



Nature & Net Zero & Food Security?

Exploring the agroecological solution

PROGRAMME

Thursday 28th April 2022

Online or in-person

@SoilAssociation #MainstreamAgroecology





Nature & Net Zero & Food Security? Exploring the agroecological solution

In the lead-up to CBD COP 15 (UN Biodiversity Conference), the conference will explore the evidence for how farming can restore nature, decarbonise and feed everyone a healthy diet. What are the economics and politics of making this a mainstream farming transition?

Farming is changing, and the new watchword is resilience. The invasion of Ukraine, extreme weather events and the geopolitics of gas have conspired to drive up agricultural commodity prices and farm input costs to record levels, with fertiliser prices rising more than three-fold in a year. Meanwhile, climate shocks, soil degradation and pollinator loss have become key constraints on food production, and yields are stagnating across the UK and Europe.

Farming sector resilience, the achievement of Net Zero and the new Environment Act target to reverse biodiversity loss by 2030 all require that we reduce our reliance on artificial nitrogen, which in turn degrades soil health and drives up our reliance on pesticides. Achieving this whilst reducing our food footprint will require strong support for our farmers to innovate and learn from their pioneering peers in a mainstream farming transition. This transition must integrate 'public money for public goods' with a vision for food production that is both resilient and nutritionally diverse.

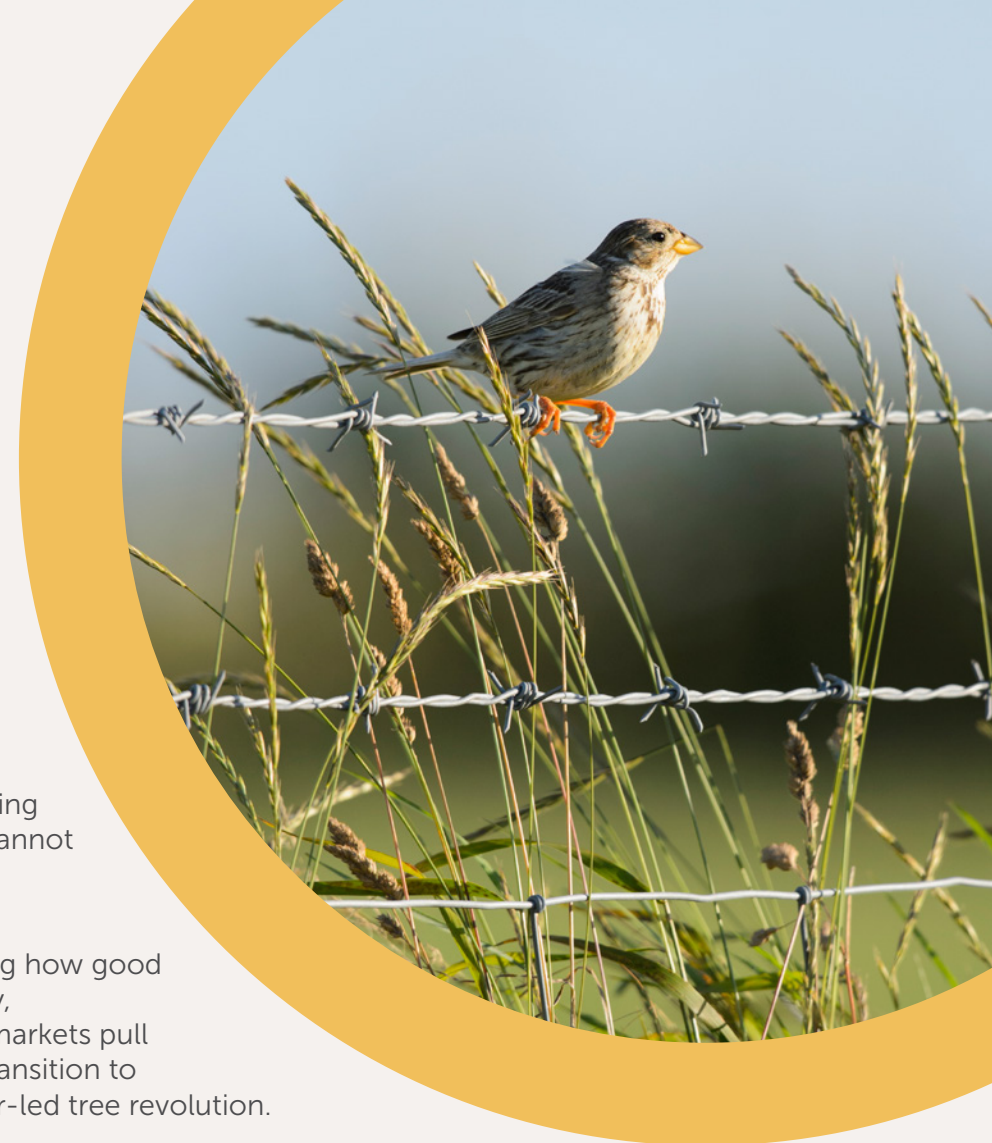
Now is the time to explore the agroecological solution. The National Food Strategy has set out a 3-compartment model which envisages a major role for low-intensity, agroecological farming alongside high-intensity farming that is still underpinned by agroecological principles. IDDRI and the Food, Farming and Countryside Commission have shown that a UK agroecological transition alongside healthier diets, can both 'share' land with nature and trees and 'spare' land for woodland and rewilding too.

