

1. Title
2. Intro
 - Quick snapshot of Growing Communities
 - More about routes to market and the Alternative Routes to Market (ARMs) model in particular
 - Why peri-urban farming is worthy of support
 - And some thoughts on what local authorities might do to support retailers and producers
3. Growing Communities – based in Hackney and trading for over 20 years. Turnover of around 1.8 million. 32 mainly part time staff/18fte
4. Run two main routes to market:
 - Box scheme – 1300 customers
 - Farmers market – 1500 customers
 - 30 small to medium scale organic farmers and processors – mainly horticulture
 - 4% of fresh veg in Hackney (ONS Family spend survey 2018)
5. Own food growing. PWF (9 micro sites) and Dagenham Farm (2.5 acres). 6 tonnes of produce a year.
 - Training programme for urban growers in Hackney and until recently - a funded - food production and processing programme in Dagenham (for which we are currently seeking funding.) 8 trainees a year.
 - 90% success rate in trainees going on to get work in the field
6. We helped to get 10 other enterprises up and running through our Start-up Programme back in 2010-2015
7. and they became founder members of The Better Food Traders – for which we received 3 years of funding last year to grow that network.
8. And most recently, we set up the Better Food Shed in Barking – Collaborative distribution hub for the London based BFTs
9. Shed and London BFTs:
10. Being a Better Food Trader's means focussing on retailing mainly fresh fruit and veg in a way that provides alternative routes to market for agroecological producers:
11. And when I say arms, I'm thinking more of these....

Slide 12 Why ARMs and why agro-ecological farms and why peri-urban agriculture

We need to reduce the amount of energy, fossil fuels and resources our food system uses. And alongside that, to halt the decline in biodiversity and increase the carbon that agriculture can sequester. In the face of the climate and nature emergency, surely that is a given.

Slide 13 BFTs prioritise trading with agro-ecological farmers because, we believe there to be particular benefits from this type of farming.

- Productivity compares favourably to larger scale systems and sometimes even wins in terms of yields alone
- Increasing evidence of this type of farming to support more and better jobs, sustain more biodiversity, protect soils, provide better animal welfare and create more beneficial social impact

These farmers currently have to internalise the environmental costs of production which are higher because they are genuine stewards of the land – often using more labour intensive methods to create lower environmental externalities' such as using mechanical and hand weeding methods instead of herbicide sprays, and soil-regenerative mulches rather than carbon-intensive fertilizers.

They also provide additional public goods supporting 50% more wildlife than on conventionally farmed land, and healthier soils with 44% higher capacity to store long term soil carbon^x These public goods are not currently recognised or rewarded. And they often pay additional organic certification fees for the privilege!

Alongside that they support higher levels of employment - predominantly the labour used to farm without chemicals and fertilisers and help create those public goods in the first place.

In the mainstream system, labour productivity is a key driver in price negotiations, and this leaves many small-scale ecological farmers struggling to compete. They either scale up and increasingly mechanise their operations (and lose many of the public goods they weren't being paid for anyway) or they go out of business.

So, BFTs are committed to paying agroecological and organic farmers a price that fairly reflects the environmental externalities of production and the public goods they provide.

- So, for instance, for potatoes we pay our famers £900 per tonne compared to the average farmgate/AHDP price of £220 per tonne.

- And 50% or more of the sales price goes to farmers in our system compared to the 14%ⁱ of the sales price that finds its way to farmers in the supermarket system.

Not only do we pay farmers more, but we manage to sell our fresh, seasonal produce to customers at less than the price of equivalent produce in the supermarkets.

How? Well that's where the short-chain and the local come in. We cut our costs in other areas mainly related to transport and distribution – reducing and waste, packaging and carbon intensiveness of distribution

And we actively support seasonality – reducing waste further and increasing freshness.

And those local, short-supply chains bring people closer to their food producers and to each other. BFTs and other Local food enterprises are increasingly acting as hubs and anchor organisations in the communities we work in – increasing transparency, environmental accountability and community cohesion.

So, Alternative Routes to Market (ARMs) are the mechanism by which we can actively support the growth of agroecological farming and function economically in a system that is currently stacked against us.

So, very briefly. What's so special about peri-urban farming?

Being close or indeed right in the middle of urban populations helps growers to feel supported and connected. Projects are attractive to new entrants and a great training ground too; the work is varied and interesting (if still hard!).

And that closeness also creates huge opportunities to deliver a whole raft of public goods in relation to health, well being and education - on top of the good labour, the good food and the environmental public goods provided through the farming itself.

In terms of produce, Dagenham Farm currently make around 35K in sales – over half is sold through our Box Scheme and the rest is sold to restaurants and through on-farm sales.

Slide 15: Dagenham Farm public goods

So – to wrap up...

If all the environmental externalities of both producing and distributing food were costed into the price of food, and the public goods provided by farmers were appropriately rewarded, then the price differential between conventionally produced food and food produced using organic and agroecological techniques would start to disappear.

And that would be a truly amazing thing – it would benefit farms and food businesses while making our whole food system more sustainable, fair and resilient.

So, I tried to imagine what policies and financial instruments might that involve?

Slide 16: Policies!

My point is that, while none of the above policies actually exist yet, and bearing in mind the timeframes within which we need to act if we are to stay within reach of a 1.5-2°C - it would be fantastic if local authorities could get ahead of the curve and start to identify and support retailers and producers now who are providing public goods – perhaps by implementing some of the measures outlined on the slide that are currently within their jurisdiction. (the green ones)

And it would be great to perhaps look at these in more detail in the group session later.

And I'm looking forward to hearing Rich speak now as public procurement is the route to market we're keen to explore next.

Thankyou.