

PILOT LOCAL FOOD HUB MENTORING REPORT

Overview, Evaluation and Recommendations

Introduction:

The aim of this report is to provide a useful overview of the current opportunities and challenges which are facing the pilot local food hubs in Wales. There are also several collections of selected and indexed reports and links to websites attached to the report. These have been selected in response to the questions and concerns raised with me by the hubs themselves. The aim with these, and with the report as a whole, is to provide practical and useful information which will assist the hubs in moving to the next step in their development, to assist them in making their best contribution to what I'm calling a 'local/equitable/sustainable' food system in Wales, and to be evidence which could support future funding applications from these hubs or other organisations.

The three local food hubs I was asked to work with are all quite different from each other in terms of their main aims, their location and their operation. The one aim they have in common is to work towards the possibility of enabling more local people to have access to local food. The hubs are at different stages in this process, with one (Peninsula Producers) already acting to aggregate locally produced food for customers using the Open Food Network platform, whereas the other two (Canolfan Maerdy and Cwm) are at this stage primarily acting as food banks to make affordable food available to people on low incomes.

Overall, the purpose of my mentoring to date has been more to do with raising questions than providing answers, in the belief that once each hub has more clarity about their aims and operations, they will be better able to seek out the information they need and to know which steps, and what support and resources, will take them in the right direction.

Underlying this work are two key questions: Are food hubs the most effective and efficient way to enable/encourage more local people to eat local food? And if not, what kind of approach would work better, and where should future funding be invested? As a part of answering this question I was keen to look at what has been done elsewhere in the U.K. to effectively overcome obstacles to making fresh food affordable and appealing to people on low incomes, and I've aimed to shed light on this with the reports and links which I've collected.

What is meant by Sustainable Food?

This is food which has a lower impact on the environment by being produced in a socially responsible and environmentally friendly manner, even though it is not necessarily 'local'. Food produced sustainably ideally helps to protect biodiversity, wildlife habitats, and respects workers. Sustainability aims to support buying food as local as possible, but just because it's local does not always mean it's produced sustainably. Local food may involve chemicals, fertilizers, factory farming or hormone use. The most sustainable food possible is when people grow their own in allotments or gardens, or pool together to create community farms – and an increasing number of people are choosing to do this.

Advantages of Local Food: Eating locally first means choosing food that is grown and harvested close to where you live, and then distributed over shorter distances than is usually the case. At present there is no officially agreed-upon distance for what constitutes eating locally. This leaves consumers to decide what 'local' food means to them. For some people, local is considered

anything produced within a 150-mile radius. For others it means anything harvested within the same county.

Developing a Local/Equitable/Sustainable Food System in Wales; a personal perspective.

In my view, in a sustainable/equitable food system, everyone from all demographics would be able to afford, and have access to, healthy food that they enjoy which has been produced locally in a sustainable way. Such a system would: create employment; enhance the natural environment; reduce greenhouse gasses; and improve the health of the whole community.

Currently, only relatively well-off people have access to such food. Food hubs which operate as producer cooperatives are an effective way to enhance that access and, with the right marketing, to increase it to the point where they may generate sufficient surplus to be able to subsidise local food for people on low incomes, alongside offering cooking classes, farm visits and other ways to encourage people to 'eat local'. These hubs need more marketing support to increase their customer base and turnover, and to ensure that producers are financially resilient.

However, even if demand for local food were to increase, and it were made more affordable, not enough food is currently being grown or produced in Wales to feed even a small proportion of the population. More land will have to be made available for growing, and more people given the skills, capital and motivation needed for increased local food production to be possible. Relatively small amounts of land can be very productive, and there is potentially enough land in Wales to grow all the fresh food we need, if for example skilled growers could mentor new entrants into the local food sector. Where there is no arable land, alternative forms of commercial-scale horticulture might be appropriate, such as vertical growing, CEA, hydroponics, aquaponics and other 'high tech' growing systems, although the cost of energy to run these may be prohibitive.

With current food prices, it's only possible to make a meagre living in horticulture, even charging premium prices, and it's physically hard work. This may discourage potential new growers, and it means that people on low incomes can't afford what they produce. Some kind of government subsidy for either producers or customers will be necessary to change this situation. Less affluent people feel they can't afford locally produced food - even if it was available to them, and it was what they wanted to eat – even though cooking from fresh can be cheaper than supermarket food.

Many people on low incomes are not used to buying, cooking and eating fresh healthy food. There is an education job to be done in schools, and with adults, using role models, cooking classes and other educational activities alongside some kind of subsidy programme, to nudge those people into cooking and eating healthier food for themselves and their families. Eating locally produced food could be a matter of pride, as well as of health and enjoyment.

There's a food-supply and environmental crisis coming, but in Wales the policy context still seems to be lagging behind this imminent reality. In the longer term national and local governments need to take more effective measures in terms of making land available for food growing and enabling people to work on that land. Significant investment is urgently needed in order to create a re-localised and equitable food system which would also create local employment.

I believe that enabling everyone to eat healthy food could be a part of Welsh Government's health budget – because it will reduce health service costs in the long term. A government -funded education and information/pricing campaign could wean people off unhealthy food (in the same way as was done with smoking/alcohol) and to encourage people to eat fresh local food. More

people could learn to produce some of their own food, even on small areas. Community gardens bring benefits to mental health as well as producing healthy food for participants.

The small pilots and government investment currently being delivered in Wales for example as part of the Resilient Green Spaces programme, along with case studies and research from other places, are yielding valuable learning and evidence. This information needs to be organised and presented if it is to be effective at convincing government to invest more resources in the sustainable/equitable food system of the future, in some of the ways described above. I hope that this report, and the resources which accompany it, will make a useful contribution to this process.

Aims of my Food Hub Mentoring – An Overview

Short-term aims.

- Identify and describes clear and realistic steps to create a sustainable/equitable local food system in each area.
- Identify and share case studies of food hubs and other community food initiatives who are making progress in creating sustainable/equitable local food systems.
- Identify possible sources of funding for creating sustainable/equitable local food systems.
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Medium-term aims:

- Identify research which describes local food projects which are succeeding in making fresh/healthy/sustainable/tasty/ food accessible to, and appealing to, people on low incomes.
- Identify existing food hubs which balance being a thriving producer coop selling locally produced food to local people with making a contribution to reducing food poverty. Describe their key aims and attributes, and of what lessons can be applied in the RGS project.
- Explore innovative approaches to local food production that are appropriate to, or could be adapted to, brownfield sites and peri-urban areas, with the capacity to create local employment and to make healthy local food more easily available to all local people.

