



Food Ethics Council

2020

IMPACT REPORT



Hope and resilience in hard times

Our vision is of a world where everyone eats well and global hunger is a distant memory; where farmers and food producers make a decent living, animals are treated humanely, and the environment is respected.

Food matters: how we produce, trade and eat it touches many issues from climate breakdown to human health and wellbeing, from poverty and justice to the plight of animals. The food sector is both responsible for many of these issues, and deeply affected by them.

The Food Ethics Council is the leading authority on food ethics. No one else has this ethical focus which allows us to reach 'in the round' solutions. We take a long-term view and believe in tackling root causes. We value our independence and are non-profit (a registered charity in the UK). Openness and honesty are important to us and we listen to, and learn from, each other. We want everyone to be involved with shaping the food systems we want and need.

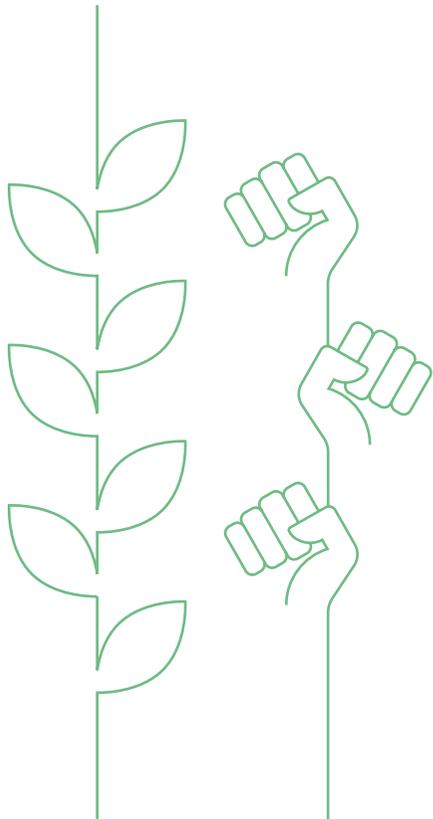
Our work explores the ways ethical questions manifest in food systems. For example, we have highlighted the issue of food and poverty, unpacked how a just food future could look, and critically explored emerging policy ideas. We work with businesses, NGOs, grassroots community groups, farmers, academics, policymakers and the public to unpack these questions together.

Our mission is to accelerate the shift towards fair food systems that respect people, animals and the planet. Decisions about our food system are often made without sufficient ethical consideration. This means they are likely to be short-term, single issues and without adequate thought for the wider consequences. We want to ensure long-term decisions are made 'in the round' and with sufficient thought for wider consequences.

Our purpose is to bring ethics to the centre of the food system.

Our role is threefold - we:

- **NOURISH** - we bring expertise together and provide ethical tools and a safe space for honest, meaningful dialogue
- **CHALLENGE** - we challenge the status quo and accepted ways of thinking
- **INSPIRE** - we promote 'in the round' ethical approaches and considered solutions that tackle root causes



Our work in 2020

In many ways, 2020 was a shock to food systems and the food sector. The pandemic and corresponding restrictions put supply chains under severe stress, increased those needing to access emergency food provision, devastated the hospitality industry and left many producers and processors severely understaffed. All this in the context of the UK leaving the EU and rewriting much of its food and farming policies.

It also prompted a significant shift in public awareness and thinking on food - where it comes from, who has grown and baked it, and who needs more of it. We have seen a flurry of support for local food systems. The dominant food system, characterised by global supply chains, centralised markets and industrial agriculture does not serve people, planet and animals. With these failings in sharp focus during the pandemic, communities across the UK have organised to make sure everyone is fed, building networks of support and resilience. Food workers were acknowledged for the essential work they do to keep society going.