ELMS (Environmental Land Management Schemes) and the Sustainable Farming Incentive are clearly an important pillar for achieving this transition in England, but they cannot do so in isolation.

The Soil Association's Ten Years for Agroecology programme is exploring how good governance could help public policy, agri-innovation and natural capital markets pull together to achieve a mainstream transition to agroecological farming and a farmer-led tree revolution.

The Soil Association will host a linked reception and exhibition at the Scottish Parliament in May and June.

Jo Lewis
Policy Director
Soil Association



PROGRAMME

09.15 - 09.45 **Registration**

10.00 **Opening words**

Helen Browning, Chief Executive, Soil Association

10.10 **Nature, net zero & food security:
can agroecological farming square
the circle?**

- In the context of the Ukraine invasion, and rising agricultural commodity and input prices, is an agroecological farming transition compatible with food security?
- In the lead-up to CBD COP-15, can agroecological farming reconcile climate-smart farming with the need to reverse biodiversity loss? Can it spare enough land for nature?

Presentation:

Introducing a new critical analysis by Chatham House exploring how sustainable agriculture is linked to sustainable food systems.



Helen Browning OBE | Opening words

Helen has been Chief Executive of the Soil Association since 2011. She is a Trustee of the RSPB, Commissioner for the Food, Farming and Countryside Commission and sits on the BBC's Rural Affairs Advisory Committee. Helen has had a number of roles in agri-politics over the years, including the Government's Policy Commission on the Future of Farming and Food ('the Curry Commission'). Helen runs an organic farm in Wiltshire, with dairy, beef, pigs, cereals and is now also experimenting with agroforestry. [@SoilAssociation](#)



Jo Lewis | Chair

Jo directs the Soil Association's Policy Unit. She is a Trustee and former Chair of the Food Ethics Council and a Trustee of Sustain, the alliance for food and farming. Jo led the development of the Soil Association's Food for Life programme including the Food for Life Served Here accreditation for healthy and sustainable menus. Before joining the Soil Association, Jo led policy teams in Defra and Green Alliance. [@SoilAssociation](#)



Professor Tim Benton | Presenter

Tim leads the Environment and Society Programme at Chatham House. He joined Chatham House in 2016 as a distinguished visiting fellow, at which time he was also dean of strategic research initiatives at the University of Leeds. From 2011-2016 he was the 'champion' of the UK's Global Food Security programme which was a multi-agency partnership of the UK's public bodies (government departments, devolved governments and research councils) with an interest in the challenges around food. [@timgbenton](#)



David Edwards | Panellist

David is Director of Food Strategy at WWF-UK and sits on WWF's Global Food Leadership Team. Prior to joining WWF in 2018, David served for 10 years as Assistant Director of HRH The Prince of Wales' International Sustainability Unit, having worked previously both as a development consultant in Africa and as a research executive with KANTAR-TNS advising major food and drinks companies. He is a Trustee of Food Foundation and Sustain. [@wwf_uk](#)



