



Synnwyr
Bwyd Cymru
Food Sense
Wales



TONNES OF CHANGE

WELSH VEG IN SCHOOLS

2023 – 2025

Summary Report

April 2025

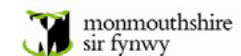


TONNES OF CHANGE

Welsh Veg in Schools 2023 – 2025 Summary Report

By Dr. Amber Wheeler for Food Sense Wales

Report Contributors: Katie Palmer, Sarah Gould, Edward Morgan, Elaine Blanchard, Alex Cook, Tony Little, Lorraine Powell, Emma Evans, Sian-Elin Davies, Caz Falcon, Hannah Gibbs, Pearl Costello, Dafydd Walters and Symon Dovey.





FOREWORD

Katie Palmer, Food Sense Wales

Welsh Veg in Schools¹ started life as the 'Courgette Pilot', a project conceived by a small group of stakeholders over a coffee in Cardiff.

Little did we know that one tonne of courgettes would rapidly turn into an ambition to supply every school in Wales with locally grown organic veg.

We aren't there yet but we are on the journey, and this report documents its progress over the last few years.

The **Welsh Veg in Schools** adventure has included carrot challenges, inspirational children, wonderful catering staff, risk taking wholesalers, supportive Food Partnerships, organisational expertise, facilitative government officials, awesome action research, growers collaboration, media appearances and a hefty dose of good humour.

This work is a huge collective endeavour and its success is a testament to the collaborative energy and the investment of multiple stakeholders in Wales; partners in the UK, and our funders.



As we have so much information to share, we have structured **'Tonnes of Change'** in three sections:

- 1 **Welsh Veg In Schools Summary Report**
- 2 **Welsh Veg In Schools Full Report**
- 3 **The Story of Welsh Veg in Schools.**

We have also produced a technical report which is available on request for research purposes.

The **Summary Report** highlights Welsh Veg in Schools key achievements over the last 2-3 years and is drawn from Participatory Action Research – learning through action as the work unfolded and adapting to challenges and hurdles, and dealing with things we hadn't thought of. It highlights the important aspects of success and documents specific key learnings gleaned in the quest to sustainably expand the horticulture sector in Wales to benefit current and future generations.





The **Welsh Veg In Schools Full Report** draws out the rationale for delivering Welsh Veg in Schools, focusing on why we believe this approach is the right one and what it will take to increase the horticulture sector in Wales to the point where 25% of primary schools veg requirements can be local and organic by 2030.

Finally **The Story of Welsh Veg in Schools** contrasts the policy context with the reality on the ground by telling the story of Welsh Veg in Schools and the people involved. It offers very rich and real experiential detail of the challenges that must be overcome to develop sustainable local horticulture supply chains, and we hope it provides a helpful contribution to the evidence base for others working to make the food system fairer and more resilient.

Katie Palmer

Food Sense Wales

OVERVIEW

Welsh Veg in Schools is a movement of stakeholders striving to increase organic horticulture in Wales for the benefit of current and future generations.

Welsh Veg in Schools is co-ordinated by [Food Sense Wales](#) and works with partners that include [Castell Howell](#), [Farming Connect Horticulture](#) as well as a host of enthusiastic growers.

Wholesaler Castell Howell has been an integral part of **Welsh Veg in Schools** from the very beginning, having also worked with Food Sense Wales on the 'Courgette Pilot.' Castell Howell understands the pressures on the food system; the vulnerability of global supply chains, and the need to build local resilience and invest in local supply chains.

