

The importance of routes to market

Julie Brown

www.growingcommunities.org

- 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

Established in 1996 based in Hackney, East London, Growing Communities aim is to build a fairer more sustainable food system that brings communities together; supports organic, small scale farmers with fair prices; and looks after people, the soil and the planet



Staff: 32 part-time, 18 fte

Annual Turnover: £1.8 million



Veg Box Scheme

1300 weekly
customers

Farmers Market

1500 weekly
customers

Two main routes to market

- 30 sustainable farmers and processors
- 4% of fresh veg in Hackney





Patchwork Farm

9 micro scale urban
production and a training
programme for growers

Our own food growing

6 tonnes of salad and veg a year

Dagenham Farm

Larger covered site, outreach
and training programme



2010 – 2015: 11 trading groups through our Start-up Programme.....



Windmill Community Gardens ^



Veg Box People



Pennine Cropshare ^



Kentish Town Vegbox

.....founder members of the Better Food Traders Network



**Together we'll make
the food system
better* for people
and the planet**

Better Food Shed





Growing Communities



Enfield Veg Co



Organiclea



Crop Drop



Kentish Town Vegbox



Local Greens



Lee Greens



Sutton Community Farm

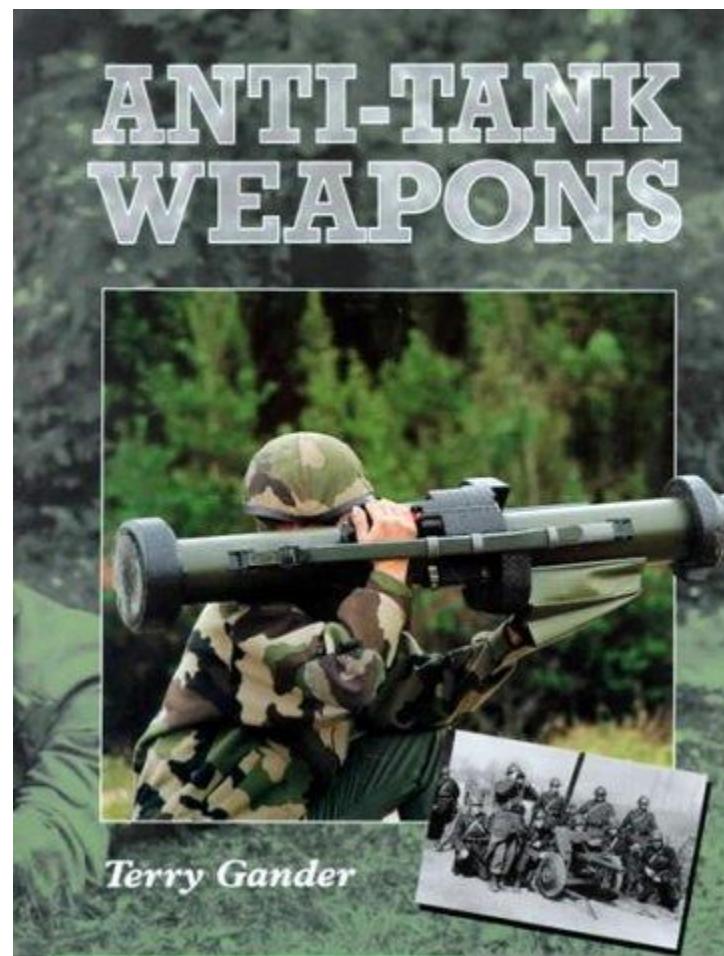
**Retail mainly fresh fruit
and veg in a way that
provides alternative
routes to market (ARMs)
for agroecological
producers (Farms)**

www.betterfoodtraders.org



**BETTER
FOOD
TRADERS**

And when I say ARMs....



We prioritise trading with small to medium scale organic and agroecological producers

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**.

