

THE JELLIED FEEL

LONDON'S MAGAZINE FOR GOOD FOOD | ISSUE 63 - SUMMER 2021 | FREE



THE FARMING EDITION



- WOMEN WHO FARM
- FARMER - RESTAURANT DREAM TEAMS



ISSUE
SPONSOR

Organico
REALFOODS LTD

REAL
FRUIT
and
nothing
WEIRD



In making Dalston's drinks taste great we select the best ingredients we can find - often from small farms in the UK. We've focused on shortening our supply chains and reducing calories, and we're proud of our work.



REAL FRUIT UNDER
50 CALORIES PER CAN
UNREAL TASTE
NO ARTIFICIAL SWEETENERS NO ADDED SUGAR

Contact sales@dalstons.com to find out about stocking,
or buy direct from us.

dalstons.com | [@drinkdalstons](https://www.instagram.com/drinkdalstons)

IN THIS ISSUE



COVER STORY NEW AGE GROWERS

10



FARMERS WHO FEED LONDON WOMEN WHO FARM

6



COOK
SUMMER VEGETABLE CEVICHE

8



CAMPAIGN
FARMING ON THE EDGE

18



CAPITAL GROWTH
SEEDS OF CHANGE

14



THINK
THE BUZZ AROUND BEES

20

STARTER

I've been lucky enough to return to 'The Eel' for another round, and this farming edition is one close to my heart.



I'm a first-generation farmer at Duchess Farms. I left a career as a lab-meat scientist to pursue one on the land. A farmer's life is both rewarding and demanding. You brave the elements, worry constantly about how much/how little rain we are having, and for many of us we make sure we can interact with the people eating what we grow, which is so gratifying. It empowers us to be climate activists and not only provide nourishing food for people, but also start to regenerate the land which we have abused for too long.

Farmers are the unsung heroes behind everything we eat and drink. So, we wanted to take this issue to celebrate them all. My mission has always been to make food and farming as sexy and desirable as the biotech world I once worked in, hopefully endeavours like this issue of Jellied Eel are a place to start.

I'll leave you with this. Every time you buy groceries or eat at your favourite restaurant give a little thanks and thought to the farmer who grew that food. Good food is so important for community and the climate, and those small and independent farmers, you support every time you open your wallet, really appreciate your help.

Thanks so much for having me again,

Abi Aspen Glencross, guest editor

@AbiAspen @DuchessFarms



@jelliedeelmag
@londonfoodlink



@jelliedeelmag

IN THIS ISSUE PHOTO CREDITS: PAGE 21

COVER PHOTO: DANIELLE AHMET BY ZOE WARDE-ALDAM

AROUND TOWN

Farm-to-restaurant dream teams.
Compiled by Amy Luck and Rob Slater.



SOUTH

Natoora and The Camberwell Arms

SE5

Camberwell

Franco founded the online farmers' market Natoora in 2004, and now supplies 'radically seasonal', quality produce from trusted farms to people and restaurants in London. This suits the chefs at The Camberwell Arms, who create regularly changing menus centered on simple, bold flavours.

www.thecamberwellarms.co.uk
[@thecamberwellarms](https://twitter.com/thecamberwellarms)

Sutton Community Farm and Well Kneaded

SW18

Earlsfield

This duo shares a vision of the positive power of good food. The farm is supported by a network of 3,000 volunteers, growing fresh ingredients that the team at Well Kneaded make into creative and award-winning sourdough pizzas. With options ranging from the 'meaty marg' to the 'wildervergan', a visit to Well Kneaded is a must for any foodie in London.

www.wellkneadedfood.com
[@wellkneadedfood](https://twitter.com/wellkneadedfood)



CENTRAL

Fern Vorrow and Spring

WC2

Temple

A true monogamous marriage, Fern Vorrow farm and Spring have been working together since 2015 and are exclusive. The farm-to-table approach connects diners at Spring with the finest seasonal ingredients, grown in the foothills of the Black Mountains in Herefordshire.

www.springrestaurant.co.uk
[@spring_ldb](https://twitter.com/spring_ldb)

Cull Yaw (Matt Chatfield) and Ikoyi

SW1Y

St. James's

Matt takes Herdwick sheep and regenerates pasture with them using a silvopasture system – essentially, grazing in woods – before selling them as mutton. He is changing the way we think about sheep and mutton with the help of Jeremy at Ikoyi, a small-plate restaurant that combines seasonal British produce with exciting West African spices.

www.ikoyilondon.com [@ikoyi_london](https://twitter.com/ikoyi_london)

PHOTOS: WELL-KNEADED (LEFT), MORA FARM BY NATOORA (RIGHT)

EAST

Gothelney Farm and Smoking Goat

E1

Shoreditch

Run by Fred, Richard and Victoria Price, Gothelney Farm is a diverse family farm at the foot of the Quantock hills in Somerset that breeds native Tamworth pigs. Lots of their pork ends up in the dishes served at the Smoking Goat, a Thai restaurant in Shoreditch that Fred says “gets what farm-to-fork really means”.

www.smokinggoatbar.com
[@smokinggoatbar](https://www.instagram.com/smokinggoatbar)

Duchess Farm and Silo

E9

Hackney Wick

Support for farms and suppliers that respect the environment, is a big part of Silo's ethos and Duchess Farms has been supplying this zero-waste restaurant with grains and rapeseed oil since they opened. We love their smoked oil beetroot dish and ‘the Siloaf’ – a Duchess Farm's heritage wheat flour bread.

www.silolondon.com @londonsilo

OrganicLea and Eat 17

E17

Walthamstow

Based on the outskirts of the city in Chingford, OrganicLea grows organic fruit and veg in its market garden. It has also set up kitchen gardens for wonders such as Ottolenghi, and supplies salad leaves to Eat 17 restaurant and its east London stores (and ‘Eel stockists’) which offer local, small batch food to Hackney and Walthamstow residents.

www.eat17.co.uk @eat_17

Fellows Farm and E5 Bakehouse

E8

London Fields

After many successful years of running E5 Bakehouse, Ben Mackinnon returned to the Suffolk countryside to start market garden Fellows Farm. Running under organic principles, Ben supplies the bakery with fruit, vegetables and some grains – making sure that their food is as good for the environment as it is for our bellies.

www.e5bakehouse.com
[@e5bakehouse](https://www.instagram.com/e5bakehouse)



GROW and Pavilion

E2
E8 E9

Hackney

The new GROW farm, based in Totteridge Academy school, is a working horticultural farm, delivering secondary education while supplying the popular Pavilion bakery with fruit, veg and flowers for their super sustainable east London sites.

