



Final Report
for the
Esmée Fairbairn Foundation

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Summary

This report provides details of the Eat Somerset project run by Sustain: The alliance for better food and farming, and funded by the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation. It outlines work that has been carried out, as set out in the original funding bid, as well as detailing the progress made. It reflects on initiatives that have worked, and also – importantly – identifies those that have been less successful, and why.

As far as we are aware the project is ground-breaking in that it has focused directly on work with the mainstream local retail sector, aiming to increase the amount of local produce sold by local and neighbourhood stores. We have worked with symbol groups, independent stores, wholesalers, and a wide range of producers. Our purpose has been to investigate how (or indeed whether) local food producers can make in-roads into this retail sector; and what activities, conditions and policies may be needed to increase their chances of success.

Summary of the main findings

Below, we provide a very brief summary of our work over the last two years. More detail can be found in the body of the report and in the appendices, where we have been deliberately extensive in our narrative, to ensure that we and others can gain maximum benefit from what has been learned.

Over the course of the two-year project, Eat Somerset has:

- Provided support, advice and arranged meetings with a leading mainstream wholesaler for the local retail sector, Booker (the Taunton branch), resulting in them now stocking a range of produce from five local food producers.
- Produced a directory for retailers to help them find local produce easily. This directory has now been provided online with a simple graphical interface and a web-based search facility.
- Held successful events, including two ‘Meet the Buyers’ events, with very positive feedback from both suppliers and buyers, and sales generated both at the events and subsequently. One participant commented that attending the ‘Meet the Buyers’ event had *“turned my business round”*. We also supported events run by regional organisations with which we have forged productive links.
- Provided networking opportunities for buyers and producers; and between the producers themselves.
- Increased awareness of the benefits of local produce and sustainable local food, including running workshops on issues important to the sector, such as sustainable packaging, and efficient collaborative approaches to distribution.
- Developed good working relationships with producers, local authorities in the area (in particular those around Bristol and Bath, who have agreed to support the next phase of work), other organisations such as the regional business support group South West Food & Drink, and local retailers and wholesalers.
- Linked up organisations to improve and increase information sharing.

- Been informed by stakeholder views and priorities throughout, and shaped the programme to meet both their needs and our own goals.

What has worked?

There have been many lessons learned over the course of the project, the details of which we reflect upon in the body of the report. However, it is worth noting here that feedback overwhelmingly shows that producers welcome the support of an intermediary (a role provided by the Eat Somerset project officers over two years) to introduce them to buyers and assist with marketing. In general, all producers we have worked with have been very supportive of the project.

What obstacles have we faced?

As a ground-breaking piece of work, the Eat Somerset project has not been without its problems. We have approached these with persistence and creativity, seeking collaborative approaches to overcome them. In particular, we note that:

- Getting into the wholesale market has required tenacity, changes of approach, flexibility and determination.
- We have had to take an energetic lead role in negotiating opportunities for new products and businesses.
- The retail and wholesale sectors have unique characteristics. There was a great deal to be learned about how the different symbol groups work and the different buying powers each has. We have also had to come to terms with certain limitations on what the local retail sector will accept, especially for loss leader and 'everyday' food categories, which are generally purchased through existing buying groups, with tight margins and retailer discount incentives.

At project level, it has also been difficult to:

- Find the right person in each organisation to help move the project forward.
- Find enough time to follow through all the opportunities.
- Cover the full geographical area, which is large and disparate, so is hard to travel around, given limited staff time.

Who have we been supported by?

The Eat Somerset project has been funded by a charitable grant from the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation. We extend our thanks to them for this, and for all of their progressive support for the local and sustainable food sector. We received additional support from Friends of the Earth for which thanks are also due. Eat Somerset has also worked with Somerset Food Links to make connections with local producers, and the New Economics Foundation to report back to a collaborative project called Real Steps Towards a Sustainable Local Food Systems – to ensure that our work in the southwest informed, and was informed by, discussion of national policy.



This report marks the completion of the first phase of the two-year Eat Somerset project. From July 2008, we are embarking on a new phase of the project supported by Rural Renaissance, Envolve and four local councils. This new phase of the project will build on what we have learned, help create sustainable local supply chains, and tackle challenging issues of sustainable distribution and supply. We also look forward to collaborating with the new Lottery-funded programme entitled Making Local Food Work, in which Sustain is both a recipient and distributor of funds and which is supporting community enterprise approaches to local and sustainable food, see: www.makinglocalfoodwork.co.uk.

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SECTION ONE – The Eat Somerset project

Sustain: The alliance for better food and farming, was funded by the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation to implement the Eat Somerset project. The aims were to offer local food and drink producers from Somerset and adjacent areas the opportunity to develop trading links with independent retailers, public sector caterers and other market outlets in Somerset and the adjacent areas, including Bath and Bristol. The project was run by Sustain, working with the not-for-profit local food enterprise Somerset Food Links (SFL).

In the following text, we list what we set out to achieve, and show the report on progress during the first year of the project (April 2006–March 2007). Sections marked in orange give an update from March 2007 to June 2008 (the completion of the project).

Activity	Date completed	June 2008 update (Year 2)
1(a) Recruitment of Somerset Food Links (SFL) officer. Sustain officer (originally Kate Bowie; now Alison Belshaw) already in post.	Late April 2006	Alison Belshaw took over from Kate Bowie, Sept 2007. In December 2007, there was also a change of staff at SFL.
1(b) Website design	May 2006	Regularly updated and improved over the course of the project.
1(c) Identify producers to take part in project.	At least 15 producers identified by July 2006 and 30 by September 2006	We have worked with, to varying degrees, one hundred and five (105) producers, fifty four (54) buyers and eleven (11) distributors along with fourteen other organisations.
1(d). Confirm participating symbol groups and stores taking part in project.	July 2006	Completed: See later in report for details.
1(e) Review supply logistics, market opportunities, quality control/ market readiness, gaps, pricing.	September 2006	Largely completed: See later in report for details.
1(f) Hold 6 events linking traders and developing market readiness.	One event by Sept 2006; 3 by March 2007; 2 by Dec 2007	Completed: Five events organised by us, July 2007 to April 2008; we have also contributed to several others.
1(g) Negotiate trading with stores and producers.	December 2006	Completed: Ongoing throughout; to be developed

		further in next phase of project.
1(h) Increased marketing and sales of local products. By the end of the project we aim to have increased sales of local products by 5% of food stock volume in 10 shops and one symbol group, working with at least 30 producers.	March 2007 (initial stage and ongoing)	Increased marketing and sales have resulted. Percentage virtually impossible to measure or verify. See discussion in report.
1(i) Publicity work	Ongoing	Completed: Ongoing throughout project.

In addition to the above the following activities have also been undertaken:

1(j) Establishing a project working party of local, regional and national stakeholders, which has met and communicated regularly, to share information and advice.

1(k) Drawing up and agreeing sustainable food and farming guiding principles for the project.

1(l) Assessing current procurement practice amongst public sector caterers in Bath & North East Somerset, and interest in procuring more local and sustainable products.

1(m) Evaluation of activities, for example by feedback questionnaires at events, and several telephone interviews towards the conclusion of this phase of the project. We reflect on the findings in the appropriate sections below, and have also used the results to shape our plans for the forthcoming second phase of the project.

SECTION TWO – What has the Eat Somerset project achieved?

Sustain is confident that the Eat Somerset project has achieved what it set out to do. We have worked with producers, retailers and wholesalers in the southwest area and increased trade between them. This is not to say that everything we have done has been an immediate success. However, we have persisted – and also sought to use challenging circumstances as an opportunity to learn more about the local and neighbourhood retail sector. Our case studies and report are therefore rich in the detail of what has worked and – importantly – what has not worked. We have shared this information, with our working party, stakeholder group and the wider constituency of Sustain’s network so that our experiences can inform future work in this important sector.

As before, we give details of progress as reported in Year 1, then highlight our Year 2 update in orange.