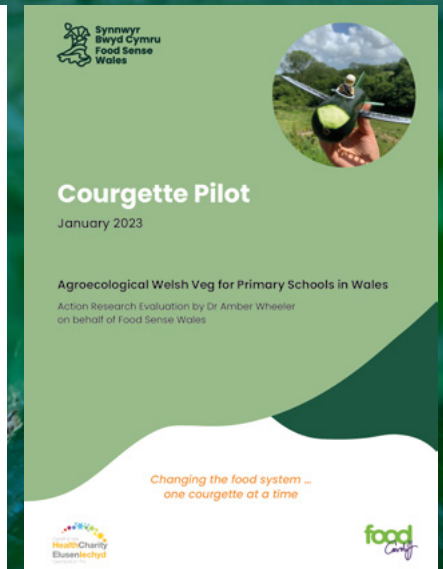
Through Lantra, Farming Connect Horticulture's role has focused on training and supporting growers to deliver safe, high-quality produce. In 2023, they also developed the 'Small Growers Suppliers Standard' to ensure compliance with legislative food safety requirements.

By leveraging the market opportunity that the Welsh Government's Universal Free school meal policy creates, and by supporting public bodies to meet their statutory requirements, **Welsh Veg in Schools** is catalysing organic veg production in Wales and building resilience for the future.



This work is crucial if public bodies are serious about meeting their obligations under the Well being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 whilst supporting local communities and building resilience against future shocks and climate change.

Food Sense Wales first started exploring the procurement of locally produced veg with the '[Courgette Pilot](#)'² – a pilot project that involved one grower and one wholesaler and delivered nearly one tonne of courgettes into primary schools in Cardiff during [Food and Fun](#) in the summer of 2022. The Courgette Pilot was facilitated by [Food Cardiff](#), the capital's local Food Partnership, helping to bring all the partners together, including Blas Gwent (grower), Cardiff Council Education Catering; Cardiff & Vale University Health Board public health dietetics as well as Castell Howell.



In 2023, with the support of the Welsh Government's Backing Local Firms Fund, this procurement project developed into the first phase of **Welsh Veg in Schools**, working with three growers across three Local Authority areas and supported by co-ordinators from the local Food Partnerships in [Cardiff](#), [Carmarthenshire](#) and [Monmouthshire](#). **Welsh Veg in Schools** recognises that procuring Welsh and sustainable vegetables is currently more expensive and the pilot covers the difference between that price and the usual price a Local Authority pays, while exploring mechanisms to bridge that gap.

In the Spring of 2024, Food Sense Wales was awarded additional funding from [Bridging The Gap](#) – a programme led by [Sustain](#), [Growing Communities](#) and [Alexandra Rose Charity](#) – to further scale up the work and leverage an even wider network of expertise and support. With the aim of developing a model that is scalable across the Welsh public sector, this report documents the **Welsh Veg in Schools** journey thus far.



Year:

2022

Courgette Pilot

1 Grower:
Blas Gwent



Tonnes:

1



Veg:
Courgettes

Local Authorities and
Food Partnerships:

1

= Cardiff

Food and Fun

Schools:



29 schools in Cardiff
Food and Fun

1500

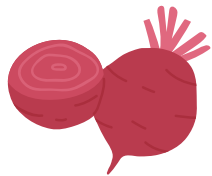
children across Cardiff



Year:

2023

3 Growers:
Blas Gwent
Bonvilston Edge
Langtons farm



Tonnes:

1

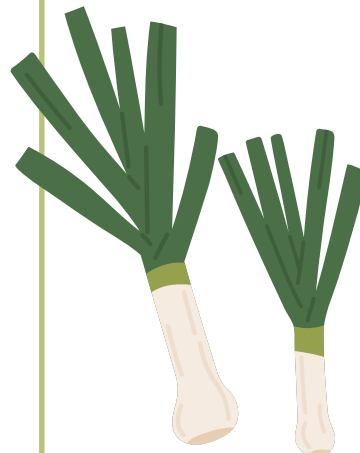
Veg:
tomatoes
aubergines
cucumber
fennel
celery
rainbow chard
spinach
courgettes
french beans
peas
beetroot
cauliflower
onions
squash
red cabbage
leeks

Local Authorities and
Food Partnerships:

3

= Cardiff
Monmouthshire
Carmarthenshire

Food and Fun
and Autumn Term



Schools:



42 schools
receive veg:



29

schools in
Cardiff



3

schools in
Carmarthenshire
Food and Fun



10

schools in
Monmouthshire
term time

400

children visit four
farms across three
Local Authorities and



360

children engaged
in food activities in
Monmouthshire

Year:

2024

8



Growers:

Bonvilston Edge
Langtons Farm
Awen Organics
Gardd Enfys
Bremenda Isaf
Bwlchwernen
Underwood
Alfie Dans

Tonnes:

14

(15.8k units)

Veg:

carrots
broccoli
tomatoes
lettuce
cucumber
onions
leeks
courgettes



For product development:

squash
kale
chard
cauliflower

Local Authorities and Food Partnerships:

6

= Cardiff
Monmouthshire
Carmarthenshire
Powys
Bridgend
Vale of Glamorgan

Food and Fun
and Autumn Term



Schools:

219 schools



Food bags with Welsh Veg
to families in Cardiff and
Carmarthenshire as part of
Food and Fun



200,000

portions of
organic veg



Year:

2025

Forecast

15

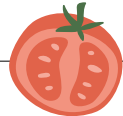


Growers

Tonnes:

60

(80k units)



Local Authorities and Food Partnerships:

12



1 MILLION

portions of
organic veg



The cost and benefits: 2024 delivery

▶ Paying **less than £10,000** for the price gap between the usual Local Authority price and the organic price enabled:

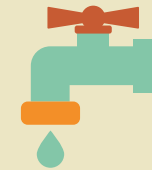
- 14 tonnes of veg to be purchased from 8 Welsh organic producers, giving them an income of £34,333 and providing an estimated £127,034 of social, economic and environmental benefit to Wales
- Diversification of supply chains to schools to help build future resilience to supply:



