

**Market Linkage Strategies
for Local Food Systems:
Lessons for Brighton & Hove**

Dr Rachael Taylor May 2018

**FRESH
PRODUCE
LOCALLY
GROWN**

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Introduction

Strategies for supporting market linkages among stakeholders in food systems can be a win-win-win for primary food producers, retailers and wholesalers, and consumers or caterers. By linking producers to consumers at a local scale, market linkage initiatives can provide marketing, retailing and sales, and distribution of a diverse range of products, through one initiative. This can simplify the process of marketing and distribution for producers and retailers while giving the consumer access to a range of fresh, local produce.

This discussion paper considers market linkage strategies for food systems at a local scale, from city to regional, in the UK. It primarily considers strategies which support the sale, distribution and consumption of agroecologically-produced food from small- to medium-sized farms. With reference to relevant literature, from the UK and elsewhere, the paper outlines case studies of market linkage initiatives, considering why they were established, how they operate, and what strategies have been successful or unsuccessful. These case studies are examined in order to draw potential lessons for the city of Brighton & Hove, and the paper concludes with recommendations for the city.

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Background to the paper

This discussion paper is an output of the International Social Science Council-funded 'Pathways' Transformative Knowledge Network. In the UK, the network is investigating Transformative Pathways to Sustainable Food Systems in Brighton & Hove. The original scope of the UK work was defined during a co-design workshop in January 2015 (Ely et al, 2015).

Since 2015, the project has conducted interviews with farmers within 50km of the city about their agricultural practices, and the constraints they face in supplying sustainably-produced food into the city. The preliminary findings of this research were presented back to stakeholders during a 'transformation lab' ('T-lab') workshop in December 2016. During the T-Lab workshop, a key issue raised by producers was the difficulty they face in distributing their produce to consumers, retailers, and wholesalers. Similar issues had been raised as a constraint to local producers during interviews.

Discussion during the workshop suggested that coordination between producers, retailers, wholesalers, and caterers, could be a useful way to facilitate the supply of local, agroecologically-produced food into Brighton & Hove, and the sale and consumption of this produce within the city and surrounding areas. Rather than conducting further empirical research within the city, it was felt that a survey of successful (and unsuccessful) initiatives in different UK cities, with a focus on lessons for Brighton, could be useful.

This discussion paper introduces examples of market linkage initiatives used in other cities or regions in the UK in order to identify potential lessons for Brighton & Hove. It hopes to inform Brighton & Hove Food Partnership, Brighton & Hove City Council, producers, retailers, and other stakeholders that might wish to undertake activities in the area of coordinating marketing, distribution and retailing of local sustainably-produced food in the city.

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Why consider market linkage strategies?

One challenge which was repeatedly raised during interviews and the T-lab workshop was the lack of coordination and links between supply and demand (including awareness of producers by customers and vice versa). Local producers noted that although there are a variety of potential channels for marketing their produce, coordination and linkages between these are lacking. This leaves the producer needing to engage with numerous routes for marketing, distribution, and sales of their produce. Producers engaged in discussions as part of this project said that they lacked sufficient time or resources to be able to engage with these marketing, logistics and distribution activities, so it is easier and more cost-effective for them to sell their produce to a wholesaler or national-level distributor.

These findings also reflect those found in similar studies elsewhere. For example, a survey of local producers in and around Oxford found that most simply don't have the time and resources to distribute locally (Eccleston, 2017a). Likewise, Brandt et al (2016) found that small, local producers around the Transition Town of Mayfield (East Sussex) do not have the time or resources to market and sell their produce locally.

A potential strategy raised during the T-lab workshop to overcome these challenges was to enhance supply chain linkages, for example through an organic food hub as a centralised point for marketing, distribution and sales, or through a centrally-coordinated online platform for the region around Brighton & Hove.

Investigations into local food systems and the potential role of a coordinated marketing system for the local supply chain have also been explored elsewhere in the UK. Following research on the food system in Oxford, Low Carbon Oxford (2013) highlight a need for action throughout the whole food supply chain in order to increase the level of locally-produced food being consumed in Oxford.

Following the issues raised by agroecological producers in the area around Brighton & Hove, it was agreed that exploring strategies for supporting and enhancing market linkages of local food supply chains could be useful for identifying lessons which may be applicable to the case of Brighton & Hove and the surrounding area. This paper sets out to do this by considering a range of examples of market linkage initiatives established elsewhere in the UK.

Box 1. What is 'local'?

Interviews with agroecological producers in the area around Brighton & Hove identified that different producers have different views of what 'local' means. For some 'local' referred to the village or town nearest to their farm, while for others it referred to Brighton & Hove or East Sussex. Other producers also considered the whole of the UK to be 'local' because of the nature of the way they distribute and sell their produce.

Different conceptions of what 'local' means have also been found in other studies. Morris and Buller (2003) found that producers and retailers in Gloucestershire had different perceptions of what 'local' is. Eccleston (2017a) reports that a survey in Oxford found that producers, food processors, and retail, wholesale and catering businesses considered a centralised 'food depot' would potentially overcome some of the challenges presented by different understandings of 'local'.



Photo: Simon Dack.
Brighton & Hove Food Partnership.
Pumpkin rescue party.

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Recent and Existing Attempts in Brighton & Hove

There are a range of past and existing initiatives to support and increase the linkages between stakeholders in the local food system around Brighton & Hove. The examples introduced here are not exhaustive, but set the scene for exploring lessons from elsewhere in the UK.

The Brighton & Hove Food Partnership (BHFP) is involved with many food-related initiatives in the city. Through the work of BHFP, Brighton & Hove is one of three cities in the UK which has been awarded a silver Sustainable Food Cities Award (Sustainable Food Cities, undated). BHFP has hosted networking events for local producers, retailers, and wholesalers in order to increase the linkages between producers and consumers. This initiative began with regular events for networking between local food system stakeholders (Brighton & Hove Food Partnership, 2015). These networking events are no longer held regularly as local businesses often wanted a list or directory of sources for different produce – which BHFP now provide in the form of a Local Suppliers Directory (Brighton & Hove Food Partnership, 2016). There continue to be occasional networking events, such as an event hosted by the Sussex Partnership NHS Trust for public sector caterers to meet the Trust's suppliers in order to increase the linkages between them (ibid).

4.1 Online Marketplaces

This paper introduces two online marketplaces – Fin & Farm and The Food Assembly.

Fin & Farm was established in 2009 with the intention to act as a wholesaler, sourcing locally produced food and drink which they would supply to local commercial businesses (Fin & Farm Ltd., 2017a). The initiative was established to support the local community and economy while providing the freshest produce to consumers and reducing the carbon footprint of food

produce by reducing the distance from site of production to consumer. Fin & Farm is registered as a for-profit company (Fin & Farm Ltd., 2017b) and it is run by three people (Fin & Farm Ltd., 2017a).

Due to the success of Fin & Farm in sourcing local produce for commercial kitchens, in 2011 the initiative began a home delivery service (Fin & Farm Ltd., 2017a). Fin & Farm provide three services: a fruit and vegetable box scheme, household delivery for groceries ordered online (Fin & Farm Ltd., 2017c), and delivery to commercial businesses including restaurants, cafes, pubs, schools and community centres (Fin & Farm Ltd., 2017d).

Fin & Farm provide a service which supports market linkages between producers and consumers in and around Brighton & Hove by delivering direct to the household or commercial outlet from the farm or producer (Fin & Farm Ltd., 2017d). Fin & Farm collate orders, provide marketing for local produce via their website, and do the distribution. Producers and food processors are able to sell produce locally without needing to manage numerous orders and distribution, and Fin & Farm also provide marketing for their produce. Consumers are able to select the produce they require while ensuring it is sourced locally, and the produce is delivered fresh straight from the farm or producer. As such, this increases the link between local producers and consumers and facilitates the sale, distribution and consumption of locally-produced food within Brighton & Hove.

The Food Assembly initiative provides an online marketplace for local producers whereby customers can order from numerous local producers and collect their order during a weekly 'Assembly' (The Food Assembly, undated a). The Food Assembly initiative has previously had two active assemblies in Brighton & Hove, both of which have now closed.

As an online initiative, The Food Assembly will be discussed further in Section 6.1.

4.2 Shops and Markets

Several initiatives in Brighton & Hove seek to support the link between local producers and consumers by providing coordinated sales and distribution from numerous producers. **Lower Hoddern Farm Shop** in North Peacehaven sells produce from a range of farms and processors within Sussex, providing consumers with a single location to link to 15 local producers for their groceries (Lower Hoddern Farm Shop, 2017). Internet-based listing service **&Sussex** provides lists of farm shops and farmers' markets across East and West Sussex (And Sussex, 2017). The directory provided by &Sussex includes details of each farm retail outlet listed, with location and contact details.