Longer Term Aims:

To contribute to the development of a model for how local food hubs can contribute to a sustainable/equitable local food system that is responsive to the demographics and the geography of the food hubs. Identifies key leverage points where financial or other pressure can be applied to create change in food production, distribution, access and affordability in order to create a sustainable/equitable local food system in keeping with the RGS goals.

The mentoring process.

A main aim for me with the mentoring process was to help the three hubs reflect on how they would define 'success', to clarify any obstacles to achieving that and think about realistic ways to overcome them.

Initially I contacted each Food Hub with the following aims:

- i. To clarify what support they needed from me, and actions they currently plan to take, to operate effectively/efficiently.
- ii. Suggestions for other development actions they could take, drawing on case studies of projects operating in similar environments to theirs, and how I could support them with those.

- iii. To explore the possibility of consulting with local residents to find out what they want/need from the hub.

My mentoring objectives

As well as describing the current operation of the local food hubs which are being supported by the Resilient Green Spaces scheme, this overview report draws on reports and case studies of sustainable/equitable food systems from elsewhere, as well as our own experience in Wales, to indicate the level and type of support which will be needed for the hubs to contribute to a sustainable food future for Wales, and to help enable effective funding applications to be created.

My hope is that this will encourage Welsh Government to invest more on sustainable/equitable food systems, and to provide the hubs with examples that they could emulate with evidence that could provide the basis for future funding applications. I have indexed and attached a collection of information resources to support the food hubs to reach their potential in terms of meeting the needs of their local community.

I believe this work is especially important at this time because we need to consider the likely climate scenarios for ten and twenty years in the future, in order to model the realistic implications for the global/local food system of those scenarios, and so begin to plan for where Wales needs to be at each stage to ensure a sustainable supply of food to our population by identifying the practical and achievable steps which will get us there.

Initial Questions:

1. What is the biggest obstacle to creating a sustainable/equitable local food system in Wales? How can that best be overcome?
2. Can food hubs and local producers make it possible for everyone to be able to afford sustainable/local food? How do the economics of this level of accessibility work?
3. What lessons can be/have been learned from other parts of Europe/UK/World about how best to increase the availability of affordable/local/sustainable food.
4. What academic research has been done on how the Food Hubs/local producers' partnership can best deliver sustainable/local food to everyone?
5. What is the current scale of operation of Food Hubs in the UK – turnover/customers/producers? What do customers and producers like most/least?
6. What return does a farmer make selling through a food hub in comparison with selling direct at a farmers' market or through a box scheme? And how do prices compare for consumers?
7. What is Land Workers Alliance's (LWA) priority mission? How does it deliver on that mission? How successful has it been so far? What are the main obstacles? How can/will those be overcome?
8. What is Open Food Network's (OFN) priority mission? How does it deliver on that mission? How successful has it been so far? What are the main obstacles? How can/will those be overcome?

As I saw it, my role with the food hubs at this stage was to help them identify:

- specific key elements in their area which need to be connected together in a coordinated and practical way to create the foundation for a viable model of a 'food hub'.
- the ways in which those elements needed to operate in relation to each other for the hub to function.
- the current obstacles to that interconnected operation.
- practical suggestions for how those obstacles can best be overcome.

From conversations with each of the hub managers, I concluded that to function as an effective food hub which will enable more people to buy locally produced food, the following elements are needed:

1. An up-front expression of interest on the part of sufficient producers to supply the hub at wholesale prices.
2. Sufficient customers who are willing and able to purchase local food at premium prices.
3. Or some form of subsidy to either producers or customers to make local food more affordable.

The essential questions which I suggested that the food hubs needed find out the answers to were:

- Who are the potential producers in the local area?
- Are a sufficient number of them willing/able to supply the food hub?
- If not, why not? – and how could that obstacle be overcome?
- If so, what quantity are they willing to supply of which types of produce?
- Are there local customers with the interest and capacity to buy that food at the price offered?
- If not, why not? And how could that obstacle be overcome?
- If so, is a local food hub the most cost-effective way to connect purchasers with producer?
- Does the Cwm food hub have the capacity to fulfil that role, or access to the investment needed to develop the capacity to fulfil it?
- If not, what additional investment is needed in the hub, or what would be the best alternative way to connect customers with producers?

(I have aimed to represent this intersecting set of elements in diagrammatic form in Appendix 2)

Overview Questions for food hubs managers

- What do you see as your main aims/priorities with setting up the food hub? Have these changed with time?
- Do you have any specific plans to change/expand your operation in the coming weeks/months?
- What are your main goals in the next 3 years?
- What have been, currently are, or are anticipated in the future to be the greatest obstacles to you achieving these?
- Has the LWA supported you to date, and what further support do you think you need from them?
- Has the Open Food Network supported you to date, and what further support do you think you need from them? Have you had any issues with the OFN Platform?
- How do you evaluate how well the Food Hub is operating, for customers and/or producers?
- What support are you hoping or needing to get from my mentoring at this stage?
- Do you have a procurement policy, and can we see it? If not a written policy, can you explain the parameters that you apply when deciding which food producers to work with?
- What is your most effective type of marketing - to potential customers or producers, and do you have plans to do more – or to try something different?
- How many suppliers do you currently have?
- What is the largest gap in terms of type of product – do you any plans to fill that?
- Are you currently expanding or contracting in terms of customers and producers? Why do you think this is?
- How do you keep the hub going off-season?
- If you had extra funding right now, what would you do with it?

My initial mentoring actions:

1. I met with each Food Hub to discuss:
 - i. What support they thought they needed from me, and actions they were planning to take, in order to operate effectively/efficiently.
 - ii. Suggestions for other development actions they could take, including consulting with local residents to find out what they want/need from the Hub, drawing on case studies of projects operating in similar environments to theirs,
2. I reviewed existing relevant material to identify:
 - i. Policy approaches from other places which are relevant to the challenge of expanding a Sustainable/Equitable Food System in the RGS locations.
 - ii. Organisations/projects in similar areas who have solved the "local vs accessible dilemma in ways which could be replicated.
 - iii. Descriptions of other possible food system solutions which could be implemented.
3. Offered practical marketing support it e.g. in distributing leaflets/ customer research etc.
4. Created a collection of resources which would provide helpful information to help the food hubs achieve their goals and reach their potential, and to make their case to potential funders.
5. Create an overview summary of each hub for them to review and reflect on

FOOD HUBS – SUMMARIES

The three hubs have agreed that these are accurate representations of their current situation. I hope sharing these will be helpful to each of the hubs.