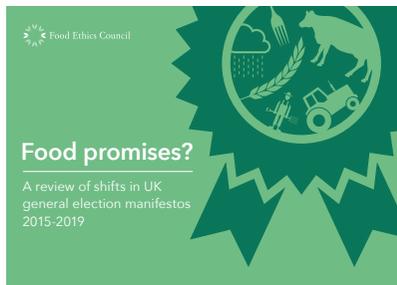


From the onset of COVID-19, the Food Ethics Council has tried to follow Cormac Russell's advice, "build on what's strong, not what's wrong." Luckily able to move our operations quickly into the home office, we set to work exploring:

- What does community food resilience look like? Which organisations and groups are already doing this pioneering work? What support do they need and how can we pass their learnings on to others?
- How can we connect those interested and working in food and farming, so we can together tackle the challenges brought to the fore during the pandemic? How can we continue building food systems which truly serve people, planet and animals?
- How can we learn from the Black Lives Matter uprising and centre tackling racial injustices in our work programmes? How can we connect with other organisations to do this work together and create positive change across our whole sector?

The pandemic has intensified the need to build just and resilient food systems with ethics at the heart. At the Food Ethics Council, we have continued our efforts on building these systems as part of our core mission. In the changing contexts of 2020, we have adapted our work arrangements and programmes to ensure we were responding to the needs of the sector, whilst holding our larger vision and mission close.

Selected highlights



- **Strengthening the food citizenship movement**
We have continued [celebrating individuals and organisations embracing food citizenship](#), supported them with our [food citizenship communications toolkit](#), [shared their experiences and vision](#), and continued building the wider food citizenship movement.

- **Building community food resilience**
Through ongoing engagement with community food organisations, we have been developing an ethical strategy to move away from the current emergency model of food provision and identifying how we can build community food resilience.

- **Working to address injustices in the food system**
Our '[On the road to food justice](#)' publication explored the multiple, intersecting injustices manifest in our food systems. We reflected 10 years on from our original Food and Fairness Inquiry and introduced a strengthened fairness framework to help us all address these injustices together.

- **Nourishing a space for changemakers via #FoodTalks and our Business Forum**
We provided opportunities online for the #FoodTalks community to explore how to address the pandemic and other emergencies facing our food systems. We also continued to provide a safe space for leaders from food and farming businesses to come together and learn from expert speakers and peers in our Business Forum.

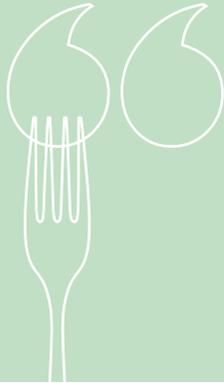
- **Exploring bold policy ideas**
We continued our innovative Food Policy on Trial series in 2020, putting the idea of Universal Basic Income 'in the dock', with our 'jury' of members of the Food Ethics Council finding that it would be a powerful tool to address household food insecurity (whilst not being a panacea).

- **Advocating for policy change and holding government to account**
We have continued our advocacy work, including joining with others to urge the UK government to protect and further strengthen standards of environment protection, animal welfare, workers' rights and food safety, particularly in relation to trade deals being negotiated post-Brexit.

In early 2020, we published a review of [food-related promises in party political manifestos](#) for the December 2019 General Election. This enabled us to highlight positive shifts in the last few years and how our work has contributed to that - but also to seek to hold the UK Government to account on the promises made in the Conservative party manifesto.

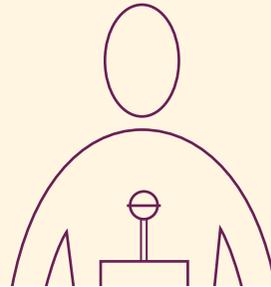
We also worked with public dialogue specialists to help with the content and framing of the public dialogue series for the National Food Strategy for England.

700



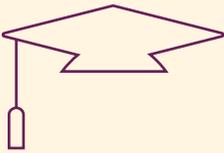
participants
in our online
#FoodTalks
series

50+



speakers at
our events and
workshops

886



mentions in
Google Scholar since
the Food Ethics Council
began

3

of our council
members in
Forbes list of
100 UK leading
environmentalists
(who happen to
be women)