Several one-off or regular **farmers' markets** have been held in Brighton & Hove, selling produce from local farms and providing consumers a direct link to numerous local farmers and producers in one location. Farmers' markets strengthen linkages between the producer and consumer by bringing both together at the point of sale. Regular farmers' markets are held in Churchill Square, weekly on a Wednesday (Brighton Food Festival, 2017a), and monthly in Old Steine (Brighton Food Festival, 2017b). One Church Brighton host a weekly farmers' market at One Church in Florence Road which seeks to support the local community to access local produce, while increasing the communal nature of food shopping (One Church Brighton, undated).

Although farmers' markets continue to be active in Brighton & Hove, research conducted as part of the Transformative Pathways to Sustainable Food Systems in Brighton & Hove Project found that some small local producers find the time required to sell through a farmers' market to be challenging. During interviews, farmers from small- to medium-sized agroecological farms in the area around Brighton & Hove stated that the cost and time of distributing their produce locally or attending farmers' markets presents a challenge due to the small size of their business.

How it Should Be (hiSbe) is a supermarket in central Brighton which was established as a social enterprise in 2013 to sell sustainably-produced, organic, and ethically-sourced produce (hiSbe, 2017). hiSbe seek to support the local community and economy by sourcing produce as locally as possible, and primarily from Sussex and the surrounding area or through local suppliers and wholesalers (ibid). Much of the fresh produce sold by hiSbe is sourced from local agroecological producers. hiSbe is registered as a Community Interest Company (ibid) and has a long-term business model which will see hiSbe open additional supermarkets and services in the coming years (Bacon, 2017).

4.3 Community Supported Agriculture

Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) is a model of small-scale, local food production. As a model, CSA seeks to link consumers directly to the production of fresh food through membership of a CSA. Models of how CSAs operate vary, but commonly members either pay for a share of the produce from the community farm, or members provide an agreed amount of labour on the farm and receive a share of the produce (Pinkerton and Hopkins, 2009). In Brighton & Hove the CSA model has been adopted by three initiatives: SheepShare and PigShare, Catchbox, and Brighton Community Supported Agriculture – Fork and Dig It (Brighton & Hove Food Partnership, 2015).

SheepShare produces lamb on the land in and around Brighton & Hove and sells shares of the produce, and this initiative has expanded into PigShare using a similar model. SheepShare and PigShare are initiatives of Brighton and Hove Community Supported Agriculture which registered as a community interest company in 2015 (Brighton Community Agriculture, undated).

Catchbox applies the CSA model to fisheries whereby members receive a share of a weekly catch of fish from local fisheries. It is registered as a community cooperative which is run by local volunteers to help link local fisheries directly to local consumers (Local Catch, 2015).

Brighton Community Supported Agriculture – Fork and Dig It provides shares of organically-produced fruit and vegetables grown on a plot rented from Stanmer Organics (Fork and Dig It, undated). The fruit and vegetables are grown by four part-time employees and several volunteers and shares are delivered to member's households in Brighton & Hove. Originally called Fork and Dig It, the initiative was established in 2007 as a community food-growing project, but moved to the CSA model of delivering shares to members in 2011 (ibid).

4.4 Local Food Hubs

In 2011, the concept of a **Sussex Food Hub** was explored through work led by Food Matters under the 'Making Local Food Work' (see Box 2) initiative coordinated by the Plunkett Foundation (Food Matters, 2011). The establishment of a Sussex Food Hub was proposed to investigate and support market linkages between local producers and local cafes and restaurants in Brighton & Hove. This initiative was focused on supporting local small-scale farmers and growers to distribute their produce to local restaurants (ibid). The concept of a Sussex Food Hub considered different ways a hub might function, with Food Matters suggesting that "[t]his may not be a literal 'hub' but might be a website or directory or even just an ad hoc way of connecting growers and caterers together more successfully" (Food Matters, 2011, p20).

An evaluation study was completed by f3, a consultancy firm specialising in supporting local and sustainable food initiatives (f3, undated a). This evaluation of options for a Sussex Food Hub led to the development of a business and action plan to link a

food hub owned by local food businesses to an incubation centre. However, this action plan was not taken further due to a lack of resources beyond the initial study.

Box 2. Making Local Food Work

Making Local Food Work was an initiative across England which ran from 2008 until 2012. The initiative was coordinated by the Plunkett Foundation and partnered with other organisations including Sustain, the Soil Association, and the Campaign to Protect Rural England. The initiative was awarded £10 million by the Big Lottery Fund.

The different project strands under the initiative sought to understand, support, and increase the linkages between local food producers and consumers in order to develop sustainable community-based initiatives (Sustain, undated). Making Local Food Work addressed issues associated with community-led cooperatives for production, processing, distribution, retailing, and education of local food (Heim and Perry, 2009). These issues were explored through six work strands within the initiative: community supported agriculture, food co-ops and buying groups, cooperatively-owned farmers' markets, community shops and local food, sustainable models of home-produced food, and distribution and supply (ibid).

An evaluation of the distribution and supply strand of Making Local Food Work identified challenges with engaging medium- to large-sized local producers with local, community-based initiatives (Jones, 2012). The evaluation found that many local producers were unable to supply a variety of fruit and vegetables because they were growing for wholesale or supermarkets. In order to overcome challenges of accessing sufficient quantities of a range of fresh, local-produced fruit and vegetables, three of the initiatives established under this strand of Making Local Food Work chose to begin growing their own (ibid). Jones (2012) also found that small-scale local producers were willing to engage with community-based initiatives and benefitted from collaborations.

The evaluation of the distribution and supply strand suggested that initiatives to support market linkages to increase the sustainability of local food systems needs to be underpinned by local and national policy (Jones, 2012). Jones (2012) suggests that there are competing objectives within local food initiatives and achieving a more environmentally sustainable food system while being fair to all stakeholders in the food systems and being self-financing requires a social context which involves policy. Citing several studies as well as findings of the Making Local Food Work initiative, the evaluation suggests that *"different analyses all point to the need for the minimum wage and state benefits to be set at levels that ensure that nutritious and sustainable food is affordable"* (Jones, 2012, p57).

Nearby, another initiative designed to help link small local producers directly to customers through a central 'hub' is **Worthing FoodHub**. Worthing FoodHub provides an online marketplace for local producers in Sussex, and orders are available for home delivery or collection (Worthing FoodHub, 2017). Worthing FoodHub is run by Food Pioneers, a Worthing-based community interest company which

supports community-based food initiatives in the town (Food Pioneers, 2015). Worthing FoodHub is small in scale but indicates a demand for online marketplaces of locally-sourced produce in the area around Brighton & Hove, and uses a similar approach to other online marketplace applications discussed further in Section 6.1.



Photo: Brighton and Hove Food Partnership



Market Linkage Strategies for Local Food Systems: Lessons for Brighton & Hove

Photo: Brighton and Hove Food Partnership

5

Case studies of market linkage strategies used in other cities or regions

Across the UK, and elsewhere around the world, a range of initiatives seek to directly link primary food producers with consumers, encouraging local consumption of locally-produced food, and supporting 'alternative food networks'. In the UK, examples of these include community supported agriculture (CSA) and veg box schemes, usually organised by individual farms. Although these initiatives enable locally-produced food to be consumed locally, there are few examples where such initiatives are coordinated across numerous producers and consumers in a town, city or region. Initiatives which have sought to coordinate markets at this kind of scale in the UK have taken a range of approaches. Some of these examples are considered below in order to inform potential lessons for Brighton & Hove.

5.1 Case Study – Growing Communities

Growing Communities is an initiative based in Hackney, north London, which was established in 1996. It is a community-based initiative which is registered as a not-for-profit company.

Growing Communities was established to create a sustainable and local food system in Hackney in the face of corporate domination of the food system and threats from climate change. The intention of Growing Communities is to provide a practical strategy for changing the way our food is produced, what we eat, and how we eat it. Growing Communities seeks to transform food and farming through community-led trade by making use of collective buying power and skills available in the local community. They propose

that the initiatives provide secure and fair markets for producers and consumers.

Growing Communities provides an organic fruit and vegetable box scheme, runs a farmers' market, and runs two farms in Hackney and Dagenham on which community members can volunteer. The Dagenham farm was established in 2012 in order to increase the land available for growing and enable production of a wider variety of fruit and vegetables to be grown (Growing Communities, undated a). This strategy supports links between producers and consumers by making the produce from numerous local farmers and growers available to consumers in one location.

Growing Communities continues to receive grant funding to cover costs, primarily awarded to the two farms run by them. Grant funding has come from Local Food Funds and, most recently, the Big Lottery Fund. In the 2015-16 financial year, the total grant funding awarded to Growing Communities was £44,571.

