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the plot.

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EDITORIAL

Every year as the new year is reigned in and another 365.25 days comes to a close, we find ourselves sucked into the societal pressures of reflecting and defining what was (last year), what is (the limbo between Christmas and New Year) and what will be (the year to come).

Rather than fight it, this edition of Community Food Growers Network's quarterly mag, indulges in the thinking and feelings of in the new year, ruminating on the themes of rebirth and reform as we look forward to a new era. For us that means looking at what the political turbulence of recent times mean for our future, opening with reflections from Vicki Hird of Sustain of what Brexit could mean for agricultural policy in our country. Delving even deeper into the food politics conversations of our era we hear from Mama D and Rob Logan about the workshops they ran at the Oxford Real Farming Conference 2018 looking at food

workers rights, our food consumption habits and grabbing a series a short reflections of the CFGN members who made an appearance at the conference.

This year, reform is hot on CFGN's agenda as we'll be doubling our efforts to engage with the planning system as we continue lobbying London and local governments to commit to and deliver the best aims possible for fair and food-growing-friendly London. After you've glimpsed through our journey of learning how to navigate that space, do flick over to Tom Kenny's piece (originally from The Land magazine) on Land Value Capture which drills even deeper into how the planning system sits in relation to the broader land value system and what Land Value Capture can do to heal the wounds in the system.

CFGN would also like to welcome new member Myatt's Field to the magazine as they make their first contribution outlining their plans and intentions in a year which means intense renovations and revolutionising the way things are done for them.

Whether revolution, reform or rebirth is on the horizon, CFGN will continue pushing forward to impact the change that's painfully necessary in today's London and across the UK. We hope you enjoy another issue of our exploration and analysis, and as ever don't hesitate to reach out and find out more at cfgn.org.uk.

What to Look for in Food Politics in 2018

Vicki Hird, Sustain

For a sector that rarely gets mentioned unless dead or diseased animals are piling up, food had a lively political year in 2017. New Bills have been passed and the appointment of Michael Gove to the head of DEFRA put fire into the belly of the conservation lobby.

But the excitement remains tinged with frustration at the lack of a coherent joined-up plan, and so much confusion about just how the government intends to resolve its differences on standards in trade deals.

With a transition deal with the EU now likely, it seems possible that we will stay in the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) and Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) for that period. `

So the promised new Agriculture and Fisheries Bills, and Gove's vision of ecological farming and new marine policies are possibly four years away. Or possibly not.

However, we can make use of the opportunities that do arise. There are four key food-related Brexit issues that will hit the stands in 2018. They illustrate why politics, finance and food are being increasingly entangled, and why a new vision, policies and partnerships are needed.

What's going to happen to food prices?

Top of the confusion pile is the impact of Brexit on food prices and availability. The number of food banks is growing and there have been warnings of potential food price increases from industry such as the chairman of Sainsbury's and, the British Retail Consortium. While we still await government impact assessments, one

scenario from the farming industry estimates 8% could be added to food costs from the EU.

Politicians use this as an excuse to say we need free trade deals with the rest of the world where food (labour) and production is cheaper so we can import what we need.

But let's not spread the misery of cheap food – poor animal welfare, food hygiene, working conditions and environmental degradation – elsewhere. Pro free-traders such as Jacob Rees-Mogg MP also argue that we'll get cheaper food through low or no tariffs on global produce after Brexit. But any potential savings would be cancelled out by a weak pound, currency fluctuations and increased food costs from European countries, who provide 30% of our food. Longer term, our resilience will be poorly served by drawing more land, water and resources from across the globe in the form of cheap raw materials for the food industry.

Food banks were around and swelling well before Brexit and reflect a problem of low incomes, in-work poverty, precarity and inadequate links between welfare support and the cost of living - they are not a function of food prices.

It's likely that after March 2019, Brexit will be blamed for any food price rises but any reaction that looks like a 'cheap food' policy could cost all of us dear in terms of job losses, food standards and more.

Will robots take over or will crops be rotting in the fields?

