



WHAT WOULD YOU LIKE TO SEE CHANGE IN THE CARDIFF CITY REGION FOOD SYSTEM?

Field to Fforc: People's Assembly on future of food in Cardiff Capital Region

INTRODUCTION

On the 7th November 2020, almost 70 people living and working in Cardiff Capital Region came together virtually to collectively imagine the future of food in the area. As part of the ESRC Festival of Social Science 2020, the event was organised in partnership by the Sustainable Places Research Institute, Cardiff University and Food Cardiff.

The online event built upon a number of similar People's Assemblies on food and farming carried out across Wales since the start of the lockdown.

People from the whole of the Cardiff Capital Region were welcome to join the discussion. The areas that make up the region include the ten local authorities of Blaenau Gwent; Bridgend; Caerphilly; Cardiff; Merthyr Tydfil; Monmouthshire; Newport; Rhondda Cynon Taff; Torfaen; and Vale of Glamorgan.

Responding to calls for public participation, the event aimed to create space for public dialogue on the future of our food systems around the question:

What would you like to see change in the Cardiff city region food system by 2040 and what are the main challenges?

Groups agreed on two to three changes they would like to see and on one challenge hindering change.

Here, we present the key themes and proposals that people agreed they wanted to see in the region's future food system:

LOCAL FOOD PRODUCTION

We want to see more food sustainably produced within our region. This would mean stopping farming practices that degrade soil and supporting farming practices that build soil.

Many of the Assembly break out groups discussed the importance of producing food in the Cardiff Capital Region which is sold within the region. The food should be produced sustainably, using practices that conserve and build soil health. More council and community-owned lands should be made available to support those who want to grow food. Growing should be made attractive with living wages for food growers and promotion. Food



produced should be sold through a strengthened network of restaurants, everyday markets, cooperatives and schools. Procurement practices can support this.



REGIONAL FOOD ECONOMIES

We want to build and strengthen regional food economies. This requires more cooperative ways of working within the Cardiff Capital Region amongst producers and consumers.

The Assembly wanted to see shorter supply chains as well as the growth of regional food economies involving diverse actors growing, distributing and trading food. Many felt there was a need for trading systems that translate the real costs of food (including both environmental and health), incentivising regenerative farming practices and penalising degenerative ones. There was a consensus on the need for more opportunities for consumers to access affordable, healthy, regional produce

across the Cardiff Capital Region - from farmers' markets, food hubs to 'healthy' corner shops, with local authorities playing a key role by making affordable retail spaces available. Co-operative ways of working were recognised as ways for small-scale and medium-scale producers, processors and traders in the region to work together to share both costs and markets.



EDUCATION

We want to see people being educated on growing, cooking and nutrition at every education level as well as within our communities.

This would mean growing, nutrition and cooking being recognised as essential life skills and being introduced at every part of the curriculum, from nurseries to universities, and especially part of teaching training so that teachers are more confident to deliver food-based curriculum. We need improved access to land to practice and exercise growing skills for those who want to grow food as a hobby or a career.

ACCESS TO SPACE

We want to see an increase in the amount of green space available and being used to grow food and protection of existing green spaces.

There should be a 'Level Growing Field' where everybody can access land for food growing. This should be supported with finance and knowledge sharing across all scales: household growing, community spaces and commercial food production. Some examples of how we could achieve this could include, local authorities designating more land for food growing; public investment to cover start-up costs and developing new markets through public procurement or retail spaces.



CREATING FAIRNESS AND EQUALITY

We want to end food insecurity and to ensure nourishing and healthy food for all.

Participants wanted to see the eradication of food insecurity through various means, including local food being more readily available and affordable or retail models that help people to access healthy foods, for example 'healthy corner shops' where veg and fruit are subsidized.

The Assembly suggested that the focus should be social justice and more equitable food systems - connecting food poverty with wider anti-poverty movements, such as labour justice or welfare justice.



COMMUNITY-LED CHANGE

We want to see communities working together to shape their local food system.

Community gardens, kitchens and food markets offer communal spaces for people to grow passion, to show how much they care about food, and to give communities power to organise and influence.

By using a social enterprise model, these hubs would keep money in the local economy and can be governed by the people they serve.

LEGISLATIVE CHANGE

We need a favourable political climate and legal frameworks to accelerate change and prevent practices which harm people or environment. This would mean building connections between different people and groups working with food to make sure plans all work well together.

The Assembly suggested ways changes could be achieved through new laws or government policies. The aspiration is for a political climate which allows changes to be made faster, and legally enforceable. Legislative tools suggested included a duty to protect green spaces for food growing; planning controls on unhealthy food outlets and support for communities to access space to grow and trade food. It was suggested that taxes could control harmful practices like industrial agricultural processes which



harm soil or rely on unfair labour practices. However, discussions noted that changing habits is hard so people will need support alongside legislative processes.



JOINED-UP THINKING

We need more communication through food focused forums and better connections between producers, consumers, public bodies and policy makers to ensure that action is joined-up.

Discussions suggested that one barrier to improving food systems is lack of connections between organisations and people. There's a need for better integration between government departments so different activities work together. Food focused forums at local authority and national level were proposed, as were task forces focused on specific challenges. Actors at different stages of food's journey also need to be better connected, for example through networks that link producers to each other and to their customers.

Communication and connections are key to achieving a more holistic approach to food.

OTHER DISCUSSION POINTS

It has not been possible to capture the full richness of the Assembly discussion in the key themes above.

Further challenges and opportunities were raised, including:

- the challenges for local food producers (e.g. getting the quantities right for a market, being able to provide regular supply);
- improvement of public procurement and provision of food in prisons, schools and hospitals;
- food waste redistribution;
- radical change to 5 day working week so people have time to join local food activities which should be less charity driven and more community-led;
- the need for more culturally and health-appropriate food, especially outside of Cardiff;
- how to make supermarkets more accountable and sustainable;
- removing stigma around food insecurity and free school meals;
- improving working conditions in the supply chain (e.g. everyone should receive a living wage at minimum) and
- supporting families on the journey from breastfeeding to weaning.

WHAT NEXT?

Food Cardiff is developing a healthy and sustainable food vision and plan for the city, aiming to be recognised as one of the most sustainable in the UK. Food Cardiff is working to ensure this is co-produced with people in and around the city – everyone should have the opportunity to inform it. Indeed, the People's Assembly findings will feed into this strategy as will additional dialogues facilitated by Food Cardiff. Food Cardiff is also canvassing people's opinions through surveys as well as ongoing partnership discussions.

The results of these discussions will feed into consultations both

locally and nationally, for example contributing to Cardiff Council's One Planet Strategy to tackle the climate emergency.

Food Sense Wales is working to support new local food partnerships in a range of different local authority areas, supporting the emergence of a national network of Sustainable Food Places in Wales for example Food Vale. In order to ensure further dialogues, a facilitator guide has also been produced so that people across the City Region can run more People's Assembly events in their areas.