1. PENINSULA PRODUCERS FOOD HUB**Main aims:**

- To make locally grown or produced food available to local residents and visitors creating a resilient and sustainable small food industry on and around the St David's Peninsula
- To act as a conventional food hub which aggregates food items which have been pre-ordered with the Open Food Network platform from a variety of local producers, at a local customer collection point.
- To generate sufficient income from a mark-up on these sales to be financially viable, with any profit being reinvested in community projects.
- To reduce local people's food shopping carbon miles to benefit our local environment.

Main obstacles:

- Not enough customers/turnover especially in Winter season
- Pick up time does not work for many locals; Saturday morning is a short window.
- Some producers don't feel it is worth being on the hub due to low sales.
- People on low incomes not able to afford locally produced food.
- A sector of the population not aware of or prioritising the benefits of eating fresh food or environmental benefits of buying local.

Plans to overcome these:

- A marketing strategy comprising a range of marketing activities to increase sales.
- When/if there is sufficient income, to subsidise prices in order to enable local people on low-income to buy from the hub.

Current main needs:

- Staff time to engage in planned marketing activities, particularly raising local awareness of the hub to more local residents and also visitors.
- Retain buyers throughout the off season perhaps by reviewing ordering and collection process, delivery option?
- Maintain fresh food, especially salad and veg, through the winter months to ensure sufficient range to keep buyers.
- Awareness/educational campaign to promote the benefits of eating fresh food.

Future needs:

- If customer demand for local produce increases, sufficient local growers to meet that need.
- To access some form of subsidy to make local food more affordable to people on low incomes.

Information Provided

1. Shared perspectives and ideas about marketing, with the aim of helping the hub increase customers so that turnover gets to the point where they can begin to afford subsidising food for people on low incomes and delivering other social benefits such as cooking classes and other educational activities.

2. Shared innovative approaches to addressing food poverty that have been used in other areas e.g. the two-tier OFN pricing structure used by Cwm Food Hub (Treherbert); and introduced the hub to possible ways of subsidising prices which have been used successfully elsewhere, such as 'Pay forward'; Crowdfunding etc. (see attached resources)

2. CANOLFAN MAERDY FOOD HUB**Main aims:**

- To provide accessible food to customers from the local area in three main ways:
 1. As a food bank; 2. As a community food pantry; 3. as a food hub aggregating local food.
- To support people to grow some fruit and vegetables for distribution/sale to local people.
- In the longer term, to make fresh food from local producers available to local people.

- **Main obstacles:**

- Shortfall in donations needed from Fare Share and the local supermarket to meet local needs.
- Fruit trees and allotments not yet producing, and relatively small-scale.
- Very little arable land in the area which would be suitable for vegetable production.
- Low-income customers might not be able to afford, or willing to purchase, fresh local food.

Plans to overcome these:

- Ongoing fundraising to support continued provision of economical/free food for local people with low incomes.
- Support for local people to develop skills and experience growing fruit and vegetables on the community allotments.
- Linking local primary schools and local groups who will cultivate community gardens.
- An awareness/education programme to encourage people to buy/cook/eat fresh local food.

Current main needs:

- To employ a new 'food hub' coordinator – salary paid from Landfill Tax grant.
- Funding to continue to supply affordable food to local customers.
- Support (advice and funding) to encourage local people to engage in food-growing activities.
- To confirm lease with Celtic Energy for the Canolfan Maerdy land and buildings – essential for fundraising
- Fencing for the community allotment, to stop sheep eating the produce.

Future needs:

- To link with local producers of fresh food to make that available to local people.
- Some form of subsidy to make local food affordable for local people on low incomes.

Information Provided

1. Identified innovative types of local food production which would be suited to the local geography, and which could create employment and supply the food hub (see attached resources)
2. Provided information on maximising production from their own allotment and orchard (see attached resources)
3. Suggest ways that they can use the OFN platform to maximise local awareness of, and access to, donated and subsidised food.
4. Suggest the possibility of the food hub functioning as a food co-op – bulk buying staple items to reduce the price for low-income customers.
5. Suggest possible sources of support for local people who would be interested in cultivating land in the locality (see attached resources)

3. CWM FOOD HUB**Main aims:**

- To provide an affordable mix of locally produced fresh food and subsidised low-cost food for local people.
- To explore possibilities for local food production using conventional and/or intensive and 'high tech' growing methods

Main obstacles:

- Insufficient demand for food from local producers to make it worth their while to sell through the hub.
- Shortfall in donations from Fare Share and the local supermarket to meet local needs.
- There is very little arable land in the area which would be suitable for vegetable production.

- Low-income customers are not able to afford, and may not be interesting in purchasing, fresh local food.
- Limited skills capacity in food growing locally at sufficient scale (at least market-garden scale) to offer a year-round sustainable supply of produce.
- Competing organisational/ 3rd sector priorities to secure funding.

Ways to overcome these:

- Ongoing fundraising to support continued provision of economical/free food.
- Lobbying Welsh Government and Local Authority to identify, and make available, suitable land in the vicinity for vegetable production.
- Training, start-up grants and subsidies for to enable new growers to cultivate freed-up land.
- Funding to invest in the installation of a local hydroponic/vertical growing system.
- Working with local partners to promote local food growing/ production.
- Planned launch of a formal horticultural skills training courses (NVQ2) at Welcome to Our Woods (Cwm food hub host organisation) in Treherbert (September 2023).

Current main needs:

- Marketing campaign to gain more customers for the food hub.
- Funding to continue to supply affordable food to local people.
- Awareness and educational campaign to encourage people to buy more fresh local food.
- Subsidy of some kind to enable more people to afford fresh local food.

Future needs:

- Funding to expand the hub's operation, possibly to include outlying areas.
- Increased access to arable land in the area – funding has just been agreed for the hub's host organisation to have access to 5 acres of land and to host a horticulture training course in collaboration with a local college.
- Funding to enable to growers to start-up as local food producers.
- Continuing food price or production subsidy to enable low-income customers to purchase fresh local food.
- A regional focus on food growing/ horticultural skills development.

