

# REGIONAL FOOD SYSTEM FOR SOUTH WEST WALES

## TUES 05 APRIL 2022



After the successful Food for the Region conference in October 2021, we re-convened the conversation in order to share best practice and discover what's been happening.



[WATCH THE EVENT RECORDING](#)

[READ OUR REGIONAL FOOD SYSTEM REPORT \(2021\)](#)

## We asked....

***“Why are you interested in food?”***

***“What would you like to get out of this morning’s discussion?”***

*“I work for Caerphilly Council, taking over NPS (national procurement service) contracts for food, working and collaborating with other bodies about food. I’m interested in collecting information around this subject.”*

*“I’m looking at the difference between food banks and the cost of living, and how [“food pantries”](#) can work, especially while we’re in the cost of living crisis we’re currently experiencing.”*

*"I was saddened to hear one of my locally-owned shops is closing down. We all need to encourage people to shop locally and get the message out there to support local businesses."*



- Encourage the concept of 15-minute cities. Would like to see cargo e-bikes delivering food from local supplies transported to urban areas.
- Permaculture (forest) gardens at schools will ensure restoration of soil and understand connections with crop health, food quality and healthier children.
- Fundamentally changing the way we use the land in this country. Scaling up access to land for community growing projects.
- Who do we need to target to make land available? The council? Make sure that developers leave space for allotments ? Farmer to share disused land?
- We discussed importance of schools learning about food, vulnerability to international events affecting food and energy supply chains, food poverty



### **Augusta Lewis, Carmarthenshire Food Network**

Carmarthenshire's Food Network is for anyone within the county who is supporting to feed its residents and to make the county a sustainable food place.

[Click here to see their webpage.](#)

The key principles of the network are to:

- Connect with like minded individuals to alleviate food poverty across the county;
- Share resources, skills, experience, knowledge and volunteers
- Support one another to support our citizens

The Carmarthenshire Food Network's steering group comprises: CAVS, Carmarthen County Council, Hywel Dda Nutrition Team, Incredible Edible Carmarthenshire CIC, Swperbox CIC, Public Health Wales.

**Q:** Do you think Carmarthen council sees Carmarthenshire as a food producing area? I don't think Swansea views the county as a food producing area. Growing, producing food isn't integral to the identity of Swansea county. Have you found Carmarthenshire has a different experience?

**A:** In Carmarthenshire, the agricultural policy has defined what we do as a county (largely meat and dairy) and we do have a small-scale horticulture scene emerging. With PHW and the council, we are keen to promote the fresh food element and there's a lot of passion involved.



### Jack Joseph, Local Food Coordinator Swansea Council

- We're currently working on a local producer mapping project - where, the scale, where they deliver.
- [Swansea Food Partnership](#) is moving forward.

### Insights from FarmCo



At Farm Co, we marketed it as an online market shop. The difficulty we experienced was getting people to shop there. You need to spend a lot of time and effort on marketing, customer retention.

Coming out of the pandemic, our customers have disappeared and have returned to old routines. We're looking to change our model to attempt to meet current demands.

Contact Jack at: [jack@farmco.wales](mailto:jack@farmco.wales)

**Peter Howells, NFU Cymru**



- We've recently launched our Growing Together strategy.
- The Agriculture bill will make its way through the Senedd over the next few months. It will set the scene for agriculture going forward.
- Everyone will start the journey to Net Zero carbon emissions from different places.
- South Wales is likely to not suffer the worst from climate change.
- More info on the Welsh Government website on the recently announced [Horticulture Development Scheme](#).
- Eligibility for small scale farmers requires a minimum of 5 hectares of land. There's more types of funds available from the RDP.

**Q:** How much does NFU Cymru recognise the need to move towards a more plant based diet?

**A:** NFU Cymru's position is that we need to have healthy, balanced and sustainable diets that are good for public health, good for the environment and help sustain our rural communities, sustainably produced and high quality red meat and dairy products play a vital role in our diets alongside fresh fruit and vegetables.



### **Alice Coleman - PLANED**

#### **[Wales Community Food Distribution](#)**

is a new regional food hub project, this sustainable distribution model will bring together community groups, food producers and suppliers in Wales.

**Q:** How do you gather the customers for projects like this? We found that interest dwindled and would return to using the supermarkets.

**A:** It's a huge challenge, showing best practice, amplifying the case studies and awareness around these types of projects are key.



