

Collaborating for Food Change in Devon

Report by Dr. Rebecca Sandover
December 2020



"Devon is a county with a wealth of food initiatives seeking to promote positive approaches to food security, health and wellbeing, food skills and cultures, access to food and local food supply chains. Currently these initiatives are largely operating individually and are focused on their local areas. There is now a great opportunity to harness this energy for Devon sustainable food and to scale up their work through effective county-wide coordination."

- Dr Rebecca Sandover

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The Sustainable Food Network Project

The Devon Sustainable Food Network Project was formed in response to the dynamic work of the place-based food initiatives that seek to address food issues in Devon, and was funded by the Wellcome Centre to explore the networks and shared experiences of Devon sustainable food networks by mapping food programmes in the city regions of Exeter and Plymouth, rural South Hams and the relevant policy work of Public Health Devon.

Dr. Rebecca Sandover worked with Food Exeter, Food Plymouth, The Bioregional Learning Centre, Public Health Devon and The Sustainable Food Places Network (SFP)¹. Early discussions indicated that Devon's sustainable food initiatives seem to be largely operating autonomously, with little capacity or opportunity for coordination between them. The project's aim was to start a conversation, share data on each partners' activities and explore how best to join up currently siloed initiatives. During 2019 the Project took a collaborative approach to explore the existing networks of research partners who have shared understandings of these issues.

In October 2019 the Project held a symposium to set out some of the initial findings of this research and explore the challenges and opportunities for a Devon Sustainable Food Network. This included presentations, panel and group discussions that created a vibrant debate amongst people with a range of expertise in this field.

The debate concluded that change is needed in the food system and supported progressing the supply and demand of sustainable local food in Devon.

This report draws from the research data gathered and key themes identified at the symposium, including next steps for action. It also contains an update in light of the recent COVID-19 crisis which has highlighted the value of an integrated localised or regional food system. It suggests that there is an on-going role for a Devon Sustainable Food Network as a coalition.

Sustainable food is understood here in the context of the SFP's 6 Key issues:

- Taking a strategic and collaborative approach to good food governance and action
- Building public awareness, active food citizenship and a local good food movement
- Tackling food poverty, diet related ill-health and access to affordable healthy food
- Creating a vibrant, prosperous and diverse sustainable food economy
- Transforming catering and procurement and revitalizing local supply chains
- Tackling the climate and nature emergency through sustainable food and farming and an end to food waste.

¹ Until April 2020 this network was known as The Sustainable Food Cities Network and this term is used here when discussing the establishment of Food Plymouth and Food Exeter.





The Conditions For Food Change

With an area of 6,707km², Devon is the largest county in the South West with a population of over 795,000 and a long history of connection to the land. 68.8% of farmed land is owned by the farmers managing it², often going back generations. Agriculture and food production accounts for 13% of the county's economy, compared to 7.6% nationally³. Although Devon's horticultural sector (fruit and vegetables) is comparatively small, covering 0.4% of its farmed area⁴, as a nature-rich county, Devon has the resources and know-how to tackle the food-related challenges it faces.

However, these challenges are only increasing. More and more people are experiencing household food insecurity (food poverty), obesity and wealth disparities on top of responding (or not) to the climate change emergency, and coping with the impacts of COVID-19 and the uncertainties of Brexit.

The Agri-Food industry continues to fail people, the environment and the economy. This 'business as usual' model is creating degraded land, polluted watercourses, squeezing rural livelihoods and rural communities and driving the mass consumption of high calorie, low value food products. There are three key issues or challenges related to large-scale intensive agriculture:

The Agri-Industrial food supply chain model encourages the supply of cheap food whilst externalising its underlying costs, producing:

- Poor diets and the health impacts of rising obesity, diabetes and other diseases
- High input-reliant, large-scale monocropping which reduces biodiversity and pollutes water courses
- High levels of wastage in production/distribution.

Challenges in widespread access to local, sustainable food:

- The current model supports mass market retail, which promotes international and national supply chains
- A localised food supply chain needs support in order to compete at a level playing field
- Support measures need to include hands on-education opportunities for communities to boost cooking skills and community-based food cultures.

A lack of joined-up policy and planning to support the 'public goods' of:

- A biodiverse, ecologically sustainable rural environment
- A locally embedded, regional supply of local, sustainable Devon produce
- The offer of healthy, sustainable local food in Devon's public services and anchor institutions
- Healthy populations with access to good food and a halt to the rising food insecurity crisis.

Little transformative action has been implemented nationally for several decades, resulting in the lack of an England-wide policy⁵ (although this may change through the work of The National Food Strategy⁶). Perhaps in response to this, place-based food initiatives have sprung up in abundance, out of necessity or market opportunity, resulting in creativity and innovation at the grassroots level.

There is also a call for policy makers to take an integrated approach to policy making, i.e. not seeing food as a single issue but joining it up to issues of access to services, the environment, education and health. Furthermore, The Sustainable Food Places Network, Food Power Alliances and Feeding Britain projects have shown that a civic-led or bottom-up approach to local and regional food and health programmes can bring together networks of organisations to work collaboratively on pressing food issues within their localities.

² National Farmers Union ³ Devon Local Nature Partnership ⁴ National Farmers Union ⁵ See Nourish Scotland and Food Sense Wales for insights into different political approaches within the UK ⁶ The National Food Strategy (2020) - Part One, available at <https://www.nationalfoodstrategy.org/partone/>, Accessed 20/08/2020

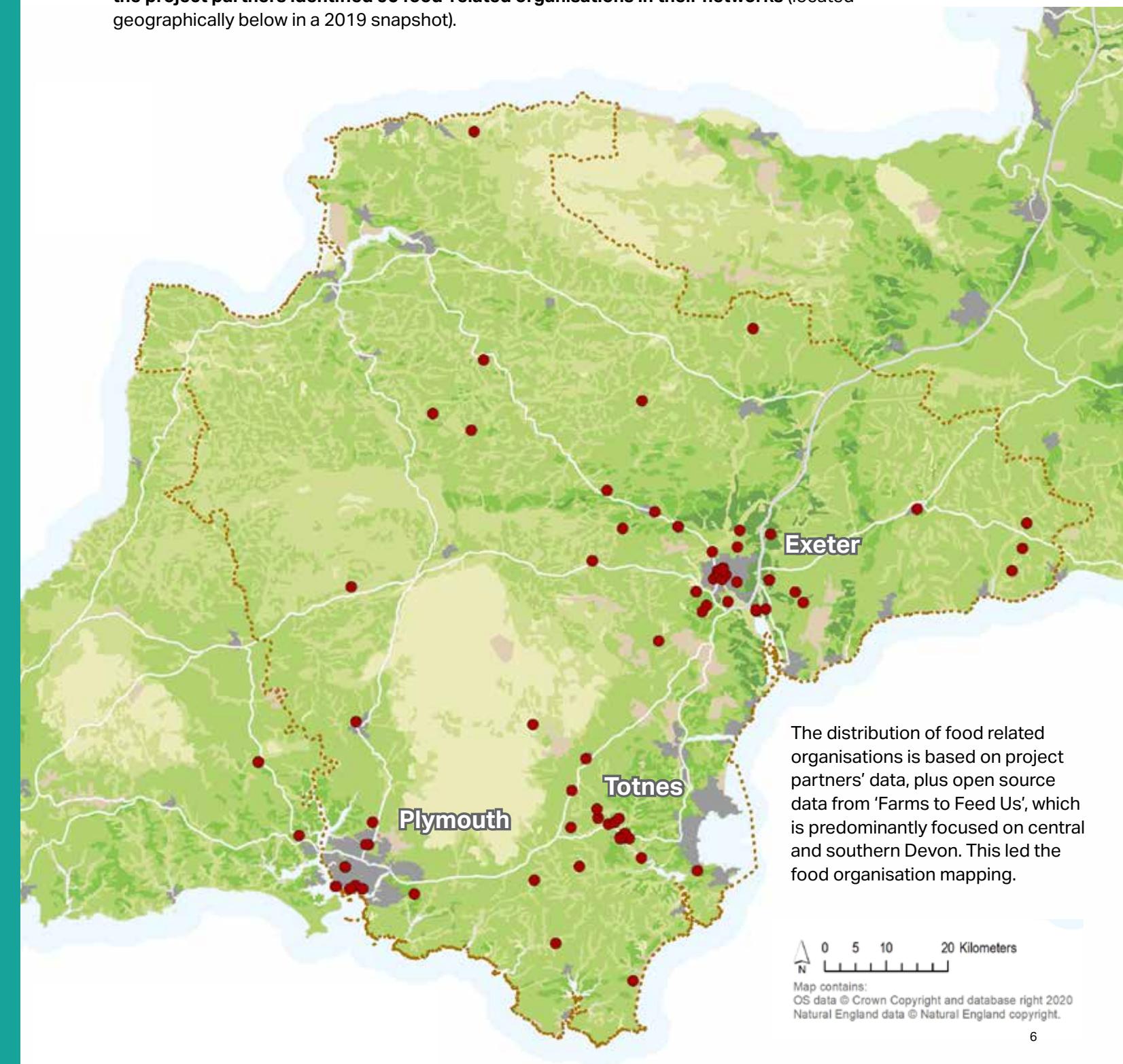
"Community groups and small enterprises have stepped up during the COVID-19 pandemic, utilising their networks to look after the vulnerable, and generally strengthening the fabric of social safety nets. This has happened despite years of cuts. Organisations and initiatives, are going beyond their original purposes to deliver services and care, including food. Community supported agriculture schemes, food banks, and food hubs can do this because they are already networked locally and can rely on emergency helpers. Their adaptability means they are fleet-footed, and capable of picking up the slack of an inflexible, industrialised food system."