www.pavilionbakery.com
[@wearethepavilion](https://www.instagram.com/wearethepavilion)

NORTH

Flourish Produce and Esters

N16

Hackney

Esters serves the best coffee, tea and brunches based on seasonal produce from places they can trust that aren't too far away. Supplied by Calixta at Flourish Produce, spectacular fruit and veg is used to make the most delicious food. The café is also a collection point for Flourish veg boxes.

www.estersn16.com/home
[@estersn16](https://www.instagram.com/estersn16)

Sarah Green and The Duke of Cambridge

N1

St Peters

Britain's first certified organic pub, so it's no surprise it has a history of farmer-focused supply. Established since 1998, it is now part of The Culpeper Family, maintaining strong farming connections to serve up delicious British cuisine. Veg comes from Sarah Green's (see page 7) as well as Riverford, with meat sourced from Rhug estate in Wales.

www.dukeorganic.co.uk
[@thedukeorganic](https://www.instagram.com/thedukeorganic)

WEST

Farmacy

W2

Notting Hill

Set in the Kent countryside, the ‘farm’ in Farmacy grows vegetables and herbs using sustainable practices that are founded in a deep respect for nature. In 2016 Farmacy launched a restaurant, using ingredients grown on the farm to develop instant classics, like their hearty ‘got no beef’ burger and vibrant kitchari stew.

www.farmacylondon.com
[@farmacyuk](https://www.instagram.com/farmacyuk)

WOMEN WHO FARM

When someone says ‘farmer’ for many this may default to a familiar image of a man wearing a flat cap and driving a tractor. **Mecca Ibrahim**, co-founder of Women in the Food Industry, speaks to rising farmers who are changing this picture.

There are numerous challenges in becoming a farmer – so many that the number of farmers in the UK is decreasing, with the average age of a UK farmer being 59, 84% of them men. However, more women are stepping into farming roles than ever before, with many addressing the social and ecological changes our food system so badly needs. I caught up with five women farmers – from different walks of life and with individual farming styles – who are putting food on Londoners’ plates.



Interested in exploring a career in farming? Check out **Ecological Land Coop** and **Landworkers’ Alliance**, who run schemes to help overcome obstacles facing new entrants to farming.

THE SHEPHERD:

SCARLET MOON



Often with her two-year-old son on her shoulders, Scarlet spends her days with her sheepdog Oz, shepherding Herdwick sheep, bringing them down from the fells onto rich pasture. She supplies this tasty, quality marbled meat to Philip Warren Butchers, The Ledbury and other restaurants.

Although currently focussing on sheep, she dreams of owning her own mixed farm one day – and this determined, five-foot-one woman lets nothing hold her back. Sometimes the grazing terrain gets flooded, making it hard going, but she sees it through with a smile: “I needed a jet ski at times,” she laughs, “not a quad bike!”

[@scarletshepherdess](#)

THE MARKET GARDENER:

SEETA RAJANI

BORE PLACE MARKET GARDEN



An organic and agroecological farmer, Seeta grows seasonal UK vegetables for various box schemes, including London’s Better Food Shed, Wholefoods in Brighton and farm shops in the Lewes area. Motivated by a desire to fundamentally change the food system, Seeta was lucky to find herself surrounded and supported by strong women who also felt empowered to change the world through food.

Margins are classically low for organic farmers, however Seeta has researched more direct routes to market. She finds farming satisfying and loves experiencing the changing seasons, even though getting onto land can be very difficult in this country. “If you can find an apprenticeship or get some basic training, go for it!” she says.

www.boreplace.org
[@boreplace](#) [@farmerfrau](#)

THE URBAN FARMER:

CHRISSY HARRISON
KEATS ORGANICS



Motivated by growing as much nutritious food as the land can provide while prioritising people and planet, Chrissy is on a mission to lower affordability barriers and increase the routes into the work of producing good food. Her peri-urban farm grows a diverse range of salad leaves, leafy greens, herbs and some seasonal vegetables which all benefit from a short supply chain.

Challenges range from foxes running amok to more pervasive things like capitalism, she says, but fortunately Chrissy has the support of family, fellow growers and great customers. She's a great believer in strength in numbers: "There's so many folks on the same page," she says. "I'm always learning that making it work in collaboration with others is easier than making it work alone. Brains over brawn!"

www.keatsorganics.com
[@keatsorganics](https://www.instagram.com/keatsorganics)

THE FAMILY FARMER:

SARAH GREEN
SARAH GREEN'S ORGANICS



Working with her parents and husband, Sarah grows seasonal organic vegetables on the east Essex coast. Only a 90-minute journey from London, the family supply several of the capital's gastropubs and community food buying groups, including the Better Food Shed.

Sarah's late grandfather and her parents have always been incredibly supportive of her wanting to work on the family farm. She's taken her childhood love of working with the seasons and nature and applied it to producing food in a sustainable way for the local community. Although the weather and weeds can be a challenge, Sarah says it's important to remember you are not alone: "Don't be afraid to ask for guidance or help," she advises. "I have found everyone to be very supportive".

www.sarahgreensorganics.co.uk
[@sally4green](https://www.instagram.com/sally4green)

THE DAIRY FARMER:

JACKIE MAXWELL
DODDINGTON DAIRY



Jackie's 1,100-acre tenanted farm is based in north Northumberland in the shadow of the Cheviot Hills. Predominantly dairy farmers, she and her husband craft their milk into artisan cheeses, yoghurt and premium ice creams. Their cheese is available nationally through quality shops, delicatessens and online. Motivated by their beautiful surroundings, Jackie wants to make their farm even more sustainable and provide the supportive local community with employment.

Jackie has faced sexism over her 30-year farming career and loves to see women on social media showing what they are doing: both to promote agriculture, but also to 'normalise' their occupations. "It's frustrating sometimes to see how far we haven't progressed," she says, "but it's only by moving forward, not accepting these attitudes and believing in yourself will we see a difference."

www.doddingtondairy.co.uk
[@doddingtondairy](https://www.instagram.com/doddingtondairy)

MAKING SHROOM IN THE CITY

by Tom Hunt



Ceviche is a Peruvian salad made of raw fish or vegetables dressed with a zesty and piquant liquid called 'tiger's milk'. It's usually made of lime juice and a chilli called aji amarillo which you can buy in specialist shops or online. With purple potatoes, red quinoa, yellow tomatoes and green coriander this dish is vibrant and rainbow coloured. The white oyster mushrooms act like sponges, absorbing the punchy flavours. It makes for a refreshing salad, perfect for hot summer days.

