



A Manifesto for a New Agriculture

On the occasion of the 5th Anniversary of the
Oxford Real Farming Conference

Graham Harvey and Colin Tudge



A good farming system should provide healthy, nutrient-rich foods for everyone at prices they can afford using methods that don't harm our fellow creatures and the world at large.

By this measure our present system looks like a dismal failure. Yet good farming – or “Real farming” – is easily achievable. No scientific breakthroughs are required – no clever new technologies. It's simply a matter of applying sound biological principles to the way we manage the land. This is why we at the Oxford Real Farming Conference believe it's time for radical change. Our agriculture has been brought near to collapse through unswerving belief in a few simple dogmas -- the efficacy of high tech and the ultra-competitive marketplace. In our 5th year we at the ORFC say enough is enough. It's time to put British agriculture back in the service of the people.

The Oxford Real Farming Conference was launched in 2010 by Graham Harvey, Colin Tudge, and Ruth West.



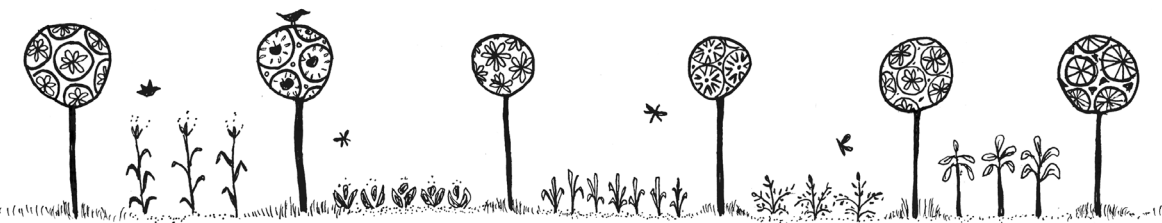
The grand ambition - and where we've come from

Graham Harvey and Colin Tudge

Agriculture sits right at the heart of all the world's affairs – our own, our fellow creatures, and the fabric of the Earth itself. It is the world's biggest employer, it provides at least 80 per cent of our food (the other 20 per cent comes from hunting, fishing, and people's back gardens), and it occupies a third of all land. It is the principal meeting place of humanity and the rest of nature. When we get farming right everything else we might aspire to becomes possible – from good food for all to global peace and the conservation of our fellow creatures. When we get it wrong everything else is compromised. At the moment it's very apparent that we're getting it wrong.

Western industrial agriculture is currently doing immense harm to our fellow human beings and to the planet we live on. As well as producing a large amount of starchy materials, it is degrading soils at a ruinous rate, increasing the threat of food shortages; failing to help the billions of people who are undernourished or malnourished; squandering the Earth's freshwater resources; polluting soils, watercourses and the oceans with chemical fertilisers and pesticides; reducing biodiversity by destroying habitats and eroding wildlife populations; and undermining rural communities by eliminating jobs and business opportunities.

Despite these obvious and well-documented failings ^[1] industrial agriculture continues largely unchallenged. Those with the most power – big governments, the corporates, the banks, and their chosen economic and scientific advisers – talk a lot about the need for change. In practice little is done. Most of the

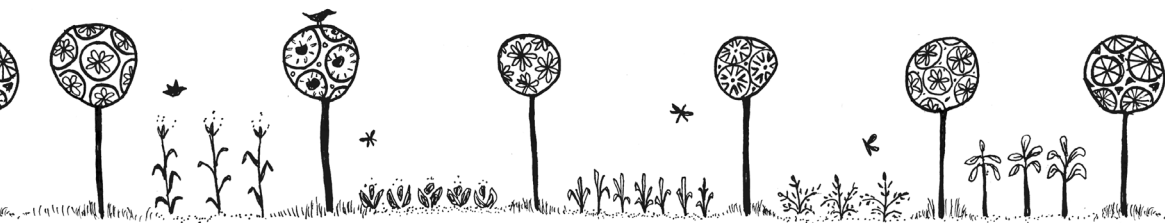


steady succession of reports – along with the big speeches from the highest platforms – advocate more industrialisation and more control from above. And behind the advocacy lies an unswerving belief in the efficacy and sanctity of a corporate-dominated global market, driven by all-out competition; in new technologies as the answer to our ills; and, despite the obvious shortcomings, in the need for tighter top-down control. Industrialisation, commodification, and bureaucratisation, are now what in practice is meant by progress.

