

Farming the Fringe

Unlocking land and opportunities
for **local food production**
and **new enterprise**



Hawkwood Nursery – Chingford, London (Credit: Organiclea)





Fringe Farming partners' gathering – Regather Farm, Sheffield
(Credit: Rob Logan)

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**



*Veg Facts 2021 - Food Foundation
**Veg Facts 2020 - Food Foundation

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



Proportion of
farm-holders
younger than 35:
3%*



*Agriculture in the UK, 2017

(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

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.