1. Recruitment of Somerset Food Links officer. Sustain officer in post (*completed*)

Summary of what we reported in Year 1

The project initially experienced delay largely because both the Somerset Food Link

project officer (Nicky Saunter) and Sustain project officer (Kate Bowie) were not in post until June 2006 and August 2006 respectively. At the time of submitting the proposal to Esmée Fairbairn, a Sustain employee, Dan Keech, was in a position to take on the post. However, Dan left Sustain in June and Sustain did not fill this post until August. While Dan and Nicky had initiated some key contacts before he left, there was effectively a four-month delay in starting the project. We discussed this with the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation, and adjusted our work programme accordingly.

June 2008 update (Year 2)

Kate left on maternity leave in August 2007. Alison Belshaw was recruited by Sustain on a freelance basis for the remaining 10 months of the project (Sept 2007 to June 2008). Nicky Saunter left Somerset Food Links (SFL) in December 2007. Kate Harris was appointed to replace her. After some discussion with SFL it was agreed that the number of days' work provided by SFL to the project would be reduced and that the project would concentrate its work on developing markets in the Bath and Bristol areas, linking Somerset producers into these markets. A freelance consultant was recruited to assist Alison in the Bath office one day a week between January and June 2008, with a focus on developing marketing events to support producers in making connections with buyers – a particular need identified by participants in the project.

2. Website design (completed)

Summary of what we reported in Year 1

The Eat Somerset project website was launched in 2006 at: www.sustainweb.org

June 2008 update (Year 2)

The Eat Somerset pages on the Sustain website have been continually updated and improved. This micro site now hosts:

- Project description
- Guiding principles for sustainable food and farming
- Sustainable food in the public sector
- Working party membership
- Project updates
- Project newsletter
- Eat Somerset directory – this was published in November 2007 with around 80 producers listed. Originally in a pdf format, a lot of work has recently been undertaken to make this a searchable database on the website, with a simple-to-use graphical interface which can be seen at www.sustainweb.org/esdirectory/
- Events
- Case studies: working with wholesalers, working with convenience stores, and meet the buyers events
- Collaborative approaches to sustainable distribution – notes of a meeting held and plans for future work to improve local supply chains

3. Identify producers to take part in project (completed)

Summary of what we reported in Year 1

Somerset Food Links has established links with around 270 producers, and close ties with three producer groups; Somerset Organic Link, Somerset Local Food Direct and Source – co-operatives of local producers that manage sales and distribution of products to a variety of outlets, including individual households, shops and restaurants. Project officers Nicky and Kate met with co-ordinators of these producer groups and discussed opportunities presented by the project.

- We found that Somerset Local Food Direct was not in a position to supply wholesale, as their focus was delivering products direct to households, operating at capacity (although expansion was possible) and being concerned that prices paid by retailers would not be high enough.
- Source was keen to engage with Eat Somerset, seeing it as potentially providing major opportunities for expansion, to help them remain financially viable. We decided to focus efforts on forging links between Source and independent retailers in their distribution area. Working with Source would effectively have supported 31 producers based on 2006/ 2007 co-op membership.
- Somerset Organic Link was keen to engage with Eat Somerset and had the capacity to do so – working in the first instance through their connections to Source (see above), and possibly developing into direct links in Year 2.

In addition to liaising with these producer groups, Nicky was also in direct contact with many individual producers in Somerset and compiled a list of approximately 15 keen to be involved.

June 2008 update (Year 2)

There have been a number of developments since the Year 1 report.

- **Work with two convenience stores in Somerset** was undertaken by Somerset Food Links, and information on this initiative can be seen in Appendix A: *Case Study One: Local Convenience Stores*.
- **Work with Source and the local retail sector wholesaler Booker** was pursued as a very promising way to engage a producer group in direct delivery of a range of goods to a wholesaler. Unfortunately, this initial work with Booker and Source failed to achieve the aspirations of the project, with the producer group pulling out shortly before the agreement was due to start. Full details of the first phase of work with Booker and the second more successful stage can be seen in Appendix B: *Case Study Two: Getting local food into the wholesale market*. The work with Booker has been both interesting and challenging and a lot of lessons have been learnt. This is covered in detail in the Case Study, and more briefly below. We are delighted to report that this has eventually resulted in Booker in Taunton taking on five local products (as of the end of June 2008), displayed separately to differentiate these from other products. These products are from Country Cottage Cooking, Robert's Sauces, Radford's Fine Fudges, Chiman's Spices, and Nutcombe Chocolates. Radford's Fine Fudges also assisted the project by producing artwork for a banner to draw customers' attention to this

range, and Eat Somerset has paid for the production of the banners. It is hoped that this initiative can be replicated in Booker and with other wholesalers in the Bristol, Bath and Somerset areas. Working with Booker has achieved the most success out of all the symbol groups.

- Using information gathered by the local authorities of Bath & North East Somerset and North Somerset through land-based producer surveys conducted in summer 2007, work began on compiling a **directory of producers interested in supplying to the retail and catering sectors**. This information was combined with producers the project and SFL had already worked with, to produce a directory identifying local producers, their products and the sectors they could supply. This now has 84 producers listed (June 2008). The directory is used as a first point of reference for any interested retailer or caterer. Although formatted in sections to easily identify types of produce e.g. drinks, dairy, meat, and vegetables, it was clear that this could become a useful web-based searchable directory. Work on this is now complete and the online directory is now available and easy to update with new producers. The directory will also be a very useful for the next phase of the project (see later for details of further funding for the project). The online directory can be viewed at www.sustainweb.org/esdirectory/
- Events that have also drawn in producers include our very popular and successful **Meet the Buyers events** (July 2007 in Bath and April 2008 in Bristol); sustainable packaging workshop (January 2008); and workshop on collaborative approaches to efficient and sustainable food distribution (March 2008). This has clearly identified a number of producers keen to work more closely with the project.

4. Confirm participating symbol groups and stores taking part (completed)

Summary of what we reported in Year 1

Symbol groups

In the initial stages of the project, the national Association of Convenience Stores introduced the project officers to three of their members – Spar, Londis and Booker – all of which are symbol groups, i.e. organisations that support a membership of independent stores. We went into some detail about the progress, challenges and plans with each of these, so that what we learned in this process could inform the wider ‘Real Steps Towards Sustainable Local Food Systems’, also funded by the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation, and to which the Eat Somerset project was linked.

Following meetings and discussions with the regional Spar distributor, Appleby Westward, it was concluded that it would be better to contact individual stores directly, as they are largely independent buyers (up to 95% of products can be bought independently from Appleby Westward). This was done. The first meeting Kate and Nicky had with Musgrave-Budgens-Londis was in early 2007 when it was concluded that there may be opportunities to work together with Londis stores, and further contact with Londis was therefore pursued.

Several meetings and communications with Booker were, until March 2007, resulting

in extremely positive and exciting plans. In September 2006, it had been agreed that Booker would promote certain products of the local co-operative producer group, Source, to customers of their Taunton branch (mainly independent retailers and caterers). These products would be made available to customers in December through a mechanism called 'drop shipments' whereby Source handled the orders and deliveries and Booker the promotion and invoicing. The initiative was to be launched with a farmers' market style event where customers could meet suppliers and try some products. To prepare for this Nicky and Source staff contacted Source members to find out which ones wanted to be included in the initiative, as well as other local producers to encourage them to join Source and the Booker initiative. This process was made easier by Source agreeing to waive the normal membership fee, allowing new recruits to be members without the full rights. Source also investigated installing Electronic Data Interchange (EDI) invoicing software. However, in November the team realised that more time was needed to complete various tasks and the launch date was postponed until April 2007. Everything was on track until mid-March 2007 when the Source management board decided to pull out of the initiative. They gave the following reasons for this decision:

- Bad timing, with an imminent change in management due to the manager at that time going on maternity leave.
- Problems with their website, which could not distinguish between Source members interested in supplying Booker and those that were not. A major investment of time and technology would have been needed for the website to suit this customer's needs.
- Resistance from some of their members, who either were not interested in supplying Booker; did not have the capacity; and/or felt that Source's time should not be spent for the benefit of just a few members.
- Resistance from members for the increased financial cut to be taken by Source and Booker. At the time, Source was taking a 20% cut. Under this initiative Booker was to take a 6-7% cut, some of which would be accommodated by Source but some of which would be passed on to the producers.
- Administrative problems of having two prices lists; one for regular customers, another for Booker customers.

