

Farming Sheffield's Fringe

The potential of food growing and farming on peri-urban land around Sheffield



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Agroecological market gardens¹ at the edge of cities can play an important role in a green economic recovery integrating targets on economic development, climate change, education, and health.

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Front cover credit: Dora Damian

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¹ Agroecological farming - at the heart of this project - takes an integrated approach to producing food where ecological and social principles underpin regenerative systems that work with natural cycles, develop fair livelihoods and equitable land access, and value farmers' knowledge. The Food and Agriculture Organisation describes 10 elements of agroecology - <http://www.fao.org/3/I9037EN/i9037en.pdf>.

1. Introduction

This briefing gives an overview of the existing context of peri-urban growing² in Sheffield and the surrounding area, provides inspiring case studies from around the world and closer to home, identifies data gaps, and suggests some potential ideas for further discussion. The 'Action Plan' and 'Key Asks for Sheffield City Council / South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority' emerged from a meeting with farmers, researchers, campaigners, council representatives and officers on the 7th July 2021 informed by a pre-event briefing. The event particularly highlighted blockages in a lack of access to information on land ownership and usage locally, and limited training opportunities for local people who wanted to get work in the sector. Supportive policy and investment in these areas to promote agroecological farming in the peri-urban can support benefits such as community wealth building and attractive green jobs in the regional economy, and 'carbon sinks' at the edge of the city using nature-friendly food growing.

The information in this briefing has been gathered by Shared Assets and Sustain with the support of ShefFood from a range of relevant documents on food policy and practice across a local to international scale (see references). The briefing sets out a strong business case for enabling 'fringe farming' to expand in the area, to become a mainstay of a sustainable, just, localised food economy, providing good jobs, education and training, better access to nature, and high quality, affordable food for all, contributing to greater resilience of the city region.

With a new generation of farmers and growers looking for suitable sites to meet increased demand (Wheeler, 2020) for healthy, ecological and culturally-appropriate foods, one of the key challenges to developing localised food systems is finding and accessing land to support equitable opportunities in the sector. Such land exists around cities, but is often hard to find information about, is underutilised as paddocks for grazing animals, or merely seen as 'waiting' for housing development, and could instead be secured for agroecological farming.

This briefing and action plan builds on previous initiatives in Sheffield and has space to evolve, with the questions below listed for further food for thought and to spark imagination and discussion about ways to move things forward:

- What if Sheffield's reputation as the Outdoor City could be expanded to include fringe farming, so that all people locally have access to healthy food and environment on their doorstep?
- What if Sheffield's new rural strategy could shift land use toward agroecological farming?
- What if Sheffield could become a hub of innovation for agroforestry, given its status as one of the most wooded cities in Europe and the aim to plant more to help meet net zero targets and increase local food production?

² We use the terms 'fringe farming' and 'peri-urban growing/farming' interchangeably - they simply mean farming around the edge of cities

- What if fringe farming could support racial justice and increase opportunities for People of Colour in the food, farming and environment sectors?
- What are the opportunities for procuring foods grown at Sheffield's fringe into health centres, schools and other anchor institutions?
- What if the development of low carbon food-related infrastructure could bring together food producers, processors, distributors, create jobs, and support a vibrant local economy?
- What if a network of agroecological farms contributed to the fight against climate change by sequestering carbon in soils and reducing the greenhouse emissions associated with food production, transport and consumption in the city?

Sheffield's urban fringe

The peri-urban land around Sheffield crosses multiple geographical boundaries. To the city's west lies a narrow band of improved grassland bounded by the Peak District National Park. Much of this farmland, including: Wadsley and Loxley Common; Rivelin Valley; and Ringinglow, is >250m above sea-level. The altitude is less favourable for arable / horticultural production and livestock grazing is the dominant activity. Heather-covered uplands and blanket bog frame the backdrop and the development restrictions within the Peak District National Park make agricultural expansion unlikely. The existing hydrology makes this landscape ideal for the purposes of natural flood management, an aim identified by the Sheffield Lakeland Landscape Partnership (2018).

To the north, city sprawl places the closest farmland approximately six miles distant from the urban centre. The land identified within the Wortley Parish is a north-south corridor; its western edge meets relict mine workings and the expansive Wharnccliffe Wood beyond. To the east, Sheffield spills over into Rotherham via an industrial landscape hosting manufacturing and retail infrastructure. Here the closest piece of open land is Orgreave Common, once a vast opencast mine and now rapidly disappearing under the Waverley housing development / business park. The next closest area with food production potential is Treeton Parish, in Rotherham.

