

A Share in the Harvest

Section 11

An action manual for
community supported
agriculture

2nd edition



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11.1 Organisations

Action with Communities in Rural England (ACRE)

Somerford Court, Somerford Road,
Cirencester, Glos, GL7 1TW
T: 01285 653477
E: acre@acre.org.uk
www.acre.org.uk

ACRE is the national association of Rural Community Councils whose shared purpose is to improve the quality of life of local communities, and particularly of disadvantaged people in rural England.

BTCV (British Trust for Conservation Volunteers)

Sedum House, Mallard Way,
Doncaster DN4 8DB
T: 01302 388883
E:Information@btcv.org.uk
www.btcv.org

Promotes and creates volunteering opportunities for individuals and communities. Their aim is to undertake practical and sustainable environmental action. Have small grants to help start up local groups.

Common Ground

Gold Hill House, 21 High Street, Shaftesbury,
Dorset SP7 8JE
T: 01747 850820
www.commonground.org.uk

Champions of local distinctiveness especially using art and local tradition. Run a project supporting community orchards.

Community Action Network

CAN Mezzanine, 32-36 Loman Street,
London SE1 0EE
T: 0845 456 2537
E: canhq@can-online.org.uk
www.can-online.org.uk

CAN is a mutual learning and support network for social entrepreneurs.

Aims:

- To strengthen communities and attack deprivation in the UK.
- To increase the number of social entrepreneurs, raise their profile and to help improve the quality of their work.
- To train social entrepreneurs to use state of the art network communications to learn from and support each other.
- To help social entrepreneurs develop partnerships in the public, private and 'third' sectors.

Community Composting Network

67 Alexandra Road, Sheffield S2 3EE
T: 0114 258 0483
E: info@communitycompost.org
www.communitycompost.org

Providing advice and support to existing and would-be community composting projects across the UK.

11.1

Community Food and Health (Scotland)

Scottish Consumer Council, Royal Exchange House, 100 Queen Street, Glasgow G1 3DN
T: 0141 226 5261
E: cfh@scotconsumer.org.uk
www.communityfoodandhealth.org.uk/

Community Food and Health (Scotland) supports initiatives in low-income communities which help people take up a healthy diet.

Its aim is to provide a one-stop information and networking resource for staff and volunteers working in food and health

Community Recycling Network

57 Prince Street, Bristol BS1 4QH
T: 0117 942 0142
E: info@crn.org.uk
www.crn.org.uk

CRN exists to promote community waste management in the UK – both as an effective way of tackling Britain's growing waste problem and as a way to build the social economy.

Co-operatives UK

Holyoake House, Hanover Street, Manchester M60 0AS
T: 0161 246 2900
E: info@cooperatives-uk.coop
www.cooperatives-uk.coop

The central membership organisation for co-operative enterprise throughout the UK, promoting co-operative and mutual solutions, working in partnership with our members to build a stronger and increasingly successful co-operative movement.

Council For the Protection of Rural England (CPRE)

128 Southwark Street, London, SE1 0SW
T: 020 7981 2800
E: info@cpre.org.uk
www.cpre.org.uk

A national charity which helps people to protect, enhance and to keep the countryside beautiful, productive and enjoyable for everyone.

Country Markets Ltd

Dunston House, Dunston Road, Sheepbridge, Chesterfield, Derbyshire S41 9QD
T: 01246 261508
E: info@country-markets.co.uk
www.country-markets.co.uk

Country Markets evolved from the Women's Institute Markets. These Societies consist of over 400 separate co-operative Markets selling the goods of more than 12,000 producers, who are shareholders of the Societies.

Country Markets Ltd enables home producers to sell items locally and co-operatively, directly to the public. These producers (aged between 16 and 100 plus) come from all walks of life.

11.1

Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs (DEFRA)

Eastbury House, 30 – 34 Albert Embankment,
London SE1 7TL
T: 08459 33 55 77
E: helpline@defra.gsi.gov.uk,
www.defra.gov.uk

DEFRA's aims are:

- A better environment.
- Thriving rural economies and communities.
- Diversity and abundance of wildlife resources.
- A countryside for all to enjoy.
- Sustainable and diverse farming and food industries that work together to meet the needs of consumers.

Development Trusts Assn (DTA)

33 Corsham Street, London N1 6DR
T: 0845 458 8336
E: info@dta.org.uk
www.dta.org.uk

The DTA aims to enable sustainable economic, social, environmental and cultural regeneration by supporting the efficiency, effectiveness and growth of development trusts throughout England, Wales and Northern Ireland.

Enterprise Directorate

T: 0207 215 5000
E: berr.enquiries@berr.gsi.gov.uk
www.dti.gov.uk/bbf

The Enterprise Directorate continues to be the expert policy unit on small business issues throughout Government. The Enterprise Directorate works across Whitehall, the Regional Development Agencies and key delivery partners to ensure that Government – national, regional and local – understands and responds to the needs of small businesses' and entrepreneurs.

Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group (FWAG)

National Agricultural Centre, Stoneleigh,
Kenilworth, Warwickshire CV8 2RX
T: 024 7669 6699
E: info@fwag.org.uk
www.fwag.org.uk

FWAG provides farmers and landowners with practical advice on making adjustments to farm operations and enhancing farm features in order to support wildlife, landscape, archaeology, access and other conservation issues.

Federation of City Farms and Community Gardens

The Green House, Hereford Street,
Bedminster, Bristol BS3 4NA
T: 0117 923 1800
www.farmgarden.org.uk

The Federation of City Farms and Community Gardens exists to promote, support and represent groups engaged in community-led development of open space through locally managed farming and gardening.

Food Access Network

94 White Lion Street, London N1 9PF T: 020
7837 1228
E: sustain@sustainweb.org
www.sustainweb.org

The Food Access Network is working to tackle diet-related ill health amongst the UK's most disadvantaged communities. By addressing the underlying causes of food poverty, we aim to ensure that everyone in the UK has access to healthy, affordable food – regardless of their income, age or social exclusion.

11.1

Friends of the Earth

26-28 Underwood Street,
London N1 7JQ
T: 020 7490 1555
www.foe.co.uk

One of the leading environmental pressure groups in the UK and campaigns for sustainable farming.

Garden Organic

Ryton Organic Gardens
Coventry CV8 3LG
T: 024 7630 3517
E: enquiry@gardenorganic.org.uk
www.gardenorganic.org.uk

Garden Organic, the UK's leading organic growing charity, has been at the forefront of the organic horticulture movement for 50 years and is dedicated to researching and promoting organic gardening, farming and food.

Garden Organic carries out research, runs events and courses, maintains the heritage seed library and supports a network of local groups.

Good Gardeners Association

4 Lisle Place, Wootton-Under-Edge,
Gloucestershire GL12 7AZ
Registered charity for gardeners.
T: 01455 520322
E: office@goodgardeners.org.uk
www.goodgardeners.org.uk

Groundwork

Lockside, 5 Scotland Street, Birmingham B1
2RR
T: 0121 236 8565
E: info@groundwork.org.uk
www.groundwork.org.uk

An environmental regeneration charity. Their network of over 40 local Trusts works in partnership with local people, local authorities and business to promote economic, social and environmental regeneration.

The Law Society

T: 020 7242 1222
www.lfyb.lawsociety.org.uk

Many solicitors throughout the UK participate in the "Lawyers for Your Business" scheme. This scheme offers a free legal consultation (about 30 minutes) or legal "health-check" to existing businesses, or to those about to set up a business.

LETS Link UK

www.letslinkuk.org

A non-profit voluntary agency with charitable objectives, which has been dedicated to testing, researching and developing sustainable models for local and community-based Local Exchange Trading Schemes and complementary currencies.

National Farmers' Retail & Markets Association

12 Southgate Street, Winchester, Hampshire,
SO23 9EF
T: 0845 45 88 420
www.farma.org.uk

FARMA, is a national co-operative of farmers, producers selling on a local scale, and farmers' markets organisers.

FARMA represents organisations selling direct to customers through farm shops, Pick-Your-Own, farmers' markets, home delivery, on-farm catering, and farm entertainment.

FARMA inspects farm retail and farmers' markets to ensure that they are 'the real thing'.

National Farmers Union

Agriculture House, Stoneleigh Park,
Stoneleigh, Warwickshire CV8 2TZ
T: 024 7685 8500
E: NFU@nfuonline.com
www.nfuonline.com

The NFU is the largest union representing farmers in the UK. It has a range of services in support of the sector.

11.1

National Federation of Credit Unions

Units 1.1&1.2, Howard House, Commercial Centre, Howard St, North Shields, Tyne and Wear NE30 1AR
T: 0191 257 2219

The Federation provides advice and support for community groups wishing to set up credit unions, with emphasis on self help and community development, especially in areas of economic disadvantage.

National Society of Allotment and Leisure Gardeners (NSALG)

O'Dell House, Hunters Road, Corby, Northants NN17 5JE
T: 01536 266576
E: natsoc@nsalg.org.uk
www.nsalg.org.uk

Representing allotments and allotment gardens nationwide, the NSALG provides membership to allotment societies and allotment gardeners.

They aim to protect, promote and preserve allotments for future generations by monitoring allotment law and other relevant legislation. NSALG provides advice and information in respect of sites under threat.

Natural England

1 East Parade, Sheffield S1 2ET
T: 0845 600 3078 (local rate)
www.naturalengland.org.uk

Natural England is the statutory body working for people, places and nature to conserve and enhance biodiversity, landscapes and wildlife in rural, urban, coastal and marine areas.

New Economics Foundation

3 Jonathan Street, London SE11 5NH
T: 020 7820 6300
E: info@neweconomics.org
www.neweconomics.org

NEF promotes practical and creative approaches for a just and sustainable economy.

Permaculture Association

BCM Permaculture Association, London, WC1N 3XX,
T: 0845 4581805
E: office@permaculture.org.uk
www.permaculture.org.uk

The Permaculture Association supports people and projects through training, networking and research, using the ethics and principles of permaculture. Permaculture is about creating sustainable human habitats by following nature's patterns. An ecological design system that inspires and empowers us to create our own solutions to local and global problems. It provides ways to design and create healthy productive places to work, rest and play.

Plunkett Foundation

The Quadrangle, Woodstock, Oxfordshire OX20 1LH
T: 01993 810730
E: info@plunkett.co.uk
www.plunkett.co.uk
www.makinglocalfoodwork.co.uk

The Plunkett Foundation is an educational charity, which supports the development of rural group enterprise world-wide. It promotes and implements economic self-help solutions to rural problems. It can provide information, expertise and up-to-date knowledge relevant to co-operatives and other models of people-centred business.

Radical Routes

16 Sholebroke Avenue, Chapeltown, Leeds LS7 3HB.
T: 0845 330 4510
www.radicalroutes.org.uk

Radical Routes is a network of radical co-ops whose members are committed to working for positive social change. The network is made up mainly of housing co-ops, a few workers co-ops and a couple of social centres. It provides practical advice in setting up housing and worker co-operatives.

11.1

Soil Association

South Plaza, Marlborough Street,
Bristol BS1 3NX

T: 0117 314 5000

E: info@soilassociation.org

www.soilassociation.org

The Soil Association is the UK's leading environmental charity promoting sustainable, organic farming and championing human health.