To change things for the better we have to re-think, not just agriculture itself, but the ideas that lie behind it. What kind of economy do we need to make possible an agriculture that serves people before corporate profits? What kind of governance do we need to encourage such an economy? What kind of science do we need to show us what's possible? And above all what grand ideas – both moral and metaphysical – can provide the necessary foundations? The real challenge will then be to turn the thinking into reality. In short, what's needed is a Renaissance in the ways we think about and practise agriculture.

All in all, it's a tall order. But worldwide millions of people are already on the case. Some – including a number in high places – have already outlined the ideas that we need to act upon ^[1,2]. A great many farmers, in rich countries and poor, are practicing the kind of farming the world really needs – some because they have always farmed that way, but also a growing army of newcomers eager to do things better. In Britain – despite the bleakness of the present system -- we have a rich farming heritage to draw on. It's easy to forget that before the excesses of the chemical age UK farmers followed a system that was both productive and sustainable. It was known as mixed farming. At its heart were grasslands and grazing animals, which allowed soil fertility to be maintained without the need for fossil-fuel-consuming chemical fertilisers.

Professor George Stapledon, the leading agricultural scientist of the 20th century, was convinced that mixed farming was the ideal system for Britain. The balance of pasture and grazing with crop growing ensured the three essentials of good farming, he claimed: sustained fertility, self-sufficiency and flexibility. The 2014 Oxford Real Farming Conference features a young farmer who's bringing pasture and grazing back on a large scale. Tim May farms 1,000 hectares in north Hampshire. Until 2013 the farm was mainly down to high-input cereals and oilseed rape crops. But having seen the damage this



kind of industrial agriculture does to both soil and wildlife populations, Tim has now sown half the farm to “herbal leys” – pastures containing deep-rooting herbs and clovers as well as grasses. Since autumn the mixed-species pasture have been grazed by a large flock of sheep. Soon beef cattle are to be brought onto the farm. Tim’s aim is to put life back into the soils and wildlife back into the woods, pastures and hedgerows. And through it all he plans to make a healthy profit!

We see the principal purpose of the ORFC to highlight initiatives like Tim’s. As elsewhere in the world, brave and innovative individuals are turning their backs on industrial agriculture and looking for something better. Our aim is to bring these people together. We don’t need a majority to bring about a real renaissance in agriculture. We merely need a “critical mass” – perhaps as little as 10 per cent of the whole. Worldwide, the mass of people now on board is already great enough, and to “go critical” they need merely to coordinate their efforts. This is what the ORFC is for. More than anything we want to provide a forum where forward-thinking farmers, consultants, researchers and others come together in the search for better ways of producing food.

The future is agroecology

We have no doubt that the way to a sustainable, people-centred agriculture lies in agroecology – farming based on ecological principles, taking account of the interdependence of all living things. Agroecology takes its lead from nature: it conceives each farm as a mini-ecosystem, and agriculture as a whole as a key player in the global biosphere. Physiology is a vital science in agroecology – how plants and animals function – and psychology too in the case of livestock, for farm animals are sentient and to keep them without cruelty we need to understand what keeps them content. Overall, though, we need ecology – often still seen as a woolly pursuit but in truth the most intricate and the most “modern” of all biological sciences.

By contrast, what is now anomalously called “conventional” agriculture is, in essence, field-scale industrial chemistry -- bench-top chemistry on a grand scale. Bench-top chemistry belongs conceptually to the 19th century. GMOs are now seen as hyper-modern, and indeed to represent “the future”. But although “genetic engineering” is immensely clever, it too belongs to an earlier conceptual age – a time when scientists assumed that each gene had one specific function and that living creatures could be re-designed to order

just by adding and subtracting genes. But modern genetics recognises that the relationship between the genes and the phenotype – the finished creature – is “non-linear”. There is no simple and therefore no entirely predictable relationship between the gene and the outcome.

Ecologists acknowledge that nature as a whole is non-linear and far too complex to be comprehensively understood. We can reasonably hope only to understand enough of nature to find accommodation with it; to live alongside and within it, with luck to our common benefit. For centuries peoples around the globe have found their own ways of doing this. Agroecology pursues these same principles. In practice, if we are to feed everyone well for all time – without wrecking the planet – we need farming that is productive, sustainable, resilient – and regenerative: able to restore fertility and life to land that seems damaged beyond redemption. We cannot slavishly follow nature, but we can certainly learn its principal lessons. For nature has been productive without interruption for the past 3.8 billion years, while the continents have spun and migrated over the globe and the climate has veered from pole-to-pole ice to pole-to-pole tropics and back again.

