices outlined in this Guide, ECEC services can help build strong foundations for lifelong wellbeing for young children – supporting them to thrive physically, socially, and emotionally.

I hope this resource empowers educators and leaders to continue building safe and supportive food environments where every child feels included and respected, and where everyday food experiences support connection and nourishment. By noticing and responding to children's cues and partnering with families, services can support children's wellbeing as they grow and learn.



Dr Jacqueline McGowan-Jones

Commissioner for Children and Young People (WA)

Contents

Foreword	3
Background	6
Setting the scene	12

SECTION 1

Defining Sustainability and the Guiding Principles used in this Guide	15
--	-----------

Defining sustainability and the guiding principles used in this guide	16
The sustainability guiding principles and relevance to ECEC settings	18

SECTION 2

Plant-Based and Minimally Processed Foods	25
--	-----------

Plant-based foods	27
Case study: Creating lasting change through a Sustainable Food Awareness Week	32
Prioritise minimally processed foods	34

SECTION 3

Greenhouse Gas Emissions, Biodiversity and Food Packaging	39
--	-----------

Greenhouse gas emissions, biodiversity and food packaging	40
Food packaging – minimising plastics	44
Case Study: In the food forest...	46

SECTION 4

Food Waste	49
-------------------	-----------

Reducing and managing food waste in ECEC settings	50
Bridging Case Study: Reducing food waste starts with everyday decisions	61
Case Study: Small changes making a big difference	62
Case Study: Where do our food scraps go?	64

SECTION 5

Local and Seasonal Food	67
--------------------------------	-----------

Local culture, local food and seasonality	68
Case Study: Growing, caring for and cooking plants	72
Regulatory, food safety and food allergy considerations	74

SECTION 6

Gardens in ECEC Services and Settings	75
--	-----------

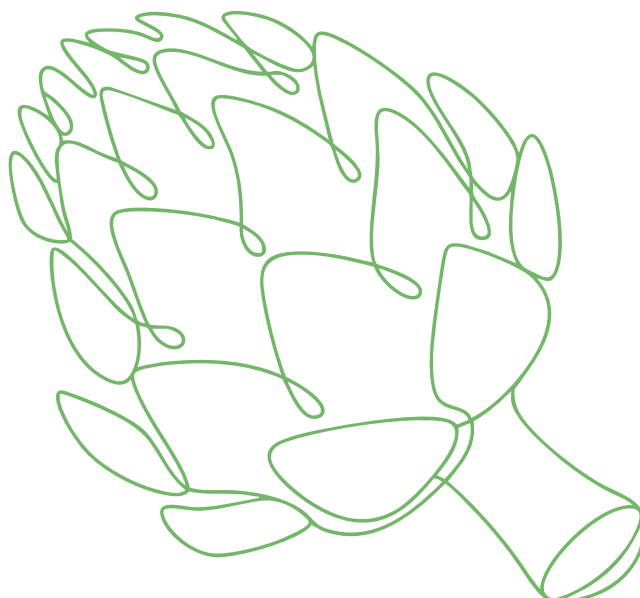
Gardens in ECEC services and settings	76
Preparing and planning for gardens	78
Vignette: A day in the wilds	80
Food safety awareness, assessment, and management	81
Planning for gardens	83
Risk awareness, common risk factors and safety	84

SECTION 7

Appendices	87
-------------------	-----------

Appendix A – Glossary	88
Appendix B – SFP Module Development Process	90
Appendix C – Evidence Framework	91

References	92
-------------------	-----------



Background

ECEC food environments are uniquely positioned to support sustainability by implementing practices that can reduce environmental impacts while creating meaningful opportunities for children to experience and explore the interconnections between people, animals, plants, lands and water through food.

The Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF) (Version 2.0) recognises sustainability as an important consideration for children’s learning and development and that educators and children have active roles to play in contributing to more sustainable communities.¹ Through the food provided, mealtimes, and food education, ECEC services can provide meaningful opportunities for children to experience and engage with sustainable food practices.