- Extract from 'Coronavirus exposed fragility in our food system – it's time to build something more resilient' The Conversation, June 12, 2020 by Emma Burnett and Luke Owen

Food Change at the Right Scale for Devon

Devon has the resources and expertise to tackle some of these urgent issues. In particular, there is a wealth of place-based sustainable food initiatives and a responsive civil society seeking to promote positive approaches to food security, health and wellbeing, skills and food culture. What is lacking is 1) wider access to sustainable food through local food supply chains, and 2) coordination and action to co-design a coherent Devon-wide sustainable food strategy that incorporates local know-how and regional learning from the COVID-19 pandemic.

To begin to explore the potential embedded within Devon's existing food-related networks, the project partners identified 95 food-related organisations in their networks (located geographically below in a 2019 snapshot).

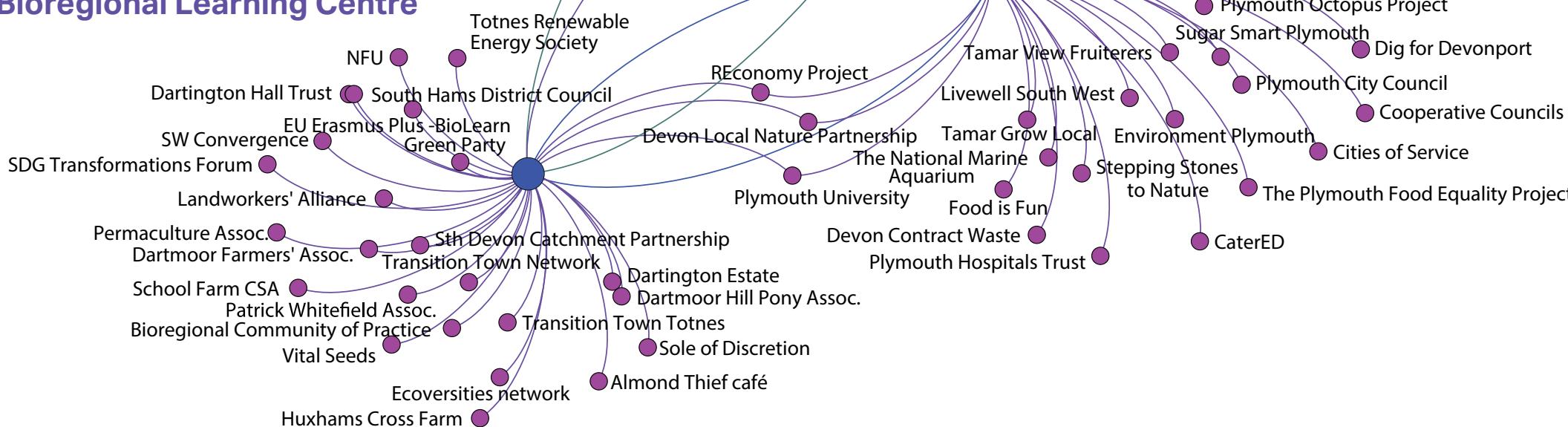


Sustainable food networks in Devon

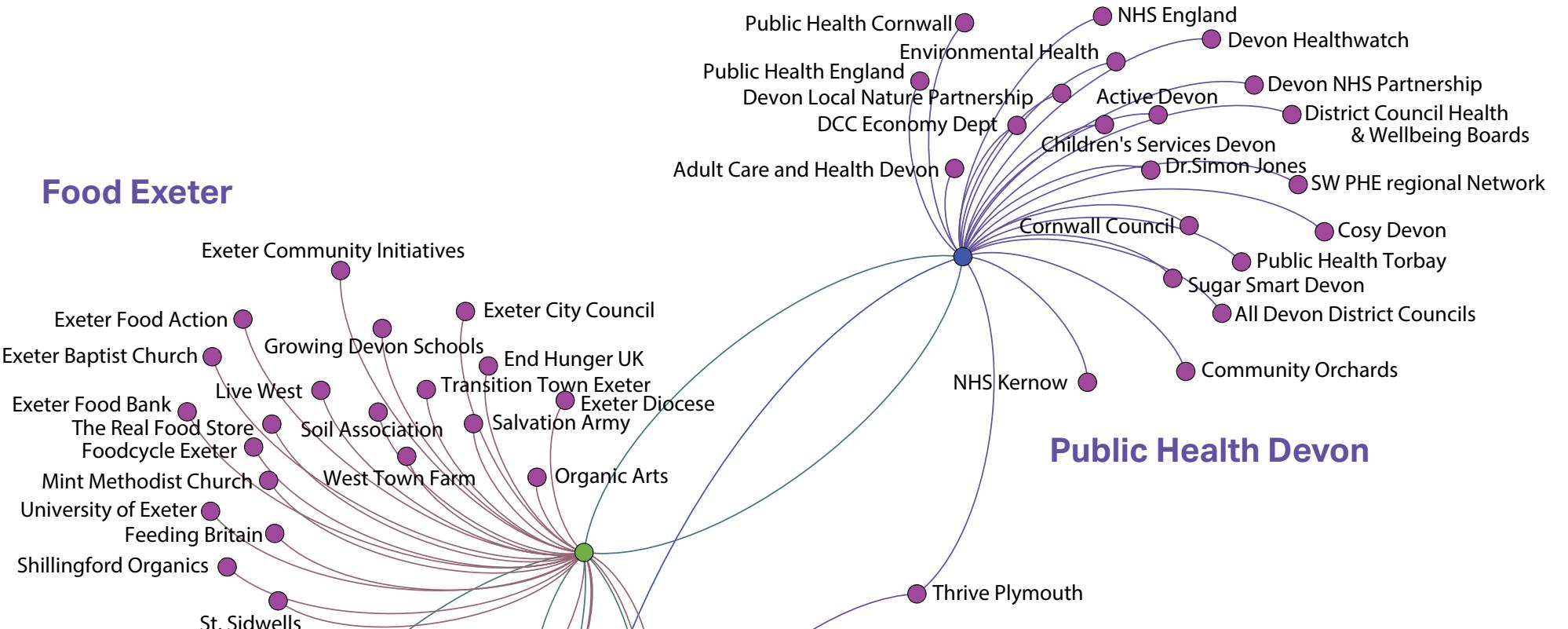
Seeing the partners' stakeholders and connections in terms of a social network demonstrates their interconnectedness. The map was created using software that takes a social network analysis (SNA) approach to visualising data. This was a very simple dataset and therefore we have four similarly sized clusters of networks coalescing around each partner, organised by their connections. An SNA map helps us understand the linkages between partners and whilst there are discrete partner networks we can see that they are largely interconnected.

This map can be found on the Wellcome Centre website at <https://wcceh.org/projects/rsf-food-networks/>