Across all of the initiatives run by Growing Communities, in the financial year 2015-16, Growing Communities ran at a loss despite increasing turnover due to a decision to not pass price-increases of fruit and vegetables onto members of the box scheme. This decision was possible due to cash reserves built up in the member's funds from previous years.

They rely on up to 40 people who work as staff, volunteers, and trainees, plus eight people on the voluntary Board, and eight or ten regular volunteers at each of the two farms run by Growing Communities. As such, up to 70 people are involved in the running of the initiatives supported by Growing Communities each year.

Box 3. Growing Communities' Food Zones

In 2008, Growing Communities developed a concept of 'Food Zones' which set out what they considered could be a sustainable and resilient food system. The Food Zones concept is depicted by a diagram which shows seven 'zones' from where different types of produce are sourced, ordered by distance from the urban market (Growing Communities, undated c).

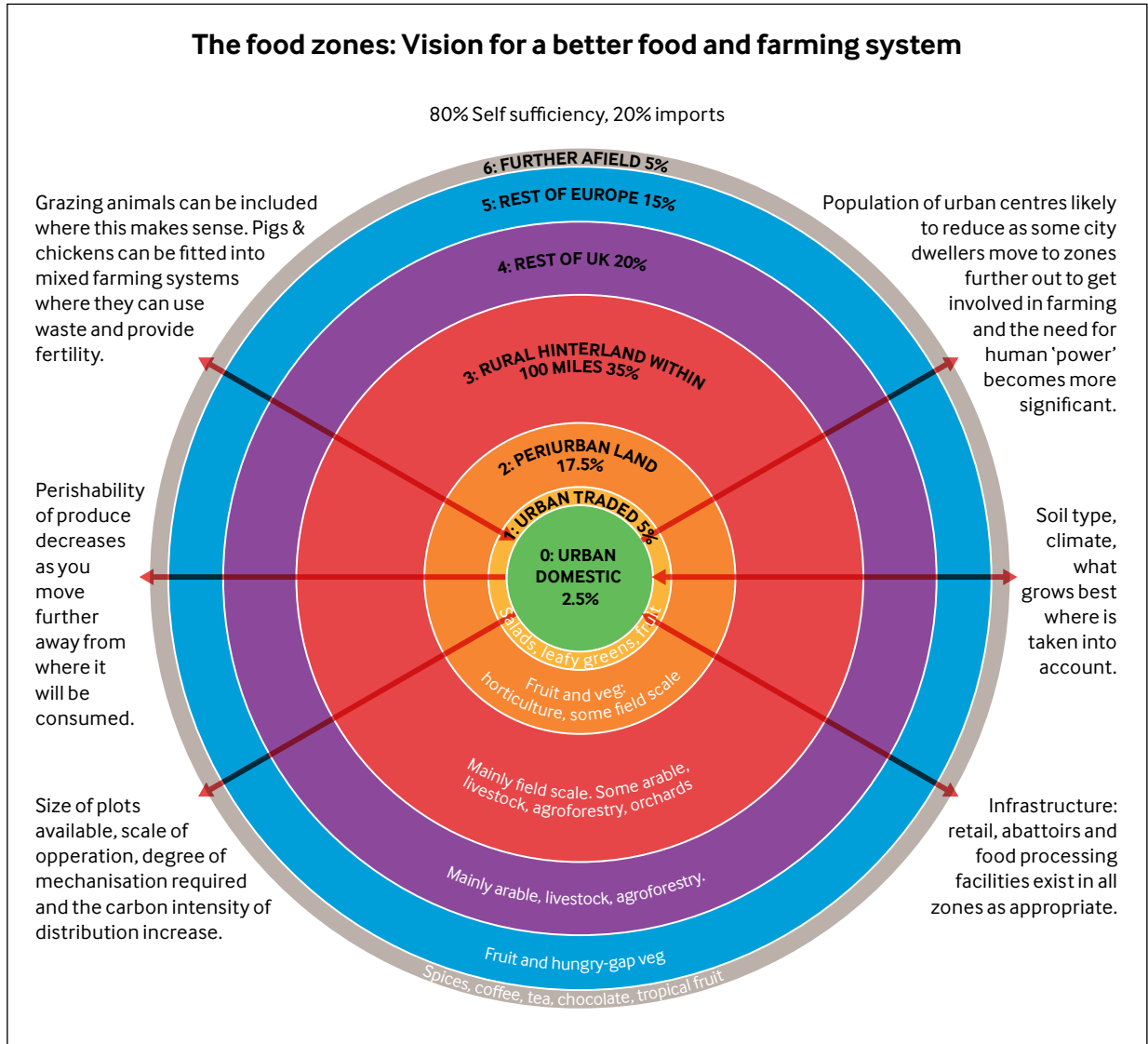


Figure 5.1. Growing Communities' Food Zones diagram. Source: Growing Communities, undated d.

The Food Zones model proposes that a sustainable and resilient food system sources 25% of food produce from within the local area around an urban area, and a further 35% from within 100 miles of the urban area (Growing Communities, undated d). The model considers that 80% of food should be sourced from within the UK in order to be sustainable and resilient.

Although the Food Zones model doesn't address market linkages which support local food systems, the model provides a framework for stakeholders in the local food system to develop linkages. The Food Zones diagram has now been adopted by other local food initiatives in the UK (e.g. Pinkerton and Hopkins, 2009; Hopkins et al, 2009) in analysis of their local food systems and sustainability.

Growing Communities have identified several lessons from their initiative that could help other like-minded groups. They explained that running a Community Supported Agriculture scheme was not successful because it did not provide produce throughout the year and members were spread over too large an area. This is why they converted it into a fruit and vegetable box scheme with produce coming from their own farms and other local producers. They suggest that it is beneficial if a box scheme is able to provide weekly boxes throughout the year because it secures the customer base and income. Because of this, Growing Communities suggest that it is necessary to buy produce in from other local producers, further afield in the UK, and wholesalers with some produce coming from overseas, to establish a successful veg box scheme. This is reflected in the Growing Communities' Food Zones model discussed in Box 3.

The **Start Up Programme** was set up by Growing Communities in 2009 with the aim of supporting other communities across the UK to develop community-led box schemes for local fruit and vegetables (Growing Communities, undated b). This initiative has supported ten community-led fruit and vegetable box schemes to be established in other areas of London. Collectively, Growing Communities and the ten community initiatives supported through the Start Up Programme have established Better Food Traders, a network of food traders across London with the aim of coordinating distribution of produce among the network (Growing Communities, 2016).

5.2 Case Study – Grown in Totnes and Totnes 10

There are two initiatives in Totnes which seek to increase the sale and consumption of locally-produced food within the town. Grown in Totnes and Totnes 10 are both part of the Transition Town Totnes initiative, the founding member of the international Transition Town movement (see Box 4; Hopkins, 2010).

Totnes, Devon, became the first designated Transition Town in 2006, and Grown in Totnes was established in 2014. The establishment of Grown in Totnes follows a study of the food web in and around Totnes in 2011 which found high public demand for locally-produced food and a positive contribution of local food to social and economic systems in the town (CPRE, 2011a).

Box 4. The Transition Town Movement

The Transition Town movement has emerged as a grassroots-led response to global concerns regarding peak oil and climate change. The first Transition Town was Totnes, Devon, who launched their initiative in 2006, and the movement has since spread to hundreds of towns and communities internationally (Transition Network, 2016; Hinrichs, 2014). The initiative seeks to develop solutions to living without cheap oil and in the face of climatic uncertainty, with solutions based in, and led by, local communities. Towns designated as part of the Transition Town Network establish initiatives to re-localise the economy (Hopkins, 2010) and build a resilient community. In many cases, this has included projects to re-localise food systems and increase the supply and consumption of locally-produced food within the Transition Town (Hopkins et al, 2009). Local food systems initiatives which have been established as part of the Transition movement include community food-growing projects, production of local food guides, food cooperatives, and local farmers' markets (Hinrichs, 2014; Pinkerton and Hopkins, 2009).

Grown in Totnes seeks to increase the range of locally-grown food available in Totnes as part of establishing a circular economy in the local area. This involves sourcing food produce grown within a 30-mile radius of Totnes (Grown in Totnes, undated a). Grown in Totnes was established in response to findings of a study which mapped the local food web in the area around Totnes, conducted as part of the Making Local Food Work initiative (Box 2; *ibid*). This study found that staple foods grown in the area around Totnes were primarily being sold further afield or used as animal feed (CPRE, 2011a). Grown in Totnes was established to develop a local supply chain for locally-produced staple foods (Grown in Totnes, undated b).