Soil Association Land Trust

Summerhill Farm, Hittisleigh, Devon EX6 6LP

T: 01647 24511

E: rcurtis@soilassociation.org

www.soilassociation.org/landtrust.aspx

The Trust acquires organic and traditionally managed farms and land through gifts, bequests and purchases, to safeguard their future by managing them in trust in perpetuity, organically and sustainably.

Sustain

94 White Lion Street, London N1 9PF

T: 020 7837 1228

E: sustain@sustainweb.org

www.sustainweb.org

Sustain: The alliance for better food and farming represents over 100 national public interest organisations working at international, national, regional and local level. It advocates food and agriculture policies and practices that enhance the health and welfare of people and animals, improve the working and living environment, enrich society and culture and promote equity.

Tenant Farmers Association

5 Brewery Court, Theale, Reading, Berkshire
RG7 5AJ

T: 0118 9306130

E: tfa@tfa.org.uk

www.tfa.org.uk

TFA was formed in 1981 by a group of farmers who felt that their interests were not being forcefully represented by existing bodies. The TFA is the only organisation dedicated to the agricultural tenanted sector. The TFA lobbies at all levels of Government and gives professional advice to its members.

Thrive

The Geoffrey Udall Centre, Beech Hill
Reading RG7 2AT

T: 0118 988 5688

E: info@thrive.org.uk

www.thrive.org.uk

Thrive is the national horticultural charity enabling disadvantaged, disabled and older people to participate fully in the social and economic life of the community. Thrive supports a network of specialist projects that run programmes of horticultural activity for training and employment, therapy and health.

Triodos Bank

Brunel House, 11 The Promenade, Clifton,
Bristol BS8 3NN

T: 0117 973 9339

www.triodos.co.uk

Triodos Bank is one of Europe's leading ethical banks. They have funds specifically targeted at supporting organic food and farming enterprises.

11.1

UK Social Investment Forum

Holywell Centre, 1 Phipp Street, London
EC2A 4PS
T: 020 7749 9950
E: info@uksif.org
www.uksif.org

UKSIF promotes and encourages socially responsible investment in the UK. Socially responsible investment includes ethical investment, green investment, shareholder activism, social banking and community finance.

Wholesome Food Association

T: 01803 840427
www.wholesome-food.org.uk

The WFA local symbol scheme is a UK-wide food labelling scheme designed to encourage sustainable practices among smaller-scale food growers and producers. It is a low-cost, 'grassroots' alternative to organic certification for people who are growing or producing food for sale in their local region.

The Wildlife Trusts

The Kiln, Waterside, Mather Road, Newark,
Nottinghamshire NG24 1WT
T: 01636 677711
E: enquiry@wildlifetrusts.org
www.wildlifetrusts.org

The Trusts partnership is the UK's leading conservation charity exclusively dedicated to wildlife. They lobby for better protection of the UK's natural heritage and are dedicated to protecting wildlife for the future.

Womens Environmental Network

PO Box 30626, London E1 1TZ
T: 020 7481 9004
E: info@wen.org.uk
www.wen.org.uk

WEN works for women and the environment with a vision of a world where women are aware of their ability to change the environment for the better and actively come together to do so.

Women's Food and Farming Union

National Rural Enterprise Centre, NAC,
Stoneleigh Park, Warwickshire CV8 2LZ
T: 02476 693171
E: admin@wfu.org.uk
www.wfu.org.uk

A voluntary organisation promoting an understanding of and confidence in all aspects of quality British produce.

The WFU believes that by representing the best interests of consumers and producers, both the health and economy of the nation will benefit.

WWOOF

PO Box 2154, Winslow, Buckingham, MK18
3WS www.wwof.org

WWOOF provides opportunities for people to work voluntarily on organic farms, through a network of member farms and regional organisers, benefiting both farmers, who have a useful source of labour, and the volunteers themselves, who gain much from their experience.

11.2 Books and publications

* Available through Soil Association

Bio-Dynamic Agriculture

W Schilthuis, Floris Books, 1994.
ISBN: 086315 178 7

A concise and fully illustrated introduction to the principles and practice of biodynamic agriculture.

The Boxing Clever Cookbook

Jacqui Jones & Joan Wilmot, J & J
Publishing 2002 ISBN: 09543891-0-7

Created by two members of EarthShare CSA. More than just a cookbook, it promotes a new food culture that involves learning what grows best locally and how to turn it into delicious, healthy and innovative meals.

Bringing the Food Economy Home

Helena Norberg-Hodge, Todd Merrifield and
Steven Gorelick (London: Zed Books, 2002.

City Harvest

Sustain. ISBN: 1 903060 00 1

Report on the feasibility of food production in cities. Taking London as its example, it is relevant to all urban areas. It assesses how, and to what extent, urban food growing could make a contribution to social, economic, environmental health, and community and educational development. It covers urban food systems and an overview of existing food growing activities. With examples and case studies, the report presents a conclusion and detailed recommendations.

City Harvest – A Summary of the Feasibility of Growing More Food in London

Sustain, ISBN: 1 903060 06 0

A twelve page summary of the City Harvest report covering the issues and recommendations.

Community Start Up. How to start a community group and keep it going

Caroline Pinder (National Extension College and Community Matters, 1995, ISBN: 1 85356 598 9)

Practical, accessible and illustrated with real life examples. A valuable resource for community building.

Community Supported Agriculture (CSA): A Farmers Manual. How to start up and run a CSA

Matthew Hayes, Milánkovics Kinga (Gödöllo, 2001 ISBN: 963 00 8292 6)

Based on four years experience of establishing and running a CSA. A very useful reference.

Community Supported Agriculture – Making the Connection: A 1995 Handbook for Producers

University of California, Cooperative Extension, Placer County. Auburn CA; Davis, CA: University of California Cooperative Extension, Placer County; Small Farm Center, University of California, 1995. Available from: UC Cooperative Extension, Attn: CSA Handbook, 11477 E Avenue, Auburn CA 95603, T: (001) 530 889 7385

E: ceplacer@ucdavis.edu

***Cultivating Co-operatives – Organisational structures for local food enterprises**

(ISBN: 1904665 047 £10.00 T:0117 914 2446
www.soilassociation.org/csa.aspx)

Diggers and Dreamers 2002-03

D&D Publications ISBN:0 9514945 6 2

The current edition of the guide to communal living, including an up-to-date directory.

Eating Fossil Fuels: Oil, Food and the Coming Crisis in Agriculture

Gabriola Island, Canada: New Society, 2006

11.2

Farms of Tomorrow Revisited: Community Supported Farms, Farm Supported Communities

Steven McFadden, Trauger M. Groh

From philosophy to examples, Farms of Tomorrow Revisited shows us where the CSA concept could take society, and its limitations. Illustrates how CSA is a practical application of the biodynamic ideology.

Grassroots Marketing: Getting Noticed in a Noisy World

Shel Horowitz, (Chelsea Green Publishing Company; ISBN: 1890132683)

Green Cuisine

Anna Ross (Green Peppercorn; ISBN: 095364460X)

Over 130 recipe ideas for everyday cooking with organic ingredients. And some ideas for what to do with that strange knobbly thing; whether it's from the shops, an organic box or home-grown.

Growing Food In Cities

Sustain, ISBN: 1 900670 56 9

Report on the benefits of urban food growing contains 38 case studies from across the UK and beyond, showing how to take action yourself, and what government can do to help.

Growing in the Community

David Crouch & Joe Sempik (ISBN: 1 84049 204 X)

A guide to good practice for local authorities and allotment associations. It strives to promote a more secure future for allotments by promoting the social and environmental benefits allotments can provide.

The Killing of the Countryside

Graham Harvey (Jonathan Cape 1997, ISBN: 0-09-973661-6)

A powerful and moving account of the devastating effects of post-war farming policy. A compulsive book, beautifully written. Winner of the 1997 BP natural world book award.

The Living Land – Agriculture, Food and Community Regeneration in Rural Europe

Jules Pretty (Earthscan 1998, ISBN: 1 85383-516-1)

This very impressive book eloquently summarises the problems of our current food systems and demonstrates practical ways in which improvements can be made. The result of careful research into sustainable agriculture, food systems and rural communities, the book argues that a large 'sustainability dividend' could become available to create more jobs, more wealth and better lives. Essential reading for everyone interested in countryside issues.

Living Lightly – Travels in Post-Consumer Society

Walter and Dorothy Schwarz (John Carpenter Pub. 1998. ISBN: 1-897766-440)

The authors of this inspiring book have spent three years travelling and gathering first-hand evidence of the effects of, and resistance to, the emerging new global order. They record many examples of common humanity and consideration for others that fly in the face of the dispiriting effects of globalisation. The uplifting message of the book is that the values of co-operation, compassion and the richness of culture are alive and well. Recommended.

11.2

The New Organic Grower: A Master's Manual of Tools and Techniques for the Home and Market Gardener

Eliot Coleman, (Chelsea Green Pub Co, 1998; ISBN: 093003175X)

The information in this book is useful to growers on any scale.

Covers soil, farm economics and labour, crop planning, equipment, green manures, tillage, organic fertilisers, pests, and livestock.

Organic Gardening – The Natural No-Dig Way Charles Dowding

Green Books Ltd, ISBN 9781903998915

Organics at the Crossroads: Future for runaway industry is community level systems, Fearless Publications,

Peter C. Reynolds, Ph.D.

An excellent account of how CSA farms are a solution for sustainable food production and provides vision for a model of CSA that is attractive to a broader base of consumers. Can be read on their website (see Fearless Foods above).

***Pig Ignorant. A Soil Association guide to small scale pig keeping**

(www.soilassociation.org/csa.aspx)

Plastic and Vegetables: A Guide to Organic Growing in Polytunnels

David Storey (IOFGA; ISBN: 1897926030)

This booklet gives sound advice on how to set up polytunnels, how to irrigate them and instructions on the cultivation of a number of suitable crops.

The Seed Saver's Handbook

Jeremy Cherfas et al (Grover Books, 1996, ISBN 1-899233-01-6)

An invaluable guide to seed collecting. What to save, when and how to collect seed, varieties to look out for. Eighty varieties of vegetables and herbs covered.

***Sharing the Harvest: A Guide to Community-Supported Agriculture**

Elizabeth Henderson and Robyn VanEn.

Revised edition (Chelsea Green, 2008, ISBN 978-1933392103)

In this new highly revised and expanded edition, the authors provide new insight into making CSA not only a viable economic model but the right choice for food lovers and farmers alike. Thinking and buying local is quickly moving from a novel idea to a mainstream activity. The groundbreaking first edition helped spark a movement and with this revised edition, Sharing the Harvest is poised to lead the way toward a revitalised agriculture.

Small is Beautiful – A Study of Economics as if People Mattered

E.F. Schumacher (Vintage 1973. This edn. 1993 ISBN: 0 09 922561 1)

Written by a former president of the Soil Association, this influential book takes a critical look at the economic system that is forcing the world into environmental chaos and offers small solutions to this the largest of problems. A classic book whose title and concept have long ago entered common use.

Valuable Vegetables – Growing for Profit and Pleasure

Mandy Pullen, Eco-logic Books, ISBN 1899233121

A really useful book when starting up which includes information on how to start up a Box Scheme or similar, and info on costs and contents.

