



Modelled impacts of dietary policies

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SMALL CHANGES, BIG IMPACT

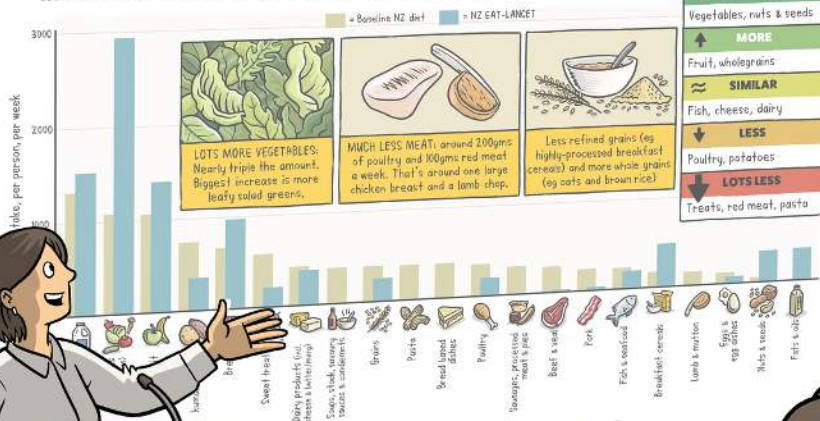
5 POLICY IDEAS FOR A HEALTHIER NZ

We all know that what we eat as individuals