While this was a setback for Eat Somerset, we learned a great deal. After further discussions, we developed new plans for work with Booker via a different approach. For example, rather than pursuing the drop shipment route we decided to continue to introduce Booker to individual local producers with the capacity and desire to get their products listed with Booker and in-store, on the shelves in the Taunton branch.

June 2008 update (Year 2)

There is a mix of news on developments since the Year 1 report:

- The **greatest success achieved with symbol groups has been with Booker**, where – after considerable effort from all parties – there are now five locally produced products on their shelves, easily identified as Somerset produce. Detailed work with Booker can be seen in Case Study 2 at Appendix B.

- **Work with other symbol stores has been relatively slow.** Musgrave–Budgens–Londis were approached again for details of good contacts in the area. Despite initial promising signs, and two of the most promising being followed up, the shopkeepers are busy and so progress has been slow.
- With regard to **Appleby Westward** (mentioned above), the symbol store chain Smiles was bought out by Martin MacColl in January 2008 leading to the closure of the Yeovil distribution centre. The pressures of consolidation are evident in this sector, as in others. Distribution moved to the company’s HQ in Brentwood, Essex. This contact has therefore not been pursued further.
- Some **individual Spar shops attended the Meet the Buyers events**, and work has started with L&F Jones a local wholesaler interested in sourcing local food. They made a number of useful new contacts at our April ‘Meet the Buyers’ event.
- It is anticipated that funding for the second phase of our project, from July 2008, will enable us to start to replicate the work with Booker in their stores in Bristol, Bath and Yeovil as well as with other wholesalers such as L&F Jones and potentially Macro and others.

Other stores

As explained above, we decided to focus our work on the co-operative producer group Source, and contact retailers, in the first instance, only within roughly a 10-mile radius of Source (their distribution range). This was 56 stores, all of which we wrote to in January 2007. The letter of introduction was followed up by phone calls and visits to interested stores (7 in total). At these visits the aims of the project were discussed further, a list of the products on offer via Source was given and a series of questions asked (about the barriers to and opportunities for local supplies experienced by stores). Whilst there was some positive feedback, only one store, Milverton Costcutter, expressed sufficiently strong interest in supplying local foods to enable a pilot project. This store participated in a local event organised by Nicky as part of the community’s Climate Challenge Weekend, in which a local produce market was run in the village school to illustrate the issues around buying locally. As a result of this event, with 150 visitors the Costcutter met two new local suppliers, whose products are now being stocked. Nicky also worked on two new local suppliers who were keen to supply this store, and also made similar efforts with the Spar store in Long Sutton. The next step would be to offer the stores more support.

June 2008 update (Year 2)

Work continued with Milverton Costcutter and Long Sutton Village Stores. Full details of this work can be seen in Appendix A: *Case Study One: Local Convenience Stores.*

5. Review supply logistics, market opportunities, quality control/market readiness, gaps, pricing (completed)

Summary of what we reported in Year 1

To understand the issues outlined above, the following activities were initiated:

- Collation of contact details of key players in the food chain in the Somerset,

Bristol, North Somerset and Bath & North East Somerset areas. These include farmers, abattoirs, suppliers, wholesalers, bakers, butchers, dairies, independent retailers (in the targeted area in Somerset only), larger tourist attractions and public sector institutions (secondary schools, hospitals, universities, prisons).

- Mapping these players, using mapping software, so that the geographic spread could be displayed visually. This was done for all the above apart from schools, farmers and retailers, which were too numerous for the maps to be useful.
- Surveying a sample of the various players to illustrate where and how food in the area was being produced, processed, transported and retailed. Questionnaires recorded information about producers and retailers when they expressed interest in being involved in the project. The producer questionnaire covered:
 - Production practices, including adherence to sustainability standards;
 - Current market outlets used and levels of interest in, and opportunities for, more local trade.

The questionnaire was initially used with four producers. Of these, three (Hollies Trout Farm, Gundenham's Dairy and Saffron Kitchen) were already familiar with packaging, bar-coding, labelling or distribution outfits to meet retail needs.

The questionnaire for retailers covered:

- Current levels of local products in individual stores;
- Barriers, opportunities and support needs for increasing these.

Seven retailers were interviewed in more detail; some already buy a lot of products locally and others very little. The most common barriers identified include higher prices for products from local producers which they believe their customers would not want to pay, and the need for regular, consistent deliveries which local producers may not have the capacity to meet. In terms of support, most retailers expressed interest in attending a 'meet-the-suppliers' event. However, few had many suggestions for support, perhaps not knowing or not having considered what may be possible or useful. More work would be useful, starting with a consultation event to stimulate discussion and ideas.

By getting answers from a sample of the local food chain (something that had not been done before in this geographical area), we aimed to illustrate where obstacles and opportunities lay for developing sustainable local food systems. For example, opportunities may be presented by the existence of a few dairies keen to expand and accommodate milk from nearby dairy farmers, who do not have the capacity to process milk themselves.

It is clear that local food projects need to understand the intricacies of the local food chain to be able to initiate and advise on the further development of sustainable local food systems in the sub-region. It is helpful, therefore, that three unitary authorities – North Somerset, Bath & North East Somerset and South Gloucestershire – supported surveys of land-based producers in their areas.

June 2008 update (Year 2)

We have continued to collect and analyse data throughout, to inform our work and to

help us plan appropriate activities and promotions. An update is as follows:

- Questionnaires continued to be completed, resulting in information from a total of 6 producers (those above, plus Somerset Organic Link, Somerset Local Food Direct and Bath District Farmers). In addition, a total of 20 retailers completed forms (8 in Somerset, 9 in Bath & North East Somerset, Appleby Westward, Booker and one in Bristol).
- Whilst we attempted to gather more information through these surveys, via email and post, this drew in very few returns. Some businesses were contacted by telephone but as each interview could take up to one hour, and businesses were often too busy to spend that time on answering questions, it was felt that this was not the best method for gathering information.
- Instead, a lot of information has been gathered through reports commissioned by three local authorities on land-based producers. These covered South Gloucestershire (2002), North Somerset (2007) and Bath & North East Somerset (2007). The latter two surveys and reports were carried out by Sustain's Eat Somerset project officer prior to appointment to the Eat Somerset post. Findings from these reports have been useful in supporting Eat Somerset's work and a summary of the comparison survey of the three areas is shown in Appendix D.

6. Hold six events linking traders and developing market readiness *(completed)*

Summary of what we reported in Year 1

By the time of the Year 1 report, the project had arranged one event on public sector catering in Bath & North East Somerset (see details below). With further events planned. Unfortunately, a farmers' market style 'meet-the-suppliers' event planned with Booker for December, then April, was postponed for reasons described above.

June 2008 update (Year 2)

Between July 2007 and June 2008 a number of events have been held. These have all been evaluated, with very positive and useful feedback from participants. This process of review has also helped us plan for the next phase of the project, and below we show what producers are requesting as support from Eat Somerset.

Event 1: Meet the Buyers – 31 July 2007, Green Park Station, Bath

The event was held in the open, but under cover at Bath's Green Park Station in central Bath. 23 producers attended and 19 buyers came to look at the produce. As a result of this event, producers reported that 15 new trading links had been made, and all attendees who completed evaluation forms (21) said the event was either 'useful' or 'quite useful'. For a first event for the project, we felt that this went really well and began the networking required between producers and buyers. Lessons were learnt on how to improve on an event. For example, because of it being in a very public place, a lot of members of the public came to have a look, which detracted a little from the main purpose of the event. In addition, it was felt that a greater number of buyers would be needed to make it worthwhile for producers.