4 Workshops for
our Sheffield
Community
resilience work

6 Food Talks

6 Business Forums

2 Agroecology and
research workshops

1 Livestock workshop



1 million+

Twitter
impressions

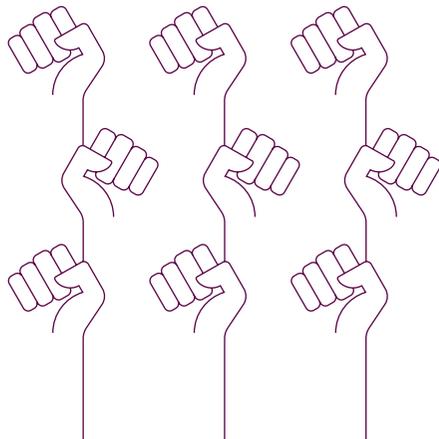


10,000+

impressions earned by
our top tweet of the year



Building community food resilience



When it comes to food, our role as individuals is generally limited to that of the consumer, choosing between products and using our wallets to vote on where and how our food is produced and processed. However, this story about ourselves and our agency in shaping this food system is, at best, incomplete.

Since 2016, the Food Ethics Council has been exploring what an alternative to consumerism could, and indeed already does, look like in the UK food and farming sector. We call this food citizenship.

Food citizenship is based on three key principles:

- **We are naturally disposed to care, and we need a deep sense of purpose in our lives.**
- **We need to have meaningful power in order to sustain that care and purpose.**
- **We need the support of a community to thrive.**

Food citizenship gives us a framework to explore some of the key challenges we face in our food systems and is a tool to change the language we use to tackle them. One of these challenges is household food insecurity in the UK.

Our vision is of the UK no longer relying on emergency food aid, and a redirecting of resources and assets to build resilient food systems, so that everyone has access to food that is good for people, animals and planet. We want to accelerate the transition from consumers who can't afford food, to citizens who form resilient food communities and whose food needs are met.

“The initial focus on food and citizenship helped me to get my bearings and to make decisions. They were ideas that I easily resonated with, but sometimes you need other people to share them to give you courage to carry them out.”

Workshop participant

Through ongoing engagement with community food organisations and national networks tackling food insecurity and hunger, we are developing an ethical strategy to move away from the current emergency model of food provision and identifying how we can build community food resilience.

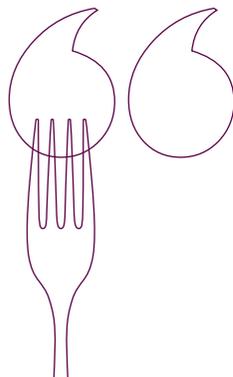
In 2020, we hosted four workshops with community food organisations in Sheffield, in probably one of the hardest years for them to date. This is a two-year project, but some key takeaways so far include:

- **During the pandemic, two stories of food emerged: food as sustenance and food as community. Each story plays a different role in our mission to end hunger.**
- **Two shifts in language are needed to help solve household food insecurity: the way we frame people, and the way we frame the problem.**
- **How we design our community spaces can have huge impacts on long-term food resilience.**
- **Building from assets, rather than from need, builds long-term community food resilience.**

2

#FoodTalks

We are all emergency respondents now



At the start of the year, we decided - with our #FoodTalks partners - to make the theme of our 2020 event series 'We are all emergency respondents now'. Little did we realise how apt that theme would turn out to be. It was originally intended to emphasise the importance of coming together to address the multiple emergencies we face - including the climate, biodiversity and obesity crises.

Responding to the pandemic, we quickly transformed our usual quarterly in-person event series into an online #FoodTalks community that we brought together in six events across the year. #FoodTalks is a partnership between us, Impact Hub Kings Cross, London Food Link (part of Sustain) and Organico. It provides a much-needed space for those in food and farming striving for positive change.

Our #FoodTalks series this year was incredibly well received, with us engaging with around 700 participants throughout the year. Whilst our main focus was UK food systems, the switch to online allowed us to reach an international audience, with people joining from as far afield as the United States, Pakistan, Sweden and Ghana. We have also shared recordings of these online, so that thousands more can listen back too.