3 tonnes of
CO₂e saving



35% increase in
biodiversity



1.2 FTE jobs on
farms in Wales

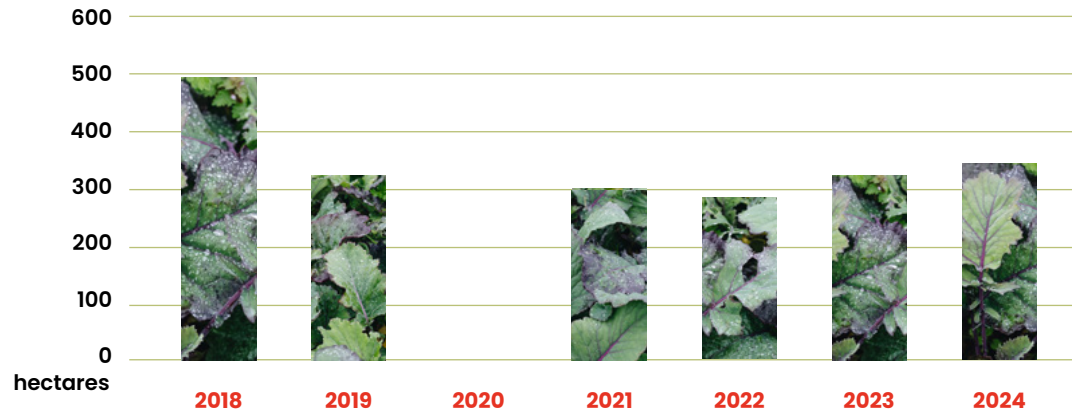


Reduced reliance on imports from
countries at high risk of water scarcity

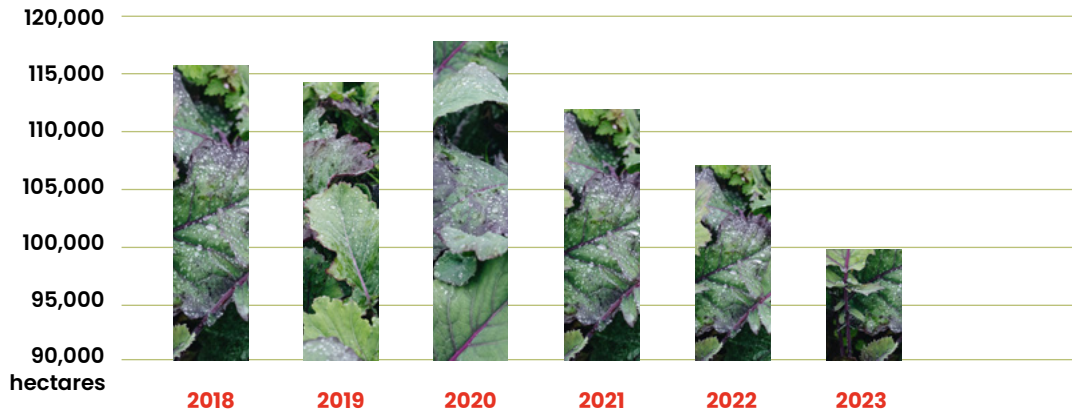
▶ Local Authorities received social and environmental benefits, helping to fulfil their obligations under the [Well-being of Future Generations \(Wales\) Act 2015](#)³, for a 25% discount (paid by **Welsh Veg in Schools**), a cost that could be gradually absorbed in future

▶ **Welsh Veg in Schools**, among other initiatives, contributed to a 20% increase in the area of land used to grow veg in Wales while the rest of the UK has seen a decline

