

Leeds Food System Workshop 2 - Report

Leeds Climate Commission Resilience Working Group, Feed Leeds and FoodWise Leeds
Report compiled by Tom Bliss

PREAMBLE

This document presents the core ideas captured at the online workshop 'Pathway for a climate-resilient, healthy and sustainable Leeds Food System' on 02 09 20. This was itself an outcome of a previous 'scenarios' workshop held at the University of Leeds on 16 12 19; 'Enabling a climate resilient food system in Leeds that promotes health, sustainability and food security'. A report on the first workshop can be accessed [here](#).

Both workshops were initiated by the Leeds Climate Commission Resilience Working Group (Dr Paola Sakia and Tom Bliss), and Feed Leeds and FoodWise Leeds (Tom Bliss and Sonja Woodcock) who have been conducting seminars and workshops on this topic for many years, with assistance from Leeds City Council and the University of Leeds. Both were facilitated by Andy Goldring (Permaculture Assn), and the first was hosted by Prof Tim Benton (University of Leeds, Research Director Emerging Risks; Royal Institute of International Affairs / Chatham House) and Cllr Judith Blake, Leader of Leeds City Council.

The second workshop was attended by delegates from Leeds City Council, University of Leeds, Leeds Beckett University, Yorkshire Water, Nestlé, FoodWise Leeds, Feed Leeds, the Permaculture Assn, Green Futures UK, Leeds Indie Food Festival, Hyde Park Source and Zest.

A Policy Brief has been prepared from this document, and reviewed by Professors Andy Gouldson (Professor of Environmental Policy) and Caroline Orfila (Plant Biochemistry and Nutrition). Further workshops and research, including adapting the CARA framework for food mitigation and resilience, and developing a vulnerability index, are in development.

The finalised Brief, which is attached along with slides from the presentation, was presented to Leeds City Council Climate Emergency Action Committee on 22 09 20 by Tom, Paola, Sonja and Andy. It can be viewed about one hour into the meeting video here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IT6dWLLYZGc&feature=youtu.be>

The policy brief can be downloaded here:

http://www.leeds.ac.uk/downloads/download/792/leeds_food_system_scenarios_workshop

An Evening Post news item prompted by the brief, quoting Professors Steve Banwart and Caroline Orfila, can be accessed here: <https://www.yorkshireeveningpost.co.uk/news/politics/carrots-dont-come-out-plastic-bags-what-can-leeds-do-make-sure-everyone-fed-2979494>

In this report, Information captured in the chat and final plenary session have been merged by topic with notes from the three breakout sessions following the structure of the workshop.

A: RESOURCES AND ASSETS

1) Existing key assets, resources, organisations and initiatives:

- LCC internal food group.
- Plentiful Grade 1 **farmland** in Leeds District with opportunity to short-circuit supply chains. Farmers are seeking local markets and new business models, eg less livestock, different crops, box schemes and milk delivery etc.
- Plentiful **urban green space** (including parks, housing land, ex-allotment sites, redundant golf courses etc), Yorkshire Water land, privately-owned land offered for growing (eg 2.5 acres in Roundhay). Also plentiful brownfield sites for vertical farms and 'meanwhile' use.
- Strong recreational food growing - increased **home growing** during lockdown; vibrant **allotment** scene; strong network of **community projects** and Permaculture ethos (low carbon, plus increasing interest in food growing in schools).

- Burgeoning **commercial urban farm** network: Kirkstall Valley Farm, Meanwood Valley Urban Farm, Growing Better (hydroponics), Patchwork Project (coalition for sales, distribution and marketing), Nell's Urban Greens, Swillington Organic etc.
- * Leeds-based **commercial hydroponics / vertical farm**: <https://growingbetter.co.uk/product-category/micro-green/>.
- Landowner **innovation and mentoring**: Yorkshire Water (Esholt vertical farm and Land Anchor network project), LCC farms, Harewood, University of Leeds farms, Askam Bryan Wades Charity, Crown Estate, National Trust etc.
- Strong **fresh food offer**: Kirkgate Market, farmers Markets, farm shops, Yorkshire Produce Centre, independent shops, cafes and restaurants buying local produce, Leeds Indie Food Festival, new box schemes and online platforms during lockdown
- Strong **support network**: Excellent emergency food provision during Covid by LCC and third sector partners.
- Good **surplus food re-distribution**; Fare Share Yorkshire, ReThink Food, Food Revival, Good to Go, Real Junk Food Project etc.
- **National support and opportunities**: Sustainable Food Places Silver bid (FoodWise Leeds). £2.5m Lottery Funding for local climate action Urban Agriculture Consortium (Leeds pilot), National Food Strategy (pushing on open door) etc.
- **Food industry** wanting/needing to reduce emissions etc. Arla, ASDA, Co-op etc in Leeds, McCain, William Jackson, Morrisons etc in Yorkshire.
- Both **universities** on board: Good links with industry partners. UoL research (Global Food & Environment Institute GFEI), student new social and business startups. Leeds Climate Commission focus on local food and food waste (Resilience Working Group).
- **Public** procurement (school dinners, care homes, hospitals etc), LCC Food Group, FoodWise Leeds, and N8 Procurement project.
- **Increasing awareness** of food resilience issues due to Covid, and a changing climate. **concerns** re plastic, and use of refills, **interest** in circular economics, composting and waste reduction (Zero Waste Leeds, Leeds Rotters), **Opportunities** from devolution (green recovery) and mayoral election.

2) Key areas to amplify for greatest impact:

- **Visibility** and power of food issues within LCC especially land access, food resilience, climate mitigation / carbon, food education, health/obesity etc.
- **Viability** of local commercial food - price / quality / value / benefits. Make small scale growing commercially viable, and a cachet for Leeds.
- **Education** about food, especially sourcing and awareness of good practice in horticulture, agriculture and the food industry.
- **Land** for growing - especially the planning process and stewardship agreements.
- **Increasing food security** (1 in 5 households struggling to put food on the table, exacerbated by lockdown, job losses etc).
- **Celebration** of existing successes / food tourism. Visit Leeds to ensure food + drinks are key to local/regional strategy. LIFF, Leeds 2023 and others to champion local food.
- **Relationships** and networking between the above initiatives and organisations.

