

## **Abergavenny Transition Town**

### **Just Food**

## **Proposals for Rethinking Food in Wales - Sept 2017**

Just Food is an Abergavenny-based group of local people, which promotes debate about the political issues around food & hunger from social justice & sustainability perspectives. We therefore have a strong vision for the future of food in Wales and what could be done to achieve it. We are delighted to have this opportunity to respond to the National Assembly for Wales Climate Change, Environment and Rural Affairs Committee consultation on Rethinking Food in Wales.

1.1 We believe that food is a public good and that everyone in Wales should have access to affordable, high quality, nutritious and safe food by right rather than relying on the charity of others.

1.2 We would like to see food embedded in each of the seven goals of the Well Being of Future Generations Act (WBFGA). A sustainable food system (from production to consumption) will contribute to improved prosperity and resilience, better public health, greater equality and social cohesion, thriving culture and Welsh language and would help Wales to meet its global responsibilities.

1.3 We would like to see Sustainable Dietary Guidelines at the heart of food policy in Wales. Several countries such as Brazil, Finland, Germany, Qatar and Sweden have developed such guidelines. Wales could be the first of the four UK countries to have such guidelines. Evidence suggests that guidelines would help to drive sustainable diets - good for public health, the planet, social justice and the economy - from a sustainable food system.<sup>1</sup> Development of Sustainable Dietary Guidelines would also help Wales make its contribution to the UK commitment to meeting the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

1.4 We suggest that an overarching aspiration for the food system in Wales should be to produce more of our own food, particularly horticultural produce. We are not proposing a 'siege mentality' as trade has long been a part of the Welsh economy, and such a mentality would

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P Mason & T Lang (2017) *Sustainable Diets*. Abingdon: Routledge <https://www.routledge.com/Sustainable-Diets-How-Ecological-Nutrition-Can-Transform-Consumption-and/Mason-Lang/p/book/9780415744720>

not improve food security, but given the potential threats arising from Brexit and climate change, producing more of our own food in Wales would help to maintain and increase resilience. It would also potentially grow more jobs and encourage entrepreneurship. However, more land must become available to new food producing entrants. Farming Connect could do more to generate a database of land availability across Wales; this could include land for sale through the usual channels.

1.5 Encouraging more people in Wales to grow more of their own food on allotments, in community growing schemes (e.g. Incredible Edibles, Community Orchards and Community Supported Agriculture) or in their own gardens would help to improve physical<sup>2</sup> and mental<sup>3</sup> health.<sup>4</sup> It would also help citizens to gain more knowledge of food, where it comes from and how to prepare it.

1.6 We would like to see schools play a significant role in raising pupils' awareness about food production and consumption. All children should learn how to grow vegetables and fruit and learn to cook a range of nutritious meals using local ingredients.

1.7 We would suggest that public procurement policy and practice prioritises local producers as much as possible thereby securing markets for Welsh producers and strengthening the local economy. Many of the most vulnerable people in Wales (e.g., children, older people and hospital patients) are fed regularly by the public sector and would benefit from the healthiest of food brought to their plates by local Welsh producers.

1.8. We appreciate that vending machines in maintained schools must comply with the 2013 Healthy Eating legislation<sup>5</sup>. However, we note that this legislation does not apply to vending machines on school premises with an associated leisure centre for public use. We would like to see all

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<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/28085098>

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<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/26515229>

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<https://www.kingsfund.org.uk/publications/gardens-and-health>

5

<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/wsi/2013/1984/made>

vending machines associated with schools comply with the Healthy Eating in Schools legislation.

1.9 We would like to see all vending machines in hospitals promoting a message of healthy food and drink consumption and hence providing a choice of drink and food which is not high in sugar, fat and salt.

1.10 Welsh government is to be congratulated on its support for the School Holiday Enrichment Programme (SHEP)<sup>6</sup> following on from the work of Food Cardiff. Just Food looks forward to the Wales-wide roll out of SHEP<sup>7</sup> including to our own county of Monmouthshire, which we see is planned for 2019.

1.11 Food poverty could be further tackled by promoting the Feeding Britain project<sup>8</sup> to local organisations working to support people suffering from or at risk of hunger in their communities. Typically they involve food banks and other emergency food aid organisation, community cafes and kitchens, community food projects, social supermarkets, organisations working on welfare rights and debt managements, local authorities, schools, local businesses and social enterprise. Feeding Britain is looking to develop pilot projects in Wales.

1.12 We feel strongly that no one working in the food system (and indeed no one working anywhere), including farmers, food producers, those working in food distribution, food service and food retail should work for less than the living wage.

1.13 We recommend that Wales adopts one of the well established food security measures.<sup>9</sup> Food security matters from a public health perspective, a moral perspective and also for maximising economic

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<http://gov.wales/newsroom/educationandskills/2017/new-summer-holidays-lunch-and-funclubs-to-get-500000/?lang=en>

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<http://wlga.wales/food-and-fun>

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<https://feeding-britain.org/regional-projects/>

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P Mason & T Lang (2017) *Sustainable Diets*. Abingdon: Routledge <https://www.routledge.com/Sustainable-Diets-How-Ecological-Nutrition-Can-Transform-Consumption-and/Mason-Lang/p/book/9780415744720>, pp60-62.

capacity. This should be part of a wider UK initiative in which all of the four countries adopts the same food security measure.

