

Home Grown 2025-2029

Investment: £1,485,167 (~£370,000/year)

Goal: To support sustainable UK fruit and vegetable farming for nature, environment and health.



The need

In the UK, 49% of farmers and growers fear they will go out of business in the next year and over 80% of our fruit and almost half of vegetables are imported.

With less than 2% of the UK's farmed land used for fruit and vegetable production, the industry and our already fragile food security are at breaking point ([DEFRA May 2024](#)).

There is an urgent need for increased local and agroecological fruit and vegetable production. This would help to enhance food security through thriving local markets, increased biodiversity, improved climate resilience, reduced emissions from protected peatland soils, and improved public health. Local farmers and growers are the key to solving these interconnected crises.

Project objectives

Lead sector growth through **farmer-led support** to overcome agroecological challenges and advocate for the local and national benefits of a vibrant fruit and vegetable industry.

Enable a **just transition for lowland peat farmers**, supporting mitigation of degradation and carbon loss and exploring alternative (peri-urban) growing areas.

Advocate for the reinstatement of a national horticulture strategy and for 50% of food spend to be on local and 'higher environmental standard' produce, as per 2022 Government Buying Standards.

Project activities



Reach **500+ growers directly and 1,000+ indirectly** through learning networks to strengthen agroecological practices and diversity of fruit and vegetable production.

Conduct two annual field trials to **explore diverse crop species** and breed varieties better suited to a changing climate and agroecological systems.

Work with partners to develop a **roadmap** to **scaling peat-free propagation** including support for growers and research on practical implementation.

Research and develop mechanisms to increase accessibility of organic certification for small-scale producers, including:

- Retail & Wholesale Markets – work with growers to identify key crops that can improve public sector buying standards and understand what is needed to boost local markets.
- Shorter Supply Chains - strengthen connections to local food systems through our Healthy & Sustainable Food team networks and support public procurement strategies to increase locally grown food in local public services, e.g., schools and hospitals.

Why we're best placed

Soil Association's work, from farm to fork, has seen us develop many impactful programmes. Future Growers (2007-2018) supported 120 new entrants to develop their horticultural skills through a 2-year apprenticeship programme, now delivered by the Landworkers' Alliance through their **Agroecology Traineeship Programme**.

In June 2024, in partnership with Sustain and The Wildlife Trusts, we launched **Home Grown – a roadmap to a resilient fruit and vegetable production in England** to influence the new government to revive the plans for a horticulture strategy. Over 20,000 people supported the report, and it enhanced conversations with growers to deeper understand the range of challenges they experience.

How you can help

A gift of:

£10,000 could fund a specialist to provide technical and economic insights for one year.

£20,000 could support two farmer-led learning networks for one year.

£76,000 could fund the core Horticulture Team for one year.

Thank you for taking the time to consider this proposal. For more information please get in touch on **0117 914 2442** or email **development@soilassociation.org**
www.soilassociation.org

Registered charity in England and Wales (206862) and Scotland (SC039168)