3) Key recommendations:

- Appoint a **senior / high profile contact** in the Council to chair a group including all officers with food and land interests; asset management, planning, parks, environment, climate etc. Members in attendance. Also, regular outreach meetings with key food groups in Leeds. (This will facilitate innovations such as new farms, including vertical farms, permissions, reduced rates for local/regional producers).
- Strengthen **public procurement** practice to include local producers and higher sustainability criteria. Create **online platform/s** for farmers and growers including wholesale, distribution, sales and marketing. Establish a **Farm Forum** and support network for local farmers looking for new markets and methods - eg direct sales to schools. Include others in the supply chain as needed.
- Create a **local food brand** / kite ('Owl'?) mark for quality, sustainability, prestige etc.
- Create an open source **database / library** (including lit reviews / SWOCs) of relevant case studies in UK and abroad. Education of impacts of industrial farming vs regenerative farming and why it's (usually) better to grow locally. (Covid-19 opportunity). Interactive **map** of land for food.
- Improve **access to land** for growers within the city (open door, supportive approach by LCC with a higher tolerance of failure). Embed land for food into **planning policy** and establish routine consideration of food crops in tree planting / carbon measures, pedestrianisation schemes, new parks and green spaces, South Bank, new housing, ELOR etc.

B: BARRIERS AND LIMITS

1) Current barriers / limits preventing a sustainable, localised food system.

- Leeds still **not fully recognised as a food city** like Bristol, Brighton, etc.
- **Lack of leadership and strategic vision.** Funding cuts demand increased innovation and partnership working. Planning dpt not fully engaged. LCC land is theoretically available, but hurdles are too high. Minimal contact with urban and periurban producers. Food waste comingled and sent to Veolia RERF, reducing combustion efficiency.
- **Lack of investment** into low carbon, affordable, healthy food projects. No support for new start up food businesses, e.g. beneficial rates and 'meanwhile' / 'pop-up' leases / permissions.
- **Lack of land / access to land** for growing. Not properly valued. Needs to be a special case; with bespoke development values / rates. Need city-wide fertile land plan with access info.
- * A political system prioritising **cheap food to release disposable income**. Escalated / externalised costs are then carried by health services and the environment (farm damage, food waste etc).
- **Lack of engagement by supermarkets** who dominate supply. Long supply chains, disconnect with local farms. Farmers driven to unsustainable practices by cost-cutting, unseasonal demand etc.
- **Fast food outlets** drive emissions and bad diets. Low cost and convenience are a barrier to better food habits.
- **Lack of food knowledge and skills** - environmental costs, seasonality, nutrition, cooking, growing, waste, packaging, composting etc.
- Conservative public opinion contributing to **limited productive use of green spaces**. Relaxed mowing, wildflowers and tree planting proving hard to introduce, food in parks and public land presents additional challenges. Needs strong political leadership at ward level.

2) Could be resolved / overcome in Leeds:

- **Leadership** - with consistent, clear messages. Planning (esp re land for growing and expanding the Fast Food SPD to restrict outlets near schools, 2019) .
- LCC lead on **circular solutions for food waste**. Collection from shops and households, then composting with green waste for resale as a growing medium, and/or local compost hubs (Leeds Rotters model is cost-effective, but needs

LCC to adopt).

- Council-funded **community / ward hubs** with best practice food (in partnership with CECAP Climate Emergency Community Action Project). Zones for priority local, sustainable businesses.
- **Improved networking** between the corporate agricultural industry, food processors, farmers, community growing schemes, local food outlets, community hubs.
- **Transport innovation** - better use of online, delivery, local hubs, local shops.
- **Education** - local schools / community groups (and farmers) - cooking workshops, veg promotions, support workshops and networks, swapping and sharing information with digital access. Farm visits.
- **New routes to market**. Central food market / wholesale / on-line / delivery etc. Cooperative aggregation of inputs to help reduce overheads.
- Improved **surplus / unused food consumption** (minimise waste and address food poverty).

3) Recommendations:

- LCC to set up a **senior task force led by new food officer**, including asset management, planning, parks and countryside, procurement, climate / sustainability / environment, education etc. Council Members to attend.
- LCC to **incentivize businesses through local and sustainable produce** - discounted rents, rates, blended finance etc. Ref Preston model.
- * LCC to **create and celebrate a local kite mark**. Make this a requirement for all procurement, festivals, sports and other major functions in Leeds.
- LCC to lead on development of a **new central food market / wholesale**.
- LCC to **lead on the sharing of food knowledge** via school open days, websites, networks etc.

C: STRATEGIES

1) Case Study References:

- **Canada** local authorities use assets to support community food growing, e.g. Vancouver; Parks providing seedlings and South Island Food Hub - good example of the above <https://www.sifarmhub.ca/>
- **Copenhagen** procurement experiment, finding ways to use local spending power to leverage local food growing.
- **N8 Report** by UoL, Lancaster Uni, Food Future & FoodWise Leeds on impact of procurement policy (Oct 20).
- **Paris** urban food growing on a large scale - especially in the context of the changing city landscape and localized composting via Tidy Planet
- * **London** Growing Communities Farm - route to market for different scale growers - central hub for marketing, distro, telling the stories of the farmers / producers (being replicated in Leeds).
- **Amsterdam** donut economics model. (Section on food and biomass: <https://www.kateraworth.com/wp/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/20200406-AMS-portrait-EN-Single-page-web-420x210mm.pdf>)
- **Todmorden**. Incredible edible approach at : 'Propaganda gardens'
- **Bristol** - separate food bin collection.
- **Milan** urban food policy pact - framework for municipalities to adopt for sustainable food systems, 200 signatories worldwide.

