

Headingley Fowl Co-operative: a community supported agriculture project.

Pilot: May-October 2008

HDT is setting up a community supported agriculture (CSA) project with the focus on organic free range chickens/table birds. This will be on a pilot basis and a small number of members are sought. The CSA project will be piloted in conjunction with Swillington Organic Farm, with which HDT already has a good relationship through the farmers' market. CSA is a growing movement and is a way of communities working closely with local farmers to ensure their livelihoods, as well as accessing a source of high quality produce they can trust. Background on CSAs is provided below.

A visit has been made to the farm to see how the birds are reared (fully free range and organic) and slaughtered. Arrangements and pricing have been discussed and agreed with Jo Cartwright who runs the farm. Jo is a licensed slaughterer so all birds are killed and processed on the farm.

It is proposed to pursue this venture on a pilot basis from May – October, and if it is successful on all sides to extend it to more members, and possibly to institutions:

How the pilot will work:

- 20 people join an unincorporated food co-op under the auspices of HDT at a one-off joining cost of £5 to cover any administration and costs. The members will sign a short application form which will set out the terms of the fowl co-op.
- Each member pays £48 for which they receive one free range organic bird (average weight 1.5 kg) per month for six months. This is £8 per bird, which is £3.25 cheaper than Jo's normal retail price. The weight of the bird may vary fractionally, but a standard payment is made.
- Each month May – October, the fowl co-op members – or representatives - collect their bird from Jo at the farmers' market (2nd Saturday 9.00-12.30). Each member (or representative) will sign on collection. (Any uncollected birds go back with Jo and people have to collect them from her out at Swillington by the following day). Poultry uncollected will be lost to the member.
- All Headingley fowl co-op members and their families are invited to take part on a farm visit, provisionally Saturday 31st May.
- There will be a review of arrangements after three months and if successful the co-operative will be extended after the end of the six month period.

Why should we do this?

Members will have access to high quality poultry, humanely reared and killed at a reasonable price (certainly competitive with supermarket prices), cutting out the middleman and the supermarket. Critically, members will know the provenance of their meat and will know that the scheme helps to give Jo Cartwright and her family a

decent living and supports local farming. She can plan ahead and is assured of a market for her produce, while we get food we can trust.

Sharing the risks

The scheme is one of mutual benefit to the member and to Swillington Organic Farm. The other aspect of this is that we share the risks, so in the event of a major catastrophe, such as bird flu, then we will have to be prepared to lose out. The farm is unable to insure against this and we therefore cannot expect Jo to bear all the devastating loss. She has agreed that if bird flu were to affect supply she would refund 50% of the payment. This is a very fair solution. However, this eventuality is highly unlikely!

Next steps – membership

Numbers for this pilot CSA are strictly limited, so membership will be accepted on a first come first served basis.