Vision in Action

Christopher Schaeffer, ISBN: 1 869890 884

Useful for the people and community side of setting up a CSA project. Particularly Section 3 – 'Starting Initiatives'.

11.2

Soil Association publications

***The Biodiversity Benefits of Organic Farming**

Soil Association, May 2000

This report draws together research comparing biodiversity on organic and non-organic holdings and provides conclusive evidence.

www.soilassociation.org

***How to Set up a Vegetable Box Scheme, A Soil Association technical guide**

(Soil Association, Autumn 2001)

Highlights the considerations to be made when setting up a vegetable box scheme from start up finances, finding customers to delivery.

***Marketing Information for Organic Growers (Horticultural Crops) Fact Sheet**

Soil Association, 2001

This fact sheet is designed to assist growers in marketing their produce, through the provision of information on marketing options and ideas, and contact details for accessing useful services, supplies and support.

***Organic Food and Farming Report 2008**

Soil Association

The third annual report on the state of the organic market in the UK. Includes figures on land conversion, market sectors and growth, along with consumer reaction to organic food. Invaluable to those needing to quantify opportunities and demand for organic food.

www.soilassociation.org

***A Share in the Harvest A feasibility study for Community Supported Agriculture.**

(Soil Association 2001 ISBN: 0 905 200 82 9)

A report by the Soil Association which investigates community involvement in farming around the globe and whether CSA is a viable component in the development of local and sustainable food economies in England. www.soilassociation.org/csa.aspx

11.3 Farming Press

Country Smallholding

Archant Devon, Exeter Airport Business Park,
Clyst Honiton, Exeter EX5 2UL
T: 01392 888481
E: editorial.csh@archant.co.uk
W: www.countrysmallholding.co.uk

Farmers Guardian

PO Box 18, Olivers Place, Fulwood, Preston
PR2 9GU
T: 01772 557227

Farmers Weekly

Quadrant Office, The Quadrant, Sutton,
Surrey SM2 5AS
Classifieds: T: 020 8652 3222
E: farmers.weekly@rbi.co.uk

Living Earth

Soil Association, South Plaza,
Marlborough Street, Bristol BS1 3NX
T: 0117 314 5000
E: tyoung@soilassociation.org

Organic Farming

Soil Association, South Plaza,
Marlborough Street, Bristol BS1 3NX
T: 0117 314 5000
E: ff@soilassociation.org

Permaculture Magazine

W: www.permaculture-magazine.co.uk

Smallholder

3 Falmouth Business Park, Bickland Water
Road, Falmouth, Cornwall TR11 4SZ
T: 01326 213333
W: www.smallholder.co.uk

11.4 Suggested guidelines for effective meetings

Before you go:

- Make sure someone is chairing the meeting. Check the agenda and prepare anything you need to take to the meeting. What background information do you need? What are the objectives of the meeting?
- If nobody is chairing the meeting – offer to do it yourself.
- If you only need to attend part of the meeting – make this clear to everyone in advance.
- If you are chairing the meeting, circulate the agenda in advance.

If you have something to add to the agenda for the meeting:

- Tell the chair the purpose of the agenda item (e.g. to decide ‘yes’ or ‘no’ on this decision, or to define the wording of a response to a proposal)?
- Tell the chair how long you think this agenda item will take.
- Do you need to circulate background information or a draft proposal to speed up the decision-making process in the meeting?

In the meeting:

- Is there an agenda?
- Does everyone have the necessary background briefing to allow quick decisions to be made? If not can you reschedule this part of the meeting?
- Are you sticking to the point?

Chairing a meeting:

- Prepare an agenda to show what is the purpose of each item on the agenda, who is responsible for introducing each item and how long that person expects to take on this item.
- Encourage everyone who is coming to the meeting to give you their agenda items in advance so that you can plan the meeting effectively.
- Circulate the agenda to everyone in advance.
- Start on time.
- Decide if minutes need taking and who is going to take them.
- Check agreement of meeting end time and that everyone will stay to the end.
- Stick to the agenda. Prevent side-tracking. It may help to write up the topic being considered and its purpose in the meeting so people can refer to it
- If new issues arise note them down and either discuss them under ‘Any other business’ or carry them forward to a future meeting.

11.4

- State the purpose of each agenda item as it comes up.
- Make sure that issues are actually resolved and decided rather than just discussed.
- Encourage participation from reluctant members. Use eye contact to include people in decisions.
- Watch for dominant members. Ask them to be briefer and/or to save their contribution to another time.
- Don't tolerate side conversations or interruptions.
- Summarise points and clarify discussion frequently. This helps ensure that everyone has a shared understanding.
- If there is a disagreement, decide if it OK to agree to disagree. If not, encourage participants to stick to facts and explore alternatives. It might be worth 'pausing' the dialogue until the next meeting (especially if there are other people in the meeting who cannot contribute to the disagreement)
- Keep to time.
- Arrange a date, purpose and chair for a next meeting if necessary.
- End on time or get the group's agreement to extend.

Taking minutes:

- Record decisions, key information and actions agreed.
- Circulate the minutes promptly to all participants.

11.5 How to run a conversation café/discussion group

Even if your CSA project has a core group that takes on most of the decision-making on behalf of the CSA membership, there are often big decisions to be made that would benefit from having more of the membership involved. The notes below are taken from the Soil Association 'Action Organic' manual. For details of how Stroud Community Agriculture uses conversation cafes see 'The story of CSA in Stroud' section 11.

Why host a discussion group?

Making the world a better place, and protecting the environment is largely down to what people do. Changing what people do is largely determined by their habits, influence from people around them and what they know and believe. For many people, one of the best ways to engage with and deepen or change thinking about an issue is through discussion. Holding a discussion session is therefore a very valuable action. It is also something that a local group is uniquely placed to do – you have individual contacts, you know the issues of interest, and you can quite easily invite people to come along.

The principles of a good discussion:

The following are features of engaging discussions:

- Everyone gets to speak, even those who are not outspoken
- No one dominates the whole evening, even the expert (you can always arrange for them to give a presentation another day)
- Many people are challenged to think something new, without getting upset
- There is an atmosphere of inquiry rather than proving a point
- Everyone spends a lot of time listening properly

How to host a good discussion:

The arrangements are quite straight forward:

- Let people know
- Identify the right people to ask (perhaps a mixture of old and new faces, including a few with some level of knowledge and commitment to various values)
- Make a comfortable space perhaps with food and drink (maybe a cosy café or front room)
- Arrange for people to actually show up

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Hosting a discussion that meets the principles above takes some forethought. Here are some things that might help:

- Telling everyone that the purpose of the session is to enquire into an issue rather than take a decision or set actions
- Sitting people in small groups, and letting them know they can move around
- Setting a start and finish time, so it doesn't ramble on for too long
- Posing a question that encourages enquiry rather than yes/no answers (e.g. "How might we be affected by GM technology?" rather than "Is GM wrong?")
- Tactfully curbing people from ranting – don't listen, or talk, too long
- Tactfully making spaces for quieter people
- Setting rules of engagement for every one at the start (egg no shouting, no interrupting, listen carefully, acknowledge differing views, etc)
- Setting the group a focus, egg asking them to report back on the most interesting findings, or to write a paragraph reflecting their group's views
- Bringing the group back to focus if it strays off the point, or gets stuck on a detail

It can be helpful to ask each person at the end to reflect on what they have learnt, or what new ideas they have, or what they might develop as a result of the conversation. This can help the new ideas to take root.

There is a great USA website – www.conversationcafe.org – which describes in detail how to run an interesting conversation to a particular format called conversation café. It is worth a look even if you decide not to follow that exact model.

Some people do like to see concrete actions and decisions coming out of a meeting. Business meetings are essential for most groups. It can be helpful to set a different time for business meetings and for exploring issues. This will probably lead to more fruitful discussions, but also to more efficient business meetings that are not slowed down by general issues.

Ideas for discussions

If you have had fruitful discussion or ideas for discussion you would like to share, why not post them on our discussion forum, see www.whyorganic.org – 'Interactive organic'. Some ideas we came up with include:

- How can Soil Association local groups make a difference?
- What can I do to live more sustainably?
- What will our food and farming look like in 2010?

An idea used by a Schumacher workshop:

"We began the training by imagining an economic system based on the values of co-operation, fair distribution of wealth, mutual aid, ecological responsibility, social accountability, respect for cultural differences, human scale, and local production for local consumption. What would the economic institutions for land tenure and capital flow look like in such a value-based economic system? How could labour be organised to protect the dignity of workers and achieve production of diverse goods at a local scale?"

11.6 Example risk assessment form

From: <http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg163.pdf>

Organisation's name:

Date of risk assessment:

<p>Step 1 What are the hazards?</p> <p>Spot hazards by:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. walking around your workplace; 2. asking your employees what they think; 3. visiting the Your industry areas of the HSE website or calling HSE Infoline; 4. calling the Workplace Health Connect Adviceline or visiting their website; 5. checking manufacturers' instructions; 6. contacting your trade association. <p>Don't forget long-term health hazards.</p>	
<p>Step 2 Who might be harmed and how?</p> <p>Identify groups of people. Remember:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● some workers have particular needs; ● people who may not be in the workplace all the time; ● members of the public; ● if you share your workplace think about how ● your work affects others present. <p>Say how the hazard could cause harm.</p>	
<p>Step 3 What are you already doing?</p> <p>List what is already in place to reduce the likelihood of harm or make any harm less serious.</p>	

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<p>What further action is necessary?</p> <p>You need to make sure that you have reduced risks ‘so far as is reasonably practicable’. An easy way of doing this is to compare what you are already doing with good practice. If there is a difference, list what needs to be done.</p>	
<p>Step 4 How will you put the assessment into action?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Remember to prioritise. ● Deal with those hazards that are high-risk and have serious consequences first. ● Record what actions need doing, by whom and by when. ● Then record when they are done. 	
<p>Step 5 Review date:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Set a date to review your assessment to make sure you are still improving, or at least not sliding back. ● If there is a significant change in your workplace, remember to check your risk assessment and, where necessary, amend it. 	

11.7 Stroud Community Agriculture's membership pack

Welcome to Stroud Community Agriculture! We look forward to seeing you at our farm days at Hawkwood (fourth Saturday of every month) and our other social events. Please feel free to contact any member of the core group (details below) if you have any questions about SCA.

This membership pack contains the agreements you signed up to on your joining form. It is made up of three sections; 1) Our agreements as a co-operative, 2) Vegetable shares – the details and 3) Buying meat, eggs and extra veg. The membership pack is updated from time to time. The latest version is always available from Carol, our Membership Administrator, via membership@xxxxxxxx.org or tel xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx.

Our aims, principles and vision are covered in a separate 'Joining Pack'.

Our agreements as a co-operative – Operating rules

This agreement (our secondary rules) sets out the commitment between Stroud Community Agriculture, the farmers and you – the members. These should be read in addition to our primary rules as an Industrial and Provident Society, Community Co-operative. Copies of the primary rules are available in the packing shed at Hawkwood or from the core group.