This Sustainable Food Practices (SFP) module aims to:

- Support ECEC services to embed sustainable food practices that are practical, achievable and aligned with everyday service operations.
- Provide support for ECEC services to reduce the environmental impacts of food through practical strategies such as reducing food waste, considering food sourcing, protecting biodiversity and minimising unnecessary packaging where appropriate.
- Provide practical guidance on applying sustainable food principles within food provision – including whole, minimally processed foods and plant-based foods such as vegetables, where appropriate.
- Encourage sustainable food practices that strengthen connections with local communities and encourage the use of seasonal and locally available foods, where practical.
- Provide guidance on planning, establishing and maintaining food gardens, including consideration of safety, risk assessment and risk management.
- Support educators, cooks and service leaders to create meaningful opportunities for children to engage with sustainability through everyday food experiences, including mealtimes, food education and gardening.

The sections below outline why this guide was developed, how it connects to the Artichoke Model and who it is designed for.

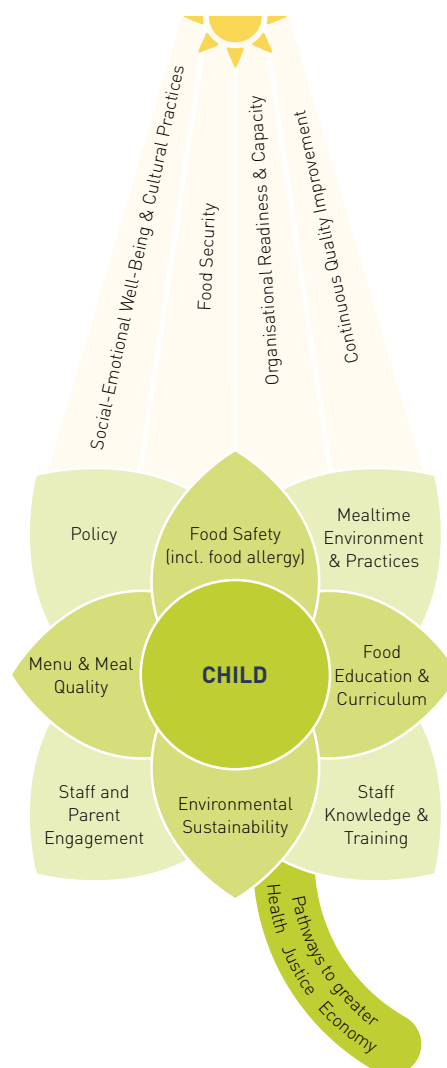
Why this guide was developed

Many Australian children spend significant time attending ECEC settings each week, where the food provided to them, mealtimes, and food-related learning are part of everyday experiences. This creates a unique opportunity for ECEC services to embed sustainable food practices that can contribute to positive outcomes for children, communities and the planet. Small, practical changes implemented across the large number of ECEC services across Australia have the potential to collectively reduce environmental impacts, while providing young children with opportunities to experience and engage with sustainable food practices from an early age.

The SFP module was developed to support cooks, educators, service leaders and approved providers with practical guidance to embed sustainability across ECEC food environments in ways that are achievable within everyday practice. Further information on the principles underpinning sustainable food environments is provided in the Setting the Scene section.

The SFP module sits within the Artichoke Model (Figure 1), which guides the overall structure for this Best Practice Guide.

FIGURE 1: *The Artichoke Model*



What is the Artichoke Model?

The Artichoke Model: ECEC Food Environment Model² is a visual way of looking at the whole food environment in early learning settings.

Like the layers of an artichoke, the model places children's everyday food experiences at ECEC at the centre, with the people, places, systems and routines that shape those experiences being the 'leaves' surrounding and supporting the child. Each 'leaf' represents a key area of the food environment, and together they show how everyday practices, relationships, curriculum, policies and service systems all work together.

Where did it come from?

The Artichoke Model was co-designed in 2024 by members of the National Nutrition Network for Early Childhood Education and Care (NNN-ECEC), drawing on their collective experience as researchers, practitioners and policymakers.² Through collaborative discussion and visual mapping, the group identified the key components of food environments, creating a simple, sector-owned way of mapping the ECEC food environment that feels recognisable to services and usable in day-to-day practice.

What does it include and why?

The Artichoke Model maps **12 connected 'leaves'** across the ECEC food environment, grouped into three layers:

- **What – food provided** (for example: Menu and Meal Quality, Food Safety and Food Allergen Management, Food Education and Curriculum, Environmental Sustainability)
- **How – feeding practices and support** (for example: Mealtime Environment and Practices, Staff Knowledge and Training, Staff and Family Engagement, Policy)
- **Environmental levers – service conditions that shape what's possible** (for example: Social-emotional wellbeing and Cultural Practices, Food Security of the ECEC service, Organisational Readiness and Capacity, Continuous Quality Improvement).