affects our health, right? But what about collectively?

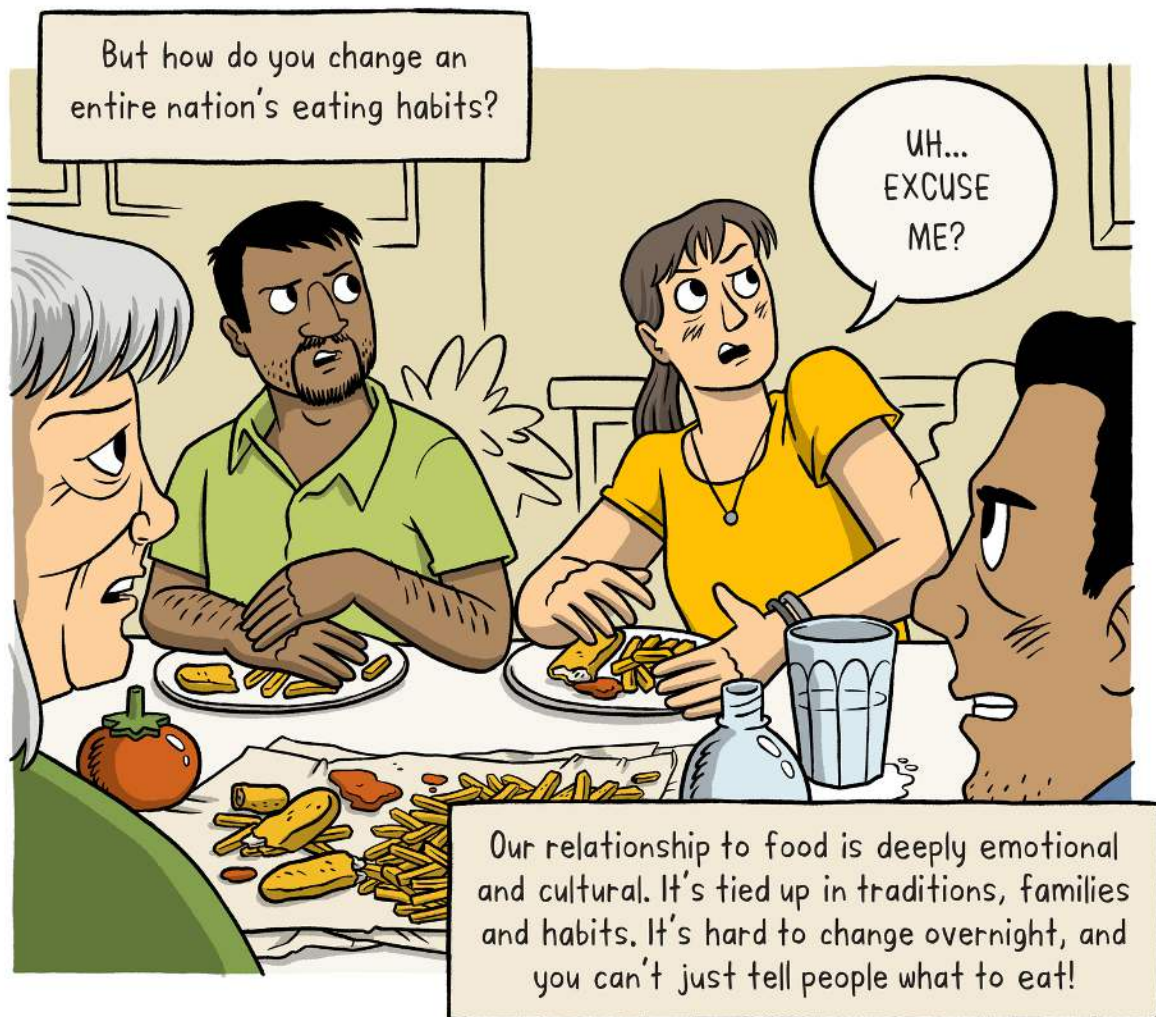
Changes in what we all eat, as a country, can improve our population's health, and how we produce our food can reduce our impact on the planet too.

