

Wales Community Food Strategy





Food connects us. It touches upon every aspect of our daily lives, both individually and collectively. From farm to fork, the food system supports economic prosperity, our physical and mental health, and **helps bring our communities together.**

We have worked closely with our stakeholders and listened to their views about the challenges and opportunities for local food. In particular, **we recognise the enormous potential for locally sourced food to contribute to the well-being of people in Wales.**



Foreword



Huw Irranca-Davies MS

Deputy First Minister
and Cabinet Secretary
for Climate Change
and Rural Affairs

It is my pleasure to present to you the Wales Community Food Strategy, as our commitment to encourage the production and supply of locally sourced food in Wales.

Food connects us. It touches upon every aspect of our daily lives, both individually and collectively. From farm to fork, the food system supports economic prosperity, our physical and mental health, and helps bring our communities together.

We have worked closely with our stakeholders and listened to their views about the challenges and opportunities for local food. In particular, we recognise the enormous potential for locally sourced food to contribute to the well-being of people in Wales.

This means realising the connection between food and our responsibility, under the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act, to improve the social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales.

There are opportunities to encourage local food supply by building relationships between local producers, food and drink businesses and the network of community food initiatives. Public sector demand should provide confidence for local suppliers, so that more food bought in Wales is produced in Wales.

Better connections within communities around food can be used to encourage healthier food choices, tackle food poverty and support social inclusion.

Importantly, encouraging environmentally responsible production methods, through community based growing and horticulture, can provide benefits for our natural environment.

All of this aligns with our ambition to connect communities, drive progress for a healthier Wales, create green jobs and growth, and provide opportunity for every family.

The potential to obtain these outcomes and to maximise the benefits for our communities can only be realised through a collaborative, joined-up approach. We can achieve nothing on our own. We must also respect the diverse needs of communities across Wales and, through a place based approach, seek to enable local activity that has been designed to meet local priorities.

I very much welcome the commitment to food as a focus area by the Future Generations Commissioner, and I will continue to work jointly with the Commissioner to help embed food as a priority within local planning and services.

As a next step, I have commissioned a ministerial advisory group that will ensure the delivery of the objectives within the Wales Community Food Strategy, and establish an effective and productive partnership with our key stakeholders.

Finally, on a personal note, I would like to sincerely thank all those who have worked with us, and contributed to the various workshops, panels and surveys that have helped to create this strategy. I look forward to continuing to work together, with commitment and ambition, to fully capture the true value and benefits of locally sourced food.

Introduction

The food system affects us all. It underpins our physical and mental health, our economic prosperity, and can bring people and communities together. Food is centrally important for achieving a healthier Wales and forms an intrinsic part of our society and culture.

Through developing this strategy, we have engaged with many of the vibrant, committed and innovative community food initiatives throughout Wales. Their work demonstrates the appetite within our communities to tackle some of the most pressing modern-day challenges and help alleviate food poverty. We have developed this strategy alongside **Food Matters: Wales** (published in July 2024) to describe the strategic landscape of the Welsh Government's food policy aspirations.

Of course, the food system in Wales is part of a wider UK and global food system. This system is highly cost effective; it rapidly and efficiently distributes food in line with consumer priorities of price, convenience and a range of choice.

Covid has taught us, however, that food insecurity can seriously affect the supply chain. Sourcing food and ingredients through long and complex supply chains, together with a focus on distribution and 'just in time' logistics, can lead to vulnerability to food system shocks. This includes shocks brought about by geopolitical instability and unexpected severe weather events.

Meanwhile, food supply is also at the heart of several long-term systemic issues, whereby poor diets give rise to obesity and related health problems. There is a persistent trend of increasing levels of food poverty, and unsustainable food production methods can threaten to exacerbate biodiversity loss and climate change.

We recognise the focus of this strategy does not include trying to influence global trends. However, strengthening the supply of locally sourced food can complement the global food system by seeking to address many of the food related pressures faced by Welsh communities.

Improving the production and supply of locally sourced food can open opportunities for increasing people's access to healthy, sustainable food with lower food miles and produced in a way that supports nature. Achieving this can help us reduce food poverty, prevent diet related ill-health, and unlock opportunities for green growth in local economies.

If we grasp the clear and significant opportunities that local food production can bring, together we can deliver benefits in well-being to people and communities across Wales.



A systems-based approach

We will bring together policy priorities across government to deliver long-term benefits in well-being in line with the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act. In developing this strategy, we have engaged extensively with stakeholders through expert focus groups to create a '**Community Food Systems Map**' – to identify the complex and interconnected local food supply issues and opportunities.

Developing local food supply and growing community food resilience cannot be achieved through a 'top down' approach alone – it must be built from the ground up through partnerships and relationships and by changing attitudes and behaviours.



Operating Principles

To enable local level direction setting and action

Welsh Government will play an enabling role. Policymakers will view their role as facilitators, supporting existing groups and partnerships to build on their activities.

To take a place-based approach

This means respecting the diverse circumstances and needs of our communities across Wales. Welsh Government will support the development of community activity and local actions that have been designed to address local needs.

To form new ways of partnership working

Welsh Government will continue to work in partnership to support local authorities and public bodies to push action forwards. The strategy will encourage public bodies and community organisations to enhance coordination and make the most out of food supply chains.

To focus on preventative solutions

Welsh Government can promote the potential benefits of locally sourced produce across a broad community well-being agenda. This will complement the delivery of a wide range of Welsh Government strategies, such as the Sustainable Farming Scheme, the Child Poverty Strategy for Wales 2024 and Healthy Weight: Healthy Wales.

To develop actions and delivery as part of an ongoing process

A new and specific ministerial advisory group will provide effective guidance and oversight for the implementation of the Community Food Strategy. The goals and actions will be refreshed through an ongoing process of engagement and collaboration.

RCT Food Partnership: nutritious, sustainable and affordable food for all

The RCT Food Partnership is an award-winning network of organisations and individuals who are passionate about healthy, sustainable, and affordable food for all. With members drawn from community groups, public bodies and food businesses from around the county, their vision is that every person in Rhondda Cynon Taf has access to affordable and nutritious food, that is also good for the planet.

A member of the UK-wide Sustainable Food Places network and a Sustainable Food Places Bronze award holder, they have been able to develop and increase sustainable solutions to strengthen the local food system, and help tackle the root causes of food poverty. Funding has allowed groups to explore new and innovative ideas for community food projects. For example, food projects building capacity through purchasing fridges and freezers and subsidising a weekly lunch club to ensure it stays affordable for local residents.

Additionally, it has provided funding to support a local veg box scheme that is working to bring locally grown, organic produce to residents, whilst also benefitting the local community through volunteering opportunities. The funding has also been used to teach resilient food skills such as growing, cooking skills and how to feed a family on a budget.