Oyster mushrooms are part of an urban farming revolution which has been taking place over the last couple of decades, transforming city spaces into flourishing edible gardens. Urban farms are helping chefs and co-producers (aka the consumers) reconnect with farmers and vice versa.

Farmer-chef partnerships bypass long food chains and many of the issues that come with them, creating more direct relationships. Better communication between farmer and chef means farmers can grow what chefs need and in the best reciprocal relationships, the chefs will also buy what the farmers need to grow (rotation crops and crops suited to the land). The result is a win-win: chefs receive a better product and farmers receive a better price.

Cultivated mushrooms need relatively few resources to thrive. They grow in small dark spaces such as shipping containers on composted and recycled materials like used coffee grounds (of which we produce seven million tonnes a year) and wood shavings, which are then upcycled into fertile potting soil. You can even get home kits to grow them yourself.



SUMMER VEGETABLE CEVICHE

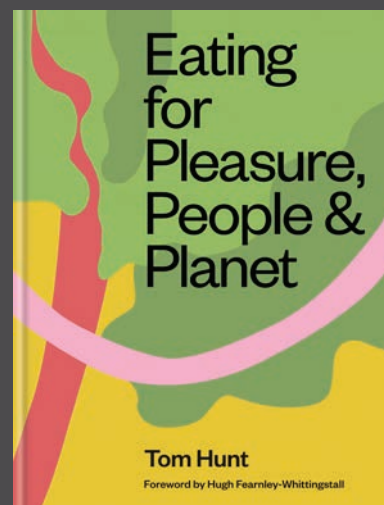
Serves 4 as a side dish,
light lunch or starter

- 50g purple potatoes, diced into 1cm cubes
- 4 tbsp puffed grain (e.g. amaranth, quinoa, rice)
- 60g oyster mushrooms, thinly sliced
- 100g cherry tomatoes (yellow if available), quartered
- Dried aji amarillo or fresh chilli, finely diced, to taste
- 1 unwaxed lime or ½ unwaxed lemon, zest and juice
- 3 fresh coriander sprigs, leaves picked, stalks finely chopped

Blanch the potato cubes in a pan of boiling water for 10 minutes, then drain and set aside to cool.

To finish, season with salt to taste then mix everything together, saving a few of the puffed grains and coriander leaves to finish the dish. Serve immediately or set aside to macerate for an hour.

@ChefTomHunt



Eating for Pleasure, People & Planet by Tom Hunt is published by Kyle Books, £26.00, www.octopusbooks.co.uk

PHOTOS: JENNY ZARINS



ESTERS N16

Nestled away just off Church Street in Stoke Newington, Esters is one of the coolest ecologically-orientated cafes in town. **Abi Aspen Glencross** and **Amy Luck** took their lockdown takeaway menu for a spin.

You might think that opening a café just off the well-trodden track of Stoke Newington Church Street is rather risky, however with a daily changing menu and unpretentious atmosphere, Esters was worth this risk and provides a much-needed breath of fresh air to uber trendy east London.

Owners Jack and Nia have been running the café since 2013 and it has gone from strength to strength, with Jack predominantly coordinating the savoury dishes and Nia having a palate for the sweet. Together they make a culinary crime fighting duo.

Open for breakfast and lunch, and always with an impressive selection of baked goods for sale, Esters caters to the safe and the adventurous diner. With familiar cheese toasties and almond croissants to the Insta-famous miso white chocolate cookie you won't be disappointed whatever you choose.

Sourcing is of utmost importance. The team works closely with several nearby, agroecologically minded farms and producers including Flourish, Duchess Farms and Little Bread Pedlar. During Covid they began stocking Flourish veg boxes and produce from their suppliers to sell, becoming one of London's loveliest little corner shops. The menu is radically seasonal and excitingly, there is produce on there you won't find in many other places (think Aztec broccoli).

We popped down to try their breakfast menu, ordering the Lincolnshire Poacher toastie with fruit ketchup and courgette pickles and the scrambled egg breakfast sandwich on a house made bun. The sandwich was the standout, with such complex flavours in something seemingly so simple. The crunch of fruit and pickle contrasted beautifully with the soft bun, creamy eggs and pumpkin pistou.

For our 'dessert' (at 9am) we picked an almond croissant and the 'Bostock'. The former is sourced from Little Bread Pedlar and made using organic flour. Esters gives any day-old croissants a makeover with homemade almond paste and flaked almonds for croissant 2.0. The Bostock, meanwhile, was unlike anything we've ever tried: brioche with elderflower syrup, blood orange jam and frangipane. Like if a blood orange Bakewell tart had a baby with french toast.

With much more than your run of the mill brunch menu and dedication to suppliers and ecology, we can safely say that this little café is one of our favourite London dining spots.

www.estersn16.com
[@EstersN16](https://www.instagram.com/estersn16)



PHOTOS: JONATHAN-SIMPSON

NEW ‘KIDS’ ON THE FARM

Where does the future of farming lie? With the average age of farmers now approaching 60, **Muna Reyah** talks to some untypical farmers about their routes in.

According to Who Owns England?, half of this country is owned by less than 1% of its population – land that is either inherited or held by corporations which consolidate farms into ever-larger ‘mega farms’. But there are many others who are breaking into this ‘closed profession’ and finding their own way onto the land.

BANKING ON A BETTER FOOD SYSTEM

Danielle Ahmet (cover star of this issue) spent 20 years in careers that included banking and fitness before coming to farming – all of which she describes as training for OrganicLea, a cooperative where she is a growers team member and involved in adult education. “I’m on serious catch up because farming is not respected enough as a profession for children to dream of pursuing – we don’t value food production, and especially not

organic food produced at a small, local level. But OrganicLea showed me that anyone can become a farmer.”

OrganicLea is a leading light in London, helping people who are not from farming backgrounds with real life work experience. As well as accredited education and training schemes and popular volunteer days, they also created a farm start programme, securing land and providing support for budding growers. Danielle may one day use this to start growing commercially but until then, “my desire is to think small”. She wants to focus her attention on helping her local community see the importance of thinking about how good food is grown, “rather than turning automatically to intensively farmed supermarket produce”.

