Frequently Asked Questions:
VCE Food Studies

What are records of practical activities?

Records of practical activities support the learning that occurs through practical work. These records can take on a variety of formats. Refer to the table of Examples of records of practical activities [www.vcaa.vic.edu.au/Pages/vce/adviceforteachers/foodstudies/examples.aspx](http://www.vcaa.vic.edu.au/Pages/vce/adviceforteachers/foodstudies/examples.aspx) to get an idea of possible ideas of practical records.

Why is agriculture a focus of Unit 1 Food Studies?

Unit 1 focuses on how human populations have fed themselves across time and across the world, including Australia. The establishment of reliable food supplies has been a key factor throughout human history – not just to survival but to humanity’s capacity to adapt to change, advance their knowledge and progressively lay claim to most of the planet. Agriculture is seen as pivotal to the advent of food surpluses, leading to the establishment of cities, new societal structures and hierarchies and unprecedented opportunities for exploration, trade and migration.

How does the history of food relate to food today?

The focus of Unit 1 is not to dwell on the archaeobotanical origins of agriculture or the anthropology of hunter-gatherer societies, but to consider these topics in terms of the foods people eat (or had eaten previously), how food was produced, prepared and shared, and how particular foods came to be viewed as commodities and/or signature ingredients of distinctive food cultures and cuisines. The purpose is to understand the food of today, through the lens of where we have come from.

Did indigenous Australians use both hunter-gathering and agricultural systems?

Care should be taken not to present a linear history of hunter-gathering inevitably followed by the ‘progress’ of agriculture. There should be an awareness that these two systems often co-existed for many generations within a region, even for thousands of years, and the advancement of agriculture throughout the world, including Australia, was gradual. Both systems presented benefits and problems for their communities. The giving up of hunter-gathering in the early centres of agriculture exacted a high price for humanity–for example in susceptibility to bad seasons, overcrowded living conditions, advent of animal-borne diseases and epidemics and the loss of diversity in the foods that were eaten–a loss of diversity that continues today. The social costs were also high for groups that had previously enjoyed the autonomy and self-sufficiency of providing themselves with food, but then found themselves cast low in urban social hierarchy. Again, these social issues continue today.

Where can I find out information about indigenous food practices?

Barbara Santich’s recent food studies research dispels the widespread assumption that European settlers ignored indigenous food sources and practices. ‘The Oldest Foods on Earth’ by John Newton also examines this in detailed, but accessible language. Teachers need to be mindful of not labeling all Aboriginal groups as hunter gatherers or nomads – Bruce Pascoe’s recent research demonstrates that some Aboriginal groups undertook plant cultivation and flour-milling practices. An edition of Gourmet Traveller in 2016 has an article about Australians discovering bread.

From where can I obtain Indigenous ingredients?

There are a range of resources available about using indigenous ingredients and where to source these ingredients. SBS Food [www.sbs.com.au/food](http://www.sbs.com.au/food)has a number of recipes and information about Indigenous foods. Indigenous ingredients can be sourced in a variety of ways including:

* by mail order such as Outback Pride [www.outbackpride.com.au/](http://www.outbackpride.com.au/) and The Bush Food Shop [www.bushfoodshop.com.au/](http://www.bushfoodshop.com.au/)
* purchased from speciality supermarket, specifically kangaroo meats and wattle seed
* grown at school – your local nursery should be able to recommend local plants that will grow easily in your area. River mint and warrigal greens, for example, are quite easy-to-grow.

What is a food system?

A food system refers to the many activities involving the production, processing, transport and consumption of food, all of which can affect food accessibility in different ways and subsequently health. A food system analyses how, from farm to consumer, raw commodities are value added to them and includes supply of agricultural inputs, primary food production, processing and manufacturing sectors, food distribution, food retailing, food catering and domestic food. The various ways consumers eat (prepare and consume) food is also part of the food system.

What is the focus of Unit 4? Is it on Australia’s role in a global food system?

Yes.

The focus of VCE Food Studies Unit 4: Food issues, challenges and futures relates to the Australian and global food systems.

Students need to understand Australia’s role within a global food system, with a focus on content related to Australia’s food system. For example, the application of Australian research and development about food production and how this expertise contributes, or could potentially contribute, to the diets of people overseas.

The ethical principles and questions of concern studied in Unit 4 need to relate to those of Australian food consumers. Also, the environmental sustainability issues and the environmental effects studied need to relate to the Australian food system.