



Localising our food system
to meet everyone's needs,
including the Earth's



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FarmStarts

Cultivating New Beginnings in Agriculture
Supporting Aspiring Farmers in East Anglia

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Suffolk Food Summit



Our partners include:



NORWICH
City Council



Norwich Institute
Sustainable Development

Goodery



1. Who's here today?

**2. FarmStarts: what they are,
why we need them, connecting the dots**

3. Making it happen locally

1. Who's here today?

The background of the slide is a close-up, top-down view of dark brown, rich soil. The soil has a crumbly texture with many small clumps and some thin, light-colored roots or fibers visible throughout. The lighting is even, highlighting the natural texture and color of the earth.

2.1 FarmStarts: what they are

What are FarmStarts?

Site-based farmer incubator programmes designed to support aspiring farmers that:

- address typical barriers to entry
- fill a gap in opportunities for new entrants
- give them a chance to test their ideas in a safe environment, while building the knowledge, skills, confidence and experience to establish and sustain their own farm or market garden



Photo: Sabine Virani

What FarmStarts provide

All FarmStarts provide:

- access to land, equipment & infrastructure
- routes to market
- business support, training or mentoring
- social support and solidarity

Some FarmStarts provide:

- grants and/or loans
- progression (moving beyond the FarmStart or incubator farm site)



Photo: Sabine Virani

FarmStart characteristics

- tackle some of the deeper issues at a systems level
- usually managed centrally by a group or organization
- must grow to organic / agroecological principles
 - LWA encourages non-certified sites to put in place an Ecological Land Management plan in place to support this



Photo: Sabine Virani

The UN FAO's 10 Elements of Agroecology



Diversity



Co-creation
and sharing of
knowledge



Synergies



Efficiency



Recycling



Resilience



Human and
social values



Culture and
food traditions



Responsible
governance



Circular and
solidarity economy



Global FarmStarts Networks

Coordinate networks

- France: Reneta
- Spain: RETA
- Belgium: Agronauten
- Finland
- USA
- UK: Landworkers Alliance (LWA)



Photo: Sabine Virani

UK FarmStarts – emerging

- Norwich
- Peterborough
- Lincoln

In collaboration with Nottinghamshire and the Urban Agriculture Consortium

- Suffolk, too?



Comparison of UK FarmStart schemes

Tamar

(Devon/Cornwall border)

Model	Markets
<p>12.5 acres <u>leased</u> on 10yr Farm Business Tenancy, split into 1-acre plots. More land available, so people don't have to move on. Each plot has 30x14' polytunnel, 1t IBC water tank, shared access to barn space, electricity & off-road parking. Various ops inc. native cut flowers, small orchard, vineyard, hatching eggs & market gardens. Some tenants bought equipment (mower, topper, spreader) and do work for other tenants - self organised. Monthly tenant mtg for communication. Participants provide business, crop & soil-building plans. 6mo business review mtg with break clause re farmer policy.</p>	<p>Rural, sparsely populated area with poor public transport. Encourage and support tenants to grow through supplying their retail and wholesale Food Hub or Grow Share Cook project. Most sell through the hub and also have their own direct sales, including pop-up shop & small veg box rounds. Some informal partnerships and shared crops have worked between tenants. Tamar Grow Local also provide access to their equipment bank which includes market stall equipment which tenants can borrow.</p>
Training	Cost
<p>No formal training (no funding left). Provide Level 2 Hygiene training for community kitchen use. (value £25 or less)</p>	<p>Tenants pay £500/yr for 1 acre. After 3yrs, only £300. Tenants responsible for maintaining own polytunnel. Can also expand when proven ability. Tenants pay £150 deposit.</p>

Source: "How to Set Up a FarmStart: A handbook for establishing and running an incubator farm site" by the Landworkers Alliance

Comparison of UK FarmStart schemes

OrganicLea

(northeast London)

Source: “How to Set Up a FarmStart: A handbook for establishing and running an incubator farm site” by the Landworkers Alliance

