


# Producing food, reducing waste and building community resilience

## Kaicycle

Industrial food production is responsible for around a third of human-caused greenhouse gas emissions. Kaicycle's composting program and urban farm shows how growing food locally can support the wellbeing of people and place.

Tucked down a Newtown side street, a different kind of industry is buzzing. Billions of microbes break down around 40 tonnes of food scraps collected from Wellington homes and businesses each year. A team of farm managers and compost specialists plans the next crop of organic produce. Bees drift from flower to hive. From kindy kids to retirees with a passion for gardening, people tend the māra at Kaicycle's urban farm.

Kaicycle grows food through regenerative practices that improve the health of people and the environment. The group's model is designed as an alternative to industrial food systems which can pollute the environment and generate lots of waste through the way food is grown, processed, transported, prepared and disposed of. This work strengthens local food resilience and contributes to a circular, low-carbon food system in Pōneke.

Community farm manager Rose Dohig says local composting and growing can benefit communities across Pōneke by turning food scraps into plant food.

"The overarching vision of Kaicycle is to have spaces in every suburb in Wellington, in Pōneke, where regenerative growing practices are taking place and food scraps are turned into compost." – *Liam Prince, Kaicycle*



Part of the farm is reserved for cultivating in line with mātauranga Māori. Crops include hue and kūmara, and harakeke is cared for, harvested and woven. With funding through the Climate and Sustainability Fund in 2024, Kaicycle launched Māra Māori ki Whanganui-a-Tara - facilitating māra sessions for whānau Māori by whānau Māori to wānanga traditional and sustainable growing practices. These sessions support kai sovereignty and empower Māori to take tangible climate action with the whenua. Kaicycle is on the journey of becoming certified under the Hua Parakore framework facilitated by the national Māori organics authority Te Waka Kai Ora.

Cycles are meaningful for this community in many ways. There are seasonal cycles, life cycles, and the important garden-to-table-and-back-again cycle. And then there's bicycles.

'Kaicyclists' use e-bikes to collect food scraps from businesses and homes around the city. Composting manager Liam Prince says compost from food waste is a precious resource that reduces reliance on fertilisers and helps to keep soil healthy.

Teaching people to grow food and make compost is part of the group's resilience efforts, along with donating most of the farm's produce. Food grown at Kaicycle is shared with volunteers and donated to community groups including Newtown Community

Centre and the Home of Compassion soup kitchen. Any extra compost is gifted to community gardens at marae, social housing complexes and schools.

"It's easy to talk about the impact of diverting waste from landfill and producing food, the tangible quantitative impact. But actually it's so much deeper than that. It's all of the other activities and people that contribute in so many ways." - *Liam Prince, Kaicycle*

Volunteers help with tasks like planting seeds or seedlings, processing food and green waste, turning compost, watering garden beds, harvesting crops, making seed-raising mix and sifting compost. Occasionally a group of workmates will spend a team day learning and helping on the farm, or ākonga from a local school will visit for a field trip.

The urban farm is a public space and has been referred to as an outdoor community centre. Sometimes people come to enjoy their lunch break. Patients and staff visit for time away from the nearby hospital. Rose Dohig says volunteer numbers have doubled over the course of a year, and people seem to enjoy the hopeful and solution-focused aspects of Kaicycle.

Kaicycle is taking local action for local resilience and tackling climate change in the process. Through their mahi, food waste is recycled, people learn to grow food without environmentally damaging fertilisers, and package-free produce is distributed locally without the need for intensive transport. This work delivers measurable carbon emission reductions and builds a resilient, community-led food system that supports long-term climate adaptation.

Rose Dohig and Liam Prince agree building a connected community is one of the best ways to reduce and adapt to the effects of climate change.

"The interest we see from volunteers goes to show how many people are wanting to have that sense of community." - *Rose Dohig, Kaicycle*



Supporting community gardens allows us to reconnect with the whenua, reduce waste, and build local food resilience. Get involved – learn, share and help cultivate a thriving, sustainable Pōneke.

To learn more visit **kaicycle.org.nz**