

Access to land for agroecological farming

Getting practical while dreaming big

Oxford Real Farming Conference 2018

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With thanks to Clare Ferguson, Santiago Ripoll, Ruth Hancock, Adrian Ely and many farmers who have contributed to this work



Why are you here?

- What's your current land status?
- What are you interested to know more about?

Participatory research – transitioning food systems

- Centred on a panel of agroecological farmers
- Building on farmers own experiences
- Research by LWA with support from IDS
- Engagement with wide ranging experts
- Deliberation and debate
- Strategies developed with ‘change agents’



Current Situation

- Price:
 - Farmland prices up 400% in past 20 years
 - That's higher than London residential property (Jaevicious et al 2015)
- Availability
 - 2/3 of land in the UK is owned by 0.36% of the population (Cahill 2001)
 - Large land parcels unsuitable for agroecology
- Living on site
 - National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) aims to protect farmland from development, but at expense of agroecological producers



“Yes, we can just about hang on, but there’s a reason why farmers live on their land and it’s not because they don’t want to drive” – Farmer Panellist

Agricultural Dwellings & the Planning System



Improving Access to Land

- Changing LPA culture
- Supporting new entrants/applicants
- Maintaining agricultural occupancy conditions
- Local registries of land seekers
- Learning from Wales – one planet development
- Learning from Scotland – land reform
- Learning from France – occupational entry barriers
- National Planning Policy Framework – making the case for local food production

Council owned farmland

- Currently 64,794 acres and 1,572 tenants in England
- Smallholdings and Allotment Act 1908 – statutory duty
- Provision is now discretionary and many councils (e.g. Somerset) selling off holdings
- There are returns (0.84% average) Defra 2009/10, 2014/15
- Councils need more info on how agroecology meets their objectives
- Councils need evidence of demand



Land trusts

- Infrastructure and support
- Ensuring focus on ecological / local food
- Scale (?)
- Inheritance (?)



The Biodynamic Land Trust
Securing farmland, conserving a living, working countryside

Acquiring land from larger farms



Kate Collyns of Grown Green on Hartley Farm

Acquiring land from larger farms

“We had dabbled ourselves with growing veg, but we quickly realised that we didn't have the expertise, passion & energy. I'd recommend to any farmer planning a diversification which may involve opening up to the public to consider how this type of business can help put your farm on the map.

...But even if you're not planning any major changes and have a spare plot of land, it's very rewarding to see a young person using that resource to produce beautiful food with such passion.”

Neighbourhood Plans

What can communities use neighbourhood planning for?

Local communities can choose to:

- set planning policies through a neighbourhood plan that is used in [determining planning applications](#).
- grant planning permission through [Neighbourhood Development Orders](#) and Community Right to Build Orders for specific development which complies with the order.

Neighbourhood planning is not a legal requirement but a right which communities in England can choose to use. Communities may decide that they could achieve the outcomes they want to see through other planning routes, such as incorporating their proposals for the neighbourhood into the [Local Plan](#), or through other planning mechanisms such as [Local Development Orders](#) and [supplementary planning documents](#) or through pre-application consultation on [development proposals](#). Communities and local planning authorities should discuss the different choices communities have to achieving their ambitions for their neighbourhood.

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Further Information

- Full reports on our access to land research - <http://www.ids.ac.uk/project/transitions-to-agroecological-food-systems>
- Chapter 7
- The Ecological Land Cooperative
- Rebecca Laughton's 'A Matter of Scale Report'
- Small Farm Future's blog posts www.smallfarmfuture.org.uk
- Contact us – elisew@ids.ac.uk; c.smaje15@gmail.com

Bringing it together

- What stood out to you?
- What questions or suggestions do you have?
- How hopeful are you feeling about access to land for agroecology?