AWESOME EXTRACTION

Sinead Fenton moved from mining to farming after she and her partner

Adam started volunteering at a community market garden. In 2017, they were asked to take over its management and, with no experience or training, they simply learned on the job. Sinead believes the best learning is on site. “allotments are underrated – especially those that host community growing projects, because you are among lots of other people growing foods and using techniques you haven’t seen before.”

Sinead was working three jobs and wanted to take a more revenue-led approach to farming, rather than one based on unpaid volunteers. But land costs were impossibly high. Fortunately, the Ecological Land Cooperative (ELC) gave them an alternative means of entry.

The ELC buys agricultural land, offering smallholdings on 150-year leases. In their eyes, Sinead is the owner of the land but, by keeping the freehold, the ELC ensures the land is





farmed agroecologically – something Sinead sees as good accountability.

This year has been tough as the market for their edible flowers, vegetables and herbs is restaurants, but Sinead is confident that her enterprise, Aweside Farm, will be viable. Sinead feels strongly that the industry needs new entrants and the creativity they bring will counter not just a monoculture of crops, but also of ideas and people. “We celebrate diversity in the natural world but we are part of it, so we should celebrate people and different experiences.”

COUNTING SHEEP

Max Ruddle woke up on his friend Oscar Harding’s sofa one day in 2016 and, to shake off the night before, offered to help on Oscar’s Duchess Farm. Before he knew it, he had inadvertently started his career as a farmer. Following only four days with another farming friend in 2020 (this

time a sheep farmer in Cornwall), he was offered 75 Herdwick sheep. He went back to Oscar, who jumped at the chance to add livestock to his land – and The Regenerative Sheep Farmer was born. But even with this access to land, Max still had to take on a night job and currently works full time elsewhere to make life as a farmer work.

Although he had a baptism of fire, Max reflects that he learned most from working on the ground, rather than from textbooks. Like many others, he is frustrated that he cannot access any government subsidy or funding, even though his sheep contribute to soil health, carbon sequestration and the farm system as a whole. Reform of farm grants is unlikely as farming is the domain of big landowners. Undeterred, Max plans to create a blueprint so others can farm without owning the land, demonstrating how sharing land with

livestock can improve the soil, reduce costs and increase profit margins: “Instead of one person farming on a huge scale, there should be 10 people, 10 ideas, 10 communities working together, sharing experiences.”

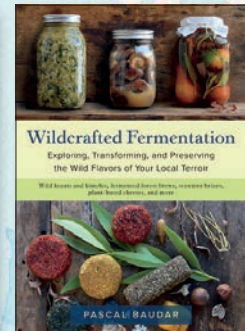
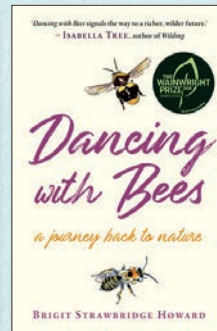
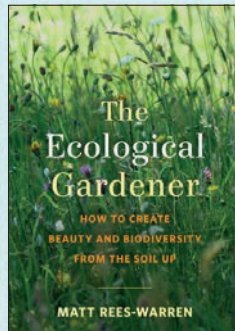
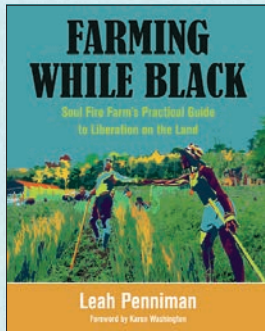
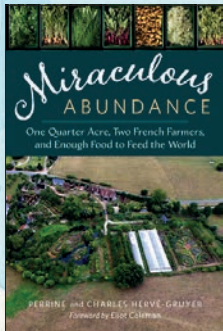
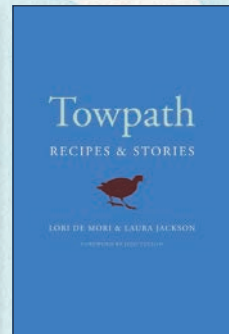
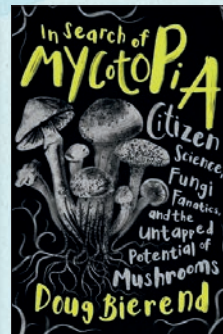
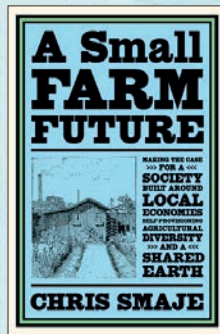
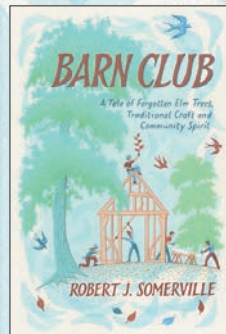
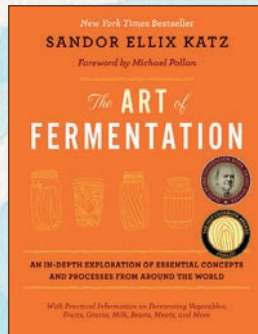
These different routes into farming show a fairer, more sustainable solution is possible over the current environmentally flawed and socially inaccessible system. While getting on and up the ladder is far from easy, farming as a profession is slowly opening up to create diverse and resilient farmers.

[@awesidefarm](#)
[@danielleisinthegarden](#)
[@eco_land_coop](#)
[@theregenerativesheepfarmer](#)
[@landworkersalliance](#)
[@DuchessFarms](#)
[@munapic](#)



PHOTO: DANIELLE AHMET BY ZOE WARDE-ALDAM

Farm to Table Reading



chelseagreenpub
 @chelseagreen
 @chelseagreenbooks

Use the code **JELLIEDEEL2021** for 25% off
 Visit chelseagreen.co.uk



Loving The Jellied Eel?

Subscribe to get future mags sent straight to your door



By becoming a **London Food Link** supporter not only do you get our mag through your letterbox, you also get great foodie offers, discounted events, and are joining a network of people who grow, cook and eat good food

Subscribe at www.thejelliedeel.org



THE GREENER-GROCERS

Not a pair likely to let a pandemic stand in their way, **Rob Slater** chatted to Shrub Provisions cofounders and veg-fighting duo **Harry Dyer** and **Sam Best** about starting up when restaurants were closing down and supplying London with produce from the finest agroecological growers around.

WHAT GOT YOU INTO THE FOOD AND FARMING SECTOR?

We both grew up in rural areas, in Oxfordshire and West Berkshire, having wonderful home cooked meals every night with our large (by today's standards) families. This instilled a love of the outdoors, countryside and food from a very young age. We share these values and both naturally fell into the food and farming sector.