- **Food Tanks** <https://foodtank.com/news/2015/07/urban-farms-and-gardens-are-feeding-cities-around-the-world/>
- **Sustainable Food Places** - food strategies and awards. Need to be pursued more urgently by all of LCC with LCC lead on private sector buy-in.
- **Bangalore** organic terrace gardening.

2) Strategies to deliver greatest impact:

- LCC **food strategy** with primary focus on resilience, healthy diets (including outdoor exercise) and fair access to food, strong partnerships with local food industry, harmonising food-related council policy and managing officer behaviour. Strong outreach across the city with emphasis on healthy diets, reduced food waste, home growing and education.
- **Marketing, communication** / sharing stories, targeted education / mutual support forums.
- Effect a **paradigm shift in values around green space**, to enable food growing.
- **Prevent breakdown in food chains** (especially by pandemic, Brexit and climate impacts). Require food industry to demonstrate resilience measures and to support safety net provision.

3) Additional recommendations

- Explore opportunities to leverage **regional devolution** deal to support funding and implementation, and embed local food in **mayoral elections**.
- Explore **local planning policy opportunities** to incorporate growing capacity within development proposals
- Explore opportunities to use **flexible business rates** structure to incentivise positive food management practices
- Explore new and existing **business planning** to take into account its impact on ecology, landscape design and agriculture etc. Encourage sustainable materials and economic / circular systems.
- Leeds City Council to become a member of **Cooperative Councils Network**
- **Explore / sponsor aeroponics / hydroponics vertical growing**, and 'meanwhile' mobile/transferrable growing beds on spare and brownfield land.
- New and existing **businesses required to take into consideration sustainability and landscape design**; use permaculture framework and/or Living Building Challenge.
- **New market for local producers** - must add value to growers to increase income and easy to access; need to work with supermarkets - break into supply chain
- **Communications campaign** to promote the idea of access to good food for everyone
- Use **multiplier effect** for Councils = £ + health = investment. Use regenerative incentives to deliver economic efficiency



Growing a resilient food system in Leeds

Brief 1, SRI 28
21 Sept 2020

Policy Leeds
University of Leeds
policyleeds@leeds.ac.uk

Paola Sakai, Tom Bliss, Sonja Woodcock, and Andy Goldring

Two workshops were held to look at how we can enable a climate resilient food system in Leeds that promotes health, sustainability and food security. They found that Leeds has many strengths and opportunities in this area, but will need the Council to show leadership and strategic vision to deliver the benefits.

Overview

- A resilient, healthy and sustainable food supply should be viewed as a matter of public good, as it underpins public health, social equality and environmental quality
- Leeds has plenty of farmland, expertise, innovation, and excellent practice. Minimal interventions could deliver major changes and benefits.
- We recommend that Leeds City Council sets up a high-profile task force to work with local stakeholders to create a local sustainable food brand, improve access to land for growers, strengthen economic measures to support a vibrant local food ecosystem, and promote education and skills development.

Covid-19 has uncomfortably revealed how exposed our food system is to external shocks. Further challenges are expected due to climate change and evolving trade relations.

The UK is a net importer of food, as is Leeds, so trade plays an important role in food and nutrition security, with current uncertainties having major resilience implications. Meanwhile, climate change is impacting both local and global food systems. Heat stress affected UK crops last year, and rain reduced the wheat harvest by 40% this year, while globally; droughts, fires, floods, changing humidity leading to diseases, soil degradation and more are affecting production, which impacts on local availability and prices. Biodiversity is being lost at alarming rates, while unhealthy consumption habits increase diet-related chronic diseases, putting pressure on health services.

Leeds needs to be strategic and bold, to increase the climate resilience of its food system while promoting health, sustainability and food security.



Food system workshops

This policy brief is informed by two workshops.

In December 2019 a consortium of experts, led by Dr. Paola Sakai and Tom Bliss from the Leeds Climate Commission Resilience Working Group, held an event to explore **different scenarios that can drive the future of the Leeds Food System**. Cllr Judith Blake (Leeds City Council) and Prof. Tim Benton (Royal Institute of International Affairs) hosted the workshop, with Andy Goldring (Permaculture Assn) facilitating. Results highlighted the need to support local food production and consumption, and the need for more control, to drive a more healthy, sustainable and secure food system.

In September 2020 a second workshop, 'Pathway for a climate-resilient, healthy and sustainable Leeds Food System', explored the Sustainable Local Food Scenario of the first workshop, to identify robust decisions capable of putting Leeds on track to a climate-resilient, healthy, sustainable and secure food system. This was attended by delegates from Leeds City Council, University of Leeds, Leeds Beckett University, Yorkshire Water, Nestlé, FoodWise Leeds, Feed Leeds, the Permaculture Assn, Green Futures UK, Leeds Indie Food, and Hyde Park Source. A full Workshop Report is in preparation, and further workshops will be undertaken using a climate multi-hazards vulnerability index and adapting the **CARA framework** for food mitigation and resilience.

Current barriers

Leeds operates with consumption patterns that prioritise cheap food to release disposable income. This has led to over-consumption, poor nutrition, health and environmental problems. The externalised costs are supposedly met by health and environmental services, but only a small fraction can be rectified. There is minimal engagement by supermarkets who dominate the production and supply chains. Unsustainable imports drive farmers to damaging practices. Fast food and low-cost outlets drive poor diets and other health problems, and form a barrier to good food habits as there is a complete disconnection with food sources. There are pockets of expertise and good practices but it was recognized that there is a major lack of knowledge and skills around environmental costs, seasonality, nutrition, cooking, food growing, waste management, packaging etc.