Grown in Totnes is currently focusing on locally-produced organic grains and legumes, particularly oats, peas and beans. As a first step in increasing the circular supply chain in Totnes, along with other Transition Town Totnes initiatives, Grown in Totnes has established a small processing unit for local producers to process grain and legumes into flour for sale locally (Grown in Totnes, undated b). The processing unit was opened in May 2017 and locally-grown, milled, and packaged flour was available to buy from shops in the town soon after.

Grown in Totnes is managed by one part-time employee and is partially funded by Transition Town Totnes and the local community. The initiative was established to increase social entrepreneurship around the re-localisation of food. The initiative saw the annual gap in production due to growing seasons as a challenge for local food systems and identified dried grains and pulses which can be stored for long periods as a potential solution.

As a strategy to enhance linkages among the local market, Grown in Totnes is seeking to increase the amount of local produce being sold and consumed in the local area by creating a small-scale supply chain which serves the local area only. The initiative has sourced local produce which would otherwise have been sold further afield for processing and distribution, and created an opportunity for

it to be processed, sold, and consumed without leaving the local area. This strategy has coordinated the produce from four local farms as well as the processing, packaging, marketing, distribution, and sales of the produce.

Grown in Totnes sources produce from four organic farms located within 30 miles of Totnes. Although the Grown in Totnes initiative is currently focusing on local production of grains and legumes, the farms they source from also produce a range of vegetables, fruit, dairy, and meat which are sold through other routes. Notably, Totnes 10 links local buyers and consumers to local producers via marketing, events, and an online marketplace in collaboration with Totnes Food Shed (Transition Town Totnes, 2016a). Totnes 10 is linked to the Transition Town Totnes initiative and is partially funded by them. It is run by one part-time employee and works in collaboration with volunteers running Totnes Food Shed. Totnes 10 was established as an evolution of the Totnes Food-Link project (Transition Town Totnes, undated). Totnes Food Shed is registered as a community cooperative and was launched in May 2017.

Totnes 10 is seeking to bring buyers and producers closer together through an online marketplace and collection service, making it easier for consumers to buy local food. Totnes 10 has developed a local food map indicating local farms, producers and processors in the area around Totnes (Transition Town Totnes, 2016b). The online map was developed to assist local buyers to locate the produce they require from local sources, thus increasing the amount of locally-produced food sold and consumed in the town.

Grown in Totnes and Totnes 10 have both launched following several years of development and planning as a result of findings from research into the local food web and relationships between producers, retailers, and consumers (CPRE, 2011a; Transition Town Totnes, undated). Both initiatives are at early stages of operation and there has not been any evaluation of successes, failures, challenges or opportunities to date.



Secret Garden (Hove)
– credit Simon Dack

5.3 Case Study – Cultivate

Cultivate is an initiative established in Oxford in 2011 which seeks to strengthen links between local producers and consumers (Cultivate, 2017a). Cultivate was established by two people running a 10-acre farm near Oxford who wanted to create routes to increase the sale and consumption of locally-produced, sustainable food in Oxford (Cultivate, 2017b).

The Cultivate website states: “*We work to involve more people in local food by building new routes to market for local producers and creating a vibrant and wide-ranging movement for local food in Oxford*” (Cultivate, 2017b). The initiative seeks to increase the sustainability of Oxford’s food system by supporting the local market for local, organic and ecologically-produced food.

Since 2012, Cultivate have been running a ‘VegVan’, a mobile greengrocer, which makes regular stops in five locations around Oxford (Cultivate, 2017c). The VegVan sells produce from local producers using organic and sustainable farming practices, as well as local bakers and cooks who use local produce. Cultivate sell produce from growers and farms within a 25-mile radius of Oxford and have worked with over 40 producers since the VegVan began operating. Cultivate has recently begun taking online orders for collection during one of the regular VegVan stops or for home delivery in selected locations, via the Open Food Network website (see Section 6.1).

Cultivate is a registered community co-operative and is incorporated as an Industrial and Provident Society for the benefit of the community (Cultivate, 2017a). Cultivate is a co-operative of over 400 members and is a community-owned company via shares, subscriptions, or a commitment to volunteering

regularly. It is run by one full-time and several part-time staff and a number of regular volunteers. One of the forms of membership of the co-operative is a ‘workshare member’ whereby members commit to at least four hours volunteering for Cultivate per month (Cultivate, 2017b). Cultivate is funded by members who have bought a share in the co-operative, and the start-up capital was funded by the local community through the sale of community shares (ibid).

Some produce sold and distributed by Cultivate is sourced from outside the local area around Oxford when it is not available from local producers. For example, tomatoes from producers around Oxford are not available year-round, so Cultivate source tomatoes from the Isle of Wight when they are not available locally (Cultivate, 2017c). In addition, Cultivate buy some produce from Choice Organics, a wholesaler of certified organic produce located outside London, which itself sources produce from around the UK, and internationally. As such, not all of the produce sold by Cultivate is grown locally to Oxford.

As an initiative to support linkages between local producers, retailers and consumers, Cultivate have increased the accessibility of locally-produced food into Oxford and shortened the supply-chain. Cultivate has established new market linkages between local producers and consumers and has coordinated this through bringing together local producers, retailers and catering outlets, community groups, and individual members and customers. Local and national publicity via radio, television, and magazines has helped Cultivate to reach a large number of potential suppliers and customers in and around Oxford by raising awareness of issues around sustainably-produced local food and the Cultivate initiative.

5.4 Case Study – Tamar Grow Local

Tamar Grow Local covers the whole of the Tamar Valley in Devon, encompassing rural and urban areas. It was established in 2007 as an independent initiative of Food Plymouth when Plymouth became a Sustainable Food City.

There are three strands to the Tamar Grow Local initiative: community, education, and commercial (Tamar Grow Local, undated a). The commercial strand focuses on supporting market linkages between local producers, retailers, catering outlets, and consumers. The objective of this initiative is to increase the availability and consumption of sustainable, locally-produced food. *“Tamar Grow Local is looking to promote and encourage increased availability of sustainable and affordable local produce in the Tamar Valley and surrounding areas, including Tavistock and Plymouth and to spread awareness of the many benefits attached to the production, preparation and consumption of local food”* (Tamar Valley Food Hubs, 2012-2017).

Tamar Grow Local has supported market linkages by pooling the produce of numerous local producers for wholesale and distribution to retailers, catering outlets, and consumers. It has done this through establishing a network of local producers and community growing projects and coordinating the marketing of their produce through food hubs. In partnership with the Westcountry Rivers Trust, Tamar Grow Local established a wholesale food hub in 2014, through which local producers could sell directly to retail and catering outlets (South West Catchment, 2014).

Tamar Grow Local has supported the development of Tamar Valley Food Hubs which provides an online marketplace for local producers to sell through and local consumers to buy through for collection or delivery (Tamar Valley Food Hubs, 2012-2017). Tamar Valley Food Hubs were established in collaboration with a project led by Cordiale and commissioned by the Tamar Valley Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (Tamar Grow Local CIC, 2013). Tamar Valley Food Hubs is run by Tamar Grow Local employees and regular volunteers.

Local producers and consumers have stated that they support Tamar Valley Food Hubs because they want to support the local community and economy (Tamar Grow Local CIC, 2013). Despite this, Tamar Grow Local found it challenging and time-consuming to liaise with local producers and for them to agree to sell through the food hubs (ibid). Other lessons which Tamar Grow Local identified following the establishment of Tamar Valley Food Hubs is that different communities work in different ways so respective food hubs need to be adapted to those individuals or community groups who are responsible for running it.

To further support market linkages between local producers and consumers, Tamar Grow Local has established an additional initiative, **Farm Start**, to support the development or expansion of small-scale horticultural businesses (Tamar Grow Local, undated b). As part of this initiative, Tamar Grow Local purchased a plot of land which they have divided into small plots to let out to new small businesses needing land for growing, or for local small businesses to expand their production.

Tamar Grow Local is registered as a not-for-profit Community Interest Company and it is run by a combination of employees and volunteers (Tamar Grow Local, undated a). Funding for the initial running costs of Tamar Grow Local were awarded by the Big Lottery Fund scheme ‘Local Food’, and specific projects have received funding from foundations including the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation, but the initiative and community- or producer-led projects are designed to be self-financing and do not receive ongoing external funding.

The connections to Food Plymouth and the Plymouth Sustainable Food City network helped Tamar Grow Local to build networks with producers, retailers, consumers and other relevant stakeholders in the local area. Food Plymouth moved towards more collaboration with procurement and corporate stakeholders in the food system and Tamar Grow Local began focusing on raising the profile of local food production. By shortening the supply chain of local small-scale producers, Tamar Grow Local has reduced the labour and financial costs associated with marketing and distribution of produce, making small-scale sustainable production more viable.