Information Provided

1. Provided contacts with potential producers/suppliers.
2. Forwarded suggestions for ways that the OFN platform can be used to maximise local awareness of, and access to, donated food – IF that is needed.
3. Suggested ways the hub can connect relatively affluent local customers with locally produced food such as microgreens (!) and plug plants etc. (see attached resources)
4. Identified innovative types of local food production which would be suited to the local geography, and which could create employment and supply the food hub. (see attached resources)
5. Suggested marketing ideas for increasing the customer base of the food hub – including lower income and more affluent customers. (see attached resources)
6. Explore the possibility of Cwm food hub functioning as a food co-op – bulk buying staple items to reduce the price for low-income customers.

Overview: Reflections and Conclusions

My mentoring work with the food hubs has been about identifying practical and achievable ways they can develop their customer and supplier base, and suggesting realistic and achievable steps for this to happen, drawing on existing policies and practical examples in Wales and the wider U.K. It became clear to me from the outset that for the hubs to make a significant increase in the amount of local food available and accessible to local people, and especially to those on low incomes, there will need to be significant investment in creating access to land, training growers, educating potential customers, and subsidising prices either at the production or purchasing end of the local food production cycle, as well as creating effective marketing and distribution systems.

In terms of increasing local food production, one way for new growers to have access to locations for growing would be for farmers to rent small areas of land to them. More radical methods of food production such as container growing and vertical growing on can be explored in areas which are not suitable to traditional food growing methods. Overall, there need to be opportunities created for horticulture and small-scale agriculture, alongside investment in innovative and non-traditional methods of local food production. Cardiff Salad Garden a good example of what can be done on a small-scale inner-city level, to create employment, as well as providing training and other social benefits, and attracting funding which can be used to subsidise the cost of the food. At the same time, various approaches can be used to stimulate the local demand for locally produced food, such as introducing primary school children to fresh food, which they will hopefully then ask for from their parents; or using a peer influencing model in secondary schools.

Looking Forward - Some Suggestions

- Would customers at local gyms be interested in the health benefits of eating fresh and local, of some kind of 'Salad Challenge' where people are encouraged to 'buy local' to support their local economy. This would introduce the concept of a food ladder' where all aspects of food buying, physical, mental and social well-being are intertwined, to generally raise awareness of the many benefits of eating fresh/local –in other words: “to feel good, to look good at the same time as living in a way that is sustainable and affordable”.
- Could local producers extend their marketing 'reach' by using a local convenience store chain such as Spar to act as distribution and collection points for their produce?
- Do the food hubs in poorer areas actually *need* any more 'marketing' to promote for example free food ND hot meals. Or is there already enough demand, and do they risk being overwhelmed? Would the food-coop type of structure be appropriate for them?
- To increase the supply of low-cost food, can Supermarkets and other food outlets be encouraged to make more surplus or wonky food available to the food hubs, as well as existing suppliers such as Fare Share.
- Should food hubs in more affluent areas aim for a larger mark-up in order to be financially sustainable as well as maximising their turnover? Some hubs may need to work on smaller margins and/or will need to be funded or run by volunteers.
- Are the Open Food Network marketing webinars helpful and appropriate? If not, can OFN consult food hubs to ask what kind of support they need?

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1: List of Attached Resources:

The following files have been attached to this report.

- 1.** A collection of community food project case studies, drawn from the ongoing Welsh Government Community Food Strategy
 - a. Big Bocs Bwyd
 - b. Glasgow Community Food Network
 - c. Helping Old Moat Eat
 - d. Mach Maethlion

- 2.** An indexed collection of links around the following broad topics:
 - a. Local/equitable/sustainable food projects and resources.
 - b. Local food growing.
 - c. Local/equitable/sustainable food project videos
 - d. A collection of local/ethical/sustainable food webinars

