

Impact Report

Our journey 2019-2024



**SUSTAINABLE
FOOD places**



Welcome from Amit Dattani

Head of Networks and Partnerships
—Soil Association.



Sustainable Food Places (SFP) is proud to be a driving force behind the UK's emerging good food movement. From our humble beginnings more than 10 years ago, we have grown to a network of over 100 members, representing 30% of all local authority areas across the UK.

Our work is about food partnerships: cross-sector, multi-stakeholder organisations that are transforming the lives of communities across the country, ensuring that everyone has access to healthy and nutritious food that is good for people and the planet. By seeding and nurturing their development and by connecting and convening their work across our national network, we are helping to take local impact to a national scale.

We know that a transition to a healthy, sustainable, and more equitable food system requires not only strong national policy, but also collaborative action between policy makers, businesses, communities, and civil society, and SFP food partnerships are proving vital in making this happen.

The last 5 years have presented huge challenges for our work. From the COVID-19 pandemic to the ongoing Cost-of-Living crisis and the worsening consequences of climate

change, our food systems are facing ever mounting pressures.

Despite these challenges, the SFP network has gone from strength to strength. We have expanded our focus, covering new geographies, including new stakeholders, and addressing a wider set of food systems challenges. Our members have been at the forefront of food system innovation, quickly adapting to cope with immediate challenges, while simultaneously ensuring that the future of food is one that is fair and sustainable.

The Sustainable Food Places programme is the glue that brings this movement together, amplifying its collective voice and scaling its impact. In this report we proudly present what we have done over the last five years to achieve this.

As we look ahead, we know we have more work to do. But the last five years have proven what is possible, and I look forward to what the next five years might bring for the Sustainable Food Places network.

**Warmest wishes,
Amit Dattani**



Sustainable Food Places

Since 2013, the Sustainable Food Places (SFP) programme has been the driving force behind the UK's rapidly growing place-based, food partnership movement.

WHO WE ARE

A programme coordinated by three national food charities— Food Matters, the Soil Association and Sustain— and three nation delivery partners—Food Sense Wales, Nourish Scotland and Nourish NI— we lead a national network of over 100 local food partnerships across the UK.

We work to catalyse shifts to a better food system by mobilizing collaborative working, bringing people together to connect the dots in food work at local and national scales. Through the power of partnerships, we aim to make healthy and sustainable food a defining characteristic of where people live.



Funded by:



OUR VISION

A future where everyone can access affordable, nutritious food that is good for people and the planet.

OUR MISSION

To build and sustain a thriving network of food partnerships driving a transition to healthy, sustainable and more equitable food systems.

Food partnerships bring together stakeholders from across the food system to develop a shared vision for a more sustainable food future and coordinate action to make this vision a reality.



Food Governance Strategy

Taking a strategic and collaborative approach to good food governance and action.



Good Food Movement

Building public awareness, active food citizenship and a local good food movement.



Healthy Food for All

Tackling food poverty and diet related ill-health and increasing access to affordable healthy food.



Sustainable Food Economies

Creating a vibrant, prosperous, and diverse sustainable food economy.



Catering and Procurement

Transforming catering and procurement and revitalizing local food supply chains



Food for the Planet

Tackling the climate and nature emergency through sustainable food & farming and putting an end to food waste