The Well-being of Future Generations Act

The Well-being of Future Generations Act is at the forefront of developing the Community Food Strategy. The Future Generations Commissioner for Wales highlights in his strategy *‘Cymru Can’* (2023-2030) that ‘from farm to fork, food is critical to achieving Wales’s well-being goals for the health of our people and our planet’.

The Well-being of Future Generations Act requires Welsh Government to consider how encouraging the supply of locally sourced food in Wales can lead to opportunities for improving social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being. It can alleviate food poverty with local community growing plans, more food co-operatives and community kitchens.

Food Matters: Wales, outlines the food related policies and the ways of working that form an overall strategic agenda for food. It describes how the Community Food Strategy contributes to the well-being objectives.



How our Community Food Strategy contributes to Welsh Government’s well-being objectives



Strategic Framework

Strategic Vision

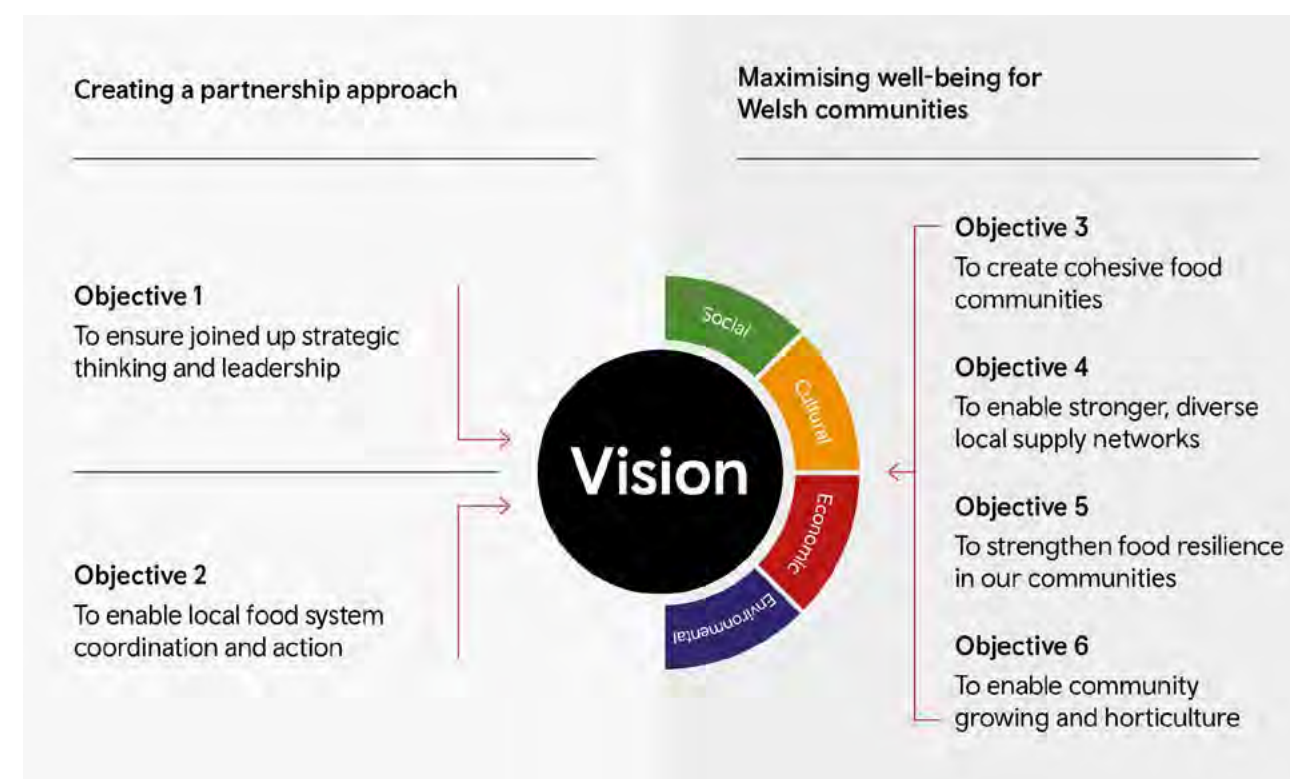
Our vision for the Community Food Strategy is: Working in partnership to promote and strengthen the local and community food system in Wales; increasing the availability and consumption of locally sourced, healthier and sustainable food; and inspiring improvements in well-being within our communities.

Ambition

The achievement of this vision rests on a series of policy proposals under six objectives. This is complemented by an ambition to create a stronger, more resilient community food system.

Creating a stronger local food system in Wales means building relationships that link local food produce with local food demand – food produced by the community for the community. Achieving this means raising levels of capacity, infrastructure and security for local growers, farmers and food businesses – for example, by supporting Welsh wholesalers to supply public sector procurement.

Building local food resilience relies on collaborative and cohesive partnerships that enable a better informed and joined-up approach for planning and delivery within communities, regionally, and nationally. This will encourage positive changes that also help to prevent future challenges, for example in tackling food poverty, social justice, education, health, and the environment.



Well-Fed: nutritious meal boxes and food support for north Wales

Well-Fed is a social business based in Shotton, with its services covering much of north Wales. It was initially set up as a partnership between Can Cook, ClwydAlyn Housing Association and Flintshire County Council in 2019.

The aim of Well-Fed is to make sure everyone has access to good quality and fresh food, regardless of their income levels. The business employs 24 people who help deliver a range of services, including Commercial Catering: for care and extra care services; Mealboxes: services delivered to homes in partnership with housing associations; MealCentres: created in partnership with local community organisations; MobileShops: focused on more isolated / rural areas; MealLockers: which allows people to order and collect meals to cook at home; MealVending: plastic free vending machines for workplaces; and Food Training: which is delivered within local communities.

Well-Fed is the only ultra-processed free meal provider in Europe, and there is a strong focus on ensuring as much of their produce is grown as locally as possible through working with local producers and suppliers. They have over 140 meal types and offer a range of services, from ready meals to cook at home options. They tailor their service dependent on the level of support that people need, with those who enjoy cooking able to access their 'Cook Easy' meal boxes or slow cooker bags. Meanwhile, others can choose pre-cooked meals, and let their qualified chefs do the hard work for them.

A big part of their work is to help feed households who are facing difficulties. They are committed to feeding anyone who struggle to have access to nutritious food, with a particular focus on feeding hungry children.

So far, they have provided over 200,000 free meals to families who are struggling financially, and in a one-year period alone, provided 15,000 fresh meal boxes to families, taught over 120 people to cook using slow cookers, and provided 1,500 fresh meal boxes to families who would otherwise have needed the support of a foodbank.



Objectives

The Community Food Strategy has six objectives. This gives the framework around which Welsh Government, the public sector, key stakeholders and delivery partners can bring ideas and resources together for collective action.