Locally, Leeds is still not fully recognised as a food city, like Bristol or Brighton. Leeds holds the Sustainable Food Cities Bronze Award, but is a long way from Silver. Funding cuts have made things more difficult for low income families, and food insecurity among children in poverty is worrying. Funding cuts also demand increased innovation and partnerships, but currently engagement is only sporadic and lacks strategic vision. There is a lack of land, and access to land, for growing. Some Leeds City Council land is theoretically available, but hurdles to access are too high and no-one knows where it is. There is little interaction with the Planning department. Conservative public opinion has contributed to limited productive use of green space - for example, slow progress on relaxed mowing, wildflowers and tree planting. Lockdown has influenced people's perception around green spaces, and introducing food in parks and public land will require strong leadership at ward level. Fertile

"Governments and local authorities have not tended to see food as a public good, so have left provision largely to the private sector and market forces.

But the Covid pandemic has shown just how vulnerable cities are, and while Leeds coped magnificently on this occasion, the lockdown sounded a claxon for the looming challenge of Brexit and, more alarmingly, climate change, which is already putting global food production and distribution under threat, while also demanding reductions in carbon emissions, plastics and waste.

Now is the time to look at the evidence and introduce robust measures to ensure a resilient, sustainable and benign food supply for the citizens of Leeds. And Leeds City Council needs to be front and centre of that effort."

**Professor Tim Benton, University of Leeds,
Research Director – Emerging Risks; Royal Institute
of International Affairs, Chatham House**

land is not a special case within a city-wide plan and is not properly valued, with bespoke development rates as required for commercial viability. There is minimal trade or engagement between the city and periurban producers. Food waste is comingled and sent to the Leeds energy recovery facility, which reduces energy output and wastes circular economy opportunities. There is a lack of investment in food projects or encouragement for start-up food businesses that promote health and sustainability. 1 in 6 households are still struggling to put food on the table, a problem **exacerbated by the pandemic** - especially with furlough ending on 31 October - with job losses, no school or at-work meals, reduced incomes, and reduced supply of affordable food.

Strengths and opportunities

The workshops identified the following key strengths and opportunities in the Leeds Food System, which suggest that minimal interventions could deliver major changes and benefits:

Timely social change is finally taking place. Covid-19 and Brexit has increased the awareness of the importance of building resilience in the food system. Building climate-resilience, focusing on health, sustainability and food security makes more sense today for the general public. There is an increased interest in circular economics, composting and food waste reductions (e.g. Zero Waste Leeds, Leeds Rotters), concerns regarding plastic, and other environmental matters. Pursuing a green recovery is encouraged from all fronts and there are opportunities related to **devolution and mayoral election**. Other actors are also looking to engage with the agenda, such as the **food industry** aiming to improve logistics, or reduce emissions (Arla, ASDA and Co-op in Leeds, and McCain, William Jackson, and Morrisons in Yorkshire). The **two large Universities in Leeds are on board**, bringing expertise and good links with industry partners (UoL Global Food & Environment Institute and NEXUS, LBU student new social and business startups) and student community. Leeds also has the Climate Commission Resilience Working Group working on food, SMEs and health.

There is **plentiful Grade 1 farmland** in Leeds District with opportunity to short-circuit supply chains. Increasingly, farmers are seeking local markets and new business models, e.g. less livestock, different crops, box schemes, milk / egg delivery, etc. There is **plentiful urban green space** including parks, housing land, ex-allotment sites, redundant golf courses and SLOAP. There are also private landlords that have offered land for growing food (e.g. Yorkshire Water, 2.5 acres in Roundhay). In addition, there are **plentiful brownfield sites** for vertical farms and 'meanwhile' use.

There are **growing networks and activity**. This includes: strong recreational food growing with increased home growing during lockdown; vibrant allotment scene; strong network of community projects; plus increasing interest in food growing in schools. We have a **burgeoning commercial urban farm network**: Kirkstall Valley Farm, Meanwood Valley Urban Farm, Patchwork Project (coalition for sales, distribution and marketing), Nell's Urban Greens, Swillington Organic etc. There is also **Leeds-based commercial hydroponics / vertical farm**, **Growing Better**, and aeroponic growing in schools by ReThink Food.

There is significant **innovation and mentoring**, including by landowners: Yorkshire Water (Esholt vertical farm and Land Anchor network project), Leeds City Council farms, Harewood, University of Leeds farms, Askam Bryan, Wades Charity, Crown Estate, National Trust, among others. The Permaculture Association is based in Leeds. Good mentoring and education support network is offered by Zest, Hyde Park Source, Space 2, Lemon Balm, Grow to School, and others.

There is a **strong fresh food offer**: Kirkgate Market, farmers markets, farm shops, Yorkshire Produce Centre, independent shops, cafes and restaurants buying local produce, Leeds Indie Food, new box schemes and online platforms during lockdown. Excellent **emergency food provision** was provided by Leeds City Council and third sector partners (e.g. Food Aid Network) during Covid-19, which could be adapted to continuing efforts to support those in need. There is **good surplus food re-distribution** via Fare Share Yorkshire, ReThink Food, Food Revival, Good to Go, Real Junk Food Project. There is good practice around **public procurement**

for instance, in school dinners, care homes, and hospitals by the Leeds City Council Food Group, FoodWise Leeds, and N8 Procurement project.

There are **pockets of excellent practice** within the Leeds City Council, especially around the Food Group led by Public Health: the Fast Food SPD to restrict outlets near schools was introduced in 2019 and could be expanded; healthier vending machine trial with NHS and the Leeds City Council; Catering Leeds 2 day meat-free and more **plant-based menu**; and the HENRY program which has been a success in the efforts to **reduce child obesity**.

Food is becoming more important in the **National agenda and funding streams are opening up**. For instance, the **Sustainable Food Places Silver** bid (FoodWise Leeds), and the successful £2.5m Lottery Funding (Climate Emergency Community Action Programme). The latter aims to facilitate local climate action through the creation of local hubs to champion good food practice. Also, the **National Food Strategy** is encouraging the creation of more sustainable food systems and is active with public consultations to further promote strategies with Local Authorities (e.g. separate food collection). Leeds also has the opportunity to become a member of the **Cooperative Councils Network**.