Jyoti Fernandes | Panellist

Jyoti manages a mixed organic smallholding in Dorset producing beef, lamb, cider, apple juice, fruit and vegetables. She promotes public policy to support agroecological farming through the Landworkers Alliance - a farmers union in the UK - and a union - La Via Campesina, comprised of 300 million small and family farmers across the globe. [@LandworkersUK](#)



11.20 Keynote speech

The Rt Hon George Eustice MP,
Secretary of State for Environment,
Food and Rural Affairs

George Eustice was appointed Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs on 13 February 2020. He was previously Minister of State at the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) from May 2015 to February 2020. He was elected as the Conservative MP for Camborne and Redruth in 2010.



12.00 Farming trees and natural capital: what are the opportunities and risks?

- Is there a role for natural capital markets in delivering for climate, nature and farmers?
- What are the opportunities and risks in natural capital markets for agroecological farming?
- What are the prospects for a farmer-led tree revolution that prioritises integration of trees in the farmed landscape?

Presentation:

Towards a diverse farm woodland economy:
the case for a farmer-led tree revolution.

13.00 - 14.00 Lunch and refreshments



Joseph Gridley | Chair

Joseph is Director of Soil Association Exchange. Prior to joining the Soil Association, Joseph lived in Madrid leading EIT Food's work with start-ups building a better food system in Southern Europe and starting a project to help 100+ Spanish/Italian farmers to transition to regenerative agriculture. Before moving to Spain, Joseph worked as a chef, studied law at the School of Oriental Studies, and worked at various NGOs on youth empowerment and employment projects. [@SoilAssociation](#)



Clive Thomas | Presenter

Clive is Soil Association's Senior Policy Advisor for forestry, leading on regenerative forestry advocacy including the integration of trees and woodland management into farming systems, as well as policy development in response to voluntary carbon and natural capital markets. Clive is a Fellow of the Institute of Chartered Foresters and has worked in private and state forestry sectors during a 30+ year career managing forests and developing forest policy. [@SoilAssociation](#)



Susan Twining | Panellist

Susan is Chief Land Use Policy Adviser at the Country Land and Business Association (CLA) covering issues related to agriculture, woodland and the environment. Susan has been at the CLA since 2017, with a focus on shaping the new agricultural policy, the industry contribution to climate action and wider land use issues. Prior to the CLA, Susan was Associate Director at ADAS heading their Sustainable Food and Farming business, having started as an Agronomist and Farm Business Advisor. [@CLAtweets](#)



Dustin Benton | Panellist

Dustin is Policy Director of Green Alliance, leading its work across energy, resources and the natural environment, with a particular focus on getting on track to net zero emissions. He recently returned from a secondment with Defra, where he was Chief Analytical Advisor to the National Food Strategy. Previously his work at Green Alliance focused on energy efficiency, renewables, and CCS, and as an expert commentator on resource risk, plastics, circular electronics and the EU-wide Alliance for Circular Economy Solutions. [@dustin_benton](#)



14.00 Does agroecology stack up? What are the economic, production and farm level impacts?

- What does the changing economic context mean for costs of production and profitability in agroecological and conventional systems?
- What are the pathways to profitability for current and future agroecological farms?
- How might the policy framework achieve best value by enabling farms to invest public money for public goods alongside other financial strategies in a whole farm approach?

Presentations:

1. Modelling the economic impacts of a transition to organic farming and a wholesale transition to an agroecological food and farming system.
2. What might the agroecological farms of the future look like?

15.15 Refreshment break



Gareth Morgan | Chair

Gareth is Head of Farming and Land Use Policy at the Soil Association. He has degrees in biological science and European policy. His interest in sustainable farming springs from a longstanding passion for the natural world, alongside fluctuating attempts to grow his own food and long hours spent in the kitchen. Gareth has worked for various environmental organisations including the RSPB and Natural England mostly in roles looking at the interaction between farming and nature. [@SoilAssociation](#)