Model	Markets
<p>FarmStart offers a next step for those on their work-based training scheme. The traineeship is 9 months: 3 work-based training & mentoring within the OrganicLea production team; 3 setting up own micro-plot on the OrganicLea site; 3 moving on to own land & developing planting plans for next season. Then ‘incubation stage’: OrganicLea provides land to move onto or supports trainees to find own land, with some mentoring support.</p> <p>Those wishing to earn a full livelihood generally outgrow the sites and move on to find their own land & grow their business. A lot of people earn a partial livelihood from it</p>	<p>Option to sell produce through the OrganicLea box scheme and markets - they get help with quality control, packaging, getting produce to market on time. Some growers grow directly for restaurants or have other routes to market.</p>
Training	Cost
<p>Must complete OrganicLea training schemes first, to demonstrate skills and enthusiasm. Training includes Level 1& 2 Horticulture, traineeships & apprenticeships. FarmStarters grow salad and veg for the OrganicLea market; 50% of market rate is placed in a bursary for when they set up independently.</p>	<p>No cost to the participating in the traineeship, but people may have to pay for means-tested horticultural courses. They don’t pay rent for the land at incubation stage, but they’re not provided with any infrastructure, only what exists on the land.</p>

Comparison of UK FarmStart schemes

Stroud Community Agriculture

Source: “How to Set Up a FarmStart: A handbook for establishing and running an incubator farm site” by the Landworkers Alliance

Model	Markets
SCA is a community-led farming business that produces fresh organic and biodynamic produce for its members. Their FarmStart began when two of their workers wanted to set up their own farm. With external funding for a polytunnel and some tools and equipment, they rent half an acre (including the polytunnel) from SCA. SCA helped with initial setup (e.g. polytunnel, laying water pipes), and they share tools, equipment and farmyard manure.	Originally SCA bought all the produce, but the starter farm is now an independent business and sells some of their produce through their own routes to market and some through SCA outlets. They feel like this is the best option as it makes sure people learn how to run a business, sell produce etc, which are important skills when they move off the plot.
Training	Cost
FarmStart tenants will have previously undergone an internship/ traineeship/ apprenticeship before moving onto the site – there is no training provided, but some informal mentoring from SCA.	Tenants don't pay rent on their plot, but they pay for water and utilities, potting compost and packaging bags (SCA buys in bulk) and rotovator petrol. There is rent-free seasonal accommodation available on site for one person (a caravan; not available during winter months).

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2.2 FarmStarts: why we need them

We need new farmers

UK farmers are an aging workforce

- 38% are 65 or older
- 30% are aged 55 to 64 years old
- Less than 1/3 are under 55 years old
- Only 5% are under 35 years old

Also, new entrant farmers are often blocked by access to / affordability of land.