1.14 Wales could grow more vegetables and fruit. Wales currently has 1.5million hectares of agricultural land, but only 1,449 hectares grows fruit & vegetables. That equates to 0.1% of agricultural land growing an essential part of the Welsh populations' diet. This land contributes to an estimated 3% of the nation's 5-a-day (recently increased to 7-a-day by Public Health England) fruit & vegetable requirement. If everyone in Wales ate 5-a-day, 620,000 tonnes of fruit & veg would be required. If we were to grow 100% of this in Wales, at a realistic yield of 14 tonnes per hectare, this would require 44,286 hectares of land. This is 31 times more than at present. But 44,286 hectares is still only 2.8% of all agricultural land in Wales and only 12.8% of grade 1-3 agricultural land in Wales.<sup>10</sup>

1.15 The range of vegetables grown in Wales could also be increased, including legumes,<sup>11</sup> which can form an important part of a more plant-based sustainable diet. Increased legume production for human consumption could help to diversify farm businesses.

1.16 People in Wales need to be encouraged to eat more vegetables and fruit and we would welcome more promotion of the Food Foundation's Peas Please initiative,<sup>12</sup> of which Food Cardiff is a partner.

1.17 Quinoa could be more widely grown in Wales. It is a healthy food and becoming increasingly popular with consumers. Quinoa is resilient to wet and windy weather and, depending on the variety, can be grown in shallow, poor quality soil and, as seen in the Andes, at heights of 3,600 metres.<sup>13</sup>

1.18 If Wales is to produce more of its own food, and a different range of food, processing facilities will need to be considered. Anecdotally, for

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Analysis by Amber Wheeler, PhD student, University of South Wales

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[http://www.calu.bangor.ac.uk/infosheets/Increasing\\_vegetable\\_production.pdf](http://www.calu.bangor.ac.uk/infosheets/Increasing_vegetable_production.pdf)

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<http://foodfoundation.org.uk/about-peas-please/>

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<http://www.fao.org/docrep/t0646e/T0646E0f.htm>

example, we understand that it is difficult in Wales to process grain, such as oats, for human consumption. In Monmouthshire, in the context of a food hub feasibility study commissioned by the Vale of Usk Local Action Group, some local small holders and food producers highlight difficulties, in terms of distance, in getting meat, including organically produced meat, cut and processed.

1.19 We appreciate that the Climate Change, Environment and Rural Affairs Committee has produced a report on the Welsh Government's approach<sup>14</sup> to marine protected area management. We are not experts on this matter but we would like to see Wales committing to healthy and resilient seas through both properly managed, protected areas and responsible sourcing of seafood. Cardiff is to be congratulated on signing up to the Sustainable Fish Cities pledge.<sup>15</sup> This initiative could be promoted and taken up more widely across the towns, cities and counties of Wales.

1.20 We would like to see the introduction of more drinking fountains across Wales to begin to reduce the use of single use plastic bottles. A 2017 UN report<sup>16</sup> estimated that there will be more plastic in the sea than fish by 2050 unless we stop using single use plastic bottles and carrier bags. Drinking fountains could be provided in public places and local government premises. In Bristol as part of the Refill Bristol Campaign<sup>17</sup>, cafes, bars, restaurants, banks and museums participate by providing water refill stations and display a blue sticker in their windows to let passers by know they can refill their water bottles for free.

1.21 Welsh government could help to promote the use of more food produced in Wales in restaurants, cafes, bed and breakfasts and hotels by introducing a 'badging' or 'branding' for food service such that customers could see that the establishment uses a certain proportion of food produced in Wales. A 'bronze', 'silver' and 'gold' award could be

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<http://www.assembly.wales/laid%20documents/cr-ld11159/cr-ld11159-e.pdf>

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<https://www.sustainweb.org/sustainablefishcity/>.

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<http://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/blog/2017/04/feature-uns-mission-to-keep-plastics-out-of-oceans-and-marine-life/>

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<http://www.refillbristol.org.uk/>

given to food service for achieving certain standards around the proportion of Welsh food on their menus. This could facilitate tourism and through tourism, Welsh producers and Welsh food service businesses and hence the Welsh economy.

1.22 We realise that the Climate Change, Environment and Rural Affairs Committee has consulted and reported on land use in Wales,<sup>18</sup> including the appropriate use of the Welsh uplands. All rural areas, including the Welsh uplands, are essential for the provision of public services such as biodiversity, soil quality, pure water, flood protection and also leisure and tourism. Given that livestock will be a part of the mix we support the managed production of food from livestock where animal health and welfare are protected and in numbers that the land can support while maintaining and enhancing the environmental services on which the public depends. Further research should also be conducted to ensure the most appropriate post-CAP supports are put in place for farmers, food producers and land managers.

1.23 We recommend an increased focus on environmentally friendly food production to protect soil quality and biodiversity, for example, by encouraging further conversion to organic methods. Rethinking food in Wales provides an opportunity to move away from pesticides and better promote Welsh organic produce so stimulating demand and production.