

Seeding our Future
A Possible Bridport Food Hub
Round Table with Producers and Retailers
Online Discussion



October 20, 2020

1. CONTEXT

Seeding our Future (SoF) is a small non-profit project team who have been working on ways that the Bridport community can increase its food security in the face of climate change. Their consultations have produced a number of ideas for initiatives which are being summed up under the term “Food Hub”. Such a hub may have several spokes, not necessarily in one place, such as a community **meeting place**, with food at its centre; a place for **information** about local and sustainable and healthy food; a place of **learning, skills sharing**, across the community; a shared physical or on-line **retail** space; and perhaps an **affordable café** making use of surpluses.

Whatever is to be taken forward should build on existing initiatives, involve and strengthen local producers and retailers, and give producers a fair price, while making their goods more widely available and affordable.

SoF are working in partnership with Bridport Local Food Group (BLFG) locally, and with Tamar Grow Local (TGL), who have over ten years’ experience of operating a food hub north of Plymouth. To help clarify which initiatives to take forward, SoF organised a Round Table with consumers and local community groups on September 23, and this event with producers and retail outlets.

The session was attended by sixteen people, from a range of local producers and farm shops as well as independent retailers. For a list of participants and apologies, see Annex 1.

2. MAIN POINTS ARISING

After introductions from all participants, and some briefing from SoF, our discussion was mainly structured around the following four questions.

Q1: How would you like us to encourage more people to buy more local produce?

The main response to this question was actually to highlight the need to increase supply, not just demand. The producers on the call said that they were pretty well at maximum output already, and Haypenny said that they cannot fulfil all the current demand. A few community initiatives were mentioned where production could be increased.

There were several comments about the need to make more land and support available to encourage new growers into the local market, as well as increasing training or capital inputs both for ongoing businesses and to set up new retail businesses. Simon from TGL gave some details of their successful FarmStart Scheme, which raised interest as something that could be developed in our own area.

Regarding stimulating demand, there was interest in cookery classes which could encourage people to buy locally and also eat affordably. Lisa said that Soulshine would be interested in hosting such classes, and SoF has noted interest from two other outlets in Bridport (such as Olive Tree and Red Brick café).

Q2/4: What are the gaps in produce that is available from local suppliers which could be filled locally? (Q4 asked specifically about products in response to climate change).

Alan described the Dorset Diet, one of the initiatives SoF is working on: the aim is to encourage people to buy eighty percent of their diet as food which is produced or processed within thirty miles of where they live. The idea has had a positive response from Dorset Food and Drink and BLFG, and it is hoped to launch it in the New Year. The Diet would help to highlight opportunities for new local products, and participants offered a range of ideas on this topic:

- Non-dairy milk is a significant opportunity, e.g. oat milk. A supplier in Devon is planning to provide non-dairy milk in glass bottles to Fruits of the Earth and Waste Not Want Not
- Barley and buckwheat could be grown locally as an alternative to rice. Tamarisk Farm produces pearl barley, and Symondsburry Estate grows barley and wheat.
- Pulses / legumes – there is room for expansion into this market for local consumption, following Hodemdod's experience, notwithstanding that these require infrastructure to harvest. Tamarisk and Symondsburry have trialled peas.
- While plain yoghurt is produced in Dorset, it seems there is no producer of flavoured yoghurts.
- It was pointed out that anything sold in a Tetrapak could be something to produce locally, for example passata.
- Pasta could be produced from local wheat. Lydia said she is buying pasta made in London from British wheat.
- Local storage for root crops would enable consumption over a longer period, and shared processing space would help extend the season.

Many of Dorset's farmers are dairy, sheep and beef farmers, and there should be an opportunity to engage with them. There are also several mixed enterprises, with relatively

few solely arable. Symondsburry Estate has 850 acres of arable as well as a market garden, which is currently small. They want to sell more locally as well as to engage with their local community. In general, local growers are smaller scale horticultural producers, or market gardeners.

Q3. Would you find a more coordinated online ordering system for local produce useful?

Simon from TGL explained the three-tier online system which they have evolved for their area, acknowledging that the situation is different in Bridport. The clear response from the producers and retailers on the call was that they are broadly happy with existing ordering arrangements, and don't want to add complexity.