Nature is not maximally productive. Natural selection does not favour maximum production from entire ecosystems. It demands survival of individual lineages, and that is quite different. But – contrary to the mantra of politicians – we don’t need our agriculture to be maximally productive either. It’s true that today a billion of our present 7 billion are undernourished (according to the UN) and world numbers are on course to reach 9.5 billion by 2050. People worldwide are eating more meat, which by present methods uses a lot of resources. With such stats in mind Sir John Beddington in his “Foresight” report on *The Future of Food and Farming* in 2011^[3] said that we would need to produce 50 per cent more food by 2050. Politicians and industrialists have since taken this as gospel. Industrial agriculture above all is geared more and more to maximum production. There is also competition from biofuel (and indeed from cities and golf-courses) so we need to produce more from less land. And so, we’re told, we need “sustainable intensification”, which, it’s assumed, means more high tech.

But other authorities, including Professor



Hans Herren of the Millennium Institute, Washington (co-chair of the IAASTD), point out that the world already produces enough macro-nutrient (energy and protein) to support 14 billion people – twice the present population. The UN demographers say that while human numbers continue to rise, the percentage rate of increase is reducing and will be down to zero by 2050. The population will stabilise, then start to fall. So 9.5 billion is as many as we will ever have to provide for. We already produce 50 per cent more food than will be needed. People go hungry because the wrong foods are grown in the wrong places by the wrong methods. And about half of what is produced is subsequently wasted. Production is not the issue. The powers-that-be are demanding more because it'll generate profits, mostly for large corporations. Global grain surpluses are now so great that half of them are fed wastefully to livestock, with an increasing amount turned into biofuels.

We recognise that farms in general need to be more fertile than most wild land in order to raise output – at least of the things we like to eat. But the plea for 50 per cent more is pure hype, commercial and political. The real task is to grow as much as we do now (or perhaps less) but to a higher standard, more humanely, and with less damage to the wider environment. We need farming that is more sustainable and resilient, and here nature clearly has much to teach us.

Diverse, integrated, low-input

To work its wonders nature employs three main tricks. It is extremely diverse, tightly integrated, and makes do on low inputs – basically on what is around. Certainly, it makes no use of fossil fuels. The sun and geothermal heat (with tidal power around the edges) provide all the energy that's needed. Common sense and many a field and laboratory study show that diversity above all is the key to sustainability, resilience, and to what ought to be meant by efficiency – making best use of what's around. When there are many different species side by side and each is genetically diverse, parasites and pathogens can't find a foothold in the way they can with today's monocultures. Demonstrably, diverse organisms interacting make far better use of available nutrients.

Diversity in farming translates into polyculture – mixed farming with genetically varied crops and animals, all raised synergistically. Low-input translates into organic, or something pretty close. Diverse, organic or low-input farms when well managed can be among the most productive of all, per unit area of land. They are also among the most wildlife friendly. Clearly

they are what the world needs. Such farms are complex – in general, the more complex the better. So they need to be skills-intensive – a lot more farmers will be required to run them. When enterprises are complex and skills-intensive there is little or no advantage in scale-up and so in general they need to be “small-to-medium sized enterprises”, or SMEs.

In short, the farms that the world really needs, run along agroecological lines, should in general be small to medium sized, very complex and polycultural, and as near to being organic as can sensibly be managed. Such farms would be quite productive enough and provide food of the highest quality while keeping the rest of nature in good heart ^[4]. Already such farms, in traditional form, worldwide, provide 50 per cent of the world’s food – even though they have been sadly sidelined by the powers-that-be: treated as an anachronism. The industrial agriculture that soaks up most of the investment and research supplies only three per cent. Agroecological farms conceived as SMEs would also provide many millions of fulfilling jobs worldwide – including enough, in Britain, to soak up the million under-25s who are now unemployed or seriously under-employed.