1 To ensure joined up strategic thinking and leadership

To continue connecting policy making across Welsh Government to address the diverse and complex nature of food related issues and establish a new ministerial advisory group to deliver on the ambitions of this strategy. To enable and support public bodies and Public Services Boards to embed food as a priority in strategic planning and delivery.

2 To enable local food system coordination and action

To encourage local and community food initiatives to create a cohesive network for knowledge sharing and cooperation. This will help address long-term viability, bring new local supply chain opportunities and improve local food system resilience.

3 To strengthen food resilience in our communities

To help address food-related issues facing communities in Wales, around tackling food poverty, diet related ill-health and reducing food waste.

4 To create cohesive food communities

To benefit social inclusion, mental and physical well-being through community food initiatives.

5 To enable stronger, diverse local supply networks

To ensure that more food bought in Wales is produced in Wales. We will build security and capacity for local Welsh food and drink businesses to win and retain market opportunities in Wales across retail, the food service sector and hospitality, and public sector procurement.

6 To enable community growing and horticulture

To increase the production of fresh, nutritious and sustainable locally sourced food in Wales, maximising the opportunities for developing community growing and small-scale horticulture in Wales.



Objective 1

To ensure joined up strategic thinking and leadership

The food system is diverse and complex, and so joined-up leadership at a policy making level is key. This means continuing our partnership approach across Welsh Government, with key stakeholders, and with public bodies.

What we have done so far

We have already taken significant steps to unify government priorities on food. A Cross Government Food Policy Forum has been established to provide oversight and ensure coherence and alignment for food policy matters. This includes making the most of connections across agriculture, economy, trade, social justice, education, health and the environment. Importantly, this creates the means by which the objectives for the Community Food Strategy can be reviewed and refreshed.

In 2024, the Welsh Government published the Child Poverty Strategy for Wales to drive collaboration, both within government and across Wales, to re-balance actions towards both preventing poverty and mitigating its worst impacts. Collaboration on reducing food costs and increasing access to affordable, healthy food is a key component of the Child Poverty Strategy.

What we will do next

Create a dedicated ministerial advisory group

We will put clear governance arrangements in place to ensure the Community Food Strategy is delivered effectively and in a joined-up way. To achieve this, we will work with senior stakeholders and key delivery partners to form a specific ministerial advisory group. This will ensure a collaborative approach and focus for guiding delivery against the objectives of this strategy and for measuring progress and success.

The purpose of the group will include:

- Establish a broad and representative membership that draws together the key partners who can contribute towards ensuring more people enjoy locally sourced food in Wales.
- Guide and monitor the delivery and impact of the Community Food Strategy, and provide advice to Welsh ministers on what will work best in practise.
- Ensure approaches are aligned and effective at national, regional and local level.
- Provide advice that helps shape the ongoing development and outcomes of the Community Food Strategy, to ensure the strategy remains targeted and relevant.



Partnership working with the Future Generations Commissioner

There is a clear opportunity to link the framework of Welsh Government food policy with the commitment of the Future Generations Commissioner for Wales, in Cymru Can 2023-2030, for food as an area of focus. This acknowledges the centrality of food and diet for delivering the well-being goals and achieving a healthier Wales.

We will continue to support the Commissioner to help public bodies understand how to drive the food agenda, integrate food policies within their well-being plans, engage with Local Food Partnerships, and adopt a long-term systems approach to local food resilience.

Public bodies have the potential to embed food as a priority within public services delivery through a range of opportunities across education, procurement, tourism, the use of local assets to support community growing, and estates to promote community food.

Findings from research and stakeholder engagement undertaken by the Commissioner and Food Sense Wales include:

- The need for greater consistency across Local Authorities, Health Boards and National Parks for integrating food into their well-being plans.
- Where food has been considered, this tends to focus on tackling specific issues, rather than taking a systems approach across local services delivery.
- The demand from public bodies for further support on how to identify and use policy levers to promote food policies at local and regional levels.

Encouragingly, findings also revealed a growing interest in taking a systems-based approach to food issues among public bodies and Public Services Boards. Local authorities are displaying an increasing trend for making public food procurement more sustainable, alongside efforts to utilise more public assets, such as land use for food-related activities.

The research also identifies developing Local Food Partnerships as a positive step, promoting collaboration and public participation.

We will continue to work closely with the Commissioner to ensure more consistent integration of food across public body well-being plans.

Monmouthshire County Council: collaborative approach to aligning food systems with the aims of the Well-being of Future Generations Act

Monmouthshire County Council is formulating a Local Food Strategy to set a long-term vision for a fairer, greener, and healthier local food system.

It focuses on areas where the council has direct influence such as public procurement, land management, community partnerships and grants – to shape a local food system which reduces food and diet inequality while responding to the climate and nature emergencies.

Key initiatives include community grants for horticulture, establishing affordable Food On Our Doorstep (FOOD) Clubs to reduce food waste and creating globally responsible, deforestation free school meals. The council also hosts the Monmouthshire Sustainable Food Partnership, to ensure involvement and collaboration around its strategic approach to food. This includes collaboration with community groups, Coleg Gwent, Brecon Beacons National Park Authority, Natural Resources Wales, NFU Cymru and Aneurin Bevan University Health Board.

Ultimately, through this work the council has incorporated sustainable food production and consumption into its well-being objectives. This is to progress food policy integration and align its food strategy with the aims of the Well-being of Future Generations Act.



Objective 2

To enable local food system coordination and action

Across Wales, there is an extensive and diverse landscape of local food initiatives, delivered by a broad range of organisations. These demonstrate the commitment within communities to respond to pressing social, economic and environmental issues and, in parts of Wales, a thriving local market.

These food initiatives face a range of challenges including finding enough suitably skilled workers and volunteers, making connections between different parts of the supply chain, and reaching beneficiaries. The financial support available is usually short term and restricted to specific goals.

What we have done so far

In 2022, through Welsh Government funding, Local Food Partnerships were established in every local authority area in Wales. By providing overarching leadership and coordination, Local Food Partnerships draw local food initiatives into a supportive network. These networks make productive connections between local food stakeholders, including public bodies, farmers, academia and community organisations. They also facilitate collaboration on priorities and action for the local area.

Local Food Partnerships are already making a difference in relation to food poverty, health, green growth, agriculture and education. This includes direct involvement in a range of projects under the Backing Local Firms Fund and Nutrition Skills for Life, linking into steering groups for Food and Fun, engaging with local public health plans and support for growers entering horticulture.



What we will do next

We will deliver representative, diverse and active local food networks and will increase the number of collaborative community food projects.

We have committed over £2m of funding in 2025-26 to further develop the network of Local Food Partnerships across Wales and deliver community food projects. In addition, Welsh Government has committed to resource these partnerships until the end of March 2028.

