

Food Policy Alliance Cymru: Priorities for a food system fit for Future Generations

Food Policy Alliance Cymru is a coalition of organisations and stakeholders building and promoting a collective vision for the Welsh food system. The Alliance includes **WWF Cymru, RSPB Cymru, Food Sense Wales, Slade Farm, The Landworkers Alliance, Food Farming And Countryside Commission, Nature Friendly Farming Network, Sustainable Food Places, Sustainable Places Research Institute, Social Farms & Gardens, Urban Agriculture Consortium** and **Oxfam Cymru**.

Food System Commission

Food Policy Alliance Cymru believes that Welsh Government should appoint an independent, cross sector Food System Commission. This commission should be tasked with developing a roadmap to deliver a 'Food System Fit for Future Generations', aligned with the principles of agroecology. The roadmap should consider the following six priorities:

1

Food for all

Wales becomes the first nation to eliminate the need for food banks by 2025. Everyone in Wales has access to the food they need in a dignified way, in order to live a healthy life.

2

Food for public health

75% of Eatwell's recommended vegetable consumption is produced sustainably in Wales for Wales by 2030.

3

Net zero food system

Develop a plan by 2022 to deliver a net zero food system to ensure swift assessment and implementation of actions for Wales. The target is for Wales to have a Net Zero Food System by 2035.

4

Farming for nature and climate

Create a roadmap by 2022 to adopt agro-ecological principles across the whole food system, including 100% agro-ecological production by 2030 on all farms in order to halt and reverse loss of nature and increase climate resilience.

5

Sustainable seafood

Setting catch limits (without further delay) which enable fish stocks to be restored and maintained above biomass levels that deliver the Maximum Sustainable Yield.

6

Sustainable food sector jobs and livelihoods

Everyone who earns their living within the food system receives, or is enabled to receive, at least the living wage or a fair return for their work. Work, whether on land or sea, is free from exploitative practices, and is varied, engaging and empowering.

Our Priorities for a Food System Fit for Future Generations

This document presents our collective vision for developing a food system that is unique to Wales and fit for Future Generations. Now is a crucial time to build for the future, with the COVID-19 pandemic reinforcing the vulnerabilities that exist in our current food system. It has highlighted how the health of nature and humanity are closely linked on a global scale. Rebuilding a more resilient and sustainable food system is a vital part of preventing future crises and is a key component in our pathway towards a collective “green and just” recovery.

Food is a basic necessity and an essential ingredient for a good life - hence its recognition as part of our foundational economy. However, the way we currently produce and consume food contributes to biodiversity decline and climate change, causes diet-related health problems and has led to a dependence on food banks and financial hardship for many farmers. These issues have recently been highlighted in the WWF Cymru report [Welsh Food System Fit for Future Generations](#) and the Food Farming and Countryside Commission’s [Wales Field Guide for Future Generations](#).

By food system we mean: all the actors and relationships involved in growing, producing, manufacturing, supplying and consuming food. It encompasses agriculture, fisheries, food manufacturing, retail, food service, consumption and waste. It includes the social and economic drivers of choices and dynamics within the system and cuts across all scales and aspects of policy, including the economy, environment, business, education, welfare, health, transport, trade, planning and local government.

We believe that everyone in Wales should have dignified access to enough, nutritious food, sustainably produced, all of the time. We should also be able to secure fair income for farmers and all food sector workers. Our food system can contribute significantly to Wales’ collective prosperity when shaped through the lens of wellbeing economics (taking account of quality of life rather than just the growth rate of a country’s GDP/GVA) and the principles of the circular and foundational economies. A shared vision across ALL Government

Food Policy Alliance Cymru

“Agroecology is based on applying ecological principles to optimize the relationships between plants, animals, humans and the environment, as well as strengthening the aspects of a sustainable and fair food system.

Through building these relationships, agroecology supports food production, food security and nutrition, while restoring the ecosystems and biodiversity that are essential for sustainable agriculture. Agroecology can play an important role in adapting to climate change.

Agroecology is grounded in place-specific design and organization, of crops, livestock, farms and landscapes, conserving cultural and knowledge diversity, with a focus on women’s and young people’s roles in agriculture.

To harness all the benefits from adopting agroecological approaches, the right conditions are required, adapting policies, public investments, institutions and research priorities. Agroecology is the basis for growing food systems that are equally strong in environmental, economic, social and agronomic dimensions.”

Adapted from UN FAO 2019

Figure 1 - Agroecology definition, adapted from UN FAO 2019

departments, together with broader food system stakeholders, would ensure that all aspects of the food system are considered and integrated. This is a well established aim in the [UN FAO definition of Agroecology](#), of which one key principle is the need for responsible governance at different scales. This is why our main recommendation calls for a **Food System Commission** to be established. The commission should be representative of all stakeholders across all aspects of our food system, including citizens, and work collaboratively to develop a road map for a ‘Food System Fit for Future Generations, taking into consideration the interconnected principles of agroecology (see Figure 1).

