

Scale of the challenge...

The production of food is the fourth highest greenhouse gas emitting sector in the World. In the UK agriculture alone accounts for 10% of all carbon emissions. When you then take into account emissions from food processing, transport and food waste as well it is estimated that the total carbon footprint of food and drink consumed in Britain is **130 million tonnes CO₂e** a year.

To reduce the environmental impacts of food production, but still meet the rising demands, more food will need to be produced using less land and emitting fewer greenhouse gases. This will mean farming practices, both nationally and within Dorset, will need to change.

For Dorset, where approximately 75% of the land is used for agriculture, we will need a county-wide shift to less carbon-intensive, more sustainable food production methods. Where possible the wider adoption of regenerative farming practices will be needed.





This will include making changes to the Council's own county farm estate which comprises 46 farms spread over 2,600 hectares.

The sector will also need to work on adapting to the changing climate. A warmer and wetter environment in Dorset will mean a change in planting and harvesting dates, crop varieties and suitable livestock breeds. This may consequently affect food choice through price and availability.

As well as changes to food production and farming practices a significant shift in consumer behaviour is required. There will need to be less demand for carbon-intensive foods like meat and dairy, and an increase

in the sourcing of food and drink locally. A drastic reduction in food waste, which is currently equivalent to around a fifth of all food purchased, will also be needed.

Dorset's progress so far...

-  Dorset Farmers' Market was established in 2004, and shortens the chain between food producer and purchaser, reducing food miles travelled
-  Creation of [Dorset Food & Drink](#) a not-for-profit, community interest company who support and promote local food & drink businesses
-  Collaborative campaigns with Dorset Food & Drink and Litter Free Coast & Sea are helping to tackle the issue of packaging waste
-  All of Dorset's household food waste is now treated within the county using anaerobic digestion (see [Waste](#))



Hear more about the challenges and opportunities in Dorset from the manager of the [Dorset AONB team...](#)



Key Issues...

Nationally

- Food with high energy density & increased carbon emissions is often cheaper than its less energy dense counterparts - usually evident in more processed foods with high sugar and fat contents
- Increases in extreme weather events are likely to have negative impacts on the availability of food nationally & globally - resulting in price increases
- Land made available to increase biodiversity will reduce the amount of land available for food production
- High volumes of food waste generated in UK equivalent to between a fifth and a quarter of that purchased by consumers for in home and out of home consumption (22%)

In Dorset

- Dorset County Farm Estate is currently focussed on carbon-intensive practices providing little additional ecological or carbon sequestration gain
- Locally produced, organic foods carry a price premium which limits its accessibility to low-income families
- Food poverty in Dorset – recent studies showed that Weymouth's foodbank is the busiest in the county
- The percentage and volume of food and drink sold at local producers' markets and farm shops is very low in comparison to the amount of food and drink consumed
- Food production in Dorset directly employs 5,974 people, which is 9.8% of the total employed in the sector in the southwest

Key Opportunities...

- County Farm Estate can play an important demonstrative role for low-carbon, ecologically friendly farming techniques
- Developing a vibrant and diverse sustainable food economy in Dorset, which includes exotic food previously not grown in UK
- Change in land use to deliver climate change mitigation and adaptation where farm business restructuring allows
- Reduced air pollution due to reduced transportation of food
- Improve local diets and reduce weight and health problems as a result of a healthier eating
- Tackle food poverty through food waste reduction activities
- Provide a basis for secure livelihoods by aligning food production to agroecological or regenerative principles



Figure 27



Figure 28






Areas for Action...

Dorset Council must work towards reducing our carbon emissions output, food poverty and the level of waste produced, all while meeting the increasing demand for food. To do so, we must facilitate change by establishing the following direct, indirect and influential initiatives...

Direct

-  Work with Council tenants and concessions to reduce food waste and promote less packaging
-  Continued adoption of the Council's single use plastic policy throughout its estate, operations, tenants and concessions
-  Increase range of edible fruits, flowers, and vegetables in Council owned parks, rooftops, and open spaces
-  Reduce use of fertilizers on Council land by increased use of locally produced compost

Indirect (through services)

-  Work to develop opportunities for enhancing Dorset's ecological networks
-  Work with partners to reduce meat and increase plant-based meals in care homes and schools
-  Work with Council tenants and concessionaires to reduce the sale of products with high GHG emissions
-  Develop funding scheme to improve the efficiency of Council (Tricuro sites / other care homes) and schools' catering equipment, and switch to electric sources to allow for carbon neutral catering
-  Work with County Farm tenants to encourage the adoption of more climate and wildlife friendly practices

Influence & Partnership

-  Continue to work with producers and partners to promote 'local food' and reduce food miles
-  Promote home growing and allotments to Dorset residents
-  Explore the adoption of tools to help engage school staff (and potentially students) to create low-carbon meals, with consideration of ingredients, food miles, and cooking methods
-  Promote Green Kitchen Standard & Food for Life to Dorset businesses
-  Work with partners to promote low-carbon affordable food options to Dorset residents
-  Work with partners to help food and drink suppliers within Dorset to be resilient to climate change

Case Study: Cornish Mutual's Real Food Heroes

In 2018 South West based insurance company **Cornish Mutual** launched their **Real Food Heroes campaign**, celebrating the people behind the produce.

The campaign puts the spotlight on farms (large and small) and rural businesses across the South West that are behind the high quality food and drink that comes out of the region. Real Food Heroes came about after independent market research, commissioned by Cornish Mutual, found that many consumers in the South West wanted local farmers and producers to be recognised.

One in three South West consumers said they were buying more local produce than in previous years and the top reason given was wanting to support local farmers.

Since its launch, Cornish Mutual continues to celebrate and share stories of its Real Food Heroes - the individuals who strive to produce and provide quality food and drink for their local communities. #RealFoodHeroes



Case Study: Local Food Links

Local Food Links Ltd is a social enterprise based in Bridport. The organisation was established in 2006 and supplies freshly prepared school meals, using local ingredients and employing local people. School meals were absent from Dorset primary schools for around 20 years and many schools no longer had kitchens. In 2005, when the government announced that all schools must provide hot meals, Dorset as a county had the task of re-introducing hot meals. Local Food Links was able to offer schools without kitchens a more sustainable alternative to trucking meals 200 miles down from Nottingham – hub kitchens were formed and

meals were freshly produced each day and driven a short distance to local schools.

There are now four hub kitchens supplying 56 schools across Dorset with around 4,200 meals a day. LFL works in partnership with schools and has a bespoke online ordering service that works



for schools and parents. 78% of ingredients are purchased from Dorset suppliers and 95% from the South West.