



## Māori kai sovereignty to achieve food security

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The FAO states that the term food sovereignty focuses on food for the people by placing people's need for food at the centre of policies and insists that food is more than just a commodity. Food Sovereignty also promotes knowledge and skills by building on traditional knowledge; using research to support and pass on this knowledge to future generations; and rejecting technologies that undermine local food systems. It is essentially a movement that "recognizes that control over the food system needs to remain in the hands of producers, and is clearly focused primarily on small-scale agriculture of a non-industrial nature, preferably organic"<sup>(1)</sup>. In Māori terms, Kai Sovereignty is drawn first from the relationship of foods to our needs; it is expressed through whakapapa, and has an overarching contribution to food security. Traditional foods abound in Aotearoa. The relationships are longstanding, expressive and contribute to our wellbeing in various ways<sup>(2)</sup>. But the true cultural value of traditional foods is diminishing as new foods, lifestyles and experiences succeed them. Kai sovereignty therefore is at risk of being relegated to historical discourse. The FAO acknowledgement of the intergenerational role of traditional knowledge to support food sovereignty aligns well to the Māori experience. This knowledge covers a myriad of food relationships including foraging, producing, harvesting, processing, cooking and manaakitanga. We are in a renaissance period that seeks to rediscover our relationship with the pātaka, the food store. So much knowledge has been lost, but much also remains. How we draw that together in a way that acknowledges the whakapapa or historical relationship alongside the present and future. The right to achieving kai sovereignty is yet to be properly understood within our communities. The first steps lie in the knowledge space; sharing and acknowledgement of our food traditions before they are lost or misinterpreted.

### References

1. Gordillo G & Jeronimo OM (2013) *Food Security and Sovereignty: base document for discussion*, FAO, Rome. Available from <https://www.fao.org/3/ax736e/ax736e.pdf>
2. Roskruge N (2015) *Tahuaroa: Korare – Maori Green Vegetables*, Publ. Tahuri Whenua Inc. Palmerston North, NZ112pp