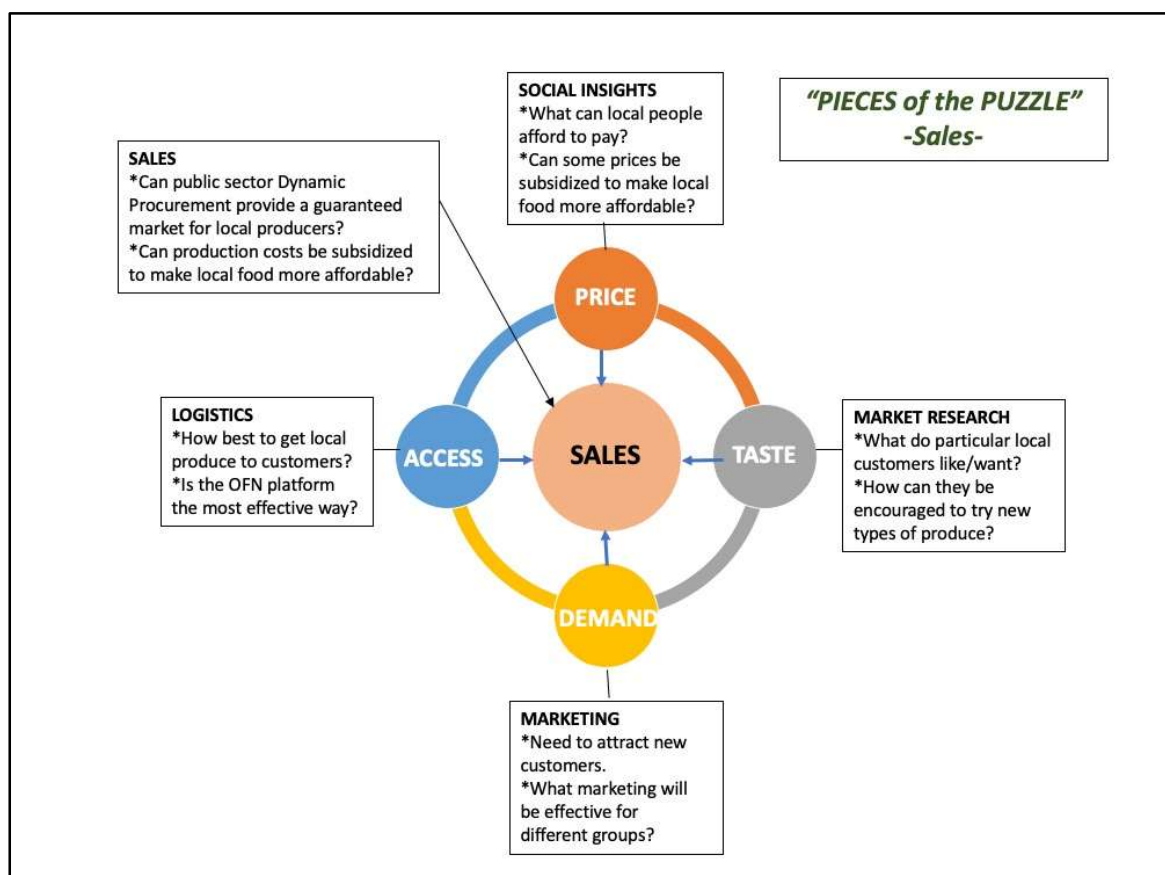
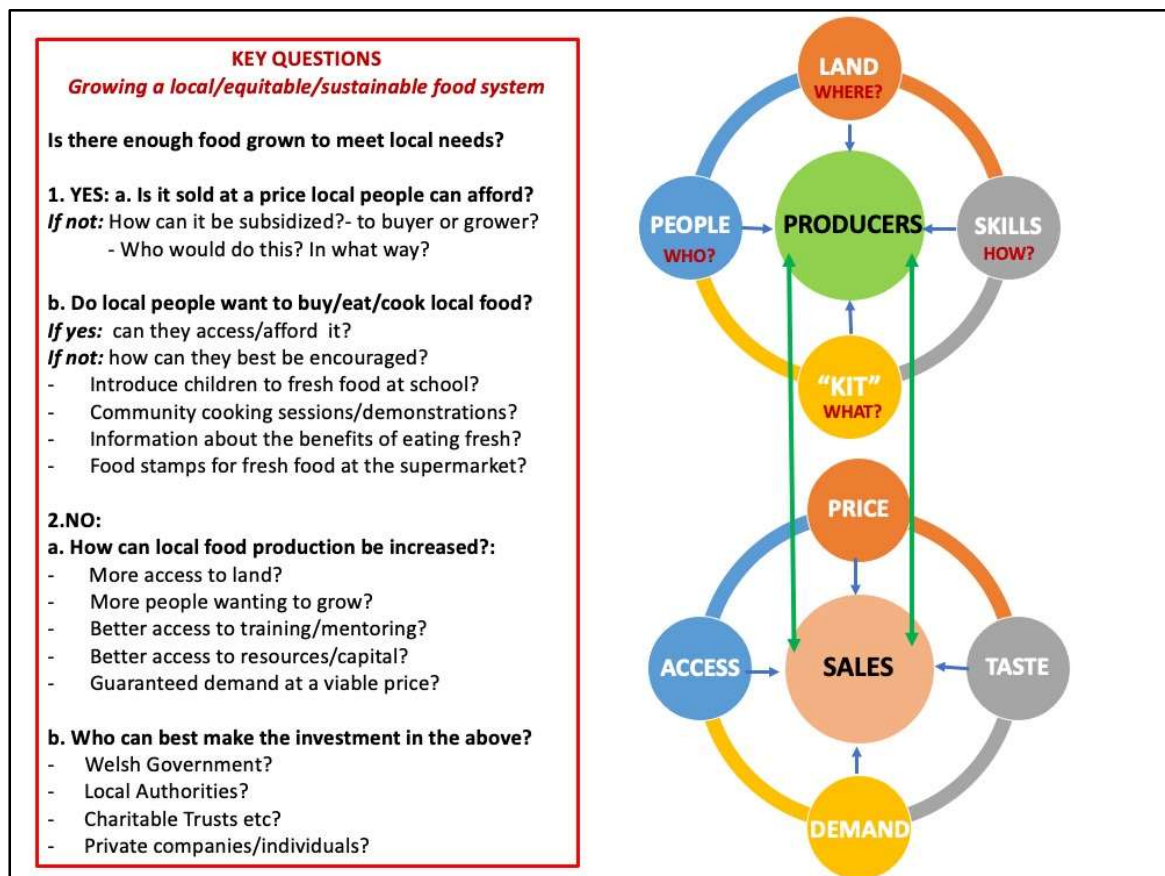
- 3.** An indexed list of local/equitable/sustainable food project case studies and reports

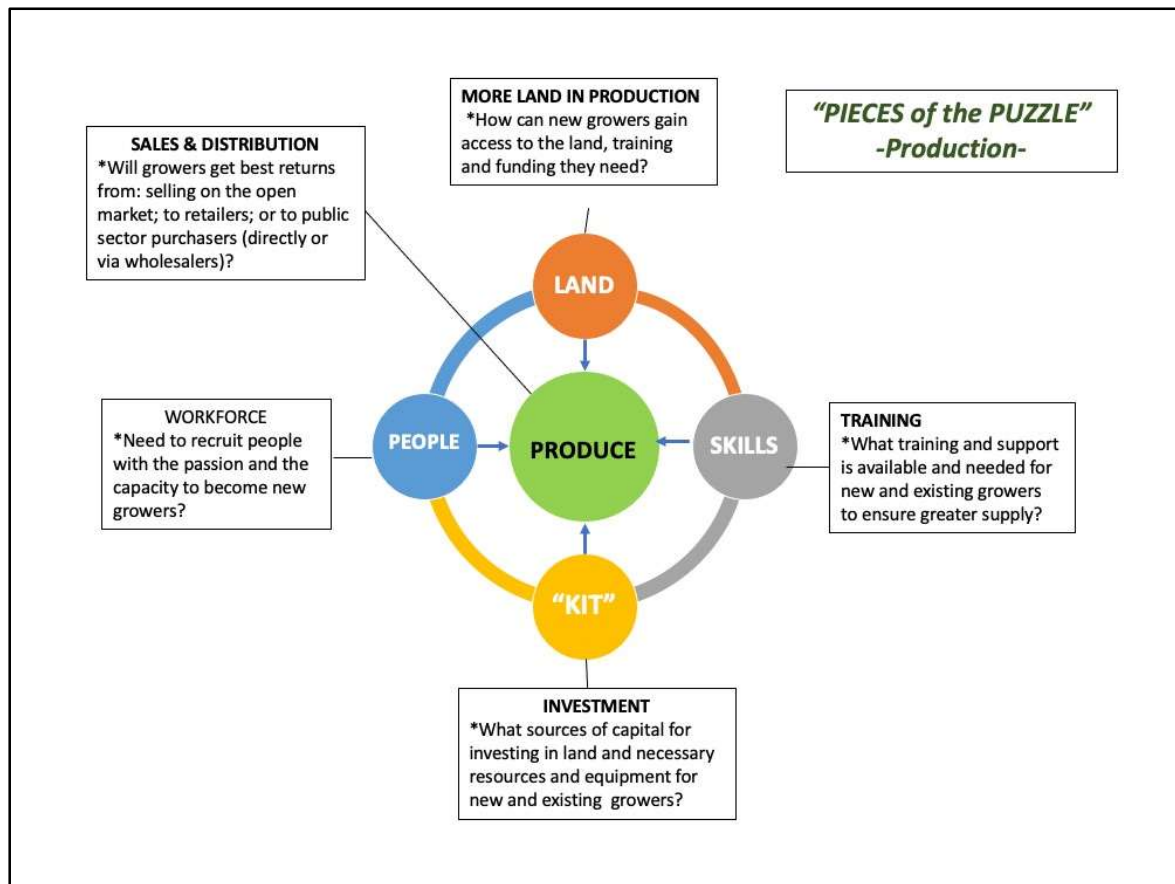
- 4.** The Sustainable Food Places 'Healthcheck'