That's one of the areas the Healthier Lives National Science Challenge has been researching.

Researchers have modelled the effects of large scale, population-wide dietary change.



For example: If all of us, on average, suddenly ate less meat and more vegetables, we'd live longer, have lower rates of many chronic diseases, spend less on healthcare, and it'd be better for the environment.



MORE MĀRA KAI AND COMMUNITY GARDENS

Growing food together creates a sense of involvement and pride, building community and supporting sustainable eating habits.



This policy would set aside land and provide funding for 'community champions' to support the set up and maintenance of māra kai on marae, and community gardens in suburbs around the country.

IMPACT:



HEALTH
'Health adjusted life years' (HALY) added per 1000 people over a lifetime



COSTS
Total million \$NZ costs or savings to the health system over a lifetime



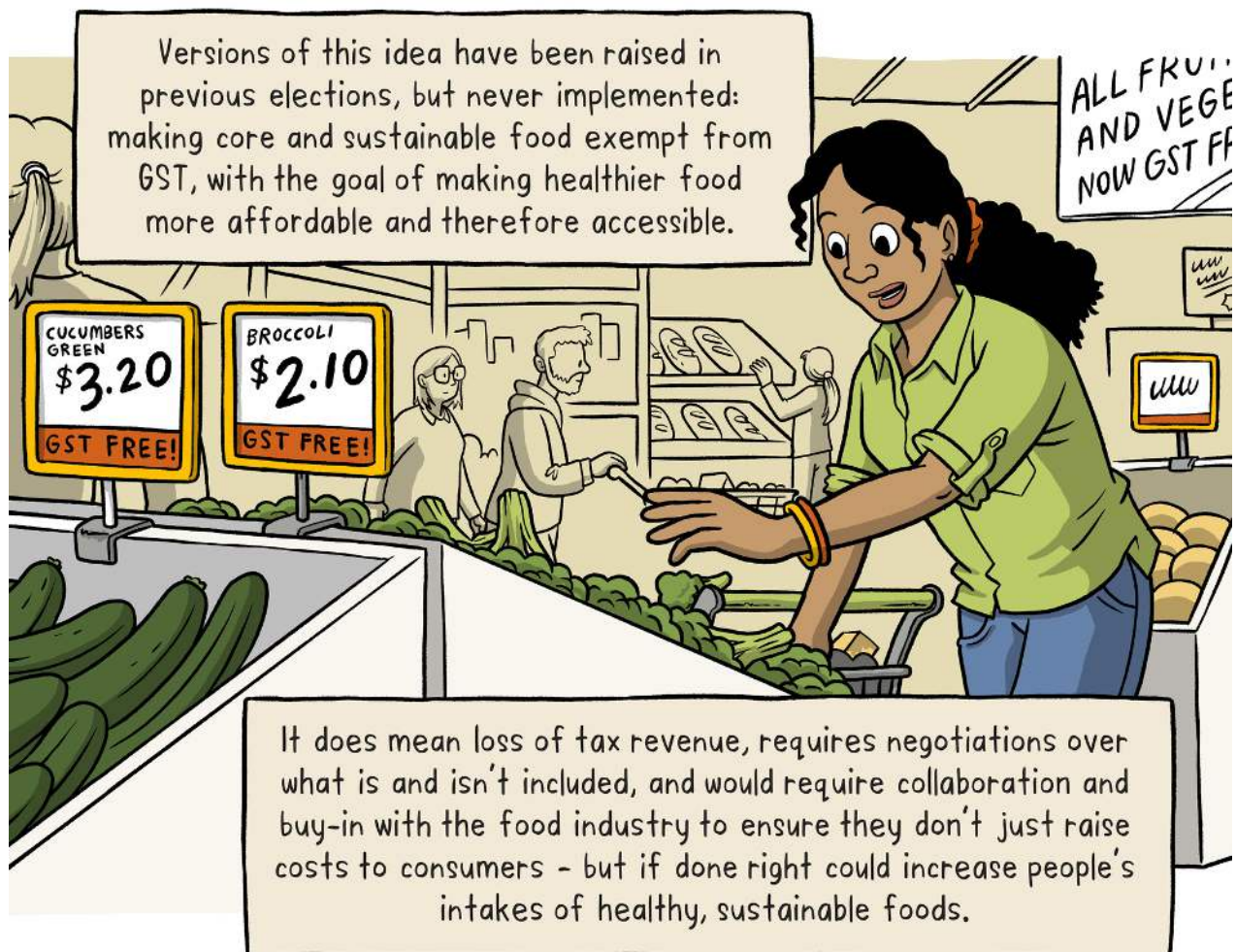
COST EFFECTIVENESS
Cost for each 'Health adjusted life year' gained



EQUITY
Ratio of health gain between Māori and non-Māori (Anything over 1 is higher per capita health gain for Māori, reducing inequity)

Although there is a cost to this policy, we would be funding communities to come up with their own solutions. We need change to make healthy kai accessible, and if we can grow our own, fresh food what better way is there? The health impacts of this policy make it borderline cost effective, and gardening policies such as this one also have wider societal benefits, like raising environmental awareness and building community.