WHAT LED YOU TO SET UP SHRUB?

It wasn't only a business decision, but an environmental one. There is a lot of greenwashing in the industry and we felt that there were truths not being told and good marketing put ahead of good practice. We wanted to provide a truly transparent, educational food chain.

WHAT'S A TYPICAL DAY FOR YOU – IF THERE IS ONE?

Since starting Shrub we have had to wear multiple hats, as any startups must. Each week follows a process

and rhythm, of talking to chefs and farmers in equal parts, sourcing, purchasing, driving, collecting, delivering, admin and squeezing in some sleep where we can!

WHY FOCUS ON THE LONDON RESTAURANT TRADE?

It made logistical, financial and strategic sense to focus on London. It's a mecca for innovative, progressive and ethical restaurants that are actively seeking to improve sustainability and traceability. Even during a pandemic we were able to sustain ourselves. We feel that if we can make a real, tangible difference to the way restaurants source their fruit and veg, London is the place to do that.

HAVE YOU NOTICED ANY CHANGE IN HOW PEOPLE ENGAGE WITH FOOD PRODUCTION IN RECENT YEARS?

As a whole yes, but particularly during the pandemic. Everyone was forced into their kitchens and this

really made people think about where their food comes from. Organic box schemes and direct farmgate sales skyrocketed. This is a great sign. We do not exclusively work with certified farms, as ultimately we believe the new and fashionable colloquialism of 'regenerative' should be the end result of all agricultural practices going forward. Our ambition is to expedite and facilitate this change.

WHAT CHANGES WOULD YOU LIKE TO SEE IN THE WAY THAT FOOD IS PRODUCED IN THE UK?

Invert where incentives to innovate are placed. We should encourage highly productive land use – this is entirely achievable following restorative methods. Our metric for success should not be measured simply by high output and low cost to the end consumer.

@shrubprovisions
@RootsToWork

PHOTO: ANDREW MARTIN



SEEDS OF CHANGE

Inviting young people to open up about their relationship with growing food, **Amy Vernon** and **Jed Coiley** dive into why it's attracting a younger audience and what needs to be done to entice more.

For many, a year of lockdowns – and with it, more time on our hands and the chance to reevaluate our career choices – has reawakened an interest in growing food. And it's not just those traditionally involved who are heading out into the garden. More and more young people are swapping the keyboard and mouse for the trowel and secateurs, seeing growing as a chance to bring together communities, act in rebellion to the climate crisis, and create good livelihoods.

BUILDING INCLUSIVE COMMUNITIES

Ali Yellop is one of the directors of horticultural business Grow2Know, a social enterprise birthed in the wake of the Grenfell Tower fire, using horticulture to heal, empower, and educate young people. Together they are changing the narrative and breaking stereotypes of what it is like to be a gardener and what gardeners look like.

Ali sees community growing as a chance to break the London norm of isolation and relinquish the control we strive for. She recognises how returning to the land taps into natural rhythms, bringing a deep appreciation of the land we stand on, its history, and importance of the food we eat.

“When people plant things, they see a world bigger than themselves. They see something that came before them and will come after them.”

She feels the more young people get involved in creating food spaces, the more respect they will have for them and the more inclusive they become.

PREPARING FOR A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE

Creating a relationship with food is vital to tackling the climate crisis and building a better food system. Driven by this, Celia Briseid wants to connect her generation with food growing. “Food is at the core of everything we do,” she says. “We want to engage students and young people with it.”

Until recently, Celia managed Roehampton University's Growhampton project, creating growing spaces across the university, where students have their first taste of independence, choice, and purchasing power. Celia explains it's also a space for exploration, which shapes their opinions of the world and she believes growing is an opportunity to reconnect with nature and food, creating conscious consumers, something they take through their lives. “All it takes is planting the seed.”

Other young people are finding



food growing through climate issues. Gabriele Rizzi is one example; a photography graduate and ex-fashion industry worker who saw how important the food system was to our climate and society. This led to an internship at Aweside Farm, through Feedback's EcoTalent scheme, which is helping young people to break into an otherwise inaccessible sector.

BREAKING DOWN BARRIERS

There are still barriers for young people within the food and farming sector. Ali points to a lack of visibility, in terms of age and cultural diversity. To address this, she advocates for urban gardens linked with universities and solidarity projects, as she saw during her time in Mexico City.

Gabriele highlights the need for paid opportunities, like Feedback's EcoTalent internships. James Turner, who heads up the programme at

SUMMER

London often suffers from hot, dry conditions and long periods of drought. Here **Carolyn Wilson**, Capital Growth's allotment coordinator, shares ways of keeping your plants happy through the summer.



Much appreciated: Soil retains moisture best when it has a good structure and plenty of organic matter. Bare soil is susceptible to being damaged by the wind and sun. You can protect your soil by 'mulching' – covering it with something – to help keep it moist.

Take your pick: Woodchips are often used for mulching around fruit trees and bushes. As they slowly decompose, they make the soil more acidic, so are best suited to plants such as raspberries, rhubarb, sweet potatoes, blueberries and gooseberries. Most annual vegetables prefer a more neutral-alkaline soil. You could use leafmould, grass clippings, chopped up plant matter or straw. You can also use cardboard, entire newspapers, fabric, or even non-biodegradable materials like thick plastic sheeting or carpet to block unwanted plants from growing, thus reducing the need for weeding.

Berry careful: Consider netting fruit to keep the birds off. Gooseberries, redcurrants etc might need some summer pruning. Blackberries can be 'tied in' and side shoots snipped off grape vines.

Planting out: After the last frost it's time to start planting out young vegetables – sweetcorn, aubergines, chillies and peppers, cauliflowers, celery, tomatoes – but it's not too late to sow some more. In June, you can still sow peas, beetroot, broccoli, runner and french beans, swedes, courgettes, pumpkins, and winter squashes.

Year-long sowing: Oriental and salad leaves – things like pak choi, mizuna, mustard greens, corn salad, rocket, lettuce – can be sown in succession (every few weeks) throughout the year. Some seeds (e.g. lettuce, coriander, basil, dill, parsley) won't germinate reliably in high temperatures, so it's worth finding a cool/ shady space for your seedlings to start off.



Feedback's agrees: "There is such a wealth of creative energy, knowledge and passion in young people from backgrounds typically not represented in the sector," he says. "It's time that organisations and others in positions of influence, recognise this potential and start celebrating and investing in this young talent."