Other local food systems

Attendees also mentioned various case studies that Leeds could learn from. For instance, in Canada local authorities use assets to support community food growing, e.g. **Vancouver Parks providing seedlings**. Alternatively, Milan has developed an urban food policy pact, providing a framework for municipalities to adopt for sustainable food systems, with 200 signatories worldwide.

Recommendations

Food systems working group

Leeds City Council should seek to appoint a **senior / high profile council contact** to chair a **Leeds Food System Cross-Council working group**, meeting regularly with members in attendance as required. There are many things happening in the city, but to upscaling them to deliver a city strategy requires city leadership.

The working group should include all senior officers with food, land and/or other relevant responsibilities e.g. asset management, planning, parks and countryside, environment, climate, public health (enhancing the existing Food Group), procurement, business innovation, waste management, among others.

The group should also hold **regular outreach meetings** with local experts such as Feed Leeds, FoodWise Leeds and a **new Farm Forum** linking and supporting producers in the Leeds/Yorkshire agricultural zone and others (e.g. processors, distribution).

A small investment in Council time and resources would deliver major changes.



Priorities for working group

The working group should look to upscale good examples already happening in the city and create a city-wide food strategy that promotes climate resilience, health, sustainability, and food security. In particular, it should look to:

Create a local food brand

Create a **local food brand** / kite ('Owl') mark to **encourage sustainability, health and food security**. **Celebrating existing successes** and best practice will create pride and a clear statement that Leeds is promoting a sustainable, healthy local food & drinks as part of a city strategy. For instance, all procurement to buy marked goods only. Likewise LIF, Leeds 2023, First Direct Arena, Leeds Fest, major sports and cultural events.

Improve access to land

Embed food into **local planning policy** and **improve access to land** for growers. On **public land**, adopt an open door, supportive approach, with a higher tolerance of failure, and routine consideration of food crops in all new developments, especially housing, urban regeneration (e.g. South Bank) and environmental improvements, e.g. pedestrianisation schemes, new parks and green spaces, ELOR etc. On **private land**, including brownfield and temporary / 'meanwhile' use. Include urban farming in spatial planning strategies and establish routine consideration of food crops in tree planting and other carbon measures. Create an interactive **map** of fertile land suitable for food production, showing access information and advice, and along with partners create spaces to develop a joint strategic approach.

Grow business ecosystem

Boost multiplier effect by considering building resilience as an investment rather than a cost. **Strengthen economic measures** to make local and small-scale growing both viable and a major cachet for Leeds. Promote innovative food production; introduce **incentives** for food businesses that promote sustainability, health and food security (e.g. lower rates and rents, blended finance); use **public procurement** to promote local produce with enhanced sustainability and health criteria (e.g. direct sales to schools, hospitals and major employers). Develop new **online sales platforms, co-operatives, new market routes, sustainable food hubs** (e.g. wholesale markets at Kirkgate, Yorkshire Produce Centre and/or new specialist sites) for farmers and growers. Encourage **vertical farms, box schemes** and 'click and collect' (e.g. the Preston model, engage with Leeds Pound and build on Patchwork Farm innovations).

Engage, educate and upskill

Promote co-benefits and engage local communities in growing, cooking and eating healthily and sustainably (e.g. benefits of outdoor exercise for mental and physical health, flood amelioration, biodiversity, tastier produce etc.). Promote

practical education that increases knowledge and skills in farming and business enterprise. Create an open source database library of relevant case studies plus data on Leeds food system resilience. Educate around impacts of industrial farming vs regenerative farming, and weather-related impacts. Harness local expertise and resources in schools, universities, businesses, community groups and charities.

Show leadership

In the face of the Climate Emergency, international uncertainty, and the challenges of poor diets and health risks, and now with Covid-19, Leeds has the opportunity to create a city-wide food strategy that promotes climate resilience, health, sustainability and food security. Leeds, thanks largely to progress by the Leeds Climate Commission and the commitment of the Leeds City Council, is well suited to lead UK cities in developing meaningful actions. Every sector - academia, government, civil society and, especially, business, has a vital role in building the city we want. But to 'build back better' our food system and green our city, we need leadership and a strategic vision.

About the authors

Paola Sakai is a UKRI Research Fellow working at the Sustainable Research Institute, University of Leeds. She is a research associate of **CCCEP**, **GFEI**, **PICC** and **W@L**, and sits in the LCC Resilience Working Group and WHIG.

Telephone: 0113 343 7966

Email: P.H.M.D.Oca@leeds.ac.uk

Tom Bliss lectures Landscape Architecture at Leeds Beckett. He chairs Feed Leeds, and sits on FoodWise Leeds and Leeds Climate Commission Resilience Working Groups.

Telephone: 07885 965 222

Email: bliss@dircon.co.uk

Sonja Woodcock is Coordinator for FoodWise Leeds, and an N8 Agrifood Knowledge Exchange Fellow at UoL.

Email: Sonja.woodcock@zestleeds.org.uk

Andy Goldring Chief Executive of the Permaculture Association, and Central Hub Coordinator at the Our Future Leeds climate action fund project.

Email: andyg@permaculture.org.uk

Further information

The views expressed in this brief represent those of the author and do not necessarily represent those of the host institutions or funders. Paola Sakai wants to thank the support of the UKRI grant ES/S001727/1, Caroline Ofila for reviewing this brief and Juliet Jopson for her valuable input.

This is a joint brief by Policy Leeds and the **Sustainability Research Institute Policy and Practice briefing series**.