Each leaf includes practical topics and reflection questions that services can use to think about where food and mealtimes already work well, where children might need something different, and what the next small step for improvement could be.

This Best Practice Guide builds on the Artichoke Model. The project team used the 12 'leaves' to scope and streamline key themes and sub-topics, then developed modules that turn the high-level map into practical recommendations, examples and tools for services. Each module zooms in on one or more parts of the Artichoke Model while still keeping sight of the whole service.

What does the Artichoke Model mean for Sustainable Food Practices?

Within the Artichoke Model, Sustainable Food Practices (SFP) sits mainly in the 'What – food provided' layer, alongside Menu and Meal Quality, Food Safety (including food allergy) and Food Education and Curriculum, with strong links to the 'how' and 'environmental levers' leaves. The SFP module draws on several interconnected layers of the Artichoke Model. While the Environmental Sustainability leaf provides the primary focus, the module also recognises the important links between Sustainability, Food Education, and Food Safety. Sustainable food environments are shaped not only by the food that is provided, but also by the opportunities children have to learn about food through everyday experiences, and by ensuring that sustainability initiatives are implemented safely and appropriately. For the SFP module, the Artichoke Model highlights that creating sustainable food environments is an ongoing process of quality improvement rather than a one-off initiative. Organisational commitment, educator and cook knowledge, family and community partnerships and ongoing quality improvement all contribute to strengthening practice over time. This module translates these elements into practical guidance to help ECEC services embed food sustainability and build on their practices over time.

Scope of the Sustainable Food Practices (SFP) module

The SFP module focuses on:

- Embedding sustainability principles into the food environment and everyday practice in ECEC services.
- Planning, purchasing and preparing foods in ways that support sustainable food systems.
- Reducing food waste through food planning, storage, preparation, meal service and waste management practices.
- Creating opportunities for children to learn about food sustainability and where food comes from through everyday experiences, including cooking, gardening, learning experiences, and mealtime conversations, while supporting children's agency and environmental stewardship.
- Supporting environmentally sustainable food practices, including consideration of food sourcing, local and culturally relevant foods, seasonal produce, packaging, resource use and waste reduction. Building partnerships with families and communities to support sustainable food practices and learning.
- Strengthening organisational commitment through leadership, quality improvement and continuous reflection to embed sustainability over time.

This module focuses on services that provide food to children as well as lunchbox services.

What is not included?

This module does not:

- Provide detailed guidance on meeting children's nutritional requirements or menu planning in line with the Australian Dietary Guidelines (these are covered in the Menu and Meal Quality module).
- Provide detailed guidance on responsive feeding, mealtime interactions, or the social, emotional and sensory aspects of mealtimes (these are covered in the Mealtime Environment and Practices module).
- Replace existing legislation, regulations, food safety requirements or service policies.
- Prescribe specific environmental or sustainability accreditation programs or certifications.
- Focus on outside school hours care (OSHC), although some principles may still be useful in those settings.

ECEC staff and services should use this module alongside relevant regulations, service policies and any clinical advice for individual children.

Acknowledgements

This Sustainable Food Practices (SFP) module was developed through a strong, collaborative co-design process. For the purposes of citation and attribution, members of the Best Practice Guide Project Team, the Sustainable Food Practices Working Group and Best Practice Guide Advisory Group, together with those acknowledged under Workshop Development and Facilitation, Meetings Chair, and Additional Consultation, are collectively recognised as the Sustainable Food Practices Consortium. Contributions across the Consortium varied according to individual expertise and involvement and included Conceptualisation, Writing: original draft, and Writing: review and editing, as applicable to each contributor's role.

We sincerely thank the individuals and organisations represented across the Consortium for the breadth and depth of expertise they brought across early learning practice, nutrition and dietetics, public health, government, regulation, peak bodies, training, service delivery, food safety, education, and sustainable food practices. Their generous time, practical insights, and commitment to improving food environments in early learning settings have directly strengthened the relevance, feasibility, and quality of this guidance.

We are especially grateful to the educators, service leaders, cooks, and chefs in early childhood services across Australia who shared their time, everyday experiences, and honest insights during development. Their knowledge grounded this Guide in real practice and reminded us throughout what truly matters at mealtimes.

We acknowledge the National Nutrition Network for Early Childhood Education and Care (NNN-ECEC) for their foundational role in developing the Artichoke Model and for their sustained commitment to improving food environments for young children across Australia.

