

‘Marketing and distribution of farm products to support sustainable food economies’

Joy Carey

**Head of local food and market development
Soil Association/Local Food Consultant**

Purpose of the workshop

To explore approaches to marketing and distribution of farm products that:

- a) support sustainable, economically viable rural livelihoods
- b) help to develop the resilience and sustainability of our food and farming economies.

Workshop session

- Current context
- Sustainable food economies - an achievable alternative?
- Different approaches
- Practical examples
- A surprise challenge!
- Discussion



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Questions to consider

1. How sustainable are our food economies?
2. Who benefits from predominant marketing & distribution models ?
3. In whose interest are the predominant marketing messages?
3. What models of alternatives marketing and distribution are successful, what are the marketing messages, who benefits?

‘An inconvenient truth about food’

- Dependence on ‘peak’ phosphate, oil, gas
- Global food price increases 2006-2008
- Reduction in national self-sufficiency
- Contribution of agriculture to ghg emissions
- Impact of climate change on agriculture
- Loss of biodiversity
- Loss of farming skills and capacity

‘Neither secure nor resilient...’



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What is the m&d 'norm' in UK?

Indirect sales

Most producers sell from 'farm gate' to:

- Marketing Boards
- Wholesalers
- Processors eg abattoir
- Other farmers eg to finish animals
- Retailers

Food as a 'commodity'

- >80% food sold in 7 supermarket chains
- 'Big Four' own 75% grocery market share
- Supermarkets compete on price to offer 'choice', 'value', 'quality'
- Disconnected from origins



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A holistic perspective

‘The health of man, beast, plant and soil is one indivisible whole.’ (Lady Eve Balfour)

‘The most sustainable food systems are based on agro-ecological practices and on mutually supportive relationships between food producers and citizens.’ (Soil Association)