A fully mechanised food system is some years off, but the government made it clear they want a tech revolution in their new Industrial Strategy. This may help solve the worker 'issue'; tech and robots will do the hard work the British won't, and cheap migrant labour may no longer be available. Under the Rees-Mogg model we'll just import what we need, so no new workers will be needed. Simple.

But wouldn't it be better to make UK farming attractive for workers and entrepreneurs? It may seem like a pipe dream, but I meet such dreamers often and all they lack is land and support to deliver highly productive farming. From the rise of food pop-ups, new food growing initiatives and the keen interest of the younger generation in food provenance and sustainability, it is clear there is an opportunity here.

But again we need to follow the money. Making the supply chain pay its way is vital, so that producers get a fair share of the pie. So too is stopping tax dodging and ending the executive pay gap which sucks money out of the food system.

These are political decisions without which we can't make the food system work fairly or sustainably.

What will happen to farm subsidies?

The long-anticipated Food and Farming 25 Year Plan bit the dust in 2017, and the promise of a 25-Year Environment Plan limps on. We are told we will get a new Agriculture Act in late 2018, but that may now be on hold. A new UK Agriculture Bill may have limited power outside of transition EU rules to govern public money or environmental standards for some years to come.

We are drowning in evidence that we could do farm and rural policy better (not just via payments for public goods but capital grants, training, advice, and even new private partnerships for environmental services) which would be better for farmers, their workers,

their animals, the environment and for our health. Gove says he gets it, and DEFRA is full of bright new staff getting out and about on farms, listening to us and our members' ideas.

But will it link up with Gove's announcement of a possible new environmental body and hints of a new Environment Act?

Given that 70% of our land is farmed and farming contributes to air and water pollution, climate change and so on, we really need to see coherence between these two legislative outcomes.

Food standards: More than just chlorine-washed chicken

Trade deals that sacrifice food safety, animal welfare, reduction of farm antibiotic use, provenance and environmental standards (such as pesticides or nitrates) for the sake of a trade deal will be toxic. Such messages helped to stop the much loathed Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) in its tracks; and never doubt the strength of the big food lobby. MPs need to have oversight of any trade deals and we should look to strengthen food safety machinery, not weaken it.

As Sustain said in its evidence to the MPs Environment, Food and Rural Affairs committee Inquiry; we've been wasting capacity on checking what's in our food packets for years.

We must do better, not simply import tonnes of new unknown junk and contaminated food. A coherent vision on food could ensure trade policies, farm support and wider measures deliver an affordable food supply that is fair to people, food providers, animals and the environment. And it needs to be well policed. Do tell your MP what you think on these four hot potatoes, and sign up to Sustain monthly updates on their website.

The original version of this text was originally published on www.opendemocracy.net.

What We Eat and How We Eat It, Today?

by Mama D

This workshop was one of two held at the Oxford Real Farming Conference, facilitated by Mama D and Rob Logan, both of whom are members of the Community Food Grower's Network, CFGN. It is part of a series of follow up workshops (Centre for Agroecology Water and Resilience/Community Centred Knowledge organised)

concerning Food and Social Justice to generate wider public discussion on the topic. The workshop attracted over ninety participants.

Here in the UK, as food system actors around each of the factors of production, we have become experts on land, labour, seed and equipment and all the processes involved in ensuring people are supplied with what will satisfy their most basic need: that of being adequately fed and nourished.

What we have been less careful to think about and act upon is HOW we do this in a fair, just and environmentally sustainable way for the entire planet. The climate and geography of Earth is no respecter of politically nationalist boundaries, or of gender, ideas of race or any other social construct. When we think about food justice we have to, therefore, think collectively, even when we wish to ensure it makes sense locally.

Collective and inclusive thinking values diversity of thought. It understands that where there are a range of different ideas and experiences, if we are open, then new patterns of thinking and doing can emerge as solutions.

