

The Plot.

The official seasonal newsletter of The Community Food Growers Network. A network of radical farms, market gardens and food growing projects around the U.K.



Issue 6 — 2017
Winter & Spring
www.cfgn.org.uk
info@cfgn.org.uk
[@cfgn_growers](https://twitter.com/cfgn_growers)

EDITORIAL COMMENT

This winter, we are proud to present to you the very first issue of The Plot, under new editorial direction. For most these winter months signify, the descent into hibernation, the frost having long frozen our feet and fruiting veg alike. But for the new network co-ordinators of the Community Food Growers Network, we are just warming up.

In our first edition as editors and a sixth issue for the organisation, we'll be sharing with you our plans for the next year of CFGN activities, as well as celebrating the achievements of back-to-back events at the start of winter last year.

As network co-ordinators we're keen to get stuck into putting food on the agenda both at City Hall and the Mayor's office, and in the minds of every Londoner. This year as the Mayor begins to develop the strategies that will shape his time in office, we will be working hard to make sure that, for food growers and the communities they benefit, the London Plan looks towards developing a resilient food system with the best interest of all Londoners at its centre.

Following last year's City Hall policy launch event (which you can find out more about in this issue) we know it's going to be a long year of lobbying for CFGN!

As well as getting our teeth stuck into that, we will also be recruiting a Social Enterprise Worker in the coming months to provide trainings and offer advice on business strategies and developing sustainable financial structures for independent projects. With two new members of staff, the capacity of CFGN to host events, support projects and promote community food growing in as many ways and spaces as possible has spiked.



Also in this edition May Project Gardens will be sharing their experience of running the Hip Hop Gardens initiative in collaboration with Loughborough Farm, helping South Londoners produce their favourite meals in a healthy and sustainable way.

As you may have seen last issue, CFGN played a key role in the organisation of the Land for What conference last November. For two days hundreds gathered to enjoy a space of conversation, the exchange of ideas and, hopefully, the beginning of action and campaigns with the common aim of making land a common resource for all. If you didn't manage to make it you can find more details at what went down, if you just turn the page.

Finally, we've also been graced with a great winter recipe suggestion by the Hip Hop Garden folks themselves so be sure to pull that out and get cooking!

With great thanks to Joel Colover for working on the design and layout of this issue. (jcolover.eu)

To find out more from Zahra and Natalie, email us at zahra@cfgn.org.uk and natalie@cfgn.org.uk respectively.

HIP HOP GARDENING

May Project Gardens (MPG) and Loughborough Farm (LF) have been working with a group of young people over the last 6 months, with MPG delivering their Hip Hop Garden course since April 2016. The young people have been planting and harvesting in their new growing beds, cooking delicious vegan recipes for the youth club, and writing lyrics and rapping about food to document their experiences. The programme is designed to engage young people with their health and well-being, as well as equipping them with entrepreneurial skills. That's what led their first LJ Youth Café at the LF Community Café on 28th October. One Hip Hop Garden unit is a Green Enterprise. During the autumn half term, the young people



from Marcus Lipton Youth Club were invited to come and cook for their community. Eight boys prepared a vegan meal, doing everything from cooking and serving to washing up and promoting the project (by using their vibrant flyers to drum up interest in the local area). They learned about customer service, working in a team, budgeting, managing money on the day, clearing and what to do when orders are mixed up! There was so much energy and fun in a great, lively space.

There was resounding positive feedback from the customers, some who came from the boys' networks themselves, and who were served delicious mushroom burgers, sweet potato fries and farm salad for £5. The young people served 25 meals, providing a great opportunity to learn about enterprise. At the end of the day, all the boys got to take home a share of the profits - about £15 each! Next up for the youth team is recording their first EP - on sale this month!

Loughborough Farm Community Cafe has been running since September 2016 as a way to bring the local community together to share healthy nutritious food every Friday, 11am - 4pm. It is volunteer run, with a different local person cooking each week. Recipes have ranged from Polish pies, Moroccan tagine, lentil dal, jollof rice and Mediterranean salads.

May Project Gardens is a team of grassroots activists working to educate and empower urban communities to live sustainably. Despite the success of Hip-Hop Gardens, they have struggled to find funding to continue the programme after Christmas. If you would like to find out more about their work, or help to fund the continuation of the Hip Hop Garden in Loughborough Junction please email ian@mayproject.org or visit the website at www.mayproject.org

We've also recently produced a Grow, Cook, Eat Cookbook, hand illustrated by Kate - our community cook at Pollards. It has growing tips and 12 fantastic recipes, designed especially to be made on a budget, with common ingredients. It can be ordered at www.mayproject.org or bought in person from Ian if you're in the Mitcham area. In the meantime enjoy a tomato and coconut cous-cous, from the recipe in this edition of The Plot.