Event 2: Booker / Producer meetings – 21 January 2008, Booker, Taunton

Following the dual disappointments of the stalled work with Booker and the producer co-operative Source, and a planned farmers' market being cancelled, we decided to work with Booker in a different way. Booker, as well as the Eat Somerset project, had undergone staff changes. The new manager at Booker in Taunton was keen to get involved. To assist, Eat Somerset arranged a morning of half-hour meetings with Booker and five selected producers. As a direct result of these interviews, four of the products were taken on by Booker in April 2008 and a further local producer has been taken on since (June 2008). Booker held a promotional event in April 2008 including the new producers (four at that time) enabling tastings for customers. Full details are in the Case Study in Appendix B.

Event 3: Sustainable Packaging workshop – 16 January 2008, Somerset Food Links, Langport

Through talking to producers we became aware that packaging was an issue for them both in terms of its use and its disposal. To address this we ran a workshop on sustainable packaging and 21 producers attended. After an introduction about the issues, there were speakers from the Eden Project and the Saffron Kitchen (a local producer who had spent nine months researching appropriate packaging for their product). Samples were also on show of packaging made from biodegradable materials. Feedback showed that the meeting went well and was appreciated. Several participants also suggested that the workshop needed to cover more in-depth issues about the reason such packaging is important. To address this, we organised a second workshop in May 2008 at Carymoor Environmental Centre, Castle Cary, Somerset. This would have included a tour of the landfill site to show people what happens to waste. Unfortunately only two people signed up to the workshop so it had to be cancelled. However, we still think there is scope for another workshop of this type and may look at running another one in the future, but not as a priority.

Event 4: Collaborative Approaches to Food Distribution workshop – 13 March 2008, Puxton Park, Hewish nr Weston-super-Mare

Producers, distributors and couriers were invited to attend a workshop to see how local food producers could work together to combine distribution of goods or link up with larger scale distributors and/or couriers. Speakers from Bristol Fruit Sales and Somerset Local Food Direct introduced the day which then broke in to workshop sessions to plot distribution routes on large scale maps. The afternoon was spent dealing with some of the issues that had been raised in the morning session. This workshop proved to be very stimulating, and has already led on to some more detailed work on distribution. More than 400 producers and distributors were sent survey forms in April 2008. We have seen an estimated 8% response. The information will be collated with the intention of setting up information on Sustain's website on journeys so that producers can try to make their own links with each other and share deliveries. This will form part of the work on distribution and supply of the Lottery-funded Making Local Food Work programme, a collaborative portfolio of activities

managed by the Plunkett Foundation. Sustain is running the food distribution and supply strand of this work. We are not in a position to report any further on this at the moment, but the intention is to carry on with this initiative. Initial findings seem to indicate that we may be best placed to co-ordinate a small group of producers who are experiencing distribution problems to help solve some of these.

Event 5: Meet the Buyers – 3 April 2008, BAWA Club, Bristol

A second Meet the Buyers event was held in April 2008 on the outskirts of Bristol. This had support from four local authorities in the area (Bristol City Council; North Somerset Council; Bath & North East Somerset Council, and South Gloucestershire Council), who all helped to promote the event by writing to food retailers, caterers and relevant businesses in their area to invite them to attend. The business support organisation South West Food & Drink also supported and attended the event, covering the costs of catering. Environmental Health representatives from South Gloucestershire Council were also there to help producers with any enquiries. Twenty four producers attended the event with a wide range of produce from dairy, drinks (soft and alcoholic), fish, flour, jams and chutneys. Fifty two buyers from the area attended, representing public sector catering, community and village shops, hotels, restaurants and cafés. See Appendix C: *Case Study Three: ‘Meet the Buyers’ events.*

We collected feedback from event participants, asking what support the Eat Somerset project could give – with results shown in the table below. It is clear that producers need help with marketing and organising events such as ‘Meet the Buyers’ (MtB), whilst buyers’ main issues are also marketing, but that the project could provide more networking and information-sharing opportunities.

Support Needed	MtB Producers	MtB Buyers	Distribution workshop
Marketing	39%	29%	30%
Brokerage	6%	13%	20%
Organising events	56%	10%	10%
Networking / info	17%	55%	80%
Training	6%	10%	0%
Distribution	6%	0%	Not indicated as was workshop topic

Other event support

Throughout the last year we have worked closely with South West Food & Drink (SWFD) on public sector food procurement. As a result, two events have been organised by SWFD aimed at getting producers ready to be able to supply public sector contracts. One was held in the North Somerset area and another in the South Gloucestershire area. We have promoted these and encouraged producers interested in working with the public sector to attend.

7. Negotiate trading with stores and producers, and 8. Increase marketing and sales of local products (*both completed*)

Summary of what we reported in Year 1

Other than with one independent retailer in Milverton, we could not report on progress with trading negotiations with stores and producers, nor with increasing marketing and sales of local products. The reasons for this were, firstly, that the Booker work had taken a lot of time and effort and, secondly, it had taken longer than anticipated to engage individual independent retailers.

June 2008 update (Year 2)

Work with convenience stores is reported in Case Study One. This details work with Milverton Costcutter and Long Sutton Village Stores. Work with these stores was primarily undertaken by Nicky Saunter, project officer with Somerset Food Links, due to her proximity to the area. Results and findings can be seen in Appendix A.

Our key observation is that work with individual stores on this basis takes a significant amount of time and the value of spending a large proportion of working time with just one or two village stores has to be considered carefully against the value of working with larger wholesalers and a range of producers. Whilst the support the project can offer to individual retailers was considered valuable by participants, in the longer term this level of support might not be of the greatest benefit, and unlikely to be sustainable without continued project officer support. In addition, the success of this type of support depends considerably on the particular shop owner/manager and their interest in local produce. Success relies to a very large extent on the individuals involved.

Having said this, small successes are worth celebrating. Both the stores have taken on new products and provided their own marketing to identify these clearly to the customer, including shelf labelling. There is scope for producing a pack of information for local retailers providing information on where they can source local produce along with some publicity material and 'shelf-talkers' already produced to help them with their marketing. All interested retailers have been sent details of how to find and use the Eat Somerset directory on the website.

Since the 'Meet the Buyers' event in April, one of the independent stores based in central Bristol has started buying from at least four of the producers who attended. Although one of these new trading arrangements has not continued, the rest are going well and in a recent conversation with the owner, she stated that attending the 'Meet the Buyers' event had *"turned my business round"*.

9. Publicity work (completed)

Summary of what we reported in Year 1

We produced a flyer in August 2006 summarising the aims of the project, and used this for publicity purposes, in mailings to potential project partners and interested

organisations. Kate and Nicky presented the project at the Plunkett Foundation's national conference in November 2006 where the leaflet was also distributed. A list of local journalists was also compiled to support media work.

June 2008 update (Year 2)

The flyer has been updated regularly, is distributed and is available on the website. Publicity about events has been emailed directly to interested parties and through networks such as tourism authorities (and to hotels for 'Meet the Buyers' events). Information on the Eat Somerset directory has been distributed widely too. We have not sought widespread media coverage, as our activities have been largely 'for the trade', and we therefore targeted specialised press and mailings. However, greater public outreach may be an element to be explored for future work. In January and June 2008 a newsletter was sent out to participants and people interested in the project, to keep them informed and encourage feedback from them.

10. Establishing a project working party (completed)

Summary of what we reported in Year 1

Eat Somerset was linked to a national policy forum coordinated by the New Economics Foundation, advising the 'Real Steps Towards Sustainable Local Food Systems' project. In addition, to deal with more local issues, an Eat Somerset working party was established, with membership drawn from local, regional and national interests, to share experiences and expertise amongst relevant organisations in the sub-region and to ensure that project work complemented rather than duplicated what was already happening. Membership was reported in Year 1. In the following table, new members are shown in bold and those no longer involved are indicated by being presented in brackets ().