5.5 Case Study – Manchester Veg People

Manchester Veg People was established in 2009 with support from The Kindling Trust, and in 2011 began trading the food it produced. It is registered as a Multi-Stakeholder Co-operative of local organic growers and buyers, including retailers, catering outlets, and the public sector (Woodcock, 2012). Manchester Veg People initially formed to coordinate what the different growers produced according to what the various buyers wanted. Following research carried out by The Kindling Trust, the approach of Manchester Veg People evolved towards supplying organic, locally-produced food to catering outlets and the public sector (ibid).

Manchester Veg People matches supply with demand by directly linking producers and buyers. Manchester Veg People works with local producers who are certified organic and coordinates what each producer is growing so that they grow to order (Manchester Veg People, undated a). This changes the shape and linkages within the market because producers do not need to find a market for their produce and buyers do not need to search numerous producers for their required produce. This benefits the producer because they have a secured market and price for their produce and they are not competing with other local producers (Woodcock, 2012). The initiative also benefits buyers because they know they will be able to source the produce they require and it will be delivered to them at its freshest (The Kindling Trust, undated a).

The University of Manchester began making small orders from Manchester Veg People in 2011 and this expanded to regular large orders in 2012. The University saw buying local, organic produce through a co-operative social enterprise as a way to contribute towards their environmental and social responsibilities while also buying fresher produce (Woodcock, 2012). Manchester Veg People work with the largest public sector bodies in Greater Manchester, including Manchester City Council, the Central Manchester NHS Trust, and schools (Manchester Veg People, undated b).

Initial funding for research and development of Manchester Veg People was awarded to The Kindling Trust by the Big Lottery Fund as part of the Making Local Food Work initiative (see Box 2). After the initial phase of development, a coordinator for Manchester Veg People has been funded by the Rural Development Programme for England (funded by the European Union) which also supported some investment in infrastructure (Woodcock, 2012). The co-operative runs as a not-for-profit, so any profit made is invested back into the initiative.

Manchester Veg People have collaborated with several other organisations and initiatives supporting sustainable food systems in and around Manchester.

Feeding Manchester is an initiative to bring together all stakeholders working towards a sustainable food system in Manchester (Feeding Manchester, undated a). The initiative provides virtual links between stakeholders via an online platform which provides a directory and map of all projects, organisations, businesses, and individuals related to sustainable food (Feeding Manchester, undated b).

The Kindling Trust have supported various features of the development of Manchester Veg People, including the establishment of **FarmStart** and **Veg Box People**. FarmStart is an initiative to train and support new organic growers in the area around Greater Manchester. New organic producers supported by FarmStart have gone on to become members of the Manchester Veg People co-operative and supply produce to other members (The Kindling Trust, undated b). In particular, two farms supported by FarmStart provide produce for Veg Box People, which is also a member of Manchester Veg People (Veg Box People, undated a). Veg Box People provides an organic vegetable box scheme across Manchester and began operating in 2015 (Veg Box People, undated b).



Photo: Brighton & Hove Food Festival



Photo: Dementia Cookery

6

Potentially transformative technologies for market linkages

As access to the internet has become widespread and ubiquitous throughout the UK, several initiatives have established tools and services that support local food systems which are available online. Such tools and services include websites which host directories of local food outlets or food producers, online marketplaces to order local produce for delivery or via a box scheme, apps for mobile phones, maps which provide a geographical directory of food outlets or producers, or tools to assist mapping of a local food system.

This section will discuss some examples of these in order to consider whether they may have potential to support a transformation of sustainable local food in Brighton & Hove. The examples will explore how they work, why they were established, and how they benefit or support market linkages between stakeholders in local food systems.

6.1 Online Marketplaces

Online marketplaces are a way to link local producers more closely with local consumers and retailers by shortening the supply chain, with the website being the only intermediary between producer and consumer. Some online marketplace platforms function as a typical online shop whereby the customer orders what they want and it is delivered to their address. Other marketplace platforms gather orders for producers over a period (often five to seven days) and then collate all of the orders for each producer, with the orders available to collect from a specific place at a designated time.

Open Food Network provides an online marketplace for local producers to sell to customers via home delivery or collection. Open Food Network gives customers a single point to buy a range of locally-produced or processed food and gives producers a single marketplace which they can manage themselves. It was originally established in Australia and was launched in the UK in 2014 after development funding was awarded to Stroudco Food Hub and local food consultancy firm f3 (f3, undated b). The Open Food Network is a not-for-profit, open-access software

platform which is freely available for producers, community groups, or food hubs or co-operatives to add to (Open Food Network UK, undated a).

The Open Food Network provides a platform for producers to sell through, but it also hosts a searchable map and directory of all of the producers, food hubs or co-operatives, and community groups which are registered users (Open Food Network UK, undated b). This map of the local food system (see Section 6.4) could serve as a tool to help link local customers to local producers.

Both Cultivate and Tamar Valley Food Hubs (see Section 5) use the Open Food Network as their online marketplace. This links all of the local producers connected with those initiatives directly to the consumer who will collect their order from a designated collection point or arrange for home delivery.

The Food Assembly initiative originated in France and launched in the UK in 2014 (The Food Assembly, undated b). It is an online marketplace where local 'assemblies' sell food from producers who are local to each assembly. Online orders are collated so that producers only deal with one large order rather than numerous individual orders. Customers collect their order from a designated point, referred to as an assembly because it is where local consumers gather with local producers to collect their orders (The Food Assembly, undated a).

Food producers set the price at which their produce is sold via The Food Assembly, meaning that they receive a fair price, of which 16.7% is paid to The Food Assembly (The Food Assembly, undated c). All of the producers marketed by The Food Assembly use sustainable agricultural practices and are ecologically sensitive in their production (The Food Assembly, undated d). All of the produce sold through each Food Assembly is sourced from within 150 miles of the assembly and the average distance that produce travels between producer and consumer is 26 miles (The Food Assembly, undated e).

There are over 900 Food Assemblies across Europe, with 85 local assemblies in the UK (The Food Assembly, undated a). There were two assemblies temporarily active in Brighton and Hove in 2016, but these have closed.

The Food Assembly is run by Equanum Limited, a private limited company registered in France and with the French Chamber of Commerce in the UK (The Food Assembly, 2017). The concept for The Food Assembly originated during a tech start-up incubator programme and Equanum was founded in order to bring the concept into operation (O'Connell, 2014).

Farmdrop functions as an online supermarket but any fresh produce is harvested once it has been ordered, meaning it is less than 19 hours between harvesting and being delivered to the customer (Farmdrop, undated a). Farmdrop began trading in London in 2014 and has since expanded to Bristol and Bath. Farmdrop has run services in other local areas, including Brighton, Hove, and Worthing, but these initiatives were short-term and are no longer operating. Farmdrop was established with the objective of increasing the supply of seasonal, ethically-produced, local food (Brouwer, 2015). Nationally, Farmdrop states that as much produce as possible is sourced from within 150 miles of the customer (Farmdrop, undated a). When it ran in Brighton & Hove in 2014, Farmdrop sold produce from within a 50-mile radius of the city (Beveridge, 2014). However, Farmdrop source produce from hundreds of producers across the UK and internationally (Farmdrop, undated b). As such, buying through Farmdrop does not necessarily mean produce has been sourced locally.

Farmdrop was established using crowdfunding, in one of the world's most successful crowdfunding campaigns at the time, and it has since been awarded start-up funding from Atomico (Atomico, 2017). Farmdrop has built over 30,000 users and was expected to generate £3 million revenue in 2017 (Rodionova, 2017). There are plans for Farmdrop to expand into areas beyond London, Bristol and Bath, including large cities such as Manchester and Birmingham (ibid).

BigBarn was established in 2001 by a farmer who found his produce for sale in supermarkets at 8 times the price he was being paid for them (Big Barn CIC, 2001-2017a). The BigBarn initiative seeks to "*build local food systems to encourage local trade and reconnect people with where their food comes from*" (Big Barn CIC, 2001-2017b). It does this by providing an

online marketplace for producers and retail outlets to sell directly to the consumer. Over 100,000 people visit the BigBarn website each month, making it the most-used online marketplace for local food producers and suppliers in the UK (Big Barn CIC, 2001-2017c).

BigBarn is registered as a not-for-profit Community Interest Company (Big Barn CIC, 2001-2017a). BigBarn is partnered with over 90 other organisations, including the Soil Association and Friends of the Earth, which help to promote the initiative (Big Barn CIC, 2001-2017c).

As well as an online marketplace, BigBarn provides a searchable map and directory of local producers, retailers, catering outlets, farmers' markets, and food events (Big Barn CIC, 2001-2017d). The map and directory have over 7,000 entries across the UK. This map is available to be shared on websites of partner organisations so that the directory is included in other local and national campaigns to support local food systems (Big Barn CIC, 2001-2017c).