Heading south into North East Derbyshire, agricultural land is not only in greater supply, it is also considerably closer to Sheffield's centre. The Moss Valley lies four miles from the city centre and only a mile over the metropolitan border. The fields off Lightwood Lane have a favourable aspect, either being at the hilltop or gently sloping to the southwest. No land here exceeds 200m elevation, making it more suitable for horticultural purposes. The Moss Valley is adjacent to the ex-agricultural land bought by Sheffield City Council from North-East Derbyshire in the 1950s for the purpose of building social housing. The proposal to concentrate on this area at the event recognises the fluidity of this border, and the potential of this landscape to feed the citizens of Sheffield, Chesterfield and the rest of the South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority.



Map showing land designations and distances from the city centre. Design: Fran Halsall, drawing on data supplied by Rob Hardie and Jill Edmondson, University of Sheffield, and other open access sources.

UK-wide Fringe Farming

This Sheffield initiative is part of the Fringe Farming project which is a collaboration with partners across the UK (Sustain, Shared Assets, Landworkers' Alliance, Bristol Food Producers, Glasgow Community Food Network and ShefFood) to understand the barriers to, and identify opportunities for agroecological farming at the edge of urban areas. The project is working with local stakeholders in four Sustainable Food Places (Bristol, London, Sheffield and Glasgow) to identify land and develop local actions, and national policy recommendations to enable agroecological farming, as part of a green economic recovery, and to help address the impacts of the COVID pandemic, Brexit, and the climate and ecological emergencies.

2. Recommendations

2.1 Key Asks for Sheffield City Council / South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority

A. Develop a City & Regional Food Strategy

Sheffield's existing food strategy was written from a public health perspective; we need one that is focused on food's central role within community wellbeing, climate change targets, and its contribution to the city / regional economy. This strategy should place food production at the heart of a vision illustrating how low-carbon, local food can reduce food poverty and provide employment, business and investment opportunities, while managing natural assets for the benefit of biodiversity.

By collaborating with ShefFood and making use of the wealth of expertise offered by the various partners the strategy would develop the understanding of how regenerative agriculture can provide nutrient-rich, healthy food while caring for regional landscapes so that they store, rather than emit, carbon (SCC, 2021c: 11, 13).

The updating of the Food Strategy is one of the principle points of collaboration outlined in the [*Pathway from Bronze to Silver: An Invitation to Transform Sheffield's Food System*](#) document.

B. Provide access to the Carter Jonas Land Asset Review

ShefFood looks forward to the publication of the Council's Land Asset review undertaken by Carter Jonas. As the city's Food Partnership we have a legitimate interest in seeing the report to establish not only the availability of, but also the intentions for, public land that is potentially suitable for agriculture / horticulture. We would also seek to clarify how this document relates to / informs the rural land review / strategy.

This report must be the starting point for any conversations about how Council managed land can be brought into a developing strategy for food production in and around the city (SCC, 2021c:11, 13).

C. For the SCR to announce itself as an 'Agroecological City Region'

Within this overarching vision, food production would be considered a priority enterprise on any suitable land that has been identified through the Carter Jonas report and any other mapping exercises that Sheffield is engaged with. This forward-thinking regional status will firmly embed the relationship between both the climate and ecological emergencies and the benefits gained by bringing low-carbon farming and horticulture back to the urban fringe (SCC, 2021c: 11, 13).

Sheffield no longer has County Farms, however public land could be rebranded as 'County Market Gardens' on sites suited to small to medium scale horticulture. Such a designation would enable interested individuals, community groups and businesses to develop the land, providing food at scale, disseminating vital skills and generating employment. As the briefing highlights, peri-urban areas are well suited to developing market garden enterprises that connect urban and rural communities and economies through economic and cultural exchange.

In the near term the City Council could signal its intent to follow this direction of travel by signing the Glasgow Food and Climate Declaration (GFCD, 2021).

D. Develop an integrated horticultural and agricultural training system

There is a substantial gap within the local educational provision of horticultural and agricultural skills that are relevant to urban and peri-urban agroecological production. To tackle this problem the City Council should promote training in both, as core skills, regarding them as priorities for securing future green jobs. This requires regional funding support, enabling both bursaries and/or apprenticeships, particularly for young adults classed as 'NEETs' and for those with limited financial resources (SCC, 2021c: 6, 9).