Llywodraeth Cymru  
Welsh Government

### **Andrew Thomas - Welsh Government**

Business Development Manager, Food and Drink Wales.

- Daily occurrence for clients to stress the issues they're facing in terms of price raises, availability of ingredients.
- We predicted a 7% increase in food costs, which is vastly underestimated.



## **We asked....**

***“Collectively, what should we focus on next?”***



- So many people are doing so many things already, in lots of different ways.
- Education across generations is key.
- Financing farmers to change their practices is huge.
- I want to encourage people to eat locally and support their CSAs
- The people interested and passionate are already involved in these conversations, how do we get the message out there and change the attitudes of others?
- Impressed with the Carmarthenshire example, mapping clearly what was available, what was in process, the schemes available. A clear visual of what's working.
- In my experience, local organic food doesn't tend to last as long, which is driving people to return to supermarkets.
- If people were seeing examples (ie - the Wales Community Food Distribution example of lower costs" then people might be more likely to purchase local.
- Create webinars for the hospitality sector to talk about shortening supply chains.
- It's difficult to get people to change their ways and attitudes; Take the steps back and go back to buying seasonal. Reduce the grip that supermarkets have on our society and government.
- No easy answers.

# THEMATIC PRIORITIES

## **Local Authorities & Policy Makers**

- We need to get policy makers more involved and increase the amount of support available for smaller scale producers, growers and suppliers.
- A policy-led top-down approach is needed to change the systems.
- Are we able to better map out what's working? Local growing projects, schemes, etc. Identify the gaps and best practices that could be scaled up.
- Evidencing our needs better, particularly around land.

## **Communities**

- We perhaps need to shift our collective regional identity towards the sense of ourselves as a food producing region.
- Connecting farmers back to their communities is also a huge benefit to all concerned.
- Promoting 'local' isn't the only thing but is a principle that may be getting traction with influential bodies and could be the door into the wider changes that are needed around production methods, etc. By local do we mean regional or national?

## **Individuals**

- Consumers should ask where their food comes from.

## **Businesses & Producers**

- We need more urban and peri-urban farming.
- To get people in using food hubs, we need a massive marketing push.
- Ultra processed food is often cheaper and therefore it brings us back to the issue of food poverty.
- The impact of food price inflation is yet to be fully felt.

## **Education**

- Food growing needs to be part of the national curriculum.
- Food for life partnership is in England and luckily more schools are getting involved, but sustainability and food growing needs to be in mainstream culture.
- When an effective food labelling system incorporates the real price of food - including environmental impacts - this may encourage people to avoid some supermarket products and look local.
- Educating and informing businesses has the potential to trickle down to educate the consumer.
- The new curriculum allows schools in Wales to access more creative and holistic resources.
- Help schools to map the life cycle of food at different levels.



## **Health**

- Regenerative practices produce crops with increased levels of phytonutrients - needed for human health
- We need to teach a lot more about links to food/nutrition and our health.
- Online marketing campaign comparing the nutritional value of local produce vs mass produced produce.
- Hidden costs of cheap foods are in the health sector, and loss of money in the local economy.

## **Procurement**

- The impact of world events has a major impact on supply chains.

## **Environment**

- We need to change the way we farm - stop ploughing, increase soil biology, use traditional seed varieties, small scale mixed farms. We don't need toxic fertilisers and synthetic fertilisers.
- Anaerobic digestion using animal manure and turning it into renewable energy.
- There could be a lot of work done to loosen compacted soils. Regenerative farming practices.
- There needs to be more focus on carbon net-zero strategy.

## **Land & Forestry**

- Farmers in Pembrokeshire have given land access to growers.
- Social Farms and Gardens have some good resources and support for how to secure long-term success for community growing projects leasing private land.
- CSAs are reaching out to farmers to discuss common problems and find solutions.
- Land management skills are also in short supply.
- A farmer must be sure his or her land is being well managed.
- The land around rural and town communities should be ring-posted for the needs of the community.
- Regarding access to land, it's not just the land availability, but the type of land suitable for different types of production,
- I think we need to better understand and evidence the demand for land for food growing / production so that the task can be more specific / informed.
- The size of land to produce adequate amounts of food to feed large numbers of people.
- Start up funding for infrastructure etc, business support, finding experienced growers or training new entrants etc.
- For successful food businesses, it's more of a collaborative approach than just relying on farmers offering up land.
- The key to diversifying food production will be whether subsidies will be available for small-scale intensive horticulture enterprises of 5 acres and under or not.

