

Local, Healthy and Sustainable Food

The issue

Pioneering steps to improve the social, cultural, economic and environmental well-being of the nation through food have been made in Wales. However, rising food insecurity and unhealthy diets continue to place an unsustainable and unacceptable burden on public health and the economy¹. Vision, leadership and urgency is needed to shape a food and farming system that delivers good food for all.

Local food policy must also not lose sight of environmental sustainability. Local origin alone does not guarantee lower environmental impact. Community-led approaches that include organic horticulture and other small-scale or currently marginal food systems, offer sustainable alternatives, but require public investment to scale up and drive meaningful change across Wales's food system.

The Community Food Strategy introduced towards the end of the Sixth Senedd prepared the way for more local and healthy food, with a focus on horticultural production. The proposed National Food Strategy offers a welcome opportunity to target and incentivise an increase in publicly procured Welsh-origin food, including vegetables.

Why it matters to Wales

Long, complex supply chains and 'just in time' logistics make our food system fragile and vulnerable to disruption from geopolitical instability and extreme weather. Poor diets are driving obesity and related illness, food poverty is rising, and unsustainable farming practices are contributing to nature's loss and pollution.

Strengthening the supply of local food can help address these pressures by reducing our reliance on industrial, extractive food systems. Shorter supply chains can mean fresher food with lower food miles. And – with the right buying standards – it can mean food produced in ways that work with nature rather than against it. For Welsh communities in particular, growing and sourcing more food locally can widen access to good food, cut food poverty, improve public health, and support greener economic growth.

Local food won't replace global supply chains, but it can make our overall food system more resilient, sustainable, and fair. Survey evidence shows that Welsh citizens want urgent action to improve food security, promote healthier diets, and align food policy with the Well-being of Future Generations Act²

Alignment with Welsh policy context

Access to local, healthy and sustainable food delivers on the **Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015** goals across diet, environment, local economies, and culture, building resilient local food systems and supply chains and tackling diet-related ill-health and food poverty. The **Social Partnership and Public Procurement Act 2023** supports this framework by embedding social value into public spending decisions, creating a requirement for public bodies to prioritise local, sustainable food. Together with the **Environment (Wales) Act 2016**, which sets biodiversity and climate duties, and the **Agriculture (Wales) Act 2023**, which supports sustainable land management and food production. These Acts provide a legislative framework through which local, healthy and sustainable food can be delivered.

Evidence/References

1. [Future Generations Report 2025](#)
2. [The Food Conversation, Wales \(FFCC\)](#)

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Our perspective

We believe that healthy and sustainable food should be a defining feature of every community. We want to see more food produced in ways that work with nature, sourced locally, and shared widely and accessible to everyone, wherever they live. Diverse, local, nature-friendly farming systems like organic can be less vulnerable to climate shocks and supply chain disruption and are a key part of future food security. The solutions must work at every level of the food system: supporting nature-friendly farming that produces nutritious food whilst recovering nature; integrating with schools, caterers, hospitals, and local authorities to make locally sourced, fresh food the norm in public life; and building local partnerships that connect policymakers, businesses, and communities around a shared vision of good food for all.

What we're doing about it

- [Sustainable Food Places](#), a UK-wide network co-founded by Soil Association and delivered in Wales by [Food Sense Wales](#), putting communities at the heart of local food decision-making and working with local councils and food leaders across the supply chain.
- We help the Welsh Veg in Schools pilot track its environmental impact using [Cool Food Pro](#), our free data tool that helps caterers reduce the environmental impact of their menus. Every pound of public money invested in climate and nature-friendly food delivers £8.78 in social, health, economic and environmental benefits³
- We work within Food Policy Alliance Cymru (FPAC), a coalition of organisations and stakeholders building and promoting a collective vision for the Welsh food system.
- We are members of the Wales Horticulture Alliance Group, working to boost horticulture production as part of the transition to a low-carbon economy.
- Our Head of Policy Cymru Andrew Tuddenham has been a member of the SFS Ministerial groups established in 2024, also representing Wales Environment Link on the Ministerial Roundtable (2024-26) and Carbon Sequestration Evidence Review Panel (2024-25).

What we want Welsh policy makers to do:

- Target and incentive increased horticultural and organic production as part of a National Food Strategy, with actions to invest in local supply chains and public procurement
- Integrate local, healthy and sustainable food into Planning Policy Wales, including a focus on horticulture as a land use
- Expand successful schemes supporting public procurement and integrating public sector purchasers into local supply chains, starting with the Welsh Veg in Schools pilot
- Introduce Optional layer support and fair payment rates for small scale horticulture within the Sustainable Farming Scheme
- Review the food processing infrastructure offer across Wales, identify gaps and set out a plan to fill them in order to strengthen local supply chains and retain GVA
- Embed clear sustainability standards and metrics in public procurement to ensure that any environmental gains are real and measurable, not assumed.

Evidence/references

3. [Sustain: Bridging the Gap \(report\)](#)

• [Changing food for good | Food for Life](#)

• The Whole Truth - Positioning whole foods at the centre of Welsh Government food strategy (on request)

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