Highlights

£2.24
MILLION
IN MATCH
FUNDING
SECURED

£2.20
MILLION
IN GRANTS
DISTRIBUTED



**120+ LOCAL
AUTHORITIES**
WORKING
WITH FOOD
PARTNERSHIPS

30% OF ALL LOCAL
AUTHORITIES
IN THE UK
REPRESENTED



1200+
**FOOD SYSTEM
IMPACTS**

**400+ COMMUNITY
AND VOLUNTARY
GROUPS REPRESENTED**

**5 WHOLE-
NETWORK
GATHERINGS**



**4 NATIONAL
FOOD
CAMPAIGNS**

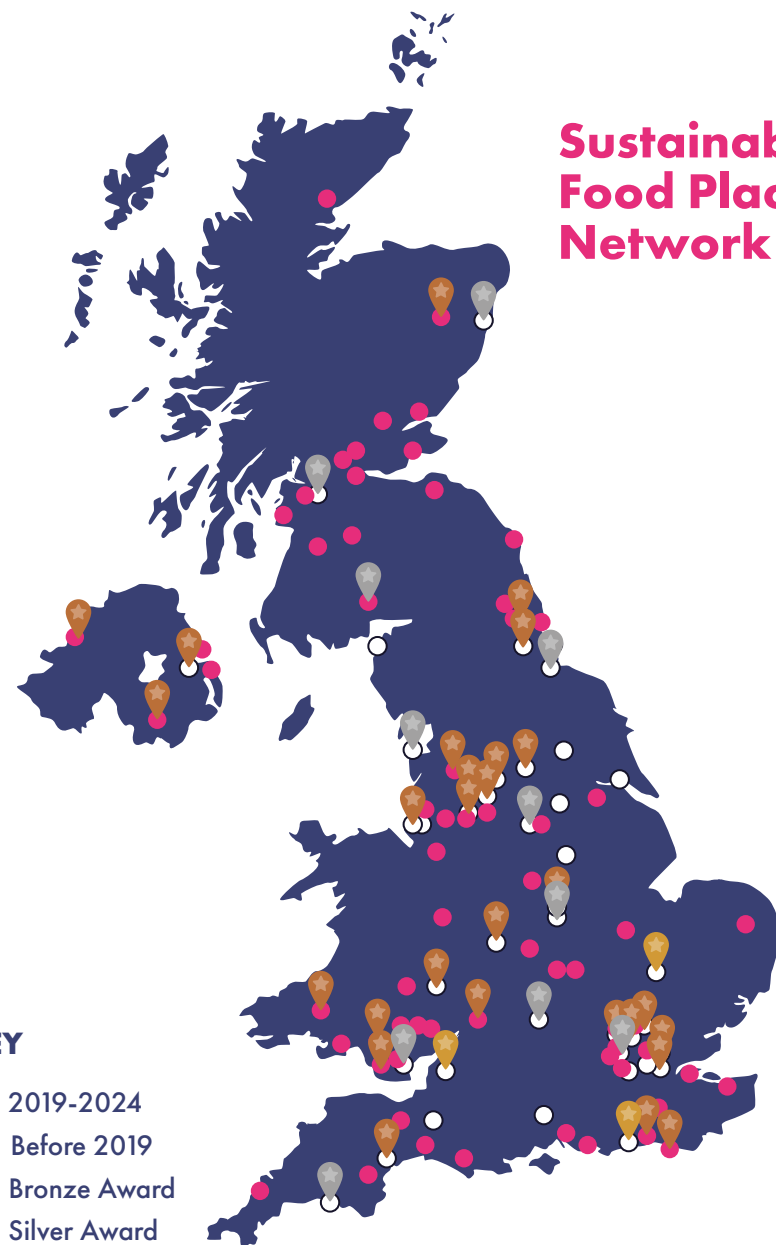
**92 MEMBERS
OF PARLIAMENT
ENGAGED**

**54 NEW
MEMBERS**

**28 BRONZE
SFP AWARD
HOLDERS**

**14 SILVER
SFP AWARD
HOLDERS**

**3 GOLD SFP
AWARD
HOLDERS**



**Sustainable
Food Places
Network**

KEY

- 2019-2024
- Before 2019
- 🏆 Bronze Award
- 🥈 Silver Award
- 🥇 Gold Award

OUR IMPACT: Enabling Food Partnerships to Grow and Prosper

By supporting early partnership development, providing funding and building the capacity, skills and confidence of food partnerships, we are enabling them to grow and prosper.

Seeding new partnerships at a local, county and regional level

Starting in 2013 with just 13 members, we have grown to a network of over 100 food partnerships, representing 30% of all local authority areas in the UK and covering an area with a population of over 24 million people.

Since 2019 we have funded the development of over half our network, distributing £2.2 million in grants and leveraging a further £2.25 million in match funding.

We have successfully adapted the food partnership model to fit diverse scales and geographies, expanding its reach and potential. In 2024, 42 SFP member partnerships now work at a county scale.

Expanding food partnerships into Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland

Since 2019, 54 new partnerships have been established across England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland. SFP partner Nourish Scotland has seen the network go from strength to strength with 15 new members, covering almost half of all local authority areas. Likewise, Food Sense Wales (FSW) has developed the SFP network in Wales to 9 member areas, encompassing nearly 50% of the population. In Northern Ireland, SFP partner Nourish NI has developed 5 active food partnerships.