There was some discussion recognising a possible opportunity for an online ordering system for consumers. It is clear that the pandemic has led to a massive increase in online ordering and home delivery from supermarkets, and there is no comprehensive non-supermarket alternative to this for ordering food. It seems that Totally Locally and the Bridport Chamber of Commerce are considering setting up an online ordering system for a wide range of products from Bridport suppliers: SoF will investigate whether this is intended to include fresh food produce also.

Q4. Do you want to produce or sell any new crops or processed foods in response to climate change?

Several responses highlighted the need to change cultivation methods so that they are more resilient, rather than changing crops. Water management was highlighted, especially rainwater capture and irrigation, as well as crop diversity and soil health. Bee suggested Farm Hacks – skill sharing visits might be useful.

Marie from Symondsburry said that they are interested in exploring some of the possibilities discussed during the call.

3. INFORMAL POLL

Near the end of the call, a show of hands was requested as an informal measure of interest in a number of possible elements for a food hub. Participants were asked which of the range of services they would like actively to be involved in developing or delivering. The most popular, indicated by over half the respondents, were:

- A more comprehensive website or other information system about available resources and supplies
- Cookery classes and informal learning programmes

Also with some significant support were:

- Café for affordable &/or surplus food
- A community space for classes, events, and social activity

4. ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Participants also shared the following points:

Elements of a hub facility could make good use of excess produce and gluts, building on the existing Facebook page.

Waste Not Want Not is expanding and collaborating with the Green Weigh and others. They are already considering integrating various of the possible hub elements which have been outlined, such as a café and cookery workshops.

Haypenny market garden is advocating for more young or new entrant farmers, across all agricultural sectors, and didn't think this would compete adversely with existing producers or routes to market.

A web-link was shared for the national local shopping movement: www.totallylocally.shop

5. NEXT STEPS

This evening was the last major part of SoF's consultation process. They will produce and circulate a further revision to the food hub concept document within the next few weeks.

There are a number of specific intended next steps over the next couple of months:

- Include a bid for a part-time Development Worker for Bridport food security as part of a forthcoming funding submission by Tamar Grow Local.
- Set up a few pop-up events to try out some of these ideas: the first has now been booked, a stall at the farmer's market on December 12 run jointly by BLFG, SoF, and Transition Town Bridport. SoF will also explore the possibility of some trial cookery classes in early 2021.
- SoF and BLFG will develop plans for 'joining the dots' about who is doing what in this area, and best ways of information-sharing among Bridport area stakeholders, including an enhanced website.
- SoF will explore with BLFG and Dorset Food and Drink how to highlight opportunities for new products and seek to locate producers for them.
- SoF will discuss with BLFG and with the Landworkers Alliance whether further steps could be taken to support new growers/ entrant farmers around Bridport.

To access Seeding Our Future reports about adapting to Climate Change, including the [report on the Roundtable discussion with consumer groups](#), please visit <https://futurescanning.org/local-communities/> where you can also subscribe to the Seeding Our Future occasional online [Newsletter](#) to keep informed of developments in and around Bridport.

ANNEX 1 – Participant List

Alan Heeks, Seeding our Future

Anita de Greeff, Bothen Hill Farm

Candida Blaker, Seeding our Future

Jo Sage, Agricultural Society, Wyld Meadow Farm and Project Food, Axminster

Kathy Dare, Chair, Bridport Local Food Group

Lally Owen and Thomas, Haypenny Market Garden, smallholders

Lisa Loader, Soulshine Café

Lydia Wilson, Waste Not Want Not

Marie Clements, Symondsburry Estate Produce Manager

Raja Jarrah, Seeding our Future

Rebecca Laughton, Landworkers Alliance, Bridport Cohousing

Simon Platten, Tamar Grow Local CIC

Sue and Mike English, Fruits of the Earth

Vicky Holland, Washingpool Farm and Shop

Apologies received from:

Ines Cavill, Bridport Local Food Group

Ilaria Padovani, Mercato Italiano

Caroline Parkins, Leakers Bakery

Ellen Rignell, Trill Farm Market Garden, Heritage Seeds

Will, Selected Grapes