Close co-operation with food producers and other stakeholders is essential, as they will play a key role in delivering training and providing work experience / apprenticeships. ShefFood is already cultivating the links between food producers, Colleges and

Universities and is ready to share these developments with the City Council. (SCC, 2021c: 9).

The training offer should be accompanied by a public facing campaign to make people aware of careers in sustainable food, and associated industries. This should be an inclusive campaign that reflects the city's varied population and that tackles the current lack of ethnic diversity within farming and growing roles.

E. Support procurement of local food to build the circular economy

Create a City Council hosted steering group to help local SME low-carbon food producers supply anchor institutions. This would be a mutually beneficial arrangement, securing a stable and sustainable food source for anchor institutions, while supporting SMEs to flourish. A locally-oriented, shorter supply chain yields better returns for producers, placing them in a stronger economic position and generating more employment opportunities (SCC, 2021c: 9).

This group should also consider the incoming Dynamic Food Procurement system and how it can be applied not only for the benefit of local producers but also for the city region's economy and carbon budget (SCC, 2021c: 11). Money previously spent on food imported from outside the region would instead be spent within the locality, and shorter supply chains permit greater control over emissions by affording greater oversight of production methods and reducing the miles travelled from field to fork.

F. Food champions and opportunities for every neighbourhood

Understanding each community's food needs is paramount to addressing food poverty. Each neighbourhood has different concerns and these can be best represented by a Food Champion working through Local Area Committees (LACs). Frank conversation and co-operation is required between citizens, the City Council and ShefFood in what would be a 'bottom up' process.

Creating equitable food access may include the allocation of green space to develop as neighbourhood-level market gardens, with the aim of nurturing enterprises that can supply fresh food direct through community pantries / kitchens and / or into retail, or it may be the promotion of training and employment opportunities within existing and new peri-urban farms (SCC, 2021c: 5, 9, 10). Neighbourhood-level growing sites would be highly visible; they would also be connected to larger operations on the urban fringe that employ more people, offering a potential means of recruiting a whole range of urbanites to semi-rural roles.

2.2 Actions to be undertaken by ShefFood

This action plan will be followed up with the ongoing support of Sustain and Shared Assets.

ShefFood's core commitments to the city and its citizens are outlined in the [*Pathway from Bronze to Silver: An Invitation to Transform Sheffield's Food System*](#) document. These pledges are:

A. Creating the framework for prioritising regenerative agriculture in and around the Sheffield region, using public events and media campaigns to demonstrate food's central role in addressing the climate crisis.

This pledge will be realised through the following actions:

- collaborating with the Council / City Region on updating the Food Strategy to reflect food's contribution to the city / regional economy. *Medium term*
- hosting regular events that not only make the products of regenerative agriculture more visible but also promote careers within the sector and related industries. *Short-Medium term*
- organising school visits to the city's organic, community-based peri-urban farms to show children what food production is all about, with site tours to be led by ShefFood's Urban Agriculture Co-ordinator. *Medium Term*
- launching a 'Land Seeker's Survey' to establish the level of public demand for developing land for food production. The survey would: gather data on what skills people have - importantly highlighting the gaps to be addressed by the education and skills sector; their business knowledge; and what type / area of land they require. This research would also support the developing vision of Sheffield as an 'agroecological city region'. *Short term*
- creating the Urban (and Peri-Urban) Agriculture Taskforce (UAT), a public-facing service that identifies and signposts land for food production; develops responses to suitable land and acts as a liaison between the City Council and future farmers / horticulturalists, many of whom will have been engaged through the Land Seeker's Survey. *Medium – Long term*

B. Developing community-based advocacy models working for the needs of all citizens so that no-one is excluded from the transition to a just food system.

Actions to be taken:

- collaborative updating of the Food Strategy so that it recognises how locally produced food can help provide the recommended 5-a-day of culturally-appropriate fruit and vegetables to those experiencing the greatest food need. *Medium term*
- providing training and support for neighbourhood Food Champions. This will open up an additional avenue of communication, permitting bottom-up innovation from community members that can be explored with expert input from the Food Partnership. This framework will actively promote food-based careers through community partnerships and recruit for agricultural and horticultural roles being developed on the urban fringe. *Short to Medium term*

C. Working with the City Council and other anchor institutions to ensure that procurement is used to achieve the best results for local businesses and jobs, while ensuring that sustainable standards are adhered to.

