

# Re thinking food

## An enquiry by the Climate Change, Environment and Rural Affairs Committee, National Assembly for Wales

*Response from the Federation of City Farms and Community Gardens specifically in the context of Community Supported Agriculture*

### About this response

As part of the Tyfu Fyny project, the Federation of City Farms and Community Gardens (FCFCG) is implementing a programme to support Community Supported Agriculture in Wales, and this response relates specifically to CSA and the contribution it can make to a fairer, more local more sustainable food system.

It is based on:

- The outcomes of a discussion session at the FCFCG Wales CSA Gathering, a meeting of key projects from across Wales, held at Cae Tan CSA 16 September 2017
- There are two documents key to making the case for policy support for systems based on the principles of food sovereignty, which are integral to the ethos of CSA. The delegates agreed that these should be used as a basis for this response. Specifically
  - [Making Food Sovereignty a reality: Recommendations for post Brexit agricultural policy](#), Landworker Alliance 2017
  - [A Peoples Food Policy](#), Land Workers' Alliance, Global Justice Now, the Ecological Land Co-op, The Centre for Agroecology and the Permaculture Association, 2017

### About Community Supported Agriculture

Community supported agriculture (CSA) is a partnership between farmers and consumers in which the responsibilities, risks and rewards of farming are shared. Consumers, often described as CSA members, are closely linked to the farm and the production of their food, and provide support that goes beyond a straight forward marketplace exchange of money for goods. This involvement may be through ownership or investment in the farm or business, sharing the costs of production, accepting a share in the harvest or providing labour. Farmers receive a more stable and secure income and closer connection with their community, and consumers benefit by eating fresh healthy local food, feeling more connected to the land where their food is grown and learning new skills.

## Our Vision

We embrace the principles of food sovereignty as set out in the documents identified above and place particular emphasis on the community based agriculture in all its forms. Our vision is:

'A food system in which people of all income levels and backgrounds, whether urban or rural, should have access to healthy, regionally produced, affordable food from farmers and growers they can trust. It embraces community based approaches to production and distribution, including CSA, community farming and growing and urban/ peri urban systems. It supports a vibrant mixture of economically viable, independent, small and medium farms and growing schemes, both traditional family farms and innovative production models while looking after our landscapes, biodiversity and wildlife.

More specifically it:

- Focuses on meeting, and adapts to, the nutritional needs of local communities
- Supports healthier, better informed/ connected communities with respect to diet, nutritional and food and farming issues
- Supports a system that enables farmers and growers to derive a decent living from food production, as opposed to mere economic survival
- Provides significant levels of meaningful employment in food and farming businesses, building the foundations of thriving, vibrant rural economies
- Supports agro-ecological production systems as defined by the [declaration of the International Forum for Agroecology](#)
- Promotes a more self-sufficient model of farming that relies less on external inputs such as feed and fertilizer
- Relies heavily on short supply chains and direct/ local marketing
- Encourages new entrants into farming and growing, especially young people, including facilitating access to land, training and apprenticeships
- Restores decision making, and decision-making powers, to local level

## The contribution of CSA

Community supported agriculture has the potential to make a very significant contribution to making this vision a reality. That contribution is limited only by the size of the movement and the number of projects/ communities participating

- The CSA movement is characterised by small scale, diverse, mixed production systems, based to a very large extent on the principles of agroecology.
- As such they provide a significant number of jobs and work opportunities (as measured per hectare) and contribute to vibrant rural economy
- By definition CSAs embrace short supply chains, and ensure the supply of fresh, nutritious food, tailored directly to the nutritional requirements of local communities

- By sharing the risks as well as the rewards of food production, and providing a fair, guaranteed income, contribution to creating more financially viable and robust businesses and viable communities
- By involving communities directly in the food production, marketing and distribution they help to educate with respect to food and farming issues. They also promote fresh air and exercise and deliver have significant benefits for both physical and mental health
- By involving communities directly in the business, it by definition brings decision making to a very local level, putting control and management of food production, processing and distribution back into hands of local communities

## What do CSAs need

CSAs need a political climate/ frame work that supports the delivery of our vision. Many of our recommendations are common to all small – medium, independent, diverse farms, and therefore align closely with the recommendations put forward by the LWA in their post Brexit position paper. Others are specific to the community supported agriculture, and community farming and growing more widely.

- The current budget CAP Wales budget support should be redirected to support active farmers and growers to produce high quality food for local, regional and national markets.
- Area-payments should be replaced with targeted support delivered through a single agency.
- Administration systems to be simplified to enable producers to apply; a system that requires specialist outside inputs e.g. through consultants is not fit for purpose
- The threshold for minimum land area (below which farms are not supported) should be removed.
- Individual payments should be capped at £120,000/ yr
- Environmental payments should be awarded to support soil health, enhance biodiversity, improve water management and encourage sustainable forestry and available to all food producers.
- Specific support should be provided for training, apprenticeships and research to encourage new-entrants into the industry, particularly for horticulture.
- Specific infrastructure support should be provided to encourage farmers to convert to more environmentally, socially and economically resilient mixed farming systems. This should also be available to community based growing schemes.
- Significant resources should be invested in infrastructure to support short supply chains e.g. (localised packing, processing, killing/ cutting/ facilities, more farmers markets, independent shops, wholesalers etc.
- An “innovative farm structures” start-up grants should promote Community Supported Agriculture and Low Impact Farming Hamlets.
- Special payments should be targeted to boost employment in horticulture and small-scale dairy sectors.

- A tariff and regulatory regime should be applied to protect domestic markets from food imports produced to lower environmental and social standards.
- The Grocery Code Adjudicator should be invested with meaningful power to provide effective regulation of the food retailers.