

Forum for the Future

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Routes to Market Opportunities

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In partnership with:



**John Ellerman
Foundation**

What is an opportunity platform?

These opportunity platforms describe three potential areas of action that could be pursued to shape routes to market for regenerative products. They draw on existing solutions, as well as insights that emerged from the Routes to Market workstream hosted by Forum for the Future from January to July 2024.

The platforms are not being presented as the perfect outcome, or indeed everything that's needed. Rather, they serve as three interconnected, and deliberately ambitious 'thought provocations'. They are intended as a 'creative input' rooted in evidence and our collective insight. Their purpose is to inspire, enable and support a workshop conversation that considers the actions that are needed to shift the UK agricultural system towards regenerative routes to market. On the following two slides, we describe what we mean by regenerative routes to market.

The opportunities have been chosen to trigger new ideas relative to the barriers identified by participants in the workstream. Use these provocations to help you identify and develop the actions needed to move the UK towards regenerative routes to market. Rather than debate whether they're achievable, explore them with an open mind, and use them to support idea generation about what we can and should do next.

Defining 'Routes to Market'

Markets

- The spaces and mechanisms where food is exchanged, valued and consumed.
- Can be local, regional, national, international, global, or virtual
- Markets can also vary in the type and size of the sellers and buyers
- Their functioning and performance are influenced by various factors, such as supply and demand, competition, regulation, or consumer preferences.

Routes

- The different ways that food travels from farms to forks, and the various actors that are involved in making this happen, such as those who transport, sell, assist, or oversee food production and consumption.
- Routes can be physical or virtual
- Routes can also be formal or informal, depending on the degree of regulation, standardisation, and certification involved.

What are Regenerative Routes to Market?

Regenerative routes to market are the different ways that food moves from farm to forks within a more regenerative and equitable food system. They involve diverse and collaborative networks of food system actors and citizens who share a common vision of regenerating ecosystems, enhancing livelihoods, and improving health and wellbeing. They reflect and celebrate local cultures, knowledge, and practices. They also build greater resilience in the face of challenges while ensuring fair and inclusive distribution of risk, value, and benefits. Some examples of what this could include are:

- Establishing accessible infrastructure and short and direct supply chains that reduce food miles, carbon emissions, and intermediation costs;
- Supporting diversified and agroecological production systems that enhance biodiversity, soil health, and environmental resilience;
- Forming impact-driven partnerships and participatory and inclusive governance structures that ensure fair representation, decision-making, and benefit-sharing;
- Promoting equitable compensation and transparent and traceable information systems that enable accountability, trust, and feedback;
- Utilizing innovative and appropriate technologies that support efficiency, quality, and fairness;
- Strengthening local and regional impact and social and solidarity economy models that foster cooperation, solidarity, and mutual aid;
- Developing cultural and educational initiatives that raise awareness, appreciation, and demand for regenerative food.

Opportunity Platform 1: True Cost Accounting

All food products sold in the UK have full traceability and transparency. This reflects not just the costs of production, but the social and environmental value that they create. Equally, environmentally harmful products now cost more. This transparency is driving greater awareness and support for regenerative practices and shifting consumer behaviour to create a larger market share for regenerative products.



Food products are now being assessed for their full social, environmental and health impacts. These are included in both the price that consumers pay and the added taxation or support provided by central government. These price adjustments are communicated clearly and transparently to citizens.

Farm audits are streamlined to support broad data collection. Farmers are incentivised to meet a multitude of environmental, health, and social outcomes. Government has helped to speed up the process by backing and enforcing independent standards across the food industry.



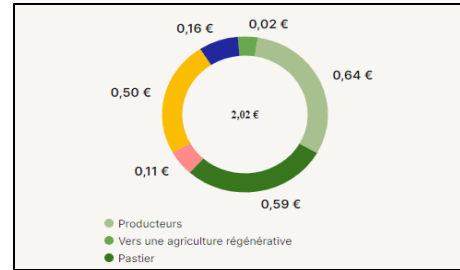
Farm advisors and research bodies have supported farmers with new data capture technology and reporting infrastructure. This has helped decrease the burden of reporting on farmers, and created more transparent and accessible information across industry.

Benefits and Signals:

1. True Cost Accounting

Benefits

- This approach builds on and strengthens the requirements for verification of environmental impacts being introduced within corporate supply chains (e.g. TNFD, CSRD).
- Streamlined data collection mechanisms and aligned auditing make compliance easier for farmers.
- Citizens are engaged in the process of shaping the food system, they can identify and appreciate the connection to land and community through the food they consume.
- This approach incentivises farmers, governments, and retailers to support the adoption of practices that increase the social and environmental value of the products they produce and sell.