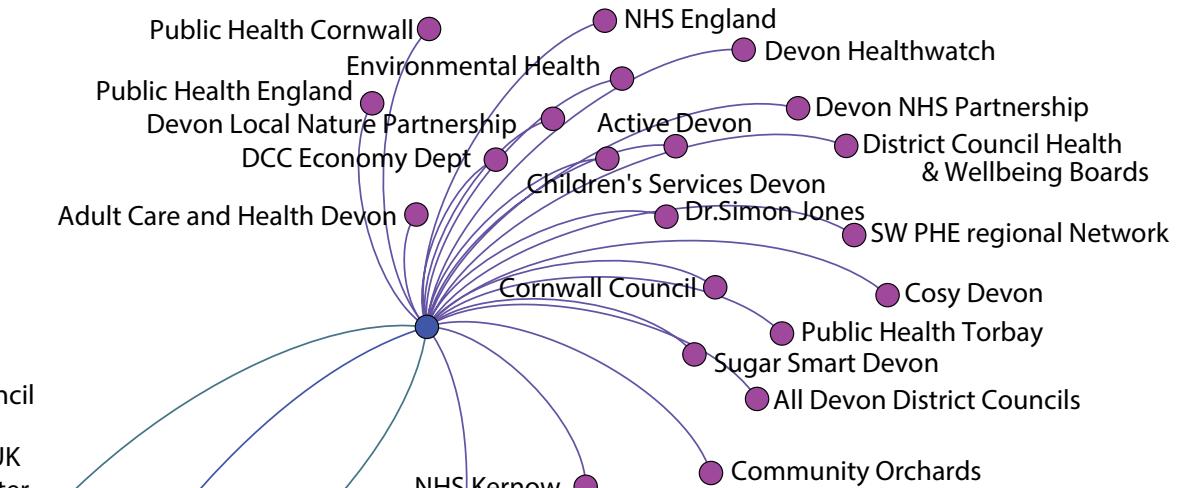
The Bioregional Learning Centre



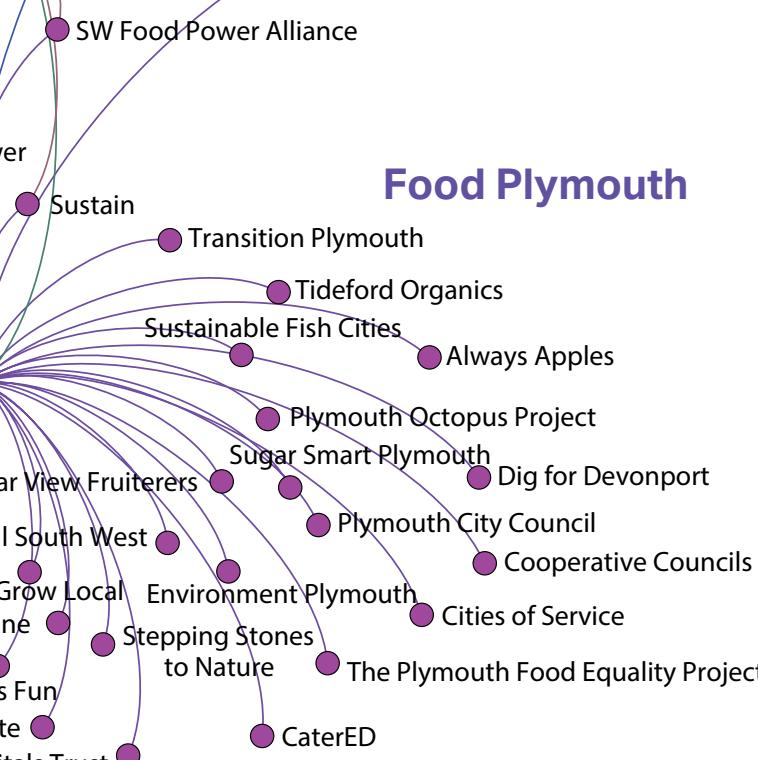
Food Exeter



Public Health Devon



Food Plymouth



Food Exeter and Food Plymouth share connections to national food-related frameworks and organisations such as SFP, Sustain and Food Power. Whereas Food Plymouth and The Bioregional Learning Centre (BLC) have geographically proximate connections to The Reconomy project and Plymouth University.

In contrast, Food Exeter and Public Health Devon (PHD) share connections based on their history of engagement and the involvement of a PHD practitioner within Food Exeter. This link is further demonstrated in the policies and projects map (see page 13).

Figure 1: Sustainable Food Networks in Devon based on Partners' Data



Figure 2: Food Exeter's Stakeholder Map

Food Exeter

Working for sustainable and healthy food for all in Greater Exeter

Food Exeter was established as a sustainable food city in 2014. In 2018 Food Exeter also became a 'Food Poverty Alliance' after securing funding from Food Power and began work on creating a cross-city alliance on Food Poverty, titled Exeter Fair Access to Food, which included their successful Exeter Food Poverty Summit held in Exeter's Guildhall November 2018. Whilst work on Fair access to Food is ongoing, Food Exeter have recently refocused on supporting Exeter's local food economy via a Local Food Centre project funded by The Conscience Trust.



Food Exeter's network shows that they are...

- Connected to other food actors in the city.
- Working across the issues of household food insecurity (Exeter Signposting Project), diet-related ill health, food in communities. (Community Growing working group) and the local food economy (Good Food Exeter - online Farmer's Market, working towards a local food centre for Exeter).

The Opportunity

Data shared by Food Exeter also highlighted the number of local food enterprises operating in and around Exeter (see geographic map), underscoring an opportunity for Food Exeter to link up local food economy nodes to harness the demand for local, fresh produce and other produce bought for sustainable dietary practices.

What's Missing

A notable absence in the map are connections to Exeter-based decision makers.

What's Changing

In 2020 this picture is changing with new connections to Exeter City Council, Exeter City Futures and Devon County Council. Also Food Exeter members recently set up a sister organisation Good Food Exeter, an online farmer's market for Exeter.

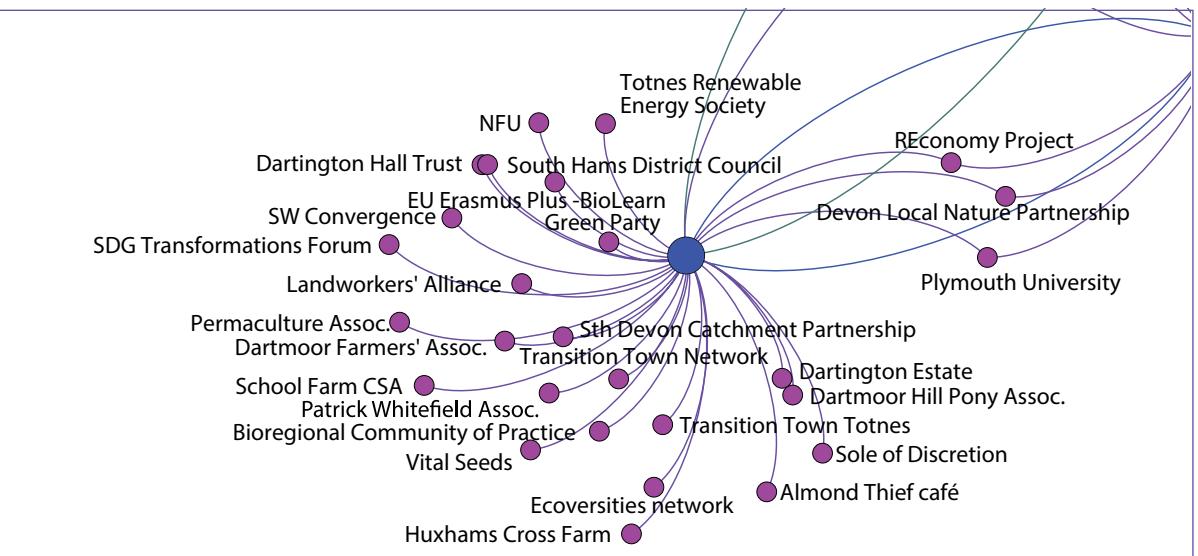


Figure 3: BLC's Stakeholder Map

The Bioregional Learning Centre

Advocating for a bioregional South Devon food shed

The Bioregional Learning Centre (BLC) was established in South Devon in 2017 with the aim of generating a joined-up response to climate change. The Learning Journey for Climate Resilience run by BLC in 2019 mapped the green shoots of this response and touched many parts of the food system from Dartmoor farmers to Brixham fishermen, urban food growing to organic veg box schemes. The Centre does not initiate projects. Instead it invites many stakeholders into shared conversations and collaborative design for a resilient future, working across sectors and aiming to influence policy as well as practice.



BLC's network shows that they are...

- Focused on a geographic rather than political region, engaging with organisations and individuals in an area from the River Teign to the Tamar.
- Connected to organisations at an international scale as they are part of a number of initiatives (see project map on page 14).

The Opportunity

BLC has synergies with Food Exeter in terms of the number of enterprises in South Devon focused on the local food economy. In particular, many small enterprises focused on innovative, experimental agroecological food production featured in BLC's Learning Journey in the autumn of 2019. The Dartington Estate, for example, is exploring innovative and sustainable land management practices, such as agroforestry, sustainable mushroom production, a community orchard and a community supported agriculture project (CSA), as well as land and water conservation projects.

What's Missing

Evolution up a level to work systemically with many actors in the food networks that sit within the geographical frame of South Devon.

What's Changing

Facilitation of the Devon 'Doughnut' is expanding the network of relationships within which the Centre sits and opening up avenues for whole-systems work, in particular around food.