This will be achieved through the following actions:

- opening a dialogue with procurers through a City Council convened steering group, using the Food Partnership’s expertise to inform the implementation of the Dynamic Procurement Framework so that the value of culturally-appropriate, regionally-produced food is fully endorsed within the selection criteria. *Medium term*
- concurrently building relationships with independent food retailers, finding out where there is potential to expand the market for low-carbon produce. *Medium term*

D. Liaising with all stakeholders to promote skills and training in food production, manufacturing and related sectors, supporting the creation of new apprenticeships, especially for those not currently in education or employment, and communities underrepresented in food production work.

This aim will be accomplished through the following actions:

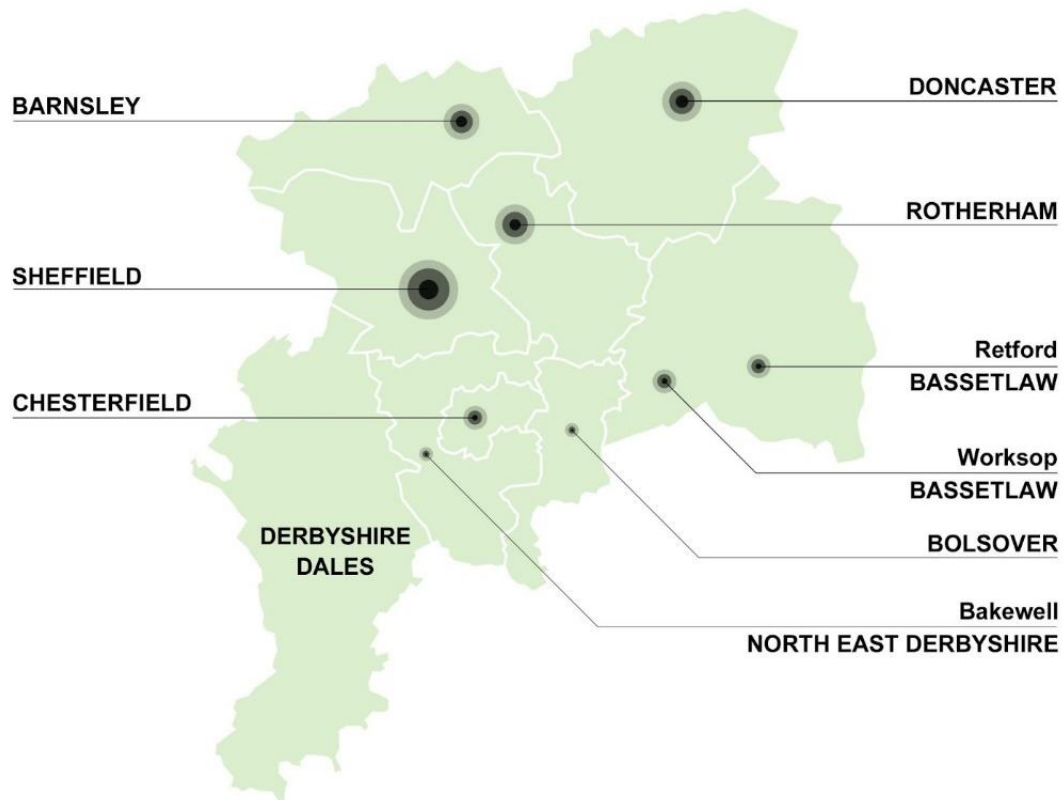
- following up on emerging plans and existing collaborations with the University of Sheffield, Sheffield Hallam University, Sheffield College and others. The guiding principle behind these activities is to ensure that all stakeholders are aligned to create the easiest and most equitable routes into careers in sustainable food. *Short-medium term*
- seek to extend ShefFood’s membership to other food-related businesses that are already working sustainably or have ambitions to decarbonise in the near-future. *Short-medium term*

3. Key findings

- There are many growing projects and farming enterprises in and around Sheffield, and potential to expand these on a larger scale in the urban fringe.
- Comprehensive land ownership and usage data is difficult to access locally.
- Small-scale agroecological farming could provide attractive, green jobs, particularly for young people affected by COVID-related unemployment, from a more diverse range of backgrounds than the mainstream farming sector, but further skills development and outreach may be required.
- Demand for veg boxes increased rapidly at the start of COVID-19, with sales doubling nationally in six weeks (Wheeler, 2020: 6). There may be further untapped markets for locally produced fruit and vegetables in the South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority, and expansion of dynamic public procurement processes could help provide markets for more small-scale food producers over the longer term as well as support community wealth building.
- Food poverty and malnutrition remain major problems in the South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority, contributing to non-

communicable disease and in turn, increased vulnerability to the health impacts of COVID-19.