CHATHAM HOUSE

Prof Tim Benton

UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS

"Governments and local authorities have not tended to see food as a public good, so have left provision largely to the private sector and market forces. But the Covid pandemic has shown just how vulnerable cities are, and while Leeds coped magnificently on this occasion, the lockdown sounded a claxon for the looming challenge of Brexit and, more alarmingly, climate change, which is already putting global food production and distribution under threat, while also demanding reductions in carbon emissions, plastics and waste. Now is the time to look at the evidence and introduce robust measures to ensure a resilient, sustainable and benign food supply for the citizens of Leeds. And Leeds City Council needs to be front and centre of that effort."

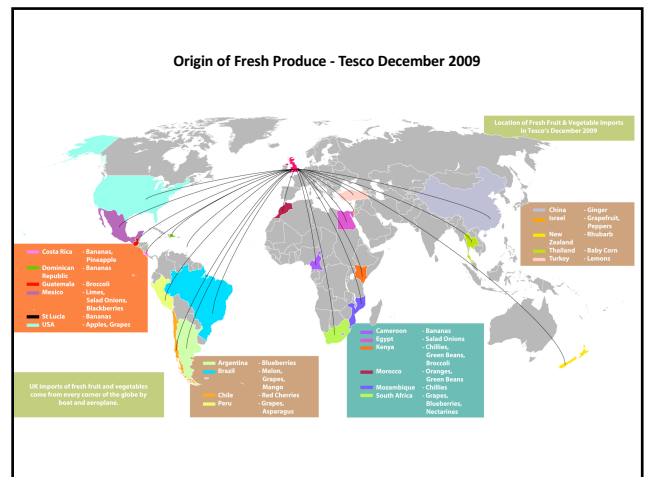
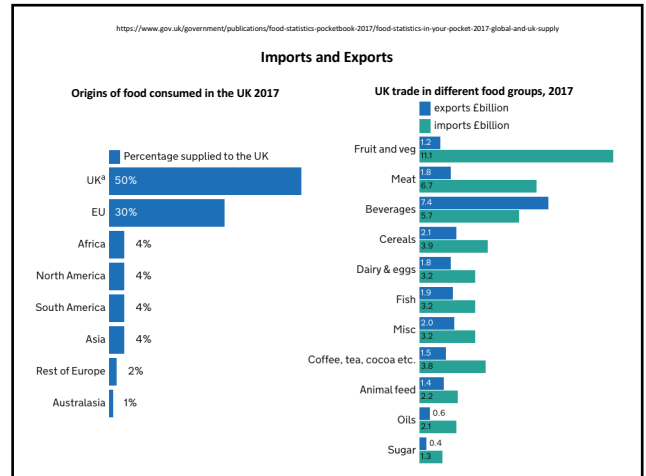
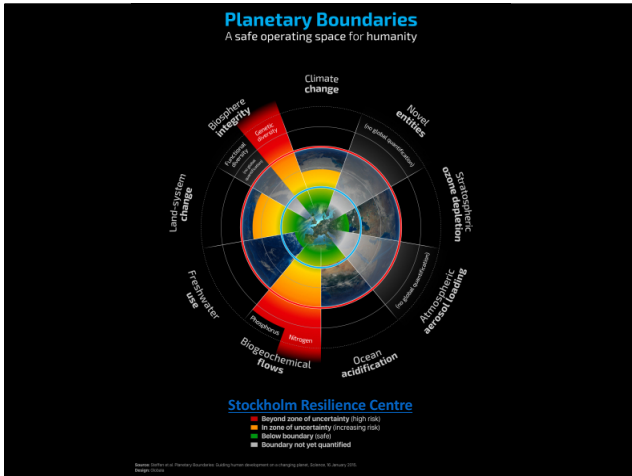
Professor Tim Benton, University of Leeds, Research Director – Emerging Risks; Royal Institute of International Affairs | Chatham House

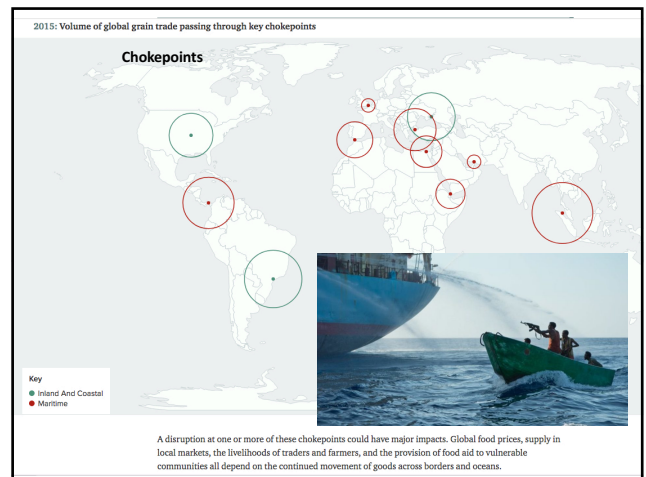
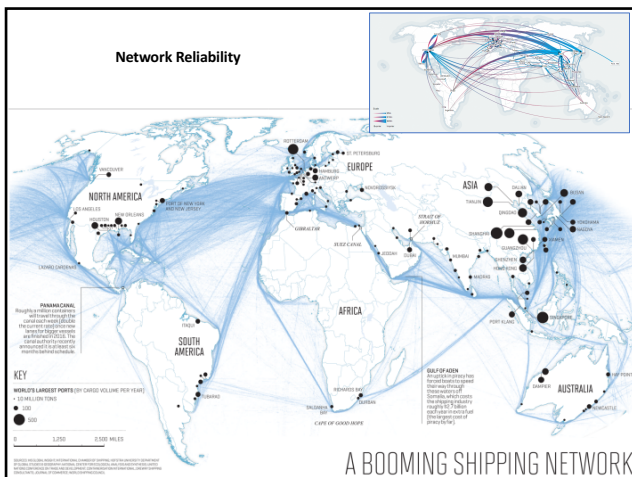
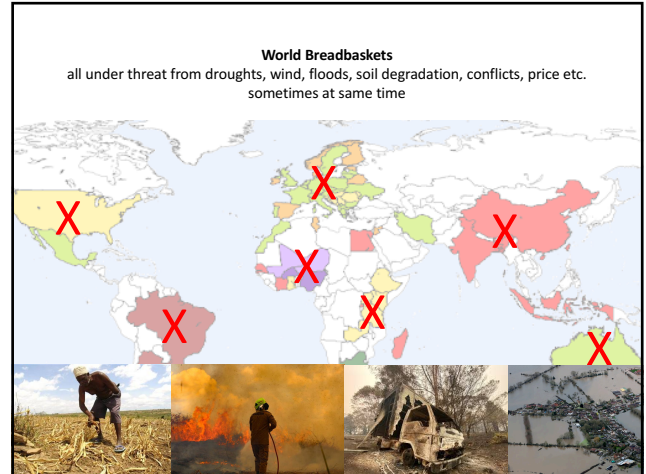
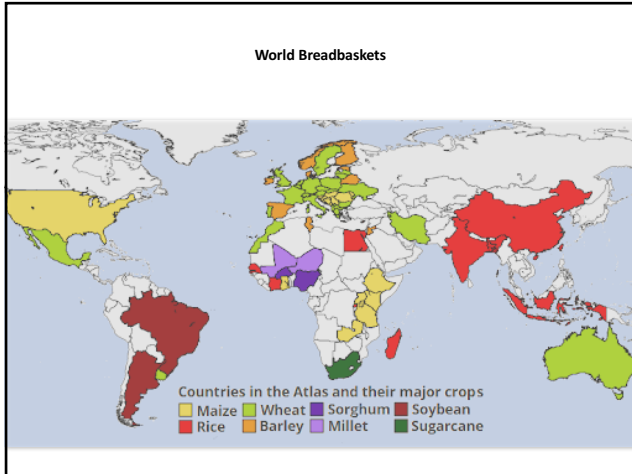


