

**Minutes of the Cross Party Group on Food
Wednesday 10th May 2017**

Attendees:

Jenny Rathbone AM	<i>Assembly Member</i>
Suzy Davies AM	<i>Assembly Member</i>
Huw Irranca Davies AM	<i>Assembly Member</i>
Christian Webb	<i>Simon Thomas' Office</i>
Jack Sellers	<i>David Melding's Office</i>
Bethan Proctor	<i>Jenny Rathbone's Office</i>
Peter Wong	<i>Jenny Rathbone's Office</i>
Amber Tatton	<i>Jenny Rathbone's Office</i>
Amber Wheeler	<i>University of South Wales</i>
Katie Palmer	<i>Food Cardiff</i>
David Morris	<i>Welsh Government</i>
Emma Williams	<i>Federation of City Farms & Community Gardens</i>
Rebecca Sandover	<i>PhD student, Exeter University</i>
Dr. Ana Moragues Faus	<i>Cardiff School of Geography and Planning</i>
Sarah Thomas	<i>Public Affairs Officer, Women's Institute</i>
Caroline Bovey	<i>British Dietetic Association</i>
Pamela Mason	<i>Food Nutrition Consultant</i>

1. Introductions

Jenny Rathbone AM welcomed attendees to the first meeting of the Food CPG. As it was the inaugural meeting, it was agreed that pro tem Jenny Rathbone would Chair the meeting and Bethan Proctor from her office would take the minutes. The representatives from David Melding's, and Simon Thomas' office agreed pending the late arrival of other Assembly Members.

JR explained that Cross Party Groups were intended to allow open and robust discussion of issues relevant to the work of the Assembly, and that food was a multi-faceted subject that touched on many areas of policy and legislation.

2. Amber Wheeler / University of South Wales – Outlook for Veg

Amber Wheeler shared some of the results of her research on the vegetable and fruit deficit in Wales which is the subject of her PhD at the University of South Wales.

The '5 a Day' campaign has been public policy since 2003; however consumption has gone down, not up, from 39% to 32% of people in Wales eating 5 portions a day. It has not changed consumer behaviour. Once 20% food waste is factored in – food not consumed – it is likely to be in the high 20%.

She argued that Consumer Demand was only one aspect of the food system and the others need to be given equal attention in tackling this public health emergency. People passively consume what is put in front of them without realising how much they are eating.

What might increase consumption?

Schools' based intervention has worked well in school, however it does not change out of school behaviour. Systemic change is needed, rather than focussing on education alone.

Public Health now recommends 7, rather than 5 pieces of fruit and veg a day which is far more than we can produce. The advice was changed without any discussion with food producers about how this can be achieved. There is not enough fruit and veg in the system either produced in the UK or imported to fulfil our requirements, even at 5 a day.

Fruit, and to a lesser extent Veg, has the greatest trade deficit of any food.

Peas Please is a collaboration between the Food Foundation, Nourish Scotland, and WWF, to increase fruit and veg consumption.

They have produced a 'Commitments Framework', based on the results of workshops with stakeholders and online feedback. The aim is to get buy-in from Government, retailers and other stakeholders.

Peas Please will launch a Vegetable Summit at the Pierhead on 24th October, with simultaneous events in Glasgow and London. Looking for pledges from big names – e.g. Chief Exec of Tesco, Greggs, for example. Also want an inquiry into horticulture.

There is also an event at the Royal Welsh on 25th July. Aim is to get the supply chain talking together.

Questions:

Huw Irranca-Davies AM – *How can we ensure that there is no negative economic impact for livestock farmers?*

Amber thought it was difficult to engage with NFU because of the economic impact they perceive it will have on them. Fruit n Veg production doesn't have to be a detriment on the livestock market. Only a limited amount of land is needed to grow fruit and veg, it can be slotted in between land used for livestock rather than replacing it.

Horticulture as a sector is not highly subsidised, and they are seeking funding for infrastructure, not subsidies, eg pack houses, machinery and a distribution network for growers.

Katie: Important to look through the Brexit lens, Welsh meat will become more expensive to sell in Europe.

Emma: A level playing field is wanted; large farms have particular support mechanisms. Horticulture, mainly on small parcels of land, does not have access to these benefits.

Amber Tatton – *What support for young farmers to develop horticulture?*

Emma: The Welsh Government have funded Tyfu Fyni and Tyfi Cymru. There are upskilling programmes in commercial horticulture. Farm Starts are needed where farmers can train up on the land.

David Morris: There is support out there but they are not well known. New Farm business grant recently launched – possibly relevant to horticulture.

Public Health

Katie: There is no strong steer from Welsh Government or Public Health Wales about the food environment. There are pockets of good practice at local level, but no broad policy vision, unlike in England.

Sarah, W.I – many people lack the cooking skills needed to increase fruit and veg consumption, this needs to be addressed. Ending Communities First will have an impact on this, as their funding for cooking courses will need to be replaced elsewhere.

Ana – Need to consider the relationship between independent fruit and veg shops and producers – some small businesses are buying their stock in Lidl. The weak supply network is weak.

Independent retailers do not generate enough money to make a living. What can be done to make them more sustainable?

David – This is the case for independent retailers generally, not just fruit and veg shops. Supermarkets are unstoppable. Public mostly to blame as we don't shop in small shops enough. Solution could be Hi-tech route – vertical farming. Indoor farming, without relying on soil. Suited to brownfield sites, rural locations. Product is appealing to supermarkets as risk of diseases and contamination is reduced. Need to think laterally in increasing consumption.

There is a need to bring together catering bodies to get commitment from them.

3. Suggested subjects for future meetings:

- Local procurement in areas of deprivations - Suzy Davies AM suggested we invite a successful organic fruit and veg business in valleys community of Pontardawe. Agreed in principle for next meeting.
- Huw Thomas from Puffin Produce – could this successful business be replicated elsewhere?
- Food cooperatives – some have been successful, others not. What were the barriers?
- School Lunches – Flintshire's exemplary Soil Association certificated school meal service.

4. **Sponsorship for the Cross Party Group.** David mentioned that Sara Jones, Head of the Welsh Retail Consortium, could help identifying a retailer who may support.

5. **Next meeting:**

3rd, 4th, 17th or 18th October. (*Bethan check room availability with the Assembly.)