"Combining vision and pragmatism with an extensive network across the food ecosystem, we have been delighted to work with the Food Ethics Council for over six years to run 'Food Talks'. The momentum generated by these inspiring events led to the development of "Feeding the City", our incubation and acceleration programmes which support ethical food enterprises to start up and grow. We are grateful to the Food Ethics Council for bringing their expertise, insights and collaborative spirit to ensure these entrepreneurs succeed as they contribute to building a food system fit for the future."

Devi Clark, Managing Director,
Impact Hub Kings Cross

We had an incredible set of #FoodTalks speakers from the world of food including Carolyn Steel (author of Hungry City and Sitopia: How Food Can Save the World), Professor Tim Lang (Centre for Food Policy, City University, London and author of books including Feeding Britain), Lim Li Ching (Third World Network and member of IPES-Food), Thomasina Miers (co-founder of Wahaca and former Masterchef winner) and Jyoti Fernandes (Landworkers' Alliance).

Feedback from participants was excellent - people appreciated the opportunity to be inspired, share insights on the rapidly-changing situation and take glimmers of hope amidst the gloom.

3 Business Forums

In 2020, we continued to provide a safe space for leaders from food and farming businesses to come together and learn from expert speakers and peers. We kept our Business Forum community together in challenging times and provided an important space for food and farming business leaders to navigate the pandemic and other critical issues related to food and farming. We held two in-person Business Forum dinner meetings (before 'lockdown') on veganism and on regenerative agriculture.

We had to adapt our Business Forum model during the pandemic, shifting online for the last nine months of the year. During that time, we held sessions on 'embracing ethics at a time of crisis', 'when is British really best?', 'recession bites' and 'meat and dairy imports.' These were well attended and well received, with eminent speakers including Max Torero, Chief Economist, UN Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO). We have published non-attributed write-ups from these discussions, in order that others can benefit from these insights. We have an exciting programme going forward, including the opportunity for more peer-to-peer learning.

Through our Business Forum in 2020 we ensured that urgent challenges facing food and farming businesses were kept on the radar.

"The Business Forum has maintained a momentum on important issues that may have been forgotten during current challenges"

Food company executive

We helped foster new connections. For example, the CEO of NEMI Teas, an award-winning tea business took part in one of our Business Forum meetings, where he was introduced to two of the speakers, Frank Bothwell, owner of contract catering company Thomas Franks, and Ben Greensmith, UK Manager of Tony's Chocolonely.

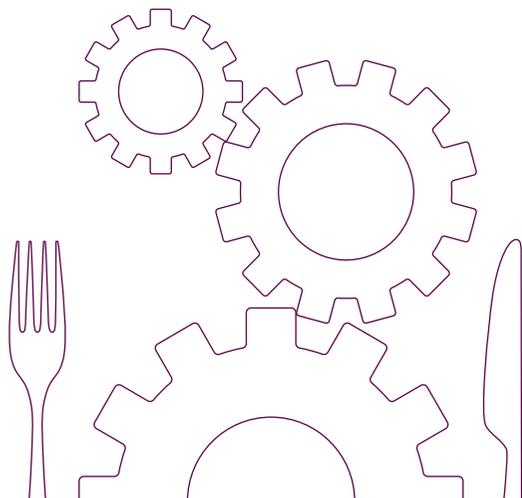
"I reached out to Frank and Ben in regards to becoming Advisors, and both of them have since officially joined our Board!"

Pranav Chopra
Founder and CEO, NEMI Teas

We helped inform and inspire strategies and actions to address sustainability challenges.

"We will be placing regenerative agriculture at the centre of our agriculture strategy and the Business Forum played a part in that."

Food retail manager



Our wider impact

Our Council members and others in our networks help amplify our messages and findings, allowing others to participate in our collective missions. In this way, our work has a greater impact across the food and farming sector.



The Food Ethics Council's leadership on the concept of food citizenship, and engaging with people as citizens rather than consumers, has continued to impact this year on our approach at the Soil Association. Previously, as an organisation we communicated with people in two different ways: as a charity, we engaged with people as supporters and agents of change; but from our organic certification arm, we spoke to people primarily as consumers of organic products. 2020 has seen us bring all our public-facing communications into one 'citizenship' team so that we only ever speak to people as food citizens, with agency that extends far beyond their shopping habits. In Organic September, we led the conversation about all the many ways people can be part of the organic movement and how our collective actions can add up to make a world of difference. In 2021, we hope to reignite and expand some of our food-citizen-led campaigns like Out to Lunch, which have had to be on pause in the pandemic. I know that staff at the Soil Association have found food citizenship a really motivating concept, giving a strong sense of shared purpose to all our public engagement."