No matter your age or experience – London's community of food growers and gardens has something to get you started. Check out your local growing space and Capital Growth's summer workshops.

www.capitalgrowth.org

[@feedbackorg](https://twitter.com/feedbackorg)
[@roehamptonu](https://twitter.com/roehamptonu)
[@grow2knowcic](https://twitter.com/grow2knowcic)



PHOTO: CELIA BRISEID, PREVIOUSLY OF GROWHAMPTON

PHOTO: KAROLINA GRABOWSKA

CAN LOCAL FOOD TOPPLE SUPERMARKET GIANTS?

With a growing number of people shifting away from supermarkets and towards local and farmer-focused options, Sustain's **Amy Luck** and **James Woodward** explore what this means for farmers, suppliers and shoppers alike.

Our food system has lost its way. Big retail is failing to support farmers, our health, our connection to food, and is certainly falling short of protecting our planet. To get back on track we need to be asking the all-important question: where does our food actually come from?

A SUPERMARKET SWEEP

Supermarkets control more than 90% of the food we buy through retail and their model has created low worker pay, low farm incomes, environmentally damaging food production, deforestation and high food waste. In the UK, farmers receive on average just 9% of each £1 spent by the shopper, and many big supermarkets have come under fire for paying workers below minimum wage. At the start of the pandemic, this conventional just-in-time model strained, with accounts of empty fresh food shelves as supermarkets

struggled with supplies. We saw a shift in the way people shopped, with many switching to local and sustainable food options. Food Foundation research found UK veg box schemes had an 111% increase in demand at the start of lockdown, and the Community Supported Agriculture Network saw community farm members double.

SHIFTING SUPPLY

For many city dwellers, buying direct from farmers is not easy. So what's the alternative if we want to shop to give farmers and our planet a better deal? This is the question the Better Food Traders Network set out to address. It supports independent retailers, box schemes, farm shops and all the other middle-people bringing food to customers via ethical and transparent supply chains, paying a fair price for farmers who in turn support nature and grow organically. One of the most well-established is Growing Communities, the Hackney-based

box scheme and farmers' market, which works with farmers and organic growers on the fringes of London.

Danny Fisher heads up the Better Food Shed, a new type of intermediary springing out of London's thriving box scheme scene. He buys produce direct from organic farms and supplies box schemes and shops from their Barking-based warehouse, streamlining deliveries while creating new opportunities for farmers and retailers to connect.

The Shed takes care of organising, selling and distributing produce, helping farmers focus on what they are best at. Danny says, "The key difference between us and a conventional wholesaler is that we are 'farmer-focused'. The farmers and growers set the price, and some have told us it helps them sleep better at night knowing we take care of the transport, sorting and sales." He explains their farmers commit to farming as sustainably as possible



PHOTO: MARTIN AT RIPPLE FARM ORGANICS BY MILES WILLIS

(at a minimum to organic standards) and compares it to supermarkets, where their prices “hide the true environmental and social cost of food”.

‘WHEN YOUR COURGETTES GET REJECTED AND YOU THEN HAVE TO PAY TO DISPOSE OF THEM, YOU KNOW IT’S TIME TO FIND AN ALTERNATIVE.’

Martin and Sarah Mackey at Ripple Farm Organics, who supply the Shed, explain the benefits for business and the food system. “It’s been over 25 years since we dealt with a supermarket and even then, that was indirectly through a wholesaler,” Martin says. “When your courgettes get rejected and you then have to pay to dispose of them, you know it’s time

to find an alternative.” Before they started supplying via the Shed, Ripple was doing multiple drops in London. This has now been streamlined “and even better, has put us in touch with other growers so that we can buy produce from each other to supplement our box schemes.”

SHOPPING POWER

For us as citizens and consumers, where we shop can make all the difference to farmers like Martin and Sarah and their 15 employees. But making this change can be daunting. So where to start? Box schemes provide the continuity that farmers cherish but there are other options; farmers’ markets, food-shares or nearby farms and online schemes are out there. And if you prefer to shop well, in a shop, then independents like Fridge of Plenty in north London, Good Food Catford and Eat17 offer a one-stop urban farm and grocery store selling local, sustainable and

seasonal products from a range of farms and producers across the UK.

Shopping in this way and with the certainty Better Food Traders accreditation brings means questions like ‘where is our food from and who benefited?’ are taken care of. Natasha Soares from Better Food Traders argues that these “radical retailers are giving ‘power back to smaller farmers’”. She continues that shopping via ‘farmer-focused routes’ “brings benefits that go far beyond the pounds we spend. We re-engage with the crucial importance of the people who grow, harvest, pack and bring us our food all the way from farm to plate.” We say – sign us up!

[@BetterFoodTraders](#)
[@growingcomm](#)
[@FridgePlenty](#)
[@rippleorganics](#)
[@goodfoodstores](#)
[@CSANetwork](#)



FARMING ON THE EDGE

The last year has been a period of extraordinary change, with Covid and Brexit leading people to ask more about where their food comes from and offering a chance to rethink how we grow and eat – for the better.

Ellie Costigan checks out a quiet revolution happening on the edge of our cities.



PHOTO: THE SITOPIA TEAM BY THOMAS BROADHEAD

A HUNGRY CITY

“While there’s been increased demand for food from community enterprises,” says Rob Logan from Sustain “there’s also a new generation of growers – seen in the growth of interest in farming organisations like the Landworkers Alliance.” The task now is to meet this demand for good food with a supply of land.

The land is there, even around London, much of it high grade agricultural land, often used for grazing horses and even lavender farms. But of the 11 000 hectares of farms, only 260 are growing fruit and vegetables, despite the hungry population. A Sustain report suggests just a 1.4% conversion of these farms to horticultural production could grow around 1,340 tonnes of food, sold straight to London markets.

DREAMING OF SITOPIA

Sustain’s Fringe Farming campaign is “focused on that obstacle: increasing access to land at the edge of cities” explains Rob, who is highlighting the benefits of fringe farming (a.k.a peri-urban farming) to councils and others. It offers not just fresh and healthy food, but environmental and social benefits too. “It can reacquaint city dwellers with what it means to

feed them and get them excited and involved with it again,” says Carolyn Steel, author of *Hungry City* and Sitopia. “That’s the kind of revolution we need: one where our economy and our culture values food again; where we care about what we eat, how it’s made and where it came from..”