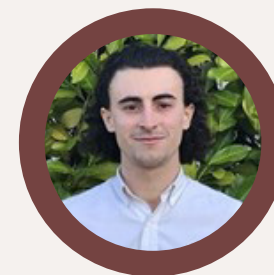
Dr. Jason Beedell | Presenter

Jason heads Strutt & Parker's rural research and supports the firm's rural team with information and analysis on farming, land management, planning, environment, energy, forestry and rural capital markets. He is a nationally recognised commentator on rural issues, particularly rural property markets and agricultural policy reform. He has led multi-disciplinary research teams on a wide range of subjects, including the rural economy and environmental policies. [@StruttsRural](#)



Ian Dickie | Presenter

Ian is a Director at eftec, working on natural capital accounting and environmental policies, and is an author of the Natural Capital Protocol. He has led development of 60 natural capital accounts for a range of organisations; managed £3million worth of research for UK Government, including ELMS tests & trials, and UK ecosystem accounts. He has also worked on Natural Capital Investment Plans for Greater Manchester and Cumbria, and biodiversity net gain and bio-carbon markets. [@eftecUK](#)



George Chanarin | Presenter

George is a Consultant at Cumulus Consultants and lead author of the Soil Association reports exploring the Economics of a Transition to Agroecological Farm Businesses and Agroforestry and Farm Woodland in the UK. He has an MSc in Environmental Science from Wageningen University. Working for Cumulus, he has applied this knowledge at the farm level to assess and influence how land managers and decision-makers impact and benefit from natural capital, and how this can be improved by the uptake of agroecological management.



Martin Lines | Panellist

Martin is a farmer and contractor in South Cambridgeshire, growing mainly arable crops on a regenerative system on his family farm and rented land. He has a special interest in farm conservation management and has Countryside Stewardship schemes on his home farm and the land he rents and manages. He also supports the delivery of Stewardship schemes for a number of other farmers. Martin is the NFFN UK Steering Group Chair. [@linesmartin](#)



George Young | Panellist

George is an agroecological mixed farmer from Fobbing, South Essex. He grows heritage wheat and other crops which are often processed on farm, including stone-milling and dehulling. George also runs a herd of native pedigree Red Poll cows, and has a 50 acre trial field of agroforestry comprising over 7,000 trees (fruit, nut and timber). Everything about the farming operation is focussed on ecology and bringing nature into the heart of the farm. [@farmingGeorge](#)



Jonathan Baker | Panellist

Jonathan is Head of Programme Policy Engagement and Strategy in Defra's Future Farming and Countryside Programme. Jonathan heads up the team responsible for cross-cutting policy across the Agriculture Bill, overarching policy across the agricultural transition period and the strategic direction of the reforms to England's agricultural policy. Prior to working in Defra, Jonathan was a Senior Land Use Advisor at the Country Land and Business Association (CLA) where he led on environmental and land use policy. [@jojabaker](#)



Helen Browning OBE | Panellist

Helen has been Chief Executive of the Soil Association since 2011. She is a Trustee of the RSPB, Commissioner for the Food, Farming and Countryside Commission and sits on the BBC's Rural Affairs Advisory Committee. Helen has had a number of roles in agri-politics over the years, including the Government's Policy Commission on the Future of Farming and Food ('the Curry Commission'). Helen runs an organic farm in Wiltshire, with dairy, beef, pigs, cereals and is now also experimenting with agroforestry. [@SoilAssociation](#)

15.30 What are the politics of the food and farming transition? Some perspectives from Parliament.

- How can policy ensure a joined-up response to climate, nature and resilient food production goals?
- How can the National Food Strategy's bold ambition for agroecological farming be translated into effective policy support? What role can Parliament now play in holding Government to account on this?

16.30 **Closing words:**
James Cashmore, Managing Director, Soil Association

16.40 **Close**



Tom Burston | Chair

Tom is Director of Policy and Research at the Food, Farming & Countryside Commission, leading a team that works on the urgent and interconnected challenges of our climate, nature and health crises. Tom has long experience of working with development agencies around the world, embracing different perspectives to find shared interest and common cause. When Tom is not working, you will find him in the Northumbrian hills with his wife and their two children. [@FFC_Commission](#)