4. The current picture



Map showing the South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority Local Enterprise Partnership. Design: Fran Halsall, adapted from the official SCR map (Sheffield City Region Growth Hub, n.d.)

4.1 Farming in the South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority and the Moss Valley

- Recent research has shown cities including Sheffield have enough usable space to become at least partially self-sufficient for vegetable and fruit production (Edmondson et al., 2020)
- Sheffield has 401 agricultural holdings currently used mainly for dairy and grazing livestock (Sheffield City Council, n.d.a: 126)
- Sheffield is one of the most densely wooded cities in the UK and by extending tree cover (and peatland restoration) it is estimated that it could realistically double the amount of carbon sequestered through land use change by 2030, as well as the associated benefits for wellbeing, education, improved air quality, alleviation of flooding, and biodiversity (ARUP, n.d.).
- The Moss Valley is an extensive tract of rolling wooded countryside within the Green Belt separating Sheffield, Dronfield, and Eckington in NE Derbyshire (North East Derbyshire District Council, 2015: 8). The area

has a significant number of protected sites and species which are potentially under pressure from economic growth objectives (North East Derbyshire District Council, 2018), and intensive agriculture and pony paddocks, but which also provide good opportunities to conserve and enhance biodiversity, such as through better woodland and grassland management (North East Derbyshire District Council, 2010, Lowland Derbyshire Biodiversity Partnership, 2011).

- The predominant type of agriculture in North East Derbyshire is pastoral, (North East Derbyshire District Council, 2010), in line with the wider East Midlands and Yorkshire and the Humber regions, where cereal and grazing livestock farming make up the majority of farmed area (Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs, 2021).
- Two organic farms operate in the Moss Valley, including Sheffield Organic Growers (12 acres) ³and Regather Farm (15 acres), but overall the proportion of land farmed organically in both the East Midlands and Yorkshire and the Humber are amongst the lowest in England, at just 1.3 and 1% respectively (Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs, 2020a: 12).
- It has been estimated that these larger 'nature friendly farms', when combined with the wider network of community food growing and therapeutic gardens, allotments and apiaries across South Yorkshire "cultivate nearly 40 hectares, employ nearly 100 staff with a collective turnover of £8m, engage nearly 2,000 volunteers contributing 200,000 volunteer hours and support over 1,000 vulnerable people annually" (Le Corney, 2021: 1).

4.2 Land ownership and access

- Land ownership and usage data is fragmented and difficult to access across different local authorities, public and private owners in the South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority. This is a key barrier to taking a strategic approach to land for fringe farming. Some maps and datasets exist which show parts of the picture (e.g. Sheffield City Council Property Terrier Holdings, Derbyshire County Council Property Data) but these give little detail. Further dedicated council staff capacity is needed to investigate this and make this information publicly accessible and understandable.
- None of the local authorities within the South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority are 'Smallholding Authorities' with County Farms (Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, 2020b) - one of the traditional routes for new entrants to agriculture to access land and infrastructure cheaply, limiting routes for people without a farming background to enter agriculture. The few agricultural tenancies which do

³ Moss Valley Market Garden also leases land from Sheffield Organic Growers.

exist on Sheffield City Council's land have succession rights attached and do not change hands often (ARUP n.d.).

- In developing a new Rural Strategy, Sheffield City Council is beginning to think about how to use its land more effectively to deliver wider objectives, including when tenancies do come up, and are working with existing farmers to encourage more holistic sustainable land management (ARUP n.d.)
- Derbyshire's Economic Strategy also states they want to use their land and property assets to attract and retain businesses and promote economic growth, particularly around renewable energies, green/blue infrastructure and ecosystem services (Derbyshire Economic Partnership, 2014)

4.3 Employment, training and skills



Credit: Dora Damian

- The economy of North East Derbyshire has traditionally been based on coal, steel and heavy engineering industries, and the decline of these, and agriculture, has led to higher levels of unemployment in areas previously dependent upon them (North East Derbyshire District Council, 2005: 29). As a result of the COVID pandemic, benefits claimants increased by 126.3% between September 2019 and September 2020 (North East Derbyshire District Council, 2021: 16).
- Overall, for every resident of working age in North East Derbyshire, there are 0.7 jobs per person, considerably lower than the national rate of 0.86, indicating more jobs are needed within the district (North East Derbyshire District Council, 2021: 16). The District Council's recently published Employment and Skills Strategy indicates developing a green

skills programme, encouraging entrepreneurship and retraining for routes to better employment as priorities North East Derbyshire District Council, 2021), all of which increased opportunities in small scale agroecological farming locally could help support.