1. Members of Stroud Community Agriculture share responsibility for the success of their community farm:
 - Members agree with the aims and principles of Stroud Community Agriculture (see Joining Pack)
 - Members pay an annual membership as a monthly standing order. The membership fee of £24/year/household (concessions £12/year) is paid annually or by monthly standing order. This fee may be changed at an Annual General Meeting.
 - Members agree to support the farm through both fat and lean times and endeavor to give at least thirteen weeks' notice to cancel.
 - Members sign up at their own risk. While every effort will be made to supply produce entitlements, no guarantee can be given as to specific produce availability, quantity or quality.
2. The project is managed by a voluntary "Core Group" of members which carries out day-to-day administration and planning on behalf of all members.
 - The Core Group is made up of between 5 and 9 elected members. There is always at least one farmer on the Core Group. So we will have a maximum of 8 members from the community on the core group and minimum of 1 farmer. The farm team will decide which of the farmers sit on the core group (maybe for a year at a time), and the community will decide who are the other (maximum) 8.

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- Any member of SCA may stand for election to the Core Group if proposed and seconded by two other SCA members.
 - Each year a third of the elected Core Group will stand down, starting with the longest serving. This doesn't preclude others standing down as well. No one person can remain a Core Group member for more than 4 years without standing down. Anyone who stands down will be able to stand for re-election along with new nominees at the Annual General Meeting.
 - The AGM can elect the Core Group if at least 20% of members are present. Alternatively a postal ballot can be arranged. Major decisions can only be made at core group meetings made up of at least 5 of them.
 - All Core Group meetings are open to observers and minutes are available on request.
3. The farmers are self-employed and are paid on a monthly basis in arrears by Stroud Community Agriculture. The farmers manage some voluntary and/or casual farm workers. The farmers have the day-to-day freedom to manage the farm in line with the overall aim of the project. They will grow a range of produce using only organic and biodynamic practices. The farmers will plan their production according to the overall needs of the members, who will be consulted.
 4. All members are encouraged to contribute to and be involved in the further growth of the project in whatever way they choose – although this is not a condition of membership. The public meetings provide an opportunity to contribute towards the development of the project and a newsletter helps keep everyone informed of developments and current issues. Notice of these public meetings is given in the newsletters and by email to supporters.
 5. These are the names of the current core group members. Please contact any of them if you would like more details or if you would like to observe a core group meeting:

Name	Phone	Email
 6. The farmers and growers take responsibility for the day-to-day management of the farm and all issues concerning farming and growing policy. Stroud Community Agriculture is an enabling coop, which gives the farmers and growers the freedom to take initiative in all aspects relating to farm management on its behalf.
 7. We sometimes buy in vegetables to maintain supply to members. We only buy vegetables that are in season. Wherever possible we buy from local suppliers. If this is not possible we buy from other UK suppliers. Only in extreme circumstances do we buy from other European suppliers. We don't buy from outside Europe. Bought-in items are indicated to members.
 8. Any surplus produce not needed by the members is sold through local retail and wholesale channels. The proceeds from these sales go into the Stroud Community Agriculture bank account and are put towards running costs & capital development (e.g. polytunnels, equipment, etc)
 9. The farmers have access to a separate bank account to run the farm funded by the main Stroud Community Agriculture account.
 10. The core group can spend up to £5000 per item without approval from the membership. The core group will not borrow money without first consulting members.

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11. The core group has made a decision to minimise the insurance cover on the project for ethical reasons.
12. In addition to the membership fee, members can receive a share of the vegetables from the farm. The recommended contribution level to receive a weekly supply of vegetables is currently £30/month/adult. The suggested contribution for each additional vegetable share for the same household is £20. Half shares or fortnightly shares are available at £15/month/adult. The share contribution will need to be adjusted at intervals. Members pay the agreed contribution by monthly standing order.
13. There is a small bursary to support potential members who cannot afford the recommended level of financial contribution. The core group encourages applications from individuals and proposals from third parties to make use of this bursary. Contributions from other members to this bursary fund are welcome. SCA supports this bursary up to a maximum of 1% of veg turnover. The standard bursary rate is £25p.c.m. If people need more than this it would need core group approval.
14. The monthly cost of a vegetable share includes a four-week 'holiday' every year (48 weeks for the price of 52). Since the farm needs supporting throughout the year, monthly payments need to continue even if you are on holiday. Members usually arrange for a friend to collect their vegetables when they are away. If you decide to cancel your membership while you are away, you would need to go on a waiting list to rejoin.
15. Veg share holidays. Members who wish to take a "holiday" for up to 3 months are asked to find someone else to take their veg. We ask that you maintain your Standing Order and make any financial arrangements between you and the people who get your veg share. We will provide you with contact details for a few people at the top of the waiting list. If you want to stop paying for more than 3 months but less than 12 months you will need to go on the waiting list but will be offered the next available share after you come back. If you stop paying for more than 12 months you will need to go to the bottom of the waiting list.
16. These rules are flexible; only needing the approval of a majority of members. Any agreed changes need to be confirmed at the next Annual General Meeting.

Vegetable shares – the details

1. Members paying for a vegetable share receive a share of the farm's produce whether fresh, frozen or processed. This varies with the seasons.
2. Members sign up at their own risk. While every effort will be made to supply a share to all members, we cannot guarantee availability, quantity or quality.
3. Members are encouraged to pick up (and in some cases harvest) their produce from the farm at Hawkwood. However, there are pick-up points in Brookthorpe, Stroud and Nailsworth.
4. If you are not able to collect your veg on a particular week, please arrange for someone else to pick it up. If this is not possible, please let Mark know a week in advance. This prevents us wasting veg. Mark's phone number is xxxxxxxxx or you can leave him a note in the packing shed.
5. For those who are collecting direct from the farm at Hawkwood, we put out the veg for collection twice each week: on Tuesday afternoons, so you can collect from 6pm on Tuesday evening. You are asked to collect your veg before 12 noon on Friday; the second

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harvest is on Friday afternoons, available from 6pm Fridays and to be collected before 12noon Tuesday. Any produce left over on a Tuesday or Friday lunchtime will be put into the gift box. If you miss your collection times then you will have to take from the gift box and not take any fresh produce left out for those collecting later. If it is dark when you collect there is a security light outside the packing shed. As you go into the shed there is a light switch on your right.

6. In the shed you will see a blackboard that tells you how much veg makes up one share. The blackboard also tells you where the veg comes from if it has not been grown at our sites at Hawkwood & Brookthorpe. If we need to buy in wholesale veg it is always organic and as local as possible. We don't buy from outside Europe. Please use the scales to weigh your own veg and use the bags and boxes under the bench to take it away. If there is anything on the list that you don't want, please weigh your share and put it in the gift box. You can also take anything you fancy out of the gift box.
7. Due to persistent burglaries (meat (twice), eggs and various bits of equipment) we have reluctantly made the decision to fit a combination padlock to the packing shed door. This seems like our best option to protect your assets. The combination is currently xxxx. The number will change from time to time. To help you remember, this is xxxxxxxxxxxx! To open the padlock, dial in the numbers first and then depress the padlock. To close the padlock; scramble the numbers first and then depress the padlock. There is a security light outside the shed, which we hope gives enough light to unlock it in the dark! If you have any problems please don't hesitate to call: Laurence on xxxxx or Mark on xxxxxxxx.
8. If you collect your vegetables from the farm site at Brookthorpe, the Painswick Inn or Green Spirit the vegetables are dropped off once per week, on Tuesday evenings. We guarantee that they will be there from 9am (8am for Brookthorpe) on Wednesday mornings
9. At Brookthorpe, our walled garden is the second brick wall on your right as you drive up the drive. Enter the walled garden by the second door and your veg will be in the first shed on your left. You may want to take a torch, if it is dark. If you have any trouble finding it, please phone Laurence, one of our farmers, on xxxxxxxxxxxx, as he lives at our Brookthorpe site.

Directions to our Brookthorpe site

From Stroud: Take the A46 north from Stroud. After 11/2 miles it splits. Bear left and take the A4173 towards Gloucester. 5 miles from Stroud you reach the village of Brookthorpe. There is a right turn in the village – slightly before this on the left there is an entrance to Brookthorpe Hall (a nursing home) – a green sign. Turn in here and follow the drive. From Gloucester: Take the A4173 from Gloucester. Cross over the motorway and enter the village of Brookthorpe. Pass The Four Mile Inn on your right. 150 yards later, on the right, there is an entrance to Brookthorpe Hall (a nursing home) – a green sign. Turn in here and follow the drive.

10. At the Painswick Inn, the lock-up is at the top of the slope leading up from Slad Road to the PIP courtyard. Your veg will be in a bag with your name on it. If it is dark when you collect there is a light switch just inside the door of the lock-up. You can pick up a key for the lock-up from the BDAA office on the top floor of the British School during weekday mornings. If these times are not good for you, please call the BDAA office on xxxxxxxxxxxx. You will need to pay £5 for your key. £2.50 of this is a deposit that you can have back if you return your key.

11.7 **Buying meat, eggs and extra veg**

11. Members can buy frozen beef and pork, which is produced from our own cows and pigs. They can also buy eggs, cheese and staple veg (such as potatoes, carrots and onions) all of which is bought in from local, organic suppliers. These items are all available at the SCA shed at Hawkwood.
12. There is a folder in the veg shed at Hawkwood, which we use as our recording system for these purchases. There is a sheet for each individual/family.
13. Please fill in the price of the items you are taking under each category (we do not need to know whether it is steak or burgers – just beef) and add up the total in the “To pay” column. This will keep a tally of what you owe. When you make a payment enter the amount in the “Paid” column, and adjust your balance.
14. We would rather that the balance remains positive, to avoid cash flow ‘issues’. We suggest therefore, that if you wish to use this service that you pay a cheque at the beginning of the month or week to cover your expected purchases for that period giving you ‘credit’ in your balance. When you purchase items, subtract the cost from your balance, until close to 0. Then please re-credit your account. Please pay by cheque and leave in the folder. Do not leave any cash!
15. Another option is to increase your present standing order to cover your expected purchases. This is easily done by phoning your bank, or over the internet, though you need to let us know you have done that. In this case the extra amount would then be a positive balance on your sheet.
16. We hope this system will work well for all, but if there are any problems then get in touch with Laurence – phone xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx.

11.8 Stroud Community Agriculture – sample membership questionnaire

Stroud Community Agriculture belongs to its members, who are responsible for setting priorities. Members are encouraged to take an active part in the life of the farm or community if they wish to. A core group of members (currently 9) undertake much of the day to day planning. We want to make it as easy as possible for everyone to contribute their views and influence what happens next. You can make your household's contribution to the dialogue by speaking to other members, coming to planning events, writing in the newsletter or, if you wish to, by sending in this questionnaire.

If you'd like to see the new business plan, or hear how things are progressing with the work the members prioritised at the last members' meeting, please contact the core group.

Overall things are going well at present – the farm is running smoothly and increasing in capacity, the finances are OK, and many members are enjoying having a part in the community. After a period of rapid growth and change, we have been consolidating this year. We may well take a new leap next year though!

- Your name (leave blank if you prefer)

- What is the best thing about Stroud Community Agriculture at the moment for your household?

- What is the worst thing?

- What do you think is the top priority for us to sort out next?

- If you wanted to be more active in the CSA, what aspect would you get involved in?

11.8

- Small groups of members are working on particular interests. Would you like to go along to any of these groups to see what they are doing?