New scientific thinking embraces this idea as one that underlies the forms and processes found in nature but it is also a way of thinking that many of our older, Earth civilisations have embraced in the past and still do, even now. What we have tended to pursue is a more individualistic, reductionist, linear, normative and perhaps overly technological way of thinking. We feel the need to segregate and specialise without necessarily recalling and remembering that there are fundamental connections between everything. We forget the greed and fear that often underlies much specialisation and technological intensification. To live well, healthily and to do so without negatively impacting any other person's, or the Earth's right, is equal to a healthy life.

At the workshop we explored our eating and 'food getting' patterns in a fun way and then we reflected on the implications of the exercise for the different ways in which we hold food and farming in our discussions at the conference and more generally.

This was an exercise that one can do in groups anywhere to get people to think how they can help to make the food systems we engage with more just. It raises

MANY questions and points to various issues and contradictions, but these can stimulate us into moving towards JUSTICE!

We might think, for example, about the different ways we source our food and what it says about us. How does it reflect upon the opportunities available to us? How does it reflect limitations and why?

How we choose to eat impacts the kinds of system which accommodates our choices. If the Food Standards Agency, for example, say that we are two types of eaters, but the majority are of one type, how do they shape their mission to accommodate this reality? By far the large majority of UK citizens express their food sovereignty through the purse, how can we make this option the most just, conferring the greatest well-being, given that for many it may be the only foreseeable option?

Food workers unite?

Workshop report by Rob Logan

In recent years I've heard more and more of people working in community food projects moving out of London because pay (and second jobs) can't meet rent and other living expenses.

What happens when we start to consider struggles of community food in the city as food workers and how this might relate to a McStrike picket in South-East London?

What potential might there be in generating mutual power and a dynamic politics with workers across food systems expressing and acting on unexpected alliances and solidarities?

For me these were the kind of questions that motivated co-running a workshop at ORFC with Mama D from CFGN called 'Food Workers Unite?'. The idea for the workshop was solidified through discussions at the 'Food Justice for All' workshop in April last year and development has been supported by the Centre for Agroecology Water and Resilience.

It was very exciting for Ronnie Draper from the Bakers, Food and Allied Workers' Union (BFAWU) to come and talk about the organisation's history and current victory after the McStrike campaign for a living wage and fair working conditions. And interesting in relation to this to hear from Humphrey Lloyd from Landworkers' Alliance on their recent

collaboration with Unite on generating policy proposals around food worker conditions as part of the People's Food Policy.

Highlighted in the discussion at the workshop was that over half of food eaten in the UK is imported and so an important element of moving forward would be to think about solidarity relations with workers in different parts of the world, and what this contributes to a food sovereignty politics in the UK with critical consideration of British colonialism. A different political context to the food sovereignty developed in Latin America.

Ronnie Draper said that BFAWU's 11th commandment was 'thou shall not sell water' in terms of the nutritional quality of bread produced and how this impacts on social health. Food, nutrition and health is a theme of food sovereignty and ORFC, and perhaps a potential area for exploration in cross-union food worker organising. Finding areas of commonality to build trust and relationships, whilst also enabling necessary dialogue to recognise difference in the experiences of food workers, seems like a focus for this work in 2018 to complement existing food worker mobilisations.

CFGN members were asked; what are you taking away from ORFC2018?



Beth Stewart, Forty Hall Farm

'I had a few take homes. First off, it's all about Brexit which is a mega complex beast. As far as food and farming is concerned there's a lot at risk and a lot to play for. 2018 is the time to roll up our policy sleeves and get involved.

Secondly, the real farming movement feels like it's maturing and beginning to be taken seriously. Great news! But we must make sure this isn't co-opted and that people and the land remain our guides. Finally, i was really glad to get to a session on personal resilience - we must sustain ourselves and support each other to do this if our movement is to sustain itself.'

Dee Woods, Granville Community Kitchen

'After two intense days, of presentations, networking and endless conversations about the future of our food and farming in the UK I came away with four recurring threads

1. We need to take back control! Of our food, our environment , our health, our communities...our production, our markets and where we get food from, how and what we eat, and to become active participants in the decision making and policy making that affect our food
2. Solidarity and building alliances beyond our food movements
3. Food and the resources to produce good food as public goods or commons
4. Diversity, not only biodiversity, or crop diversity but the inclusion of women, young people and children, the working class and people of colour.'