We are often told that organic, small-scale, mixed farming is simply “unrealistic”, a misguided exercise in nostalgia. Yet it is based on fundamental principles of biology and demonstrably works. In contrast, the industrial model now known as “conventional” is pure ideology: absolute faith in high tech, geared to the maximisation and concentration of wealth. It demands maximum output at what is perceived to be minimum cost: more and more agrochemistry to increase the yields from fields and crops and livestock that are already overstretched, with less and less labour employed. This means there can be no complexity: monoculture must rule. All must be done on the largest possible scale to spread the costs. All outputs are conceived first and foremost as commodities to be sold on the world market to the highest bidder. Speaking in January 2013 at the other Oxford

farming conference, Environment

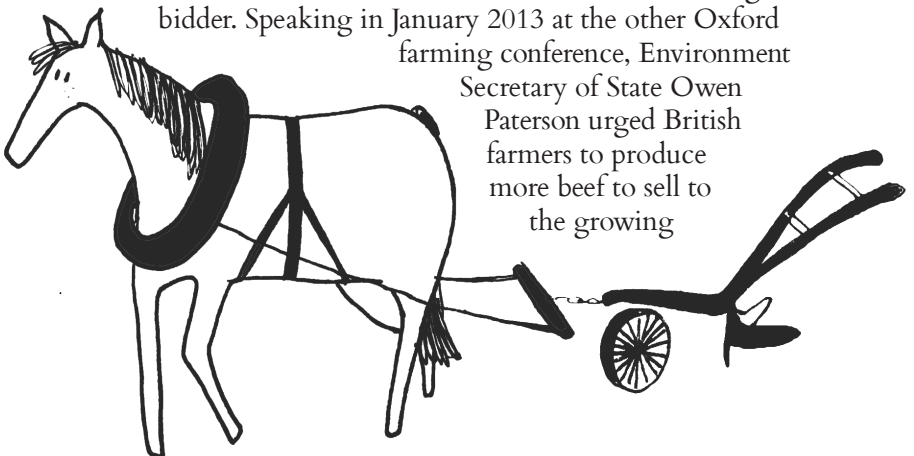
Secretary of State Owen

Paterson urged British

farmers to produce

more beef to sell to

the growing



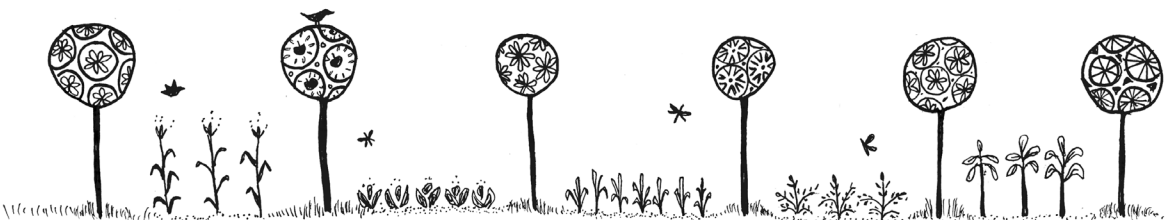
Chinese middle class. We should also export more biotech products, said Paterson, not because the world needs them, but because they are potentially lucrative. This advice is perfectly in line with neoliberal thinking but totally at odds with the principles of agroecology, common sense, and common justice.

Britain once had an agriculture well suited to feeding people. The development of mixed farming in the 18th century produced a step-change in farm productivity allowing a fast-expanding population to be fed. So successful was the system that it lasted more than 200 years. At the end of World War Two much of lowland Britain was still occupied by family-run, small and medium-sized family farms. Through good times and through bad they survived without pesticides or chemical fertilisers and with few subsidies from the state. At times of national emergency they were able to up their game and feed the nation. And in times of hardship they were content to hunker down and wait for the pendulum to swing back. Together our family mixed farms were one of the nation's great assets.

For the past few decades governments, economists, supermarkets, agri-business corporations, even farmers' own leaders have waged a relentless campaign against them, representing them as out-dated and inefficient. Subsidies and the tax system have favoured the large-scale, mechanised, chemical-dependent unit. Markets for the healthy, nutrient-rich foods produced by mixed farms have been ruined by industrial commodity producers who have banked big profits and left taxpayers to pick up the tab for degraded foods and a polluted environment. It's now clear that this nationwide experiment in chemical agriculture has failed. Just as the banks are having to rebuild their capital reserves, we need to rebuild the fertility and social capital that were once safeguarded in our family farm structure.