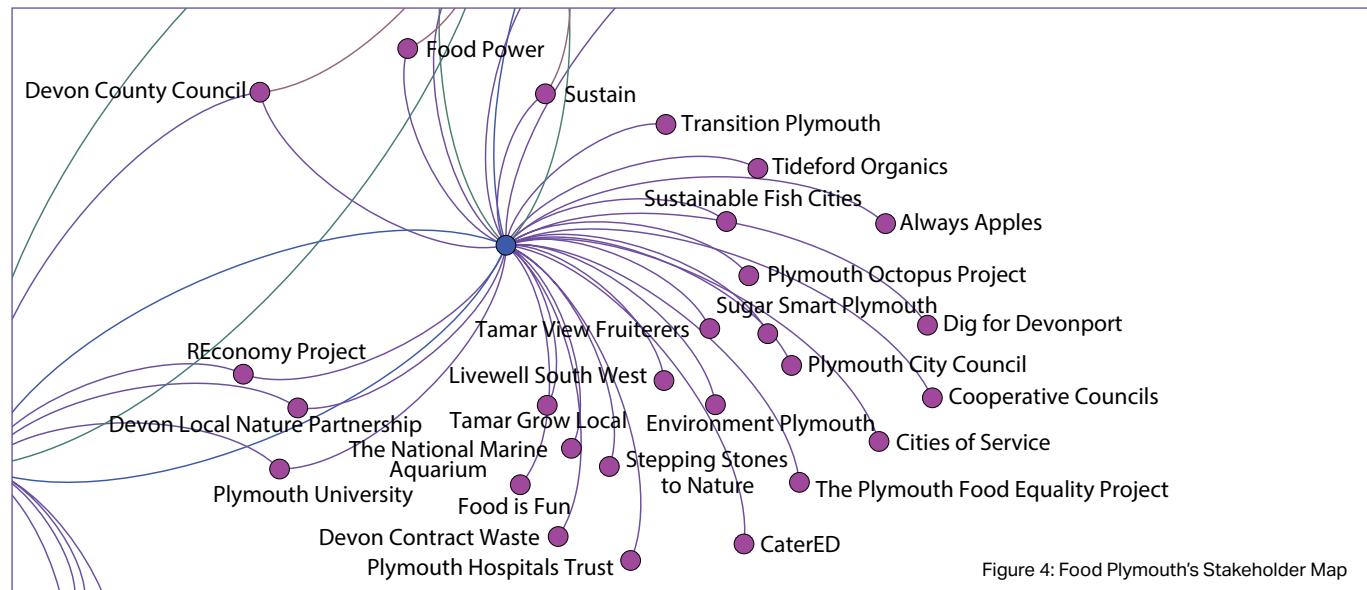


Figure 4: Food Plymouth's Stakeholder Map

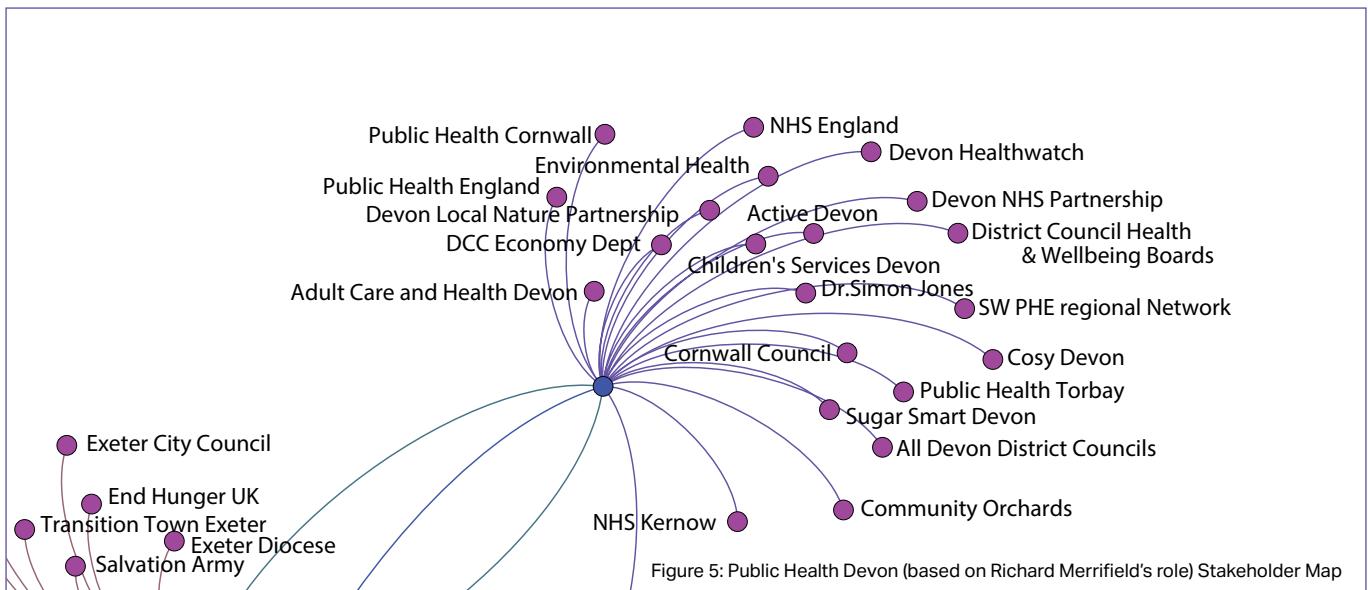


Figure 5: Public Health Devon (based on Richard Merrifield's role) Stakeholder Map

Food Plymouth

A city-wide approach to sustainable food that leverages strategic connections

Food Plymouth was established in 2010 as one of the founding Sustainable Food Cities. From 2011-2014 they developed and delivered the Plymouth Food Charter and Action Plan. Their stakeholder analysis map underscores the multi-sectoral basis of their network, which includes a number of strategic bodies, local food enterprises and community-based organisations. Operating within a Unitary Authority enables Food Plymouth to have strong strategic connections with Plymouth decision makers, Plymouth City Council and Thrive Plymouth, which is led by PCC's Director of Public Health. These connections have enabled Food Plymouth to help shape Plymouth City Council's Food Policy, including co-authoring their strategy document The Future of Food in Plymouth in 2014.

Food Plymouth is currently focused on working towards achieving their Silver SFP Award by harnessing this diverse network, including their Growing Community Abundance project. They are also focused on running the Food Power funded, Plymouth Food Equality Project which takes a creative approach to starting difficult conversations about food inequality in the city.

Food Plymouth's network shows...

- There is a wealth of organisations working to progress action on sustainable food in Plymouth.
- FP is well connected regionally to BLC and FE and nationally to Sustainable Food Places.

The Opportunity

To develop stronger regional connections into Cornwall and mentor other emerging alliances, especially in relation to Food Insecurity.

What's Missing

A joined up network of local food producers.

What's Changing

FP's capacity is being extended by:

- The Food Equality project that is addressing issues of food insecurity in Plymouth.
- Food Plymouth has secured funding for a new Sustainable Food Places Coordinator and a Plymouth Food Aid network coordinator.

These actions are supporting FP to build a campaign to reach Silver Sustainable Food Places standard by 2022.



Public Health Devon

A Devon-wide approach that makes explicit the link between food and health

Public Health Devon has responsibility for Public Health Intelligence in Devon and produces the Devon Joint Strategic Needs Assessment and the Devon Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy in order to protect the health of Devon's residents. There are a range of professional roles at PHD; the Project worked with Richard Merrifield who is an Advanced Public Health Practitioner. PHD's stakeholder map (fig. 5) represents networks relevant to his work on Healthy Weight, Healthy Places, Fuel Poverty and the Climate Emergency, plus his responsibilities of working across Devon's district councils' Health and Wellbeing boards.

Data from Richard highlights how different areas of Devon are taking forward initiatives to promote good health. For example, a working group in North Devon are taking a Whole Systems Approach to tackling Obesity which promotes a joined-up approach to tackling the issue.

Taking a Devon wide approach, in September 2019 Devon County Council became the first council in the South West to sign a Local Government Declaration to promote healthy weight across the county via improved food and drink provision. This initiative is concerned with diet related ill health, access to healthy food in deprived areas, a healthy start for infants, planning and more.

PHD's network shows that they have...

- Strong regional links with decision makers.
- Undertaken significant work on Healthy Weight, Healthy Places, Fuel Poverty and the Climate Emergency, plus created links across district councils' Health and Wellbeing boards in Devon.

Opportunity

- Due to local authority boundaries PHD has no links with Food Plymouth.
- Taking a multi-partnership approach to a Sustainable Devon Food Partnership could build capacity by working across Devon local authority boundaries

What's Changing

Working closely with Devon County Council, Devon district councils and partners, PHD is part of The Devon Climate Change Response Group and COVID-19 Recovery Group.