Baroness Bennett of Manor Castle | Panellist

Natalie Bennett became the second Green Party member of the House of Lords in 2019, having been party leader from 2012-2016. Since then, she's concentrated on the Agriculture and Environment Acts (in which she briefly got soil inserted as a priority area). An agricultural science graduate, she's particularly focused on food security and biodiversity, caring for all of the land rather than sparing some and trashing the rest. [@natalieben](#)



Lord Curry of Kirkharle CBE | Panellist

Donald Curry has been a Crossbench Peer in the House of Lords since 2011. He is a trustee of Clinton Devon Estates, and also Anglican International Development (AID), a charity leading on a range of development projects in South Sudan. Donald is also Chair of Food and Farming Futures and a founder and Chair of The Rural Design Centre in the North East of England. In 2017 he became President of Community Action Northumberland.



Lord Deben | Panellist

The Rt. Hon John Gummer set up and now runs Sancroft, a Corporate Responsibility consultancy working with blue-chip companies around the world on environmental, social and ethical issues. Lord Deben is Chairman of the Committee on Climate Change, Valpak Limited, and the Personal Investment Management & Financial Advisers Association. He was the longest serving Secretary of State for the Environment the UK has ever had (1993-97). [@SancroftInt](#)



Baroness Young of Old Scone | Panellist

Barbara Young is a Member of the House of Lords with special interests, among others, in the environment, agriculture, natural resources and climate change. She has been Chair of the Woodland Trust since 2016 and was appointed the Chair of Council at the Royal Veterinary College in July 2019. Baroness Young has a number of honorary designations and was elected an Honorary Fellow of the Royal Society of Edinburgh in 2017. [@youngb48](#)



James Cashmore | Closing words

James is Managing Director at the Soil Association, leading the charity's overall work and impact across food and farming. Appointed in 2015, as Director of Food for Life, James led the transition of the programme from a Big Lottery funded partnership focused on schools, extending into early years settings, hospitals and older people and developing new income streams. He is also responsible for the Soil Association's work on the Sustainable Food Cities programme. [@SoilAssociation](#)



The Soil Association's vision is a future of regeneration.

We see a world with good health, in balance with nature, and a safe climate.

There are global emergencies in climate, nature and health – but food, farming and forestry hold the key to solving them.

The Soil Association has over 75 years of experience in pioneering solutions, working across the whole food, farming and forestry system to drive action.

Our charity works with people and nature to create practical solutions that prove we can transform our future from the ground up.

Out in the field, we work with farmers, growers and foresters, supporting them to thrive, while stewarding the land using nature-friendly practices like agroecology and regenerative forestry.

In businesses, we work with caterers and people across the supply chain, guiding them to source from sustainable producers to help put nutritious food on menus everywhere and increase access to sustainable options.

Our policy team take learnings from practitioners and other experts to policy makers to support the development of pragmatic policies, that deliver for climate, nature and people. We work with everyone across the sector – bridging connections between ideas and people to build holistic nature-based solutions, and a landscape where everyone is respected.

Our collective knowledge can give you the confidence to act, and be a force for nature, climate and health.

The time for change is now. Working together, we can achieve net zero, recover nature and strengthen food resilience.

Find out more: www.soilassociation.org



Our planet is in crisis. Nature has the answers.

We are the charity joining forces with people and nature to transform our future from the ground up.

It starts by looking after our soil.

As a charity, the Soil Association relies on support from people, charitable trusts, statutory funders and companies.

Our vision is a future of regeneration. We see a world with good health, in balance with nature, and a safe climate and we could not undertake this work without the generosity of our supporters.

Thank you to everyone who supports our work. If you would like to know more about how you can get involved, please visit www.soilassociation.org/support-us or call 0300 330 0100.



Sponsors:

This event has been sponsored by the A Team Foundation. Thanks also to Samworth Foundation, the Ashden Trust, Thirty Percy, Esmée Fairbairn Foundation and others who support our Ten Years for Agroecology programme of work.



Supporters:

This event has been supported by Strutt & Parker.



To find out more visit:

www.soilassociation.org



Soil Association

Spear House, 51 Victoria Street, Bristol BS1 6AD

T 0300 330 0100

F 0117 314 5001

Registered charity no. 206862

Do you need this in an alternative format?

If you require this document in an alternative format, please email **digitalteam@soilassociation.org** to request a copy.