This will provide confidence for Local Food Partnerships to develop longer term planning, develop strategic relationships with public bodies and Public Services Boards, and facilitate new local supply opportunities. Project funding for 2025-26 will also support Local Food Partnerships to build capacity, develop targeted food projects and collaborate to address, infrastructure challenges.

Food Sense Wales, the delivery arm of Sustainable Food Places for Wales, will oversee this process through a central supporting role for the Local Food Coordinators, including one to one and peer support, encouraging the development of local and regional food projects and monitoring best practise and evaluating impact.



Food Cardiff: strategic approach to good food governance and action

Transforming a place’s food culture and system requires a joined-up strategic approach and long-term collaboration between individuals and organisations across all sectors and levels — from community groups and third-sector organisations to businesses and public bodies.

Since its establishment over a decade ago, Food Cardiff has consistently worked in collaboration with a diverse range of stakeholders, and its Sustainable Food Places Gold Award in 2024 is a testament to the partnership’s success in bringing together sectors to drive meaningful and strategic change in the capital’s food system.

Food Cardiff operates through co-ordination, strategy, and operation, overseen by the Strategy Board. This Board is composed of core members from organisations such as Cardiff Council and the Cardiff and Vale University Health Board, as well as representatives from third sector organisations and professionals and citizens who are part of the local sustainable food movement.

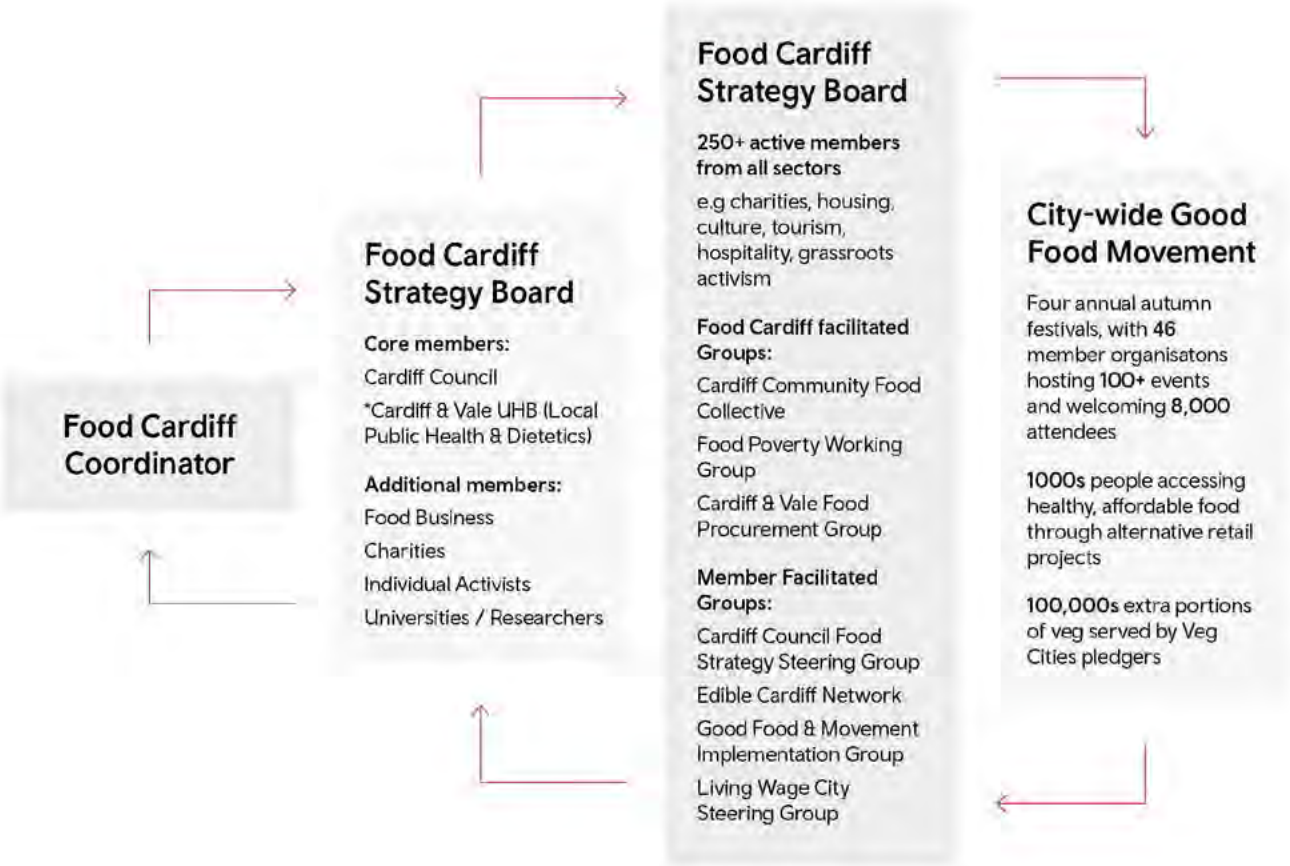
The wider partnership is made up of over 250 members which includes businesses, community organisations and individuals. Together, their collective efforts are aligned with the Good Food Strategy, which was collaboratively developed to guide the city’s long-term food sustainability and access goals.

Food Cardiff also co-ordinates sub-groups such as the Cardiff Community Food Collective, which is made up of almost 30 local community food projects. Cardiff Community Food Collective presents a collective voice for change to tackle the root causes of food poverty; and works collectively to deliver projects, for example on securing resilient sources of food supplies.

Another strength is the integration of nutrition and dietetic expertise into its operations. For example, the Head of Nutrition and Dietetic Services at Cardiff and Vale University Health Board has been involved since its inception and emphasises the critical role that dietitians play in making the principles of good food a reality. Through initiatives like Nutrition Skills for Life and Food and Fun, residents can access evidence-based advice and practical tips on making healthier food choices.



This table from Food Cardiff gives a good overview of a typical structure for a Local Food Partnership



Objective 3

To strengthen community food resilience

Food supply is intrinsically linked to systemic challenges for long-term health and well-being. Being able to access a balance of nutritious and more sustainable food is a fundamental necessity for better health and for tackling food poverty – which is an increasing concern across Wales.

Levels of obesity in Wales have been increasing steadily over the last few decades. This is concerning because obesity is cited as one of the most significant public health issues currently facing Wales. Obesity is a key risk factor in a range of chronic diseases, including type 2 diabetes, hypertension, cardiovascular disease, and some cancers. Around a quarter of children in Wales have overweight or obesity by the time they start primary school.

The consequences of poor diets and malnutrition are clearly understood when translated into costs for the NHS. Public Health Wales has recently estimated the direct costs to NHS Wales of treating people living with overweight or obesity and related diseases to be £0.5 billion annually.

