

**Cross Party Group on Food**  
**Breakfast Meeting 3<sup>rd</sup> March 2020**

**Members Present**

Jenny Rathbone MS, Chair

Lesley Griffiths MS **Minister for Environment, Energy and Rural Affairs**

Llyr Huws Gruffydd MS

Mike Hedges MS

Rhun ap Iorweth MS

Huw Irranca-Davies MS

David Melding MS

Also present

Keith Smyton, **Deputy Director of the Food and Drink Division** Welsh Government

Shea Buckland-Jones, WWF

Lucie Taylor, CLAS Cymru Coordinator, Social Farms & Gardens

Joanne Jefford, C&VUHB Dietetics.

Katie Palmer Food Sense Wales

Rhys Evans, RSPB

Rhys James, Caerphilly Council Procurement

Andrew Collings, Ark of Taste and Slow Food Wales

Harry Thompson, Deryn re Food and Drink Federation and British Soft Drinks Assoc.

George Watkins, Office of Jenny Rathbone, minute taker.

**AGM:**

Annual Report approved. Jenny nominated as Chair by Mike Hedges and Llyr Huws Gruffydd. Minutes of previous meeting 21<sup>st</sup> Oct 2019 to be circulated by email.

Jenny welcomed the Minister as the person best placed to discuss the challenges facing food in Wales in the context of the uncertainty surrounding Wales' future relationship with Europe.

**Lesley Griffiths, (LG)** emphasised her lead role representing Welsh interests in quadrilateral discussions with UK and other devolved govts on future trade negotiations. Future of Agriculture in Wales vital for our food industry. Have had two rounds of public consultations on *Sustainable Farming and Our Land*. Funding will continue to support agriculture.

Firm commitment to maintain food standards, it is what Wales is famous for. Lack of clarity re outcome of trade negotiations with EU on food. Wales Food & Drink Industry Board developing a strategic action plan for achieving our wellbeing goals. Worrying that local authorities selling off community farms as it is a way in for new entrants.

**Mike Hedges (MH): A lot of local authority inherited** farms, transferred to them as a result of the disestablishment of the Church in Wales. . Are those farms still being held under the Welsh Church Act? If they are being sold, is it to invest in good causes? If not why are local authorities selling them?

**Keith Smyton:** Some have been sold off, but WG has an incomplete picture of the extent of the sale of council farms and whether they came into local authority possession as a result of the disestablishment of the Anglican church in Wales.

**Huw Irranca Davies (HID):** Potential opportunities as well as challenges for food in Wales. To what extent can we now move towards more localised food networks to supply our schools, hospitals and local authorities?

Majority of Welsh fisheries rely on exports. If no deal with EU, what forethought to developing local markets?

What role could tariffs play in either protecting Wales from cheap, poor quality food being dumped on our market or impeding exports of Welsh produce?

**LG:** There are definitely opportunities in procurement. As Health Minister she discussed the inconsistencies of menus in hospitals. Hospitals said the reason they did not procure Welsh lamb was because of cost. Also bought frozen veg and pre prepared roast potatoes. There are opportunities to change that

90% of fish caught in Wales is exported, as is 2/3 of beef. No Deal and tariffs would eliminate many businesses. Tariffs a potential threat for some sectors eg **90% of** our fish is exported. No deal would be the end of many of those businesses. We don't eat enough fish in Wales to sustain the market.

**David Melding (DM):** The scale isn't right unless everyone ate the shell fish I do. The Welsh coast is the Chesapeake Bay of NW Europe, teeming with fish.

**Joanne Jefford(JJ):** CO-chair of All Wales Public Procurement Menus Framework working group. Need to refresh 2009 standards. Financial pressures = Fish rarely on the menu. Many meats like lamb are too expensive. Particularly for hospitals. We want the best for our patients but cost is an issue.

**LG .** Post Brexit, that is a real opportunity.

We also need to make sure we are promoting Welsh produce in Cardiff Airport and train stations. Scotland does it much better than us.

