

## Why increase food production and what this could look like in London

I would like to share a quick reflection that it was over 20 years ago that Sustains original founding alliance (SAFE Alliance and NFA) co-commissioned the report '*Growing food in Cities*' from Dr Tara Garnett. 20 years on the idea is well recognized and needed more than ever.

My work is around agriculture policy and supply chains. I will aim to look at the need, the opportunities and the threats we'll have to counter in growing more food and especially horticulture in and around cities. It is a great idea – we need a renaissance in London Market Gardens and more food growing in London.

### What drives the need to produce more food in and around London?

Climate - we have increasing threats from climate and nature emergency to our domestic and imported food supplies. There is no doubt that next few years will see increasing extremes of weather and frequency of drought and floods and agriculture land loss will accelerate. Our reliance on imports – which means drawing on land, water, energy too, into UK and into London are a vulnerability as well as making others overseas vulnerable.

Diets - for the really good stuff we need in our diets – far more fruit and vegetables, nuts, pulses, and less but better meat like 100% pasture based meats - we should be looking at sourcing closer to home – for some that means UK but for perishables like salads and fruits – even closer.

Jobs and incomes - Provides opportunities for youth to develop skills in outer areas and neglected areas of London – the evidence suggests this can be a real boost for some people wanting skills and employment.

We also need to address poor wellbeing by getting people and diverse communities involved, green urban areas, redevelop derelict areas and so on.

### The opportunity – its good timing

- We have a new **Agriculture Bill** which pays farmers to deliver public goods – moving from the EU system of largely paying based on land area. That means, in theory, we could have growers paid for environmental outcomes, like wildlife and cleaner air pollution as well as public access to nature and farming, community involvement, education and agro-ecological training. This is an opportunity for new community supported farming schemes, procurement for schools and hospitals and so on producer co-operatives, platform co-operatives and food hubs. Work is needed to make the schemes designed suitably for such enterprises and we are working on that with Landworkers and others.
- There may also be support for the infrastructure needed under a new clause on '*ancillary activities*' – we need to look at what defra mean but it could help with capital costs etc
- **Land** is available in and around London – available even short term this could be useful.
- Use of London's abundant **rainwater**, and food waste **compost** the city generates could be used as soil fertiliser.
- New interest in good local food and especially plants – we can tap into that interest.

## What this may look like in London

- a renaissance in market gardens (producing sustainably)
- jobs, training and skills development opportunities and more enterprises
- community engagement and communities looking better with food in green spaces, trees and shrubs
- linking farmers and consumers and better awareness of what it takes to produce food and the benefits of good eating
- yes okay some vertical farming – I'm less excited by this but it could provide some fresh produce with a low land take.
- more buzz in London media, hubs, social media – Instagram full of photos of London food growers

## We can't ignore the threats/opportunities

Trade deals we will be embarking upon as a result of Brexit could mean a weakening of our food and farming standards- influx of cheaper produce from Australia, the US with for instance more high fructose corn syrup, hormone treated beef and so on.

Lack of infrastructure (such as packing, storage, milling, part processing, marketing hubs) , training and support that new enterprises will need to ensure they can run successful businesses and supply markets with produce in a suitable form.

Lack of time for local institutions to consider new suppliers and lack of investment money for support the new enterprises – but we can campaign for these

### To conclude

About 5 years ago I was asked to speak at a London event on food security and climate change – I said then we need to really map food flows in London and understand better what vulnerabilities that entails, and take many measures to support an increase London sustainable food growing and sourcing – in and around the city. It is five years on and we need action more than ever – around all urban areas and London should show how it can be done.

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