REMOVE GST FROM SUSTAINABLE CORE FOODS



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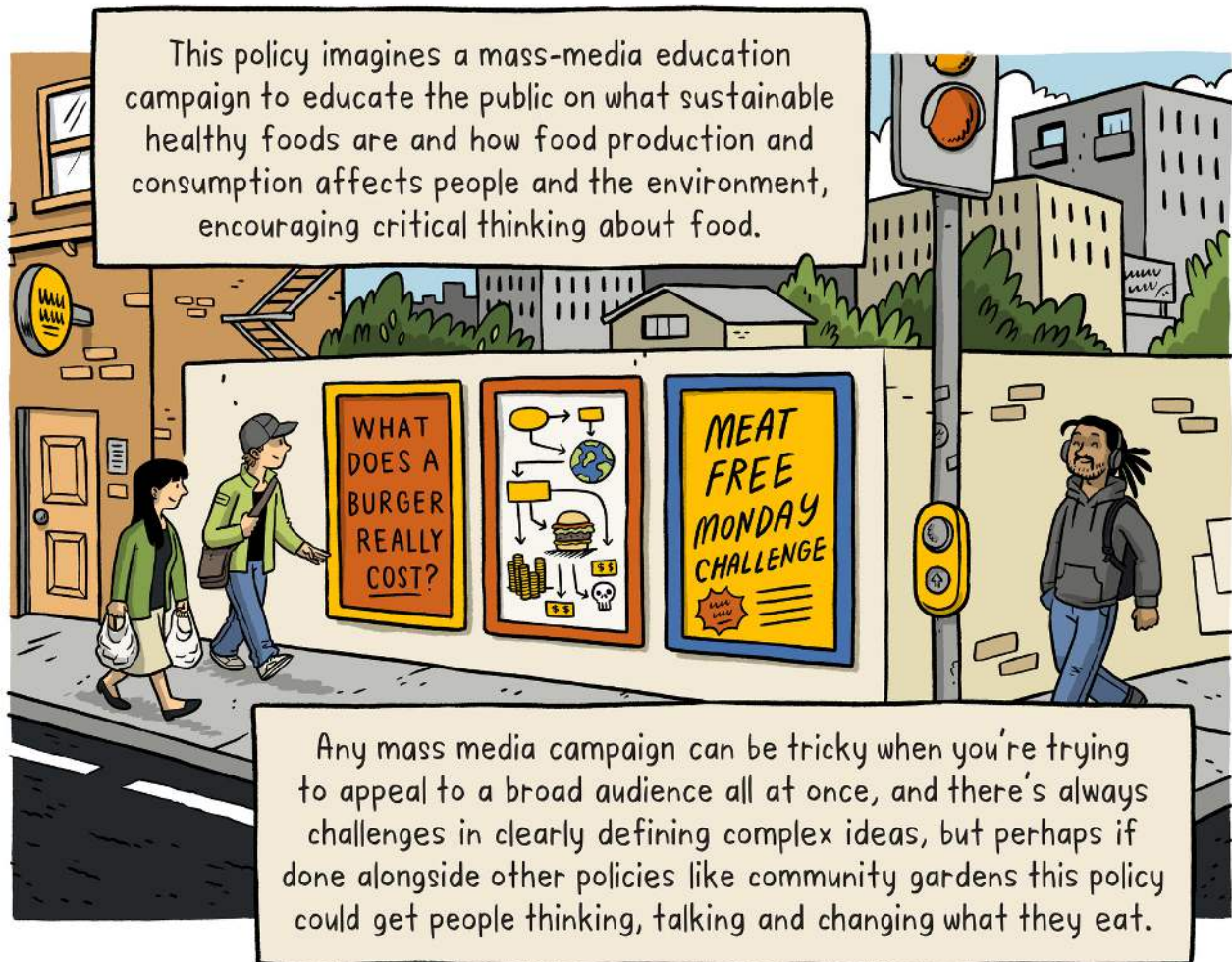
COST EFFECTIVENESS
Cost for each 'Health adjusted life year' gained



EQUITY
Ratio of health gain between Māori and non-Māori (Anything over 1 is higher per capita health gain for Māori, reducing inequity)

This policy has the biggest benefits in health outcomes and costs. The savings are likely to be offset by the drop in tax income, but this policy has the highest positive impact on health of the policies discussed here. It's also an ongoing change, so these benefits will continue in the long term.

