



World Council of Churches Ten Principles for Food

April 2026

Then he took a loaf of bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to them, saying, "This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me."

Luke 22:19

The Justice and International Mission Cluster continues to invite you to join campaigns for social justice in our food systems to help address climate change, eliminate the exploitation of people working in food production, live sustainably, and promote human health.

As we noted in our February JustAct, the World Council of Churches, Ecumenical Advocacy Alliance, has been running a Food for Life Campaign, which can be accessed here <https://www.oikoumene.org/programme-activity/food-for-life>. It released an advocacy resource for congregations outlining 10 principles for how we should relate to food. The resource can be downloaded by searching for the title "Ten Commandments of Food".

The ten principles are:

1. Give thanks for the food you eat.
2. Eat food grown as close as possible to where you live.
3. Strive for all people to have knowledge about and access to affordable, nutritious food.
4. Eat mindfully and in moderation.
5. Do not waste food.
6. Be grateful to those who grow and prepare food for your table.
7. Support fair wages for farmworkers, farmers and food workers.
8. Reduce the environmental damage of land, water and air from food production and the food system.
9. Protect the biodiversity of seeds, soils, ecosystems and the cultures of food producers.
10. Rejoice and share the sacred gift of food with all.

We will provide a sheet in each JustAct for the rest of the year to further unpack these principles.

1. Give thanks for the food you eat

We recognise God as the source of everything we have, and praying before meals helps remind us of that truth. Praying before eating with a thankful heart brings glory to God and focuses our minds on the great love that God bestows on us and on all creation. Our eating should also remind us of God's goodness and make us deeply thankful for it. "Taste and see that God is good." (Psalm 34:8).



We may feel uncomfortable praying in front of other people or in public places. However, a brief offered prayer of gratitude for every meal, even those eaten in public, is a testimony of our faith. We can show humble gratitude and faith in our prayers. We commend Christ to the world when we pray, wherever we are, and give thanks for God's provision to us ([2 Cor. 5:10](#)).

2. Eat food grown as close as possible to where you live.

There are economic, environmental, health and social benefits in consuming locally grown food. Food that is grown closer to home is fresher and loses fewer nutrients during transportation. Purchasing food locally supports local farmers. Locally grown food has fewer transportation emissions. As the distance food travels decreases, the need for processing and refrigeration to reduce spoilage decreases. Dependence on locally grown food is crucial for both tackling climate change and rebuilding a resilient local food network. If we neglect locally sourced products, our markets become saturated with highly processed foods and sweetened beverages.



Global food-miles account for around 19% of all the emissions generated to get food on your plate, and the emissions from transporting fruit and vegetables are almost double the amount released during their production.

Avoid air-freighted food. Air transport generates many times more greenhouse gas emissions per tonne of food than all other forms of transport. Shipping and rail are by far the least carbon-intensive. Trucks, whilst nowhere near as good as rail or ship, are still many times better than air transport.

3. Strive for all people to have knowledge about and access to affordable, nutritious food.

“Just access” to food was given a very high priority by the followers of Jesus in the first century. The disciples appointed seven deacons with impeccable credentials to oversee food distribution after questions were raised about its fairness, and allegations of discrimination against one group of widows in the distribution of food rations arose.



Despite being a wealthy country, Foodbank’s Hunger Report for 2024 confirmed that, despite some recent improvement, in the previous year, close to two million Australian households (19%) continued to experience severe food insecurity. As a result, they often skipped meals, reduced portion sizes, or went entire days without eating. Charities have experienced a surge in demand for food relief. Emergency relief services providing food support often serve as an entry point to further assistance like housing, mental health, and family violence support. Despite their importance, they remain underfunded and heavily dependent on in-kind contributions, such as donated goods and volunteer labour, which cover 61% of delivery costs. For more information, see a report released by Uniting Vic.Tas in January 2026 <https://www.unitingvictas.org.au/too-critical-to-fail-the-precarity-of-emergency-relief-services/>

Ultra-Processed Foods (UPF) have become a significant part of our diet. In simple terms, they are highly processed foods containing additives and modified ingredients that you would not normally find in your kitchen. The additives and modified ingredients improve taste, appearance and shelf-life. However, they can also disrupt appetite regulation, leading to overeating and obesity. Around 66% of Australian adults are overweight or obese. Further, approximately 27,000 Australians die each year from preventable diet-related causes. UPF makes up 42% of the energy intake from food for the average Australian.¹

UPF has been linked to harm in every major organ system of the human body. It is responsible for rapidly displacing fresh food in the diets of children and adults across the globe. Dozens of studies have linked UPF to increased risks of health conditions, including obesity, type 2 diabetes, heart disease, fatty liver disease, cancer, asthma and depression.² For younger people or those who are financially poorer, UPF can make up as much as 80% of their diet. The marketing activities of multinational food corporations are driving up UPF consumption. Some UPFs are designed to provide a burst of intense flavour as quickly as possible, driving consumption.

The Justice and International Mission Cluster of the Synod of Victoria and Tasmania has postcards about reforms to reduce the harms from UPF. If you would like to order postcards for your congregation, family or friends to sign e-mail jim@victas.uca.org.au

¹ Nic Fleming, “Are ultra-processed foods really so unhealthy? What the science says”, *Nature*, 3 September 2025.

² Andrew Gregory, “Ultra-processed food linked to harm in every major human organ, study finds”, *The Guardian*, 19 November 2025.