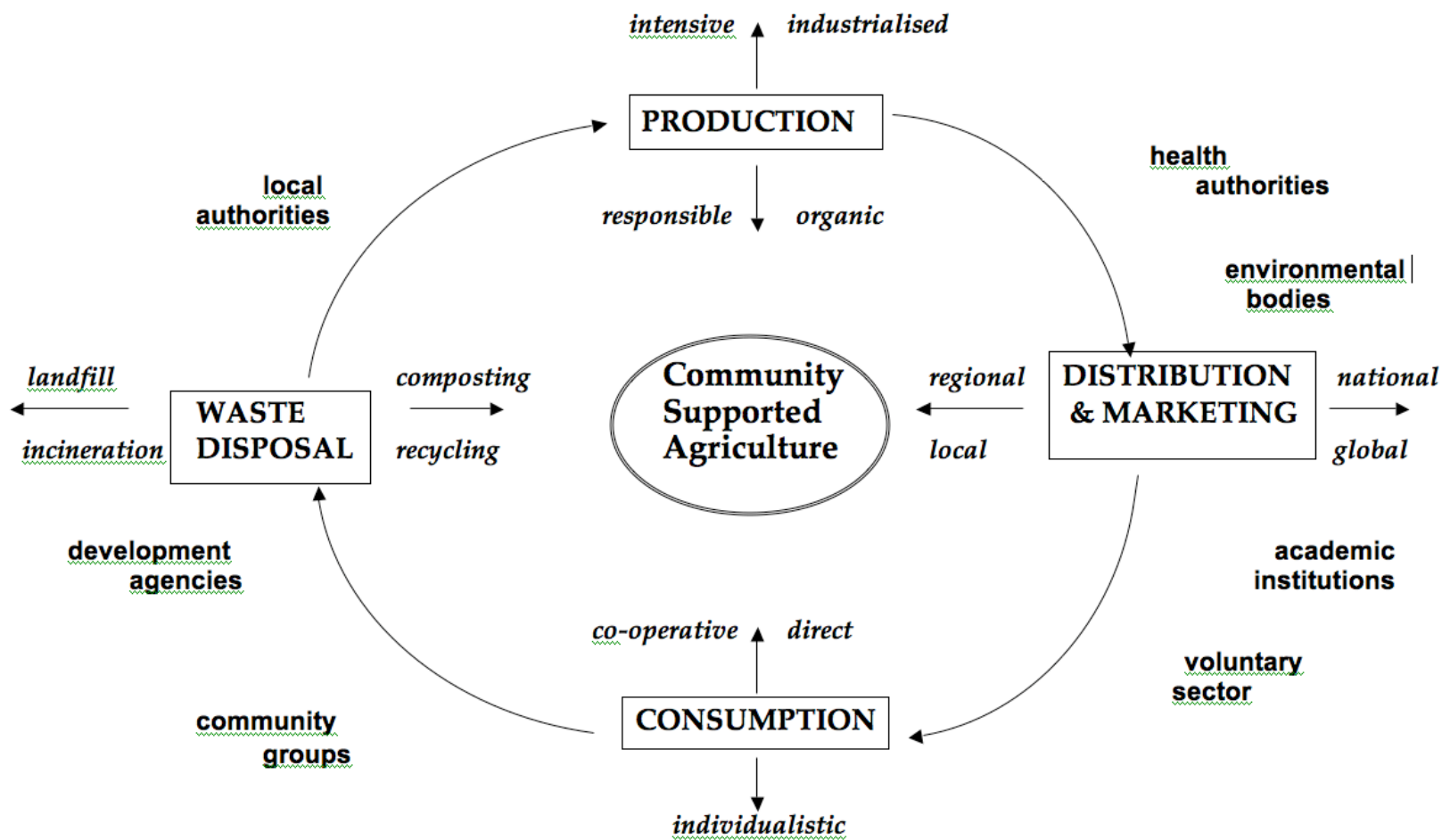


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Simplified Model of a Sustainable Local Food Economy



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A sustainable food economy

‘Food produced, processed and traded from sustainable production systems where the physical and economic activity is controlled within the locality where it is produced, and which delivers health, economic, environmental and social benefits to the people in those areas’



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What change is needed?

We need to build food production and trading systems based on principles of sustainability that are both locally controlled and genuinely benefit the communities they serve



How to make change?

Soil Association methodology

- Action-research approach; facilitators; pioneering innovation through practical projects; strategic partnerships

Strategy

- An alternative vision of collaboration, mutuality
- Promoting & developing direct sales models
- Promoting benefits of 'fresh, seasonal, local'
- Participatory planning with stakeholders
- Linking policy 'asks' to practical action



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Marketing & distribution models

What marketing & distribution models support the development of sustainable food economies?



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‘New’ approaches

- Farmer/grower collaboration
- Food & Drink business collaboration
- ‘Non-farmer’ owned home delivery schemes
- Direct sales from farmers
- Producer & consumer collaboration
- Local sourcing for retailers and caterers



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Case studies

- Somerset Organic Link
- Eastbrook Farm; Yeo Valley Organics;
- Riverford Organic Vegetables
- Peak District Foods
- Growing Communities
- Stroud Community Agriculture



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Larger scale UK farmer innovation

- Successful 'marketeer' buying direct from other farmers (eg Yeo Valley Organic, Helen Browning Organic Meat)
- Joint marketing producer co-ops supplying a marketing company (eg Graig Farm Meat Producers; OMSCO dairy, Riverford veg producer group)

Yeo Valley Organic, Somerset

- 1974 began yoghurt for local shops
- Approached in 1993 by other farmers
- Collaborative business, long-term contracts to suppliers
- Products - yoghurts, milk, cream, butter, ice cream for wide range of outlets



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Eastbrook Farm, Wiltshire

- 540h mixed farm on the Wiltshire Downs.
- Dairy and beef cattle, veal calves, pigs and sheep, cereals, pulses and veg.
- Village pub, restaurant, shop
- 'The flying pig' event catering
- Sell to 3 supermarkets
- On-line shop, home delivery
- 'Helen Browning' brand





Localising production and distribution

Direct sales; producer/consumer collaboration;
indirect sales for 'local sourcing'; info & promotion

- Farmers markets
- Box schemes
- Food distribution hubs
- Buying groups & food co-ops
- Community Supported Agriculture
- Local catering – schools, hospitals, restaurants
- Community shops
- Local food directories, websites
- Food festivals





Riverford

- Franchise model – 3 farms
- Based on customised computer system
- Buys vegetables from nearby producers
- Home delivery, internet orders
- Strong commitment to eco-packaging
- Regular customer newsetter
- Farm tours and farm restaurant



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Food Link van
on Isle of Skye



Newham
Food
Access
Partnership

Growing Communities, Hackney

- Began 10 years ago by three friends
- Not-for-profit company, limited by guarantee
- Box scheme, farmers market, shop, urban growing
- 10 part time members of staff
- 140 households pay £3.50 - £8.50 for weekly bags
- Grow high value organic salads on 3 small sites
- Support 40 farms
- Train new apprentice growers



