Could UK growers meet the demand for fruit and vegetables?

Rebecca Laughton – Landworkers’ Alliance and Growing Communities’ Horticulture Campaign
We must make UK fruit and vegetable supply more resilient

- Health imperative
- Labour crisis
- Climate change adaptation
  - Rest of world can’t be relied upon to keep feeding UK (water shortages, floods, pest and disease outbreaks)
  - UK may become one of fewer countries that can still grow vegetables
- Climate change mitigation
  - Reduce long-distance food transport
UK Horticultural Production (2018)

Vegetables
- 53% home produced
- 47% imported
- 131,000ha planted to veg (<1% of agricultural land)
- 2.4 million tonnes
- 40% lost through waste

Fruit
- 16.7% home produced
- 83.3% imported
- Total UK production 719,000 tonnes
- Home produced apples increased market share to 45% (from 33% in 2017)
## Domestic Production of Popular F&V = Import Substitution Opportunities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vegetable</th>
<th>Production</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Peppers</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pears</td>
<td>16%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Plums</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tomatoes</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cucumbers</td>
<td>24%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lettuce</td>
<td>30%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Desert apples</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Courgettes</td>
<td>33%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Spinach</td>
<td>39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Onions</td>
<td>49%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Broccoli and cauliflower</td>
<td>51%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Raspberries</td>
<td>56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beans</td>
<td>58%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leeks</td>
<td>69%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cabbage</td>
<td>92%</td>
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Large Scale Veg Production

- UK workers don’t want to do horticultural work
- Brexit labour crisis (SAWs needs 70,000, not 2,500 workers)
- Environmental impact (water, soil, monoculture)
- 85% sold via supermarkets
- Tight squeeze on margins
Introducing Food Zones

- Direct urban
- Direct peri-urban
- Direct rural hinterland
- Wholesale national
- Wholesale Europe
- Wholesale further afield
Growing Communities - An existing example in Hackney, London

Supplied by:

- 3 urban market gardens
- 3 peri-urban farms in Dagenham, Lea Valley and Enfield
- 3 farms in Kent, Cambridgeshire and Suffolk
- 2 orchards in Kent and Essex

Routes to Market:

- 1600 weekly fruit and veg bags
- Weekly farmers’ market
- Direct sales from urban market gardens
Alternative Routes to Market in Rural Areas

- Farmers markets
- Farmer led box schemes
- Community Supported Agriculture
- Farm shops
- Traditional greengrocers
- Food hubs and other online sales
Benefits of Alternative Routes to Market (ARMs)

- Localised supply and distribution
- 54-100% of sale price goes to growers
- Improves grower viability
- New entrants attracted to this kind of horticulture
- Better public engagement
- Organic produce more affordable than in supermarkets (inc. “Holiday Bags”)
If all F&V that could be produced in the UK, but are currently imported, were produced in the UK, they would have a market value of £3.2 billion.
Imagine if 10% of that £3.2 billion was spent in local food economies, rather than on imports ………..

Can we do it?
Some serious number crunching!

Total sales value of one Food Zones Unit (FZU): £1,350,000

Population of Hackney: 279,000

Population of UK: 66million

One FZU per 279,000 head of population = 237 FZUs

237 x £1,350,000 = £319,354,839

This represents 10% of £3.2 billion
Big Assumptions and Big Ambitions

- Uniform climate and soil quality across UK
- Equal ability and willingness to buy organic produce across all regions
- 237 is a lot of new Food Zones
Yes we can!

- Already happening in pockets across UK
- Better Food Traders will measure it and develop distribution
- Landworkers’ Alliance will grow more growers!