

# A New Deal for Horticulture: Ideas for a horticulture renewal programme and illustrative case studies





# A Vision for Horticulture Renewal

- **Tasty, fresh and affordable fruit and vegetables for all** - Every person in Britain (England) (whether living in a city, town or rural area) has access to affordable, highly fresh, fruit and vegetables produced locally using organic methods and sold from a decentralised network of farms and market gardens either via Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) or box scheme, food hub or farmers' market. The diverse nature of these systems means that all needs would be catered for, from the person who wants the ultimate convenience of a doorstep delivery to those who want to participate in production through a CSA.
- **Local produce boosting local economies** - The percentage of fresh produce currently imported would be gradually substituted by locally produced fruit and vegetables through an increase in the number of small-scale, highly productive market gardens and farms. If just 1% of the £7.8 billion worth of F&V currently imported was produced in the UK, this would bring £78 million into local economies, enabling the establishment of 780 new market gardens with an annual turnover of £100,000. This represents 11.3 new market gardens around each of Britain's 69 cities. A 10% substitution of imports would multiply this figure by 10!
- **Decentralised supply system** - Each city would have a decentralised, values-driven supply system, of the sort pioneered by Growing Communities, integrating urban and peri-urban production of perishable, high-value crops, with farms in the wider rural hinterland growing bulkier crops (carrots, onions, potatoes).
- **Viable Livelihoods** - Farmers and growers would be able to earn a decent income from growing and selling fruit and vegetables, and their workers would be paid enough to live in secure accommodation, with work benefits such as maternity leave, sick pay and pension provision.
- **Employment** - Due to its creative, meaningful, varied and convivial nature, combined with decent pay and working conditions, horticulture would become a desirable occupation for many school leavers. The labour-intensive nature of organic horticulture means many more part-time work opportunities would be created, enabling people to combine horticultural work with other "desk-based" jobs, creating a fitter, healthier and more mentally balanced population.
- **Food connection and education** - Individuals and families would have access to the farms where their fruit and vegetables are produced, with options to visit, volunteer or take a course in aspects of sustainable horticulture. A combination of its freshness and flavour, combined with the opportunity to participate in the food system would encourage people of all ages to eat, grow and enjoy fruit and vegetables.



# Horticulture Renewal Programme

To meet the UK demand for fruit and vegetables a massive scaling up of production is required. The table below sets out a series of schemes which, implemented together, would lead to the recruitment, training and establishment of new growers and support existing growers to become more productive and efficient. Many of these ideas are already being implemented with great success, and case studies are provided on the enclosed sheets. However widespread adoption is limited by lack of funding and skills to support their development. These ideas and case studies are offered as an illustration of the type of programme necessary to bring our vision for UK horticulture into reality.

	Action	Case Studies
Recruitment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Resource pack for students considering horticulture</li> <li>• Programme of careers talks in schools</li> <li>• Work experience programmes</li> </ul>	No UK examples as yet
Training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Vocational courses in organic and agroecological horticulture</li> <li>• Apprenticeships and Traineeships</li> <li>• Mentor scheme link to experienced growers and new entrants</li> <li>• Farmer to farmer study and research groups</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Organiclea City and Guilds Organic Horticulture Course</li> <li>• Soil Association Future Growers Scheme</li> </ul>
Start up and business development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Incubator farms</li> <li>• Create affordable access to land and accommodation</li> <li>• Introduce a “Mixed Farms Scheme” supporting the creation of horticultural units on larger farms</li> <li>• Provide grants and interest free loans for infrastructure and equipment costs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Renata (France)</li> <li>• Ecological Land Co-operative</li> <li>• Trill Farm Market Garden</li> <li>• Scottish RPA New Entrant’s Capital Grants Scheme</li> </ul>
Production	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inspire best practise through mentor schemes to link new growers with experienced practitioners</li> <li>• Support urban and peri-urban horticulture to develop market gardens as a community resource in green belt</li> <li>• Introduce an orchard planting and maintenance scheme to encourage long term investment in fruit production</li> <li>• Adopt production techniques from international examples of high performance, ecological market gardens</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Examples of highly productive UK market gardens (eg Fresh and Green, Tolly)</li> <li>• Ferme du Bec Hellouin, Curtis Stone, Jean Martin Fourtier</li> </ul>
Distribution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Shift to shorter supply chains</li> <li>• Create innovative and diverse, value-based distribution schemes to increase access to local fresh produce</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community Supported Agriculture</li> <li>• Growing Communities, Tamar Valley Food Hub</li> </ul>

## A Realistic Route to Health and Harmony:

How our Horticulture Renewal Programme meets the objectives of the post Brexit agriculture bill

### Health and Harmony

*"Market dynamics are externalising costs onto health and society. This is policy failure"*<sup>1</sup>

If the UK population were to eat the "seven a day" helpings of fruit and vegetables now recommended by Public Health England, UK growers would need to produce at least £2.4 million tonnes more of fruit and vegetables<sup>2</sup>. Bad diets result in diseases such as cancer, heart-disease and diabetes, costing billions to the NHS<sup>3,4</sup>. Increased opportunity to eat fresh, local, organic produce and engage with production would bring significant physical and mental health benefits<sup>5</sup>.