Rates of obesity are much higher in the most disadvantaged communities. A report by the Food Foundation shows that a healthy balanced diet remains unaffordable for many households. Research shows that price pressures can lead to detrimental behaviours including skipping meals, reducing portion sizes, and reducing food choices.

The post-Covid cost of living crisis resulted in a spike in UK food prices, peaking at 19.2% in March 2023 – the highest annual rate since 1977. A report from the Trussell Trust highlights that in the 12 months to mid-2022, 20% of all adults in Wales experienced food insecurity. Although food price inflation has since normalised significantly, these previous price increases are now embedded. Food poverty is a persistent and long-term issue.



What we have done so far

Since 2019, Welsh Government has committed over £27m of support for people affected by food poverty, including providing emergency food aid through the network of Local Authority and Trussell Trust food banks. Funding has supported community food organisations to access sufficient supplies including food, cooking equipment and other essential goods to maintain healthy diets and personal dignity. Importantly, this funding also supported collaborative initiatives which built food knowledge and skills, and supported uptake of benefits such as the Healthy Start programme.

Healthy Start is a benefit aimed at making sure pregnant women and families with young children can afford healthier foods such as fruit, vegetables and milk. This includes many smaller local businesses as well as food pantries. We have introduced a mandatory e-learning course for all NHS staff working with pregnant women and young families to ensure Healthy Start is widely promoted and we are exploring how we can reach even more families in Wales.

Since 2015, Welsh Government has invested more than £3.9m to further build the capacity of FareShare Cymru. This is so that FareShare Cymru can store and distribute more good food surplus and therefore keep up with the long-term supply demands of community food organisations. FareShare Cymru has distributed more than 15 million meals to those in need across Wales through 411 community organisations and charities.

Welsh Government funding also supported the expansion of the 'Big Bocs Bwyd' – a project that operates in schools with the aim of ensuring that no child goes hungry and that every child can learn how to make healthy and sustainable food choices. The project currently covers 70 school communities throughout Wales.

Our Child Poverty Strategy for Wales embeds a 'think community' approach to creating and funding relevant programmes including those related to food poverty that will create pathways out of poverty and support child and family well-being.

The PIPYN Children and Families pilots in Anglesey, Cardiff and Merthyr are local programmes within three contrasting areas which have high levels of childhood obesity. The pilots trial new approaches to engaging and supporting families with children aged between three and seven to adopt healthy behaviours. Hundreds of families have completed a course which supports them to provide healthier family food and embed lifelong healthy attitudes towards food. The course is part of a wider whole system approach which aims to foster collaboration among local organisations to increase opportunities for families to access a healthy balanced diet.



What we will do next

Food justice for Welsh communities

Over the longer term, it is important to move away from a dependence on food banks, and to support community food initiatives to procure food from a more diverse range of sources, beyond the redistribution of surplus food.

Ongoing grant funding objectives for Local Food Partnerships will include a focus on encouraging the local availability, access and consumption of healthier and nutritious food for all, including for those with protected characteristics, as well as distribution of surplus or excess food. An example of this work is Food Cardiff who have already engaged with communities in south Cardiff through multi-cultural food pantries.

Welsh Government has set food targets to reduce edible food waste by 60% by 2030. Communities can play an essential role in preventing edible food from being wasted. This includes supporting the effective management of surplus food the supply chain, preventing excess edible food being thrown away at home, and redistributing surplus edible food.

We will encourage community-level solutions, which could include communities developing a relationship with a larger centralised redistribution organisation; direct relationships with local suppliers; signing up to apps; or establishing community fridges.

Using a range of different approaches to redistributing food increases the likelihood of sourcing more and different surplus food. This in turn gives more resilience to food security threats and stops food that could have been eaten from being thrown away.

Promoting health equalities

The Healthy Weight: Healthy Wales strategy supports people to eat a healthy balanced diet by increasing understanding and making healthier options more accessible and available.

The strategy and its delivery plans set out the key steps to ensure our communities have neighbourhood access to healthier foods through a broad range of outlets, including out of home venues, hot food take aways and public sector settings. Local health boards are supported to embed a systems-based approach in their strategies and governance structures to strengthen collaborative responses to healthy eating. This includes innovative approaches to healthier food within settings such as schools and leisure centres.

By restricting the promotion of high fat, sugar and salt products, the Food (Promotion and Presentation) (Wales) Regulations 2025 will move the balance of product promotions away from less healthy products within our food stores. We are exploring options to reduce advertising of less healthy foods on public-owned sites, following the example set by Transport for Wales.

The Community Food Strategy will support Healthy Weight: Healthy Wales, particularly around improving the provision and access within communities to locally sourced, healthier food. We will encourage a better balance between healthier and less healthy options through a range of outlets and through public sector food provision. Through community growing and horticulture, there is a unique opportunity to promote the local supply of fresh food produce.

Big Bocs Bwyd: boosting educational attainment through good food

Inspired by a TV programme, the head teacher of two schools in the Vale of Glamorgan decided to set up an experiential, educational food hub in a shipping container to help address food poverty and food waste, and to give children and parents the opportunity to learn all about food and healthy food choices.

Following a good amount of fundraising in Cadoxton, Barry, and working with the Vale of Glamorgan Council to find a suitable site for the project, the Big Bocs Bwyd quickly became a hub for the community. Following the success of the original Big Bocs Bwyd and subsequent funding, further hubs have been sited across the country, including Llandeilo, Brecon, Llanelli, Port Talbot and many more.

As a rule, Big Bocs Bwyd hubs comprise of an attractive 'pay as you feel' shop in a modified shipping container, with additional secure storage in a second smaller container, which includes raised beds and small group meeting space. Some schools also have additional growing spaces, woodlands, poly tunnels, bee hives etc. that enhance their shops' offering.

Previously, participating schools had not worked together and therefore the project has created a common interest where they can discuss their experiences, and share best practice. Not only does it bring the community together, but it also demonstrates how the project can positively impact learning in the classroom and beyond, with the core aims of the project explicitly linked with the four purposes of the Curriculum for Wales.

For example, the children are taught how to build enterprising skills through applied real-world learning which is linked to the Curriculum, Rights Respecting Schools aims, Future Generation and Well-being Goals, United Nations SDGs and Eco Schools.

Ultimately, children and families are provided with healthy food at affordable prices, supported with authentic learning experiences that help them become food literate by growing, cooking and learning about their food. The project also helps ensure that no child is hungry and that every child is able to learn how to make good food choices that will enable them to thrive.



Blaenau Gwent Food Partnership: healthy food for all

The Blaenau Gwent Food Partnership seeks to ensure that all residents have equitable access to healthy, affordable food and includes collaboration with the local authority, health board, and third-sector organisations.