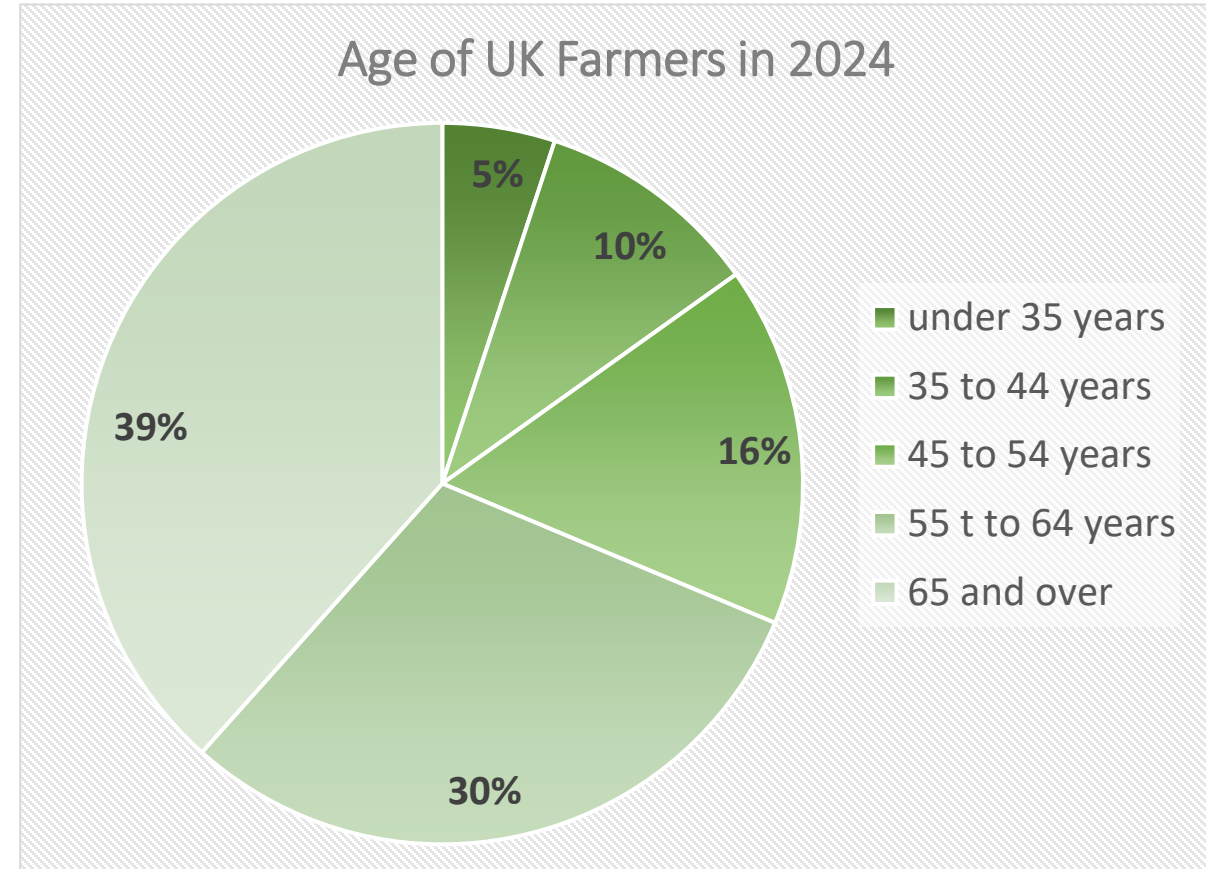


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We need food security

- Global geopolitical and environmental volatility
- UK reliance on food imports: 40% overall, 43% of our vegetables, and 85% of our fruit
- Reliance on countries struggling with climate change: water scarcity, floods and wildfires
- British growers reducing how much fruit and veg they grow, due to labour shortages, increased input prices (diesel, fertilizers & pesticides, packaging & transport)
- 90% of the UK food supply controlled by nine supermarkets
- Veg production in the Fens under threat
- Distributed systems offer greater resilience



We need food security

”Food security is under pressure from the direct impacts of climate change and food supply chains need to be better prepared and more resilient to deal with global shocks and the extremes of extreme weather.”