The many faces of Real Farming

In its five-year history the ORFC has showcased many contemporary farmers who, despite a hostile economic environment, are finding new ways to make ecological farming viable. They include Charlotte Hollins who, with her brother Ben, runs England's first community-owned farm: Fordhall Farm near Market Drayton in Shropshire. The farm first became

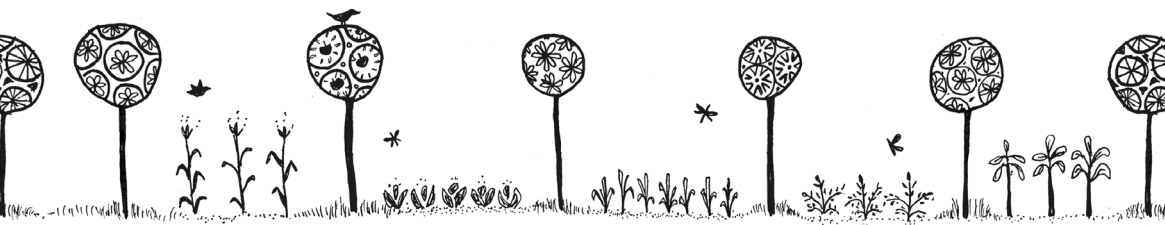


famous in the 1960s when Arthur Hollins pioneered organic farming. He built a nationally-renowned yogurt brand and developed a unique system of winter grazing known as “foggage”. After his death the historic farm was threatened with development, but Charlotte and Ben led a campaign to save it through community ownership. The farm is now owned by a community land trust and has 8,000 shareholders. With a lifetime tenancy on the farm, Ben and Charlotte now raise nutrient-rich, grass-fed beef, lamb and Gloucester Old Spot pork.

Horticulture lends itself most immediately to organic farming and small-scale polyculture. A regular among the ORFC’s horticultural participants is Ed Hamer. He with his wife Yssy and partners Chinnie and Annkatrin make the better part of their living supplying veg boxes from “Chagford Community Market Garden”, a Community Supported Agriculture project (CSA) based on two rented plots of farmland on Dartmoor. Customers pay in advance for the year and must take what grows – but they generally do well out of the arrangement. Each year numbers grow steadily. Ed is also a pioneer of intermediate technology. He has imported various small-scale cultivators from France and the US (they don’t exist here) which are powered by his two small horses – a Dartmoor pony and a Welsh Cob X Dartmoor.

But the principles of agroecology apply equally well on the grander scales. In the very first meeting in 2010 Professor Martin Wolfe of the Organic Research Centre described his pioneer studies with agroforestry – ultimately polycultural agriculture, with farming as a whole integrated with trees; and including populations of wheat, genetically heterogeneous, the very opposite of current monocultures, planted between the trees.

At Wakelyns Farm in Suffolk – just under 60 acres (a little more than 20 hectares), all entirely organic – Martin has planted rows of trees all aligned north to south, with alleys that are mostly around 12 metres wide in between (agroforestry alley-cropping). The rows contain hazel and willow for short-term staves and biofuel (a source of biofuel that doesn’t compete with crops), plus fruit trees (“the worse place to grow fruit trees is in an orchard”) and hardwoods (“my pension”). The alleys are devoted in rotations to arable and horticulture alternating with leys rich in a wide range of clovers and their



relatives. (He would like to keep livestock but hasn't yet got enough labour). The trees are a financial and aesthetic bonus – and, contrary to common lore, they benefit the crops between. They help to conserve moisture; bring nutrients up from the depths and leave it on the surface in their deciduous leaves; and provide a beetle bank for pest control. Voles make their burrows along the rows of trees and bumble bees nest in the burrows and pollinate the clovers and fruit trees, and barn owls have returned to catch the voles. The shading is minimal because the trees run north-south and in any case it is not the problem that is commonly supposed. As Martin says, cereals grown in big open fields are often heat-stressed, even in Britain.

The wheat in the alleys is mostly heterogeneous, either grown from mixtures of the seeds of different varieties, or as largely self-selecting populations grown from deliberate intercrosses of many different varieties. Given such heterogeneity, in any one year some individual plants do well and others less well – it differs from year to year and field to field. The point is that the crop has in-built resilience – whatever the local environment throws at the crop, it will thrive. The average yield over different seasons and fields is higher than single pure varieties can achieve. Using this same principle both within and among crops means that the overall output of the farm is greater than would be achieved if the same cereals (and other crops) and trees were grown separately. In other words the land equivalent ratio is increased above one. This is “sustainable intensification” not by high tech -- which is how those in official circles who coined the term seem to intend it to be used -- but by applied ecology. In some years the mixed populations of cereals have out-yielded the highly fertilised monocultures in surrounding fields – and profits can certainly be higher because the inputs are so low. Wakelyns is primarily for research rather than commerce but it seems nonetheless to demonstrate that agroecology, particularly as agroforestry, can be profitable even in the present economy, which is so attuned to high-input monoculture. With a more sympathetic economy, it could clearly become the obvious choice.