Building the capacity, skills and confidence of food partnership coordinators

We draw on broad expertise to support the development of food partnerships by providing resources, training, and advice. Bringing together the skills and experience of the network, we have codeveloped learning tools and resources to guide partnerships on their journey. SFP Toolkit is a free-to-access resource that includes 27 guides, providing a step-by-step approach to partnership development.



42 NEW PARTNERSHIPS
working at a
county scale

30% of all local authorities
represented by food
partnerships

£2.24 in match funding
MILLION leveraged to support food
partnerships development

100+ SFP food
partnerships
established
across the UK

£2.20 in grants distributed
MILLION to food partnership
development

// The SFP Programme has been a key factor and driver for Birmingham City Council to begin its food journey. Due to the support, national presence and guidance, SFP award aspirations, and much more-we have become a national and international leader in food system approaches.

CHFC Birmingham
(SFP Member)

OUR IMPACT: Mobilising Action and Innovation Across the Food System

By connecting and convening stakeholders across scales, we facilitate peer-to-peer learning and knowledge exchange, nurturing a UK-wide network of innovation, experimentation, and collaborative learning.

Connecting and convening stakeholders across the food system

The SFP programme connects food systems stakeholders across sectors and scales. We bring together a network representing well over 1000 local authority, community, and private sector organisations to foster dialogue, share learning and nurture collaboration.

Over the last three years we have organized over 110 opportunities for food partnerships to get together and learn from one another. Ranging from regular informal coordinator catch-ups, to webinars addressing diverse food system issues, these in-person and digital sessions are energetic, best practice hubs that are inspiring and informing work across the country.

Nurturing innovation and experimentation

Food partnerships are leading the way in exploring innovative and experimental approaches to addressing food system and sustainability challenges. Through case studies, briefings and guides, we have captured and shared their learning to inspire and inform others. The new **SFP Evidence Database** provides open access to over 1200+ examples of partnership innovation, experimentation and best practice.

[CLICK HERE](#) to access the new SFP Evidence Database

Facilitating peer-to-peer mentoring and knowledge exchange

SFP members are experts in their field, and this is amplified when they learn from each other. We have enabled members to learn from their peers through:

Online Community Building: Facilitating an active email forum and online community space, enabling network members to easily exchange ideas, identify shared opportunities and engage in collective problem solving.

Peer Mentoring: Coordinating and funding peer mentoring for new food partnership coordinators, matching them with more experienced coordinators to develop their knowledge and confidence.

PeerLink: Our tool for matching partnerships seeking specific support with those who have the relevant experience, skills and knowledge to provide it.

// The SFP programme has been extremely effective at developing the skills and knowledge of the coordinator. We would not have been able to do this amazing work in Lincolnshire without the support, funding and role models heading the SFP programme.

Greater Lincolnshire Food Partnership
(SFP Member)



110

KNOWLEDGE
exchange events
and webinars

1000+

FOOD SYSTEM
stakeholders convened
across the network

OVER
1200+

FOOD SYSTEM
innovations
instigated

5

NATIONAL
whole-network
gatherings

98%

of our members find
our knowledge exchange
events effective in
supporting their work

OUR IMPACT: Building a Good Food Movement with Communities at its Heart

By mobilizing and empowering citizens and communities we are fueling a good food movement that is transforming the food system.

Mobilising citizens

SFP works to build public awareness and active citizenship around food to generate and sustain local and national good food movements. We do this both directly and indirectly through support to our members. Since 2019 we have:

Led **4 national campaigns** to catalyse local action on specific food system issues. We supported our members to participate in these with a wide range of assets, events, and networks.



SUGAR SMART



Awarded **£500k+ in grant funding** to support movement building and campaigning locally.

Grown audiences for our website, newsletter, and social media channels. Supported members to reach wider audiences by providing assets, training and comms support.

Facilitated spaces where food actors of every kind can connect, learn and collaborate to advocate for change, such as public webinars and our regular 'Campaign Breakfasts'.

Empowering communities

SFP provides leadership on participatory approaches and community engagement to ensure that food systems change is led by and serves the communities in each place.