Eat Somerset working party

Ballinger, Christina	Somerset Organic Link
Bayne, Jonathan	Londis
Belshaw, Alison	Eat Somerset Project Officer
Berry, Andy	SW Food and Drink
Blackburn, Rosie	Sustain, Good Food on the Public Plate Project Officer
Bone, Steve	Government Office for the South West
Bonner, Alan	Radstock Cooperative Society
<i>(Bowie, Kate</i>	<i>Sustain, Eat Somerset Project Officer)</i>
Bowles, Liz	English Farming and Food Partnership
Brannagan, Chris	South West Regional Development Agency
Brennan, Shane	Association of Convenience Stores
Chant, Sue	Somerset Primary Care Trust
John Cotterell	Gundenham Dairies
Dalmeny, Kath	Sustain, Eat Somerset project manager
Goodall, Christine	Natural England
Guilding, Ann	Agricultural Development Officer, Sedgemoor DC
Harris, Kate	Somerset Food Links
Head, Chris	Involve
Hird, Vicki	Friends of the Earth
<i>(Hockridge, Emma</i>	<i>Sustain, Hospital Food Project)</i>
Hughes, Mary	School Meals Advisor
Johns, Mike	South West Regional Development Agency
Keech, Dan	new economics foundation
MacLachlan, Andy	Co-op
Marriott, Steve	Bristol City Council
Marshall, Christine	South West Food & Drink
Moore, Andrew	Somerset Food Links (Chair)
Morris, Sue	Taste of the West
Pinnock, Helen	Bristol City Council
Righton, Kirsty	Soil Association
<i>(Saunter, Nicky</i>	<i>Somerset Food Links)</i>
Sheaves, John	Taste of the West
Smith, Toni	Food Standards Agency South West regional coordinator
Talbot, Veronica	Long Sutton Village Store
Ward, Judith	South West Food & Drink
Webber, Nick	Rural Enterprise Gateway Project Officer
Wheatley, Jan	Booker
Wilcox, John	Booker
Wildblood, Jane	Bath and North East Somerset Council

Retailers, producers and producer groups will be invited to join the working party as and when they become involved in project activity.

The first working party meeting took place in October 2006 and the second took place in April 2007. Contributions from members between meetings also proved very useful – whether to support event planning or research.

June 2008 update (Year 2)

The working party has continued to thrive and to meet regularly, with meetings in October 2007 and January and April 2008. This has largely been a forum for disseminating information about the project and the participants, generating ideas, contacts and other support for Eat Somerset. It has been extremely useful to have this network of people to contact for advice and information in between meetings. Notes of all working party meetings are available on request. Membership has been revised slightly as shown in the table above.

11. Drawing up and agreeing sustainability guiding principles for the project (completed)

Summary of what we reported in Year 1

While the objectives of the project are, at face value, straightforward (to increase trade between Somerset producers and local independent retailers and public sector caterers); when taken in the context of the wider local and sustainable food agenda, a range of complex questions arise. Thinking ahead to where Sustain and Somerset Food Links would like to see Eat Somerset's work in a few years' time, beyond the current funding, what action, if any, should we be taking now to encourage the development of local food systems that are robust and leading the way in terms of sustainability? Should Eat Somerset, for example, be encouraging sustainable food production methods and, if yes, how and to what extent? Should Eat Somerset be promoting the use of energy-efficient food processing equipment and transportation methods and, if yes, how? Should Eat Somerset be advocating higher than average animal welfare standards? And so on.

At the first working party meeting it was agreed that, indeed, Eat Somerset should incorporate broader sustainability issues, as well as reducing food miles and promoting local jobs. There was also a consensus that, while the project should not impose criteria and procedures that made participation difficult for many potential project partners, it should draw up sustainability guiding principles to provide a framework under which project activity could be implemented, and improvements achieved wherever possible in sustainability. We conducted a consultation process, with the principles agreed by both the national and local working parties. They can be viewed on the Eat Somerset page on www.sustainweb.org. The condensed version, now final (reported as draft in Year 1 report) is shown below.

FINAL

Eat Somerset – Developing sustainable local food systems

Eat Somerset promotes food systems that:

- Support local jobs and livelihoods
- Contribute to thriving local economies
- Protect the environment and wildlife
- Avoid the depletion of natural resources
- Promote health and well-being amongst communities

Eat Somerset's guiding principles

Eat Somerset aims to:

- Promote local food – food traded between producers, processors, distributors, caterers and independent retailers in and around Somerset, Bristol and Bath
- Promote fair trading practices, especially in support of small-scale food and farming enterprises
- Reduce the use of artificial fertilisers and pesticides, favouring produce from low-chemical farming such as certified organic and accredited LEAF Marque produce
- Reduce food packaging and waste and encourage recycling, reusing and composting of it
- Promote the use of energy-efficient vehicles and equipment
- Guarantee high animal welfare standards, favouring organic, RSPCA Freedom Food certified and free-range animal and poultry products
- Promote good quality, fresh, seasonal and healthy food

Please refer to www.sustainweb.org for full details of the Eat Somerset sustainability guiding principles.

June 2008 update (Year 2)

Eat Somerset's guiding principles remain useful and robust. Whilst we have not needed to update our guiding principles, it is worth noting here that these influenced development of Sustain's own 'Sustainable Food Guidelines' – a synthesis of learning from several of its projects, including Eat Somerset. These guidelines are now used in work with producers, processors, distributors, retailers and caterers.

12. Assessing current procurement practice amongst public sector caterers in Bath & North East Somerset (B&NES) and interest in procuring more local and sustainable products (completed)

Summary of what we reported in Year 1

At the end of January 2007, Eat Somerset secured a consultancy contract with the Government Office for the South West (GOSW) that has proved to be a useful complement to the Eat Somerset process. During February and March, Kate spent two days per week contacting the organisations listed below, presenting the case for sustainable food procurement and discussing steps they could take to introduce more local and sustainable food into their catering services. On 23 March 2007, she held a seminar for interested organisations.

Organisations contacted:

- The Royal United Hospital in Bath
- Leisure facilities managed by Aquaterra Leisure under a Leisure Partnership Agreement with Bath Council, including in Bath, Keynsham and South Wandsyke
- Universities and further education colleges, including Bath Spa University, University of Bath, City of Bath College and Norton Radstock College
- Residential care homes and day centres for the elderly, for people with special needs and for people with physical disabilities, run by B&NES Social Services
- Avon and Wiltshire Mental Health NHS Partnership Trust
- B&NES Primary Care Trust
- Council-owned historic public buildings with catering outlets, including the Roman Baths and Pump Room and the Museum of Costume
- Avon and Somerset Constabulary (Bath, Keynsham and Radstock police stations)
- Avon Fire and Rescue Services (stations in B&NES)
- Council procurement team, responsible for school meals
- Schools that have opted out of Council meal provision
- Ministry of Defence bases

A report of the work was presented to Government Office for the South West at the end of the March 2007 which included:

- Details of the work carried out.
- A database of all contacts.
- A summary of current local food activity in B&NES public sector, with commentary on where opportunities lie for future work.
- Copies of written materials produced.
- Recommendations for future work.

The report identified several examples of good practice in the public sector in Bath & North East Somerset, most notably the Council's school meal provision and the Heritage Services' catering services at the Pump Room and Assembly Rooms. In 2006 the school meal contracts came up for renewal and the Council vigorously encouraged local suppliers to tender. Three of the four suppliers that won the contract, as a result, are locally based and buy locally where possible. Similarly, 18 months ago, Heritage Services put their catering contract out to tender and specified

fresh, local and fairly traded products. They report that they have noted a marked improvement in quality.

Amongst the 10 secondary schools that manage their own catering service, half already procured some products from local suppliers (recognising these suppliers may not buy locally produced products) and were keen to explore opportunities for increasing this. Both universities, both colleges, the Royal United Hospital and the leisure facilities were also all keen to explore opportunities, although expressing some scepticism at what could be achieved given their budget and contractual restraints. The MoD did not respond to our enquiries; fire and emergency services in the area only have one station with a very small catering outlet, and none of the police stations had any catering provision, so would not engage in this process.