We think this type of farming operation has the potential to play a significant part in improving the sustainability of our food and farming system

References

- Some small-scale agroecological producers in the UK are producing double or triple the yields of standard non-organic farms. Laughton, R. (2017), [A Matter of Scale](#), Landworkers' Alliance and Centre for Agroecology at Coventry University, p.44 and chapter 5
- Small agroecological farms employ 26 times more people per hectare compared to the UK average, i.e. 0.68 full time workers per hectare ([Laughton 2017](#) p.26) compared to 0.026 (Eurostat, 2011 [Large Farm Statistics](#))
- Timmermann, C. and Felix, G. F. (2015) [Agroecology as a vehicle for contributive justice](#), Agriculture and Human Values; Winter, M. and Lobley, M. (2016) [Is there a future for the small family farm in the UK?](#) Prince's Countryside Fund p.43-47
- IPES-Food (2016) [From uniformity to diversity: a paradigm shift from industrial agriculture to diversified agroecological systems](#), International Panel of Experts on Sustainable Food systems, p.35
- IPES Food 2016, p36.
- The Food Ethics Council & Pickett, H. (2014) [Farm Animal Welfare: Past, Present & Future](#), Food Ethics Council, p.30-31
- CPRE (2012) [From field to fork: The value of England's local food webs](#) CPRE; [Winter & Lobley 2016](#), p.4 & 40-47

And when it comes to public engagement for health and wellbeing

In **2018** **84** residents took part in regular food growing sessions and reported more positive feelings about their physical and mental health. This includes **15** people with mental health issues who have either self-referred or been referred to us by mental health services, growing has been shown to be beneficial in dealing with mental health issues.

One of our volunteers said recently: “100% this helps with anxiety, it’s better than any tablet or therapy.”

Between 2016 and 2018, 890 children, (74% of one local school) were involved with food growing, food preparation and consuming school grown food over the 3 years of the project.

Over **95** children from local families have taken part in Holiday club activities including harvesting food and cooking it for their lunch from Summer 2016, teaching them about food, where it comes from and healthy eating. (Figs: **75** GID, **20** RFL).

2,023 residents & long term volunteers between 2016 and 2018 were engaged with the farm via food growing, open days, farm shop sales and training and reported improved access to fresh, local produce and improved well-being.

Between 2016 and 2018, we trained **11 unemployed lone parents** as Food Workers with skills in food preparation, food growing and food hygiene – of these **6** are now in work or further education, (**54%**) .

For our trainees, the whole family has benefited from the trainees’ experiences on the farm. There had been an overall improvement in the family well-being – as well as in the skills and self-confidence of the individual trainees.

Recognising and rewarding public goods

1. Public subsidies reward health and environmental benefits of sustainable food production through ELMS
 - Agro-ecology - support for whole-farm systems, such as organic, that can deliver on multiple environmental, social and animal welfare benefits.
 - Public health - support for farming methods that promote public health, such as low antibiotic and pesticide use, and promotion of healthy fruit and vegetable production.
2. ELMs payments are available to horticulture (a horticulture test and trial has recently been agreed) and open to holdings of less than 5 hectares.
3. Financial support for Peri-Urban and urban farming recognises the additional social goods these systems provide by being very close to urban populations. So, London/city wages are subsidised for peri-urban growers, compensating for higher housing and transport costs, an enhanced Employment Allowance for organic Peri-Urban farms, reduces NI payments and a scheme like the (Scottish) Crofters Direct Farm payments (under CAP) supports sustainable farming which is otherwise financially unviable.
4. Support for diverse and appropriately scaled funded apprenticeships for Peri Urban and urban farms and Better Food Traders lead to an increase in the number of young people entering farming and food retail work.
5. Targets and funding increase the proportion of organic, seasonal and fresh produce in public **procurement**, leading to better health and nutrition for our most vulnerable citizens.
6. Targets and incentives/regulation for retailers increases the proportion of fresh, organic, and seasonal and produce available to citizens (and reduces the amount of highly processed food).
7. Revenue Support Grants for local authorities eg like the New Homes bonus, make land and premises available to urban/peri-urban farming and sustainable food distribution delivering proven public goods.
8. Infrastructure grants like the Green Growth Fund are made appropriate for urban/peri-urban farming and sustainable food distribution (e.g. BFTs and Better Food Shed/s). These are also made available to support sustainable rural infrastructure for operations delivering proven public goods Eg. subsidy for small local abattoir regulation compliance.
9. Planning guidelines are changed to ensure that all peri-urban land (over ½ hectare) requires assessment of suitability as agricultural land by Natural England(DEFRA) and that planning regulations favour appropriate housing and infrastructure tied to small-scale agro-ecological horticulture.