- North East Derbyshire Economic Zone recognises that the South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority heavily influences the northern fringe of North East Derbyshire. It also acknowledges that the area is home to major employment sites and through securing growth will assist in reducing disparities (Derbyshire Economic Partnership, 2014)
- In 2019, 6.1% of 16/17 year olds in Sheffield were not in education, employment or training (or their current situation was unknown), above the national rate of 5.5%. Unemployment amongst young people (aged 16-24) nationally has also increased by 13% due to the impact of the COVID pandemic (Powell, Francis-Devine and Foley, 2021).
- In the South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority, “the workforce is typified by a lower qualification profile” and higher rates of unemployment underpin levels of poverty (Sheffield City Region, 2021a: 42-43). Research on small farms has suggested that they provide more employment opportunities than larger farms (3.2 FTE per hectare, well above the UK average of 0.028 annual work units per hectare), and more meaningful and desirable work environments (Laughton and Kiss, 2017).
- A lack of diversity in the South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority’s workforce is reported to be constraining productivity and business performance (Sheffield City Region, 2021a: 43). Agriculture is also the least diverse sector in the UK, with 98.6% of farm managers and owners identifying as white British (Asgarian, 2020). By linking opportunities in agroecology to racial justice and reparations, fringe farming could support a much greater range of people to connect to the land, and produce food which is familiar to the diverse communities living in Sheffield (Sheffield City Council, 2021b).

4.4 Food and Retail

- The local food sector in Sheffield, made up of 4,951 registered food businesses (Sheffield City Council, n.d.a: 125), employs around 25,000 people and is an important part of the city’s tourist economy (Sheffield City Council, 2018a: 1)
- Sheffield has built its reputation as the ‘Outdoor City’. At present this identity is largely associated with leisure activities; food production and its role in building local brands is overlooked. Sheffield’s potential as a food destination is ripe for expansion. Food of local provenance could become a mainstay of hospitality and the events industry.
- Only 1 in 4 adults in Sheffield consume the recommended 5 or more portions of fruit and vegetables on an average day (Sheffield City Council, 2018a: 2), and it is estimated that over 30,000 people in

Sheffield are malnourished and that approximately 40,000 people are currently experiencing food poverty (Sheffield City Council, n.d.: 116)

- In NE Derbyshire, about 10% of the District's population live in the top 20% most deprived neighbourhoods in the country and suffer from challenges associated with low income and poor health (North East Derbyshire District Council, 2018: 18)
- There is also evidence that people with non-communicable diseases (NCDs) such as diabetes (which 30,000 people in Sheffield have [Sheffield City Council, 2018a: 2]) are more vulnerable to severe COVID-19, and COVID-19 and NCDs share a set of risk factors, including deprivation and obesity (Sheldon and Wright, 2020), so there is increased urgency to tackle these issues.
- Derbyshire County Council has also done some work on the health of farmers in the area, noting that they are at increased risk of mental health problems and suicide due to factors including financial hardship, but that initiatives such as the 'Farm Out' clinic helped bridge the gap between the farming community and health services (Derbyshire County Council, 2011).
- The average household in Sheffield wastes £600 of food or drink per year, amounting to over £136 million of wasted household food per year in the city as a whole (Sheffield City Council, n.d.a: 126)
- During the pandemic demand for locally-sourced food soared in Sheffield, as it did nationally (Wheeler, 2020: 3). Regather alone went from supplying 320 households with veg boxes at the start of 2020 to 761 households by March 2021. This trend has been driven by several factors, including scarcity of produce in supermarkets and a desire to support the local economy (Halsall and Roberts, 2021: 8).
- Currently Chesterfield, the town nearest the Moss Valley, is only served by the national Riverford veg box scheme and potentially represents a huge underserved market (Transition Chesterfield 2021, personal communication).



Regather box scheme, Sheffield. Credit: Regather

5. Sources of inspiration - case studies from the Moss Valley and elsewhere

There are already numerous effective food-focused projects and organisations in the South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority, a few of which are highlighted below, but interesting approaches from elsewhere show the potential impact of fringe farming and might prompt ideas for creative ways to move forwards here.