- 5.** A collection of reports about small-scale and commercial hydroponics and vertical growing systems

APPENDIX 2.

PIECES of the LOCAL FOOD HUBS 'PUZZLE' (A personal perspective) Growing a local/equitable/sustainable food system in Wales





APPENDIX 3.

Basic Elements of a Sustainable/Equitable Food System

1. LOCALISED PRODUCTION: sustainably produced, fresh, healthy, tasty food for everyone.
 - i. Commercial (including high tech/small scale) growing.
Needed: access to sufficient good-quality land, or alternative growing systems; investment; training; funding; marketing
 - ii. Community gardens.
Needed: location; facilitators; funding.
 - iii. Allotment surplus.
Needed: collection and distribution system
 - iii. Household growing:
Needed: Information; mentoring; funding

2. **EQUITABLE DISTRIBUTION SYSTEM:** which generates sufficient income for producers and is affordable for all. Would need more of the following:
 - i. Local Food hubs – with some price subsidies, possibly created from hub income.
 - ii. Local farmers markets – with possibly some type of ‘food stamps’ for low-income customers
 - iii. Local food retailers, with possibly subsidised prices for low-income customers
3. **FOOD COMMUNITIES** – for people facing food poverty challenges, and general community building.
 - i. Community kitchens/cafes.
 - ii. Food co-ops and pantries.
 - iii. Delivery system – for elderly/disabled customers
 - iv. Community gardens

APPENDIX 4.

Six reasons why eating local is a good idea. <https://betterfood.co.uk/embrace-eating-locally>

1. **The quality of food is higher:** It’s no secret that locally grown food tastes better. Once separated from its source, a higher rate of respiration occurs in the product, resulting in moisture loss, nutrient degradation, and potential microbial spoilage.
2. **It’s more nutritious:** Eating local is not only tastier, but also healthier! Ripe fruits and vegetables contain the most nutrients, as the minute they’re picked, their plant cells begin to shrink, and their nutrients diminish. Supermarket produce is grown and processed with its shelf life in mind, and not necessarily its nutritional benefits
3. **Eating locally means you’ll be eating in season:** Farmers can only grow what the season will support. Before transporting goods over long distances became commonplace, we had no option but to eat seasonally. As a result, we based our meal choices on the ingredients we had available. Luckily, the natural cycle of produce is perfectly designed to support our health.
4. **It is an investment in your community:** Every time you buy produce from someone other than a local producer your money leaves the local economy. By shopping locally you keep money in your area, which helps to sustain local producers and create local jobs.
5. **It cares for the environment:** The average fresh food item travels 1,500 miles to arrive on our dinner table. That’s a pretty large carbon footprint to leave for a little bulb of garlic. Choosing to buy your food from local sources eliminates the need for fuel-intensive transportation.
6. **It is more likely to be organic:** When food is closer to the consumer, they have more direct influence on the food that is produced. Take farmers markets. Farmers that sell produce at local markets are likely to sell organic because they want to guarantee high standards to the customers they interact with, while the customers are likely to quiz them on their standards.

Other aspects to food sustainability than how local it is.

Food miles are the average miles that food travels from the farm to the consumer. A significant percentage of the carbon or fossil fuel footprint of industrial agriculture comes from transporting factory farm crops or animals to the processing plant or slaughterhouse and then transporting these processed foods from the processing plant to the dinner table via the supermarket. So by reducing the processed foods in our diet we can greatly reduce the food miles or carbon footprint for which our households are responsible, since the shorter the distance food travels, the lower the greenhouse gas emissions.

The commonly held belief that reducing “food miles” is always good for the environment because it reduces the use of transportation fuel and associated carbon dioxide emissions turns out to be a red herring. Strange as it might seem, local food uses about the same amount of energy per pound to transport as long-distance food, because of volume and method of transport. Big food companies can ship food more efficiently — even if it travels longer distances — because of the large volumes they work in. Plus, ships, trains and even large trucks driving on motorways use less fuel, per pound per mile, than small vans driving around town.

As a source of CO₂ emissions, “food miles” pale in comparison to emissions from deforestation, methane from cattle, and nitrous oxide from overfertilized fields. Local food systems - especially organic farms that use fewer fertilizers and grass-fed beef that sequesters carbon in the soil - can reduce these more critical emissions. But small and local farms may use pesticides, plough extensively and irrigate inefficiently. Some may grow in greenhouses heated with fossil fuels.

Large farms growing crops suited to their region may use less energy per product and grow more food on less land. And adopting strategies such as no-till, more efficient irrigation, integrated pest management, judicious fertilizer use, better handling of manure and leaving fields fallow could help offset the greenhouse gas emissions of large farms.