EDUCATION ABOUT SUSTAINABLE AND HEALTHY FOOD



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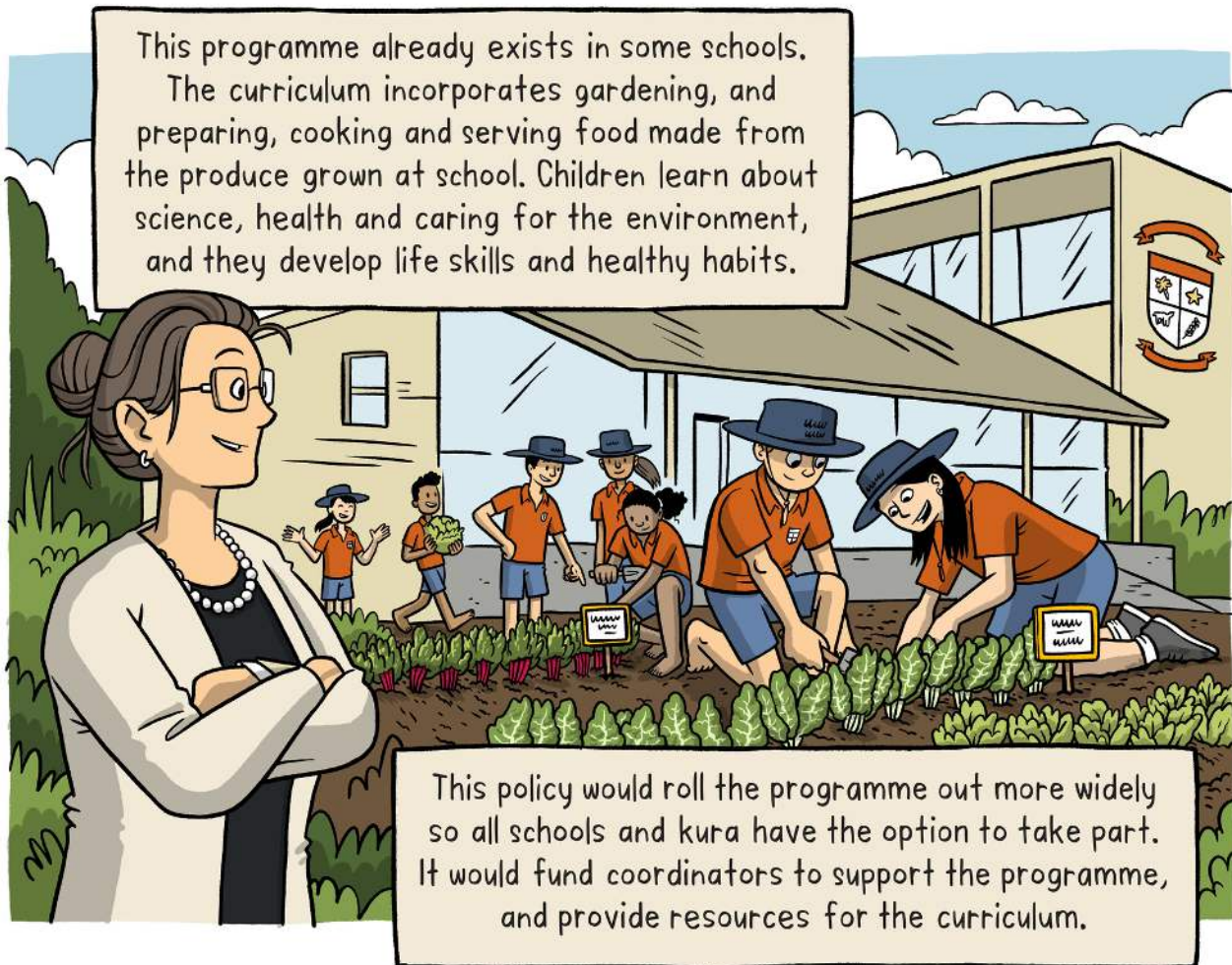
COST EFFECTIVENESS
Cost for each 'Health adjusted life year' gained



EQUITY
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This policy would result in less dramatic health gains, partly due to it being a one-off campaign rather an ongoing change, but still has a positive impact on health, improves equity and saves money for the health system.