We have provided funding, advice, and resources to enable our members to **build representative food partnerships that engage and empower diverse stakeholders** to form their strategies, networks, and movements. We have also provided direct facilitation and/or support for many of the **500+ community engagement activities** run by our network, including food summits and citizen assemblies.

Race, Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (REDI)

Our work on Race, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion has initiated reflection, action, and innovation on making food systems work more inclusively across our network, and we continue to build on this foundation.

We worked with our members to co-create the new SFP REDI for Change Review Tool which provides a framework to critically assess the food partnerships approach to Race, Equality, Diversity and Inclusion.



4 NATIONAL Food Campaigns

£500K in funding for campaigning and movement building

19K+ followers on social media

400+ CVS organisations represented across the Network

500+ community engagement events held across the Network

// Sustainable Food Places resources have been invaluable in guiding us through the processes that ensure that communities are meaningfully represented within local food work.

Buckinghamshire Food Partnership (SFP Member)

OUR IMPACT: Driving long-term change towards more resilient food systems

We are driving change at a strategic and policy level and creating long-term transformations in the food system that secure access to healthier, more sustainable diets for all.

Influencing Policy

SFP works to create long-term food systems change by engaging with decision-makers and influencing policy at the national and local level across the UK. We build the confidence and capability of our members to do so with training, advice, resources, and events like our annual Day of Celebration and Action. This work has helped to secure:

Recognition of food partnerships in the **National Food Strategy and UK Government's Food Strategy 2022**

Alignment between local Food Action Plans and SFP's Key Issue framework in the **Good Food Nation (Scotland) Act**

Distribution of **£2.5m funding from Welsh Government** to support food partnerships in all local authorities in Wales

Endorsement from the Local Government Association of the food partnership model as a long-term approach to food insecurity in their 2023 Public Health report

New improvements to the Healthy Start scheme, including reinstating publication of uptake data and improving promotion

Building resilience

Since 2019 a series of crises have illustrated the vulnerability of our food system. SFP has provided leadership, grants, training, and networking to equip members to respond rapidly to crises and maintain a long-term approach that tackles underlying causes of food insecurity and builds future resilience.

SFP has spearheaded work that both tackles and builds robust responses to the climate and nature emergencies through food. We have led the way in embedding environmental sustainability across food systems work through our framework and toolkit, whilst our feature Food for the Planet campaign has catalysed action across local authorities, businesses, and individuals.

By delivering webinars, knowledge exchange, and £200,000 in grant funding, we have supported members to develop innovative, durable approaches to food poverty that go beyond food banks - such as food hubs, pantries, fridges and co-op shops - to build more food secure communities.

Through the strategic direction and support of the UK-wide Sustainable Food Places programme... Food Partnerships have been able to pivot to respond with agility to an extended period of national crisis and have moved forward to offer a coherent framework for the transition of local food systems.

Professor Mat Jones, & Dr. Sarah Jones,
University of West England



92

Members of Parliament engaged through outreach activities

200k

IN GRANTS awarded to building food resilience

5

NATIONAL submissions to national consultations

71%

OF MEMBERS more confident in engaging with policy

OUR IMPACT: Mobilising Support, Celebrating Success and Demonstrating Impact

Through our bespoke SFP Awards scheme and our innovative data work, we are helping to benchmark success and demonstrate the impact of the network.

Awards

The **Sustainable Food Places Awards** recognize and celebrate the success of places across the UK who take a holistic and systems approach to sustainable and healthy food.

The Bronze, Silver and Gold awards represent progressive levels of achievement across local food systems.

There are now **over 50 SFP award holders across the UK**. 34 places have achieved Bronze, 14 Silver, and 3 have now achieved the prestigious Gold SFP award, recognizing exceptional achievement in transforming local food systems.

Sustainable Food Places Impact Hub

Through surveys, consultations, interviews, reports, and research studies, we have collected a huge amount of data documenting the impact of SFP food partnerships.