Carolyn now sits on the board of Sitopia Farm, set up by civil-servant-turned-grower Chloe Dunnett. Following a successful crowdfunding campaign, combined with a grant from the Mayor of London, Chloe plans to transform two acres of land in Greenwich into a model agroecological peri-urban farm. “We want to create a beautiful farm where we’ll grow things that make sense to be grown in cities – highly perishable produce like salad, vegetables, fruit and herbs” she explains. “We want this to be a place that’s inclusive and diverse in all its forms. One of the things that’s really important for us is making good food and farming accessible. We will have lots of open days, volunteering, community feasts, workshops and school visits.”

A MARKET ON YOUR DOORSTEP

It’s not easy to make farming work financially, but peri-urban farms can explore routes to market more readily

available thanks to their proximity to the city. Chrissy Harrison, who runs Keats in Bexley, sells to many local restaurants and farmers markets and sees many pluses to her location. “I have a high value economy on my doorstep which I’m using to make my veg boxes accessible,” she explains. “I’m thinking about increasing restaurant prices, so the produce is affordable for people living locally, that’s one of the benefits of these restaurants on your doorstep: they support me and in turn, I support the community.” She also sees benefits to rural farmers who can sell to her box scheme.

With more potential threats to food supply, the growing movement of fringe farmers provide a chance to build resilient food production closer to where we live, with opportunities to learn, grow and connect with all that nourishes us – and the best thing? “Direct access to a supply of freshly harvested produce, obviously” adds Chrissy.

[@sitopiafarm](#)
[@carolynsteel.sitopia](#)
[@cropdroporganicveg](#)
[@keatsorganics @elliecostigan](#)

www.sustainweb.org/fringefarming





PHOTO: ARTEM BELIAIKIN

TOP OF THE SWOPS

In case it has passed you by, Netflix recently released the Seaspiracy documentary. It shows some of the disastrous environmental and social consequences of industrial fishing, and the threats faced by our marine life. The film's key message is that the damage to the oceans from plastic pollution – a headline-grabbing issue in recent years – is dwarfed by the harm from industrial fishing. The film recommends we stop eating fish altogether.

Here at the 'Eel, we've always championed a less-but-better approach to eating meat, fish and dairy. The environmental impacts associated with animal proteins in comparison to plant proteins means they should be eaten rarely. However, not all animal protein is created equal. Just as organic farming can rebuild soil carbon and biodiversity on land, some practices for farming and catching fish are small-scale, low by-catch, with minimal impact on the marine environment.

Here are options for buying fish better:

1 SWOP Cod for coley, pollock, hake or haddock

UK-caught cod is on the Marine Conservation Society's list of fish to avoid – stocks are thought to be at

their lowest for decades. Look out for cod from further afield, with the MSC ecolabel or choose coley, pollock, hake or haddock from around our shores.

2 SWOP Farmed salmon for chalk stream trout or brown crab

Salmon is farmed in lochs across Scotland, Northern Ireland and Norway. Concerns are growing about pollution, the wastefulness of vast quantities of wild-caught fish used to feed farmed fish, and outbreaks of disease.

Rainbow trout from the UK is farmed in much less intensive systems. Brown crab from the UK is also a great choice – high in omega three, like trout.

3 SWOP King prawns for pot-caught langoustines, or other UK shellfish like mussels

King prawns are mainly farmed in Indonesia, Thailand and Vietnam. Not only are they associated with mangrove deforestation and pollution, but slavery in supply chains. Luckily, there is an abundance of UK-caught shellfish to swop, including creel or pot-caught langoustines or mussels. Mussels are one of the most sustainable foods you can buy, because they filter and fix pollutants and carbon in their shells. Nature's carbon capture!

4 SWOP Skate or ray for dover sole, dab or megrim

Skate and ray are the only UK-landed fish to avoid on this list – some populations are so low they are considered 'fish to avoid' by the Marine Conservation Society. Flat fish like dover sole, dab and megrim make a great alternative (and are normally cheaper!), but check the fish is not caught by beam trawlers (which impact seafloor habitats).

5 SWOP Tuna for mackerel or sardines

Tuna is incredibly popular in the UK, but global populations are in trouble and only a few stocks are well managed (look for the MSC or 'pole and line' label). Try mackerel or sardines instead.

By Ruth Westcott, Sustain



WHERE TO BUY

Buying direct is great, as well as using independent businesses supporting fishing communities such as SoleShare (London) or Pesky Fish. Find more place to shop at:

www.goodfoodmap.org

THE BUZZ AROUND BEES

Bees do a critical job of pollinating our flowers and crops, with figures suggesting a third of all the food we eat is pollination dependent. But did you know the growing enthusiasm for urban beekeeping may be doing more harm than good? **Katerina Gladkova** investigates the urban bee crisis.

There are more than 20,000 known species of bee around the world, with around 270 species appearing in the UK. Among them, one is clearly the best-known: the honeybee. The majority of honeybees are kept in managed hives; our remaining bee population is wild, including 25 bumblebee species and more than 220 varieties of solitary bee.

Interestingly, bees possess unique characteristics, making them suited to pollinate certain plants. The early bumblebee's small size and agile nature allows it to pollinate plants with drooping flowers. Garden bumblebees excel at pollinating the deep flowers, because their longer tongue can reach deep inside the flower. The diversity of bee species is therefore fundamental – wild bees specialise in pollinating the base of the flower, while honeybees prefer the top.

THE URBAN BEE BOOM

In recent years, wild bee populations have come under increasing pressure due to habitat loss and increasing pesticide use, with the proliferation of urban honeybees intensifying competition for precious food resources. "Shrinking green space has diminished the natural food resources available to all urban pollinators. [It is] estimated that an area two-and-a-half times Hyde Park is lost every year," says Dale Gibson, co-founder of Bermondsey Street Bees, a sustainable beekeeping practice he set up with Sarah Wyndham Lewis.

'WE ARE NOW WELL BEYOND THE TIPPING-POINT.'

While food supply pollinators have been decreasing, the last two



decades have also seen a surge in the number of hives, often due to well-intended campaigns calling for people to save the bees. "The 'Disneyfication' of bees underlying the 'save the bees' message has had the unintended consequence of doubling the number of beehives in London. There are more than 5,000, currently," comments Dale. "We are now well beyond the tipping-point, with new beehive introductions into London now very much part of the problem, not the solution" – something exposed by data, showing soaring disease contagion, higher overwintering mortality and low honey yields.

