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| **Fruit and vegetable co-operatives in the Sydney region: A community-based solution to improving fruit and vegetable consumption?** |
| **Background/Objectives**Diets low in fruit and vegetables (F&V) are the leading dietary risk factors for cardiovascular disease, obesity, cancer and mortality. Only 5% of Australian children and adults eat enough F&V. Two common barriers to F&V consumption are high cost and limited access. Innovative population approaches to improve consumption of F&V are urgently needed. Community-based initiatives such as farmers markets, community gardens, cooking classes and food co-operatives (‘co-ops’) may have the potential to reduce barriers and improve consumption of F&V. We conducted a situation analysis of food co-ops in the Sydney region with the aim of describing characteristics, functions and objectives of co-ops.**Methods**We used Google and Facebook to identify food co-ops in the Sydney region. Food co-ops were excluded if they did not supply fruits and vegetables, if information was not available in English or did not reflect a school or community-based model. Using food co-op websites, we recorded the type, location, and objectives of each co-op. Ethical approval was obtained from University of Sydney Human Ethics Committee (no. 2017/1016)**Results**Fifteen food co-ops were identified in the Sydney region. Three co-ops operated across a number of sites within Sydney, seven co-ops supplied fruits and vegetables only and the prices for boxes of food ranged from $AUD 12 to $AUD 55 per box. Thirteen co-ops were not-for-profit and relied on volunteers to operate. Five operated within schools and two within Universities. Two co-ops relied on donated food from non-government organisations. A total of 13 of the 28 locations listed for the co-ops (46%) were in the higher deciles of social disadvantage (ie higher SES) and only 8 (28%) were in areas of high disadvantage.**Discussion**Our research provides a snapshot of the numbers and diversity of food co-ops in the Sydney region. These findings show that current food co-ops in Sydney are operating in higher SES areas. Our next steps will be to determine the feasibility of establishing food co-ops in areas of higher disadvantage and document the benefits and impacts of participation, including effects on quantity and diversity of F&V intake and community connectiveness. Our final aim is to determine whether the establishment of food co-ops may be a method to improve the affordability, access and ultimately improve the F&V intake of populations.**Keywords**Fruit, vegetable, food co-operative |