

Briefing for Senior Management of  
Monmouthshire County Council & Brecon Beacons National Park  
and for Welsh Government Ministers  
in advance of the formal launch in March 2022  
January 2022

Our Food 1200 is a project to rebuild a local food economy in Monmouthshire and the Brecon Beacons.

It is led by Our Food 1200 / Ein Bwyd 1200, a new locally managed community benefit society (no.8795).

## The challenges

- There was once a thriving mixed farming and food economy in our region, with local growing, local processing and local supply chains generating extensive local employment. The Common Agricultural Policy and global distribution systems have completely dismantled this.
- Farmers are paid poorly. Intermediaries buying from them are making the profit. Only subsidies keep our farming sector going.
- The cost of buying or renting homes and land is sky-rocketing as incomers with deep pockets move in, pricing locals, and particularly the young out of market.
- Most people now buy their food from supermarkets. Nearly all food consumed in our region is sourced from outside the area.
- The current food system is dangerously fragile, as the twin disruptions of COVID and Brexit have shown. (Tim Lang, Feeding Britain, 2020). Crises will happen again and there will be more food shortages.
- Climate change. Farming must lead in fixing more carbon in the soil.
- A health crisis linked to poor quality food.
- The destructive promotion of cheap food by supermarkets able to externalise 50% of true costs, generating health and ecological crises.

## Rebuilding a local food economy means fixing everything.

- **Reinstate local growing.** 1200 acres of modern, small-farm regenerative horticulture, enough to feed every home in the region with seasonal vegetables. (A football pitch feeds 60 families.) This will create substantial local supply chains that all other local farmers can eventually access (meat, dairy, value-added foods...)
- **Acquire land** through leasing, community purchasing and farm diversification.
- **Find new farmers.** High-productivity horticulture employs c.1 person/acre.
- **Build local ownership** of processing plants and routes to market, keeping the wealth we create in our region, “at the roots”.
- **Provide housing** near the land for new farmers. Lease ultra-low-carbon removeable housing units.
- **Create business start-up funding.** Current Government subsidies exclude small farms (<5ha).
- **Stimulate local demand** for local food: education, marketing.
- **Advocate** for supportive policy and planning rules.

## Good news

- Demand for local food exceeds supply: local growers currently sell everything they produce. This provides immediate opportunities for new enterprises.
- Modern small-farm regenerative horticulture is profitable and highly productive:
  - Low investment costs
  - Lean operating and efficient design of processes
  - Ownership of supply chain to customer
  - Collaboration between small farms
- This type of production also helps mitigate climate change:
  - Helps capture carbon in the soil
  - Builds soil health and drought resilience
  - Helps reduce flooding
  - Local markets mean low food miles
- Fresh, seasonal produce, grown without chemicals, is beneficial for health.
- It requires only a very small amount of land, leaving more for rewilding.

## Action so far....

- Tested market for local food - “Our Food Crickhowell”. We need more production!
- Tested modern, small-farm regenerative horticulture for profitability – Langtons farm.

- Stimulated 2 new farms (4 jobs) to start up in 2021.
- Developed online resources for new farmers [www.our-food.org](http://www.our-food.org)
- Agreed a peer network of regenerative farmers ready to provide training, working experience and support to new entrants.
- Prepared ground for promotion to landseekers UK-wide, via partner organisations.
- Built local momentum for the project. Many stakeholder meetings and publicity (e.g. BBC Wales, Nation Cymru, Institute of Welsh Affairs).
- Agreed with Community Foundation to host a new grant fund for new farmers.
- Created Our Food 1200 / Ein Bwyd 1200, a community benefit society that will have the skills, credibility and ability to (1) lease land from landowners and to farmers, (2) buy land through community purchases, (3) raise funds for and implement all the other necessary activities.
- Recruited a team of local leaders to be Directors. Two board meetings so far.

## Next....

- **Create leadership engine for ambitious 10-year programme.**  
Establish Our Food 1200 / Ein Bwyd 1200, (registered as a Community Benefit Society on 12 January 2022). Locally managed body to lead the work in the next 10 years. Structured to enable community purchase of assets, such as land and housing. Build robust internal processes, create captivating communication materials, etc.
- **Launch Our Food 1200 community membership.**  
Launch event in March 2022, inviting all interested stakeholders to become voting members of Our Food 1200.
- **Develop alliance of regenerative horticulture businesses.**  
Build strength and influence for small horticulture enterprises through collaborative action. Plan future activities, particularly educational outreach (work experience, volunteering). 10-15 such businesses already started/starting.
- **Launch search for plots of land (3-5 acres) to lease/buy.**  
A partnership with local land agents.
- **Prepare for recruitment of new farmers.**  
Confer with local colleges/training courses and with UK networks of landseekers, many of whom are struggling to find land.

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