Jo Lewis

Member of the Food Ethics Council and Strategy and Policy Director, Soil Association



The amazing example of Food Ethics Council work in action that I have been close to is experience of how friends and colleagues are using citizen language in their interactions around food and how this momentum has grown over the year. This language has entered our general conversation, guidance for food growers, educational materials, marketing materials and many more platforms. It is fostering the understanding of food as something we all have responsibilities around and how our growing and purchasing decisions can have a positive impact on people, animals and our environment. Food is seen more and more as something that connects us all and the citizen approach is now really touching into a powerful realisation that the way we eat and the future of our precious earth and its resources are inextricably linked."

Ruth Layton

Member of the Food Ethics Council and founder of sankalpa

The power of collaboration

We are firm believers in the power of working with others – whether directly partnering, being part of an informal alliance or exchanging advice and insights. Here are just some of the groups, panels and alliances we were involved with in 2020 – to amplify our reach and impact.

➤ Informing and influencing policy

- National Food Strategy public dialogues (we worked with Hopkins Van Mil, public dialogue specialists, bringing food systems expertise)
- Defra Consumer Stakeholder Consultative Group
- FSA COVID-19 Expert Panel

➤ Supporting grass-roots action and movements

- Together for Sheffield – Bringing networks of community food organisations together
- Food citizenship movement

➤ Advocating for change with others

- UK Food Poverty Alliance
- Eating Better Alliance
- Sustain: the alliance for better food and farming (e.g. its farming working group)
- Groceries Code Action Network
- Voluntary and Community Sector Emergencies Partnership
- UN Global Compact Network UK (formerly via UK Stakeholders for Sustainable Development)
- Trade Unwrapped (led by Food, Farming and Countryside Commission)

➤ Nourishing a space for people wanting positive change

- #FoodTalks partnership with Impact Hub Kings Cross, Organico and London Food Link (part of Sustain)
- E-mail discussion list for critical agroecology researchers

➤ Learning with others

- Food Learning Forum
- Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust 'Sustainable Futures' group

➤ Supporting food businesses on their sustainability journeys

- Business Forum – with individuals from a range of food and farming businesses
- Feeding the City – start-up & accelerate programmes for food businesses led by Impact Hub Kings Cross

Looking ahead

2021 will be a big year for food and farming and offers the potential for transformative change. Here are some of the critical questions we are exploring.



➤ How can we promote transformative policy ideas, to accelerate the shift to fair food systems that respect people, animals and the planet?

➤ How can we make publicly-funded food and farming research fair?

➤ How can we nurture an enabling business environment to allow fair food systems to flourish?

➤ How can we build community food resilience?

➤ How can we accelerate a transition to ethical dairy?

➤ How can we support the emerging food citizenship movement?

➤ How can we bring racial justice more centrally to our work and our sector?

We cannot address these questions alone and we seek partnership, participation and support from others working in this space.

Whether you are using and sharing our toolkits, engaging in events, joining our networks or supporting us financially, our ability to build more just, resilient and joyful food futures relies on collaboration. We are in this together and hope you will join us.

Who we are

OUR STAFF

Dan Crossley is executive director and leads the team. He has worked on food sustainability issues for over 15 years, previously leading Forum for the Future's work on sustainable food and working for a food manufacturing company.

Anna Cura is responsible for the management of key programmes, with particular focus on the [food citizenship project](#). She is the in-house expert on systems change, complexity, framing and the power of language.

Helene Schulze is communications officer, leading our internal and external communications and ensuring our work reaches the right people in an engaging and accessible manner.

Clare Stone is project and office coordinator, overseeing our office operations as well as supporting staff with projects and events.

Tom Levitt is our newest member of the team and is leading our new dairy project.