Crop for the Shop is an initiative established by BigBarn which seeks to support local shops and supermarkets to sell local produce (Big Barn CIC, 2001-2017e). The initiative includes supporting local shops to link with community growers and allotment holders, as well as local farms and producers, to increase the amount of locally-produced food sold through local retailers (ibid).

There were several online marketplaces linking local producers directly to local consumers, which emerged as online shopping became widespread, but have subsequently gone out of business. This may be due to competition as other online marketplaces have become more established and captured the market (for example Open Food Network and Big Barn). However, Good Food Oxford has suggested that online marketplaces may not attract customers other than those who would otherwise buy their groceries from local producers via other routes such as farm shops, veg box schemes, or farmers' markets (Eccleston, 2017b). Along with local branches of Food Assembly and Farmdrop, other online marketplaces for local produce which are no longer operating include Foodtrade.com and Food Nation.

6.2 Apps for Local Food Systems

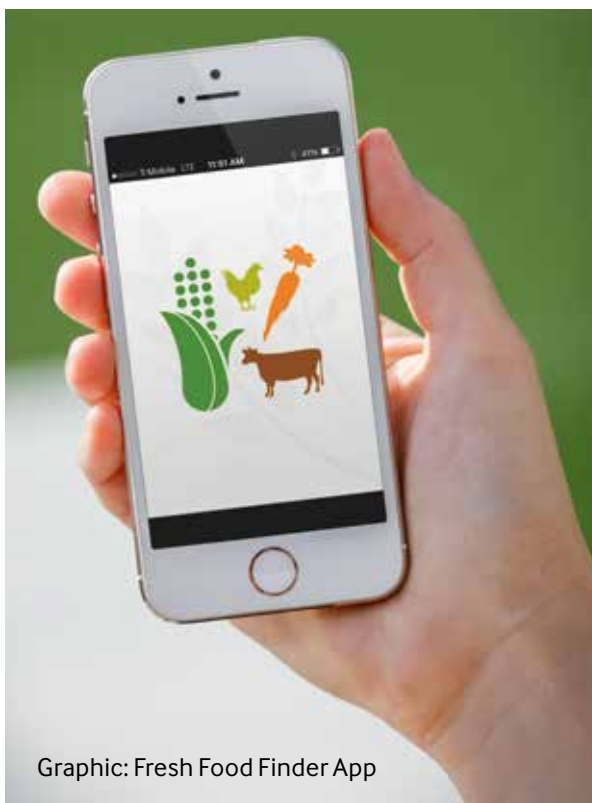
The online marketplaces discussed above can be described as applications which support the market linkages between producers and consumers because they use information and communication technologies available through websites. However, apps are also being used for other forms of linkages between stakeholders in local food systems. There are several initiatives which are developing apps either as specific software for a computer or smartphone, or as an online service to support market linkages between local producers and consumers.

Neighbourly provides an online platform for producers and retailers to notify local charities of surplus food which is available (Neighbourly, 2015). Food producers, including community growers and allotment holders, can list their surplus produce on the Neighbourly website. Local charities which provide meal services, such as homeless shelters or day centres, are able to search for any surpluses which are available locally and can arrange to collect it or have it delivered (ibid). Connecting surplus food to charities ensures surplus food is consumed locally rather than being disposed of.

Agrilocal is an initiative based in France which was established in 2013. Agrilocal provides a tool for linking local producers with local buyers for the public sector and large-scale catering outlets (Agrilocal, undated). Buyers are able to share the type and quantity of produce they require and set a distance they are willing to travel to collect it. The Agrilocal software then automatically notifies producers within that geographical area of the request for specific produce, enabling producers to offer their produce at a price which they set. Potential buyers are then able to choose which local producer to buy from (ibid). The Agrilocal tool ensures adherence to French public procurement laws and simplifies the process for both suppliers and buyers. The tool is free for suppliers and buyers to use (ibid).

Fresh Food Finder is a USA-based smartphone app which enables users to search for local producers and farmers' markets within a geographical area (Trice, 2015). All of the shops and markets which are listed on the app are registered with the US Department of Agriculture (ibid).

Sofia is a project being developed by the Countryside and Community Research Institute (CCRI), based at the University of Gloucester (CCRI, 2017). The initiative is exploring ways in which mobile apps could support linkages between local stakeholders in the food



Graphic: Fresh Food Finder App

system. Sofia was conceptualised to identify ways to support alternative agri-food networks to find local produce, communicate, and exchange knowledge (Sofia, undated a). The Sofia initiative seeks to identify and develop tools which will enable local food systems to become more competitive against mainstream food systems which utilise national and international produce (Sofia, undated b). The project has developed a mobile application, MiLarder, which enables consumers to locate farm shops, markets, and other local food retailers and initiatives based on their location (CCRI, 2017). The app was launched in February 2018 and hopes to benefit producers and consumers by increasing knowledge exchange at a local level (CCRI, 2018).

As a research project, Sofia is approaching data analysis through a consumer-based: "*where can I buy local food?*" (Sofia, undated c). Through this approach, the initiative seeks to engage producers and consumers who will use technologies and tools developed to support the re-localisation of food systems. The project is funded by the European Union's Horizon 2020 programme and MiLarder is run as a not-for-profit (Sofia, undated d).



Photo: Simon Dack.
Brighton & Hove Food Partnership.
Pumpkin rescue party.

6.3 Online Directories of Local Food

There are several organisations and initiatives which use the internet as a tool to share directories of food systems. These range from national organisations which list food retailers such as farm shops to community-based initiatives which list organisations, groups, and projects associated with the local food system. Online directories, whether in the form of a searchable list or a map, can potentially support linkages between producers, retailers, catering outlets, and consumers. Some examples of online directories developed to support linking suppliers with buyers are introduced here.

The **Sheffield Food Network** have produced a map of independent producers, retailers, catering outlets, and community growing projects in and around Sheffield (Sheffield Food Network, undated a). The map shows the regional distribution of local food initiatives but also functions as a directory by enabling users to click on icons and follow the link to the producer or retailer. The directory linked to the map provides information about the producer, retailer, catering outlet, or community project, including location, contact details, and opening times (Sheffield Food Network, undated b).

Local Food Advisor is an online directory of UK producers, farmers' markets, farm shops, retail outlets, and food markets which have won awards for their business (Local Food Advisor, 2011a). The directory includes a map with information on the icons, which is searchable by geographic location, and a directory of relevant food blogs, restaurants, and traditional recipes (Local Food Advisor, 2011b). Local Food Advisor Limited is registered as a company (Local

Food Advisor, 2011c) with income coming from a £20 charged to producers and retailers for permanent listing on the directory (Local Food Advisor, 2011d).

The **Soil Association** provide a directory with map to search for farmers' markets, farm shops, retail outlets, box schemes, and catering outlets which are selling certified organic produce. This directory lists independent retailers, producers, and caterers, and is intended to support buyers and consumers to identify local producers and retailers (Soil Association, undated).

Local Food Britain originated as a local initiative in Surrey but has since expanded to neighbouring counties and has plans to expand throughout Britain (Local Food Britain, 2017a). Established in 2012, Local Food Britain provides a searchable directory and map, providing information about local producers, farm shops, box schemes, catering outlets, and where various types of produce are available (Local Food Britain, 2017b). They also provide a directory of local food-related events, news articles, and recipes (Local Food Britain, 2017a). Local Food Britain operates using revenue from membership fees charged to businesses or events which want to be listed in the directory, a cost of £130 per year (Local Food Britain, 2017c).

Other initiatives which have developed an online directory of farm shops, farmers' markets, box schemes, and pick-your-own farms include Find Local Produce (findlocalproduce.co.uk), Farm Shop (farmshop.uk.com), Organic Supermarket (organic-supermarket.co.uk), Herefordshire Food Links (herefordshirefoodlinks.org.uk), and Hampshire Fare (hampshirefare.co.uk).

6.4 Mapping Local Food Systems

Online maps provide a potential tool for identifying food producers, retailers, caterers, or food projects in a local area. Several tools are available to help communities to map local food systems, and other maps make it possible to search for food producers and farm retail outlets in a given area. Five examples of online maps for local food systems are briefly introduced here.

The National Farmers' Retail and Markets

Association (FARMA) has produced a searchable online map which indicates the location of all farmers' markets and retail outlets in the UK which are members of FARMA (FARMA, 2017). The clickable map icons link to details about the farmers' market or retail outlet. This service allows people to search for local FARMA members. The map is at farma.org.uk/members-map.