Children's group fundraising practical farm work events and celebrations
 study groups making a community room overall management and planning

Please let us know if you would like to start a new workgroup. Yes No

- How are you finding the vegetables? (if you have them) What do you want more of? What do you want less of? What else would you like?

- How are you finding the meat? (if you have any)

- Do you think you are contributing about the right amount of money, too much or too little?

- We are discussing setting up a land trust. It would raise money and buy land to be put in trust for use by Stroud Community Agriculture.

For more details email cflt@communitylandtrust.org.uk or see the website www.communitylandtrust.org.uk/farmland

This would be a large project, needing a group of enthusiastic leaders. Please let us know if you would like to work on this, or if you have views about a land trust.

- Any other comments?

Please return to xxxxxxxxxx@xxxx, or leave in the pack shed at Hawkwood for me, or post to XXXXXXXXXXXX. We'll have a look at all the returned forms in our November meeting, but you can send in your thoughts or replies at any time.

11.9 Stroud Community Agriculture – members' exit questionnaire

Dear _____

I am sorry to hear that you will be leaving Stroud Community Agriculture.

To help us improve SCA for future people would you mind taking the time to answer the following 3 questions and send your answers back to me by email or post?

1. Why are you leaving SCA?

2. Is there anything we could have done to help you to stay?
(Could we still do it and get you back?)

3. Anything else about SCA that you want to tell us?

Many thanks for taking the time to help us.

11.10 County farm proposal

A statement of community-based enterprise support for the farming business at Leaze Farm

From

Leonard Stanley Food Enterprise

To

Gloucestershire County council

Leonard Stanley Food Enterprise (LSFE) is the working title of a group of local people who are dedicated to creating an organisation that is able to source fresh, local seasonal food for local people and in so doing actively support the local farming and food producing economy to help establish a more sustainable community.

We have recently held a public meeting at which residents in the village and neighbouring communities have shown their support for such a venture and it is with this in mind that we have formulated a draft proposal for the formation of the enterprise – see the attached Proposal.

We are determined to pursue the ambitions of a growing number of local people (we now have some 60-7 individuals) and would highlight the following as indications of our firm resolution to meet our commitments;

- Over 15 people have committed to being part of the steering group that will take the project forward
- We have secured support funding from Rural Enterprise Gateway via The Royal Agricultural College, Cirencester
- We have secured the advice of English Food and Farming Partnerships, including help with business planning
- We have the support of our County Councillor, Parish Councillors and Member of Parliament
- Several members of the steering group are farmers or have farming backgrounds
- We have the support from founding members of Stroud Community Agriculture and Stroud Slad Farm – both successful examples of Community-supported Agriculture
- We have in the region of 40 pledges of membership and of private financial support (including equipment and specialist advice e.g. veterinary advice)

We propose to demonstrate through the course of the next tenancy of Leaze Farm that we are able to build our Food Enterprise into a sound business that is able to offer a significant benefit to the local farming and food producing economy by providing producers with a direct route to local consumers in a variety of ways – weekly membership food boxes, seasonal markets, access to retail outlets – that are flexible and can help to give a surety of income to producers.

11.10 **How does this affect Leaze Farm?**

We acknowledge the important opportunity that Leaze Farm provides to entrant farmers in an increasingly demanding industry and wish to enhance the service offered by providing the tenant with an opportunity to sell his produce directly to local consumers. We believe that in providing access to a known membership with a regular requirement for produce, and by being able to offer other local outlet opportunities, that this will have a positive effect on the success of the farm business and help to provide a degree of stability and surety to that new business.

We also acknowledge that the local farming economy is an increasingly important element to the viability and sustainability of our rural community and it is one that we believe we need to support both socially and economically. We believe that our proposal is able to provide many benefits to the tenant farmer and their family, not least to help them feel an integral part of our community – a stay that is by necessity, often all too brief.

We are deliberate in making our statement general and non-specific regarding the nature of the arrangement between the tenant at Leaze Farm and our Food Enterprise as we believe that the success of the joint venture very much depends upon the individual eventual tenant selected by GCC, and in meshing their business plan with the expectations of our membership. We are structuring our activities in a manner that mean we have the flexibility to be able to adapt our requirements to the type of produce/livestock being reared at Leaze Farm and are therefore happy to discuss a variety of possible outcomes – it may be that Leaze Farm can only provide meat occasionally, in which case we can source vegetables and other produce from other local sources and produce some of it ourselves. Alternatively we are happy to discuss the supply of much of the weekly requirement. We also have to say that this offer is completely free of obligation and that we fully accept that a tenant may choose not to take us up on this offer at all. That is fine – we only wish for them to know that this opportunity of support is available if required.

We are absolutely committed to creating a successful Food Enterprise and propose to develop ourselves into a sound business alongside that of the business starting at Leaze Farm. We will develop our business plan and our membership to the same timescales as that required for the tenancy of Leaze Farm so that our progress can be of benefit to the tenant and show, by the time of final selection, that we are able to provide a reliable and direct local food outlet for produce from Leaze Farm.

11.11 Open days, festivals and celebrations

There are plenty of opportunities around which to organise a get together on the farm, such as the seasons: first day of spring, midsummer's eve and so on. Pagan and Celtic festivals are built around seasons and food production. There are lots of good websites with festival suggestions. Other opportunities for community fun are offered by the agricultural calendar: lambing days, apple day, organic week (October) and pumpkin day. Here are some specific suggestions taken from the Soil Association Action Organic manual.

Harvest supper

This can be an opportunity to appreciate farmers and share a meal cooked with producer from the farm. If you set up the harvest supper as a conversation café (see below), you can get members involved in future planning.

Plant and cake swap

Members come and bring cakes, seeds or plants, which they leave on a table, and exchange for something they find there. Offerings are preferably home grown or home made. Everyone can be offered a seat and a cup of tea so there is time for chat. The event is usually held in someone's house or a local hall and could be attended by plot holders on an allotment site or a local organic group. In some places, this has become an annual spring event.

Scarecrows

In some places, scarecrow making has become an annual public event with some fairly outlandish contributions (such as Mr Blobby), which probably would scare the crows off, even if they attract the visitors. With the farmers' permission, scarecrows offer a point of interest even to an open arable field.

Calf naming

Local people are invited to the farm to meet a new calf. The farmer might explain the pedigree of the animal and something about how it will be raised. Everyone can suggest a name and one is selected. The person who proposed the name may be entitled to the first milk from the calf, or similar. Good for farm shops or school visits.

Wild food walks

There are many variations on this theme. Wild food walks help people look at the detail in the hedgerow. A wild food walk might entail a blackberrying outing followed by jam making together at somebody's house. There may be a fine crab apple or sloe patch in the parish and an annual collecting day (ask permission!), which could be preceded by a blossom walk earlier in the season and followed by a jam competition at the village fête or a Christmas sloe gin party. If you have a good path then a pram parade to a community orchard or neglected fruit tree could make an outing for a toddlers' group. Edible seaweed trips to the beach are another possibility.

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A book called Wild Food (see below) is an excellent guide, with recipes for all kinds of plants. Be sure of correct identification and do not over pick scarce plants.

Wild food water trips with a fishing theme might be arranged for an open day at the fishing club, or with fishermen offering sea trips, such as occur during the annual fish festival in Pembrokeshire.

Night-time walks

A night-time walk can help open your eyes and ears anew to a familiar place. Walkers can bring a candle lantern, using a jam jar. The walk could finish with a shared soup made with food from the landscape the walk passed through. Good for Christmas Eve, Halloween, Winter Solstice, etc. Be careful of twisted ankles of course – find a flat path.

Field names

Field names are often intriguing or illuminating. Farmers and landowners often know field names and they can be found in title deeds, on the tithe maps of the 1840s held in County Records Offices or on individual farm maps. The names can be kept in circulation, perhaps by making a sign with the field name where a footpath crosses a field. Where a field has only a number, people who live near the field could create a name. For more on field names and field days, contact Common Ground (see below). Similarly, people may like to learn the names of rivers and brooks that pass through farmland. In some places local artists have made signs for river names.

Art exhibitions

Art can help people appreciate a place from a different perspective. Students from a local college could be invited to undertake their photography project on an urban allotment site. Artists are often pleased for an opportunity to show their work in a farm shop, café, etc and may have paintings or poems relating to the land or agriculture. The library may be able to tell you about local art or craft societies or classes, so that you can invite wood turners to use your apple prunings, potters to use your river silt, or weavers to use your wool.

Local food picnics and roving meals

For summer, you could have a 'bring and share' picnic with dishes containing at least one item of local food. In winter a roving meal using local ingredients is a friendly occasion, good for cycling, riding, or rambling clubs. A different course is served at each person's house. The Soil Association's website lists where to buy organic food locally, including farm shops, (www.whyorganic.org) and the National Association of Farmers' Markets website lists UK farmers' markets (www.farmersmarkets.net). Many places now have their own local food directory listing where to buy local food, and the local authority may know whether there is one for the area. Traditional Foods of Britain (see below) is an inventory of local dishes.

Of appeal to those who like the exotic are flowery dinner parties, where locally picked flowers can replace the mange tout from Kenya. Several flowers are edible, including elderflowers and alexanders as fritters, chamomile as tea, broom buds in salad and clover as wine (see Wild Food below).

11.11

Giant pies

Several communities have celebrated an event by jointly producing and eating a giant pie or cake, perhaps to a local recipe. There may even be a chance to have an entry in the Guinness Book of Records.

Food paths and pictures

In some places, people have made large displays by arranging food on the ground in the shape of a snake, flowers, etc. This can be turned into a public picnic. Food can also be arranged to form a pathway, for example by placing rows of apples in the grass through a cider orchard, to lead to the drinking room.

Apple Day and variations

Common Ground (contact details in 11.2 above) has promoted Apple Day to celebrate orchards and varieties of apples. Every year in the autumn people hold events with apple bobbing, tasting, identification, juice pressing, cider drinking and so on. Common Ground also promotes Tree Dressing on the first weekend in December.

See appendix below for details on how Stroud Community agriculture organises its apple juicing parties.

Equally, plums, pears and cherries deserve a day of their own. A rhubarb festival is held in Wakefield, a garlic festival happens on the Isle of Wight, and a whitebait festival has been held in Southend with a blessing of the sea. Potatoes lend themselves to celebration of variety. Pumpkin Days, perhaps around Halloween, can bring out the monster, weird and wonderful squashes of the season, pumpkin carvings and lanterns, and seed trading.

Children's vegetable activities

Good for fêtes, or introducing new dietary habits to sceptical young people, are potato printing and vegetables necklaces (try radish jewels, swede beads and carrot slices). Ugly 'people' can be made with vegetables and matchsticks and hidden around the garden to scare the slugs away. Thin vegetable leaves can go into a flower press.

Easter eggs

Guaranteed to get children investigating every tree hollow and bramble bush is the annual Easter egg hunt, with eggs (chocolate or otherwise) concealed in grass nests.

Egg racing, using long sticks down a sloping field is perhaps best if the eggs are hard-boiled first. Variations are pancake races and egg-and-spoon races.

Egg lobbing is a team game, in pairs – more entertaining if the eggs are not hard-boiled. The winning pair is the one which throws and catches an egg over the longest distance.

