

# Briefing for Bristol Food Policy Council on four recent reports: implications for work in Bristol

- Council for the Protection of Rural England, 'From Field to Fork: the value of England's local food webs', June 2012
- Commission on Sustainable Agriculture and Climate Change, 'Achieving food security in the face of climate change', April 2012
- Making Local Food Work report, 'Food from the urban fringe: Issues and Opportunities', February 2012
- UK Government Environmental Audit Committee report on Sustainable Food, April 2012

## 1. 'From Field to Fork: the value of England's local food webs', June 2012, CPRE

**1.1 About:** This report summarises the findings of 5 years work of mapping local food networks or 'webs' in 19 different locations across England (for which there are also separate reports) to present a national picture of the significance of local food webs. It demonstrates that local food offers a great opportunity to support vibrant town centres and countryside, but that its role is undermined by the dominance of superstores and the multiple retailers. It highlights the fact that despite their critical importance to the health of our high streets, local economies and much loved landscapes, local food networks are under-recognised and poorly supported. The report presents a fundamental challenge to superstores and the damage they are doing to local food webs. It makes recommendations for everyone: government, local authorities & other public bodies, multiple retailers, businesses, community groups and consumers.

### 1.2 Key findings:

Nationally, based on extrapolations from data from all 19 locations, CPRE broadly estimate the following:

- Pound for pound of spending in smaller independent 'local food' outlets supports three times the number of jobs than at outlets of national grocery chains: outlets selling significant to high percentages (above 25% of sales) of local food support on average one job for every £46,000 of annual turnover; by comparison at three national chains one job is supported per £138,000 to £144,000 of annual turnover.
- Local food sales in some 750 towns across England through independent outlets (including social enterprises and co-operatives) could currently be £2.7 billion a year. These outlets are supporting over 103,000 jobs (full-time and part-time), of which over 61,000 can be attributed directly to local food sales.
- Local supply - For butchers the average (mean) of local food sold was 68%, bakeries 61%, fishmongers 55% and greengrocers 39%. Delicatessens and wholefood stores were also selling significant percentages of local food (46% and 20% respectively).

- Money spent in local food networks will be re-circulated within the local economy for longer: it could be contributing £6.75 billion of total value to local economies

(For more, see CPRE's separate local food facts sheet attached)

### **1.3 Implications/ideas for Bristol:**

#### ***Using the facts & figures***

- **Communication:** Useful back up facts and figures in support of the Bristol Independents Campaign and the Bristol Pound.
- **The case for local food procurement:** Figures could also be helpful in making a stronger case for local food sourcing and sustainable food procurement.
- **Base line data:** on which to base ongoing research work in Bristol around the importance of the independent food retail sector and links with the fruit & veg wholesale market.
- **A different angle to take:** especially helpful if discussing the 'city region' and engaging the other Unitary Authorities.

***Bristol could put more pressure on Government*** to follow CPRE recommendations - re-examine competition policy to support retail diversity and the ability of new local food entrepreneurs to enter the market; develop national planning policy guidance to provide stronger support for a sustainable food system; improve the ability of the planning system to ensure the vitality of town centres, as Mary Portas recommended in her recent high street review; and provide strong leadership on sustainable food procurement.

***Make more use of the 'Who Feeds Bristol' report*** - promote the suggestions for action from the Who Feeds Bristol report as a simple action plan; find ways to link it back into Bristol City Council's local development plan and other relevant strategies. Find ways to support local food webs through planning and economic development policy.

***Dialogue with supermarkets*** - if wishing to attempt to engage with supermarkets, take up CPRE's recommendation that supermarket chains should set themselves demanding targets for stocking and selling local food in ways which reinforce consumer awareness and trust.

***Ongoing support to the Bristol Independents Campaign*** – currently dependent on a lot of voluntary input; which has made a good start in bringing together traders, community groups and individual consumers; has links with the Bristol Pound and the new Portas work.

***Issue a public 'buy local' challenge:*** Many shoppers interviewed were able to source around 30% of their food from within 30 miles. CPRE recommend people try a 30:30 diet for a month and find out more about their local food. This could be done through the Bristol Independents Campaign making use of the cook from scratch recipe cards.