The Met Office



 **Met Office**

Issue 56 | 25 October 2023

Get ready
for tomorrow

Spotlight on *'food security'*

We need food & nutrition security

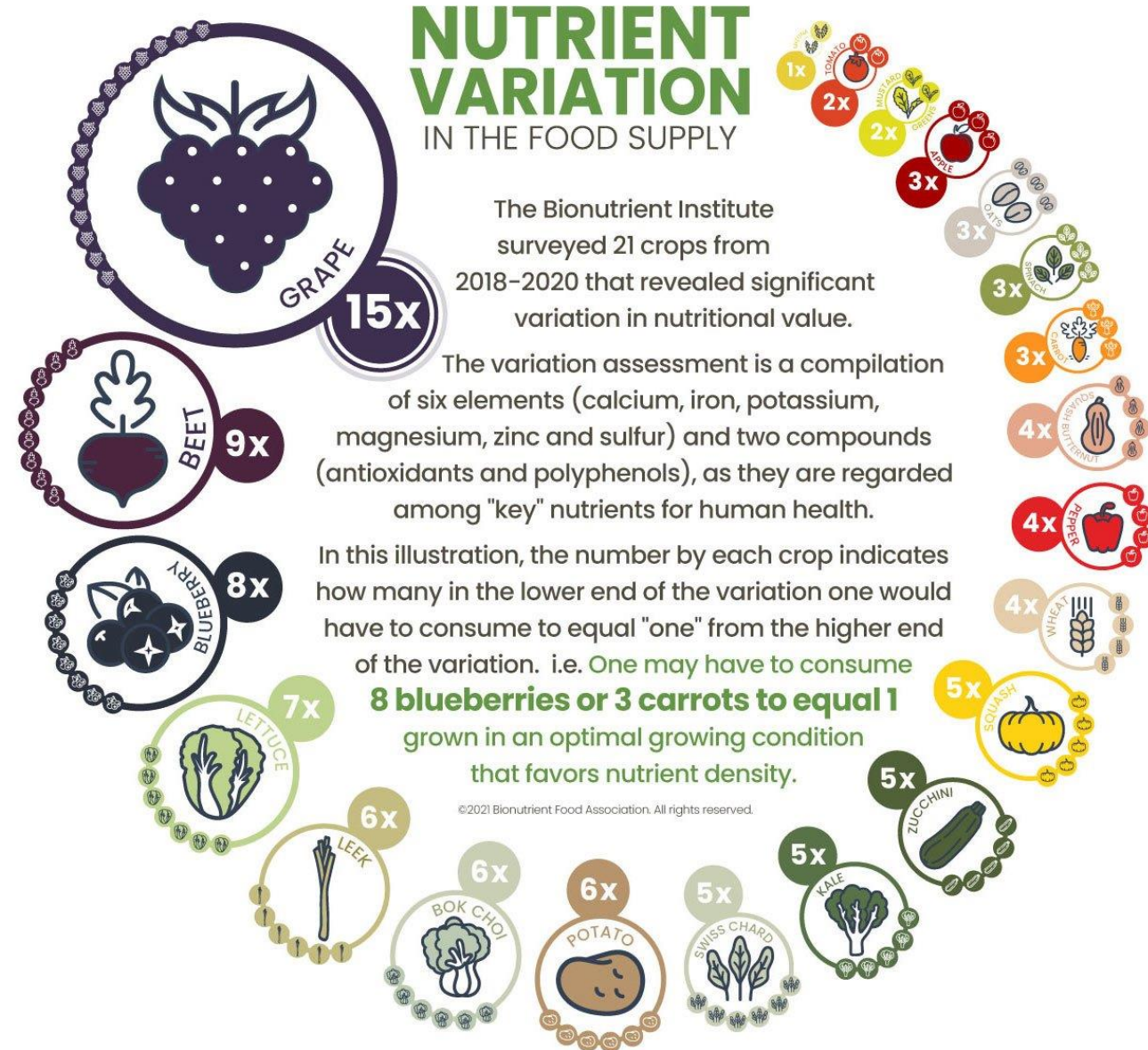
- Number of UK children in food poverty nearly doubled in a year to 4 million
- An estimated 800,000 children in poverty do not qualify for free school meals.
- Poor nutrition linked to rises in obesity, diabetes, mental health problems, scurvy, rickets and even heart murmurs and stunted growth in UK children
- Data obtained by The Times in 2023 found that cases of malnutrition in the UK had more than doubled in a decade and had quadrupled since 2007/8.