Rhun Ap Iorwerth: Supermarkets used to get away with having a token selection of Welsh produce on sale. We should turn it around and have a non Welsh produce section. Discussion re progress made in various supermarkets.

**JR:** Lamb's only expensive if you want popular cuts. Could cheaper cuts be used in public procurement rather than exporting them?..

**JJ:** As a dietician I want to see patient budgets protected. Every health board has different way of working out budget per patient. Need to meet different dietary demands eg vegans need balanced diet including protein, not just fruit n veg. Problem with less expensive cuts is fattiness.

**Keith S:** WG work on sustainable land values What is local Welsh food? How hard is it to source Welsh only ingredients? Easier for smaller businesses than large ones. We don't grow all our vegetables in Wales. Six years ago Keith met over 160 horticulture companies in Wales, now only ¼ of that survive. Horticulture Wales was a hub then, but the business model was unsustainable Clustering of like-minded companies together e.g. seafood has worked well to strengthen other sectors.

**Katie Palmer (KP):** How can we match production and consumption strategies? Only producing 5% of our vegetables in Wales. Importing over 20% of veg from countries with major climate change issues. Children not getting enough vegetables. Healthy Weight, Healthy Wales strategy should provide opportunities to increase their vegetable consumption. Huge impact for public health. Eating veg = vital for things like heart disease prevention. Working with WG on Veg Power campaign to increase veg consumption.

**LG:** Another opportunity for Horticulture provides post-Brexit. Not many farms around at the moment. Because we import so much fruit and veg- we are not as mindful of climate change as we could be.

**Shea Buckland-Jones:** If we applied the Wellbeing goals to our food system, what would this look like? Plan to test hypothesis over the coming months to see what works. Do we need a national food system strategy? Work commissioned from Cardiff University Sustainable Places Institute, to be published next week. Developing a community model and local supply chains. Healthy Weight Healthy Wales agenda relevant too. More and more people keen to develop local energy networks. How could that be applied to food? Food & Drink Industry Board deals with commercial aspects. How could you apply the same rigour to a wider good health strategy? Give farmers good role models like Slade Farm to inspire them to follow example. How can we add value to the efforts of farmers?

**LG:** People want to buy more Welsh food today than 10 years ago. Welsh food sector has grown.. WG now has 7 or 8 food clusters which bring companies together to discuss areas of mutual interest. Eg.Honey is an expensive commodity but sector keeps growing. . 1,400 beekeepers. 680 companies involved

**Lucie Taylor(LT) :** Community farms face particular challenges eg having to - apply for full planning permission to build a structure if they are under five hectares.

**Rhys Evans:** Farming has become more specialised over the last decade. Opportunity to bring back mixed farming, previously a lot more arable fruit and veg production in my valley in North Wales. Diversifies risk. . Need Agri policy to encourage diversification Eating less meat but better quality, sustainably sourced. Biodiversity could be at the heart of agriculture policy.

**LG:** Agree with importance of mixed farming. meat needs to be sustainably produced, and better quality. Is beef grass-fed?. There will further consultations on Sustainable Farming and Our Land. We need to make sure our policies are aligned.

**LlyrHuws Griffiths:** How is this trickling down to our agricultural colleges? Making sure that we are teaching people how to create the sustainable food for the future. Suggestion of bringing agricultural colleges together.

**LG:** Kirsty Williams recognises importance of these new skills . Ongoing conversation.

**JR:** Thanked LG and wished her luck with EU negotiations over next 10 months..

(Lesley Griffiths left meeting)

There was a short discussion on future topics.

**HID:** Roundtable about sustainable food system in Wales on 11<sup>th</sup> March to discuss research commissioned by WWF from Cardiff University Sustainable Places Institute. . Would the Food CPG be up to pick this up? .

**JR:** Tool to measure nutrient levels in food has the potential to change how people judge food based purely on price. Shoppers could use it while shopping.

**KP:** Work of co-ops. Sustainable food places model: 60 in the UK but only 1 in Wales.

**JR:** Opportunity to give lobbying groups platform for their asks for party manifestos for 2021 election.

It was agreed that members present would have email discussion how to take this forward.