## **2. 'Achieving food security in the face of climate change', March 2012**

**2.1 About:** The Commission on Sustainable Agriculture and Climate Change (CCAFC) reviews the scientific evidence to identify a pathway to achieving food security in the context of climate change. Overall the report says that food systems must shift to better meet human needs and, in the long term, balance with planetary resources. This will demand major interventions, at local to global scales, to transform current patterns of food production, distribution and consumption. The Commission reviewed the scientific evidence base to develop a package of solutions that address how food is produced, distributed and consumed. Their recommendations support climate-resilient agricultural production, efficient resource use, low-waste supply chains, adequate nutrition and healthy eating choices that, together, will constitute a sustainable food system.

### **2.2 Key findings:**

- It identifies 5 key changes that are needed: i) reduce GHG emissions from agriculture; ii) adapt to climate change; iii) change diets towards more plant-based foods; iv) reduce waste ; v) improve crop yields.

*(Defra reviewer comment: 'Note that a growing number of scientists and policy observers are starting to underline exactly the same points'.)*

- It makes 7 specific recommendations for implementation at a global level and call for better information for integrated decision-making. They focus on the need for changes in policy, finance, agricultural production, development aid, diet choices and food waste as well as revitalized investment in the knowledge systems to support these changes.

### **2.3 Implications/suggestions for Bristol:**

**Clarifying areas of influence:** The CCAFC report reinforces the call for interventions to transform current patterns of food production, distribution and consumption at a local level and for better information for integrated decision-making. These findings are in line with those of the 'Who Feeds Bristol' report and most are summarized in the suggestions for action with a central and ongoing 'food systems planning process'. Bristol's findings now need to be developed in more detail alongside a more in-depth look at relevant policies and strategies within the city region. Some of these areas are within the city's direct control eg, food waste disposal & composting; planning for more efficient resource use within the city. Other areas are not within the city's direct control but are within its influence eg, low waste in the supply chain and climate-resilient agricultural production.

**Develop the 'Good food' criteria:** Bristol as a city needs to decide on simple & clear food sourcing and procurement criteria that increase its influence. Food

and how it relates to ghg emissions needs to be made much clearer (as Malmo have done). The city's food system players could be encouraged to sign up to to support low waste in the supply chain and climate-resilient agricultural production. It could be a follow on step from the Charter, perhaps along the lines of the Malmo SMART work or the Food for Life Catering Mark, but adapted for food retailers too. A review of existing similar initiatives been used around the UK would be a good start.

**Information and communication to support change:** The city has some excellent websites that are concerned with engaging the public in sustainability issues. The messages around work on food need to be clearer and more joined up. The simple diagram of WFB suggestions for action, turned into 'Bristol's Good Food Plan' with more detail, could be put to good use in this respect. For example see below.



### 3. 'Food from the urban fringe: issues and opportunities', February 2012, Making Local Food Work

**3.1 About:** This report was commissioned by the Making Local Food Work partnership, (funded by the Big Lottery), which promotes and supports community food enterprise. The **purpose** of the research was to investigate the current barriers and opportunities for smaller-scale food production on land around urban areas, referred to as the 'urban fringe' and in this report limited to the area up to 10km beyond the urban edge.

One of the **concerns** of the report is that whilst much of the urban fringe is protected from expanding by Green Belt policy, is often an area where either the landscape is neglected or agriculture is in poor health. Land holdings can be smaller and land uses diverse, accommodating infrastructure needs, recreational activities and transport corridors a zone of change and uncertainty.

The study **explores** the issues, barriers and opportunities by reviewing a diverse range of seven successful small-scale food enterprises including social enterprises (Sims Hill in Bristol is one of the case studies), and unpacking how their businesses operate in the urban fringe, a zone of constant change and ongoing competition for land use. The report **highlights the potential** of such

land given its close proximity to largely populated areas – dramatically cutting down the distance food would have to travel.

The report **concludes** however that while there are some inspirational successes, only the most innovative urban fringe food enterprises may survive in the future, unless the value of the urban fringe as a food-producing zone is recognised and interventions are made to enable viable local food supply chains. This places responsibilities on the shoulders of national and local government to safeguard and facilitate food business development in the urban fringe as a priority; on landowners to explore and promote land use for new types of production; on support agencies to develop the right infrastructure; and on the enterprises themselves to consider new and more diverse business models.

### **3.2 Key findings:**

- The 'urban fringe' is an interesting zone for food producers, which on the face of it offers some unique opportunities: good land for production, proximity to large centres of population, and enhanced opportunities for food chain collaboration.
- The urban fringe is also an area of change and competition for the land resource. Planning constraints, especially in the Green Belt, can also restrict opportunities for food-related development.
- Evidence from case studies suggests that a number of innovative enterprises are surviving and flourishing in the urban fringe. They have observed that they can sell more than just food: they combine food production with leisure provision, education, community building and conservation.
- The keys to success appear to be by producing excellent food at prices that meet their own and customer needs, nurturing direct relationships with their customers and supporters, and working within a supportive supply chain community. In the case of community food enterprises, they can build on their unique advantage of access to a local network of consumers, volunteers and supporters.