Sustainable Food Practices Working Group

Our working group, together with additional consultation, brought together cooks with extensive experience in ECEC food environments, a service leader, and experts in nutrition and sustainable food environments, food safety, education, and food allergy management to shape the SFP module, with a particular focus on the needs of regional and remote services.

- **Ms Caterina Benati**
Cook, Nature's Atelier – Child Care & Early Learning (Regional WA)
- **Ms Bek Clancy**
Public Health Nutritionist, Miwatj Health Aboriginal Corporation
- **Ms Lorraine Hingston**
Cook, One Tree Wickham Children's Service (Very remote WA)
- **Dr Rebecca Lindberg**
Public Health Nutrition Researcher, Deakin University (VIC)
- **Dr Ros Sambell**
Chair, National Nutrition Network – Early Childhood Education and Care
- **Ms Leah Stuart-Douglas**
Director, Regional/Remote WA

Best Practice Guide Advisory Group

Our Advisory Group (listed alphabetically) provided high-level guidance and sector insights across early childhood education, health, nutrition, government and community organisations.

- **Professor Lennie Barblett**
Professor of Early Childhood Education, Edith Cowan University, WA
- **Ms Fiona Champion**
Senior Regulatory Officer, Early Childhood, Regulation and Communication, Metro North, North Lakes, Department of Education, Queensland (QLD)
- **Ms Penelope Clark**
Senior Dietitian (Community), Public Health – Improvement, Department of Health, TAS
- **Associate Professor Kathy Cologon**
Associate Director, Children, Families and Communities; Children's Voices Centre, NSW
- **Ms Wendy Cook**
Family Day Care Manager, Busselton Family Resource Centre, The Y, WA
- **Ms Katie Dix**
E-Learning Content and Projects Coordinator, Early Childhood Australia
- **Ms Kirsty Elliott**
CEO, Nutrition Australia QLD
- **Ms Leanne Elliston**
CEO, Nutrition Australia ACT
- **Ms Amanda Ferguson**
Project Manager, Foodcore Nutrition Services, WA

- **Ms Ricky Gelman**
Nutrition Lead, National Nutrition Foundation, Victoria (VIC)
- **Ms Jodie Gray**
Quality Manager, Department of Communities, WA
- **Ms Natalie Gulberti**
Director, Education and Care Regulatory Unit, Department of Communities, WA
- **Dr Karen Krist**
Director Food and Nutrition Policy, Department of Health and Aged Care, Australian Government
- **Associate Professor Deana Leahy**
Associate Professor, School of Education, Culture & Society, Monash University, VIC
- **Ms Ciara O’Flaherty**
Principal Policy Officer, Department of Health, WA
- **Dr Ros Sambell**
Chair, National Nutrition Network – Early Childhood Education and Care
- **Mr Blake Stewart**
Manager, Quality Practice and Programs, Australian Children’s Education and Care Quality Authority (ACECQA)
- **Ms Aimee Sullivan**
Senior Grants Development Officer, Healthway, WA
- **Dr Suzanne Tamone**
COO, The Creche & Kindergarten Association Limited, QLD
- **Dr Sandra Vale**
CEO, National Allergy Council
- **Dr Jill Whelan**
Principal Project Officer, Early Years Partnership, Strategy and Partnerships, Department of Communities, WA

Case Studies

The Best Practice Guide Team conducted interviews for the case studies and vignettes with the following ECEC staff, to provide on-the-ground examples of sustainable food practices in different contexts:

- **Shelley Carlin**
Marjorie Mann Lawley Daycare Centre, major cities, WA
- **Ranjitha Prema Vasavan**
Goodstart Endeavour Hills, major cities, VIC
- **Lorraine Hingston**
One Tree Wickham, remote WA
- **Fiona McAuliffe**
Nature’s Atelier, inner regional, WA
- **Leah Stuart-Douglas**
Regional/remote WA
- **Joanne Waterhouse**
Margaret Ives Community Children’s Centre, major cities, SA
- **Dr Ekta Sharma**
Montessori Minds Childcare and Kindergarten, major cities, VIC

Best Practice Guide Project Team

The Best Practice Guide Team led the evidence review, sector engagement and content development for this resource.