Wales

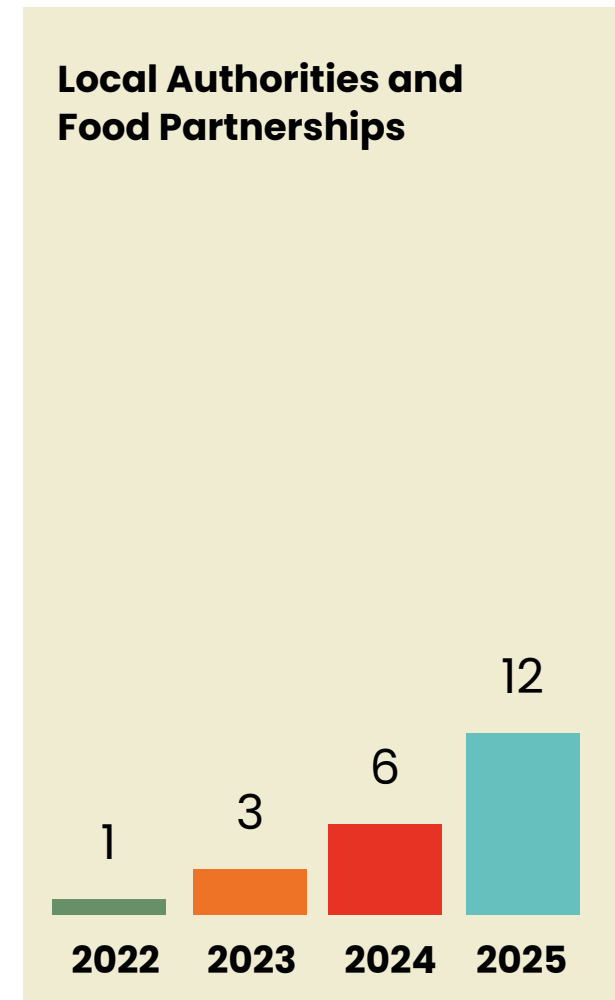
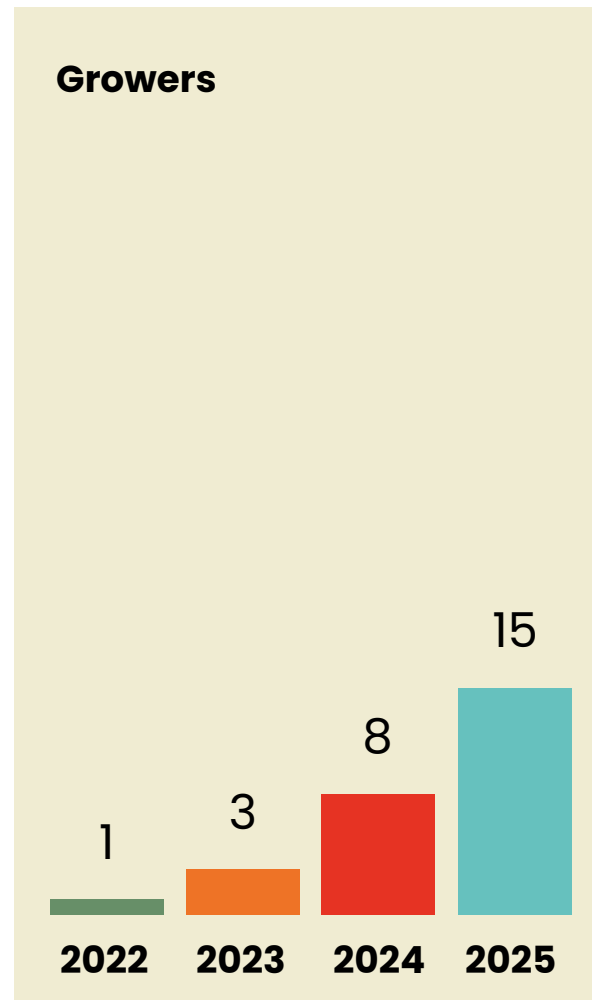
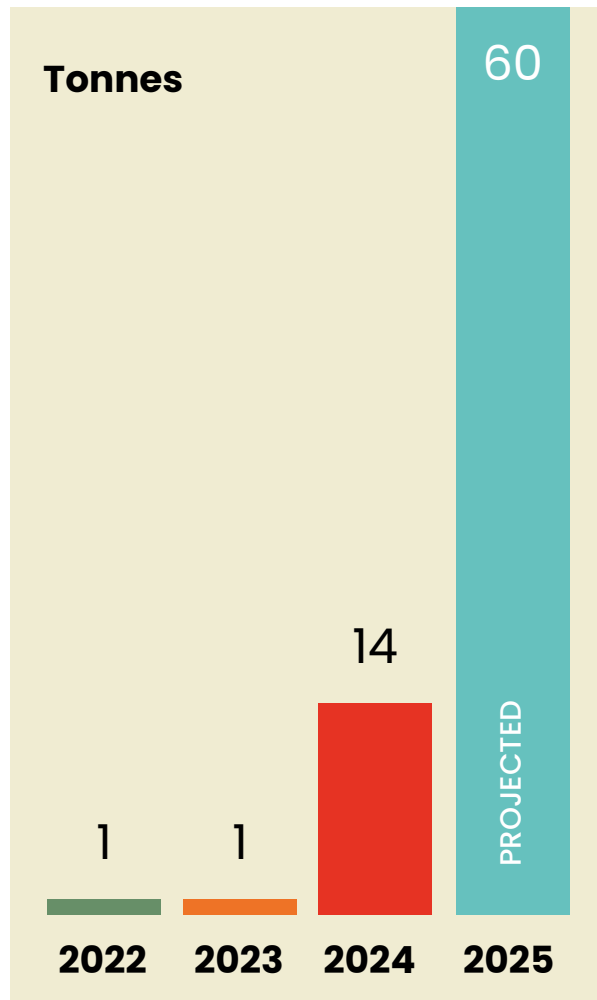


UK



- ▶ Since the project's inception, there's been a significant increase in the number of growers and Local Authorities involved, as well as a substantial increase in the amount of vegetables produced.

Here's the increase, at a glance:



What we learnt:

Fundamental aspects of success for building fair, resilient, organic local veg supply chains

1 Build relationships between people in and around the supply chain and accept that risk and reward should be shared equally.