Photo: Sabine Mirani

We need food & nutrition security

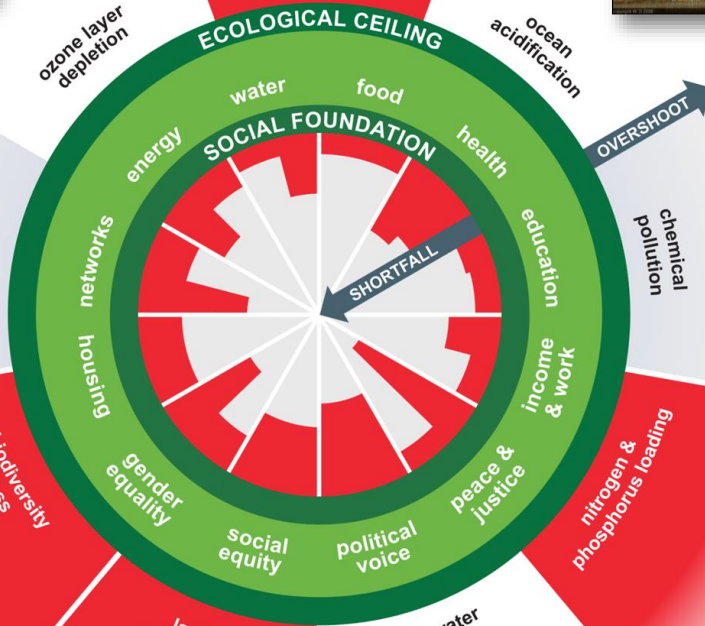
Soil health and human health are strongly linked: the Bionutrient Institute's research found that the highest levels of polyphenols (needed for human health) were in produce grown in soils with higher levels of beneficial micro-organisms



Food, climate & the ecological crises