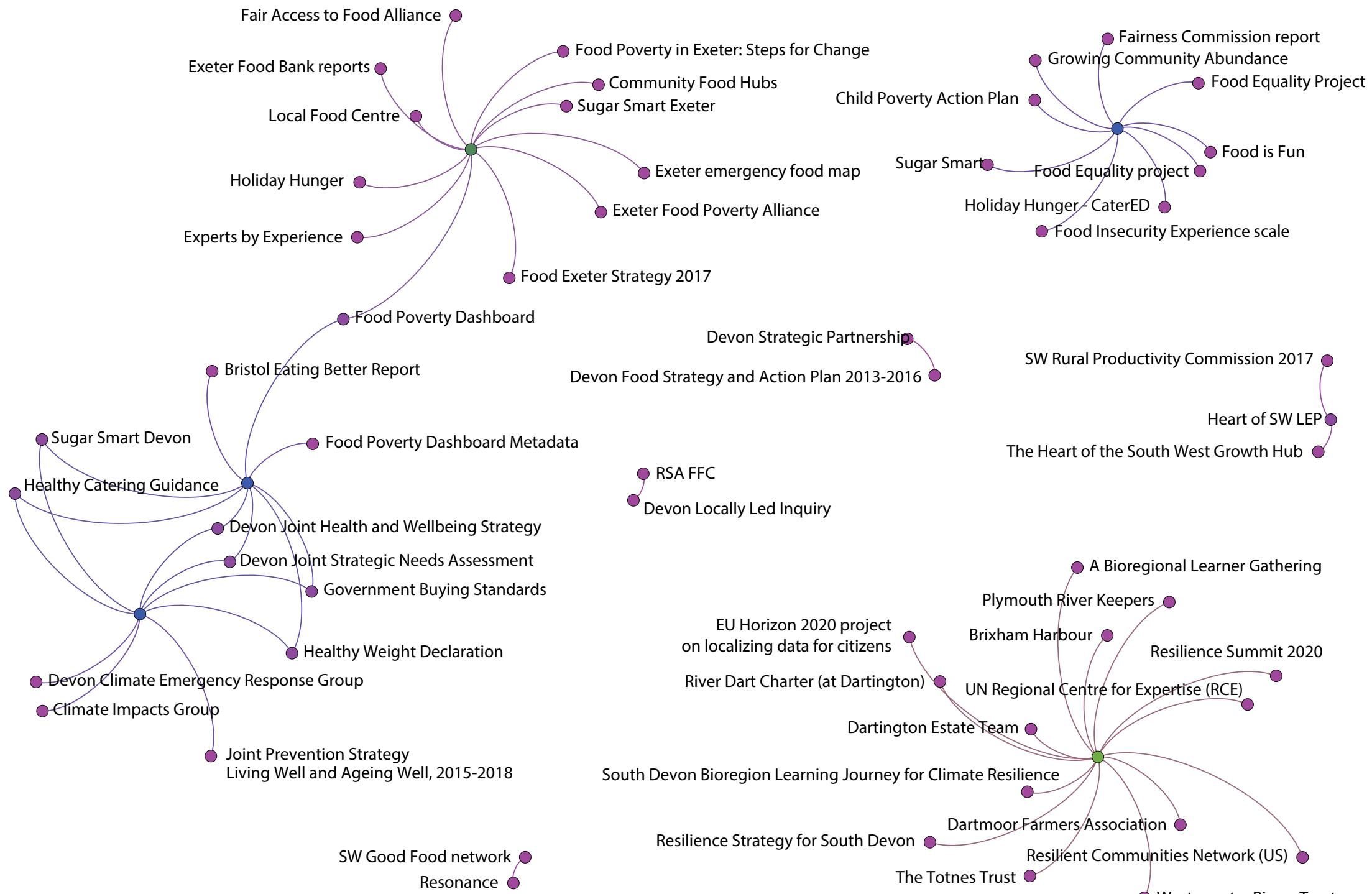
Sustainable Food Policies and Projects

With data shared from partners fig. 6 maps their policies and projects, illustrating the range of initiatives underway in Devon and connections between partners projects. Both Food Exeter and Food Plymouth have ongoing projects focused on addressing household food insecurity and on supporting the local food economy. Fig. 6 demonstrates how they are connected to national organisations via these initiatives. BLC has a number of projects focused on community, water, food and land resilience which are situated in both local and international scales.

Of particular interest, this map shows the direct links of Food Exeter to Public Health Devon, who collaborated in the Fair Access to Food Project and created a Devon Food Poverty Dashboard at their request. Naturally Public Health Devon are interconnected with Devon County Council; fig. 6 illustrates their relevant sustainability focused projects such as the Devon Climate Change Emergency Response Group and Healthy Weight declaration.

Other Action for Change

There are other notable projects in Devon that are concerned with sustainable food:



The **Devon Climate Change Emergency** process includes the creation a Devon Net Zero Citizens' Assembly.

Devon County Council's community engagement online platform, **Pinpoint Devon**, lets residents search for services, such as community food projects in their area.

The RSA's Devon Led Inquiry for the Food, Farming and Countryside Commission
launched their report in 2019 on Health and Thriving Communities in Devon and Cornwall.

The Devon Local Nature Partnership, established in 2012, brings people together to protect the environment. It works to promote sustainable farming and land use and to connect people with nature through initiatives that encourage active participation in the landscape.

Recently, a new initiative, **The South West Good Food Network**, funded by Resonance, has been working to link up local food producers across Cornwall, Devon and Dorset in order to support a localised food supply chain.

This map can be found on the Wellcome Centre website at <https://wccceh.org/projects/rsf-food-networks/>

Figure 6: Sustainable Food Policies and Projects in Devon

Challenges for Progressing Sustainable, Local Food in Devon

Structural and Economic

Whilst there are positive actions that support sustainable food action in Devon, there are a number of challenges for progressing a linked up network in Devon. In particular the differences in **political structures** creates a challenge as Devon is a two-tier authority. Plymouth and Torbay are unitary authorities that have full responsibilities for strategic as well as planning issues and others. Whereas the rest of Devon is divided into 8 district councils where Devon County Council takes responsibility for strategic issues including health. This means that the district councils, which includes Exeter City Council, may choose not to give a significant focus to food issues on their district level health and wellbeing boards. There are **wealth and life expectancy disparities** across Devon, including the 13.7 year gap between the ward with shortest life expectancy (Ilfracombe Central at 74.7 years) and the longest (Chagford at 88.4 years). Around 11% of the Devon population is classed as income deprived, ranging from 33% in parts of central Ilfracombe to 1% in areas of Exeter⁷.

Devon's **socio-economic and geographic structure** also create challenges in terms of creating rural-urban linkages that assist the supply of local food. In addition, Devon's economy is constrained by low wages and seasonal employment. Devon's agriculture and food production sector accounts for 13% of the county's economy, compared to 7.6% nationally. Devon's economy is hampered by low wages and seasonal employment, the population is predicted to rise by 20% between 2008 and 2033. At the same time, Devon's native wildlife species and habitats are under pressure, with only 36% of Sites of Special Scientific

Interest and 32% of rivers classed as being in good condition⁸. These issues have been intensified by the COVID-19 crisis with sectors such as Hospitality taking a significant economic hit and a high proportion of furloughed staff (and expected redundancies). Workers in the food production and retail sectors have suffered some of the highest death rates from COVID-19⁹.

A complexity of these interconnected challenges contribute to the decision of farmers to transport high quality Devon-grown food produce out of county where they can receive a premium price, instead of being locally supplied. There is an urgent need for an aggregated approach to creating the right infrastructure to enable the supply and distribution of sustainable, local and regional food within Devon and the wider South West. In recent years there has been a continual rise in the dominance of supermarkets and low-cost retailers which assist the spread of 'cheap food'. This has serious implications for public health, the Devon economy and its biodiversity.

Social Constraints

Local and sustainably produced food can be more expensive and less accessible than food sold through conventional mass retailers such as supermarkets.

In Devon and elsewhere, the rise in household food insecurity (also known as Food Poverty) is a significant constraint to increasing access to local, sustainable food. In response to this, Food Exeter and Food Plymouth have both created projects focused on tackling the issues and joining up key stakeholders to boost joined up approaches to these challenging issues. Recent statistics from Exeter Food Bank show that the number of emergency food parcels provided has risen continually each year and has increased by 138% since 2012/13. In 2018/19, the foodbank provided three days' worth of emergency food to 6,878 people, of which 2,158 were children¹⁰.

Food Plymouth are also focused on running a Food Power-funded Plymouth Food Equality Project which takes a creative approach to addressing food inequality in the city.