Egg painting is more dainty, and if you know someone with happy free-range chickens, it's nice to collect the eggs yourselves. To empty them, make a 1mm hole in the top and bottom, using a pin, and blow hard over a bowl. If your paint is waterproof, everyone can hang their egg in a particular tree. If you tie a string to a matchstick, it can be posted through the hole in the egg and will wedge sideways, so the egg will hang.

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Snail racing

Before the race, entrants select a snail and write their initials on the shell with a waterproof marker. Initialled snails are put in a bucket, ready for the race. When everyone has a snail, the race begins. The race track is a board, not too rough and free from salt. It has two concentric circles marked on it, the outer one about three feet from the inner one. Racers begin inside the inner circle and the winner is the first to cross the outer line. You may find one or two people willing to try out a French recipe on the losers – see River Cottage Cook Book below.

Racing floating fruits down a stream may be preferable for some!

Meeting places

A farm, orchard, allotment or Community Supported Agriculture scheme can offer a place where everyone is welcome, often of special interest to teenagers. For example, it could be a shed, BBQ place, tree house, hammock, fire-pit or picnic table.

Slug contests

The annual biggest slug competition is very horrible. You will need accurate scales rather than a tape measure, and perhaps a pair of gloves. In Egton Bridge in Yorkshire, they wisely opt for the largest gooseberry competition instead.

Special plantings

Fruit trees are often planted in memory after a funeral. But plantings can be made at birthdays or other special days too. A tree such as walnut or mulberry that takes a long while to fruit can be planted at a Christening. Garlic can be planted on Christmas Eve and harvested at Midsummer. Sweetcorn can be planted in a maze shape at a spring party, for a reunion at the end of the summer. A child's name can be planted in lettuce. A cross-fertile pair of apples can make a nice wedding present.

Maps, banners and posters

When a community makes its own map of a place, it can show what matters. A community's map need not be a surveying masterpiece but could be a work of art. The one produced by Robertsbridge WI is a tapestry hanging in the village hall, showing the old hop fields, the Sussex Cattle Society, the fishing stream, etc. Others, such as Community Action for Food and the Environment, have produced maps showing all the local food outlets, and several groups have made maps of local food trails for days out. Common Ground (see below) produce a publication on parish maps.

You could ask everybody to take a photo of a small thing in the parish or farm that they like to see, or they have known for a long time, or they especially like. It might be a stile, a ring of mushrooms, the dairy man's wellies that sit outside the pub in the evening, or images from the local allotments. You could lend them a disposable camera to take their shot. Then you can make a montage of everybody's photos.

Community centres sometimes hang banners of the local area made by community groups and these can lend themselves to a food and farming theme.

11.11

Window boxes

Window boxes can grow food such as herbs and salad. As part of a street party, school project or village in bloom competition you may find several new gardening enthusiasts. Organisers may like to provide seedlings, basic growing instructions, and a wooden crate lined with plastic and filled with reasonable soil.

Festival days and processions

Many places have festival traditions still in living memory, which can be revived and often involve food or agriculture: Mayday, Whitsun, Valentines Day, St George's Day and so on. Some of these are listed on Common Ground's website. Many ethnic groups also have food festivals and traditions.

Old ways with food

Listening to older people talking about food or old ways of agriculture is rarely a disappointment. This can be arranged by stopping people at a stall on the street or at the farmers' market, helping children make visits to an old people's home, or going to the right pub or coffee morning. In producing a local cookbook in this way, the recipes can be accompanied by a story about how the pig was slaughtered in the yard, how the youngest was always sent to the bakers for fresh yeast on a Saturday, or how the goose feathers were saved for pillows. Elders who have settled here from overseas may have particularly interesting stories.

Wine making

Many towns have a club for brewing enthusiasts who can be invited to join with a local food group, CSA or open farm for a country wine week or stall at a fair, involving sampling, recipe exchanges etc. If you have a local home brewing shop, they may like to help out. Wild food has recipes for birch sap, coltsfoot, haw, oak leaf, broom flower, etc.

Try and divide the responsibility of event organisation, as they require more time and thought than first imagined. This is an area of responsibility ideally suited to a CSA core group even if this is their only purpose!

11.12 Planning an apple juicing party

These are some notes made by people who have been involved in planning apple juicing parties for the Stroud Community Agriculture orchard group about what we do and when:

August:

- Send out an email inviting people to get involved in planning it.
- Talk to Resthaven (the owner of the orchard) and Gloucestershire Orchard Group, SCA and SSFC (Stroud 2 CSA projects) to find suitable date for the party in mid to late Oct.
- Book three presses and crushers (previously have borrowed/hired from Gloucestershire Orchard Group (GOG), Ruskin Mill, Made in Stroud (very expensive (£50) and unreliable) and David Newton.
- Prepare newsletter article for SCA, SSFC, Leonard Stanley, SNJ, etc. Include in the article an invitation to bring your own apples and a request for anyone with too much fruit to invite us to pick it for them in return for some freshly squeezed juice.

One month before:

- Confirm collection details for the three presses
- Confirm details with Resthaven (the owner of the orchard). Can we pick any of their apples and which trees?

Liaise with Resthaven

- Agree what is going to happen and when, etc

Need on the day:

1. Presses (previously have borrowed/hired from Gloucestershire Orchard Group, Ruskin Mill, David Newton & Leonard Stanley)
2. Mashers (some come with presses)
3. Tables (available from Resthaven)
4. Long poles for knocking down apples
5. Boxes for collecting apples
6. Bin bags (or similar) for taking away pulp
7. Buckets (large) for washing apples (if needed), for under mashers, for apple bobbing
8. Containers for collecting chopped apples
9. Jugs/low bowls to collect juice from presses and to decant into bottles via funnels
10. Cups for drinking apple juice
11. Long pole/scaffold pole for adding leverage to press arms

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12. Donation box and notice attached asking for donations to cover costs of press hire and donation to Resthaven – give a £ per family estimate to cover costs
13. Entertainment: Apple & spoon races / apple bobbing / write an apple poem / apple identification / apple stories / books / music + enthusiastic people to make them happen!
14. Someone with a camera to add photos to SCA collection
15. Notices – see below

Planning the share out

Previous years we have had difficulties with how we share the juice out – some people think if they have brought a 5 litre bottle they should get 5 litres of juice – some people want to take their own bottle(s) – some people want to leave early, before we know how much juice we have made...

A suggestion from 2007 was to tell everyone early on that the juice will be shared out equally at the end of the day – if you need to leave early, then leave your name and tell us what you want done with your juice (e.g. get someone else to take yours to pass on to you). Also perhaps to have notices that clearly say: Empty bottles here. Filled bottles here, to await sharing at end of day. Otherwise it can become a bit of a free-for-all!

Other notices:

‘Please contribute to the hire of the presses and a donation to Resthaven. £2 – £3 per family should do it. Thanks’

‘Please sign in here so we know how many families are sharing the juice: (COLUMN HEADINGS): Family name, Paid (tick), If you need to leave early please let us know what you want us to do with your share of the juice which will be shared out at the end’

Ask everyone to bring:

- A donation to cover the cost of the presses
- Boards & knives for chopping apples
- Apples
- Bottles for juice
- Bring & share appley food (optional)?

NB take all your belongings home with you

Afterwards:

- Need people to help wash all the equipment
- Need people to return presses
- Need people to take pulp to pigs / wherever it is going
- Need people to take their empty bottles home with them or a volunteer to recycle them all

11.13 Example box note from Earthshare

Earthshare Box note 23rd November 2007

Dear Subscriber

This week we have **curly kale** (nutritionally rich, containing vitamins A, C, E, manganese, iron, calcium and potassium). Wash the leaves well, then tear the leaves off the thicker stalks; roughly tear or shred the leaves, then steam, simmer or saute until tender.

We hope to have some **black radish** – this is a hot, spicy radish, that needs peeling. It can be sliced or grated and eaten raw. Nick mentioned a cough cure using black radish, so I had a quick search on the internet and found this: “Black Radish or Onion Syrup: To treat a cough, take a black radish, hollow it out and add 1 teaspoon of honey. Leave for 4 at least hours. Let the juices from the radish mix with the honey and drink the mixture like you would cough syrup. Similarly, the same can be done by pouring honey over chopped onion.” (www.myhealthcollection.com/healthy_eating_2.htm)

Please return your boxes: Recently the number of boxes being returned, particularly small ones, has dropped... so some of you must be hoarding them up... EarthShare needs them!

EarthShare is looking into taking part in the government’s Healthy Start vouchers scheme, and we wondered if any of our existing subscribers are in the scheme? It would be good to have a chat about it, so please get in touch.

Pam for the EarthShare team

Tjitze’s Kale

Thank you to subscriber, Tjitze de Jong, for writing to me about kale. As a Frisian farmer’s son, Tjitze was brought up on kale, and he was amazed to find that it is so rarely eaten in the UK. To Tjitze, kale is one of the beauties in a frosty/snowy winter garden. Here’s his favourite way of preparing it.

1. Remove the tough stalk, then chop it very finely (chopping it finely results in a shorter cooking time and it therefore retains more nutrients).
2. Boil some potatoes; drain most of the liquid off, but keep it.
3. Add the finely chopped kale to the potatoes and heat gently for a minute or so while gently stirring/mashing together; you may need to add some more of the potato liquid.
4. Then you can either: • melt a herby, tasty cheese on top; • add some finely chopped red pepper for colour; • serve with an Indonesian style saté sauce (blend together some peanut butter, chilli, garlic, tattie liquid, soya sauce, and some sambal oelek if you have it).

11.14 Example newsletter from Future Farms

Newsletter – Summer 2007

Futurefarms – Martin Ltd, St. Hilda's, Martin, Fordingbridge, SP6 3LG
www.futurefarms.org.uk
Registered in England no. 5120703

Veg Story

This is our biggest, most varied and most wonderful of enterprises. It involves more people, more wages and more effort; it gobbles more land and more of the budget than anything else. It lifts the heart and ruins the back and feeds more people than anything else we do. It takes seeds as fine as grains of sand and with water and sunlight provides a cabbage as big as your head and tomatoes with the sweetness of tropical sugarcane; no one can doubt the supremacy of the veg plot.

One small wrinkled potato turns into ten big ones under the quiet mantle of the earth – while we work on the land we are very close to simple beginning of things and despite the visits to the osteopath we can't leave it alone.

Our vegetable 'impresario' is Janet. She plans out the one and a bit acres at Folliotics (Tidpit); the poly tunnel (60 x 18) and the three acres of land at Drove End Field. She plots the sowings of 45 different crops; she raises ALL the cabbage, cauliflower and other brassica plants from seed in her greenhouse; she raises all the tomatoes, aubergines and peppers from seed; she organises the jobs on the whole enterprise ably helped by Heidi, our knowledgeable and experienced vegetable person.

NO ONE APPLIES A SINGLE DROP OF CHEMICAL FERTILIZER OR A SINGLE SQUIRT OF PESTICIDE TO THE VEGETABLES YOU EAT. DON'T FORGET!

The harvesting of the crops happens every Friday to get ready for the Saturday Market with top-up forages during the week for the village barrow. 'Spuds' and onions are stored in the bottom shed at Folliotics causing much mental anguish for the population of voles and mice.

John and Jake Hooper carry out all the ploughing and cultivating and land preparation for us. Heidi drills the seed crops with a precision seed drill pushed along like a thin wheelbarrow with semaphore arm-like row markers to keep things straight – although not always! All the plants raised from seed are planted by hand.