- **Dr Ros Sambell**
Project Lead, Public Health Nutritionist, Edith Cowan University
- **Professor Amanda Devine**
Professor of Public Health and Nutrition, Edith Cowan University
- **Dr Audrey Elford**
Public Health Nutritionist and Postdoctoral Research Fellow, Edith Cowan University
- **Mr Lochie Clark**
Public Health Nutritionist and Senior Research Officer, Edith Cowan University
- **Ms Connie Ihlein**
Nutritionist and Research Officer, Edith Cowan University

Workshop Development and Facilitation, and Meetings Chair

The development of the overall process and associated workshops, as well as the chairing of the Advisory Group meetings and facilitation of Working Group workshops, was completed by **Dr Helen Alexiou** from the Knowledge Brokering Group.

Secretariat

- **Dr Audrey Elford**
Public Health Nutritionist and Postdoctoral Research Fellow, Edith Cowan University

Additional Consultation

- **Mr Henry Tan**
Principal Scientific Officer, Food, Environmental Health Directorate, Public and Aboriginal Health Division, Department of Health, Western Australia
- **Dr Merryn Netting**
Paediatric dietitian and food allergy management expert, National Allergy Council
- **Ms Stacey McKenzie**
Early Childhood Teacher B.Ed (Early Childhood Studies)
- **Ms Asha Rojahn**
Early Childhood Teacher, B.Ed (Early Childhood Studies), GradCert Autism Studies

Who this module is for

The SFP module is for people working in ECEC services for children from birth to five years. It applies across centre-based care and family day care. The module is relevant to services that provide food to children as well as services where families provide some or all of the food. Table 1 suggests how this module can be used by each audience.

TABLE 1: *How this module can be used by each audience*

Intended users	How they can use this module
Cooks, chefs, food coordinators and kitchen assistants	To plan, purchase and prepare food that aligns more closely to sustainability principles, including management of food waste.
Service leaders/directors and educational leaders	To set and resource expectations for sustainable food practices, support time and resources for planning and implementing sustainability initiatives, and inform service policies and procedures related to sustainable food practices.
Educators and room leaders (including relief and casual staff)	To embed sustainable food practices into everyday routines, support children's learning about food and sustainability through mealtimes and learning experiences and contribute to feedback on food experiences and sustainability initiatives.
Family day care educators	To plan and provide food sustainability opportunities for mixed-age groups in a home-based setting and embed food sustainability into everyday learning.
Approved providers and management teams	To support consistent sustainable food practices across services, by embedding sustainability into food-related policies and procedures. To support whole-of-service approaches to sustainable food practices and identify where staff may benefit from further support or training.
Allied health partners (e.g. dietitians, nutritionists, speech pathologists, occupational therapists, physiotherapists)	To align dietary advice and food-related recommendations with the service's sustainable food practices, and use a shared language with cooks, educators and families about sustainable food practices.
Quality and regulatory staff, inclusion support staff and local health promotion officers	To inform assessment and rating observations and guidance, support visits, and develop resources related to sustainable food practices in ECEC.
VET and university educators, RTOs and placement supervisors	To integrate sustainable food practices content into training programs, prepare students for sustainable food practices in ECEC, and support reflective conversations during placements.

This module supports everyday practice in ECEC and does not replace clinical, medical or dietetic advice. ECEC staff and services should follow their service policies and procedures, food safety requirements, and any individual allergy, healthcare or action plans for each child.

How to use this guide

Six sections

The guide is divided into six separate sections covering the following topics:

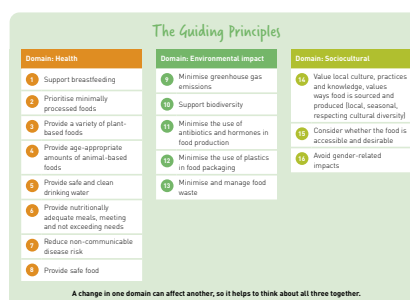
1. Defining Sustainability and the Guiding Principles used in this Guide
2. Plant-based and Minimally Processed Foods
3. Greenhouse Gas Emissions, Biodiversity and Food Packaging
4. Food Waste
5. Local and Seasonal Food
6. Gardens in ECEC Services and Settings

Elements found across sections

Elements	Examples
----------	----------

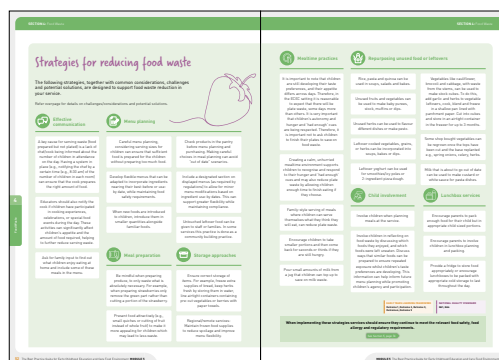
Background information

Supporting background information summarising current evidence and providing context to practical strategies and tools used in the guide.