The absolute importance of pasture – and the micro-dairy

The 2013 ORFC saw the first public meeting of the Pasture-Fed Livestock Association, the PFLA, which was first formed in March 2011 by a group of livestock farmers and their non-farming but far-sighted convenor, John Meadley. While half the world's cereals plus well over 90 per cent of the soya is now fed to livestock, the world's grasslands – which occupy about two-thirds of all the agricultural land in the world including Britain's – have been woefully neglected. The farmers of the PFLA insist that their members must raise their animals exclusively on pasture, from weaning to slaughter. This is more than possible – beef cattle can be finished in 18 months – and can certainly be profitable, even as things are. Inputs are low and so are vet bills.

At the 2010 ORFC Cornish farmer Ben Meads showed how mixed-species pastures – containing deep-rooting herbs like chicory and plantain as well as clovers and a range of grasses – can lift cattle nutrition to a new level. Given the opportunity dairy cows will graze selectively choosing different plants species at different times of the year. They will also self-medicate when challenged by disease or ill-health. Ben gives them that opportunity, allowing them to browse selectively from the hedgerow as well as choose from the “salad bar” grazing on offer in the pastures. As a result his cows are long-living and in robust good health. While the developers of fashionable, housed mega-herds boast that they can afford a full-time vet on the farm, Ben Mead has found that with his ecological approach to pasture and grazing, the cows never need the vet anyway.

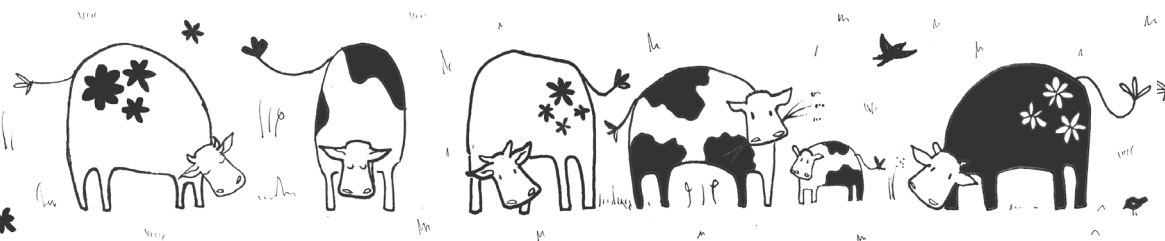
Graham Harvey, ORFC co-founder and the founder of Pasture Promise TV, has put ecological grazing techniques high on the conference agenda. Among 2013 speakers was Gloucestershire farm manager Rob Richmond who has shown that the grazing of mixed-species pasture with deep-rooting herbs – in this case with dairy cows – not only produces very fine milk, but can sequester large amounts of

soil carbon. Also at the conference was environmental consultant Dave Stanley who challenges many common assumptions about ruminant animals and their supposed threat to the climate. Dave has produced compelling figures to show that, far from hastening climate change, grassland and grazing may be our best means of countering it. Soil fertility has always been high on the agenda in the Farm Days of the ORFC. In 2014 soil specialists Mike Harrington and Robert Plumb help farmers to raise the productivity of their farms – and reduce the need for chemical inputs – by boosting soil fertility through biological means.

The PFLA has created the Pastoral brand, which guarantees a set of production standards for cattle, sheep and lamb. Well-managed pasture in settings that are as natural as possible (and with plenty of trees) is surely the way ahead: productive, sustainable, resilient, profitable, *and* aesthetically pleasing. Fired by such thoughts Nick Snelgar has set up a micro-dairy on the four acres he has bought in the village of Martin in Hampshire. He started with Jerseys, but is now buying Ayrshires, aiming to build a herd of 15-20 cows (he will rent more grazing). Like Ed Hamer, Nick too is an innovator in intermediate-scale technology. He has developed a mobile milking parlour, enough to milk two cows at a time, which can be towed by small tractor to the cows where they graze in the field. The capital requirement is low, and there's no need for hard standing or permanent tracks. At present he is selling his milk together with milk from another local dairy farmer that he is processing to at least nine local shops. By charging the full retail price for unhomogenised milk of known provenance he will make a living, as other micro-dairies have already shown is possible. Low-capital micro-dairying offers another obvious way in for newcomers.