I think Futurefarms finds and exposes the talents that rest within a village and allows those talents to blossom. It encourages people to have a go at something perhaps quite outside their normal experience.

This spring we borrowed a single-row homemade onion planter from Bill Parker of Tarant Gunville and we hired a mini tractor from Groundwise in Alderholt to pull it. I had the comfortable job of driving the tractor whilst Eddy followed by Margaret had to sit astride the machine adopting a 'yoga' position that not even Suzanne could dream up. We planted 40 rows in one day with 3 people. On our onion planting Saturday (work day) with 7 people

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in a biting north-easterly wind we also managed to plant 40 rows between 2 pm and 4.30. Then we repaired our strained muscles with Sue's chocolate cake and platefuls of Beth's fresh scones.

If anyone would like to learn more about the vegetable plot, please give us a ring – we could do with your help

Food Labelling – Lights At Red

Have you read in the press about the unfurling nightmare surrounding the labelling of our food? Have you got up close to the 'traffic light' system versus the 'red tractor' – or just plain 'British' which means it could be grown in Bolivia so long as it is packed in Britain. What a muddle and the large and respected supermarkets battle it out to select a system to help us decide what to eat. So what's best?

Not 'produce of more than one country' – try 'produce from only one Parish' – and see how that fits.

Food Labelling Afterthoughts

Pig farming is where the difference between animal welfare standards in Britain and elsewhere is the greatest. Britain is the only country where it is illegal to tether sows in stalls for farrowing. Castration is illegal here – not elsewhere.

Chickens – Half the chicken eaten in Britain is imported mainly from Brazil and Thailand. There is an EU ban on imports of raw poultry from Thailand but 'cooked' meat can still be brought in.

Antibiotic drugs that promote rapid growth are banned in Europe – not in Brazil and Thailand. If a chicken arrives in Britain already frozen it may have been processed in heavily chlorinated water – illegal here. Don't eat poultry unless you know where it has come from!

Composting – 'is a quiet bonfire'

The chicken shut-up rota is a great success and many thanks to all those involved; namely, Margaret for designing the rota and to Gary Blandford-Hull, Michael Wingate-Saul, Phil Griffiths, Mark Barnes, Len Jackson and in the winter Suzanne Spreadbury for doing the work.

Futurefarms produced superb cauliflowers for sale on 21st April 2007. The seeds would have been sown in March 2006 and the plants set out in June 2006. All credit to the veg impresario!

We had a visit this spring from a world authority on Trace Elements in the ground. Danny Goodwin-Jones parcelled up our soil for analysis and talked to us earnestly about the importance of elements in our diet and left us worrying about the levels of selenium and cobalt in Drove End Field. A full report will be published in the next news bulletin.

On Friday 20th April we had a visit from Dr. Caroline Lucas MEP. She is the MEP (Member of the European Parliament) for the South East and Drove End field is at about the North West tip of her constituency. She was most interested in Futurefarms and in the Cooperative spirit of the venture.

A big thanks to all our loyal and fantastic customers. Please keep on spending. The more revenue that ends up in the till on a Saturday morning or in the box on the barrow, the further we can go with this exciting addition to our village life.

11.14 **Field Notes**

The poly tunnel blew inside out on 13th February this year.

We managed to save the polythene from ending up on the cathedral spire and we dug a new trench and reburied the cover for another season.

Out of an annual turnover of £24000 we paid £6000 in wages to employees and to subcontractors thus keeping that precious economy within the Parish.

11.15 Example Farm Diary from Perry Court Farm

Perry Court Farm, Garlinge Green, Canterbury, Kent. UK

Tel: 0800 083 5942 www.perrycourtfarm.com

Newsletter / Farm Diary

The grain harvest was finished some time ago, with the spring sown Barley and Oats suffering the worst from the wettest summer on record. The winter crops were down slightly with some poorer quality samples from some of the fields. Since then the straw has been baled and cleared and the fields cultivated to control weeds and help kill the plague of slugs that have built up over the wet period. If this is not successful the next crops we plant will take a severe hammering from them.

Thankfully we now have the ideal conditions for this 'cleaning' process.

This week we will be making our third cut silage and also be harvesting the first grass and clover seeds crop. Also now underway is our main crop potato harvest and despite the extra weeds this season has produced, we are managing to harvest at around 2 tonnes/hour. After that it will be back to spreading the rest of this years home made composts on the fields and then planting up the crops for next season.

The vegetables that have not succumbed to the rain, slugs or low light and heat levels have done well. Harvesting is in full flow, with some excellent samples coming off the fields. This next week we hope to be harvesting the first of the Sweetcorn, Pink fir apple potatoes, Winter Squash and Swede.

While the farm has been very busy over the last few weeks so has life in the family home. Grainne, Jamie, Edward and myself welcomed our new baby Elissa into the family last week. After some difficult times it was a very rewarding occasion for all.

Congratulations also to Dominique and Lewis on the birth of their son just a few days before. They met while working on the farm and will be known to many at the different farmers market stalls they have run.

10th August

Conditions have improved and we are now about 2/3 the way through our combining. All the winter Oats and most of the Wheat is in with just the Spring sown Barley and Oats to do. Our old (1970) combine is being kept alive by our two very skilled workshop chaps and while breaking down several times the combine has always been fixed and sent back out again. Crop yields are down a bit and quality poor due to the previous two months rainfall. Our second round baler has been repaired and we are now able to bale up fairly closely behind the combine to prevent the straw getting wet and all the problems associated with that. As a lot of the silage and hay making had been delayed to the end of July that work had to be carried out at the same time as the combines started to head for the cereal crops. With a few late nights tractor work we are now catching up again – apologies for any disturbance caused to the residents of Garlinge Green, we won't always be working the tractors up to midnight.

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Over all this part of the country seems to have got off lightly compared to others. Even so we have lost all our runner bean crop, some Brassicas and all the heat loving plants such as tomatoes, Squash, Courgettes and Sweetcorn have been held back and will produce a much later and smaller crop.

Please do come and visit one of our market stalls now, as the seasonal veg is now really in season and just about every type of vegetable we produce is available. The Broccoli is looking fantastic at present as are the bunched Carrots and Desiree Potatoes. This week we also have several new lines including Barlotti Beans, Summer Squash, Golden age Plums and several other unusual and interesting vegetables.

11.16 Example newsletter from Rentavine

Summer 2007 Newsletter for Sedlescombe organic Vineyard's Rentavine.co.uk members

Dear Rentavine.co.uk member,

Welcome to the Summer Newsletter for Rentavine.co.uk members

In this issue we look at the Soil Association's Organic Fortnight and review the grape growing season for the 2007summer – the summer that didn't happen. What will be the consequences for supplies of our Organic English Wines?

NEWSLETTER Summer '07

What a great summer! Not too much sun, plenty of rain, fairly mild – just right for our summer sown green manure crop which we sow between our vines for improving soil fertility. It contains a mixture of plants such as clover and lucerne, designed to improve soil texture and provide nitrogen for vine growth. Summer sowing is always a bit risky, because in some years we go long spells without rain, and rain is needed to germinate the seeds and make them grow. So this year, as usual, I timed the sowing according to the weather forecast and as an extra precaution did a little silent prayer for some rain and a bit of a rain dance to get them started. Well let me tell you, prayers do sometimes get answered, sometimes they get answered big time. Did I overdue it I wondered? – as weeks later it is still raining!

From July onwards the vineyards have looked spectacular as the green manure crops came into flower – purple Phacelia, white raddish, crimson clover and yellow lucerne flowers have really caught the eye of the handful of vineyard visitors who have braved the harsh conditions to walk the vineyard trail.

These flowers also attract an array of insects by the thousand, including many honey bees collecting nectar for honey. In turn the insects attract birds. These green manure crops not only enhance soil fertility and feed the vines they also greatly improve the vineyard as a wild-life habitat – something which the grass alleyways of conventional vineyards certainly do not do. Just another of the extra costs (and largely hidden environmental benefits) of organic farming methods.

Another big success story this summer has been the cane growth on the vines – the vines have grown like triffids, producing strong canes carrying twice the normal amount of leaves. Consequently there will be lots of canes available for selection come winter pruning time, and to carry the crop for next year's grapes.

Yes, the wines have certainly made good vegetative growth, it's just a pity there are hardly any grapes!

The reason is the dreaded 'couloure' – a disease which causes embryo grape bunches to turn brown, wither and drop off. Couloure is caused by incessant rainfall during flowering.

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It prevents pollen transfer within the flowers. Then fruit fails to set and the bunch drops off. It has caused extensive damage on several varieties, notably Muller-Thurgau, Solaris (both white wines) and Regent (red) and Seyval Blanc (sparkling). These varieties have lost 50-75% of their crop. Other varieties, such as Reichensteiner and Bacchus have suffered very little couloure, but have been infected with mildew diseases instead, with up to 50% losses on Bacchus, mostly powdery mildew, but some downy also.

Diseases have developed due to the practical difficulties of trying to spray when it is raining nearly every day. Then, when you do get a 'window' of a dry half-day or even a day, and get the spray onto the vines, it is all too soon quickly washed off again. Our organically approved sprays do not get inside the plant and into the sap system like the more toxic conventional 'systemic' sprays, but stay on the surface where rains readily dilute them or wash them off.

Only our new Triomphe d'Alsace and Johanniter vineyards have come through the deluge virtually unscathed. They are currently in their third year and carrying quite heavy crops of healthy looking grapes.

A small grape crop on vines carrying many leaves, with which to soak up sunlight and ripen the grapes, means the potential is there for high sugars and excellent quality wines, albeit low in quantity. A nice Indian summer would help, but are we going to get it? – or will it be more of the same dull, dreary, miserable greyness that we have endured all summer? Watch out for our Christmas Newsletter to get the story of the harvest and the actual grape quality.

ORGANIC FORTNIGHT

The Soil Association annual promotion of organic food and farming begins tomorrow 1st September and runs until 16th. Organic enterprises throughout the country will be offering special deals to promote their wares. We are offering FREE entry to our Vineyard & Woodland Nature Trail + Wine tasting (normally £4.50) PLUS 10% OFF everything! So, if you have not visited yet – get yourself down here and stock up for Christmas – and the New year as well – with the pitifully low harvest we are expecting this year, there may not be much wine available this time next year!

GRAPE PICKING

Anyone who fancies rummaging around inside a lot of leaves looking for the odd bunch or two of grapes should please register their interest as soon as possible by telephone, or email me direct (roycook@englishorganicwine.co.uk).

HOLIDAYS

Hope you managed to escape our miserable summer, enlarge your carbon footprint and get some real sun in another country way down south somewhere. As for us, we had our usual week's boating holiday exploring the Thames – the quickest way to slow down! – and there's water all around anyway, so even if it pours you hardly notice.