Currently growers carry the greatest burden of risk in the supply chain due to weather and crop failures. All stakeholders should take a share of this risk

2 Keep the needs of growers and farmers central, including paying the right price and recognising financial pressures they experience and the need for support.

Currently, growers are the stakeholders receiving the lowest proportion in the value chain. Value should be shared equally across the system

3 Keep supporting the training, safety, system and technical needs of growers.

Providing flexible and adaptable training and support is essential



What we learnt:

- 4 Work on systems to effectively guarantee sustainable and safe produce.**
This can be done through organic certification alongside a suppliers standard that focuses on safety aspects
- 5 Invest in lost infrastructure on-farm and within the wider supply chain.**
This is needed for key processes, to build efficiencies of scale and develop sustainable logistics systems
- 6 Do a crop plan based on demand: scale supply and demand simultaneously.**
Customers need to commit ahead of time to enable a growing plan to be developed. They must be willing to work with growers to support increases in production and this involves aligning catering planning timelines to the growing season
- 7 Work with catering managers and support kitchen staff to have the time and capacity to adjust to local veg.**
Local veg may require extra processing or be a different size or shape to the usual supply and may therefore require some additional support
- 8 Provide wrap around support/information/activities/ farm visits for caterers, teachers, parents and children.**
Learning about where veg comes from and why local organic sourcing is so important will increase acceptability and uptake



VISION

**A mission to ensure that by 2030,
25% of all veg going into schools is local and organic**

By 2030, 25% of all veg going into school meals in Wales should be local and organic.

Welsh Veg in Schools has successfully shown that it's possible to supply veg from Welsh organic producers through procurement and into schools. It's demonstrated that this comes at a relatively small cost in comparison to the list of benefits it brings.

'The most expensive veg is the veg you can't get'

Wholesaler

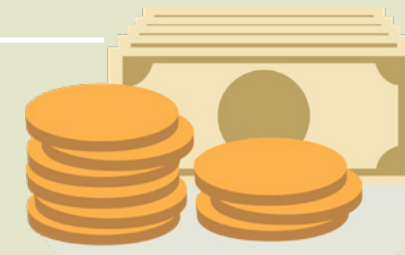


Achieving the vision - 25% by 2030

Adding 3.3p per meal per day to the price paid by Local Authorities and Welsh Government would allow for **2 portions of local organic veg** to be included seasonally and would incentivise the following benefits:



901 tonnes purchased would provide **£2.21 million** direct to Welsh producers with a multiplier of 3.7 to give an estimated **£8.2 million** in social, economic and environmental benefit



£552,500

investment in infrastructure



Increased capacity to supply and increased average farm income in Wales

More resilience in the supply chain



74.3 FTE jobs



on Welsh farms

50

 hectares of organic veg

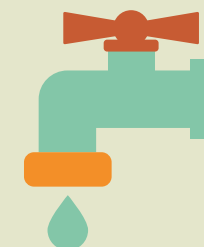
35%

 increase in birdlife in fields 

226 tonnes

 CO₂e saving

Reduced reliance on imports from countries at high risk of water scarcity



Comparison

£3.00 per meal means

- No support for Welsh veg production
- No building capacity for future supply
- No resilience from having stronger local supply chains
- No support for Welsh jobs on farms
- No increase in farm incomes in Wales
- No carbon reduction
- No biodiversity gain
- Potential pesticide residues on veg and run-off in country of origin
- Reliance on imports from climate



£3.033 per meal (3.3p extra) means

- Support for Welsh production (around £2,500 per tonne) and increased capacity and resilience to supply into the future
- More jobs on Welsh farms (0.08 FTE per tonne)
- Increased farm income average across Wales
- Increased resilience to supply in future
- Carbon saving in the supply chain (0.25 Kg CO₂e per kg depending on veg purchased)
- 35% increase in birdlife in fields
- No synthetic pesticide residues
- Less reliance on imports from climate vulnerable countries



CONCLUSION



Welsh Veg in Schools is continuing its mission during 2025 working with 12 local authorities and 15 growers and aspires to involve even more local Local Authorities, growers and wholesalers. As the work progresses, **Welsh Veg in Schools** continues to learn and build on its findings to innovate and develop procurement systems that enhance the well-being of people in Wales.