The micro- or the medium-sized dairy, with pasture-fed animals and very short delivery chains, is surely the way ahead. The 8000-animal (some dream of 30,000) zero-grazing industrial factory farm where the animals give 10,000 litres each and rising is very flashy and doubtless lucrative for some but it depends on industrial chemistry and pharmaceuticals and the environmental damage is enormous.

Martin, Ed, and Nick and many more besides are making their various enterprises work even within the present economy. But to make ecological



agriculture work on the grand scale, the economy must be changed. As Sir Crispin Tickell said when he launched the very first ORFC in 2010, the neoliberal economy that seeks simply to maximise wealth is not fit for purpose. As many a speaker since has shown, it will be hard to make the necessary changes but far from impossible. The renaissance is happening here too.

Economic Democracy: an economy fit for farming

The means to a better agriculture is agroecology; and the economic structure that can make it work has broadly been called “Economic Democracy”. It has three prime components. None of them is at all frightening (Soviet-style revolution is not called for) and all, indeed, should be highly convivial.

The first is the re-imagining of farming as a global network of small businesses – SMEs. This is essentially the kind of arrangement that has commonly been written off as “bourgeois” or “petit-bourgeois” – or, in rural settings, as “peasant”. It acknowledges the value of private ownership and private enterprise but also insists on a moral agenda. Each separate enterprise is expected to take the needs of the whole world into account. It is not acceptable as has often been the norm of late simply to ruin the ground and wreck the local community and then move on. That indeed should be seen as a Crime Against Nature. Ideally, each farm would be conceived as a “social enterprise” – intended to be viable commercially, at least to pay its way (“wash its face”), but also, primarily, with a social and/or environmental agenda.

The second is to deploy many of the financial and legal mechanisms which already exist to bring about the kinds of structure we need. Here at last is serendipity: that the mechanisms that we associate with capitalism, and are so misused in the modern all-out struggle for wealth, do indeed exist and are well thought out and can be used for the general good and not simply for the benefit of the biggest players.

The third is the idea of community. What individuals find difficult or impossible, communities can achieve: communities defined either geographically, as neighbourhoods or villages, or as groups of like-minded



people, as in clubs. Eventually, community ownership and control might well become the norm. Why not? Communities when properly conceived are also convivial; and, as institutions like the National Trust have long demonstrated, they can exercise real power.

Again, all three themes are pursued through successive ORFCs. Thus, 2012 saw the launch of “Funding Enlightened Agriculture” – designed to identify farms and smallholdings (but also some related enterprises) that are in need of start-up money; to provide them with business advice; and to direct various, appropriate finance in their direction. Some may need grants, especially at the beginning (Ed Hamer and Nick Snelgar have both benefited from start-up grants, though before the FEA came into being). Some may attract donations. When they have a convincing tale to tell they may raise further cash by crowd-funding: presenting their case on a crowd-funding “platform” on the internet. Thus the Sarvari Trust, which is breeding new lines of non-GM blight-free potatoes (it simply isn’t true that GM is vital for this as we have been told) has attracted useful funds through Buzzbnk_[5], who we are pleased to say forms part of the FEA advisory team. Beyond this first stage, finance is typically structured using a mix of loans, grants/donations and investment with The Community Benefit Society increasingly the vehicle of choice for social enterprises wanting to raise finance. Triodos Bank, and three ethical investment companies of complementary type are involved in FEA.

The farms (or related enterprises) themselves are generally conceived as social enterprises. Typically, a social enterprise favours one of three legal structures: the Community Benefit Society, Co-operative, or the Community Interest Company. All have their pros and cons (which can be explored in outline on the web, and indeed on our Campaign for Real Farming website). Again, FEA advises on what is most suitable.

The point is, it’s all out there. We need a radical shift in the economy not only for agriculture but for all human enterprises. Crude neoliberalism will not do. But it need not mean ditching capitalism. We simply need to invoke some of the sometimes forgotten mechanisms that are to be found within the broad capitalist church. Low-key proto-capitalism within a moral (and ecological) framework can deliver what’s needed.

The absolute importance of communities

All becomes easier, and the impossible becomes possible, when people operate in communities – as shown in many ways at the ORFC. Valuable enterprises commonly begin with groups of chums – like Cultivate Oxford, founded in 2012 as a Community Benefit Society now with over 350 members, which sells fresh vegetables from local farmers from a van in Oxford and also has its own market garden on 10 acres of land. Then there's Manchester Veg People (MVP): a co-operative of local organic growers and restaurants. And the social miracle spreading throughout the UK and beyond, Incredible Edible Todmorden, a town on the Pennines, just within Yorkshire, where the locals raise fruit and vegetables on just about every available space, and invite passers-by to help themselves (outside the local Health Centre is a favourite venue). They are egged on not least by the redoubtable Mary Clear who among many other things induced the local firemen to festoon their station with vegetables by telling them that the police already had enviable runner beans ("I have noticed that men in uniform tend to be competitive").