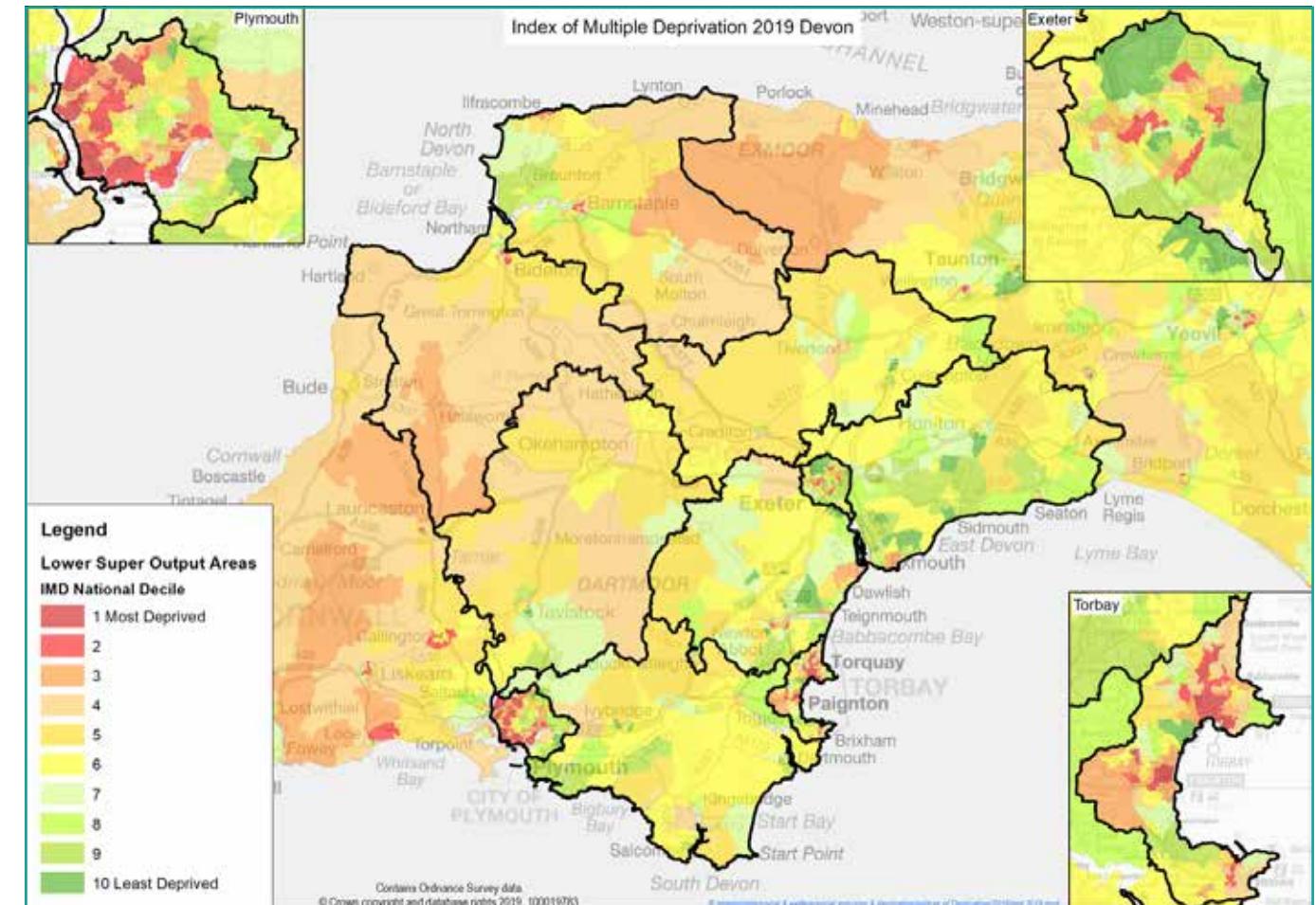
Recent research from The Independent Food Aid Network (IFAN) highlights the negative impacts of COVID-19 in generating a steep rise in poverty and household food insecurity. Their work shows a 108% percentage rise in the number of emergency food parcels distributed in Scotland from 2019-2020¹¹.

Household food insecurity creates detrimental impacts on health, mental health and ability to function within mainstream socio-economic systems. Benefit issues and precarious employment can switch someone experiencing low income to become a vulnerable adult who requires additional services. These issues can trigger mental and general ill health, precarious accommodation, homelessness and food poverty.

Switching back towards positive health and employment is a difficult road that requires the intervention of a variety of services and professionals. Access to food and nutritious eating is at the core of establishing positive health and the ability for residents to work, volunteer and engage positively within communities. The rise of these challenging issues is detrimental to creating positive communities that contribute to overall Devon economic and community life.



Photo from an article in The Independent: "A steady rise in food bank use is a stark reminder that universal credit has been an abject failure." Thursday 25 April 2019



⁷ Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy in Devon 2013-2016

⁸ Devon Local Nature Partnership

⁹ Winter (2020) - Food System Impacts of COVID-19, CRR Research Bulletin, available <https://centreforruralpolicyresearch.createand1.com/t/ViewEmail/r/14FE-D12A9D663B972540EF23F30FEDED>, accessed 03/09/2020

¹⁰ Statistics available from Exeter Food Bank

¹¹ IFAN (2020) - Scotland Emergency Food Report, available https://uploads.strikinglycdn.com/files/e790b418-8c4c-4e86-b123-81e16690c017/IFAN%20Scotland%20Independent%20Food%20Bank%20Food%20Parcel%20Distribution%20Report_FEB_JULY_19_20_8.9.20.pdf accessed 09/09/20

The Role of Civil Society Organisations

Within Devon

As discussed, there is a range of initiatives led by civil society organisations working to address the challenge of sustainable food in Devon. The Sustainable Food Places in Devon, Food Exeter and Food Plymouth bring together networks of organisations focused on: Improving the affordability of local, sustainable food; increasing access to, and consumption of, fresh produce; boosting opportunities for good food in community via the food offer in community cafes, shared food events etc.; supporting opportunities for local producers to find routes to market. The Bioregional Learning Centre are working to convene a response to supporting sustainable land and water management in South Devon.

In the SW region

In 2017-2019 The Cornwall Food Foundation's Food for Change programme^{12 13} made a difference in supporting disadvantaged people to develop cooking and growing skills which led them to develop new food practices as well as improving their health and wellbeing. In particular, participants developed a new enthusiasm for food, they enjoyed new food experiences, saw improvements in food budgeting and planning, developed an enjoyment of sharing food skills with friends and family.

A widely reported outcome was participants experiencing a change in their sense of confidence. These practical activities enabled the acquisition of food skills that supported participants to become more self reliant and adventurous in their food practices. Enthusiasm for new food skills plus a new found confidence has helped participants develop a

new vision for their futures. Many of the participants were previously reliant on high energy, low value fast food diets and had limited cooking skills. The programme demonstrated the appetite people can have for freshly cooked meals and developing food skills that support a healthy diet.

In the UK and Europe

Outside of the South West action is being led by networks like SFP which support local and regional sustainable food initiatives. County Durham and Leicestershire are county-wide Sustainable Food Places that have both been creating Food and Drink charters. Since establishing as a Sustainable Food Place, County Durham has created a food hub that works with 19 businesses to strengthen the local food economy. The London Food Strategy has a range of initiatives focused on food insecurity, boosting community growing and cooking spaces and supporting community food initiatives.

The Food Zones model developed and implemented by Growing Communities is a practical example of a low-carbon, low-waste, seasonal, agro-ecological and fair food buying policy (Sustain 2019)¹⁴.

Some UK networks, such as Greater Manchester are signing up to the influential Milan Urban Food Policy Pact that seeks a cross-sectoral approach to 'develop sustainable food systems that are inclusive, resilient, safe and diverse, that provide healthy and affordable food to all people in a human rights-based framework, that minimise waste and conserve biodiversity while adapting to and mitigating impacts of climate change'.

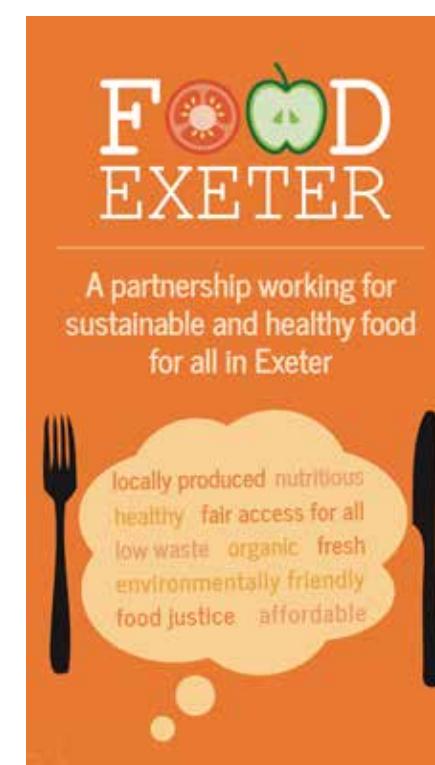
Barilla Center for Food & Nutrition Foundation have placed France as top of the league table on sustainable food policy. France is lauded for its aggressive measures to tackle food waste¹⁵, promote healthy lifestyles and adopting eco-farming techniques. In 2014 France put the transition to agroecology at the centre of its agricultural policy. The French agricultural system now trains over 450,000 people and promotes crop diversity, biodiversity, ecological pest management and integrated mixed farming as the basis of successful food production. In 2015, The French Public Food Policy focused on social justice, food waste, educating young people, reconnecting producers and consumers which has a strong focus on food procurement. Many French regions and towns have 'Food Plans', a model that is beginning to be replicated in the UK, with Food Sense Wales and Food

Cardiff releasing this year 'A Sustainable Food Plan for Cardiff', with action on boosting the local food economy, boosting food growing, addressing food insecurity and diet related ill health, developing a local food 'Food Park', supporting farmers markets etc.

Denmark has a 90% public procurement target for organics that has been met at no extra cost. This was led by public institutions creating new reliable markets for agroecological farming where 57% is used for organic food production. Copenhagen has transformed its public procurement policy with 72% of its food sourced from organic producers.