Policies to ensure enterprises no longer externalise the negative impacts associated with their business:

1. Carbon tax is introduced and works to shorten supply chains, reduce transport and distribution along with carbon/fossil fuel dependant inputs eg artificial fertilisers, pesticide and herbicides (with associated benefits for soil health and biodiversity). Also works to disincentivise fossil fuel use on-farm resulting in a rethink of when best to use heavy machinery and automatization.
2. Regulation, incentives or taxation designed to reduce waste and packaging lead to shorter supply chains and an increase in seasonal production and consumption
3. Regulation and incentives to widen supermarket sourcing specifications are introduced and lead to reduction in waste
4. A more nuanced and fair way of defining productivity (eg public goods productivity not just labour productivity) is recognised in price negotiations between producers and retailers.
5. Consumption side measures recognise the health costs of poor nutrition and the fact that those on low incomes need to be supported via mechanisms such as a wider roll-out of the Healthy Start voucher system, (and an extension of the listed foods to enable purchase of sustainably produced foods) and the Beetroot Bond put forward by the RSA (where all citizens are given access to food vouchers and a stake in their local food economy). These work to increase greater access to good food, give sustainable food production a financial boost and shield the poorest sections of society who already struggle to access good food. (NB Despite the UK's food being some of the cheapest in Europe we are the country with the greatest degree of food insecurity. The poorest 10% of the population would need to spend 74% of their income on food in order to meet the Eat Well guidelines .

Other policies:

1. Introduce better supported data collection for smaller farms, peri urban farms and BFTs.
2. Update the ALC (mapping of England's most fertile land) to tie in with policies of protecting this from development –if we don't sequester the most fertile land for horticulture then we are missing an opportunity and if we don't know where it is – we can't protect it!
3. Support bringing in an immediate moratorium on selling off County Farm land adjacent to major cities/towns and support local authorities being required to earmark 5% of County Farm land for horticulture.

Not just a vision - increasing amount going on!

Peri-urban farms and market gardens

- Growing Communities' Dagenham Farm
- Organiclea: Hawkwood
- Sutton Community Farm
- Forty Hall farm and market garden
- Wolves Lane and London Grown
- Glebelands (Manchester)
- Keats Community Farm
- Redbridge: new peri-urban farm?

Small and medium scale farms: Ripple Farm, Sarah Green, Adrian Izzard/Wild Country, Pear Necessities, Hooks, Galileo, Perry Court.

Larger scale farms e.g. Brecklands and G's via wholesaler

European producer cooperatives

Urban market gardens, Patchwork farms, Roof top gardens, Growing in the underground, railway arch mushrooms. *Community Food Growers Network.*

Home-grown and allotments, community gardens, community orchards.