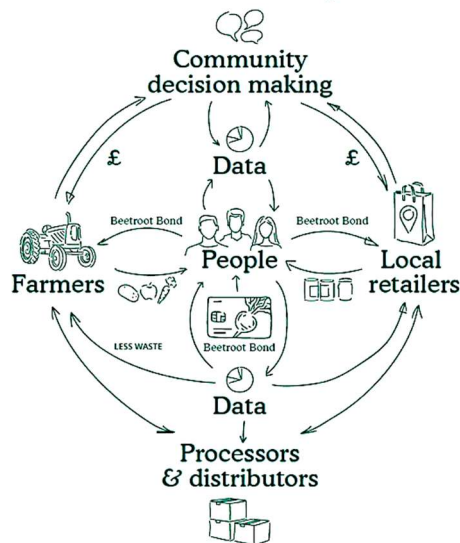
The inputs into the food production life cycle also vary according to variety of fertilizer used, number of pesticides and herbicides applied, type of farm machinery, mode of transportation, load sizes, fuel type, trip frequency, storage facilities, food prep, waste, etc. The majority of food's climate impact is due to non-CO₂ greenhouse gas emissions such as nitrous oxide and methane emissions. Nitrous oxide emissions (298 times more potent as a greenhouse gas than CO₂) arise from nitrogen fertilizer and certain techniques for soil and manure management.

Methane emissions (25 times more potent than CO₂) are a result of the digestive process of ruminants like cows and sheep, and manure management. Meat and dairy production are also responsible for emissions from the growing of grain to feed the cows. The life cycle study found that red meat accounts for about 150 percent more greenhouse gas emissions than chicken or fish.

So while buying local food could reduce the average consumer's greenhouse gas emissions by 4-5 percent at best, substituting part of one day a week's worth of calories from red meat and dairy products with chicken, fish, eggs, or vegetables achieves more greenhouse gas reduction than switching to a diet based *entirely* on locally produced food (which would be impossible anyway). Eating foods that are in season and eating organic and less processed foods can further reduce one's greenhouse gas emissions.

APPENDIX 5. From: Food Builds Communities: *Food, Farming and Countryside Commission*
<https://ffcc.co.uk>

Beetroot Bond System



The community leaders we spoke to had immensely creative and energetic ideas for a different food future in their community, and knowledge of the context they were working in. The food system could look entirely different if communities, like those within Big Local, had the resources and power to enact their versions of our food future – and this is something that government, funders and others can help with. This food future would be possible if:

- Communities were allocated the resources they need to make change but

were not alone in making that change: For communities like Big Local areas. to deepen the impact of their work on food, they need to be supported through. policy frameworks and information that enables them to act – and there are issues like poverty which should not be falling to communities (and charities within them) to solve.

- Communities were at the heart of our response to the climate crisis: Food system strategies and plans would focus on helping communities to create healthy and agroecological food systems and to create shorter routes to market for food that is fair and fresh.
- Every community across the UK could access land for community food projects and food growing: Communities need access to land not only to grow their own food or set up community spaces for sharing food, but to form strong connections and resilience.
- Solutions to challenges in the food system were driven by relationships and connection: Focusing on relationships and connection and putting real decision-making power in the hands of communities will create new community driven food systems with more flexibility and resilience. These would not be in competition with the 'mainstream' food system, but would be there to supplement it and meet needs not currently met by the food system.
- Funders supported vital and vibrant community food systems: If we were to ask funders to imagine a better food future, the same question that we asked our Big Local participants, it is unlikely that they would answer with food banks and other emergency food provision. A good question for funders to consider is: what does a vital and vibrant food community look like, and how can your funding help support that?

APPENDIX 6:

TOWARDS A SUSTAINABLE/EQUITABLE FOOD SYSTEM – A Selection of Overviews and Projects

1. Sustainable Food Places <https://www.sustainablefoodplaces.org/>

“We believe that to drive a shift towards healthier and more sustainable food requires high public awareness of food issues and widespread participation in food-related activity, by both individuals and institutions, as part of a growing movement of active food citizenship. Key to achieving this are: communications and events that can inspire people about the role, importance and joy of good food; practical engagement opportunities such as growing, cooking and sharing food in every community; and a facilitated network through which food actors of every kind can connect and collaborate on-line and in person as part of a local good food movement.

Plans to develop a locally grown and sustainably sourced food system is part of the Welsh government’s five-year programme for the 6th Senedd. First minister Mark Drakeford reaffirmed his Labour government’s commitments last month, which includes a Wales Community Food Strategy, and introduction of a new system of farm support to “maximise the protective power of nature through farming”.

Drakeford said in the foreword that the programme was “founded on the distinctly Welsh values of community, equality, and social justice. It puts collaboration ahead of competition, showing how we will act to maximise fairness for all and eliminate inequality at every level of society. “The Programme shows how we will act decisively to tackle the climate and nature emergency so that people can go on treasuring Wales’ rich natural resources for generations to come.”

2. Accessible Veg Project <https://tgrains.com/accessible-veg-pilot-project/>

A project to show the benefits of an accessible veg box schemes to food-insecure households

Key policy recommendations

- **Quick funding for small projects and initiatives and best practice projects.** Small grants of up to £5000 that can be accessed quickly to help farms and/or charity partners to establish a solidarity veg bag scheme or other social innovation to circumvent barriers to participation for food insecure households. Initial funding enables CSAs to explore and implement the most productive and sustainable model of solidarity to implement for long-term provision of veg bags for food insecure households.
- **Developing Sustainable Food Partnerships that support local partnerships between actors in the food systems,** for example Sustainable Food Places Wales. Support and coordination of networks across the food and agriculture sector that facilitates better connections in the food system and links to the Community Food Strategy. To achieve this, a geographically categorised **online network** of community-scale food providers could be developed to assist organisations in finding collaborators and mentors. For example, stronger links between small scale horticulture projects and pilots could be linked with findings from this project. Some examples are partnerships between schools, local growers and Big Bocs Boyd or other food aid partners and local health boards.
- **The use of Healthy Start vouchers for veg bags and further pilot projects that interlink health, community, environment, and agriculture.** Again, this can be achieved through partnership building and a potential integration into the Healthy Start programme.

- **Coordinating and funding links to existing Government policies.** For example, Healthy Weight Healthy Wales could be supported by providing funding for linking local Health Board Plans and Nutrition Skills for Life with CSA schemes. Another example is the opportunity to use Welsh Government funding for poverty alleviation to support community-based food solidarity models or policies related to the Welsh Government's Community Food Strategy.
- **Sustainable funding commitment** to provide long-term support for community-based initiatives and build consistent and stronger links to existing Government policies. By providing **long-term grants for sustainability** to organisations involved in community-scale supply chains, such as food hubs and CSAs, the Government can reduce administrative burden and loss of capacity and institutional knowledge owing to high turnover related to uncertainty experienced by organisations relying on small, short-term grants.
- **Support and funding accessible to people that experience multiple vulnerabilities**, often linked to poverty (e.g. food and fuel insecurity, mental health and physical health issues). Social prescribing and food vouchers that can be used towards CSA memberships can address both well-being and food insecurity.