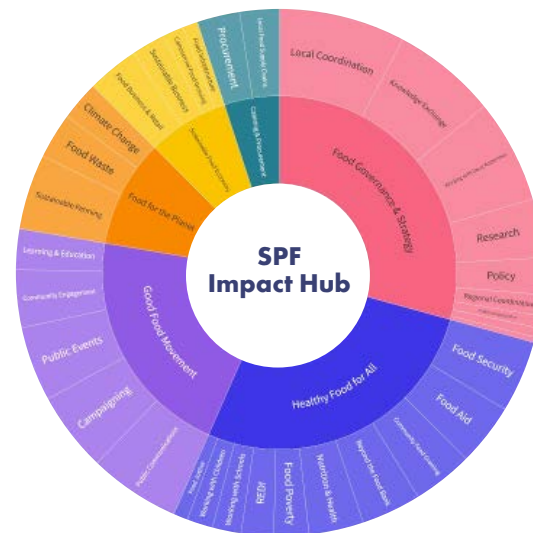
To enable this data to be shared and learnt from, we organised and analysed it to build the new SFP Impact Hub. This interactive tool maps food partnership impact across the food system and provides a platform to share innovations and learn from the experiences of others.

[CLICK HERE](#) to access the SFP Impact Hub



"SFP Awards are a very useful way to get city wide organisations on board with our work, and is a great way to recognise the accomplishment of our partnership and city

SFP Member



"The SFP Impact Hub is the best present I could have wished for as we try to justify our continuing existence here in Hull. Thank you so much to you and your team – it is incredibly useful!

Hull Food Partnership
(SFP Member)

Challenges

Food Partnership Funding

Ensuring that food partnerships are embedded in their locality for the long term continues to be our greatest challenge. This requires core funding for their work. Having a paid, dedicated food partnership coordinator in post is the single most significant factor in determining positive impact on the ground.

We need national and local government to acknowledge the essential role of food partnerships and fund their continued existence.

Lacking National Policy

The SFP programme has helped to drive substantial change to the local policy landscape, but national food policy continues to lag. We need a robust and holistic national food strategy that supports local food systems to become more sustainable, resilient and prosperous.

While the 2022 Government Food Strategy was a step in the right direction, we **call for a holistic and wide-ranging strategy** that adopts the 14 recommendations of the 2021 National Food Strategy Review and provides a clear and accountable roadmap to transforming the UK food system.

Climate Change

The worsening impacts of climate change are affecting every aspect of our food system. Extreme weather events are putting our food security in peril and pushing already overstretched farmers out of business. We need urgent action to reduce the carbon emissions of the food system while ensuring that producers are supported in making a transition towards more sustainable agriculture.

Worsening Food Poverty

With so many people going hungry, many of our members are providing and coordinating local emergency food. The SFP collaborative approach makes food partnerships particularly effective in this role. Ensuring people have access to healthy and nutritious food is a priority for our work. We take a long term, strategic approach to address the root causes of food poverty.

However, many members report having little time to do anything other than respond to the demand for emergency food. We do not believe that it should be the role of civil society to address food poverty, and our movement calls for national government to take a greater responsibility for ensuring people have a right to access healthy and nutritious food.



What's next for Sustainable Food Places?

Ensuring Long-term Network Sustainability

While we have played an important role in financially supporting the development of food partnerships, our goal for the SFP Network to become more robust and adaptable. This means working with our partnerships to identify new and creative ways to build financial security. It also means taking steps to ensure the network is owned and governed by our members.

We will also work to ensure our movement keeps growing. In 2023, we welcomed 14 new members to the network. Over the next few years we hope to see that number growing, helping to build the critical mass of the UK's good food movement.

Enhancing Diversity & Inclusivity

Our goal is for the food movement to become more inclusive, equitable and accessible to all communities. We continue to be keen advocates for the importance of community representation and will provide the tools, training and guidance needed to ensure that community voices are meaningfully represented in the work of food partnerships.

We are applying a greater focus to this work, ensuring that the SFP Network lives up to these ambitions. In 2024 we are pioneering a new Equality, Diversity and Inclusion programme, with the creation of a new EDI strategy, action plan, and advisory board.

Taking a Preventative Approach to Food Insecurity

SFP food partnerships have long been champions for taking a preventative approach to tackling food insecurity. However, with more and more partnerships being drawn into providing emergency food, many find it difficult to carve out time and resources for long term planning and prevention work.

We will work continue to work with our network to create and champion a multi-sector preventative approach that fosters innovative solutions that move from emergency food provisioning to more sustainable models of support.



Through the power of partnerships
we make healthy and sustainable
food a defining characteristic of
where people live.



Sustainable Food Places

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