### **Recommendations:**

There is a huge opportunity for a greater level of small-scale food production in the fringe of towns and cities, which is currently being missed. More needs to be done to remove the barriers currently stopping this land from being used.

The report recommends that:

- The Government reviews the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) to encourage local planning authorities to encourage sustainable agriculture in the urban fringe and Green Belt;
- More Local Planning Authorities develop food strategies, policies and action plans to enable local food supply networks as part of their Local Development Framework;
- Landowners explore diverse income generation models by working with other agencies and NGOs to enable increased use of land for food production.

### **3.3 Implications for Bristol:**

***Strategic support of sustainable agriculture:*** Bristol needs to review its own interpretation of the NPPF and actively encourage sustainable agriculture within its urban fringe. This would include working BCC land tenants - farmers and smallholders. Bristol would also need to work on this in partnership with other Unitary Authorities to address food production in the urban fringe for the whole city region. (This point relates to the previous report – suggestion for supporting low waste, resource efficient using closed loop systems, climate-resilient agriculture).

***Urgently clarify a FPC view on land in North Bristol:*** Current plans for the Rapid Transport Route for Bristol includes building on best value agricultural land in Frenchay. Land that the Avon Wildlife Trust has turned into its new lottery-funded ‘Feed Bristol’ project is under ‘tarmac threat’. This area has some of the highest quality agricultural land in the country (see Natural England soil maps in the Who Feeds Bristol report). The FPC ought to have a view on this and the wider issue of safeguarding high quality agricultural land for food production.

***Understanding the current picture:*** A good start would be to build on the WFB findings on land issues; review relevant plans, strategies and Local Development Framework to identify to what extent and in what ways sustainable agriculture within the city boundary & urban fringe is, or could be encouraged. Consider opportunities for new business, apprenticeships, skills development in food-related enterprise, the potential value of part time farming jobs for city residents (see the WFB case study on ‘Growing Power’, summary attached).

***Actively encourage more sustainable food production within or close to the city:*** This fits in with 3 of the WFB suggestions for action – safeguarding land for food; encouraging community food enterprise; increase urban food production. There are some excellent existing examples that might benefit from more support & promotion (Leigh Court, Sims Hill, Feed Bristol, Severn Project, Community Farm). A few groups are trying to produce greater volumes of fruit and vegetables within the city (Severn Project and some of the Get Growing Trail participants). A good start would be to identify support needs and clarify who the key players are. There are a lot of existing support resources and expertise available. Bristol Food Network is well placed to gather information, coordinate support events and broker links but currently lacks the resources to do so. One idea would be to enable food producers within and close to the city to visit each other, maybe once a month over the next year.

## **4. UK Government Environmental Audit Committee report on Sustainable Food, April 2012**

**4.1 About:** This report was produced by the Environmental Audit Committee, which is chaired by Joan Walley MP. It has 16 members including Zac Goldsmith and Caroline Lucas. The remit of the Environmental Audit Committee is to consider the extent to which the policies and programmes of government departments and non-departmental public bodies contribute to environmental

protection and sustainable development, and to audit their performance against sustainable development and environmental protection targets. Unlike most select committees, this Committee's remit cuts across government rather than focuses on the work of a particular department. The Environmental Audit Committee has launched a wide-ranging inquiry into the environmental and social consequences of the way the food we eat in the UK is produced, distributed, marketed and sold. The Committee wishes to examine how Government policy can be used to promote more sustainable practices in the UK food industry and more sustainable behaviours from the public. As part of this, the Committee also examines the Coalition Government's proposals to develop new food policies.

