Farming the Fringe

Unlocking land and opportunities for local food production and new enterprise

Hawkwood Nursery – Chingford, London (Credit: Organiclea)
The Fringe Farming project

- Increase access to agroecological farming at the edge of UK cities
- 50 years ago in the UK, market gardens ringed many cities
- Areas of high-grade soils under Green Belt policies

Read our national & local policy recommendations in full:
www.sustainweb.org/publications/feb22-fringe-farming/
Number of annual premature deaths attributed to low vegetable diets in the UK: 18,000*

Converting 0.65% more agricultural land to horticultural production would meet national fruit and veg demand**

Why farm the fringe?
Builds connections between urban and rural areas with multiple agroecological benefits:
- Economic
  e.g. jobs, contracts, services and products in regional economies
- Social
  e.g. community development, education, skills and training
- Environmental
  e.g. water management, enhancing biodiversity and carbon capture
- Health
  e.g. closer connection to food and the land, better diets and health benefits

*Veg Facts 2021 - Food Foundation
**Veg Facts 2020 - Food Foundation
Proportion of farm-holders younger than 35: 3%*

(Career) Pathways to peri-urban farming

Building the next generation of farmers
- Diverse backgrounds
- More adaptable to big changes
- No prior links to farming

Delivering an integrated package
- Land, resources, skills, market
- Interdependent factors
- Set them up to succeed

*Agriculture in the UK, 2017
Key asks – low hanging fruit

Maintain and expand land access by local authorities and other public institutions
- Protect and expand the county farms network
- Put resources to ensure local mapping of land
- Ensure planning frameworks protect and encourage agroecological practices
- Protect Grade 1 and 2 land

New Entrants Support Schemes
- Match new entrants’ skills and entrepreneurship training with council, institution or private land and startup resources/finance so that they can apply their training

Environmental land management schemes
- Pilot peri-urban horticulture scheme, as part of smallholder farming support
- Remove any size (e.g. 5 ha) or other eligibility requirements
Why agroecological?

Versus, for instance, indoor, vertical farming.

For Peri-urban farming the gains are broad:
• Carbon sequestration, sinks
• Major biodiversity outcomes with food
• Natural capital e.g. cooling the city via agroforestry and orchards, soil based mean water retention, flood alleviation, waste removal
• Access to green space and outdoor learning at the edge of built-up cities
• Integration of green and food waste into growing practices
• Reduced exposure to chemicals.
• Active building and protection of valuable fertile soils.