With the right planning and significant investment in infrastructure, around 25% of all veg in schools across Wales could be Welsh organic by 2030 providing all of the benefits outlined in this report.

These are our recommendations to make that vision a reality:

RECOMMENDATIONS

Growers, convenors and wholesalers

- **Welsh Veg in Schools** sets up as an entity which supports growers, develops communication and systems, and links growers to the procurement market to create a Sustainable Welsh Veg landscape
- **Welsh Veg in Schools** continues to develop systems and investigates and researches farming, harvest, storage, packaging and logistics, and best practice for fresh produce
- **Welsh Veg in Schools** works with more wholesalers
- **Welsh Veg in Schools** models the infrastructure needed for the scaling up that's required and the investment needed to support it as soon as possible





Government and Local Authorities

- Welsh Government and Local Authorities look to add around 3p to primary school meal budgets (1% more than now) from 2026 for Welsh organic veg, and infrastructure development, because of the social, environmental and resilience benefits it brings to Wales
- Welsh Government supports **Welsh Veg in Schools** to continue to develop and innovate through the Foundational Economy and Integrated Natural Resources Scheme
- Welsh Government supports growers through the Sustainable Farming Scheme Optional and Collaborative layers
- Welsh Government continues to support the work of Farming Connect Horticulture to provide wrap around support and training to growers as well as horticulture infrastructure grants
- Welsh Government uses **Welsh Veg in Schools** as an exemplar case study of how procurement can enhance the well-being of the people of Wales in line with the [Social Partnership and Public Procurement \(Wales\) Act 2023](#)⁴
- Local Authority kitchen waste disposal costs are looked at again to assess whether they are disincentivizing the use of fresh produce in kitchens and incentivising the use of pre-prepared foods

Recommendations

Local Authorities, schools and children as well as convenors

- Every rural Local Authority or region aims to have a demonstration horticulture farm which hosts a machinery ring, and perhaps other veg processing and storage facilities, that are maintained and available for the growers of that region
- Every child in Wales has the opportunity to learn about veg in school, has the opportunity to grow veg, prepare veg, try different veg and 'play' with veg. Schools should be supported to develop curricula and access resources accordingly through appropriate staff training (for example [Nutrition Skills for Life](#)) and the resources to implement
- Put children at the heart of increasing veg consumption. Build on the work and assets of [Veg Power](#) and [The Food Hour](#) and others to engage with children to understand their preferences; help with menu design, and encourage tasting new foods, in order to drive up consumption and reduce waste
- Every child in Wales should have the chance to visit a veg farm and meet a grower once during their primary school education and every school should have a growing space or access to one
- All school catering staff should be given the opportunity to be supported to develop veg skills and be empowered to 'get creative' with veg



THANKS

A big thanks to **Welsh Veg in Schools** funders and all those involved in making **Welsh Veg in Schools** happen. The success of the project is down to fantastic collaboration across the food system and beyond.

To learn more see: [The Welsh Veg In Schools Full Report](#) and [The Story of Welsh Veg in Schools](#)

For technical report email Foodsensewales@wales.nhs.uk

¹ Food Sense Wales (Accessed 2025) Welsh Veg in Schools <https://www.foodsensewales.org.uk/good-food-movement/pilot-project-welsh-veg-in-schools/>

² Food Sense Wales (2023) Courgette Pilot https://www.foodsensewales.org.uk/app/uploads/2023/01/CourgetteReport_Eng.pdf

³ Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 <https://futuregenerations.wales/discover/about-future-generations-commissioner/future-generations-act-2015/>

⁴ Social Partnership and Public Procurement (Wales) Act 2023 <https://www.gov.wales/social-partnership-and-public-procurement-wales-act>