

## **BROADENING ACCESS TO LOCAL FOOD, RIVERSIDE COMMUNITY MARKET ASSOCIATION - A Cardiff Case Study**

**Steve Garratt**

### **An Introduction to the Project**

Steve gave a presentation on the founding and running of the Riverside Community Market Association (RCMA). RCMA was founded in 1998 by a small group of local people. A community consultation was undertaken and realistic targets set. RCMA began small (12 stalls once a month), accessed some seed/development grants and grew slowly and was steered by volunteers who loved the idea, rather than for purely business reasons. RCMA gained 'in principle' support from Cardiff Council at an early stage.

### **ORIGINAL AIMS OF RCMA**

- Community regeneration
- Reduce Food Miles
- Reduce packaging/waste
- Support sustainable agriculture in Wales
- Support local businesses
- Fresher, tastier, healthier food for local people
- Create a greater sense of community
- Customers can meet the producers
- Provide an alternative to the multinational control of the food economy - and to overpriced corner shops

### **Key steps in Riverside Market's development**

- \* Making sure that all stalls are excellent
- \* Using email as a marketing tool - developing a 'friends' mailing list
- \* Relentless low cost marketing – posters, flyers etc.
- \* Regular stories in local press - 'free advertising'
- \* Accessed seed and development funding wherever it was available
- \* Being as credible as possible in running the organisation; being seen as trustworthy and competent

### **Key Factors in Early Development**

- \* Finding and 'making friends' with committed producers
- \* Cultivating 'friends in high places'
- \* Understanding local politics, steering through the maze
- \* Applying for every grant and award available

- \* Skilled and enthusiastic people on the committee
- \* Realistic business plan for long-term sustainability

There has been a great increase in the number of Farmers' Markets in Wales in the past ten years. Currently there are more than 40. Riverside is one of the largest and most diverse.

### **Who Uses the Market?**

Despite original intentions many customers at Riverside Market do not come from the local community.

#### Customer survey findings

- 55% walk or cycle to the market, but only 16% came from Riverside
- Perception that the market is 'middle class' and that food there is expensive.
- There is a strong social aspect to the market.
- There is a demand for a greater range of produce at the market.
- Market customers perceived to be mainly white and middle-class
- The degree of ethnic minority participation does not reflect the local population of Riverside
- There is a demand among the local Asian population for Asian vegetables

In 2006 RCMA published the **"URBAN FARMERS' MARKET TOOLKIT"** which details the step by step process of setting up and running a Farmers' Market in an urban context, using Riverside Market and Newport Farmers' Markets as case studies. *Available free as a PDF File from RCMA.* On March 1st 2008 RCMA launched the Roath Real Food Market - a weekly farmers market in East Cardiff. This will help make our social enterprise viable, and is meeting an expanding demand for local food.

### **Organisational Structure**

- The weekly Markets and other projects (e.g. Community Garden) are run by RCMA Social Enterprise Ltd, a Company Limited by Guarantee.
- RCMA S.E.L also undertakes consultancy work on the setting up of new Farmers' Markets (e.g. Newport Farmers Market)
- RCMA S.E.L currently employs 2 p/t time project managers + finance officer with plans for expansion. The Markets are self-financing; at the same time RCMA receives outside funding for projects such as the RCMA Community Garden and for various outreach projects.

### **Activities**

- RCMA regularly works with local primary schools
- "Cow Goes to School" project

- Farm visits to our producers
- Social events around a healthy-food theme
- Consultation sessions in the local community and plans to appoint a full-time Local Food Worker
- Riverside Food Co-op now run by a diverse group of local women.
- RCAM sells around 75 bags a week of fresh produce to local residents for £2 per bag. Produce sourced from a nearby wholesaler with plans to source locally where possible in the future.

### **Community Allotment Garden: Learning how to grow together...**

Some of the long standing allotment holders took a while to get used to the diversity of the project participants - but now they are mostly very welcoming. Some volunteers grow food which they sell at the Riverside Food Coop, and there is potential for this to increase. The success of the RCMA community Garden Project in engaging with ethnic minorities is featured in a new publication 'Chilies and Roses' published by the Federation of City Farms and Community Gardens. The Garden recently won a Wales Diversity Award and an Award for Food Action Locally (FSA Wales). It also receives a Project Management grant from Environment Wales. Special raised beds have been constructed at the Community Garden for older people.

### **Awards**

- 2008 Food Standards Agency Wales - 'Award for Food Action Locally';
- 2007 Diversity Awards Wales - Winner (Community Group).
- 2007 UKTV Food Heroes Award - regional finalist (Wales).
- 2007 and 2005 BBC Radio 4 Food and Farming Awards - Finalist
- 2004 Wales True Taste Award - (Food Retailer);
- 2004 Food Standards Agency Wales - 'Award for Food Action Locally';
- 2003 Environment Wales '10 of the Best' award;
- 2003 Community Enterprise Wales 'Top 10 Regenerators' award;

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