While this work could have been seen as a divergence from the core aim of Eat Somerset (to broker links between independent retailers and Somerset producers), we felt that it would be very useful to undertake, for the following reasons:

- The original project proposal suggested that Eat Somerset would aim *“to offer local food and drink producers from Somerset and adjacent areas the opportunity to develop trading links with ... new markets in the regional urban centres such as Bristol and Bath, including retailers, street markets and public sector food providers”*. This work paves the way for expansion of the project into Bath & North East Somerset in the future.
- There is a lot of enthusiasm amongst a local food partnership established in Bath & North East Somerset for expanding Eat Somerset activities in the area.
- The GOSW contract effectively ‘bought’ additional time for the Eat Somerset project officer. Having more officer time was highly beneficial, as the groundwork had been laid and plans were in place for a period of intense activity.
- The GOSW contract allowed Sustain to allocate some additional funding to Eat Somerset activities, including events and promotional work, for which there was previously very little budget.

June 2008 update (Year 2)

On public sector food procurement we have:

- Continued work with producers interested in supplying this sector. In particular, Bath District Farmers, a group of 11 farmers, are involved with the project and supply to Bath & North East Somerset and South Gloucestershire schools. They have also spoken at events on public sector food procurement organised by South West Food & Drink.
- We have maintained contact with Beechencliff School, worked with South West Food & Drink on this issue, and have plans for a specific ‘Meet the Buyers’ event for the public sector (see future plans). This theme has not been a priority for the project so far, as our primary concern is retail. However, if opportunities have arisen they have been followed through.
- Participated in southwest policy discussions and strategy development, which has a strong local and sustainable food focus.

3. What have we learnt?

The whole Eat Somerset project has been designed as a learning process, and we have endeavoured to record and reflect on both our successes and problems throughout. We have been keenly aware that this is ground-breaking work, and therefore of interest to a wider constituency than simply our project working party and the policy discussion forum of which we have been a part. Since our purpose has been to learn, and to share that learning, we have put considerable effort into recording and communicating this via our own networks and the website. This has led to very productive developments, such as new work with the Making Local Food Work team on collaborative approaches to efficient and sustainable distribution.

As a result of this present review and report, we have revisited our original project objectives, and planned new activities for the next phase of the project – to be supported by Rural Renaissance, Envolve and four local councils. In doing so, we reviewed several challenges, as set out below.

Challenge 1: Geography

Summary of what we said in Year 1 about what we have learned

Some of the difficulties have been due to the project's geography:

- The remit of the project is to engage producers and new market outlets, especially retailers, in Somerset and its adjacent areas, including Bristol and Bath. Activity over the initial eight months focused on engaging retailers and producers in Somerset rather than the adjacent areas of Bristol and Bath. This was because Somerset Food Links has contact with producers and producer groups in Somerset and it seemed more likely that the project could realise its objectives if it sought out retailers as local to these producers as possible. However, Bristol and Bath continued to offer more significant opportunities.
- The two project officers, Nicky Saunter and Kate Bowie, were based about 1.5 hours travel time apart, with Nicky in Langport, Somerset and Kate in Bath. While Nicky was well-placed to engage Somerset producers, Kate was better placed to engage with Bristol and Bath producers and retailers, to make more efficient use of time and effort.

What we planned to do differently in the future

After a Year 1 review, we decided that:

- Kate should focus on engaging retailers in Bath & North East Somerset and increasingly explore opportunities in Bristol.
- Nicky should continue to develop links with producers in Somerset, particularly those with capacity to supply retailers in Bath and Bristol.
- Both Kate and Nicky would also start to engage producers in the areas adjacent to Bath & North East Somerset, i.e. West Wiltshire, North Somerset and South Gloucestershire.
- More time would be needed to continue to cultivate the new arrangements and

ensure they became well rooted. For this reason the project team sought funding to extend the project beyond June 2008.

June 2008 update (Year 2): What did we do?

In late 2007 it became even clearer that the geographical difference was making it over-complicated to run the project. After discussion, we decided to rationalise the project. Specifically, we:

- Reduced the amount of time Somerset Food Links contributed to the project, whilst maintaining a good working relationship.
- Commissioned SFL to offer specific support for events. SFL used this time to organise the packaging workshop, organise the meetings with Booker and producers and provide support at the 'Meet the Buyers' event in Bristol.
- Employed Cordelia Rowlatt one day per week from the end of January 2008 to the end of June 2008, to compile a considerable amount of data, provide support at events (distribution workshop and meet the buyers) and carry out some evaluation activities for the project such as phone interviews. With Alison and Cordelia being based in the Bath office, communication improved considerably.
- Utilised data from surveys in the area (land-based producer surveys).
- Engaged some producers in South Gloucestershire through the Meet the Buyers event and distribution workshop.
- Extended links to all the West of England local authorities (formerly Avon).

Challenge 2: Producer group capacity

Summary of what we said in Year 1 about what we have learnt

At the time of submitting the original project proposal there were four producer groups established in Somerset (Blackdown Hills Food & Drink Association; Somerset Local Food Direct; Somerset Organic Link, and Source), all of which had connections with Somerset Food Links. It was understood that these producer groups were in a position to support Eat Somerset. However, the producer group in the Blackdown Hills had ceased to exist by the start of the project; Somerset Local Food Direct was not in a position to deal with wholesale; and Source, as experienced via the Booker initiative, was not in a position to supply larger retailers. We considered that Source and Somerset Organic Link still offered good prospects for new work. Until the end of Year 1, our efforts focused on Source. We were slightly concerned that Somerset Organic Link deals only with organic fruit and vegetables, some of which was not produced locally. However, the relationship with Somerset Organic Link remained positive, with an idea emerging for 'piggy-backing' other local products onto their distribution runs (which already go to retailers in Bath and Bristol). We also hoped to continue to work with Source, but were better informed of their capacity and therefore better able to plan achievable activity.

What we planned to do differently in the future

After detailed discussion, and informed by advice from our working party, we identified a range of very interesting options to pursue. We decided to:

- Continue to work with Source, and perhaps Somerset Local Food Direct and Somerset Organic Link, brokering links between them and individual independent retailers.
- Continue work with Booker, but focus on brokering links between them and individual producers that have the capacity (scale; continuity of supply; experience of logistics such as bar-coding) to trade direct, getting their products listed and on the shelves in-store.
- Make producer-by-producer referrals to other stores as they engage in the project.
- Exploit any further opportunities to broker links between a producer group and a symbol group supplier, taking more time to ensure that members of the group are able and willing to engage, and that the infrastructure requirements, such as website design, invoicing and deliveries, can be arranged realistically, cost-effectively and in the given timeframe.
- Explore opportunities for facilitating a system of 'piggybacking' local products into existing delivery systems, for example those operated by some larger producers and Somerset Organic Link
- Explore opportunities to work with existing delivery services to 'fill in holes' in their distribution routes, e.g. identifying stores that could be included on their established distribution routes.
- Aim to work with local wholesalers and other intermediaries, such as bakers, dairies and butchers, encouraging them to buy from local producers and promote local produce

June 2008 update (Year 2): What did we do?

Alison's arrival in September 2007 offered a useful point for us to review our work and design a detailed work plan to make best use of the remaining time:

- We decided not to continue to work with Source on mainstream retail issues. Alison has worked with Somerset Organic Link, helping to promote them and make links where necessary. After the July Meet the Buyers, SOL began to deliver Bart Spices with their goods and after the distribution workshop they are negotiating delivery of Robert's Sauces. In addition, possibly as a result of meeting at the workshop, they are now supplying vegetable boxes to staff at Essential Trading in Bristol. SOL has a range of promotional leaflets and produced one for restaurants and cafés. Eat Somerset part-funded this leaflet, shown in Appendix E. Somerset Local Food Direct spoke at the distribution workshop and have had some links into Eat Somerset, although they are not dealing with the retail sector. There is scope for developing working between SOL and SLFD and it is hoped that this opportunity will be explored further in the near future.
- Work with Booker continued and is detailed in Appendix B.
- Producer-by-producer referrals have been made to retailers, caterers and public sector organisations as and when requested. These include Booker, Green Park Brasserie (Bath), Beechen Cliff School, amongst others.
- Producer group and symbol group brokerage has not yet happened as new

opportunities have not arisen. Producer-by-producer referrals seem to be the more successful way of introducing producers to new markets. This means the new trading arrangement can develop at a pace suitable for both the producer and the retailer with minimum risk on either side.