- Food and farming account for 30%+ of our GHG emissions
- Industrial farming contributes to soil compaction, droughts and flooding
- Our current food system is a major contributor to the sixth mass extinction event, through habitat loss, pesticides and other chemicals, and more





Upgrading the Operating System

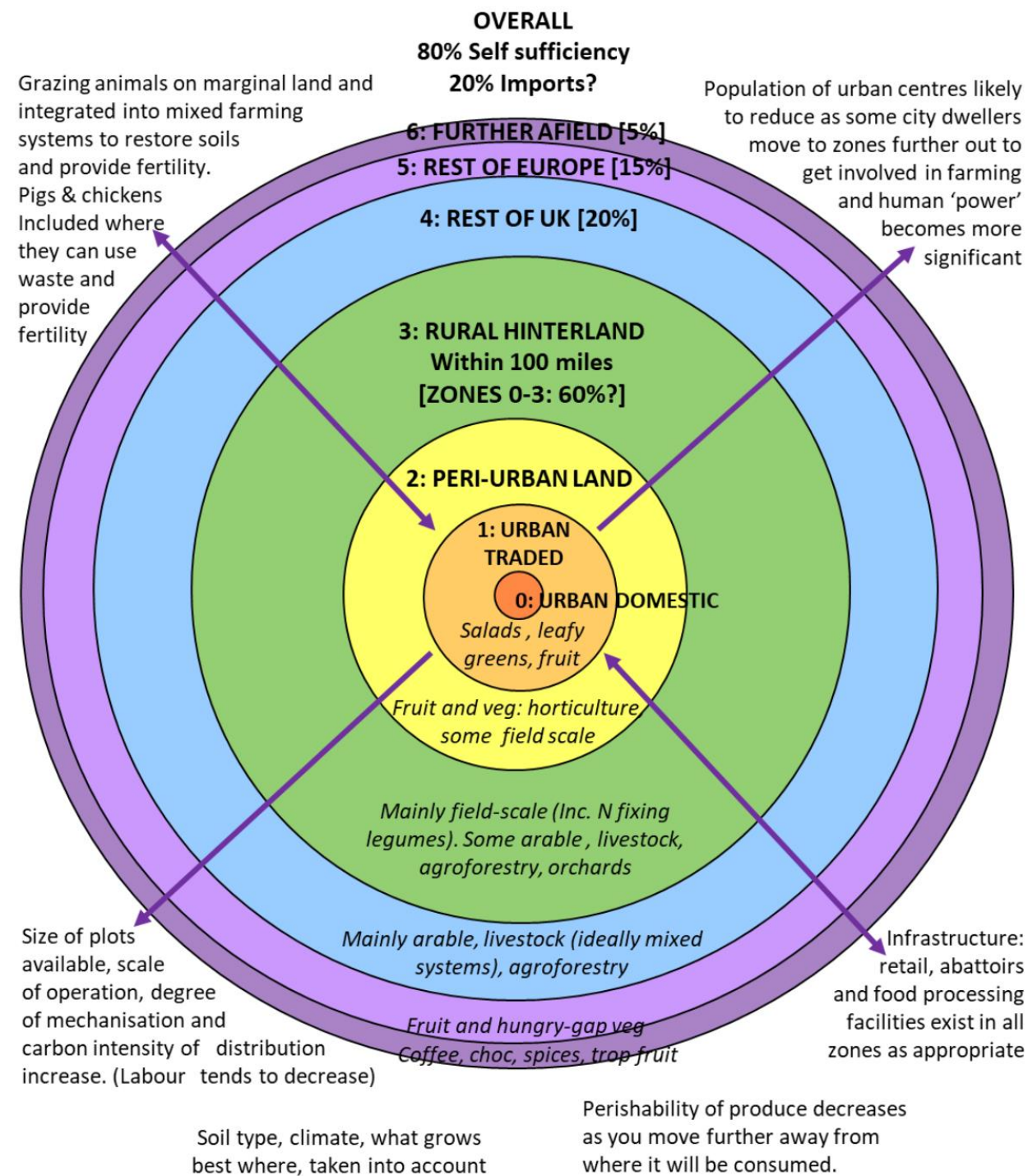
(Theory U, MIT)

