

SUMMER RESEARCH 2024/25

PROJECT ABSTRACT



THE UNIVERSITY OF
WAIKATO
Te Whare Wānanga o Waikato

PROJECT # TBC

SUPERVISOR/S:	Professor Celine Louche
PROJECT TITLE:	Changes in the food rescue industry in New Zealand: exploring the implications for community led organisations and waste reduction
FIELD:	Social science/organisation studies; Sustainability
DIVISION/SCHOOL:	WMS - School of Management & Marketing
PROJECT LOCATION:	Hamilton
EXTERNAL PARTNER:	GoEco

PROJECT ABSTRACT:

The COVID 19 pandemic has triggered many changes in the food rescue industry in New Zealand in terms of growth, structuration, actors involved, and funding of the industry. The aim of this project is to explore the implications of those changes on the NGOs active in this industry and the implications on waste reduction. Food rescue organisations are non-profit groups that coordinate the activities of food collection, storing, sorting, and redistribution to those who need it most. The food is being rescued from various food industry actors- from producers, wholesalers to retailers and redistributed to those in need (most often) via community and non-for-profit organisations, and throughout the entire food supply chain.

With the COVID 19 pandemic, food insecurity became a national concern and food rescue organisations were named 'essential services'. This led to a number of significant changes in the industry including a growing demand and expectation on the industry, the emergence of new actors and initiatives such as Aotearoa Food Rescue Alliance (AFRA) and the New Zealand Food Network (NZFN), the use of new technologies, a re-structuration of the market, and new economic dynamics. However, as the OPMCSA report series on Food Loss and Waste highlights but also recent studies (Clare et al, 2023; Dombroski et al, 2020), we still need more research to understand interactions and collaborations between stakeholders, the mechanisms at play in supporting or hindering food waste reduction, and the dynamic of the industry.

Those changes have affected the entire industry, but in this project we want to focus our attention on the NGOs involved in the system. The objective of the project is twofold: 1) explore the impacts of the changes to the food rescue industry made since covid on the NGOs and, 2) understand the implications of those impacts on waste reduction.

References

- Clare, G., Miroso, M., & Bremer, P. (2023). The impact of COVID-19 on food rescue organisations in Aotearoa New Zealand and future crisis management. *British Food Journal*, 125(5), 1895-1913.
- Dombroski, K., Diprose, G., Sharp, E., Graham, R., Lee, L., Scobie, M., ... & Martin-Neuninger, R. (2020). Food for people in place: Reimagining resilient food systems for economic recovery. *Sustainability*, 12(22), 9369.
- OPMCSA Food Loss and Waste report series: <https://www.pmcsa.ac.nz/2024/06/27/releasing-our-reports-on-food-loss-and-waste/>

STUDENT SKILLS:

- The student should have a keen interest in sustainability related issues
- The student should be able to work autonomously
- The student should have good analytical skills to make sense of qualitative data (including analysing, interpreting qualitative data but also creativity and judgement to make sense of the data)
- The student should show good interpersonal skills in interacting with participants and the partner organisation

PROJECT TASKS:

1. Literature review: Conduct a literature review on food rescue in New Zealand (academic and grey literature)
2. Data collection:
 - Collect secondary data related to the food rescue industry in New Zealand
 - Interview 15 to 25 actors from the food rescue industry in New Zealand (with a special focus on NGOs)

3. Data analysis:

- Identify the changes in the industry since COVID 19
 - Analyse how those changes have impacted the industry and more especially the NGOs.
 - Analyse the implications on waste reduction and NGOs
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EXPECTED OUTCOMES:

- Student's Research Poster (as per clause 6 of the [Scholarship regulations](#))
- Write a report including the following elements:
 - Presentation of the literature review
 - Identification of the changes in the food rescue industry since the COVID 19
 - Analysis of the impact of those changes in the industry with a special attention to NGO and on waste reduction
 - Draw some conclusions and recommendations
- Present the outcomes of the research at the partner organisation