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Growing Communities



Stroud Community Agriculture

Community Owned Enterprise

- Operates solely to further a set of principles
- 2 farmers paid a wage £19k
- Rents 50-acres, organic mixed farm
- A rich community life around the farm
- IPS members represent 200 households
- £80,000 turnover



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Longer term strategic development

Some examples from the Soil Association

- **‘Food futures’** 3 yr programme participatory planning with mixed stakeholders within a geographical locality – developing sustainable local food systems and collaboration
- **CSA & organic buying groups** 3 yr action research project with other partners
- **‘Food for Life’** 5 yr integrated partnership programme working on school meals, education, gardens, farm visits, school food policies, cooking skills



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Food Futures – 1999-2001

Participatory planning

- Soil Association facilitators
- Local coordinator
- Local steering group
- Stakeholder workshops
- Action groups
- Twelve 12-18 month programmes in UK
- Over 160 new local food initiatives
- New strategic partnerships between health and local govt
- 12 new regional 'local food links' projects



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Food for Life Partnership Mark

- Action framework and award scheme for schools
- 3 levels: Bronze, Silver and Gold Marks
- 4 strands:
 - Food leadership
 - Food quality and provenance
 - Food education
 - Food culture and community involvement



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Gold schools

Food quality & provenance

- 50% local
- 30% organic or MSC-certified
- Organic meat, dairy or eggs as welfare best practice
- Steps taken to promote non-meat dishes

new...Soil Association FFL Catering Mark



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Messages

What marketing messages
are needed to support sustainable local
food economies?



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RAFAEL Project

A charter for 'Authentic Food Systems' :

- ✓ 'People focussed'
- ✓ 'Local'
- ✓ 'Sustainable'
- ✓ 'Distinctive'
- ✓ 'Traceable'



(Renaissance of Atlantic Food Authenticity and Economic Links, Interreg)



Telling the story behind the products

- The people and their skills
- Their passion, values and commitment
- Their family heritage and history
- The place and the landscape
- Their 'routes to market'
- The distinctiveness of the products
- The benefits that the business brings

‘Authentic, resilient, sustainable’



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The surprise challenge!

Scenario: Group of local producers who sell at a regular farmers market and want to develop collaborative marketing and distribution. Beautiful area, lots of tourists.

Task: a) Agree a collaborative approach,
b) Agree key marketing messages

Process: Each person consider their product and 3 key aspects they need from the collaboration; discuss the needs; agree approach and messages; write it on flip chart paper to present

Time: 30 mins only!



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How was it?

- What did you agree?
- What skills did you need?
- What external help would have been useful?
- What issues arose during the process?
- What have you learnt that you will now make use of?

Peak District Foods

Members principles:

- Honesty, transparency, traceability, accountability
- Sourcing as much produce as locally as possible
- Collaboration not competition
- Building on what already exists in a complementary way
- Working to protect and enhance the distinctiveness of the local culture and the local environment
- Supporting the local economy by using local products and services where possible
- Minimalistic packaging
- Bringing producers and consumers together to learn



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Peak District Cuisine project

Putting the Peak District on the menu

Many companies in the area use local produce, but their customers are not aware of it.

- Encourages local produce in restaurants, hotels, guesthouses and pubs.
- Promotes the use of local produce to create new, innovative or traditional menus.
- Developing a Peak District Cuisine brand – for display on menus of participating restaurants, hotels, guesthouse and pubs to let customers know that they are proud to use local produce.



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Useful references

- 'An inconvenient truth about food'; Soil Association Nov 08
- www.soilassociation.org/csa
- Riverford Organic Vegetables
- Yeo Valley Organic
- Helen Browning Organics
- Peak District Foods
- Somerset Organic Link
- Stroud Community Agriculture
- Growing Communities

Questions to consider

1. How sustainable are the food economies in your areas?
 - How does food marketing & distribution happen?
 - What are the predominant marketing messages?
 - Who benefits most?
2. Alternative marketing and distribution models that you know about
 - What changes are they achieving?
 - What messages are they conveying?
 - Who benefits most?
3. What have you learned from this workshop that you could put into action in your own situation and what help might you need to do this?
4. What one thing will you definitely do as a result of this workshop?