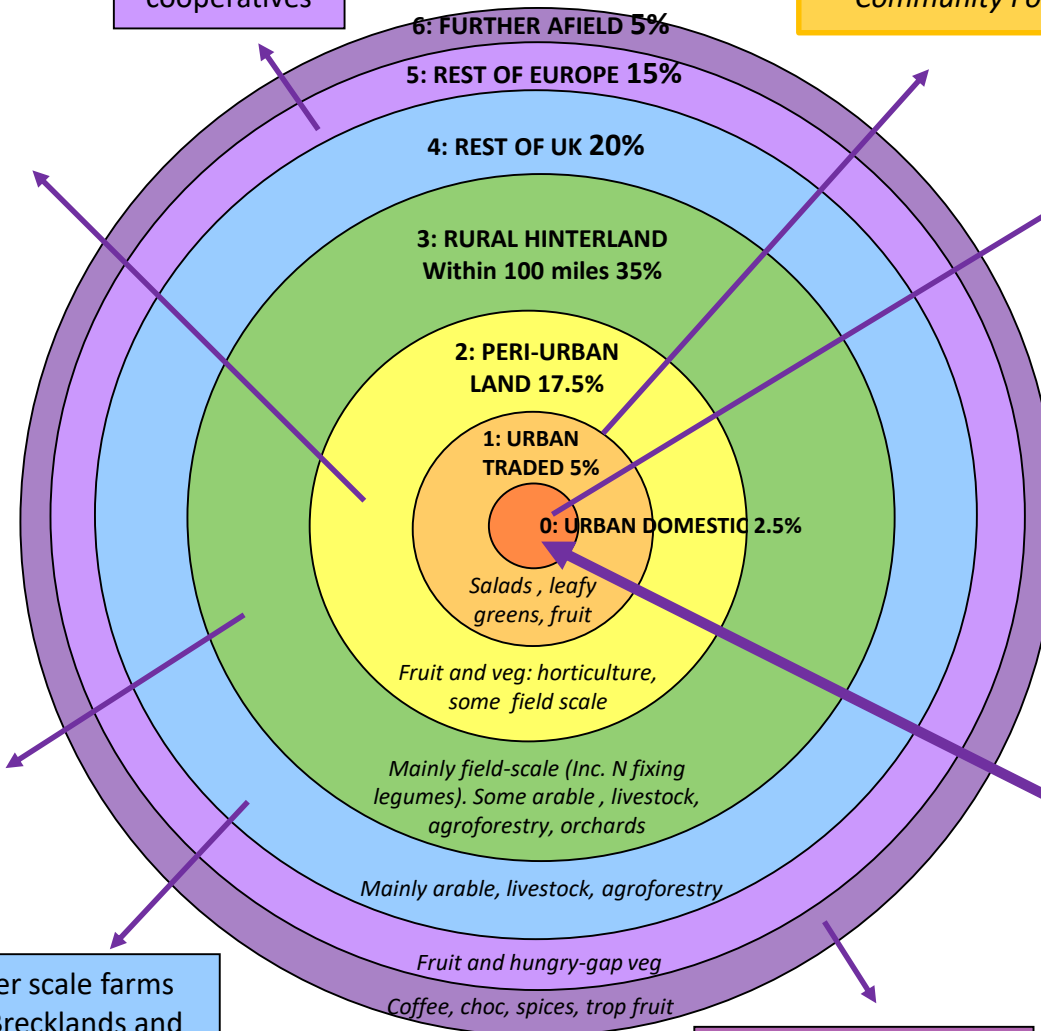
Alternative Routes to Markets (ARMS)

Retailers and Better Food Traders

Box schemes, farmer's markets, community markets, wholefood and independent shops, CSA schemes, alternative supermarket models (Hisbe, Unicorn), On-line systems (Open Food Network, Neighbourhood Food,), Food hubs.

Collaborative distributors and new wholesalers

Manchester Veg People
Better Food Shed
Tamar Grow Local



Fairtrade via wholesalers (shipped)