Green Map is an online platform for participatory map-making. The service provides a platform for communities to identify and map all initiatives which address a 'green' or sustainability issue, such as energy, transport, and food (Green Map, undated). Hundreds of maps created by communities around the world are publicly available on the Open Green Map which is searchable by keyword, geographical location, or sustainability issue (Green Map, 2013). The Open Green Map is available to view at opengreenmap.org/greenmap. The map-making tools provided by Green Map allow anyone to contribute to this global map of sustainability initiatives.

Numerous communities and sustainable food initiatives have added information on locations related to sustainable food. The icons and themes available using the Green Map tools include topics such as Farmers/Local Market, Eco-Agriculture/Permaculture, and Organic/Local Food (Green Map, 2013). Searching the map for these icons within a specified geographic location would identify all those relevant to sustainable local food systems if a group or individual has added them to the Open Green Map. For example, hiSbe supermarket in Brighton, discussed in Section 4, has been identified on the map by a public user so the Open Green Map provides information about the service hiSbe provides (ibid). As such, the

Open Green Map could be used as a tool for consumers, retailers, caterers, wholesalers, and producers to identify one another within a given distance.

Geofutures is an online service to assist individuals or groups to use Geographic Information Systems (GIS) (Geofutures, 2017). It has been used by the Transition Town network to map the concept of a 'food footprint', the amount of land needed to produce sufficient food for an urban population. Hopkins et al (2009) used an example of South West England to map the food footprints of urban areas using Geofutures. For more information about this map, see geofutures.com/sustainability/relocalising-the-uk-food-supply.

The Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE) has developed a toolkit for mapping of local food systems. CPRE undertook a project on Mapping Local Food Webs between 2007 and 2012, which was funded by the Big Lottery Fund and supported by Sustain (CPRE, 2012). This project saw CPRE support 19 communities in England map their local food web (see Box 5 for details of the local food web mapped for Hastings). Following the 19 case studies within the project, Food Matters developed a toolkit which outlines 12 steps and 20 tasks needed to map a local food web and provides the 25 tools needed, including participatory exercises, interviews and surveys.

The Centre for Family Food Business is a platform which provides a searchable map and directory of all family-operated food businesses in North West England and South West Scotland. The directory covers food producers, retailers, and catering outlets (Thomas Jardine & Co, undated). The Centre for Family Food Business is run by Thomas Jardine & Co and was established to help promote locally-produced food. The directory and map of family-operated food businesses is available at thomasjardineandco.co.uk/centre-family-food-business.

Box 5. Mapping the Local Food Web in Hastings

In 2009 the Campaign to Protect Rural England supported a group of community-based volunteers to map the local food web in Hastings, East Sussex, as part of their Mapping Local Food Webs project (CPRE, 2011b).

The study mapped the local food web in and around Hastings using a geographical boundary of 30 miles from Hastings as the definition of 'local', meaning food producers and suppliers within 30 miles of Hastings were considered to be part of the local food supply chain (CPRE, 2011b). Data was collected by volunteers from the Hastings area and used tools including interviews, surveys, and public meetings and workshops (ibid, p18).

The report on this case study outlines ways in which the local food web in and around Hastings benefits the local community, economy, and environment, while challenges for these three sectors are also identified. The benefits identified include the social hubs created by local food outlets, farmers connecting with the community, high animal welfare standards, supporting local employment, reducing food miles, and maintaining diversity in the countryside (CPRE, 2011b). Producers interviewed for the study suggested that they have reduced risk and can sell produce at more competitive prices in a local food web because the supply chain is shortened and they deal directly with the consumer or retailer (ibid, p8).

Recommendations for ways to support the local food web in Hastings are given, which include issues for the local authorities to incorporate into Planning Policy and Procurement Policy, actions for local businesses to take to emphasise the benefits of seasonal foods and improve labelling, and things individuals and the local community can do, particularly through their shopping habits (CPRE, 2011b, p14-15).

Photo: Brighton & Hove Food Partnership,
Macs Organic Egg Farm



7

Lessons for Brighton & Hove

The examples of initiatives discussed in this paper show a diversity of approaches to support market linkages in local food systems. Although there are many examples of initiatives in Brighton & Hove which seek to re-localise and increase the sustainability of the local food system (see Section 4), there are approaches which have been used elsewhere that Brighton & Hove could learn from. This section will consider some of the lessons drawn from the case studies discussed in Sections 5 and 6.

7.1 Defining a Local Food System

As discussed in Box 1, there is no agreed definition of what 'local' means and different initiatives set different distances as the boundary of 'local' to their community. The Transformative Pathways to Sustainable Food Systems in Brighton & Hove project set a relatively arbitrary boundary of 50km as local to Brighton & Hove. Some of the initiatives introduced in this paper identify their local food system as within an area of 25 or 30 miles radius from their community or urban centre. Many of the online services consider within 150 miles to be local and state that produce "mostly" comes from within 150 miles.

It may be beneficial in a local food initiative to have a common understanding of how the local food system is defined, and that understanding to be agreed through a participatory process.

It may be beneficial in a local food initiative to have a common understanding of how the local food system is defined, and that understanding to be agreed through a participatory process. Any such definition of a local food system might need to allow for different producers or retailers to have different types of supply chain, with markets locally and nationally, as discussed in Section 7. It may also be appropriate to consider a local food system with an irregular, varying or fluid boundary, rather than a hard boundary at a nominally-determined distance radius. For example, concepts such as the 'food web' or 'food shed' may identify that the local food system extends further in one direction than it does in another. Various tools, including

participatory exercises, for mapping a local food web may be more appropriate and accurate in fully reflecting the local food system than a boundary or distance. For example, the Mapping Local Food Webs Toolkit (CPRE, 2012) provides a range of steps and tasks required to fully map a local food system (see Box 5 for an example from Hastings).

Further to differing definitions of what 'local' means, different communities will function in different ways and diverse initiatives may be appropriate. 'Local' food initiatives often operate in rural areas, in towns, or in a particular community of a city, rather than across a whole city. Although the 'local' food may come from across an area associated to a whole city, they are typically brought together through small-scale, community-based initiatives such as a shop, market, or 'hub' and are not large enough to serve a whole city. There are examples of initiatives at this scale existing in Brighton, such as hiSbe and the One Church Brighton Florence Road market. Online marketplaces such as Big Barn and Open Food Network appear to have the capacity to serve a larger area, although locally-based online services such as Food Assembly are often smaller in scale and have fewer resources to enable sustainability in operation.

'Local' food initiatives, such as Growing Communities (Section 5.1), often sell some produce from other continents (for example, bananas) because they need to offer customers a full range of produce or risk losing the custom. Selling some produce from overseas is needed to increase the sales of local produce. In addition to selling produce from overseas, the case studies discussed in Section 5 indicate that it is unrealistic to aim for 100% of produce which could be grown locally to be sourced locally. For example, Growing Communities, Cultivate, and Tamar Grow Local all source some produce from wholesalers who in turn source produce from further afield, including overseas in some cases. This pattern of selling some produce from overseas and sourcing some produce from wholesalers is reflected in the Growing Communities Food Zones, which proposes a sustainable and resilient food system in the UK would include sourcing 20% of food from overseas, and 25% of food from the local area, with a further 35% sourced from within 100 miles of the urban area (see Box 3; Growing Communities, undated d).

7.2 Online Technologies

Online marketplaces and directories exist but there are many which duplicate each other so there is no clear place to go to for all of the information. This leaves the consumer or buyer unsure where to look for comprehensive information. A comprehensive online directory of local food initiatives, producers, retailers, and catering outlets could be developed to support the linkages between suppliers and buyers across an area, for example, the Sheffield Food Network map (Sheffield Food Network, undated a). Furthermore, producers and retailers often have to pay to be listed on online directories and marketplaces so may not want to sign up to numerous services. As such, having a single online directory, which could also link to a marketplace, would reduce costs and could simplify the local food system for suppliers and buyers.

having a single online directory, which could also link to a marketplace, would reduce costs and could simplify the local food system for suppliers and buyers.

Sustain found that using or adapting existing online services or tools for local food initiatives was challenging and time consuming and suggest that it is impractical and undesirable (Horrell, 2012). They suggest that the use of information technologies can be highly beneficial for local food initiatives and it may be worthwhile for each to develop their own system, service, or tool for their own needs (ibid).

7.3 Public Sector and Policy

Local and sustainable food initiatives need strong public sector support and a positive policy environment, locally and nationally. The evaluation of the distribution and supply strand of the Making Local Food Work initiative (see Box 2) suggested that, to increase the sustainability of local food systems, there needs to be supportive local and national policy (Jones, 2012). Policy and public-sector support need to facilitate initiatives which seek to make local food systems more sustainable, while also supporting producers using sustainable agricultural practices

and ensuring that consumers are able to afford fresh, healthy food which has been locally and sustainably produced.