Imagine if the following examples of community-oriented organisations were funded, connected (not consolidated) and were actively sharing and learning from each other...

EXETER Good Food Exeter Online farmers market



Shillingford Organics Sustainable horticulture, education



St. Sidwells Community Café
Affordable good food/community space, use of surplus and local producers, education



PLYMOUTH
Tamar Grow Local
Sustainable horticulture, education, café, community growing spaces



Devon and Cornwall Food Association
Surplus Food redistribution and emergency food aid



CaterED
City-wide procurement of local produce for school meals, holiday hunger projects



DEVON
Sugar Smart Devon
Healthy Weight declaration



SOUTH HAMS
Riverford
Sustainable horticulture, restaurant, shops



Huxhams Cross Farm Sustainable horticulture, Dartington Mill, education

UK AND EUROPE
Food Durham
Food hub, food charter



London Food Strategy
Initiatives, implementation plan



Dartington Estate
Agro-ecological project trials including mushrooms and forestry, UK's first River Charter

Growing Communities
Policy, market, veg scheme



The Opportunity

Action is needed to support and strengthen initiatives working to promote the supply and consumption of local and regional sustainable food.

Taking a civic led or bottom up approach, local and regional food and health programmes can bring together networks of organisations to work collaboratively on pressing food issues within their localities.

Working with local authorities, key decision makers and regional bodies such The Heart of the South West LEP will be essential to realise the goal of transforming the local and regional food systems.

A Devon Sustainable Food Network would explore opportunities to increase the supply and sale of sustainable local food in Devon and support the procurement of local, sustainable food by public bodies and anchor institutions. This approach would not only support Devon's farmers, it would also help Devon's consumers eat better and healthier food, so addressing diet-related public health concerns as well.

Food Sense Wales/Food Cardiff
Sustainable food plan



Denmark's holistic approach
Copenhagen's School Meals Service



Milan Urban Food Policy Pact
Sustainable food systems



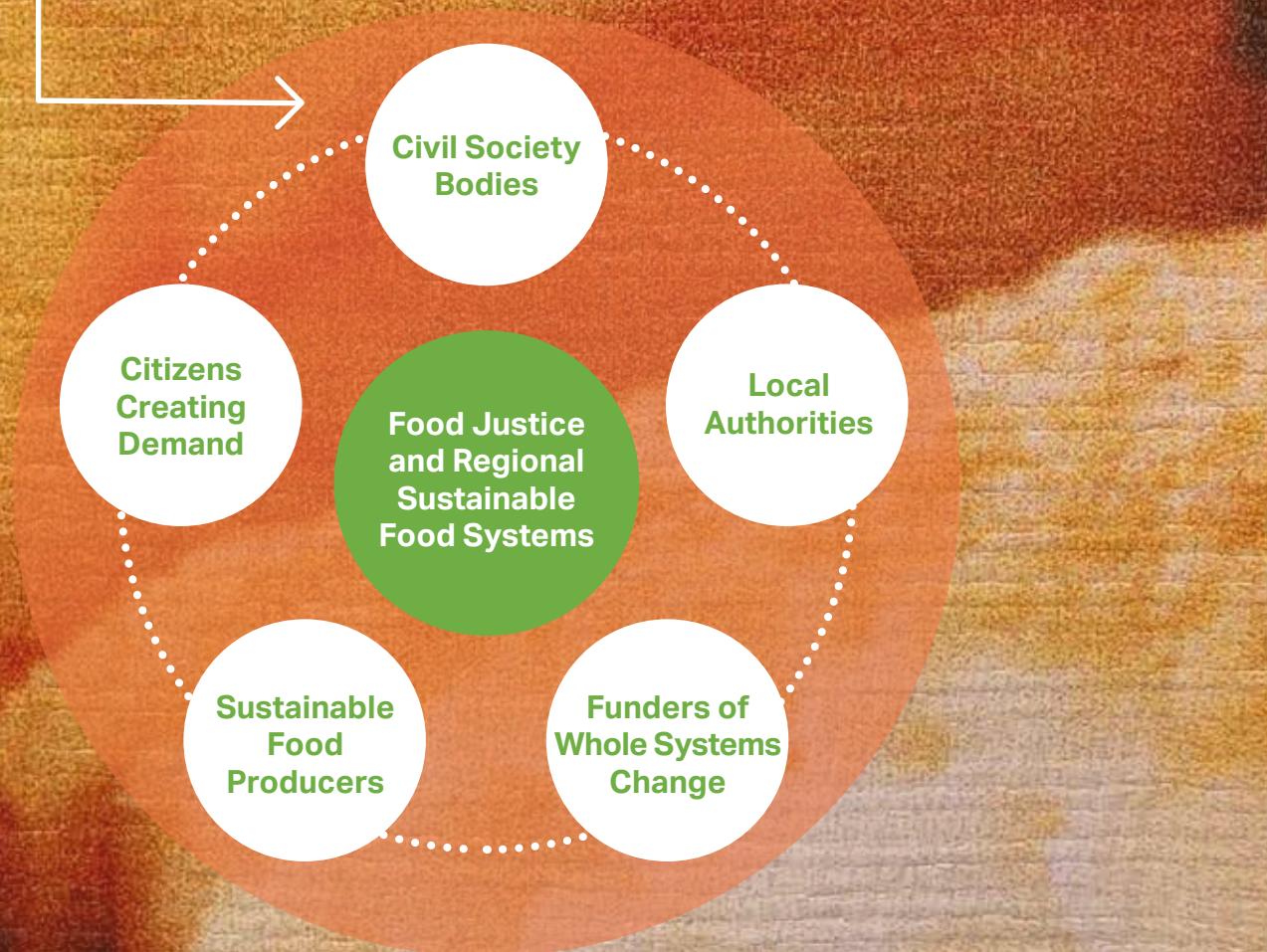
¹² On 12th December 2019 The Cornwall Food Foundation announced that they were ceasing operations. For more information read their facebook post.

¹³ <https://www.cornwallislesofscillygrowthprogramme.org.uk/projects/food-for-change/>

¹⁴ Growing Communities' Food Zones Project - A vision of what a sustainable and resilient food & farming system might look like

¹⁵ France becoming the first nation in the world to penalise supermarkets that throw away products that are edible by humans.

The conversation needs to widen to become a fertile collaboration with a collective focus and purpose.



Opportunities for Food Change

- An aggregated regional system that enables the supply of local, sustainable food is needed in Devon. Developing a system that creates shorter food supply chains and includes support to small scale farmers and food producers is needed in order to boost Devon's food resilience and boosts the sustainable production and consumption of food in Devon. Systemic change is needed to achieve this, which will require funding in order to support the creation of a level playing field for small scale farmers.

An increased supply of fresh Devon produce could also have positive public health benefits if there was a linked increase in the consumption of local, sustainable fresh Devon produce^{16 17}. When considering a rounded picture of the environmental impact of food production, a good approach is to combine considerations of distance, perishability, suitability of production for different farmland, production methods, proven climate credentials, seasonality and fair trading.

- A linked-up regional approach could see an increase in public procurers and anchor institutions buying sustainable, local food from small and medium scale producers via an online platform or other intermediaries¹⁸.
- Boost health via a good food approach where subsidised, sustainable, local food is supplied to neighbourhood produce markets and community centres in order for community organisations to run cooking sessions to familiarise residents with how to cook fresh produce and to instil an interest in trying new food experiences. This approach aims to find solutions to making sustainable, local food affordable and draws on findings from The Food for Change programme. Conversations with people with lived experience of food insecurity and community organisers are essential to make this approach successful.
- Action is needed to create a joined up, Devon wide approach to progress sustainable, local food in Devon. A cross-sectoral network of organisations who understand the challenges and have a vision for change, need to work together to take the ideas in this report forward. This approach may include creating a Food Strategy for Devon that has buy-in from DCC, district and unitary councils and other key organisations.

Barriers to Change

One central challenge to taking forward sustainable food networks in Devon is the lack of higher level strategic coordination, as well as a lack of district level strategic support. A coordinated Devon-wide approach is needed that joins up county and district level authorities with key place-based civil society organisations and sustainable food leaders. Innovative and community-led Devon Sustainable Food initiatives require access to funds to run pilot and trials. Once an initiative has been trialled, access to investment will be needed to support its launch.

Next steps

- The development of a regional local food distribution network that includes small and medium food producers is an essential step to support Devon food producers and boost the availability of local, sustainable produce¹⁹.
- This initiative will require funding. Gaining support from The Heart of the South West Local Enterprise Partnership (HoSWLEP), the new South West Mutual Bank and others, would be an important step in taking these recommendations forward.
- Reciprocally, partners in this project would like to support HoSWLEP in developing a 'social values' yardstick across all their policies, which would boost support to SMEs.
- Strategic and key organisations need to take a high level vision of what Devon could look like if transformed by sustainable local food approaches.