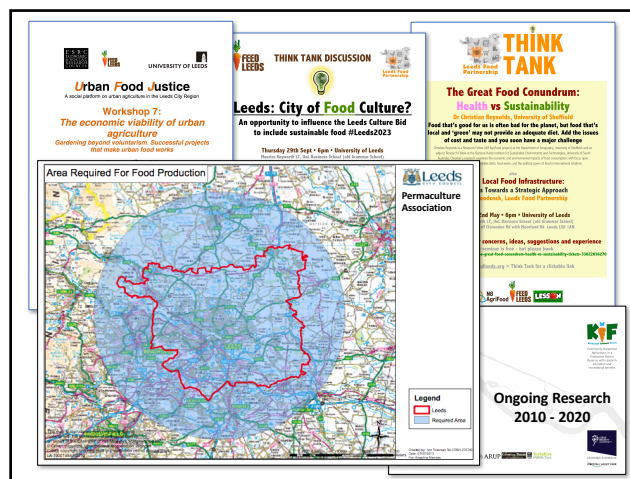
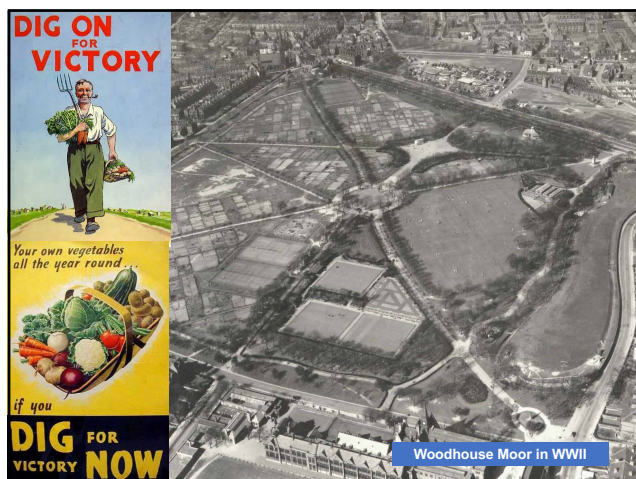
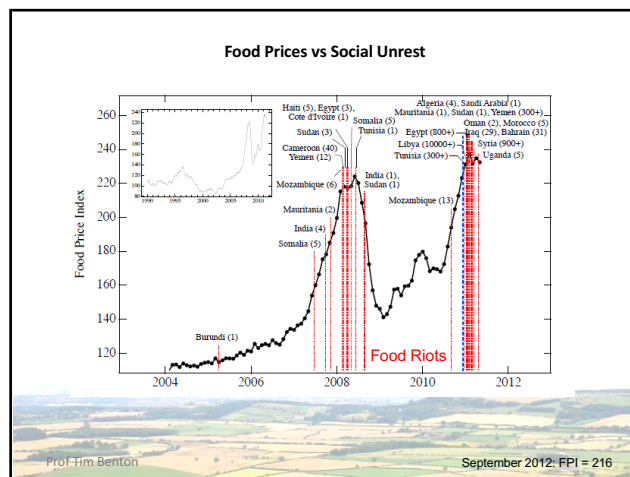
- A resilient, healthy and sustainable food supply should be viewed as **a matter of public good**, as it underpins public health, social equality and environmental quality
- Leeds has **plenty of farmland, expertise, innovation, and excellent practice**. Minimal interventions could deliver major changes and benefits.
- We recommend that Leeds City Council sets up a **high-profile task force, led by a senior officer**, to work with local stakeholders to: create a local sustainable food brand, improve access to land for growers, strengthen economic measures to support a vibrant local food ecosystem, and promote education and skill development.