LAND, WHAT IS IT FOR?

The First Steps Towards a 21st Land Debate

All community food growing projects, no matter their size, their funding or their longevity, face one common battle: they need land to function. Perhaps for some the battle is brief, but for most, as land is retained century, after century by the wealthiest members of society whilst those who work the land see just a fraction of the profit yield. It is clear that a change in legislation around land, how it is distributed and how it is used could drastically change the food movement. But land reform in the UK is a rarely touched on topic.

Working with nine other community groups over the course of a year Land for What? Brought together a myriad of groups and causes, the centre of which were land. From food to housing, environmental decay to public health, the weekend of November 12th and 13th saw hundreds of people gathered together for two days of intense conversation around land; the common ground beneath us that unites all of our struggles.

Indispensable contributions were offered by



Andy Wightman, Marion Shoard, Peter Peacock, Simon Fairlie and Serge Marti. The weekend saw a lively atmosphere buoyed by excited children and constant excited chatter, stalls which boasted literature from across a spectrum of organisations, promoting planning reforms, info packs, land magazines and specialist books, including Marion Shoard's seminal *This Land Is Our Land*.

Sessions were never long enough as the enthusiasm to keep the conversation going and more, translate it into action, was palpable. A full report

of some of the incredible and thought provoking sessions can be found on the Land for What website.

Moving forward CFGN will continue to work with Land for What? as we hope to push the energy that was brought to the event into a sustainable movement towards land reform. Raising money, planning actions, developing our networks, all of this will need the sustained support of our network and the other member groups. We look forward to seeing the land movement grow and will continue to fight for a more equitable system of land distribution for the well-being of the many.

A PROPER FOOD SYSTEM FOR LONDON

Today, as an unelected Prime Minister negotiates her way through deals and debates which could change to our social and political structure for generations to come, it is undeniable that our political system needs serious intervention. Those who govern fail to listen to the voices of those who live the consequences of the politics and policies exported by Westminster, City Hall and at local council level. As food growers, and as citizens, we need to be in these conversations, influencing these policies and ensuring that the voices of those on the ground are central to the policies purported by the powers that be.

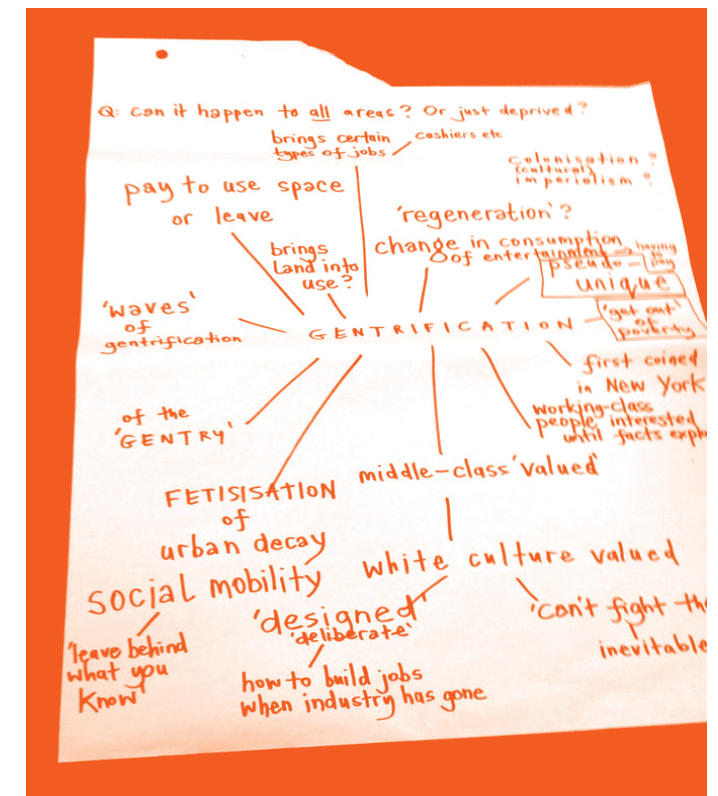
Last November, at City Hall, the Community Food Growers Network (CFGN) took the leap in platforming these very voices and presented a collation of policy directions and proposals in the belly of the beast itself. In a room full of food growers, council members, policy researchers and more the document "Towards a Resilient Food System" was explored as debated, and introduced to City Hall for the first time by Deputy Mayor, Joanne McCartney.

It became evident, not long into the process, that City Hall and the Mayor's Office are already thinking about food, albeit focusing almost wholly on food poverty. An opening contribution from their in-house food department, demonstrated an eagerness to engage and collaborate. Contributions from Robert Biel of UCL, Susie Crome of Tower Hamlets Public Health and Organiclea offered evidence supporting policy proposals by highlighting the benefits of food growing to the urban environment, public physical and mental health in the community and the training and employment prospects for local people.