## General Comments

- *"I think the marketing ties into the mapping we saw earlier [Carmarthenshire Food Network] so effectively illustrated in Carmarthenshire - making it clear how accessible it can be across the wider geography."*
- *"We need to prioritise healthy microbiomes as the foundation of human and planetary health."*
- *"On schools: A prominent [Valleys Regional Park/ Welsh Gov Project](#) on local fresh produce (often supported with a Panty/ Food Bank provision)"*
- *"Micronutrients and phytonutrients are all about how food is grown but so long as farmers are focussed on improving quantity rather than quality we're not really addressing this problem."*
- *"In Wales there surely is a great opportunity for development of new ways of adding nutrients to the soil eg. sheep wool and bracken compost? We have a lot of both of these. The only place I am aware of that produces this is in the Lake District <https://www.dalefootcomposts.co.uk/>"*
- *"Agriculture needs to shift to agroecology away from industrial agriculture. More people need to know about the science of ecology and the importance of soil biology for better carbon, water and nutrient cycling. Application of toxic chemicals and synthetic fertilisers on crops kills soil biology as does ploughing - industrial agriculture produces unsafe food that is causing ill-health in humans"*
- *"We need local AND nutrient dense food. Otherwise you can be supporting greenwashing - still using toxic chemicals and synthetic fertilisers, still ploughing, still intensive dairy and poultry farming, but it's local. So we mustn't support these industrial practices by focusing just on Local. Local, seasonal, healthy, regeneratively produced, high quality, nutrient dense food is the way to go."*
- *"The new curriculum for Wales is looking at including more focus on food and nutrition in the core, Whilst at the same time new qualifications around Food and Nutrition at GCSE and level 3 are being worked on as part of a current review, There is a phase 2 review around food manufacturing/ production qualifications too underway which overlaps with many of these challenges to drive awareness, skills and behavioural change."*

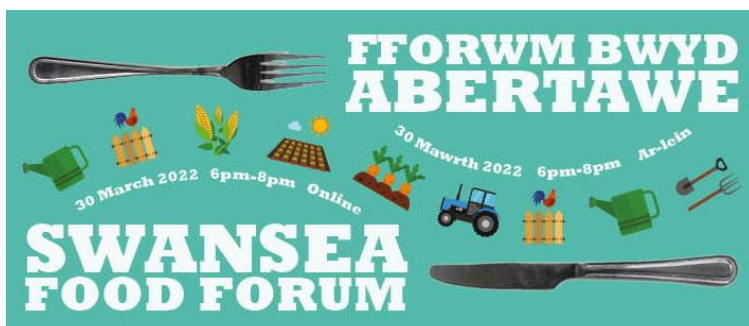
## RESOURCES & REFERENCES

### Articles & Resources:

- [Dalefoot Composts | Example of innovative ways to add nutrients to soil](#)
- [CEIC | Simon Wright on Putting local food on the public plate](#)
- [European Journal of Public Health | 'All under one roof?' differences in food availability and shopping patterns in Southern France and Central England](#)
- [Food For Life | Get Growing](#)
- [Food Sense Wales | Investment in a small-scale horticulture grants scheme could significantly increase the amount of veg produced in Wales](#)
- [Kumu.io | Used to create the Carmarthenshire Food Network Map](#)
- [RHS | Growing vegetables in school gardens](#)
- [RSA | Maths in the Garden](#)
- [Social Farms & Gardens | The Community Land Advisory Service](#)
- [Sustainable Food Trust | The Hidden Cost of UK Food](#)
- [Welsh Government | Horticulture Development Scheme: rules booklet](#)
- [Welsh Government | Upcoming Sustainable Farming Schemes](#)
- [Welsh Government | Welsh Government funding for roll-out of award-winning food project in Valleys schools](#)
- [WFP | School Feeding](#)
- [WLAG | Healthy Eating in Schools](#)
- [Visit Wales | Example of how local produce can be mapped and promoted.](#)

### Events:

- 4theRegion | [Green Recovery Business Conference](#)
- Landworkers' Alliance | [Create Opportunities for Community Farms](#)



Catch up on the recent Swansea Food Forum event recording here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ln8meFeSyvg>