The examples may already be multiplied many times – and the net result is far from trivial. Indeed, Martin Large, who spoke at the OFRC in past years and chairs a session in 2014, suggests in his excellent *Common Wealth* (Hawthorn Press 2010) that communities could and should become the third and at least equal component in the mixed economy; the other two being state and private ownership. In France, *Terre de Liens* is already showing what is possible. Between its founding in 2007 to 2012 it has acquired 1700 members who have bought 2,300 hectares on 102 sites that are dedicated to people-friendly agriculture. Colin Tudge has calculated (the arithmetic is very simple) that the British people as a whole could together buy out all of Britain's farmland for £8000 per head – not much when spread over a lifetime and far less than has been prized from us in recent years to bail out banks of very dubious utility; and certainly not much to

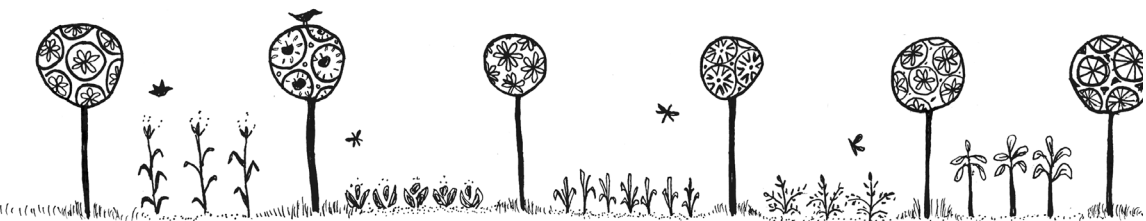


invest for a dramatic and permanent reduction in the price of food, and for food security and sovereignty. In truth, though, ownership of land need not be the be-all and end-all. What really counts is right of use and security of tenure and as Tom Curtis of *LandShare* has been showing, this can be achieved by other means – principally by various forms of partnership^[6]. Dramatic transformation need not be as hard as it seems.

Finally, in September 2013 Colin and Ruth ran a one-week course at Schumacher College at Dartington in Devon. This we intend to be the first in a series, linked in with Schumacher's existing programmes, to develop and promulgate the ideas of Enlightened Agriculture that are needed to get the Agrarian Renaissance under way. Various other initiatives are under way that are already turning those ideas into reality. Graham Harvey's *GrazingAmazing* movement aims to take the buzz and excitement of the new agriculture to a wider, non-farming audience. The guiding principles are not those of "sustainable intensification" with monocultural GMOs and 20,000 litre cows, and economic growth through exports to the wealthy Chinese middle class, all controlled by corporates and bureaucracies and their chosen intellectuals -- but of agroecology, economic democracy, and the power of community. We can get from where we are to where we need to be relatively painlessly if enough people just start doing the right kinds of things *despite* the present powers-that-be and despite the present *Zeitgeist*. People of all kinds worldwide are already doing the kinds of things that need doing and some of them meet every January at the Oxford Real Farming Conference. Coordination is the key. For those who think that the world needn't be facing Armageddon just yet, the ORFC is the place to be.

Notes and References

- 1 International Assessment of Agricultural Knowledge, Science and Technology for Development (IAASTD), Island Press, 2009.
- 2 UNCTAD Trade and Environment Review 2013: Wake up before it is too late
- 3 Foresight. The Future of Food and Farming, GO-Science, 2011
- 4 See for example Commentary IX (UNCTAD TER 2013): Comparative analysis of organic and non-organic farming systems: a critical assessment of on-farm profitability, Noemi Nemes, FAO
- 5 See <https://www.buzzbnk.org>
- 6 See <http://www.landshare.org/land-partnerships.html>







January 2014

Acknowledgements

Editor
Ruth West

Illustrations
Lucy Ball

Design and Layout
Georgia Cass

Publishing
Calverts, Bethnal Green, London
On recycled, FSC-certified paper

For more information:

ORFC: <http://www.oxfordrealfarmingconference.org/>
Pasture Promise: <http://www.pasturepromise.tv/index.php>
Campaign for Real Farming: <http://www.campaignforrealfarming.org/>