It was a well-attended event which displayed a series of engaging presentations which aptly

represented the work of CFGN and the importance of food growing in urban environments. After 18 months of outreach, listening to growers and centring their knowledge and experience, the development of a policy document to present to decision makers has been completed.

Now, the work begins to ensure that the message reaches the desks and ears of those it must, and that real policy change is born of this. In 2017, as the London Food Board Assembles once again and the London Plan and their Mayor's strategies are continually deliberated, we must ensure we are heard at every turn through every avenue. Moving towards a resilient food system, putting food on the agenda and keeping it there, will require a meticulous strategy and constant pushing from us and our networks. This event was just the beginning, and this year, this will be the challenge CFGN takes on.



A Round up of The Oxford Real Farming Conference

By Dee Butterly, Land Workers' Alliance and People's Food Policy

The stories of our lived experiences, and the accounts of the resilience and action people are taking in this country and around the world were shared so strongly by so many at the Oxford Real Farming Conference. It is in the power of listen-

ing to these stories and sharing with each other our lived experience that we begin building far more than just solidarity with each other. It is a way of connecting that lays common foundations from which to galvanise our energy and momentum into building alliances and a strong coordinated food and farming movement together over the coming year.

The two-day conference was fantastic, brimming with ideas, knowledge and exchange. There were over fifty-five sessions packed over the two days of the conference. In the Old Library, the Land Workers Alliance had organised ten sessions which kicked off with a fascinating session on measuring productivity in small farms. We heard from Paula Gioia, a farmer and beekeeper on the European Coordination Committee of La Via Campesina who spoke on a panel on resilient food system, climate change and the UK's international role.

From the European Food Sovereignty movement, we heard how Food Sovereignty is a framework, defined by millions of small scale food producers and recognised at the international level, which puts control back into the hands of people.

A session was organised on democratic food governance and grassroots policy making where we heard of the work from Dee Woods, actionist of Granville Community Kitchen and Community Food Growers Network, from my myself in my role as part of coordinating The People's Food Policy and from Elli Kontoravdis, Policy Officer for Nourish Scotland.

The two days then rounded up with a had a powerful panel, discussing the true cost of food and social justice in the food system with urban farmers Humphrey Lloyd from Edible Futures and Lynne Davis from Street Goat, George Dunn of the Tenant Farmers Association and geographer Naomi Millner.

As the two day conference drew to its conclusion we were posed the question: where do we go from here?

We are a new generation, we have lots of ideas, but we are in an entirely hostile climate. We struggle so deeply to produce food whilst an estimated over eight million people across Scotland, Wales and England experience food insecurity and struggle to eat even one meal a day.

But we are still here. Despite that 33 000 small to medium farms have been closed down or consolidated in the past ten years.² Despite that 64% of farmers earn less than £10 000 a year. Despite that eight supermarkets control almost 95% of the food retail market. Despite that farmers

receive less than 10% of the value of their produce sold in supermarkets. Despite that we have the second highest land concentrations in the world.

We are still here, and we are getting more organised, more visible and are fighting back.

As we prepare to leave the European Union, this year will be the most critical in generations and our successes or failures will be measured in how affectively we manage to organise ourselves and influence policy. All of our economic and agricultural policies that were previously affected by EU law will need to be revisited and rewritten. This is an enormous task and it is imperative we seize this moment to guarantee we see the development of public policies and governance structures that are coherent, complementary and protect our food system and food cultures. To do this we need to;

1. Come together to create clearly articulate common positions that we are all supporting and organising around. Intergenerationally and intersectionally, we need to change the way food governance happens so that the people most affected and most marginalised by the current food system are at the heart of shaping and changing it.

2. Rethink the way we do alliance and coalition based change to develop civil society mechanisms for participation so that organisations with political access and resources offer support to representatives of the most affected people.

3. We need a People's Food Policy. This process has been emerging over the past year, and if we really begin to collaborate and receive support this is a document we believe we could use as part of developing a Food and Farming Act in the coming years.

This is going to be hard, it's going to be uncomfortable and it's going to be challenging, but we have no other choice and no other option but to unify ourselves, strategies together and take strong action together so that we have the power to save our food system. A food system which is the beating heart of our cultures, our histories, our earth, our communities and our future generations – a food system based on agroecology, food sovereignty and social justice.

This is an edited version of an article written for the Land Workers Alliance, the full version with a referenced appendix can be found on their website at landworkersalliance.org.uk



Tomato + Coconut Couscous

This is a one pot main dish designed to feed a lot of people in a practical way. The initial mixture is vegetable heavy, it provides a variety of vitamins and textures. Adding the couscous straight into the mixture (rather than cooking before hand in water) absorbs the flavours and provides some essential carbohydrates. This dish serves eight people.