Regather Farm has been in development on a 15-acre site in the Moss Valley since 2018. They are establishing a market garden, orchard, polytunnels, beehives and an agroforestry project, and sell an organic fruit and veg box across Sheffield and the surrounding area. They see the farm as part of a bigger effort to transform the local food system in Sheffield and make it more sustainable. Volunteering opportunities will soon be available at the farm so more people can connect with the land and where their food comes from.



Regather Farm, Moss Valley. Credit: Dora Damian

Food Works Farm in Manor, on the edge of Sheffield's industrial northeast, was acquired from Green Estate in the summer of 2020 and cultivation began in early 2021. As of May 2021, there are three volunteer sessions every week, with produce going to Food Work's kitchens, to be used alongside the food surplus they save from landfill to create meals for the local community. Over the COVID pandemic they cooked thousands of meals, redistributed through a network of 11 hubs across Sheffield.

Pollybell Farm in Doncaster is a family owned organic farming business, with the Brown family having a farming background for the last 120 years. The farm covers 500 acres across the county borders of Nottinghamshire, Lincolnshire and South Yorkshire and produces mainly cereals, vegetables and livestock to sell into retail, wholesale and processing. The farm takes a holistic approach reducing reliance on external inputs, and aims to enhance the land and the surrounding area for future generations.

London, UK

OrganicLea is a workers' cooperative growing food on the edge of London. They have a veg box scheme, offer practical support to local community groups and schools which want to start growing food, and run a number of different accredited courses and traineeships on horticulture and other land-based skills. They have used the Farm Carbon Calculator toolkit to show their activities result in over 11 tonnes of carbon sequestration (OrganicLea, 2020). OrganicLea is also part of the Wolves Lane Consortium, stewarding a 3-acre former council plant nursery site in to become a thriving centre for growing and distributing wholesome food, a space for the local food economy to develop through education, enterprise, and events, and a community hub which makes good food accessible to all and builds a healthier, more sustainable food culture in the area. In 2020, the Consortium received £1.2 million as part of the Greater London Authority's 'Good Growth' regeneration fund to be split between the OrganicLea and Wolves Lane sites to help their vision of a 'market garden city' come to life (Wolves Lane Centre, 2020a).



Organiclea, Hawkwood Nursery, London. Credit: Shared Assets

Rosario, Argentina

Rosario's flagship Urban Agriculture Programme emerged from financial crisis in 2001, and since then has grown to preserve over 700 hectares (1,730 acres) of agricultural land, produce 25,000 tonnes of fruit and vegetables each year, and reduce greenhouse gas emissions for locally produced vegetables by 95%. With support from research institutions and the UN, the municipality began by mapping and then taking over vacant and underutilised land that could be used for farming, set up a Municipal Agricultural Land Bank, and offered tenancies to small-scale agroecological farmers. It

also provided technical agricultural assistance and trained farmers in commercial skills such as food safety and quality control, and strengthened routes to market through home delivery schemes, setting up farmers' markets, and processing plants.

Today, over 2,400 families are practising agroecological growing in small plots making up 75 hectares (185 acres) across the city, helping reduce food insecurity and poverty. A number of 'Garden Parks' and Green Corridors have also been opened up, mainly in low-income neighbourhoods, to help manage flooding and extreme heat, as well as providing space for agriculture on the peri-urban fringe (World Resources Institute, 2020). Key to the programme's success has been a dedicated team of agronomists to support growers and innovate new technologies for agroecology, an accurate inventory of the municipality's land assets, and a joined-up approach across departments of the municipality, with supporting agroecological farmers seen as a way to tackle poverty, food insecurity and the climate crisis (Urban Sustainability Exchange, n.d.). The motivation to set up this transformative programme from a time of crisis provides an example of the sort of changes to UK local food and farming systems which could be achieved as part of recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic if comprehensive support is offered to growers.

Further case studies are included at the end of this document.