Many of the above recommendations can be achieved through a few simple actions that make long-term, consistent funding commitments to build community-based partnerships that are capable of delivering health and well-being benefits for food insecure households, and thereby reducing the cost on the NHS for dietary- and mental health-related illnesses. As public health is a public good, community-scale supply chains could be approached using the 'public money for public goods' principle contained in the relevant Agricultural Bills across the UK and the Well-being of Future Generations Act (2015).

Implementing 'public money for public goods' payments for community-scale supply chain participants can create a source of long-term and secure funding for community growers, suppliers, distributors, and other organisations involved in local food provision services that result in improved environmental sustainability as well as positive public health outcomes. This policy approach can support a more diverse range of actors engaging in community-scale supply chains, generating more resilient consumption patterns that align with health, biodiversity, zero-emission policy targets and other non-food benefits.

3. Urban Agriculture Consortium: <https://www.urbanagriculture.org.uk/>

Our approach is to work dynamically and flexibly with clusters of places and different people and organisations to amplify, accelerate and add value to work that is already underway and nurture ideas and solutions that are emerging. We see how we can achieve richer solutions faster when we are supported to do so we can help to support dynamic, facilitated processes. We are seeking opportunities for connection, collaboration and synergy on projects directly working towards our vision:

All people regardless of income, enjoy nutritious fresh, seasonal and culturally appropriate food sourced from agroecological growers every day via the shortest possible supply chains.

Current project collaborators (thinking and doing stages) include: The Landworkers Alliance and various members of the National Farmstart Network, Foodwise Leeds, Regather Sheffield, Food Futures Lancaster, Middlesbrough Environment City, Social Farms & Gardens, Petronella Tyson, GeoFutures, Incredible Edible, Nottingham Good Food Partnership, the South West Food Hub.

4. Breadline Voices <https://foodfoundation.org.uk/initiatives/breadline-voices>

Stories from the millions of people facing food poverty or working on the frontline across the UK in 2022. Highlighting the plight of people facing food and energy poverty during the cost of living crisis

Breadline Voices is a series of true accounts and stories from people in this country facing the grim reality of food and fuel poverty, as food prices reach a 40-year high. The series will be spearheaded by a mum-of-four from Portsmouth, a single dad in Kent and a disability rights campaigner from the Hampshire. It will also feature insight from professionals including doctors and teachers who see first-hand the devastating impact the cost-of-living crisis is having on the people they work with.

“Most of us know that vegetables are good for us. But we’re still not eating enough of them. Consumption of veg has remained stubbornly below Government and global health recommendations for over a decade in the UK, with intakes particularly low among children and low-income groups. Veg are the golden thread connecting diets that are both healthier and more sustainable, and there would be huge benefits for our health, the environment and the UK’s economy if we were all able to hit the recommendations for vegetable consumption.

We are seeking to address the shortcomings of the many healthy eating campaigns and initiatives that have previously tried (rather unsuccessfully) to increase the UK's vegetable consumption by focusing on education alone. Instead, we take a food systems approach to increasing consumption of veg, working collaboratively with businesses, policy makers, academia, civil society and citizens to make vegetables more readily available, affordable and appealing”.

BUT

“Multiple nutritional, societal and environmental issues are connected with our food systems, concerning the way we produce food and both how and what we eat. These include the dual global nutritional challenges of obesity and hunger, significant climate change contributions from the food industry, biodiversity loss and degradation through agricultural practices, food waste and food loss, and poverty and human rights issues across the food industry. These challenges are complex and formidable, but not insurmountable. “Fixing food” is possible with a transition that involves the protection and restoration of natural habitats, widespread adoption of sustainable farming practices, tackling global food waste and, crucially, dietary shifts. We need to eat “less and better” meat, more plant-based food, and less energy-dense, nutrient-poor”.

APPENDIX 7: A Selection of Food Production Statistics

Some Welsh Food Statistics

Only 5% of the lamb produced in Wales is eaten in Wales (30% goes to England – the rest to Europe)

We grow vegetables on 0.1% of our land.

There are 204 commercial fruit and veg producers in Wales, of which 120 are small-scale (117 under 5 ha, 3 producers 5-10 ha).

Wales produces enough F&V to supply $\frac{1}{4}$ of a portion per head of population per day. To produce '5 a day' for Welsh population would need 29 times more land.

Only 14% of land in Wales is classed as suitable for arable cropping.

Wales is only 19% self-sufficient in vegetables.

30 years ago, 83 per cent of the veg we ate came from the UK. Now it is 58 per cent, partly because we eat more exotic veg.

British Farming Statistics

Defra figures for 2017 show that Britain produced 60% of its own food and this rate is in long-term decline.

Farmed environment statistics:

- Farmland covers 70% of the nation.
- Under agri-environment schemes in England, more than 30,000 kilometres of hedgerows have been planted or restored.
- There are around 270,000 hectares managed voluntarily under the Campaign for the Farmed Environment.
- Total Greenhouse gas emissions from agriculture have fallen by 17% since 1990.

Farmed food statistics:

- British farms produce 61% of the nation's food.
- British food is produced to some of the highest standards in the world, underpinned by assurance schemes like the Red Tractor which independently audit the supply chain from farm to fork.

Farming's contribution to the economy:

- Food and farming provide 3.8 million jobs.
- Farming is the bedrock of the largest manufacturing sector, food and drink, which contributes £111 billion to the country's economy.

National Farmers Union [Our Back British Farming campaign](#)

"This has been a real test for Government to show the farmers and the many concerned members of the public that they think that our ability to produce food in this country is truly important.

"We strongly believe that every British citizen should be entitled to a safe, traceable and high-quality supply of British food that is produced to some of the highest animal welfare and environmental standards in the world. Home-grown food production must have the unwavering support of Government if we are to achieve this post-Brexit.

"The statistics show a concerning long-term decline in the UK's self-sufficiency in food and there is a lot of potential for this to be reversed. And while we recognise the need for importing food which can only be produced in different climates, if we maximise on the food that we can produce well in the UK then that will deliver a whole host of economic, social and environmental benefits to the country.

"The UK farming sector has the potential to be one of the most impacted sectors from a bad Brexit and as we replace the EU's Common Agricultural Policy, we must keep a sharp focus on what productive, progressive and profitable farm businesses need from a domestic agricultural policy."