Blaenau Gwent faces alarming obesity rates, with 70% of adults and 29% of girls starting school either overweight or obese. In response, the partnership is working across the entire food system, with a particular focus on reducing health inequalities and improving access to healthy food.

Key initiatives aim to empower residents to make better nutritional choices, creating pathways to healthier lifestyles for people across the borough, with several local projects making a tangible impact in bridging gaps in food access, whilst also fostering community engagement.

These include Llanhilleth Miners' Institute, which offers a diverse range of food-related activities for people of all ages, including youth cookery classes, lessons on cooking from scratch and an emergency food pantry. Meanwhile, the Sirhowy Hill Woodlands Trust has evolved from woodland management to providing community allotments and cooking sessions for children, with the food partnership providing funding to create raised beds.

Other projects include collaborating with the Flying Start team to raise awareness of the Healthy Start benefit, which has significantly increased uptake. In partnership with the Aneurin Bevan University Health Board, the project has provided Nutrition Skills for Life training to Flying Start practitioners, ensuring that families receive the evidence-based information needed to make healthier choices.

The Blaenau Gwent Food Partnership showcases the power of collaboration between dedicated individuals, communities, and organisations. By addressing the root causes of food poverty, expanding access to nutritious food, and equipping residents with the knowledge and tools to make informed food choices, the partnership is fostering a healthier, more equitable food system for Blaenau Gwent.



Objective 4

To facilitate cohesive food communities

Enjoying locally produced food can bring people together and help build community cohesion. Supporting positive attitudes, behaviours and connections with local food produce can also help bring long-term benefits for our diet, mental health and social inclusion.

What we have done so far

The successful roll out of Universal Primary Free School Meals (UPFSM) across Wales is a major step in ensuring more school children can eat a nutritionally balanced meal. UPFSM has also been a vital intervention for children and their families as they navigate through cost-of-living pressures. It also significantly raises the profile of healthy eating and is anticipated to drive improvements in behaviour and attainment. UPFSM can contribute to a whole school approach to food; educating children about where their food comes from, how it is produced and the impact on the environment.

Embedding change within communities

Across Wales there are a broad range of subsidised membership models, including food hubs, food clubs and community pantries which are focal points within communities to supply locally sourced food.

Food and Fun is a school-based education programme that provides food and nutrition education, physical activity, and healthy meals to children during the school summer holidays. In 2024, 205 schools participated across Wales to deliver the programme that provided 13,040 places for children each day.

The Nutrition Skills for Life programme supports partner agencies to improve food and drink provision in community settings such as childcare, schools and older adults care. The programme helps communities overcome barriers to accessing a varied and balanced diet, through building capacity and skills in the community workforce, delivery of nutrition training and co-developing community food initiatives.



Food provenance and sense of place

Farmers markets and food festivals are important market development opportunities for local producers, consumer health and education initiatives, and bring added value to regional economies. They bring people together and attract visitors.

Micro and small food businesses in Wales often favour local supply chain development including direct local retail and hospitality businesses opportunities, such as farm shops, restaurants, markets and festivals. Many local food businesses are sustained by continuing to supply local, while for some, there is a natural progression from farmers markets and food festivals towards supplying major UK customers.

More widely, there are opportunities to use food tourism to promote high quality and distinctive food experiences that are linked to places and communities in Wales. Food and drink are integral to the Welsh tourism offer by combining quality, local, seasonal food and ingredients with interesting places to stay and some of the world's best chefs.



What we will do next

We will raise the appeal of locally produced food by supporting interventions around education, training, information exchange and through marketing and promoting local and seasonal produce.

We will ensure that local food forms a key part of school meal provision through partnership working between Welsh Government and local authorities across procurement and education. Additionally, we will improve cooking skills amongst children and adults by promoting activities involving growing, cooking and nutritional education.

We will review how the Food and Drink Wales communication and promotion programme can help raise levels of awareness and participation in community food initiatives.

We will explore opportunities to support the upcoming Mental Health and Well-being Strategy. This relates particularly to empowering individuals, organisations and communities to take action to protect and promote good mental health and well-being. For example, community food and community growing can bring benefits for mental health from spending time in nature and in green spaces.

We will continue to provide funding support through the Small Food Festivals and Events grants scheme. This investment brings together local agriculture, food processing, the food service sector and tourism to provide communities and visitors with unique, high quality and distinctive cultural food experiences.

We will continue to invest in food hubs, food clubs and community pantries to provide the much needed lifeline for communities and individuals experiencing food poverty as well as to provide advice and support to tackle issues of poverty.

Together, we will deliver new UKGI routes to market to build on a sense of place and maximise the opportunities that protected products and markets bring to local communities.

Working with Visit Wales, we will ensure the food and tourism sectors continue to work closely together. This includes delivering high-quality cultural food experiences in partnership with communities and tourism attractions.



Food Stories: a recipe for success in school food education

The Chwedlau Bwyd | Food Stories is a school project run by Monmouthshire County Council aimed at making food fun, through a creative and playful approach to food education.

With hands-on cooking sessions inspired by school meals, sensory exploration and storytelling, the project has been changing how children think about their meals at school.

Fun activities, including blind taste tests, let children discover new ingredients, such as fresh vegetables and dark chocolate, in a friendly and supportive environment, leading to exciting reactions and a growing interest in healthier options.

Family involvement has been crucial to the success, with families invited to sample the meals prepared by the children, which sparked conversations about making healthy food choices at home. Additionally, families received meal kits to recreate the recipes together, turning cooking into a fun, bonding experience.

The council partnered with storytellers Tamar Eluned Williams and Ceri John Phillips to help explore the stories behind food and culture. By using traditional storytelling in the Welsh language, pupils were inspired to create their own 'Food Stories,' enhancing their vocabulary in both Welsh and English in a playful way.

Notably, the project emphasised sustainability, utilising local surplus apples and community-grown vegetables to celebrate Welsh produce and promote the importance of sustainable food systems. As a result, more pupils chose nutritious meals from their school menu, significantly boosting their enjoyment and confidence about lunchtime.



Objective 5

To enable stronger, diverse local supply chains

Security and capacity for Welsh businesses and community enterprises to win local market opportunities is critical to building resilience within the local food system. Encouraging the supply of locally sourced food in Wales relies on accessing local demand, so that more food bought in Wales is produced in Wales.

What we have done so far

There is significant demand from Welsh consumers for more Welsh food and drink products in retail and out of home venues. Some 8 out of 10 shoppers said they would choose Welsh for premium products and 65% said they would pay more for Welsh. While 9 out of 10 Welsh visitors think it is important that venues have a good range of dishes with Welsh ingredients to offer.