Best Regards

Roy Cook (Proprietor & Winemaker)

Sedlescombe Organic Vineyard, Hawkhurst Rd, Cripps Corner, ROBERTSBRIDGE,
East Sussex TN32 5SA

Tel +44(0)1580 830715 www.englishorganicwine.co.uk www.rentavine.co.uk/

11.17 Example newsletter from Dragon Orchard

Dragon Orchard, Putley, Ledbury, Herefordshire HR8 2RG

Telephone 01531 670071 Fax 01531 670811

Email info@dragonorchard.co.uk www.dragonorchard.co.uk

Our first load of Discovery apples has been sent down to Jus and returned in bottles – this year with metal caps, which should ensure an even better seal. Yesterday Tom Oliver delivered two pallets of single variety Yarlington Mill Cider that will find its way into this season's Cropshare. We are currently picking Tydeman Early Worcester and are delighted that our younger son Hugh, who is about to begin his final year at Contemporary Dance College is helping us, as agility is a great asset whilst balancing on a swaying ladder high in the treetops. Annie is busy making damson jelly and jam and marrow and ginger jam and the grass in the orchard is growing apace. The cider delivery permits have been applied for and the tree shaking and harvesting dates heavily pencilled in. Is there time to write this newsletter? Annie suggests that there certainly is and, with the look that is in her eye, it is hard to disagree.

Summer Weekend

Following our return from Australia the week before the summer weekend, a muttering went around the orchard, which appeared to say "Jet Lag – what Jet lag?" Our sleep patterns slowly returned to what passes for normal at this time of year and Cropsharers assembled at Broome Farm, just outside Ross on Wye. For those of you who visited the Duchy Estate at Harewood End, Mike Johnson's orchard adjoins the eastern flank of the Duchy land. A second discovery was that satellite navigation systems do not seem to know when there are carnivals in narrow town streets when advising on suitable routes between Guildford and Broome Farm. Our picnic lunch was eaten in warm sunshine at the family farm of the Johnson family, who grow some 60 acres of fruit including over 30 varieties of cider and a wide selection of perry pears. Mike then took us on a tour of his enterprise, which in his own words has suffered of late from a lack of attention. Mike in fact is a classic victim of his own success. When Bulmers were not renewing contracts in 2003 he decided to make his own cider. This has been so successful that he has had to spend most of his time on the cider business to the detriment of the orchard. The pruning regime has fallen completely off his schedule, the spraying has not happened and, even if it did, the trees are much too thick for the sprays to penetrate. There is little chance for the air to circulate, so scab is rife and the agronomist has left in despair. However, Mike is a philosophical chap and knows that he can get his orchard back on track with some effort and investment and probably the injection of some energetic eastern European pruning teams. After admiring his alpacas and enjoying a demonstration of his Pattenden Grouse self-propelled apple harvester, we repaired to the lawn under the watchful eye and expert tutelage of the enthusiastic Gabriel to sample the Broome Farm Cider. As if this was not enough pleasure for one afternoon, out came the most fantastic homemade cream tea, which nobody, but nobody was able to finish.

Cropsharers then wended their way, somewhat heavily back to Dragon House and attempted both mentally and physically to digest their day. This led into a most pleasant and relaxed

11.17

evening, with food accompanied by South Australian wine, which we had felt obliged to sample on our holiday.

Clement weather prevailed in the orchard on Sunday morning, as we sallied forth on the bucolic walk, beginning with a foray into the not quite ripe discovery. It was especially interesting to tour the cider orchard after seeing Broome Farm the previous day and to observe at close hand the results of a different husbandry regime. Dragon Orchard sparkled on that August morning and the trees were heavy with promise of the crop to come and we all felt justly proud of 'our' orchard.

We were joined for lunch by Muriel Maby, who was looking fantastic and not a day over a hundred. She bore with her mementos of her hundredth birthday parties (not just one party for Miss Maby) as well as her card from the Queen. She was also planning her forthcoming helicopter trip and, as it was to be a two seater aircraft, this flight has to be logged as a training flight! We then sashayed into the shade of the oaks to the north of the house for a truly magical afternoon of traditional story telling. Valerie Dean told the stories and held the company enraptured and captivated by the enthralling demonstration of the oral tradition. The whole weekend left us all well and truly connected with the joys of the Shire at its summery best.

Scottish and Newcastle see the light – at last!

When Bulmers went belly up – a tale most of you will have heard me tell on many a dark winter's night – they were taken over by brewing giant Scottish and Newcastle, makers of the famous Newcastle Brown and other national and international brands.

S&N knew little about cider and seemed to lack any coherent strategy to promote their new acquisition. However having been shown the way by Magners, they suddenly seemed to realise that they actually had, in their portfolio, a considerable asset. They have recently launched Bulmers Original, a marketing leap of some huge degree, along with an advertising campaign, showing cider bottles swimming upstream in a river – am I the only one missing the point here? But, much as I may scoff, S&N from a standing start have captured 25% of the "over ice" market and, lo and behold, have realised that, unlike beer and lager sales, which have largely stalled, the cider market has room for growth. Then revelation of all revelations, their extensive market research has discovered that – you'll never guess – females drink cider as well as males. Well knock me down with a pint of scrumpy! So, new orchards have been planted, the price of concentrated juice is at an all-time high and the Scottish and Newcastle research and development team have earned their bonuses.

Summer Weather

We wisely chose to be in Australia on our first visit to the Southern Hemisphere during the worst of the summer weather and watched aghast in Sydney at TV pictures of Tewkesbury underwater and all the local motorways closed. Putley was not badly affected, but Ledbury was cut off and some roads and bridges in the vicinity are still affected. However, our well-set apples, which had benefited from the good weather in May, when the blossom was so good over the Spring Cropsharers' Weekend, have literally soaked up the moisture. We have always known that apples benefit from summer rainfall, but this exceptionally wet summer has illustrated just how much this is the case. The rain soaked ground followed by warm late summer sun has swelled the fruit and our cider apple crop looks like being the best ever. Our Somerset Redstreak are having an "on" year and I glance behind me from my desk

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at trees laden with fruit. The downside is that the early dessert fruit is not keeping especially well and another aspect has been that there is very little wasp damage, especially in the plums. I have a theory that the exceptional rainfall may have flooded the wasp nests that are found in the ground and shallow banks and it is almost impossible to prove me wrong. By the next Cropsharers' weekend we will have harvested the first of the cider crop and will have a much better indication of our final yield.

Once upon a tree ree

Once upon a time there was a small orchard in deepest Herefordshire where a family lived among the trees growing apples and pears and plums and quince. One day the wise and wonderful female fruit grower clapped her hands and said "Let's invite lots of people into our orchard, so they can share it with us and eat the fruit and drink the juice and sup the cider and walk with us in the countryside". And lots of people came and it was all the better for having fun and fruit. After they had been doing this for some time, they thought it would be a good idea to make their own cider, so the male grower tried and it didn't work very well and it didn't taste very good and nobody liked it very much but it did make very good vinegar. But just then, into their village came a young family and the woman knew about making gardens and the man knew about making wine and cider. So they met the orchard family and after sampling lots of cider, they all agreed it would be wonderful to get together and combine apples and land and buildings with enthusiasm and knowledge and youth. They didn't know what to call their cider company so they sought advice from a wise woman and her husband, who sometimes lives up a hill that had auspicious west facing views. And the venerable pair pondered and pronounced and said "You should call your company 'Once upon a Tree' ". When they had drunk a lot more cider, they dreamed dreams about taking cider and heating it up in a vessel and turning it into vapour and cooling it down and capturing the liquid and then drinking it carefully and slowly and sharing it with others. Will they all live happily ever after? Watch this space.

The Little Cider Press.co.uk

In days of yore mobile cider presses used to roam the county and set up on farms so locals with a few trees could make their own cider. A mobile press has visited Dragon Orchard in the past and Cropsharers have had the opportunity to make their own cider. Now our neighbours, Deborah Davies and Nigel Sweet have set up their own version and details can be found on their website. They will be here on October the 6th and down at the Parish Hall on October 13th. If any of you wish to use the press you need to book a slot directly with them and you can purchase apples from us. We will charge £10 for a two-hundredweight bin, which works out at about 5p per pound.

The Italian Job

At our 'What Next' session in January, a number of people commented on how much they had enjoyed our visit to Normandy in 2003 and wondered whether we might consider another trip abroad. Annie and I had just the same thought when we were in Liguria in November taking her sister Sue to a new life on the Italian Riviera. Annie has visited since and, with contacts Sue has made, we feel we can offer a worthwhile and enjoyable trip to the area in May 2008.

We can fly to Nice relatively cheaply in May. If you do not wish to fly, it is feasible to take the train to Marseille and then to Bordighera. You can also drive down, a one way journey of 900

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miles. We would travel around the area in minibuses, stay in B&B accommodation up in the hills, visit local producers, take walks, visit Hanbury Gardens and eat out at local restaurants in the evening.

Rough costings at the moment for a 5-day trip are around £450.00 per person, which includes flights, mini-bus hire, visits, main meals and accommodation.

Provisional dates are Monday May 12th – Friday 17th May

Numbers will be limited to two minibus capacity, probably 24. A deposit of £50 per person will be required. Places will be secured on a first come first served basis.

Autumn Weekend Programme 13th and 14th October 2007

Saturday 13th October

9-10.30 am	Country Breakfast, Much Marcle – see Big Apple Programme
11.30 am	Optional Orchard Walk, Dragon Orchard
1pm	Lunch at Dragon Orchard
2pm	Walk and visit to Keepers Cottage, Woolhope TBC
6.30pm	Harvest Festival, Putley Church
7.30pm	Harvest Supper and Ceilidh, Putley Parish Hall

Sunday 14th October

11am	Coffee
11.30am	What is the Value of an Orchard?
1pm	Lunch at Dragon Orchard
Afternoon	Big Apple Programme

Dates for 2007

Sept 15th-16th	Abergavenny Food Festival
September 30th	Picking Day

Dates for 2008

January 5th-6th	Winter Weekend
May 3rd, 4th, 5th	Spring Weekend
May 12th – 17th	Italian Job
August 2nd – 3rd	Summer Weekend
October 18th-19th	Autumn Weekend

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Community Supported Farming

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CSF NEWS 2008 – Our 5th Year!

New sites have joined the Neighbourhood Farm Network. Existing sites are developing routes to market for their local produce as well as ways to attract more local community investment and offer opportunities for enterprise and education. CSF would welcome any investment to re-create the infrastructure for local food production, promotion and delivery and would be happy to discuss proposals from individuals or groups at the monthly committee meetings. So far CSF has helped to develop, incubate, support or promote:

1. A box scheme for East Portlemouth.
2. A regular Landmatters produce stall at Totnes Market.
3. Chickens, eggs, goats, lamb and wool production at Beeleigh Meadows Farm.
4. Continued sales of local biodynamic vegetables, herbs, flowers and juices from Velwell Orchard.
5. A weekly delivery round of local organic vegetables from Coombe Meadow.
6. A regular box delivery scheme for meat and eggs from Great Prideaux Farm.

In addition to the planting and harvesting of potatoes other activities have included:

- volunteer events at Velwell Biodynamic Orchard,
- CSF tree planting and maintenance at Beenleigh and Wayfield Nurseries,
- earth / lime rendering training at Beenleigh Meadows,
- scything at Beenleigh, and a celebratory summer camp at Beenleigh.

CSF's News Urban Site!

The Castle Field is situated in Totnes just below the Norman castle. It has been rented by CSF in partnership with the Rudolf Steiner School, South Devon as an educational meadow within easy walking distance of the centre of town. CSF hopes to develop activities on the site along educational lines for the benefit of the meadow habitat and the community around it.