Conclusions

Setting up a Devon wide Sustainable Food Network can support the development of a regional food supply network, which would include a mix of representatives from local authorities, including Public Health Devon, farmers, food businesses, civil society organisations, planners and relevant academics.

A Devon Sustainable Food Network would build capacity and form a joined up approach to supporting the supply of local, sustainable produce in Devon. This body should be linked up to nationwide organisations such as The Sustainable Food Places in order to share best practices. It is recommended that the County Council would have oversight and lead on action but in close collaboration with a range of bodies including other local authorities. However the input of civil society organisations is of central importance for place based understandings of issues and communities. There needs to be an inclusive approach to this, so that a range of voices are heard including sustainable food producers, and food businesses as well as community voices

There are both opportunities and challenges in taking forward sustainable, local food networks in Devon. This project has focused on the data of partners that highlights the lack of higher level strategic coordination of this issue, as well as a lack of district level strategic support. In the face of the challenges of the Climate Change Emergency, COVID-19 recovery and Brexit, assisting the development of a Devon wide Sustainable Food Network has the potential to begin the journey of remedying this.

This report and its Social Network Analysis maps can be found on the Wellcome Centre website at <https://wcceh.org/projects/rsf-food-networks/>

"We need a resilient food system. This means going beyond the ecological idea of resilience as merely survival during times of stress, and instead proactively building a food system that can both respond quickly to changing circumstances and act as a safety net."

- Extract from 'Coronavirus exposed fragility in our food system—it's time to build something more resilient'
The Conversation, June 12, 2020 by Emma Burnett and Luke Owen



¹⁶ See key reports: RSA FFCC -Our Future in the land report 2019 - The Soil Association's 2019 Manifesto Priorities -Sustain 2019 Every mouthful counts: The role of food in city-based responses to climate and nature emergency

¹⁷ The Food Foundation-Veg Facts Report 2016. This report explores the challenges of persuading people to eat more vegetables and the need to be increasing the supply of UK vegetables.

¹⁸ See www.thesouthwestfoodhub.co.uk for a new initiative providing this service.

¹⁹ We look forward to seeing the impacts of the new South West Food Hub who are piloting work in this field. We hope that they will support sustainable, agroecological producers <https://heartofswlep.co.uk/news/launch-of-the-south-west-food-hub-cic/>

²⁰ From Farms to Feed Us Devon



Photo: Farms to Feed Us Devon

Active food businesses and organisations in Devon²⁰

Farms to Feed Us Devon

Allercombe Farm Traditional Meat
Cabrito Goat Meat Limited
Country Cheeses
Court House Orchard Ltd
Crossways farm
Down Farm
Haye Farm
Higher Hacknell Farm
Living Soil Garden
Maslin Bakery
Pig Out - Beenleigh Copse Farm
Pipers Farm
Quicke's Cheese
Sandford Orchards Cider
Sharpham Wine & Cheese
The Devon Charcoal Company
Trill Farm
Verwill Farm
Quicke's Traditional
Norsworthy Dairy Goats
Native Breeds at Fowlescombe Farm
Pig and mix Ltd
Crossways Farm
JH and JL Gibson
Find and Foster Fine Ciders
Grainofruth Devon (fresh_flour)
Westons Rose Veal
The Meat Box Company
Freshflour
Eversfield Organic

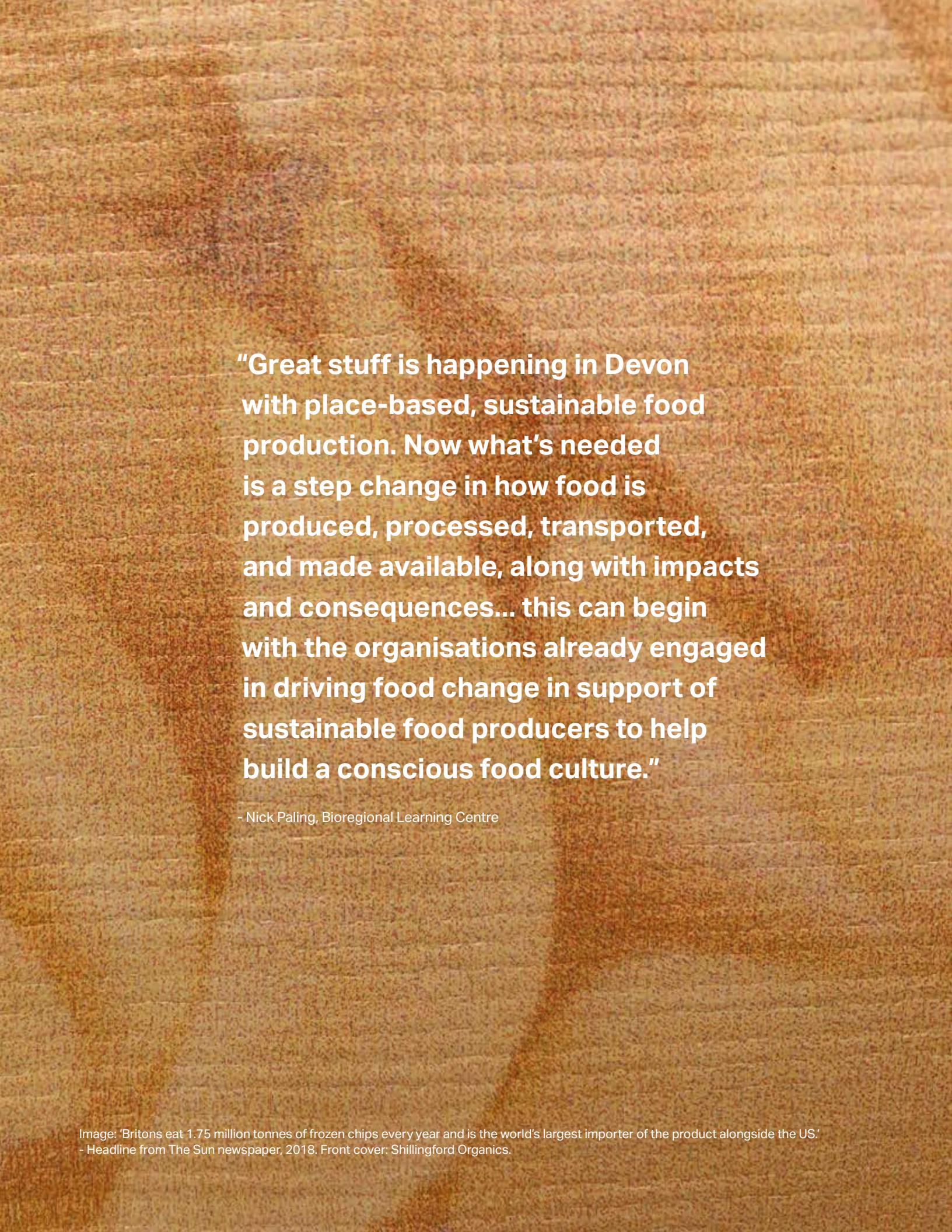
Exeter Food Organisations
Food Organisation
Ben's Farm Shops
Burrow Farm Shop

Darts Farm
Devon Meat Box Co
Eat your Greens
Greendale Farm Shop
Hartnell Fresh Foods
Nourish
Parr's Farm Country Store
Real Food Store
Seasons
Shillingford Organics
The Grocer on the Green
Veg in a Box
Zero Exeter
Barton Place Farm
Boyce's Fruit Farm
Fareshare SW
Exeter Food Action
St Sidwells Community Centre
Exeter Growers' Co-operative
West Town Farm
Organic Arts
Broadclyst Community Farm
Foodcycle
On the Hill
Good Food Exeter
Food Exeter

Plymouth Food Organisations
Name of Organisation
Catered
Grow Share Cook
Always Apples
Food is Fun
Devon & Cornwall Food Action
Tideford Organics
Tamar View Fruiterers

Tamar Grow Local
Plymouth Octopus Project
Transition Plymouth
The Plymouth Food Equality Project
Dig for Devonport
Livewell South West
Stepping Stones to Nature
Reconomy
Food Plymouth
Sole of Discretion

South Hams Organisations
Almond Thief
Conversation Cafes
School Farm CSA
Huxham's Cross -Apricot Centre
Riverford
Stokeley Farm Shop
Churston Farm Shop
Aune Valley Meat
Greenlife
Sacks
Patrick Whitefield Assoc.
Sole of Discretion
Dartmoor Hill Pony Assoc.
Vital Seeds
Dartmoor Farmers' Assoc.
Dartington Estate
Transition Town Totnes
The Bioregional Learning Centre
The Happy Apple
Ark Wholefoods Shop
Ben's Farm Shop
Dart Farmers Market
Wellspring Farm



"Great stuff is happening in Devon with place-based, sustainable food production. Now what's needed is a step change in how food is produced, processed, transported, and made available, along with impacts and consequences... this can begin with the organisations already engaged in driving food change in support of sustainable food producers to help build a conscious food culture."

- Nick Paling, Bioregional Learning Centre