

INVESTING IN A BETTER FOOD FUTURE

THE INNOVATIVE ROLE OF FOOD PARTNERSHIPS



Introduction

As the cost of living crisis continues to affect communities, and supply chain disruptions further put pressure on food access, now is the time to invest in local food economies and community food access – into production, distribution and infrastructure that improve access to healthy and sustainable food, creating good food jobs, fair returns for farmers, healthy communities and a pride of place. This briefing makes the case for harnessing the power of Sustainable Food Places food partnerships to deliver the above, and for a Good Food Bill in every UK nation to set a long-term and consistent strategy on food.

Food partnerships play a central role in developing, as well as attracting funding and investment for, healthy and sustainable food programmes that benefit local communities. In doing so, they deliver long-term solutions to some of the most pressing issues in our food system, including food insecurity, supply chain disruption and inequity, and the climate and nature emergency. Food partnership-led and supported initiatives have a track record of meaningful and long-lasting community benefits, reaching far and wide and embedding long-lasting change, whether through changing policy and provision, or creating a culture of community engagement and education around good food.

Food partnerships also collaboratively develop food strategies for their areas and oversee their delivery over the long term. However, they are often under-resourced and themselves face an uncertain future. While Scottish and Welsh governments have recently made progress around securing funding for local food strategies and partnerships, commitment and recognition are not matched in the other nations.

Our calls to action

Sustainable Food Places calls on government investment in a food partnership in every local authority and better investment in local good food economies, good food jobs and infrastructure, alongside investment in healthy food access. We also call on enhanced decision-making power to the devolved governments to better target investment to meet local food systems needs.

- Investment in a food partnership in every local authority, alongside a food strategy endorsed by the council.
- A Good Food Bill in every nation, underpinned by an independent body to champion action and scrutinise progress.
- Investment in agroecological farming, small and medium size producers, and better routes to market.
- Investment in local food infrastructure, skills, and business support favouring values driven, social enterprises delivering on environmental, social and health objectives.

- Use existing public spending on food to support local and sustainable food systems and local food suppliers.
- Investment in children's health and healthy food access programmes, including expansion of free school meals, healthy start and school fruit and vegetable schemes, as well as school and community food infrastructure to support growing, cooking and eating good food.
- Better decision-making powers for devolved governments to focus farming, economic and infrastructure investment where it can make the most impact on local economies and community wellbeing.

Nations-specific calls to action

- Northern Ireland: DAERA and Invest Northern Ireland to work together to better target investment streams to better benefit small and medium-sized food businesses, not just those exporting products, prioritising healthy and sustainable food supply chains that create local jobs.
- Scotland: To support the implementation of Good Food Nation Act actions at a local level, allocation of 5-10% of the agricultural budget (replacing CAP fund) to establish a Local Food Fund to help local authorities to invest in local food systems (for example to increase jobs in farming and crofting, support small and medium enterprises, localise and increase climate- and nature-friendly food in procurement, and increase community access to good food).
- Wales: Continued support to develop the network of cross-sector food partnerships as part of a National Food Strategy for Wales.

Who we are

The Sustainable Food Places network is one of the fastest social movements in the UK. We are a growing movement of 90+ food partnerships in cities and other places across the country. Through these cross-sector food partnerships, local authorities and other public bodies are working together with third sector, business and academic organisations to transform their local food system with the aim of improving public health and wellbeing; fostering community connection and resilience; building prosperous and diverse local food economies; and helping to tackle the critical sustainability issues of waste and the climate and nature emergency.

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Sustain: the alliance for better food and farming, advocates food and agriculture policies and practices that enhance the health and welfare of people and animals, tackle climate change and restore nature, improve the living and working environment, enrich society and culture, and promote greater equality. It represents around 100 national public interest organisations, and cultivates the movement for change, working with many others at local, regional, national and international level.

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