The Food and Drink Wales 'Retail and Food Service Action Plan' was renewed in 2024 to provide direct support for retaining and growing the listings for Welsh products in retail and food service settings. Objectives within the plan include partnership programmes with an increasing network of retail and foodservice providers in Wales. The regional economy in general is becoming ever more reliant on knowledge transfer exchange. Sharing information along the supply chain is just as important to success and for creating a pipeline of entrepreneurial Welsh food and drink businesses. However, more fundamentally, it creates the conditions to support businesses with resilience issues to provide a greater stability to withstand food shocks.

The Food and Drink Wales Business Cluster programme was renewed in 2024, to focus on the principle aim of building collaborative relationships between businesses, and more widely with the various food sector support organisations in Wales, academia and government. This helps Welsh businesses accelerate growth in sales, profit and employment – and so supports the development of local economies in Wales. The clusters target specific priority areas within the Welsh food and drink industry, such as health and nutrition, the horticulture sector and improving the environmental and social impacts of food production.

Transforming public procurement in Wales

We are committed to supporting local food supply chains by increasing the proportion of food purchased across the public sector that is locally produced. We will continue to ensure that public procurement is a source of confidence that enables creativity and growth for local food businesses and community food enterprises.

Currently, contracting authorities have the flexibility to design procurements that target specific needs and benefits, together with a requirement, under the Procurement Act 2023, to have regard to the fact that small and medium-sized enterprises may face particular barriers to participation, and consider whether such barriers can be removed or reduced. When brought into force, the socially responsible procurement duty will require public bodies to improve social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being, by carrying out procurement in a socially responsible way.

Public sector procurement can play a crucial role in re-localising the food system in Wales. Programmes such as Universal Primary Free School Meals (UPFSM) boost demand and create new opportunities for local producers to increase Welsh food onto public plates. Through a greater emphasis on quality and social and health benefits, rather than just cost, public sector procurement teams can maximise social value within Welsh communities.

To assist with this, an online food procurement resource '[Buying Food Fit for the Future](#)' has been produced. It contains legal food procurement guidance 'Harnessing the Power of the Public Plate', which outlines how local considerations, social value and fair work can be embedded into food contracts, whilst remaining compliant with procurement rules. Use of this guidance by local authorities is stipulated in Welsh Government's UPFSM grant conditions.

Critically, Welsh Government programmes are strengthening the relationships between Welsh wholesalers and local growers, manufacturers and the public sector, for example through the Backing Local Firms Fund. Welsh wholesalers are key in providing the link between local food supply and public sector contracts.

For example, Castell Howell and Harlech Foodservice are working innovatively with local growers and producers to make significant increases in the supply of Welsh products distributed to schools and hospitals. Castell Howell has reported spend on Welsh food increasing by 173% from 2021 to 2024 (some increases are apportioned to increased sales after the Covid induced lockdown, and success in winning additional public sector contracts in March 2024). Harlech Foodservice has reported increases from 2021 to 2024 of 90% for Welsh meat 120% for Welsh milk and 64% for Welsh school drinks for example.



What we will do next

Going forward, we will continue to develop strong commercial and marketing programmes and support certification for essential accreditation schemes such as SALSA and BRC. We will support businesses to understand market insight data and showcase Welsh produce at key industry events that target retail, food service and public procurement. We will also aim to achieve year-on-year growth in the number of listings for Welsh products in retail and food services settings in Wales.

We will encourage Welsh food and drink businesses to form new networks to share knowledge and understanding of supply chain opportunities, including encouraging collaborative bidding for public procurement. Through expanding existing networks and clusters, we'll encourage new and stronger collaborative relationships between local growers, manufacturers, wholesalers, public settings, retail and food service.

We will continue to work across the public sector in Wales to identify opportunities for the procurement of locally sourced food in settings such as education, health and social care sectors. In doing so, we will aim to increase the amount of Welsh public sector spend on food of Welsh origin by at least 50% by 2030.

Through the online food procurement resource 'Buying Food Fit for the Future', Welsh Government will continue to promote the benefits of embedding local, sustainable food into public procurement and will demonstrate how procurement can help deliver a healthier and wealthier Wales.

A Welsh Food Index is being developed which should help increase the amount of Welsh food being bought in schools and hospitals. The tool, for use in food tenders, will help assess the 'Welshness' of products being purchased and attribute a score according to the value they add to Wales.



Welsh Veg in Schools: tonnes of changes through organic vegetables

By leveraging the market opportunity that the Welsh Government's Universal Free School Meals policy creates, and by supporting public bodies to meet their statutory requirements, Welsh Veg in Schools is catalysing organic veg production in Wales and building resilience for the future.

This work is crucial in helping public bodies meet their obligations under the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act, whilst supporting local communities and building resilience against future shocks and climate change.

Food Sense Wales first started exploring the procurement of locally produced veg with the 'Courgette Pilot' – a pilot project that involved one grower and one wholesaler and delivered nearly one tonne of courgettes to primary schools in Cardiff during Food and Fun in the summer of 2022.

In 2023, with the support of the Welsh Government's Backing Local Firms Fund, the project developed into the first phase of Welsh Veg in Schools, working with three growers across three Local Authority areas and supported by co-ordinators from the local Food Partnerships in Cardiff, Carmarthenshire and Monmouthshire.

Welsh Veg in Schools recognises that procuring Welsh and sustainable vegetables is currently more expensive and the pilot covers the difference between that price and the usual price a Local Authority pays, while exploring mechanisms to bridge that gap.

Having secured additional funding in 2024 the project further scaled up the work and leveraged an even wider network of expertise and support. This has resulted in a forecast for 2025 of working with 12 local authorities and food partnerships, to deliver 200,000 tonnes of organic vegetables into 307 schools, which is the equivalent of 1 million portions.

Their mission is to develop a model that is expandable across the Welsh public sector, and that by 2030 a quarter of all vegetables going into Welsh schools is local and organic.



Objective 6

To enable community growing and horticulture

In the past, Wales had a rich and varied horticultural industry. The movement to a global food system with specialisation increased the economy of scale and this led to a steep decline in Welsh, and indeed UK, horticulture production.

Small-scale horticulture in Wales presents numerous opportunities and benefits, particularly in terms of environmental sustainability and biodiversity. By promoting local food production, small-scale horticulture can reduce the carbon footprint from food transportation and contribute to food security. Additionally, it supports biodiversity by encouraging the cultivation of a variety of crops, which can enhance soil health and provide habitats for pollinators and other wildlife.

Small-scale horticulture also offers economic benefits, like creating local employment opportunities and supporting rural economies. By developing local supply chains, small-scale horticulture can add value to Welsh produce and strengthen the reputation of Wales as a food nation.



What we have done so far

We have a range of initiatives to support the development of horticulture in Wales. These include:

Horticulture Development Scheme

Funding to support horticulturalists to become more competitive and expand their businesses in an environmentally friendly manner.