### An Attractive Profession

*"We want to attract more of our graduates and domestic workforce into this vibrant industry"* p10 H&H<sup>6</sup>

Small scale organic horticulture is already attracting UK graduates and domestic employees, motivated by the meaningful, varied and skilled nature of the work. Addressing barriers such as access to land, and affordable accommodation, lack of training and mentor schemes and low investment in appropriate R&D would make it still more attractive<sup>7</sup>.

### Self-Reliance

*"Agricultural support should focus on encouraging industry to invest, raise standards and improve self-reliance"* p15 H&H

Import substitution of some of the £7.8billion<sup>8</sup> worth of fruit and vegetables we currently import would increase UK self-reliance on fresh produce, guarding against potential price rises of imported produce<sup>9</sup>. Agroecological growers tend to operate low input, "closed loop" systems, with a focus on recycling, so are more self-reliant in fertility, seed and packaging than their conventional counterparts.

### Delivery of Public Goods

*"We will support the industry to adapt to a new world: one which will yield greater economic benefits and improved environmental, biodiversity and animal health outcomes"* p15 H&H

The production methods chosen by organic and agroecological SMEs focus on delivering positive externalities such as soil care, carbon sequestration and wildlife conservation, while local production keeps more money circulating within the local economy<sup>10</sup>.

### A Culture of Excellence

*"There is an important role for knowledge sharing, producer co-operation and farmer to farmer learning to kick start a wider culture of excellence"* p25 H&H

Organic and small-scale growers already co-operate to share knowledge through the Soil Association's Innovative Farmer Programme, FarmHack events, local growers' study groups and farm walks. Financial support from Defra would enable more growers and new entrants to benefit from mentoring and apprenticeship schemes.

### A Productive and Resilient Sector

*"We want to see productive, skilled and self-reliant, arable, horticulture, forestry and bee-keeping sectors, with reduced losses from pest and disease outbreaks"* p55 H&H

Small scale horticulture often produces higher yields of vegetable crops than industrial systems, especially those which benefit from high labour inputs such as salad leaves and beans. The diversity of crops in such systems, combined with soil health and biodiversity means they tend to be more resilient to pests and diseases than monoculture systems<sup>11</sup>.

### A Culture of Co-operation

*"...It is important to build on and widen existing traditions of co-operatives to encourage a stronger culture of co-operation, transparency and fair dealing as part of a modern, 21st century food chain"* p57H&H

SMEs often add value by direct marketing, achieving transparency and fair dealing. If supported to co-operate they could supply larger markets, such as public procurement contracts.

1 Schoen V. and Lang T. (2016) Horticulture in the UK: Potential for meeting dietary guideline. Food Research Collaboration Policy Brief

2 Food Foundation (2016). Veg Facts: A briefing by the Food Foundation. London: The Food Foundation.

3 Schoen V. and Lang T. (2016) Horticulture in the UK: Potential for meeting dietary guideline. Food Research Collaboration Policy Brief

4 Food Foundation 2016. Veg Facts: A briefing by the Food Foundation. London: The Food Foundation.

5 PHE 2017. Spatial Planning for Health: An evidence resource for planning and designing healthier places. London: Public Health England.

6 Defra (2018) Healthy and Harmony: The Future for Food Farming and the Environment in a Green Brexit. All italicised quotes marked H&H are from this document.

7 Laughton, R (2017) A Matter of Scale: A study of the productivity, financial viability and multifunctional benefits of small scale farms. LWA and Coventry University

8 Schoen V. and Lang T. (2016) Horticulture in the UK: Potential for meeting dietary guideline. Food Research Collaboration Policy Brief

9 Food Foundation 2017. Farming for 5 a day. <http://foodfoundation.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/Farming-for-five-a-day-final.pdf>

10 Ward, B. and Lewis, J. (2002) Plugging the Leaks: Making the most of every pound that enters your local economy. New Economics Foundation.

11 Laughton, R (2017) A Matter of Scale: A study of the productivity, financial viability and multifunctional benefits of small scale farms. LWA and Coventry University

The Eatwell guide recommends that 40% of each person's diet consists of fruit and vegetables (Public Health England, 2016), yet currently only 1% of the £3 billion agricultural budget is spent on horticulture.



The Landworkers' Alliance  
[info@landworkersalliance.org.uk](mailto:info@landworkersalliance.org.uk)