- Distribution and 'piggy-backing' delivery have been investigated through the collaborative approaches to distribution workshop (March 2008) and distribution survey (April/May 2008). Findings from these activities will be used to inform decisions on the best way to develop this work.
- Work with wholesalers is continuing.

Challenge 3: The ease of engaging retailers

Summary of what we said in Year 1 about what we have learnt

Symbol groups – what we have learnt

We did not have any difficulty in engaging Booker in Eat Somerset and are confident that they will continue to work with us on a producer-by-producer basis, despite the temporary setback with drop shipment plans. We believe a reason for Booker's ready engagement was motivation at regional management level and a desire at head office to realise the market and publicity benefits of promoting local produce – even if only for a few headline products. In other words, retailers will not engage in Eat Somerset unless they have a commitment to the project's objectives and/or can see market benefits for themselves. It is also worth noting that both Booker and the Eat Somerset team have had to learn about each other's very different capacities and expectations, with Eat Somerset being a project of minimal budget and part-time staff and Booker being a profitable business with a national reach.

Symbol groups – what we will do differently in the future

We believe the Co-operative retail movement is likely to share similar motivations to Eat Somerset, being rooted in community engagement. We are hopeful that, once the right contacts at regional level have been identified, they may be an additional symbol group to engage in the project. Similarly, it is hoped the local sourcing manager at Londis will be keen to explore opportunities for involvement in Eat Somerset.

June 2008 update (Year 2): What did we do?

The Co-operative movement have been kept informed through receiving notes of the working party meetings. However, they have not been able to attend, as the main buying contact is based in Scotland. Work with individual Co-op stores has not been pursued, as the work with Booker was identified as a priority and we had already developed working relationships with them. With regard to Londis, two stores were followed up but nothing has come to fruition yet, despite initial interest. As reported earlier this is primarily down to the length of time that needs to be invested with individual stores, often with very little output.

Summary of what we said in Year 1 about what we have learnt

Individual stores – what we have learnt

Out of 56 stores contacted, seven were visited and, out of these, only one has been prepared to consider any significant action so far. Thus, merely introducing retailers to the concept of local food and presenting them with a list of alternative local products is not enough to stimulate them into taking action. In addition, answers were not forthcoming from local retailers about what kinds of support they feel they need. We think that independent retailers are not aware of what support they could be offered or that might be useful, and appear not to have thought about what they could do to market products other than national brands, for which materials and incentives are readily supplied by marketing agents.

Individual stores – what we plan to do differently in the future

We decided to invite a few particularly keen retailers (in the Bath and Bristol areas) and present them with some offers of practical support; inviting them to comment and help us develop the ideas. We decided to try to stimulate people's imagination by providing case studies and positive stories of where similar support has helped to improve sales and customer relations. Support planned could include:

- Providing market research information
- Helping with in-house promotions
- Providing promotional materials (leaflets, on-shelf stickers, banners etc.)
- Helping publicise the work being done around local food e.g. with the local media
- Providing training, e.g. on handling fresh produce or monitoring sales of local produce
- Running events where they have a chance to meet suppliers
- Helping to run product trials

The feedback would inform which activities with retailers are taken forward.

June 2008 update (Year 2): What did we do?

- We designed and had printed banners to promote the local food ranges. We provided Booker with these materials. There is still scope to produce other point-of-sale material including leaflets, shelf displays, etc, in consultation with Booker.
- Meet the Buyers events have been run to introduce producers direct to local buyers. These have proved popular and successful and there is an opportunity to run more of these. The time invested is worthwhile as they involve a large number of producers and buyers at the same event.

Challenge 4: The complex nature of local food work

Summary of what we said in Year 1 about what we have learnt

Eat Somerset is operating in an increasingly complex and shifting local food agenda. Broader sustainable development issues are being considered by the project team and these may throw up challenges in addition to those already being faced, such as questions about which types of products and systems create more greenhouse gas emissions than others – the answer is rarely straightforward.

What we plan to do differently in the future

The project will continue to be mindful of the wider sustainable development agenda and plan activity accordingly, seeking advice and support from organisations and individuals with appropriate expertise where necessary.

June 2008 update (Year 2): What did we do?

We have kept aware of developments and Sustain has produced guidelines on sustainable food, partly informed by the experiences of Eat Somerset. The project works within these guidelines wherever possible. We offer advice to producers, and have, in particular, offered training on sustainable packaging. However, we have also been careful not to exclude producers from the project, and essentially promote the guidelines within which the project works, but fully appreciate that it can take some years for producers to develop or change their production methods to more sustainable ones. There also has to be the will to do it. Whilst building new relationships we are keen to impart information on our aims but do not see these as rigid limits on the project.

Challenge 5: The value of the mapping exercise

Summary of what we said in Year 1 about what we have learnt

The review of supply logistics, market opportunities, quality control/market readiness, gaps and pricing quickly became a lengthier and more involved piece of work than first anticipated. This is because we wanted to get a better overview of key players in the sub-region (Somerset, Bristol, Bath & North East Somerset and North Somerset). By being more thorough, the project would be in a better position to plan its activity and look strategically at what it and other partners could be doing to develop sustainable local food systems. Despite being a more thorough review than originally planned, we recognised that it would still only scratch the surface, but we sought good illustrations of where and how food is being produced, processed, transported and retailed and where some of the obstacles and opportunities lie.

What we will plan to do differently in the future

In recognition of the value of a thorough mapping exercise we planned to share our learning with key players who may be able to fill in any gaps and act on the findings.

To conclude, taking into account the delayed project start date, the challenges faced and lessons learnt, we revised some of the project's objectives and activities, in consultation with our working party and wider stakeholder group, and with approval from the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation.

June 2008 update (Year 2): What did we do?

- We are aware from follow-up work undertaken that our work and support has made a difference to Booker, Briggs Greengrocers (Bristol), Milverton Costcutter and Long Sutton Village Store.
- Over the course of the project we have worked with over 150 businesses,

exceeding the target of 15.

- We have run five events, exceeding the target.
- We have succeeded in negotiating new trading arrangements with Booker, and through the Meet the Buyers event are fully aware of a number of other new arrangements that have been made. However, we have found that measuring that increase is virtually impossible. Should this be done in the future we would need to set up monitoring guidelines and forms for producers and retailers right at the beginning of the project. However, even so, it is a matter of debate about how accurate such measurement could be.

4. Conclusion

This report has described and reflected on the main activities of the Eat Somerset project and what it has achieved in relation to what it set out to do. As this is a final report there is an opportunity to conclude on what the project has provided and identify work for the future. The summary at the beginning of this report outlines the main findings of this work, and identifies the challenges, and some concluding thoughts are as follows:

- The project's targets were revised after Year 1 when we realised that these had been over-ambitious and that the length of time to engage both producers and retailers had been underestimated.
- In retrospect, we consider that a project such as this would probably be most effective if carried out over a period of three years, with Year 1 for development, building up contacts and research; Year 2 for running events and developing new trading arrangements; and Year 3 for embedding and monitoring these new trading arrangements and continuing to develop new ones. Funding for additional staff time would also have been invaluable.
- It has become clear over the course of the project that a link between producers and retailers is essential to provoke greater uptake of local and sustainable food – or indeed change of any kind. Both are busy with their own work and to have someone act as an intermediary is invaluable to both parties. This has been particularly evident in organising meetings with Booker and organising the Meet the Buyers events.
- This is new territory for many wholesalers, and they welcome support and advice on enhancing their product range.
- The project has represented a huge learning curve for the Sustain staff, since work on local and sustainable sourcing had not been carried out before with wholesalers and other retailers in this capacity. We believe the process is of value for the local food sector, and look forward to development of this work in its new phase and further opportunities for learning and dissemination.
- Despite some setbacks, there is no doubt that Eat Somerset has responded to a need and that the work has been greatly valued by participants – as reported in our feedback forms and telephone interviews.