Since the food system is a vast, complex and highly interdependent space, we highlight six main measurable outcomes that we think Welsh Government, together with the **Food System Commission**, should prioritise. They are fundamental when considering how to develop a world leading food and farming system. **Food System Commission** should prioritise; **Food for all, Food for public health, Net zero food system, Farming for nature and climate, Sustainable seafood, Sustainable food sector jobs and livelihoods.**

Food System Building Blocks

These are key tools we believe Government should draw on to achieve change

We recognise that the complexity of the food system cannot be summed up in six outcomes. So here we present “building blocks” together with case studies to provide a bank of ideas on how these outcomes can create a food system that delivers for people and planet – by restoring nature, tackling climate change, supporting livelihoods, education and providing affordable healthy food for all.



Integration

Ensuring effective integration of production, supply and consumption policies across Government (local and national) to address the climate and ecological emergencies, the public health crisis and the rise in food insecurity. Examples include farm support schemes that maintain and enhance nature and the environment and grow more healthy food close to customers; public procurement of sustainable Welsh-produced food for school meals; local cross-sector food partnerships to make food a strategic priority; and ensuring the cost of a healthy diet is reflected in the 2021 review of benefit rates.



Enforcement

Ensuring effective enforcement of existing legislation, duties and policy instruments; examples include the Rights of Children and Young Persons (Wales) Measure 2011, The Environment (Wales) Act 2016, Animal Welfare Act 2006, the forthcoming Socio-economic duty and the Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015.



Accountability

National and local government should set, monitor and share clear targets that have been developed through citizen and stakeholder engagement and that are reported on in a transparent way. For example this could be achieved through delivery of section 6 of the Environment (Wales) Act 2016 where public authorities have a duty to maintain and enhance biodiversity and promote the resilience of ecosystems.



Audit

Conducting comprehensive legislative, policy, infrastructure, land and skills gap analyses at local and national levels to match achieving the nutritional needs of the population with capacity to produce. For example establishing what proportion of our Veg requirement is sensible to produce locally given our land and what additional skills and infrastructure is required to produce it sustainably.

Food Policy Alliance Cymru



Investment

In local, regional and national food infrastructure and communities. Examples include: agricultural investment schemes to cover the true cost of sustainable farming and support farmers making the transition, in flourishing rural economies; Capital grants to support short supply chain infrastructure (e.g. food hubs, small scale horticulture); investment in people to develop the agro-ecological farming skill base and food production skills; and in public provision of healthy food in schools, hospitals, and other keystone institutions (e.g. Food for Life).



Education

Through our education system and community engagement, creating a nation of good food citizens equipped with the knowledge and skills to grow, purchase, cook and eat a healthy and sustainable diet and provided with the opportunity to develop the skills to work within the food system. Examples include integrating food skills in the National Curriculum at every level, embedding the Nutrition Skills for Life Programme across communities and expanding the apprenticeship scheme for the food and drink sector.



Innovation

Innovative approaches and new technologies should be harnessed across the whole of the food system. For example through farmer-led research compatible with agroecology. Using innovation to drive solutions to find innovative ways of resourcing people which drive more equitable resource distribution, develop business models, regenerate soils, improve animal welfare, restore nature, develop carbon capture techniques, deploy appropriate technologies, remove waste and share knowledge in peer-to-peer networks.



Global Responsibility

Ensuring that policy decisions made at home do not negatively impact on people or places abroad. For example by building on our Fairtrade Wales Nation status, eradicating Wales' contribution to the hidden cost of human exploitation across the supermarket global food supply chains and ensuring that Wales' food supply chains are deforestation free.



Case Studies

Food for all: Our children

The Welsh Government has a duty to ensure that all children receive their right to food as part of the UN Convention of the Rights of the Child (Article 27). However, [Child Poverty Action Group \(2020\)](#) estimate that 70,000 of Wales' 128,000 school-aged children in poverty did not qualify for free school meals in January 2020. In a classroom of 25 learners, seven will be in poverty and four of those will not qualify for free school meals.

Unemployment is expected to rise and indications suggest that Brexit will lead to an increase in food prices and challenges with supply, especially for fresh fruit and vegetables. There is a risk of food banks becoming institutionalised, further widening inequalities by creating a two-tier food system: those that can afford to feed their families and those that cannot.