Operating System		Food & Farming	Health	Sustainability & Business
1.0	Input & Authority-Centric	Traditional farmer-centric	Traditional doctor-centric	Compliance
2.0	Output & Efficiency-Centric	Industrial agriculture: monocultures	Evidence-based medicine	Resource efficiency
3.0	Outcome & User-Centric	Organic agriculture: reduce negative footprint	Patient-centric medicine	Business innovation / net zero
4.0	Regenerative & Eco-System-Centric	Regenerative agriculture: food as medium for healing people & planet	Strengthening sources of health & wellbeing	Purpose: ecosystem transformation / net positive

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2.3 FarmStarts: connecting the dots

Food zones model: Growing Communities Hackney, London

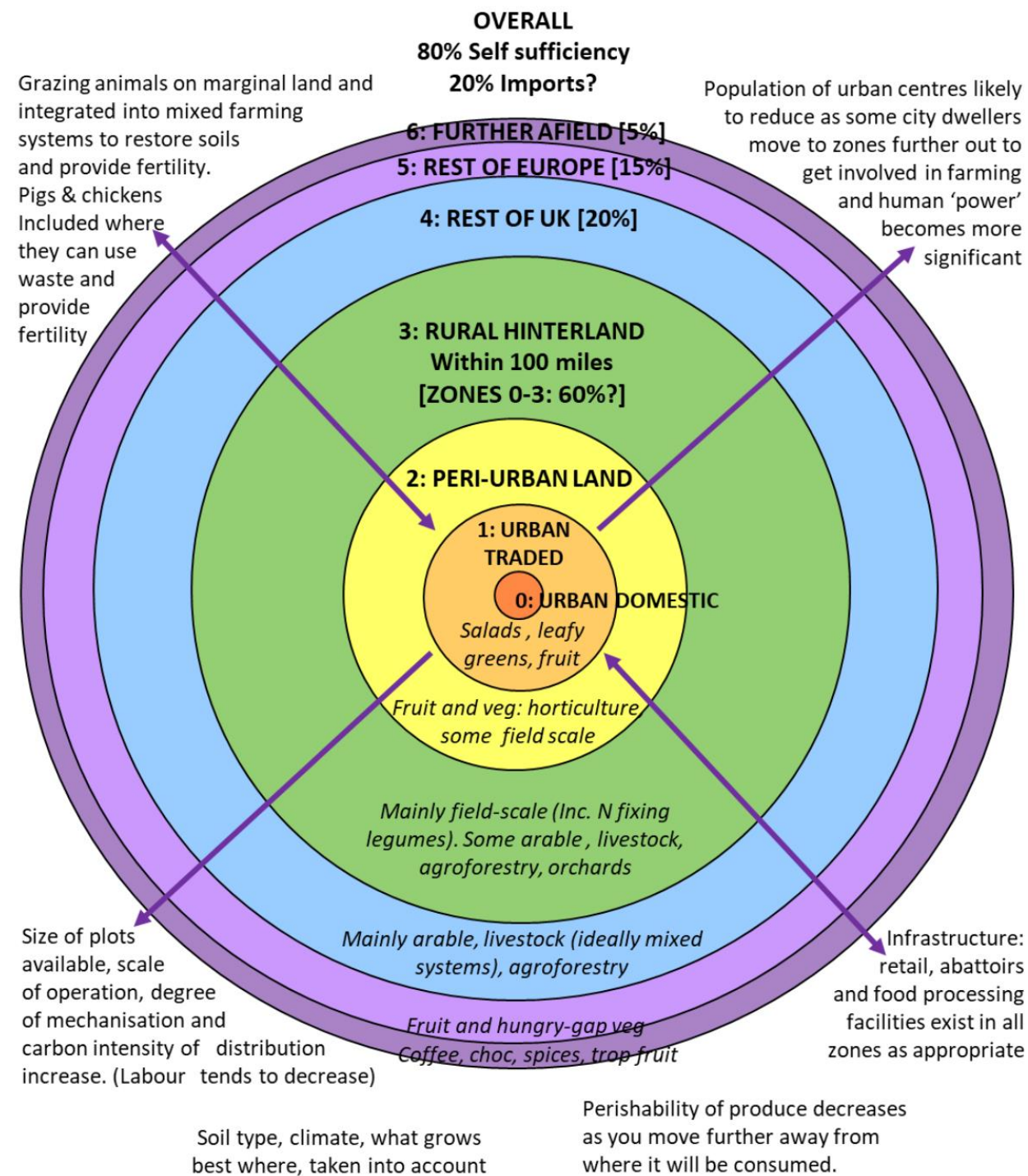


Food zones model: Growing Communities Hackney, London

New Economics Foundation report found:

For every £1 spent on organic fruit and veg at Growing Communities, £3.73 is generated health benefits for customers, better financial returns and job security for farmers, and environmental stewardship.

“We pay farmers 80p/kg for potatoes, while the farm gate price is 15p or less per kilo.”