Ingredients

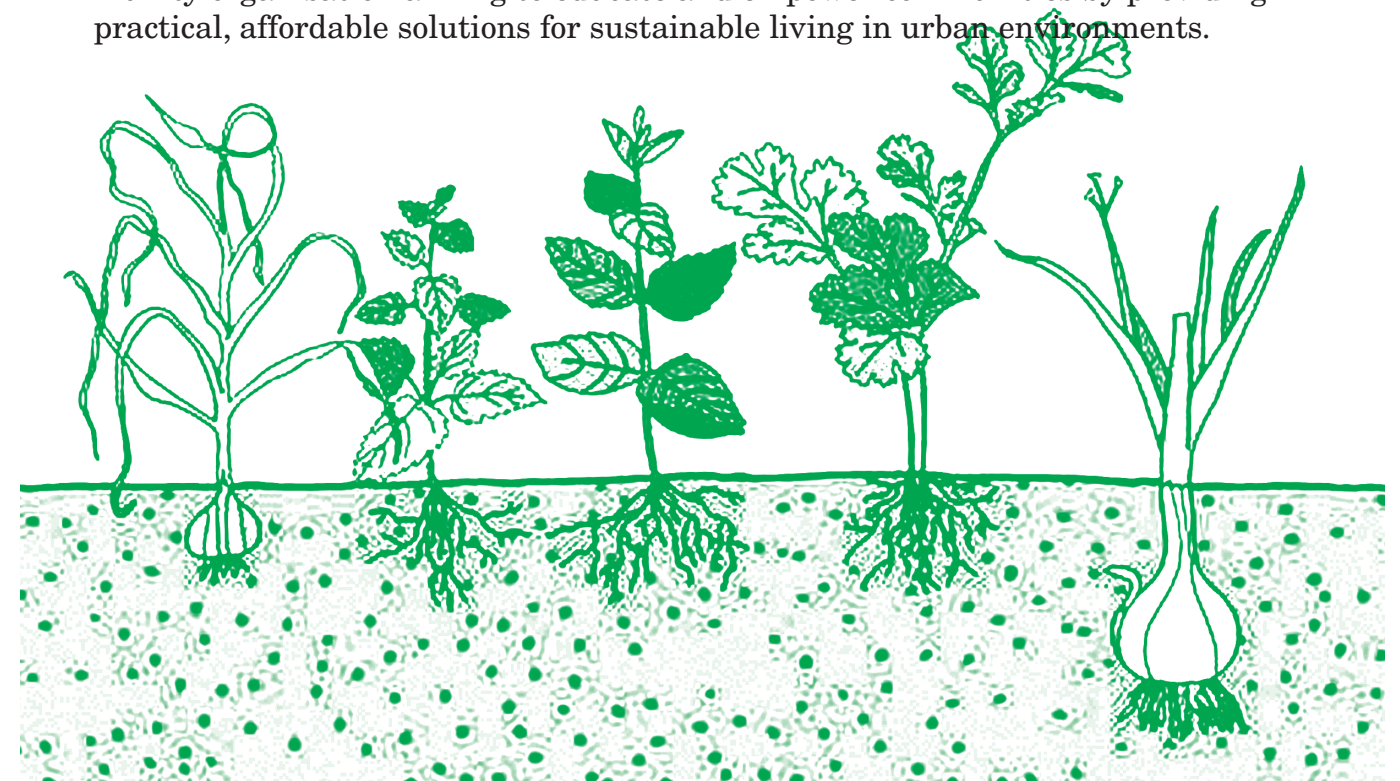
3 tins of tomatoes
2 tins of coconut milk
2 tins of chickpeas
1 tin of kidney beans
500grams couscous
1 white onion
1 broccoli
3 cloves of garlic
5 table spoons olive oil
1 tea spoon chilli powder
1 handful of fresh coriander <OR>
1 tea spoon of coriander powder
generous amount of salt and pepper.



Making filling, healthy, delicious meals for a large amount of people using the most basic of ingredients can add to your quality of life by enriching friendships, getting your kids to eat vegetables, and being able to spend money on other things in life that fulfil you.

This book is a compilation of growing and recipe cards that will allow you to cook tasty, nutritious and affordable recipes using simple ingredients.

All proceeds from this book go towards May Project Gardens - a grassroots, community organisation aiming to educate and empower communities by providing practical, affordable solutions for sustainable living in urban environments.



A guide to Growing and cooking simple and delicious meals to with family and friends, written and illustrated by Kate Betty Scott.