French retail platform [OMIE](#) shows how the sale price of a product is split between the farmer, operations, shipping etc.

The [University of Bern](#) has launched a project to support true cost accounting, responding to the Swiss Government's 2030 Development strategy which states that "the Confederation is committed to ensuring true cost pricing by internalizing external costs".

Farmer-friendly digital technologies are taking data collection, aggregation and analysis to the next level. From soil monitoring to facial recognition for cows, the tech is increasingly available, accessible and easy to use, helping with both individual farm and environmental management at scale.



Opportunity Platform 2: Infrastructure for local distribution

New local infrastructure is supporting regenerative farming by providing easier access to regional processing hubs. These are enabling more diverse varieties and getting smaller volumes of crops to citizens in an efficient way. This movement is enabled by simple digital infrastructure, so citizens, retailers, and hospitality and others can support more local, shorter supply chains with ease.



Supported by community owned, digital infrastructure, networks of growers are selling into retail outlets and food hubs. These hubs have linked together to form networks that aggregate, manage quality, and smooth out regional production fluctuations.

Processors and retailers are changing their specification and contracting to support diverse, small-scale production volumes. National and local governments have mandated local procurement targets for retailers and manufacturers.



Peri-urban horticulture is in ascendance. Community farms are engaging citizens in the food production process. With less processing, people are eating a more diverse, healthy, and whole-food dominated diet.

Benefits and Signals: 2. Infrastructure for local distribution

Benefits

- Procurement, distribution and processing infrastructure adapt to create a more resilient local food system.
- Creates local and regional markets that encourages multi-nationals to engage with smaller, more local producers.
- Supports greater peri-urban farming and community engagement in the growing process.
- Data networks facilitate aggregated trading, decreasing logistics costs.
- New business and production models enable category specific brands and stacked businesses.



The [Food Data Collaboration](#) is building on the work of the [Data Food Consortium](#) in France, aiming to create an infrastructure that empowers local producers to list and sell their produce across multiple platforms seamlessly and nurture diversity at scale.

Globally, 20-30% of city dwellers are participating in some form of urban food production. [Urban farmers](#) see improved mental health, diets, and social networks because of their work. [Urban symbiosis](#) offers the opportunity to add growing space to under-utilised brownfield sites and use waste streams for agri-inputs.



Opportunity Platform 3: Equitable distribution of value & risk

New business models, contracting and financing are supporting communities and farmers to adopt regenerative practices. There is a redistribution of risk, and increased equity along the supply chain. Processors and retailers are rethinking how value is distributed, investing more into downstream actors to support the transition.



Cooperative and stewardship ownership models are flourishing supported by government legislation and tax incentives. Rural and urban communities are more engaged in production and processing practices through collaborative agreements.

New business models are enabling the transition, without putting pressure on farmers to shoulder the risk. Flexible tenancy agreements allow for business stacking. Government provided startup support is de-linked from large land occupancy requirements.



Financing mechanisms, such as interest cap and collars, and long-term contracts, are helping to de-risk the transition. Transparency and sustainability policies prioritise the financial viability of production systems, to the mutual benefit of all parties.

Benefit and Signals: 3. Equitable distribution of value & risk

Benefits

- Supports greater community ownership of the value chain, and more local and direct involvement in food production and processing.
- Increases democratic accountability and community integration within businesses.
- Retail and large multi-national businesses are responsible for the viability of the supply chains from which they source.
- Accelerates the transition to regenerative agriculture by distributing risk more fairly.
- Increased opportunity for new entrants and alternative business models within production landscape.



[Steward-ownership](#) is a corporate ownership structure that presents an alternative to shareholder value primacy. It ensures that companies prioritise long-term purpose over short-term profits by legally enshrining self-determination and purpose orientation.

[Vivescia](#) is a cooperative and food processing business in France geared to support 1000 farmers to transition by removing financial and technical barriers.

After the second COVID lockdown one [Mexican restaurant in Berlin](#) introduced solidarity pricing - three different prices for the same dish, depending on what the customers are able to pay.

In the US, [Mad Ag](#) offer financing for farmers to transition to regenerative agriculture. They offer quick fund releases, flexible repayment terms, and a 10 year commitment to farmers.



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