EXPAND 'GARDEN TO TABLE' SCHOOL PROGRAMMES



IMPACT:



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COST EFFECTIVENESS
Cost for each 'Health adjusted life year' gained

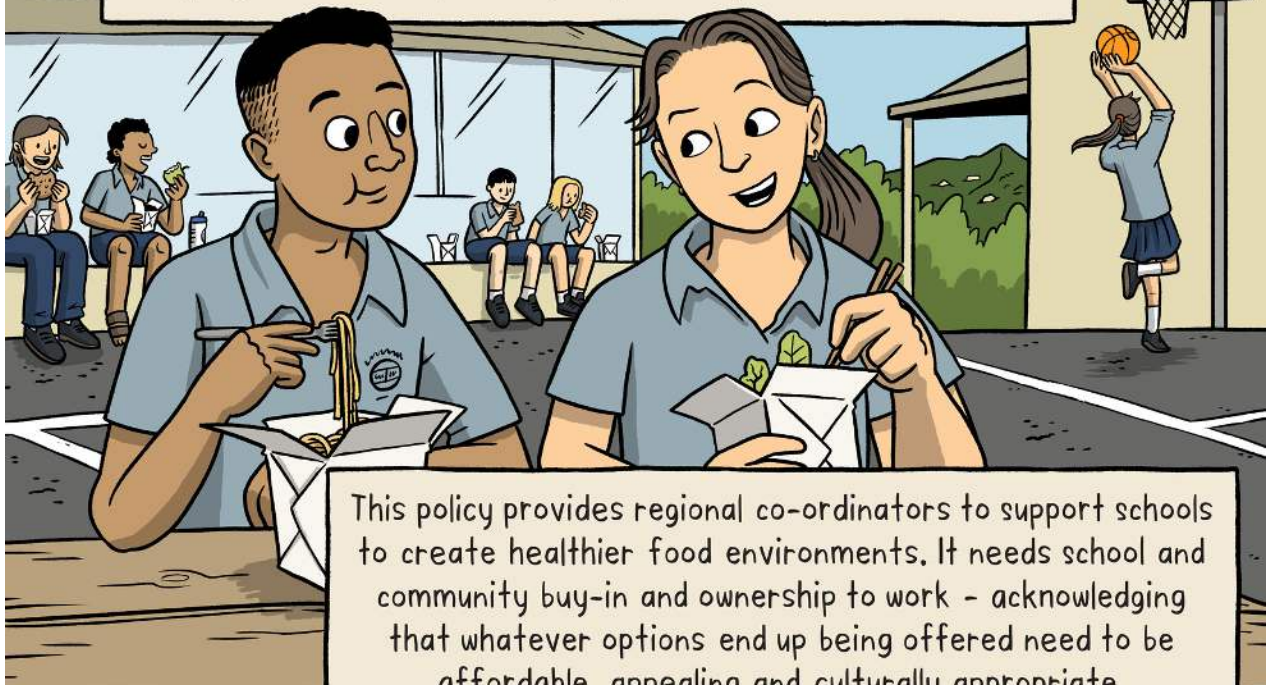


EQUITY
Ratio of health gain between Māori and non-Māori (Anything over 1 is higher per capita health gain for Māori, reducing inequity)

Modelling shows this policy would have small health benefits (+0.14 HALYs/1000 children) but is cost effective. Similar to the Māra Kai policy, this also has wider benefits for the next generation moving into adulthood – life skills, environmental awareness, community building. And it's very positive for equity.

HEALTHY FOOD AND DRINK POLICIES AT SCHOOLS

Many schools and kura already have their own policies around what kind of food and drinks can be sold on school grounds, and this policy would seek to make that standard across the country: basically that school canteens, vending machines and lunch programmes are providing only healthy food and drinks.



This policy provides regional co-ordinators to support schools to create healthier food environments. It needs school and community buy-in and ownership to work - acknowledging that whatever options end up being offered need to be affordable, appealing and culturally appropriate.