GROWING COMMUNITIES' FOOD ZONES: OUR VISION FOR A BETTER FOOD AND FARMING SYSTEM

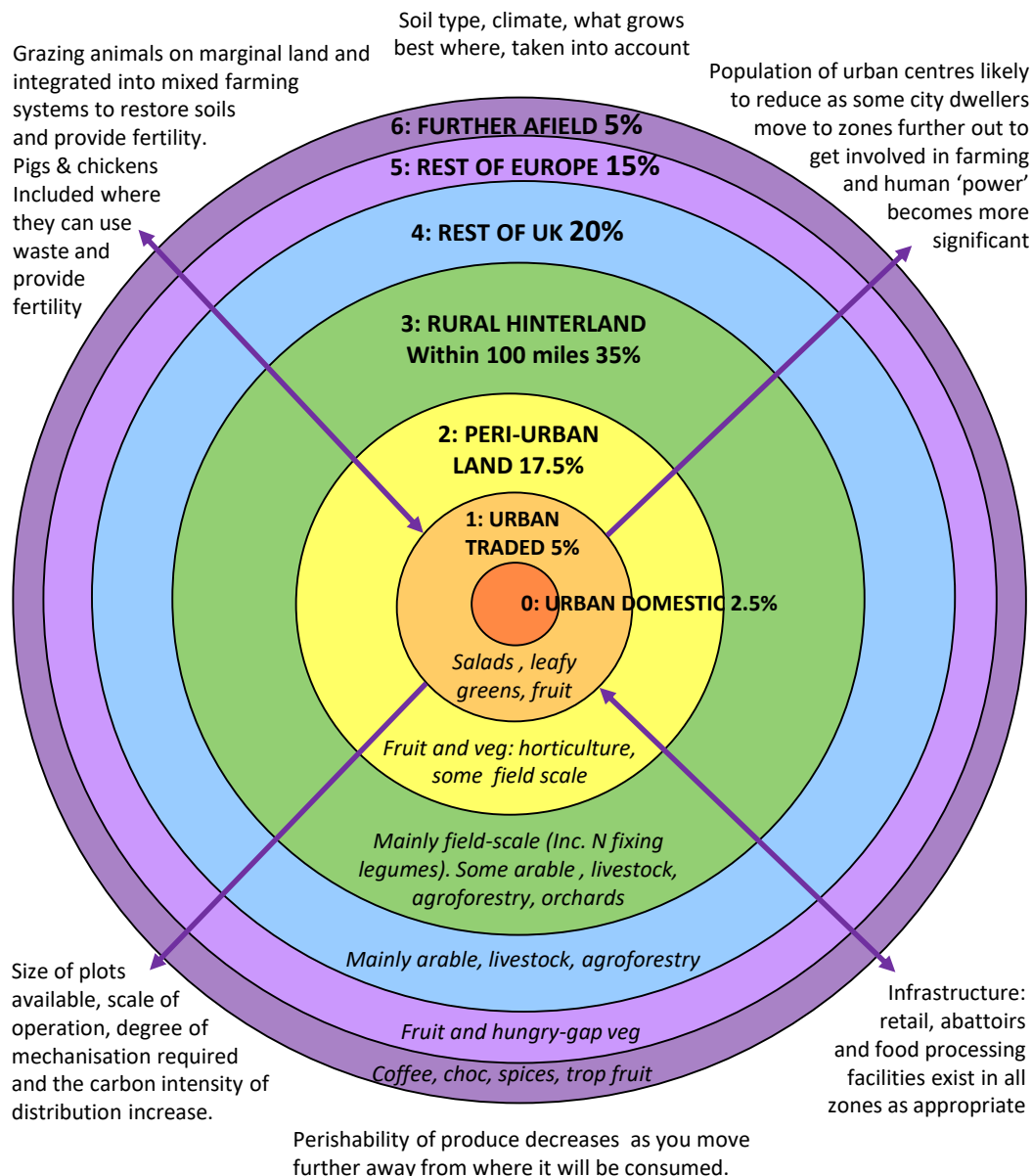
How might we reduce the amount of energy, fuel and resources it takes to feed us, while creating jobs and community in urban and rural areas and producing delicious food that is good for us and the planet? The Food Zones looks at how much of which foods we could be sourcing from different zones, starting with the urban areas in which most of us live and applying a kind of 'food subsidiarity' - raising what it is best to raise as close as we can and then moving outwards taking into account the factors shown. On the right: the kind of farms, diet and trading systems we need and on the left the principles and worldviews that underpin it.

PRINCIPLES

- Be mission driven - trading for social purpose, not to maximise profit
- Commit to transparency and cooperation throughout the food supply chain
- Trade fairly
- Champion ecological farming and food production
- Source food sustainably, using the food zones as a framework
- Promote a diet that is good for people and planet
- Operate in a low-carbon way
- Build a strong community in support of this work
- Strive to change the bigger picture

WORLDVIEWS

- Diversity** of solutions operating across multiple scales: balance achieved overall
- Decentralisation** with control and responsibility reclaimed and trading with principles valued over profit
- Productivity** fairly defined, focusing on a whole system view: underpinned by paying farmers a fair price to produce food sustainably
- Limits** acknowledged and standards welcomed: viewed as an invitation to creativity and innovation, not a constraint



SUSTAINABLE DIETS (DEMAND)

- Reflect the seasons and which foods can best be produced where
- Mainly fresh and minimally processed
- Mainly plant based
- Minimise waste
- Aligned with what it is possible to produce sustainably while providing everyone with 'enough'

TRADING & DISTRIBUTION

Retailers and distributors provide farmers with **Alternative Routes to Market (ARMs)** which pay them the price they need to produce food sustainably and fairly. Enterprises prioritise local and direct sourcing while encompassing the global – enabling urban growers, rural farmers, larger operations, wholesalers and imports to exist in harmony. **Farms** are connected to urban communities, enabling supply chains to be shortened and communities to source increasing amounts from closer to where they live. **People** are reconnected with farming; involved with the production, trading and celebration of food.

ECOLOGICAL FARMS (SUPPLY)

- Low input: organic or near as
- Predominantly small to medium scale: appropriate & human scale
- Mixed, diverse and integrated
- Use human skills and labour, backed up by appropriate technology and grounded in sound science