OUR COUNCIL We are lucky to have an active and engaged Council who guide our work, ensuring that we are asking the right questions and reaching the right people.

Our Council is made up of experts in food and farming, appointed as individuals. They bring a broad range of expertise to our work, including academia, farming, business, policy and philosophy. Our Board members, elected from the wider Council, oversee the running of the organisation. Board and Council members are not paid for their time.

COUNCIL MEMBERS IN 2020

Nigel Dower (Incoming Chair)
Honorary Senior Lecturer in Philosophy,
Aberdeen University

Chloe Donovan (Trustee)
Founder, Hundred River Farm

Ralph Early (Trustee)
Independent Food Scientist and Food Ethicist

Ruth Layton (Trustee)
Founder, sankalpa

Joanna Lewis (Trustee)
Strategy and Policy Director, Soil Association

Patti Whaley (Chair and Treasurer)
Retired, Non-executive Director

Jon Alexander, Co-founder, New Citizenship Project

Dr Julian Baggini, Freelance writer and philosopher

Helen Browning OBE, Organic farmer,
Chief Executive, Soil Association

David Croft, Global Director, Sustainability,
Environment and Human Rights at RB

Professor Elizabeth Dowler,
Emeritus Professor of Food and Social Policy,
Department of Sociology at the University of Warwick

Cathryn Higgs, Head of Food Policy,
Co-operative Food

Patrick Mulvany, Agriculturalist

Professor David Pink, Emeritus Professor of
Crop Improvement at Harper Adams University*

Dr Kate Rawles, Outdoor philosopher,
author and activist*

Pete Ritchie, Director, Nourish Scotland,
organic farmer

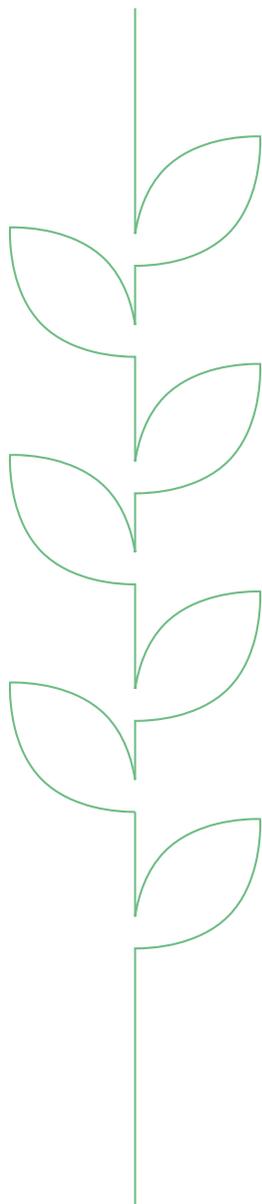
Geoff Tansey, Curator, Food Systems Academy

Albert Tucker, Independent consultant,
advisor and social entrepreneur

Dee Woods, Co-founder Granville Community
Kitchen, member GLA London Food Board

*stepped down from the Council during 2020

Our funding



We are very grateful for the support of all those who funded our work this year, without whom none of this would be possible. Our biggest source of income in 2020 was from charitable trusts and foundations, namely:

- **A Team Foundation**
- **Esmée Fairbairn Foundation**
- **Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust**
- **Polden Puckham Charitable Foundation**
- **sankalpa**

We receive funding from a variety of different sources - including from individual donors, from businesses participating in our Business Forum and from other organisations we work with - but we only accept funds that will not compromise our independence.

Our people are our main asset and our main cost is therefore staff costs, which typically represent around two-thirds of our total expenditure. Other spending is for activity, premises and governance costs. We have a lean, flexible organisational model with minimal fixed overheads. Our Council members, who are amongst the leaders in their fields (e.g. ethics, farming, business and policy), operate in a voluntary capacity and provide an invaluable source of in-kind support.

If you want a more resilient and hopeful world, please join us. Fair food systems will get us there faster. Get in touch with our Executive Director:

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dan@foodethicscouncil.org
+44 (0) 333 012 4147



Food Ethics Council

www.foodethicscouncil.org