Practical tools

Practical tools underpinned by evidence and aligning to best practice with suggestions for continuous quality improvement.



Case studies



Links to Early Years Learning Framework and the National Quality Standard

Show the links to the Early Years Learning Framework and National Quality Standard.

EARLY YEARS LEARNING FRAMEWORK
Outcome 1, Outcome 3

NATIONAL QUALITY STANDARD
QA2, QA5

Setting the scene

How sustainability aligns with ECEC food environments, the NQS and EYLF

Food environments, including those in ECEC settings, play an important role in sustainability by shaping food-related practices and experiences that can contribute to positive outcomes for children, communities and the planet.

Sustainable food practices align with several Quality Areas within the NQS, including Educational Program and Practice (QA1), Children's Health and Safety (QA2), Physical Environment (QA3), Collaborative Partnerships with Families and Communities (QA6), and Governance and Leadership (QA7).¹ Embedding sustainability within food environments can support children's learning and wellbeing, environmentally responsible practices, and provide opportunities to inform a service's Quality Improvement Plan (QIP).

The Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF V2.0) recognises sustainability as an important consideration for children's learning and development. It highlights the interconnections between people, animals, plants, lands and waters, and acknowledges children's capacity to contribute to a fair and sustainable world. Embedding sustainability into ECEC food environments can provide meaningful opportunities to support these concepts in everyday routines.

Sustainability in practice

Sustainability looks different in every service as services operate in different locations and work with different supply chains, budgets, and communities. There is no single version of doing sustainability well, and each service is best placed to determine what is achievable and meaningful within its own context.

Services do not need to implement every sustainable practice at once.

Small, practical changes can make a meaningful contribution over time. Focusing on one area of sustainability and embedding it into everyday practice can be a valuable starting point, with opportunities to build on these practices as capacity and circumstances allow.

Sustainable food practices are not all-or-nothing, and services should recognise and build on the strengths and practices they already have in place.

This module refers to both environmental health and food safety requirements and ECEC regulatory requirements. These frameworks operate alongside each other but have different purposes. Environmental health and food safety requirements primarily address the safe growing, handling, storage, preparation and provision of food.

ECEC regulatory requirements arise under the National Quality Framework and focus on children's health, safety, wellbeing, supervision, educational practice and service operations. In some areas, including gardening, food preparation, composting and food procurement, both frameworks may apply. Services should identify and comply with all requirements relevant to their circumstances. page 74 of this module outlines additional considerations for these requirements.

Considerations for regional, remote, and very remote services

Regional, remote and very remote services may experience unique challenges related to food availability, supply chains, transport, cost, and infrastructure that can influence which sustainable food practices are selected and how they are implemented. Adopting even one manageable practice can be a meaningful step towards creating a more sustainable food environment.

For example, reducing the distance food travels may be more achievable for a metropolitan service with access to local markets and suppliers. In regional and remote communities, sustainable food practices may instead include planning menus around seasonal availability and delivery schedules, storing food carefully to minimise food waste, or growing food on site through vegetable or herb gardens. These are all sustainable food practices in their own right and represent important strengths that services can recognise and build upon.

Throughout this section, practical strategies and ideas have been included to reflect the diverse contexts in which ECEC services operate, including regional, remote, and very remote settings. Services are encouraged to adapt the strategies in ways that are meaningful, achievable, and appropriate for their unique circumstances.

How sustainable food practices links with other modules in this guide

Sustainable food practices can be considered across all aspects of ECEC food environments and aligns closely with the other modules within the Best Practice Guide. Many sustainable food practices naturally overlap with food planning and provision, menu and meal quality, mealtime environments and practices, food education, and continuous quality improvement.

For example, sustainable food practices may influence the foods that are purchased and provided, how food waste is minimised, the mealtime experiences offered to children, and opportunities for children to learn about sustainability and food systems. Sustainability strategies can also support service philosophies and QIPs.

Throughout this module, signposting has been included where relevant to highlight links to other modules.