Mama D, Community Centred Knowledge



ORFC is moving from strength to strength. The highlight of the conference for me was not only the packed room of participants wishing to talk about food justice at my workshop but the equally packed Long Room who listened to and applauded the six powerful women speak of the place of Good Food in our lives from farm practice to cooking pot wisdom. Looking forward to sharing more at ORFC19 and bringing the 'just food' agenda even more into the balance.

Marlene Barret, Organiclea

'It's been great to be at the conference because it just feels like this is a really strong movement coming together and now is a really important time to influence our food policy in the UK and we've got that opportunity to that which will shape our food for decades to come.'



Ru Litherland, Organiclea

'A reminder that if you think losing is tough, try winning! The presence of Gove at the conference divided opinion and posed big questions of us: can we influence and negotiate without being coopted by the establishment? To what extent can we keep our internal conversations comradely and avoid our movement fragmenting?'



At the ground level, I was really pleased with the positive response that the "incubator farms/ Farm Start Network" workshop generated: it certainly made me feel that this idea "has legs" as and the skills gap – two of the biggest obstacles to new people pursuing livelihoods in organic growing.'

Regeneration and Reform:

Tackling the Mayor's Draft London Plan

With each election come new election promises, new intentions and hopes for a newly successful candidate. In London, the expectation is that the Mayor will have a strong vision for the city and do everything in their power to enact it. One of these strategies that outline this vision is the London Plan, a document which guides the local and regional intentions for how planning permission is granted and how the city's land should be used for each borough.

In November 2017, Sadiq Khan released the first draft of his plan for London and opened consultation for comments and reflections on the plan for three months. This means that for community food growers, campaigners, housing activists, environmental organisers and more there is just a few months left to attempt to intervene in the decision-making process and make the Mayor's office listen to what these groups and the communities they represent, really want from London.

Following the launch of the document, Community Food Growers Network assembled a working group to develop a response to the plan

that appropriately voiced the concerns and suggestions of the network and its member projects.

Responding to a London Plan ostensibly built on the premise that regeneration will and must continue across London makes for an interesting job. For many across CFGN regeneration has meant relocation by force, as the relentless expansion of London's luxury developments has forced closure on a number of food growing projects and made living in London unsustainable for many growers.

Nonetheless, making the decision to engage with the recourses to change that the planning system offers, CFGN members have been getting stuck in picking apart chapters, bullet points, policies, green boxes, grey boxes and more. Over the coming months, the London Plan working group will be looking into different ways to critique the plan and the food system as a whole potentially through working collaboratively with policy pros like Just Space and A People's Food Policy and by thinking about what solidarity with multiple issues would look like in the context of this response.

If you want to develop your own response to the London

Plan, read of the document at www.london.gov.uk and

follow the instructions.

Email zahra@cfgn.org.uk for more info.

New Members Corner:

Myatts Field, *the urban park working for a revolution in how we eat*

Rebirth has been a constant theme throughout the history of Myatt's Fields, a community-run Victorian park between Brixton and Camberwell, south London. Rewind nearly 300 hundred years and meadows, orchards and farmland stretched across this land, then part of politician Sir Edward Knatchbull's private estate. In 1889 we opened as a public park, designed by Fanny Wilkinson, a suffragette and one of Britain's first female landscape gardeners. During World War I the park was transformed again into a makeshift hospital for the wounded.

Today a charity called Myatt's Fields Park Project (MFPP) runs the park in partnership with Lambeth Council. MFPP was started by a group of park users in 2000 and since then we've reinvented the park as a true community space. In that time we've raised £3 million for a renovation to provide new children's facilities and toilets, and turned a derelict greenhouse into the heart of a local cooking and growing hub.