Plans for the next phase of Eat Somerset's work

The need for the project has been recognised and supported by the four unitary authorities in the West of England area (Bristol City, North Somerset, South Gloucestershire and Bath & North East Somerset Councils). To that end, Sustain submitted a funding application to the Rural Renaissance Initiative which is 50% match funded by a combination of Sustain and the four local councils. This application was approved in June 2008 and will provide continued funding for the project until the end of March 2009. Over the next nine months the project aims to:

- Hold more events including individual Meet the Buyers events aimed at specific markets including: wholesalers; public sector catering; the retail sector.
- Run training events on marketing (for producers - a particularly popular request); food hygiene; sustainable packaging (depending on demand).
- Gather support for, and develop a funding bid, to be submitted to the Local Food Fund (Big Lottery) to continue a project in the West of England area.
- Continue to develop links and networking opportunities for organisations and businesses working on sustainable local food projects in the area.

We remain grateful to the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation for providing the necessary funds to make Eat Somerset possible. This has enabled us to explore fascinating and complex new territory and share a great deal of learning with the local food sector.

SUMMARY REPORT
Background, key findings
& recommendations of
results from
Food Supply Chain
Initiative Surveys

in
Bath & North East Somerset,
North Somerset and
South Gloucestershire

July 2007

1. Background

In the West of England, Local Food Supply Chain Initiative surveys have been carried out for South Gloucestershire (September 2002), Bath & North East Somerset and North Somerset Councils (both May 2007). These were funded by the local councils themselves and South West Rural Enterprise Gateway.

This report details the findings of the surveys by comparing data collated in each area. The intention is to provide a basis for the Partnership to make decisions on future joint working on local food initiatives.

Some additional information was gathered from the Bath and North East Somerset and North Somerset surveys. These are analysed in the reports provided to the individual local authorities, but are not relevant for this report so have not been included. The information includes annual turnover and employment; farm assurance schemes; and environmental management. For details of these in Bath and North East Somerset and North Somerset please refer to the specific report for that area. Likewise, details of abattoirs, livestock markets or processors used are not included in this report.

2. Methodology

Postal surveys of local producers were conducted in each area. In South Gloucestershire a database from Department for the Environment, Farming and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) was used. This was not available to the other areas, but a combination of data supplied by the local National Farmers Union (NFU), Council's Trading Standards and Environmental Health teams, and information from the Yellow Pages was compiled.

3. Response

Response rates for each area are shown in Table 1. To the extent that all response rates are within, or slightly above, the typical range of postal survey response rates of 5-10%, the number of respondents in each area, and overall, represents an acceptable size. However, more detailed analysis would be required to prove actual statistical validity.

Table 1: Response Rates

Area	Number issued	Number returned	Number processed	Response rate
Bath & North East Somerset	623	82	55	9%
North Somerset	718	133	75	10.5%
South Gloucestershire	649	130	84	13%
TOTAL	1,990	345	214	11%

3.1 Key Findings

Farm Sizes

Of the farms responding:

- 29% of farms in Bath and North East Somerset and 24% in North Somerset are 6-25 hectares in size (15-63 acres)
- In South Gloucestershire, 24% of farms are 51-100 hectares (126-250 acres)

Produce

Based on the data provided by respondents:

- Bath and North East Somerset has the highest percentages of beef, pig and sheep farmers
- There are more dairy farmers in South Gloucestershire than in the other areas
- In North Somerset there are more poultry farmers than in the other areas

Produce Sales

In all three areas the main points of sale are:

- direct to local consumers
- direct to abattoirs
- direct to livestock markets

Limitations to expansion

The main limitations detailed by respondents to the surveys are:

- Lack of facilities for local processing
- No time to develop other outlets
- Obtaining planning permission
- Obtaining finance for investment
- Compliance with food hygiene regulations

Advice

Local food producers would welcome advice on and support with:

- Publicity and promotion
- Identifying markets for their produce
- Advice on planning permission
- Information on compliance with food hygiene regulations

Supply

Of those producers who responded in all areas:

- 75 (46%) are interested in supplying to the public
- 62 (38%) are interested in supplying local retailers
- 60 (37%) are interested in supplying local caterers

Orchards

- There is the potential to bring 25 unmanaged orchards back into management

4. Recommendations

The West of England Partnership can use the information contained in this report, and the more detailed individual reports, to make decisions on future working on local food issues.

Marketing, Publicity and Promotion

Many producers state that they need assistance with marketing. South Gloucestershire and North Somerset Council's have already addressed this to some extent with the production of a local food directory for these areas. In addition, South Gloucestershire has run a Local Food & Drink Festival since 2005. This has grown each year and evaluation from the Festival in 2006 has indicated that producers welcome the festival (all but one has participated all three years and a number of new producers are taking part in 2007). Further feedback from one farm shop estimates that their trade has increased 50% since taking part in the 2006 festival.

Suggested actions:

- *The West of England Partnership could coordinate a food festival for all three areas. Funding could be sought from the Rural Renaissance Initiative.*
- *The Partnership could produce a local produce directory aimed at retailers and caterers*

Catering and Retailing

The report indicates that 60 producers are interested in supplying caterers and 62 are interested in supplying retailers. Further work with these producers could be undertaken to establish actual quantities and types of produce available and then assessing with caterers and retailers the demand for these products.

Suggested actions:

- *Reassess the potential for establishing a brokerage scheme in the area using Rural Renaissance funding*
- *Consider other ways of working with retailers and caterers such as organising 'Meet the Producer' type events as recently done in Gloucestershire (Taste of the West) and Somerset (Eat Somerset Project, Sustain)*

Orchards

Investigate ways of providing advice to orchard owners on ways to bring their orchards back into management. This could include working with organisations such as the Somerset and Gloucestershire Orchard Groups.

Suggested action:

- *Contact the relevant orchard groups to discuss ideas and the potential for reintroducing orchards and identifying sources of funding to help achieve this.*

Why **Eat** Organic?

It's good for you and it's good for your world

Somerset *Organic* Link

Dining Out

Taste the difference

Chefs take pride in the quality of the food they serve. They seek the finest ingredients. They work closely with farmers in their locality to find out what's available and what's in season.

Put simply, the best chefs know that locally sourced, organic ingredients in a well prepared meal taste great. And they can see how important it is to support the farmers that supply them with the freshest, tastiest ingredients.

Next time you eat out, ask where the food on your plate comes from. You may be surprised. More and more pubs, cafes, restaurants, hotels and B&Bs are now using some, if not all, local and organic ingredients.

Support the chefs that serve at least some local, organic food, and encourage those that don't to give it a go. Put your money where your mouth is! Ask for local, organic food.



Somerset Organic Link

SOL is a farmer-owned marketing company set up on behalf of organic farmers and growers in the Somerset area.

SOL supplies catering outlets large and small. What these outlets all have in common is an understanding of the farming year and a commitment to freshness, flavour, variety and seasonality.

“Ordering is so simple - a friendly efficient service by telephone or email - and the produce was wonderfully tasty.”

Ethical trading & traceability

At **SOL** we are concerned not only with how food is produced, but also with the welfare of those who labour to produce it.

As a result, we actively seek trading partners who look after their staff and keep a healthy balance between welfare and profitability.

It is as important to us as suppliers as it is to you that our produce is what it says: **ORGANIC**.

All **SOL's** suppliers have valid organic certification or are registered in conversion to organic production.

SOL's Soil Association Registration: UK5 / P932

t: 01458 224618 **w:** www.somersetorganiclink.co.uk