The Welsh Government should consider three key actions:

- **Accountability** at a local authority level to measure, monitor and report on food insecurity* and ensure strategies are in place to mitigate against it, as part of their socio-economic duty. This could be facilitated through investment in local cross-sector food partnerships such as [Food Cardiff](#) which successfully co-ordinated the [food response to COVID-19](#) across the city.
- An adequate benefits and emergency support system across the life course should be developed that covers the cost of a healthy diet. In particular, increasing eligibility for free school meals to all children whose parents are in receipt of Universal Credit (or equivalent) and extending to those with no access to public funds. Welsh Government should also expand the School Holiday Enrichment Programme.
- Sufficient family income secured through fair work – Welsh Government should **enforce** recommendations from the [Fair Work Commission](#), such as deployment of the Economic Contract to ensure that public funds only go to those employers that support the Living Wage for Wales.

*Food insecurity is when an individual or household has insufficient or insecure access to food due to resource constraints. Food Insecurity should be measured according to recognised standards ([USDA Food Insecurity Module](#))

Food for public health: Integrating production and consumption strategies

Wales is currently producing only one quarter of a portion of vegetables per head of population per day on 0.1% of land ([Tyfu Cymru and Wheeler 2020](#)). Meanwhile less than one third of adolescents in Wales report eating a portion of vegetables once a day ([PHW 2019](#)).



The [Healthy Eating in Schools \(Nutritional Standards and Requirements\) \(Wales\) Regulations 2013](#), which is due to be reviewed, includes only one portion of vegetables for primary school children and two for senior school children. Inadequate monitoring and **enforcement** means that many children are served far less vegetables [despite calls](#) for all their main meals to contain two portions.

Provision of free school meals in Wales could generate a 44% increase* in domestic horticulture production if school food standards were amended to include two portions in all lunches. These standards would need to be **enforced** and **integrated** with procurement policies to ensure that vegetables were sustainably grown locally or regionally within Wales.

This is a realistic ambition with [13 varieties of UK-grown vegetables identified](#) as being capable of becoming increasingly productive. This would also reduce global pressures for imports from climate-challenged countries. To enable this, an **audit** of the infrastructure, land and skills at a local, regional and national level to meet school food needs would be needed and appropriate **investment** made. This approach could generate around 77 large scale or >500 small scale/ agro-ecological jobs** and create a financial output for the horticulture sector of >£3.8m as well as helping to mitigate against potential price increases and supply issues due to Brexit.

*Based on school PLASC data Jan 2020 and on the basis no local veg is currently being purchased.

** Number of jobs created at 0.26 jobs per hectare (as per large scale production), Number of jobs created at 2 jobs per hectare (as per small scale production)

A net zero food system: A journey to becoming a net zero food system by 2035

Our food system is at risk from a changing climate. It also directly contributes towards climate change, with agriculture contributing around [12% of Wales' total greenhouse gas emissions](#). Based on UK data, food manufacture, transport and retail emissions account for [another 5.5%](#). However, our land is our biggest natural defence against climate change.

Wales could be at the forefront of the global transition to a climate and nature friendly food system by creating and enacting a net zero plan. Central to this plan is transitioning to an agroecological Wales. This low carbon approach can drive [nature-based solutions for climate](#) that harness the power of nature to sequester carbon, reduce greenhouse gas emissions – agroforestry, peatland restoration or restoration of species rich grasslands and address Wales'



global responsibility. This transition will require strong **enforcement** of a high regulatory baseline, improved **auditing** of farm emissions and sequestration rates, **education** (advice and guidance) and training to drive appropriate management and **investment** in food producers.

A key commitment to **global responsibility** would include eliminating products that are imported into Wales and cause significant damage to the environment, such as deforestation linked to soymeal and palm oil production.

The transition to agroecology will look beyond food production and consider the food system as a whole by tackling food consumption, promoting healthy, sustainable diets and reducing food waste.

We need an approach that better **integrates** production and consumption in Wales, putting more focus on the foundational and circular economies, reconnecting people with locally-produced food and enabling community-developed responses that can ultimately shape a sustainable food system. Wales can show the world how to secure rural livelihoods, enhance biodiversity and cut emissions rapidly.

Farming for nature and climate

[One in six wildlife species](#) in Wales is threatened with extinction, with unsustainable land use (due to agricultural policies that have encouraged production at the expense of the environment) being one of the drivers of biodiversity loss.

Furthermore, [none of our ecosystems have all the attributes required for resilience](#).



With more than 80% of Wales' land utilised for agriculture, mainstreaming agroecological farming systems can play a vital role in reversing declines of farmland nature. In some areas we may also want to take land out of production to make space for nature and nature-based solutions to climate change, improving the resilience of the landscape. All farms are different. By focusing on agroecology, the Welsh Government and farmers will commit to finding and providing environmental and social benefits at a system level for each locality.