IMPACT:



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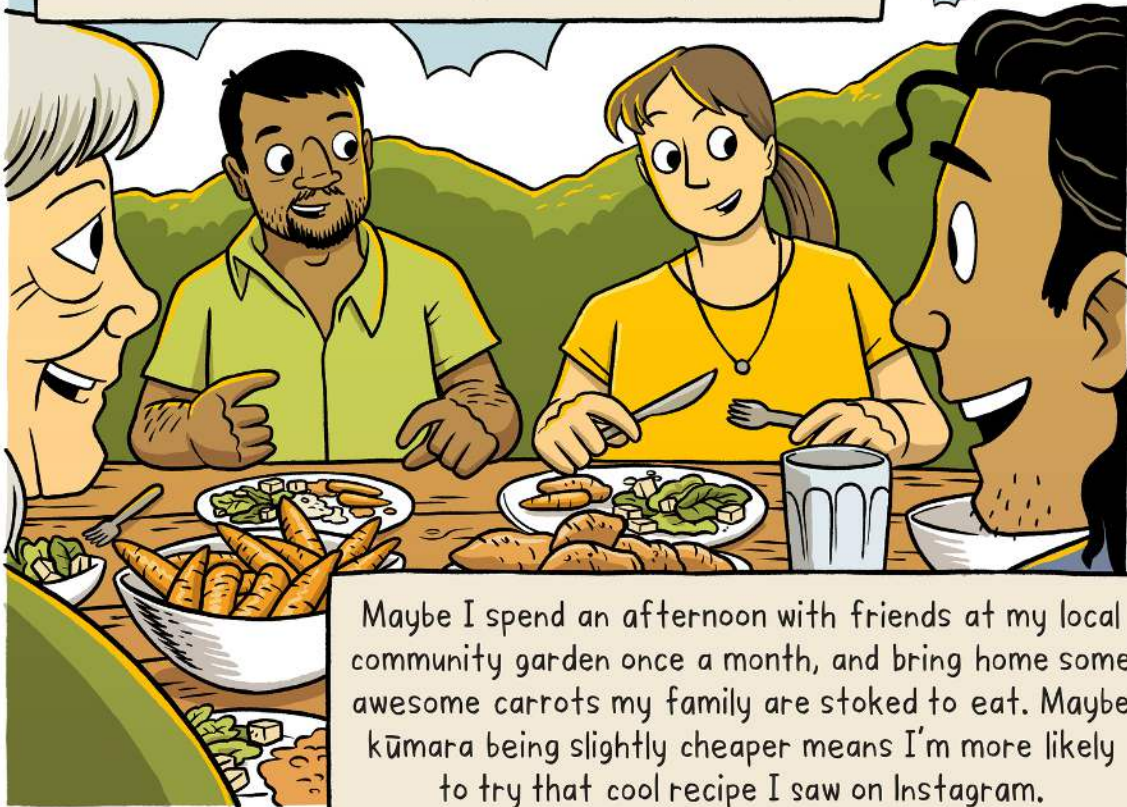
COST EFFECTIVENESS
Cost for each 'Health adjusted life year' gained



EQUITY
Ratio of health gain between Māori and non-Māori (Anything over 1 is higher per capita health gain for Māori, reducing inequity)

Similar to the Garden to Table policy, here we'd see less dramatic immediate health changes (although +0.50 HALY/ 1000 children is positive). But it would be cost saving, positive for equity and would have long-term benefits of building healthy lifestyle habits in kids as they move into adulthood.

In all of these policy ideas, the impact on an individual's daily life is pretty minor - maybe our kids spend a little more time in class learning about healthy eating.



Maybe I spend an afternoon with friends at my local community garden once a month, and bring home some awesome carrots my family are stoked to eat. Maybe kūmara being slightly cheaper means I'm more likely to try that cool recipe I saw on Instagram.

But collectively - downstream, the cumulative effects of those small changes for individuals can make large changes at a population level - real, tangible improvements: Longer life expectancies, less preventable disease, a positive impact on the land we love so much.



That could mean another year with grandma, swimming in a clean river, feeling strong and happy. That's worth trying.

For further information about this project
and our findings please see:

<https://www.otago.ac.nz/wellington/research/groups/research-groups-in-the-department-of-public-health/a-sustainable-diet-for-health-and-the-climate-in-aotearoa-new-zealand>

or please contact:

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