Vassall ward, where the park is located, is a food desert where many people have limited access to healthy eating options. Communications in the area have traditionally been poor, with residents often cut off from decision making. We're on a mission to change this. We want to grow a green and healthy neighbourhood through our gardening clubs, community lunches, events and programmes focused on food.

Take Food Heroes, which built on the skills of local people. Each participant received a budget to teach cooking workshops to others, using fruit and vegetables grown in our community greenhouse. Cook Like a Caribbean traced the history of Caribbean food. Last year our greenhouse supported Lambeth Council has committed up to £500k to redevelop our depot building in 2018 to create a large cooking and eating space, which will be linked to our greenhouse. This represents yet another exciting new chapter for the park and for the neighbourhood and as ever, we're working hard to make sure that local people benefit. Their voices will be vital in shaping the way the space will be used.

The idea of developing a series of interlinked and mutually supportive food hubs across London has come up in conversations we've had with Dee Woods also a member of the Community Food Growers Network. We'd love to be the hub for south east London. Both our experience and Dee's are testament that diverse communities and people not usually involved in decision making can come together around food and strengthen themselves and each other in the process. By working together we can bring about a revolution in the way that people eat.







LAND VALUE CAPTURE

by Tom Kenny

One often hears about rising house prices exacerbating inequality. However, this is only one part of a wider problem. Almost all increases in the value of land currently line the pockets of landowners, and this 'uplift' can be far higher than any rise in house price.

When a piece of land or its surroundings are considered to have improved in some way this generally means potential buyers will pay more for that land. This uplift in the value of the land often falls into the hands of the landowner. Land value capture mechanisms attempt to 'capture' some of this uplift for the public, often to fund new community infrastructure like schools, transport, or social housing.

When uplift takes place without any labour or investment from the landowner, or is triggered by public investment, there is a clear argument that the public deserves to reap the rewards. Some of the main causes of such uplift in land values are:

Infrastructure: Land values will often rise if local infrastructure is improved, for example hospitals, broadband, or transport. An obvious example is where land values rise around a new train station.

Planning permission: This determines what land can be used for. If land is given permission for development it becomes more valuable. Even if there is a faint prospect of it being allocated for development it will incur so-called hope-value. This is especially true for permission to develop housing.

Services: Surrounding land values will rise when new businesses open or community services like schools are developed or improved.

Competition: land values will rise if more people or businesses want to move into the area for other reasons, for example because it has become fashionable, or is receiving overspill from elsewhere.

In each of the above cases, the increase in value is not primarily a result of the landowner's labour or investment. However, at the moment, in most cases the landowner captures the vast majority of the uplift. This is not just unfair.

It also directly stops us creating the places and society we want and need. The planning system does have some mechanisms for capturing uplift. In particular developers are forced to contribute to the community through Section 106 contributions and the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL). These are financial charges that are imposed when planning permission is given, typically for residential development.

However, existing mechanisms capture only a relatively small proportion of the total uplift. The Centre for Progressive Capitalism estimates

that without new measures the public will lose £185bn to landowners over the next 20 years.

There are many alternative ways of capturing land value, each of which has its supporters. They include taxation on the uplift (e.g. capital gains tax), taking land into public ownership prior to investment so the state receives the uplift (e.g. through compulsory purchase), or a more general recurring tax on the value of land (e.g. Land Value Tax, and arguably, rates). Each have their own strengths, weaknesses, and political barriers.

If the public does manage to capture more of this value there will still be trade offs such as between quality and short-term affordability. Moreover if we want to capture uplift to maximise spending on infrastructure or public services, this might mean selling at least some homes at market prices. However these are good problems to have.

It is encouraging that more campaign groups and local government bodies are raising land value capture as a way to solve pressing issues and we must build on this momentum.

The Land invited representatives of three such organizations to explain how land value capture can help us solve the housing crisis, develop transport infrastructure, and protect greenfield land whilst creating thriving rural communities.

This article was re-printed with the permission of its author Tom Kenny. It initially appeared in The Land Magazine in 2017, with additional reflections of the three representatives mentioned.

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Illustration by Nick Hayes.

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