#### 4.2 Key findings:

- The report highlights the big issues: obesity, food-related ill health, global food security. In simple terms this report says that **reducing environmental impacts and getting people to eat more healthily can be achieved in tandem**
- The report considers research concludes that the UK does not currently have the basic science base to deliver more sustainable food production practices. The report warns that **relying on markets to identify and to direct where the research is needed is likely to fail**; that instead Government must take a more active role in directing research to ensure we have the science base to deliver food security and sustainability.
- It considers the need for **clear guidance for consumers** on the environmental and health benefits of eating well. It highlights the **value of including good food skills in the school curriculum**.
- The Committee report warns that the **current Government has no overarching food strategy in place**. Defra's 'Green Food Project' due to be published in June examines only part of the food system and the Government's **focus on 'sustainable intensification' risks ignoring the wider social and health implications** of how we grow, trade and consume food in the UK.
- It challenges the Government to **define what 'sustainable intensification' means in practice**, and particularly for the UK. The authors believe that sustainable intensification must be more than simply increasing yields: the **emphasis should be on 'sustainable'**. Policy must take account of social and environmental impacts of the food system, including **retaining space for small scale production practices and local food networks**. To put that into practice the Government needs a clearer and **more cross-cutting strategy**.
- It makes a clear link with Planning. **Planning policy often fails to recognise the importance of sustainable production and consumption of food**. Evidence suggests that access to land for food growing is vital for a sustainable local food system. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) potentially provides local authorities with

more powers to provide communities with better access to local food and to be able to grow their own food. The Government should make clear in the subsequent guidance it provides that for Local Plans to be consistent with the NPPF they should take account of communities' access to sustainable food and ensure that they are provided with alternatives to unhealthy food options. **There should also be provisions in Local Plans to ensure that communities are provided with open spaces to grow their own produce.**

### **Recommendations:**

The Environmental Audit Committee's Sustainable Food report recommends that:

- stricter advertising limits protect children from junk food marketing on all media including the internet
- food skills, such as cooking and gardening, should be part of the curriculum in all schools
- new national planning policy guidance for Local Authorities should ensure communities have access to healthy food and land to grow their own produce
- Government Buying Standards for food must be improved on meat and dairy and extended to cover hospitals, prisons and schools
- the Office of Fair Trading's remit should be amended so supermarkets are not blocked from cooperating on sustainability initiatives;
- Government should examine the scope for simple and consistent labelling on the sustainability of food products

### **4.3 Implications for Bristol:**

***Protecting children from junk food and advertising:*** This is not an area that has been discussed so far by the FPC but would come under the 'transform food culture' action. A good starting point would be to review Bristol NHS's policy on this. Using BCC Planning Departments newly purchased Goad Retail Centre data (Stephen Hewitt), it would be possible to clearly identify the locations of schools and junk food takeaways. This would provide baseline data that could support a review of the current situation on junk food locations and initiate dialogue with the planning department. The FPC might wish to join the lobby at a national level or review Sustain's existing initiatives and resources for further specific action in Bristol (see additional references below).

***Planning & Food:*** This point relates to the previous report on food production in the urban fringe. The FPC will need to find a way to engage with Bristol planners on land issues, also with planners in the other Unitary Authorities. A good starting point might be to organize a seminar to initiate dialogue with the Planning Department and other key developer stakeholders, perhaps with support from Cardiff University, and building on the 'Positive Planning Powers' section of the Who Feeds Bristol report written by Stephen Hewitt. The Planning report by Sustain would also be a useful resource.



**Other points in this report:** A number of points raised in the report are already on the FPC agenda in some way or are referred to in the Who Feeds Bristol report. The next step may be to develop some clear targets and indicators relating to public procurement, food skills in schools, and an action to influence Bristol's own interpretation of the new national planning policy guidance.

## **Full reports**

The full reports can be found on the following websites

CPRE

<http://www.cpre.org.uk/resources/farming-and-food/local-foods>

Achieving food security in the face of climate change

<http://ccaafs.cgiar.org/commission/>

Food from the urban fringe: issues and opportunities

<http://www.makinglocalfoodwork.co.uk/resources.cfm>

Environmental Audit Committee

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201012/cmselect/cmenvaud/879/87909.htm>

## **Additional references**

### ***Achieving food security in the face of climate change***

i) Tara Garnett, Food Climate Research Network 30 Apr 2012; review for Defra  
<http://sd.defra.gov.uk/2012/04/achieving-food-security-in-the-face-of-climate-change/>

ii) CCAFS own press release <http://ccaafs.cgiar.org/news/commission-sustainable-agriculture-and-climate-change/global-commission-charts-pathway>

### ***Environmental Audit Committee***

i) Summary <http://www.parliament.uk/business/committees/committees-a-z/commons-select/environmental-audit-committee/news/report-on-sustainable-food/>

ii) Sustain's Children's Food Campaign

[http://www.sustainweb.org/childrensfoodcampaign/our\\_campaigns/](http://www.sustainweb.org/childrensfoodcampaign/our_campaigns/)