BETTER FOOD TRADERS
WHAT I’M GOING TO COVER

• A bit about Growing Communities and the Better Food Traders
• Tell you all about our plans to expand the Better Food Traders Network and the funding bid we are about to submit to enable us to do that.
• Would love to get your comments and feedback
Staff: 25 part-time, 12 fte  
Annual Turnover: £800,000
Two main community-led retail outlets
30 farmers and processors, 3500 people

Veg Scheme
Farmers Market
COLLECTION SCHEME
Our own food growing

Dagenham Farm (Larger covered site, outreach and training programme)

Patchwork Farm (Micro scale urban production and training programme for growers)
START –UP PROGRAMME (10 TRADING GROUPS)

VegBox Kentish Town

Crop Drop

Field to Fork

Local Greens
WHO ARE THE BETTER FOOD TRADERS

Growing Communities, Hackney; Local Greens, Herne Hill; Windmill Community Gardens, Margate; Crop Drop, Haringey; Field to Fork Organics, Kensal Rise; Enfield Veg Co, Enfield; Kentish Town Veg Box, Kentish Town; Veg Box People, Manchester; Angel Greens, Islington; Lee Greens, Lewisham; Pennine Crop Share, Hebden Bridge
A BIT ABOUT WHAT MOTIVATES US.
A TALE OF TWO FOOD SYSTEMS…
WE BELIEVE THAT SMALL TO MEDIUM SCALE ORGANIC AND AGROECOLOGICAL PRODUCERS HAVE A SIGNIFICANT PART TO PLAY IN IMPROVING THE SUSTAINABILITY OF OUR FOOD AND FARMING SYSTEM.
Increasing evidence that they 

- support more and better jobs,
- sustain more biodiversity,
- protect soils,
- provide better animal welfare and
- create more beneficial social impact.

1 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

2 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)


5 IPES Food 2016, p36.


7 CPRE (2012) From field to fork: The value of England’s local food webs CPRE; Winter & Lobley 2016, p.4 & 40-47
MEANWHILE, THE MAINSTREAM FOOD SYSTEM... IS HEADING IN A DIFFERENT DIRECTION

- Large-scale industrial monoculture - ‘efficiency’ and economies of scale.
- Automation can removes people from the equation entirely, or diminish the work experience to one more akin to modern slavery\(^1\).
- The heavy machinery and chemicals that enable it to work make it difficult to protect the soil and biodiversity and contribute significantly to the climate impact of agriculture\(^2\), the costs of which are not included into the price of food\(^3\).

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\(^2\) Lin, B. et al. (2011) *Effects of industrial agriculture on climate change and the mitigation potential of small-scale agro-ecological farms*, *CAB Reviews: Perspectives in Agriculture, Veterinary Science, Nutrition, and Natural Resources*

\(^3\) Sustainable Food Trust (2017) *The Hidden Cost of UK Food*.
20% 1960 – 90%

NO LONGER ACCOMMODATE SMALLER SCALE FARMING OPERATIONS OR SHORT SUPPLY CHAINS
IT’S A STRUGGLE TO COMPETE

• Food often costs more

• These producers bear the cost to the environment and public health that other actors in the food supply chain can externalise.

• Lack of government support makes the playing field still more uneven
SO, DESPITE ALL THAT GREAT STUFF......

➢ YIELDS ¹
Increasing evidence that they
➢ support more² and better jobs³,
➢ sustain more biodiversity⁴, 
➢ protect soils⁵, 
➢ provide better animal welfare⁶ and 
➢ create more beneficial social impact⁷.

THE SMALL SCALE SUSTAINABLE FARMERS WE NEED MORE OF ARE BEING DRIVEN OUT OF BUSINESS.
WHERE THE BETTER FOOD TRADERS COME IN
BETTER FOOD TRADERS AIM TO:

➢ Provide the kind of farmer we need more of with alternative, secure routes to market that pay them the price needed to produce food sustainably and fairly.

➢ That in turn enables those farmers to produce food in a way that protects soils and biodiversity while providing decent pay and working conditions to agricultural workers.

➢ And it enables our community to access seasonal healthy food at a fair price

➢ And it enables us to create jobs and community here in the urban areas is which most of us are based.

NOT EASY...BUT A WIN WIN
IN PRACTICE....BFTS FOCUS ON F&V AND HORTICULTURE

➢ Horticulture is the agricultural sector that as communities we can most easily connect with and directly influence: it is the farming sector that lends itself best to supplying local markets.

➢ On the other hand, growers of fresh fruit and veg can particularly benefit from the Better Food Traders approach which includes shortening supply chains and supporting seasonal consumption while providing producers with fair payment and consistency of orders.

➢ Horticulture is also the area that we ourselves can most easily get actively involved with – as demonstrated by the increase in urban/peri-urban market gardening. The significant social benefits of this kind of production are increasingly clear alongside its potential to reconnect communities with their food.

➢ UK self-sufficiency in fruit and veg is low compared to cereals and livestock. Focussing on domestic horticulture provides a means to both increase food security and reduce the climate impact of food.

➢ Focussing on small scale organic systems can support more good jobs, attracting more domestic employees and entrepreneurs motivated by the meaningful, varied and skilled work.

