

Pipers Farm: A livestock farmer-focused supply chain case study

Thirty years ago, Pipers Farm was a 50-acre permanent pasture farm in Devon where Peter and Henri Greig raised their two boys and reared native Red Ruby cattle, which they sold to customers through their butcher's shop on the local High Street.

Fast forward to today and Peter and Henri still run the 50 acre family farm, and Pipers Farm has become a sophisticated online marketplace for sustainably produced British meat, dairy and grains. They closed the bricks and mortar butcher in 2017 having realised local customers were placing their orders online, and never looked back.

Now, they are setting the benchmark for proper sustainable farming that nurtures rural communities and local food economies. **Working with a network of 30 small-scale family farms, Pipers Farm is providing healthy, high welfare food straight to the homes of tens of thousands of people UK wide.**

"Within our network, most of our partner farms are based within a 50-mile radius of Pipers Farm. We believe small-scale mixed farming is the most sustainable way to produce food. All our farmers grow a range of produce – for example, our Red Ruby cattle graze alongside a flock of sheep and our Wessex Saddleback pigs rotationally graze in amongst fodder beet crops."

"We have always believed in a short supply chain, having a direct relationship with our customers, and providing food that people can trust – food that is wholesome, nutritious and produced in harmony with nature."

Enabling a direct relationship between farmer and customer has been absolutely vital in time like the pandemic where local food systems have proved most resilient in being able to respond to consumer demand quickly, and ensure constant supply of good food.

"Our family farming business model is built around relationships, trust and respect for the work carried out by each person within the supply chain. We liken it to a delicate web, facilitating relationships between the many vital services from the butchers, the vets, slaughterman, the local feedmill, warehouse and packing staff, and all the small ancillary services that feed off these. **Directly we employ 42 people, but indirectly our model impacts on the livelihoods of '00's in a whole web of local businesses.**"



Peter Greig walking his farm.

Credit: Pipers Farm.

"We believe in having a direct relationship with our customers and providing food that people can trust – food that is wholesome, nutritious and produced in harmony with nature."

Peter Greig, Pipers Farm

“A local food chain like ours has the potential to sustain entire communities. It not only contributes directly to local economies, but to the social fabric of our communities where families will be involved in local institutions and enterprises, schools and churches. It is a societal good, and should be valued as such.”

Pipers Farm, Devon

- 50-acre permanent pasture regenerative farm working with nature and climate.
- Rear native livestock on a natural diet.
- Work with 30 small-scale local farms who supply through out online market.
- Employ 42 people directly and support hundreds more livelihoods.

“If we look to our future and the ecological and climate issues we face, livestock has a very clear role to play in the production of food (including grains and crops) and adding value to the sustainability of the farming system. **Our farms rear native breeds on natural diets, in their natural environment. When farmed the right way, they contribute to healthy soil, biodiversity, and improving carbon sequestration.**”

Industrial farming is growing animals by numbers, it’s about driving down costs for short term profits. The premise it is built on, of not respecting the natural world, means it is on borrowed time. It is unsustainable and devaluing the true cost of our food.

Recently, Kantar reported that 630,000 more household bought from independent butchers in the year to Feb 2021, spending nearly 50 per cent more per trip compared to other retailers. “Evidence that value in local, quality meat is on the up. And we’ve seen this firsthand. The awareness and appreciation for better quality, high welfare meat from farms they trust has sky-rocketed. It is heartwarming to see.”

“Local meat processors are one example of an under-valued link in the supply chain. Without small-scale local abattoirs, we could not sell high welfare meat. It minimizes stress on the animal and offers a level of care an industrial scale meat processor cannot. On our system, animals are slaughtered either on the farm or at a local

abattoir. We rear properly free range chicken to 84 days processing up to 1700 chickens per week and selling them to the customer for a price which values every person in the supply chain. This is what sustainable farming communities are (or should be) about.”

“There is also a lost opportunity from the by-product of livestock agriculture – hides, skins, wool, tallow have decreased in value and all but gone since the rise of industrialised farming. But they could become a lucrative part of local enterprise, recycling value within the region.”



***Henri Greig tending to free range pigs in beet fodder.
Credit: Pipers Farm.***

“At a time when demand for sustainable, traceable, local food is on the rise, and issues of welfare and health are at the forefront of many consumers’ minds, **we must protect the future of local food systems and farmer-focused supply chains. These are the backbone of our rural communities and economies.** We need the next generation to see farming as a viable career and reassure them that it will be fit for purpose in 10 – 20 years time. We genuinely believe it’ll be farming business models like ours which will stand the test of time.”

Pipers Farm [website](#) and [Twitter](#).

Find out more about the local abattoir campaign [here](#).

Visit [Sustains farming website](#).

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Sustain: The alliance for better food and farming advocates food and agriculture policies and practices that enhance the health and welfare of people and animals, improve the working and living environment, enrich society and culture and promote equity. We represent around 100 national public interest organisations working at international, national, regional, and local level.