IT'S ALL ABOUT THE HONEY

The focus of urban beekeepers has been on the honeybee and while they experience pressure for nourishment, "they are very successful general foragers, often out-competing other species of wild bees and other insect



PHOTO: BERMONDSEY STREET BEES

pollinators, whose limited food sources are being stripped out by hungry honeybees,” says Dale. As a result, urban overcrowding puts wild bees and other pollinators at risk.

Carolyn Wilson, Capital Growth’s allotment coordinator adds, “A lot of people have heard that bees worldwide are in trouble and their well-meaning reaction has been to take up beekeeping.” She believes people need to learn not just about honeybees, but all the species. Many schools and community projects help by creating ‘bee hotels’, which are habitats good for solitary bees. “Learning about mason bees and bumblebees can be just as fascinating as studying a colony of honeybees.”

BUZZ TO ACTION

So, what can be done? “If we really want to help ‘save the bees’, we can deliberately plant these nectar-rich species in our gardens and green

spaces and join the campaign against the continuing use of neonicotinoid insecticides in the UK,” Carolyn recommends.

This echoes Dale’s verdict. “Every window-box with flowering herbs, every patio with a tub of nasturtiums, every fruiting tree planted represents a tiny increment to the nourishment available to London’s pollinators.” And as a single bee colony requires 250kg of nectar and 50kg of pollen just to survive every year, he adds “if everyone considering the introduction a hive into London was to show how they intended to provide the new forage for their proposed bees, particularly in built up areas of London, that would go a long way to tackling the problem”.

@bstreetbees
@Capital_Growth



THE JELLIED EEL

ISSUE 63: SUMMER 2021

thejelliedeel@sustainweb.org

Editor: Abi Aspen Glencross

Editorial Support: Ellie Costigan, Katerina Gladkova, Amy Luck, Rob Slater and Sarah Williams

Design: Alan Karlik

Writers: Jed Coiley, Ellie Costigan, Kirsten Foster, Katerina Gladkova, Tom Hunt, Mecca Ibrahim, Amy Luck, Muna Reyah, Rob Slater, Amy Vernon, Ruth Westcott, Carolyn Wilson, James Woodward

In This Issue credits: Cover Story, Danielle Ahmet and Organiclea Growers, and Farmers Who Feed, Chrissy Harrison, by Zoe Walde-Aldam; Summer Vegetable Ceviche by Jenny Zarins; Seeds of Change, Ali Yessop and Buzz around Bees by Bermondsey Street Bees.

Printed by: RapSpiderweb

Distributed by: GoldKey Media

Editorial content is independent of advertising, and while we are careful when selecting features and accepting advertisements, inclusion does not imply an endorsement.

Opinions expressed are those of individual writers and not necessarily those of London Food Link / Sustain.

We rely on voluntary writers, photographers, illustrators to make The ‘Eel swim. If you’d like to showcase your work to more than 30,000 good food lovers, please get in touch.

We love eels but many stocks are endangered, so please don’t eat them, jellied or otherwise!

The Jellied Eel is published by London Food Link, part of the food and farming charity Sustain. Read about our work and JOIN US at www.londonfoodlink.org



sustain
the alliance for better food and farming

THE EEL GOES WWOOFING

Swap the beach for beetroots and go WWOOFing in the UK for your break this year. **Kirsten Foster** digs into these unforgettable opportunities.



For decades, WorldWide Opportunities on Organic Farms (WWOOF) has been uniting volunteers who want to learn about sustainable growing with hosts who need a hand. The more-than-370 hosts in the UK are a varied bunch, spread all over the country, offering a unique mix of volunteering holidays, informal training courses, communal living experiences and voyages of self-discovery.

Take WWOOF UK CEO **Scarlett Penn's smallholding in rural Shropshire** as fairly typical: a calm, very rural location with vegetable plots, a forest garden, rescued hedgehogs and wild rabbits. Her WWOOFers are fed seasonal produce from the site, often preserved with techniques volunteers can learn, such as making sauerkraut – something her current volunteer, Imogen Lacey, who's on her second stint at the eight-acre site, really values: "I can really taste the extra deliciousness that comes from eating something you have helped to grow."

It's not just about veg growing. Other volunteers have found themselves helping with lambing

and TB testing, surveying land and even painting wooden dragons, so it's important to communicate with your host about what you do or, more importantly, don't want to do. First-time WWOOFer Adrian insists a phone call is best for this – and not just because many hosts might be seriously low-tech. "You can both be really clear about what you want – and you can get a sense of whether you'll get on."

Georgie Styles, who's WWOOFed around the world on her journey into farming, did her first stint in the UK last year at **Caerhys Organic CSA in Pembrokeshire**, working on veg production for their box scheme. They also cared for cows and grew grain, which she knew nothing about. "I would corner the farm manager at any opportunity, as he was a fountain of knowledge," says Georgie. She recommends volunteers "be bold in asking questions. Most hosts are happy to share and you need to make sure you get something from it."

But being flexible is important too. As a vegan, Fran Bernhardt was surprised by her favourite task when WWOOFing: "Cheesemaking! I also

milked cows, split logs, weeded, planted, looked after the turkeys, collected the eggs, fed the pigs and picked veg." Her host, **Old Hall, in Essex**, only takes volunteers for two-week stays, but there's a host for you whether you want to stay one day or one year. Most prefer longer visits, so volunteers can learn the ropes and bond with each other and their hosts.

The first WWOOFer at **JJ Gladwin's biodynamic plot on the Black Isle in Scotland** arrived "for a hectic exploratory summer tasting western culture for the first time. Now he is a dear friend and godfather to our son."

2021 is WWOOF UK's 50th birthday. What better way to celebrate it than getting involved at a time when, as Imogen Lacey says "so much is precarious – it makes sense to find meaningful volunteering and living going hand-in-hand."

www.woof.org.uk @woofuk

@scarlett penn
@caerhysorganic
@goodfoodforwho

PHOTOS: SCARLETT PENN

To order, please call 0207 471 3700
or visit www.londonbiopackaging.com

20%
OFF



Sustainable packaging that won't cost the earth



At London Bio Packaging we are here to help make your food and drink to go service even better. Better for the planet, better for your customers, and better for your business.

Visit our website and save upto 20% off your first order over £100* with the code: **JELLIEDEEL01**

*see website for terms



@LondonBio

 **LondonBioPackaging**
Your food to go. But even better.

Organico

REALFOODS

Brand New Web Shop
For Organic Change-Makers



At Organico we **love** good organic food and sustainable values.

We've made it our mission to find some of the very best organic **change-makers** who transform the ingredients they grow into the products we eat

www.organicorealfoods.com

Organico



REDFERN'S