Good Food Loop

A CALLINGTON

B PLYMOUTH

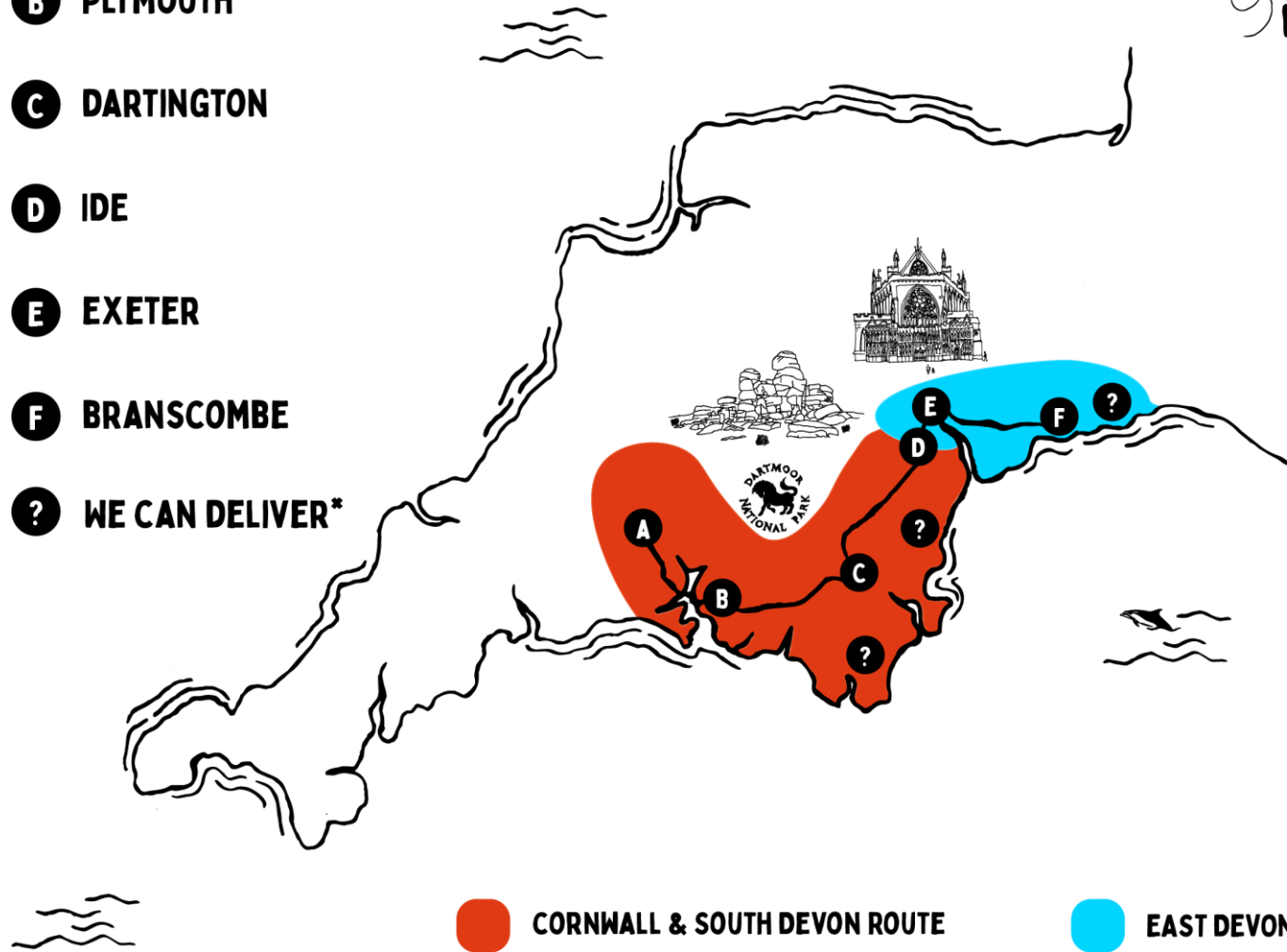
C DARTINGTON

D IDE

E EXETER

F BRANSCOMBE

? WE CAN DELIVER*



CORNWALL & SOUTH DEVON ROUTE

EAST DEVON ROUTE

Islands of coherence

“When a complex system is far from equilibrium, small islands of coherence in a sea of chaos have the capacity to shift the entire system to a higher order.”

Ilya Prigogine, Nobel Laureate



The art of the possible

Eves Hill Veg Co

Aylsham, Norfolk

- Sold £35k worth of veg in first year on new 1-acre site
- Made an additional £70k in training and education
- Sell direct to households in local villages and Norwich, as well as too local bakeries and restaurants
- 'Growing' new growers, who need access to suitable land



Photo: Simon Finlay

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3. Making it happen locally

How can we develop FarmStarts in our region?

- Who has suitable land, and where is it?
- Who can offer training and mentoring?
- What other opportunities are available locally?
- What models might we use?
- What other projects, organisations and markets are around?
- What can you do to support FarmStarts locally?

Other things to think about

- What would be the aim of a FarmStart in our region?



Photo: Sabine Virani



Thank you

**100 MILLION
ACRES**

**FROM
THIS**



**TO
THIS**

SOIL IS OUR

CO₂MMON

GROUND

COMMONGROUNDFILM.ORG