A great example of this approach is [Slade Farm Organics](#) in South Wales. The farm's agroecological approaches favour the use of natural processes, limits the use of purchased inputs and promotes closed cycles. Throughout the year, the farmland is managed to synchronise with nature and the environment, embracing the [Less is More](#) principle. As well as producing sustainable high-quality food, the farm provides valuable ecosystem services.

The farm is signed up to Glastir agri-environment scheme, an important income stream that has helped nature flourish. Long-term **investment** via a new Wales Agricultural Policy, centred on public money for public goods, should reward farmers for the wildlife and environmental benefits that agroecological farming practices provide.

Education is central, as advice, guidance and knowledge sharing will be vital to help farmers transition to agroecological farming systems. This can also help identify skills and production gaps.

Wildlife and plant surveys are undertaken annually on the farm which in turn helps inform management practices that can drive farmland nature recovery. Ongoing monitoring and **auditing** should be reported transparently via the State of Natural Resources Report (SoNaRR), thus promoting government **accountability** for restoring nature.

From Slade Farm's experience, ensuring appropriate and effective **enforcement** of strong environmental baselines and regulations can yield positive results for nature and the environment.

Sustainable sea food

Future Welsh fisheries policies should have sustainability at their core and deliver [UK Fisheries Bill](#) objectives. In 2015, [53% of marine fish \(quota\) stocks of UK interest were fished at or below sustainable levels](#), whilst most national shellfish stocks have either not achieved Good Environmental Status or their status is uncertain. Future policies should recognise the need to sustainably manage fisheries in Welsh waters.

Key to achieving this goal will be an **audit**, based on fisheries science, to address the evidence gaps where the status of fish stocks in Welsh waters is uncertain. The Welsh Government should be **accountable** for allocation of fishing opportunities (new quota or funding mechanisms) based on transparent social, economic and environmental criteria which incentivise sustainable fishing practices.



The government should also facilitate and **invest** in innovation for new monitoring technologies to ensure fishing activities are fully documented to inform effective management. Together with NRW, the government should complete [the Assessing Welsh Fisheries Activities Project](#) which will evaluate the impact of fisheries on marine protected areas and determine if any management is needed.

Sustainable food sector jobs and livelihoods

Farm business owners must receive a fair return that adequately takes into consideration the true cost of sustainable production; while farm employees and workers in the global food chain must be paid and treated fairly. Their work is among the most precarious and undervalued, with an estimated 6,700 across the UK [not even receiving minimum wage](#).



COVID-19 has shone a light on how essential food sector workers are, while insufficient worker protection, precarious employment contracts with low pay and inadequate sick pay, have made it impossible for many to protect themselves. Virus outbreaks at meat packing factories [have drawn attention](#) to the impact of poor working conditions here and abroad.

The Welsh Government must ensure that existing labour and Health and Safety rules are **enforced** and consult workers on how to empower and protect them. The [Economic Contract](#) should be used to demand standards for how workers are treated in Wales, the UK and internationally, from companies that supply the public sector.

Examples of best practice and **innovative** approaches include companies such as [Real Seeds](#), an agroecological vegetable seed business in Newport, Pembrokeshire, which provides its employees with meaningful work for a fair wage. All employees receive the same wage, currently £15 per hour, and a profit-share bonus at the end of the season, with varied work contributing to enhancing ecosystems by encouraging the practice of seed saving.

In response to the COVID-19 crisis, the company shifted working patterns and enforced a strict cleaning routine to ensure safe and distanced work for employees. The Welsh Government should promote and support organisations, such as Real Seeds, as exemplars of responsible employers in providing 'good work' for its employees.

Food Policy Alliance Cymru
is a coalition of organisations
and stakeholders building and
promoting a collective vision
for the Welsh food system.



Sustainable Places
Research Institute
Sefydliad Ymchwil
Mannau Cynaliadwy

Rhwydwaith
Ffermio
er Lles
Natur



Nature
Friendly
Farming
Network



Comisiwn
Bwyd, Ffermio
a Chefn Gwlad



Food, Farming
& Countryside
Commission



OXFAM

SLADE FARM
ORGANICS.COM



yn rhoi
cartref i
fyd natur

giving
nature
a home

RSPB
Cymru



Through collaboration, engagement and research
the Alliance aims to:

- Co-produce a vision for a food system in Wales that connects production, supply and consumption and gives equal consideration to the health and wellbeing of people and nature.
- Advocate for policy change to address climate and ecological emergencies, the public health crisis and the rise in food insecurity.
- Ensure Wales is linked to UK policy, research opportunities and the broader global system.

#rethinkingfoodcymru