Small Grants - Horticulture Start-Up Scheme

Supports new commercial horticulture enterprises, either as a diversification within existing agricultural businesses or as stand-alone ventures.

Training and Development

Programs delivered by Lantra through - Farming Connect - offer training and support for horticulturalists.

Working Group on Horticulture

Develop solutions to planning control barriers and improve access to land through asset availability.

The Horticulture Cluster

Supports collaboration, knowledge exchange and networking in the Welsh horticulture sector. The group identifies and develops horticultural clusters of businesses, especially in food and amenity production which could operate in short-supply chains.

The Community Land and Advisory Service (Clas Cymru)

Delivered by Social Farms and Gardens through Welsh Government funding, provides a specialist support service for the start-up and organisation of community led green space projects in Wales.

Allotment Support Grant (ASG)

Since 2021, the Welsh Government's Allotment Support Grant (ASG) has allocated £2.8 million across local authorities to help improve and increase allotment provision, and this support will continue with another £600k to allocate in 2025-26. The ASG provides capital funding to local authorities, with scope for local authorities to choose to spend the funding directly, allocate funding to community projects, use the services of a supporting network to find suitable projects, or a combination of all of these.

Backing Local Firms Fund

Funding support through the Backing Local Firms Fund has enabled a project, delivered by Social Farms and Gardens, to expand on existing national policy and guidance for Rural Enterprise Dwellings, to address the specific circumstances of smaller-scale horticultural enterprises.

What we will do next

Addressing the barriers

The Welsh Government commissioned report, [Barriers to Small Scale Horticulture Development in Wales](#), contains a number of recommendations to address both actual and perceived barriers to the development of small-scale horticulture. We will continue working with stakeholders to take these actions forwards.

The horticulture sector is made up of many small suppliers. As a result, we will update Planning Policy Wales to emphasise the specific focus and importance we place on horticulture as a land-use, acknowledging its unique operational needs. The update aims to increase small scale horticulture in Wales by giving explicit mention to horticulture, our definition of and vision for the sector. This will enable local planning authorities and applicants to have the awareness and the knowledge needed for planning permission. We will subsequently look to update the relevant Technical Advice Notes (TANs) to reflect our ambitions to expand the horticultural sector in Wales. This will offer clarity for planning officers and growers, recognising the distinct requirements for evaluating horticultural planning applications from the current wider agriculture guidance. We want the guidance to enable improvements to the quality and evaluation of planning applications and the timeliness of approvals. Our work with stakeholders identifies these as instrumental first steps towards enabling the sector to grow.

Connecting growers to local supply chains

We will deliver year on year growth in the availability and diversity of locally sourced horticultural produce and create new local food supply chain relationships for community growers and farmers.

Local Food Partnerships will build on existing and create new local food relationships across agriculture, food businesses, wholesalers, community initiatives, and the public sector. This, in turn, will encourage more people to choose locally sourced produce.

Importantly, this will also support collaborative actions under the Sustainable Farming Scheme by helping farmers to engage with wider organisations on joint projects, particularly for developing local supply opportunities.

We will work with the range of relevant support bodies, such as Social Farms & Gardens, and more widely with Local Food Partnerships to scale-up community based growing initiatives, including by developing solutions to current barriers. For example, we will seek to address infrastructure challenges around the processing and packaging of local produce. Organisations with a local focus can tailor solutions to local needs, as reflected by the work of Edible Cardiff, Grow Cardiff, Food Cardiff, and many more, to increase the amount of agroecological food produced in the urban and peri-urban areas of Cardiff.

Expanding Community Supported Agriculture

Community growing and Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) offer significant benefits for both individuals and communities. CSA fosters a partnership between farmers and consumers to share the risks and rewards of farming enterprises. This model can encourage growth in agroecological food production, and lead to lower carbon emissions, higher biodiversity, and improved animal welfare.

However, CSAs are rare in Wales and face a number of challenges, including financial stability, fluctuating membership, access to land and maintaining levels of awareness and engagement. We will explore the potential to establish more CSA start-ups and increase the availability of land to support them.

We will work with Ystadau Cymru to encourage public bodies to improve access to land through repurposing, leasing, and providing soft support, such as using outputs from the Community Assets Commission.



Social Farms & Gardens: nature-based activities to boost health and well-being

Social Farms & Gardens is a UK-wide charity supporting communities to farm, garden and grow together.

Their mission is to improve the health and wellbeing of individuals, communities and the environment through nature-based activities which enable people and communities to reach their full potential, as a part of everyday life.

They advocate and campaign for greater recognition, funding and opportunities for nature-based activities, providing a united voice for organisations and groups delivering such initiatives. By influencing policy makers and working with partners in the voluntary, public, private and academic sectors, they seek to improve the health and wellbeing of individuals, communities and the environment.

Through providing expert advice, support and a free membership scheme to support communities to grow in sustainable ways, they support thousands of grassroots organisations from small fruit and veg plots on urban housing estates to large-scale rural care farms, transforming lives and connecting people. Key outcomes in Wales have included helping 122 community orchards to thrive, running five food hubs, creating 147 allotment plots across 15 sites, and helping develop over 500 community food spaces across Wales.

Looking to the future, Social Farms and Gardens plan to retain their leadership role, supporting and guiding a spectrum of initiatives for a growing membership. Projects will both build on current successes and look for innovative ways, including scaling up community growing initiatives to commercially viable levels, supporting the establishment and running of new Care Farms, mentoring, coaching and training volunteers and community groups.





Cae Tân: traditional and local farming in an increasingly uniform world

Formed in 2015, Cae Tân is a Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) project based on the Gower Peninsula.

The ethos of Cae Tân is to bring back the traditional values of farming on the land, and they embrace seasonality and localness of produce. The demand for fast-growing, high-volume vegetables that conform to a standard size, has resulted in processes to create uniform produce on a large-scale that is highly mechanised and very expensive. This has made traditional farming practices increasingly unsustainable.

Cae Tân, and other CSA's, hold climate, environment and soil quality at the heart of their projects and believe many more people hold these values. This is demonstrated by increased member numbers and that demand for the local produce continues to grow. They grow organic, local and chemical-free produce, supplying approximately 130 households each week, all year round. The produce boxes are collected from a local food hub.

The success of Cae Tân has enabled the employment of 4 full time growers. There are also approximately 30 regular volunteers and continued training for new growers each season. Indeed, the positive impact seen by those attending Cae Tân goes far beyond growing vegetables, with the social, physical and mental well-being of all the volunteers, staff, and trainees an equally essential output.

Wider impact includes engaging and educating local schools, while the community also feels empowered to take control of their food systems, which helps with sustainability and increasing the biodiversity in Welsh food systems.





Bwyd a Diod Cymru
Food & Drink Wales

bwyd-food@gov.wales

gov.wales/foodanddrinkwales