6. Existing commitments

The next decade will bring challenges and opportunities as the South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority recovers from COVID and strives to become a 'stronger, greener and fairer' place to live and work (Sheffield City Region, 2020). A number of key strategies have goals that either explicitly refer to more sustainable food production and consumption, or could be supported through the expansion of fringe farming:

1. Sheffield City Council has declared a Climate Emergency and aims to for the city to be zero carbon by 2030 (ARUP, n.d.); for the wider Combined Authority the equivalent target year is 2040 (Sheffield City Region, 2021b), and Derbyshire has pledged to reach net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2032 (Derbyshire County Council, 2019)
2. "Develop Sheffield as a centre of excellence for environmental and horticultural skills; for community volunteering and engagement; and for local and natural heritage conservation by 2022" (Sheffield City Council, n.d.b: 72)
3. "We will plant at least 100,000 additional trees and replace trees on a 2 for 1 basis in our greenspaces and woodlands over the next 10 years" (Sheffield City Council, 2018b: 3)
4. "Develop opportunities for sustainable land-use, leasing and management and reinvestment within Sheffield's Rural Estate, as part of a Rural Strategy." (Sheffield City Council, n.d.b: 69)

5. To propose and implement a Food and Wellbeing Strategy for Sheffield and changes to future commissioning to support the Food and Wellbeing Strategy in line with Sheffield's Public Health Strategy (Sheffield City Council, 2018c)

7. References and further reading

More case studies from elsewhere

Barnet, UK

GROW! has been based at The Totteridge Academy, North London since May 2019, where they have built a community farm, started a Forest School and free school meal holiday programme, and rolled out our unique curriculum to 300 students per week as part of the school timetable. This partnership between community market gardeners and a school integrates access to food, food education, skills-building, and outdoor exercise to respond to the accelerating climate emergency, rising obesity levels amongst children and young people in the UK, and the surging mental health crisis faced by our schools. The project's ambition is that the GROW programme features as part of the national curriculum by 2030. The Principal of The Totteridge Academy credits GROW! with helping transform their school's culture, "by empowering our students to connect positively and healthily to themselves and the world around them."

Liège, Belgium

Ceinture Aliment-Terre Liégeoise (CATL) or the Liège Food Belt is an association launched in 2013 dedicated to promoting sustainable food amongst the general public and to fostering local food production and distribution in the Liège region. Since their launch, 16 citizen-led food cooperatives have been created (Communities for Future, 2020), the City of Liège has identified and provided communal land suitable for urban agriculture, three food policy councils have been established in the Liège Province, and a cooperative food hub has been set up. The Food Hub seeks to bridge missing links of local food production chains, by providing a vegetable cannery, jar and bottle washing unit, meat cutting and processing workshops, and a logistics hub for distribution. This has been supported by finance from the Walloon regional government, with a key recommendation emerging that food hub infrastructures should be owned by public bodies but preferably run by a group of food cooperatives (Jonet, 2021).

New Haven, Connecticut, USA

The city of New Haven has recently established a Food System Policy Division which operates according to a food justice framework based around health equity, socio-economic and environmental justice. They plan to work with a wide network of non-profits, volunteers, and community groups to develop a New Haven Urban Agriculture Masterplan. So far, initiatives rolled out include:

- Creating an ordinance to allow small food business entrepreneurs (particularly those with fewer resources) to access shared commercial kitchens, as a way of entering the food industry, as well as creating jobs, and encouraging sourcing from local producers.
- Laying the groundwork for a city-wide community composting network.
- Building institutional partnerships between, and creating tools for, schools, hospitals, and universities, to move towards more sustainable and transparent food procurement practices (IPES Food, 2020).

Brighton, UK

The non-profit Brighton and Hove Food Partnership is pushing for a consideration of food growing at a wide scale, including through the planning system, and via the management of the Downlands Estate landscape. An updated version of the Planning Advice Note on Food Growing and Development was recently adopted by the Council's Tourism, Equalities, Communities and Culture Committee, and includes guidance and practical examples for developers on including food growing spaces in new development such as through edible hedgerows, roof gardens or mini allotments (Ward, 2020).

The Partnership has also submitted a response to the recently closed council consultation about how it should manage the Downlands surrounding Brighton for the next 100 years (O'Brien, 2021). In this, the Brighton and Hove Food Partnership advocate for a shift to sustainable farming and food practices to be placed at the heart of the City Downland Estate Plan, and that the Downlands should be recognised not as a 'wild' landscape but primarily a managed one (often through farming), which communities should have a greater say in. You can read their full response here.

Bristol, UK

Grow Wilder (formerly Feed Bristol) is a six-acre wildlife gardening hub, run by Avon Wildlife Trust, on Bristol City Council land. Members of the public can visit, volunteer, or join a course at the site to learn more about growing wildflower meadows (at their nursery and living seed bank), ecological land management, therapeutic wildlife gardening and organic food growing. A range of innovative community food growing businesses are located onsite, rooms are available for hire, and seasonal celebrations are hosted to help the wider community engage with growing and the environment.

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