➢ And of course, the very significant links between increased consumption of fresh fruit and veg and health.
Increasing trade in fresh fruit and veg via agroecological short supply chains can deliver significant and multi-faceted benefits to health, the environment and livelihoods.

What’s not to like about veg?

And very excited by the launch
BACK TO OUR PLANS TO EXPAND THE BETTER FOOD TRADERS NETWORK

➢ Working in partnership with Sustain
➢ Want to discuss collaboration with:
  ▪ SFC/Veg Cities
  ▪ OFN, CSA network and Transition Network
  ▪ And others?
**THERE'S A LOT OF GREAT STUFF GOING ON**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Farmers</th>
<th>Soil Association</th>
<th>Food Assembly</th>
<th>Organic Growers Alliance</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Food Ethics Council</td>
<td>Processors</td>
<td>New Economics Foundation</td>
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<td>Landworkers Alliance</td>
<td>Fisher 'men'</td>
<td>CSA network</td>
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<td>Growing Communities</td>
<td>Growers</td>
<td>CAWR</td>
<td>Food Foundation</td>
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<td>Fair Trade shops Group</td>
<td>Guild of Fine Foods</td>
<td>Nat Ass of Health stores</td>
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<td>Stroudco</td>
<td>Langridges</td>
<td>Craft Bakers association</td>
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<td>Eating Better</td>
<td>Pheonix</td>
<td>Village shops and pubs network</td>
<td>National Fed of Fishmongers</td>
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<td>Infinity</td>
<td>Sustainable Food Cities</td>
<td>CSA schemes</td>
<td>Sustain</td>
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<td>Suma</td>
<td>Boxmaster</td>
<td>Real Farming Trust and ORFC</td>
<td>Tudor Trust</td>
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<td>Wholefood Action</td>
<td>Ismee Fairbairn</td>
<td>County Markets</td>
<td>British Organic Box Schemes</td>
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<td>Lottery (PtC and RCs)</td>
<td>Wholesome Food Ass</td>
<td>FORMA</td>
<td>Crystal Palace Food Market</td>
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<td>Sustainable Food Trust</td>
<td>FCRN</td>
<td>Food Co-ops network</td>
<td>Funding Enlightened Agriculture</td>
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<td>Open Food Network</td>
<td>Stock-free organic</td>
<td>Organic Research Centre</td>
<td>Real Food</td>
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<td>FRC</td>
<td>Food Sovereignty Movement</td>
<td>Fairtrade Foundation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Regional Food Groups &amp; 'foodlinks'</td>
<td>Farm Drop</td>
<td>Friends Provident</td>
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<td>Manchester Veg Box People</td>
<td>Joseph Rowntree</td>
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and lots of other groups out there working along the same lines
BUT... ISOLATED
AND HARD TO FULLY DEMONSTRATE OUR COLLECTIVE IMPACT

“….how can we promote with policy-makers the benefits of local food systems, direct sales, and the funding and infrastructure that needs to support these. I think this evidence and voice is seriously lacking in the agriculture consultation that Defra has live now.”

Kath Dalmeny, CEO of Sustain
INSTEAD WE COULD BE

More of these

a little less of this
AND DEVELOPING AND A STRONG COLLECTIVE IDENTITY

So we can raise the profile of BFT and persuade more people to buy sustainable fresh fruit and veg.
AND COLLECTING AND AGGREGATING DATA

➢ Help develop that strong collective identity,

➢ Demonstrate to policy makers the viability of the movement and the necessity to support the sustainable famers and growers and trading systems that we need
**FUNDING BID**

- **Better Food Traders**: build the network by inviting other enterprises on the ground to collaborate around a shared set of principles.
- Demonstrate impact and growth by **aggregating data** based on a common set of metrics.
- **Tell the BFT story**: developing its brand recognition and reach to consumers, producers and policy makers in order to increase supply and demand for healthy and sustainable food.
WHAT WE’LL BE OFFERING

• Slack messaging platform (moving to intranet over time) where groups share knowledge and expertise on a wide range of topics from marketing local food to how to source ecological packaging.

• Online events, webinars and eventually regional events where we can meet and share knowledge.

• Access to mentoring bank of free hours of bespoke advice on a wide range of topics such as finance, marketing, logistics.

• To be part of a collective movement where together we get more customers and demonstrate our collective impact.
WHAT WE’D WANT IN RETURN

Will cost nothing to join except a bit of time to…provide

• Information demonstrating that you’re a Better Food Trader

• Annual return of information to enable us to demonstrate the ongoing impact and growth of the network
THREE THINGS YOU COULD DO THAT WOULD MAKE A BIG DIFFERENCE

1. Can you help us identify a Better Food Trader in your area or network?
2. Would you help persuade them to join the BFT network?
3. Could you encourage everyone in your network/group to buy food from them?

If you can’t identify one, are you interested in helping to get one up and running? We can help with that too!
SO OVER TO YOU

➢ Any Questions?
➢ What do you think about…
   □ The concept of Better Food Traders
   □ What you get when you join the network (the offer)
   □ The Three Things You Could do:
     1. help us identify a Better Food Trader in your area or network
     2. help persuade them to join the BFT network
     3. Encourage everyone in your network/group to buy food from them?