**The role of Regulatory Frameworks and Non-State Actors in Creating Sustainable Diets**

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Abstract

To know our ecological limits we must continue to embark on personal and collective reflection on what is essential for wellbeing. This reflection may necessarily involve internalising that we a facet of “…diverse but interconnected forms of life”.[[1]](#footnote-1) Accordingly, not only does knowing our ecological limits require a rethinking of life-styles and shifting the emphasis from economic growth but also the ability to identify with Earth. A barrier is that this revaluation seems to require intolerable change and sacrifice.[[2]](#footnote-2) Accordingly, this paper’s overarching proposal is that living within ecological limits will improve both the health and wellbeing of the planet and, not coincidentally, our own. This idea will be explored through transitions to sustainable diets.

Widespread adoption of sustainable diets is vital for living within our ecological limits. However, Australian regulatory responses to unsustainable diets are based solely on overnutrition. The emphasis has been framed as “the structural vs the individual”.[[3]](#footnote-3) The star-system labelling model, approved by the Australia and New Zealand Food Regulation Ministerial Council, reflects this reductionist and personal responsibility discourse.

In response, this paper reframes these discourses by critiquing legal responses to overnutrition within the reality of the unsustainable food system. The key argument is that limiting legal and policy responses to overnutrition artificially separates health and well-being of a person to that of the planet. Consequently, this approach aggravates adverse impacts on environmental and human health. In order to make this point, ecological public health will be used as a paradigm to shape legal and policy reform.

To begin this paper outlines the elements of sustainable diets and draws the connections between health and well-being of people and the planet. Secondly, the unsustainability of mainstream Australian diets and regulatory responses will be outlined. Lastly, this information will be synthesised into legal and policy reforms for transitioning to a sustainable diet that helps us to live in harmonious relationships within ourselves and with the wider Earth community.

Speaker Biography

Hope Johnson received first class honours in Bachelor of Laws with a minor in journalism in 2012. Currently, she is a PhD candidate with the School of Law at QUT and a member of the Australian Food Sovereignty Alliance. Her thesis is entitled “Progress towards sustainable food systems that align with emerging visions of progress: Regulatory frameworks and non-state actors at international and community levels”. Hope’s supervisors are Dr Rowena Maguire and Professor Douglas Fisher.

1. Mitchell Thomashow, *Ecological Identity: Becoming a Reflective Environmentalist* (MIT Press, 1996) 57. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Daniel A Farber, ‘Sustainable Consumption, Energy Policy, and Individual Well-being’ (2012) 65 *Vanderbilt Law Review* 1479, 1492. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Ruth M Armstrong, ‘Obesity, Law and Personal Responsibility’ (2007) 186 *Medical Journal of Australia* 20, 20. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)