Climate Emergency









Healthy Leeds

Leeds Food Matters

A Food Strategy for Leeds: 2006–2010
Healthy, Affordable, Safe and Sustainable Food for All

2010
Strategy Lapsed




Healthy Leeds

Leeds Food Matters

A Food Strategy for Leeds: 2006–2010
Healthy, Affordable, Safe and Sustainable Food for All

2010
Strategy Lapsed
2012
Feed Leeds formed







Healthy Leeds

Leeds Food Matters



A Food Strategy for Leeds: 2006–2010
Healthy, Affordable, Safe and Sustainable Food for All

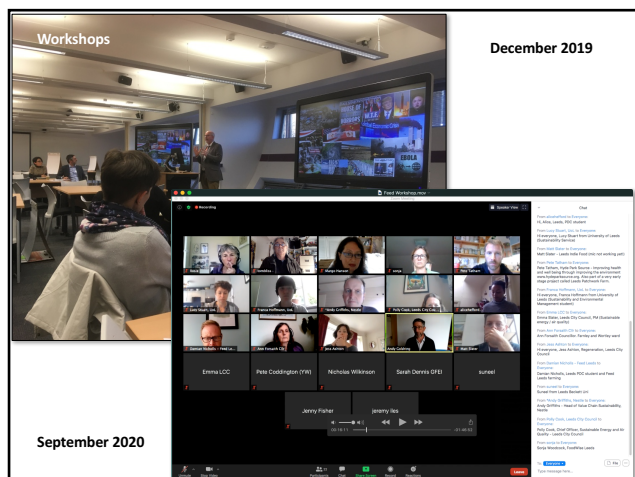
2010
Strategy Lapsed
2012
Feed Leeds formed
2014
Deputation to LCC
2016
Leeds Food Audit
2015
LFP formed





2010
Strategy Lapsed
2012
Feed Leeds formed
2014
Deputation to LCC
2016
Leeds Food Audit
2015
LFP formed
2018
Bronze Award
2018
FoodWise Leeds
2019
Bid for Silver
2020
Food Policy Brief
Leeds Farm Forum
Food Data Repository
Further Research





Problems and Barriers

cheap food is prioritised - costs of damage carried by health and environmental services

funding cuts impact on low income families, especially children in poverty (hunger and obesity) **lockdown** adds to problems - job losses, no school / work meals, reduced income on furlough etc

minimal engagement by **supermarkets**, who force farmers into poor practices and import unsustainably (consumer choice has only minimal impact)

city has minimal contact with **periurban farmers** - **planning dept** not engaged

lack of knowledge / skills re environmental costs, seasonality, nutrition, cooking, food growing, waste management, packaging, composting etc

lack of land / access to land for growing - fertile land not properly valued

small scale local production **very tight margins**

food waste sent to energy recovery – reduces energy output and wastes circular opportunities

lack of investment and encouragement for businesses promoting health and sustainability – vertical farming / meanwhile growing / box schemes / click and collect etc





Strengths and Opportunities

timely **social change** eg circular economics, waste / plastic reduction, UK government lead, new funding streams, big initiatives

food industry recognising need for change – carbon emissions, biodiversity, sugar / salt etc.

farmers looking for shorter supply chains / routes to market and crops (less livestock)

plentiful **grade 1 farmland**, plentiful **urban green space**, plentiful **brownfield sites** for vertical farms and 'meanwhile' use.

devolution and **mayoral election**

local expertise, innovation and mentoring - universities working with food networks, industry and national NGOs

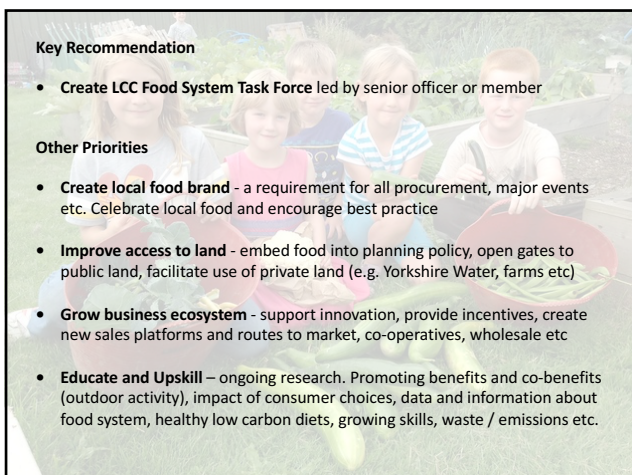
burgeoning **commercial urban farm network**, Leeds-based commercial hydroponics / vertical growing

strong fresh food offer

excellent emergency food provision - **good surplus food re-distribution**



Key Recommendation



Key Recommendation

- **Create LCC Food System Task Force** led by senior officer or member

Other Priorities

- **Create local food brand** - a requirement for all procurement, major events etc. Celebrate local food and encourage best practice
- **Improve access to land** - embed food into planning policy, open gates to public land, facilitate use of private land (e.g. Yorkshire Water, farms etc)
- **Grow business ecosystem** - support innovation, provide incentives, create new sales platforms and routes to market, co-operatives, wholesale etc
- **Educate and Upskill** – ongoing research. Promoting benefits and co-benefits (outdoor activity), impact of consumer choices, data and information about food system, healthy low carbon diets, growing skills, waste / emissions etc.



Next Steps

- 1) Terms of Reference for Task Force
- 2) Establish Task Force
- 3) Engagement with all sectors of food system, including industry
- 4) Task Groups on land, kite mark, incentives, education etc.
- 5) Continuing research:
CARA Workshops
Vulnerability Index
Data and information pool
Community outreach etc.

In the face of the Climate Emergency, international uncertainty, and the challenges of poor diets and health risks, and now with Covid-19, Leeds has the opportunity to create a city-wide food strategy that promotes climate resilience, health, sustainability and food security.

Leeds, thanks largely to progress by the Leeds Climate Commission and the commitment of the Leeds City Council, is well suited to lead UK cities in developing meaningful actions. Every sector - academia, government, civil society and, especially, business, has a vital role in building the city we want. But to 'build back better' our food system and green our city, we need leadership and a strategic vision



and to grow food wherever we can!