Local and sustainable food initiatives need strong public sector support and a positive policy environment, locally and nationally.

A supportive policy environment for a sustainable local food system would need to address diverse issues which range in scale. Issues concerning sustainable local food systems which local and national policy influence include:

- **Availability of funding** for community-based or not-for-profit initiatives, which could be in the form of grant funding for initial start-up or public-sector funding for community-based employees;
- **Access to land** for agroecological producers, property to house local initiatives, and/or infrastructure required for local initiatives;
- **Public education** about the food system and sustainability issues, including issues such as environmental degradation, environmental impacts of agro-chemicals, and food miles;
- **Procurement standards** in the public sector to increase the amount of sustainably-produced, local food provided in schools, hospitals, prisons, and other public institutions;
- **Public awareness campaigns** about food waste reduction and education about nutrition from fresh, diverse, seasonal fruit and vegetables;
- **Provision of a living wage or relative benefits** to ensure the public can afford to buy fresh, healthy, and local produce.

Initiatives such as the Good Food Procurement Group run by the Brighton & Hove Food Partnership (Brighton & Hove Food Partnership, 2016 and 2015) and the public sector collaboration with Manchester Veg People (Manchester Veg People, undated b) indicate the potential for successful collaborations between local food initiatives, the public sector, and policy-makers. Although there are diverse and complex sectors associated with establishing sustainable local food systems, there is much scope for collaboration to develop a supportive policy environment.



Photo: Brighton & Hove Food Partnership.
Giuseppe with his vegetables

7.4 Collaborations

A local food hub can serve as a site for numerous producers or other stakeholders in the local food system to come together to collaborate. Food hubs work in very different ways and at times are physical centralised warehouses for collection and distribution, but in other cases serve as an online marketplace for local suppliers (Horrell et al, 2009). Food hubs can provide a service to link suppliers to buyers, collate orders to producers or retailers, or provide infrastructure for collective distribution. Food hubs of this nature have facilitated initiatives such as Tamar Grow Local (South West Catchment, 2014) but require significant collaboration and an initial input of funding to establish.

Food hubs can provide a service to link suppliers to buyers, collate orders to producers or retailers, or provide infrastructure for collective distribution.

Making Local Food Work, Tamar Valley Food Hubs, and others all found it difficult and time consuming to bring local producers on board for online marketplaces, coordinated wholesaling, or pooled sales via collated orders. Establishing collaborations for a local food hub or other initiative to support market linkages can take considerable time and commitment, and it may not be possible to bring all potential producers together in a collaboration.

Some forms of collaboration might not be desirable for local food system initiatives. For example, Manchester Veg People decided not to collaborate with Unicorn supermarket (a local supermarket similar to hiSbe in Brighton & Hove) or wholesalers because it would double the mark-up price (Woodcock, 2012). Other factors also present challenges in some collaborations which could result in negative outcomes for other stakeholders in the food system if initiatives sought to collaborate with all possible local food stakeholders.

8

Recommendations

While some policy relevant to a sustainable local food system in Brighton & Hove cannot be determined locally, **collaboration with the local Councils to develop a supportive policy environment for local food initiatives should continue.**

This could be extended to stronger collaboration between policy-makers, public sector institutions, businesses, non-governmental organisations, and community-based initiatives.

The existing network among local food stakeholders established by the Brighton & Hove Food Partnership, and their collaboration with the local Councils, could be extended to increase action taken by local academic institutions in influencing local and national policy. The Transformative Pathways to Sustainable Food Systems in Brighton & Hove project and initiatives such as the Brighton and Sussex Universities Food Network and Sussex Sustainability Research Programme may provide a key resource for strengthening the involvement of academic institutions in developing policy recommendations.

The Brighton & Hove Food Partnership's (BHFP) initiative to increase the sustainability of food distributed or sold in the public sector could be extended. The success of the minimum buying standards developed by BHFP and the Brighton & Hove City Council is reflected in national recognition awarded to the Council (e.g. Brighton & Hove Food Partnership, 2016). The work BHFP has done on procurement in the public sector could be extended to ensure the University of Sussex, catering outlets, retailers and wholesalers, and secondary food producers have minimum buying standards in the form of percentage targets of local produce and sustainability criteria. An extension of BHFP's successful work on local procurement in the public sector could incorporate innovative technologies similar to Agrilocal (see Section 6.2), providing an automated online link between producers and buyers to simplify procurement.

An online directory of all local producers, retailers, catering outlets, organisations and businesses, and community-based initiatives which are associated with sustainable local food systems could be developed. This online directory could

potentially also host an online marketplace for local producers, or it could provide links to existing marketplaces which local producers sell through, such as Fin and Farm which sells through Big Barn. This online directory would provide a consolidated version of all of the existing directories, lists, and marketplaces available online, serving as a single location for producers, retailers, buyers, and individual consumers to find information on the local food system. Such a directory would need a commitment to host and maintain the website and information in the directory. The demand for directories of this nature is reflected in the Local Suppliers Directory produced by BHFP for their initiative on public sector procurement (Brighton & Hove Food Partnership, 2016) and the number of online directories which include initiatives in Brighton & Hove (see Sections 4.1, 4.2, 6.1, and 6.3).

The viability of a Sussex Food Hub could be further discussed and explored. The evaluation of options for a Sussex Food Hub which was commissioned by Food Matters as part of the Making Local Food Work initiative (see Section 4.4; Food Matters, 2011) could be revisited in the context of the challenges identified by stakeholder involved in the co-design workshop for the Transformative Pathways to Sustainable Food Systems in Brighton & Hove project (Ely et al, 2015). In conjunction with an online directory of the local food system (see above), a physical 'hub' which provides centralised warehousing, coordinated sales, and distribution for local agroecological producers could support market linkages to increase the sustainability of the food system in and around Brighton & Hove. A Sussex Food Hub could have features similar to those developed by Grown in Totnes, Tamar Grow Local, and Manchester Veg People but would require significant effort to establish.

By supporting market linkages in the local food system, the potential initiatives recommended here could collectively make significant steps towards increasing the sustainability of the local food system in Brighton & Hove. These recommendations respond to the issues raised by stakeholders during participatory workshops held as part of the Transformative Pathways to Sustainable Food Systems in Brighton & Hove project outlined in Section 3.

9

Further Reading and Resources

Brighton and Hove CSA Feasibility Study was a detailed analysis of local food initiatives and the feasibility of establishing a new community supported agriculture project in Brighton & Hove. The feasibility study was completed by Food Matters in 2011 having been commissioned by the group which now run SheepShare and PigShare. The report on the Brighton and Hove CSA: Feasibility Study is available to download via the link at the bottom of this website: <http://brightoncommunityagriculture.org.uk/about-us>.

- Food Matters (2011) Brighton and Hove CSA: Feasibility Study: Interim Report <http://brightoncommunityagriculture.org.uk/about-us> [Accessed on 9-10-2017]

Mapping Local Food Webs Toolkit was developed by Food Matters as part of the Campaign to Protect Rural England project on mapping local food webs for the Making Local Food Work initiative. The toolkit provides a series of steps and tasks to undertake with relevant community groups, organisations, businesses, and public sector bodies, including detailed exercises and required resources.

- CPRE (Campaign to Protect Rural England) (2012) Mapping Local Food Webs Toolkit <http://cpre.org.uk/resources/farming-and-food/local-foods/item/3076-mapping-local-food-webs-toolkit> [Accessed on 12-9-2017]

Local Food: How to make it happen in your community is a book written by the co-founder of the Transition Town movement (see Box 4). It provides details of a range of community-based initiatives which could support the re-localisation of food systems and increase the sustainability of local food systems.

- Pinkerton, T., and Hopkins, R. (2009) Local Food: How to make it happen in your community, Green Books, Cambridge, pp216

The Making Local Food Work initiative ran from 2008 to 2012 and was coordinated by the Plunkett Foundation (see Box 2). The publications which were prepared as part of the initiative are available via the Sustain website: <http://sustainweb.org/makinglocalfoodwork/publications>. The publications include information about establishing food hubs, using information technologies, and financing small food initiatives, among other topics.

- Sustain (2017) Making Local Food Work [online] www.sustainweb.org/makinglocalfoodwork/publications [Accessed on 9-10-2017]

Our Food Plan Toolkit was developed by local and sustainable food consultancy f3. It provides a range of instructions, guidance, and tools for developing a local food plan with community members, the public sector, and relevant organisations and initiatives. Information about the Our Food Plan Toolkit is available at <http://foodplan.org.uk>

- f3 (undated) Our Food Plan Toolkit <http://foodplan.org.uk> [Accessed on 9-10-2017]

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Contact: Dr Rachael Taylor
rachael.taylor@foodecologies.net

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