

Present:

Jenny Rathbone AM (Chair)

Huw Irranca-Davies AM

David Melding AM

George Watkins, Office of Jenny Rathbone

Sioned James, Plaid Cymru Group Researcher

Patrick Holden Founding Director, Sustainable Food Trust

Shea Buckland-Jones , WWF Cymru

Pearl Costello Food Sense Wales

Haydn Evans (Head of Farming, Soil Association Cymru)

Lisa Williams (All Wales Nutrition Training Facilitator- CVUHB)

David Lloyd Thomas, Head of Food Policy Unit at DNR Welsh Government

Nick Fenwick, FUW Policy Officer

Rhys James, Principal Procurement Officer, Caerphilly Council)

Rhys Evans, RSPB

Louise Shute, Programme Manager- NHS Food For Life Get Togethers-)

Graeme Wilson, Slade Farm Organics

Tony Little

Don Woosnam, Woosnam Dairies, Bargoed

Sian Woosnam, Woosnams Dairies

Andrew Collinge, Slow Food Movement

JR welcomed people to the meeting and everyone introduced themselves

Patrick Holden (PH)- opened the discussion about a **Climate Friendly Food Plan for Wales.**

Current food and farming systems are in the frontline of the cause of the current climate crisis, but can also become part of the solution.

He used his 46 years of experience of farming at Bwlchwernen Fawr in West Wales to illustrate what can be done.

It has 50% rotating crops; 50% pasture for grazing animals. The manure is composted and used to enrich the soil. The best way to build soil carbon is by moving cattle every 24 hours. Soil carbon stewardship is achieved from the manure, trampling, grass and clover which offsets the methane emitted by the animals.

The farm uses no nitrogen fertiliser. Nitrogen fertilizer reduces farmland diversity- highlighted in State of Nature report. Stewardship schemes wouldn't be needed if we stopped using nitrogen fertilizers.

The farm generates renewable energy to run the creamery where they make cheese. The farm is self-sufficient in cattle feed. It is unsustainable to be importing straw from England to Wales.

Farms should be seen as social and educational centres which benefit society, rather than marginalised as at present.

The next agricultural payments scheme should financially reward farming for sustainable practices and withhold payments for practices which are not sustainable. There are more than 100 definitions of sustainability worldwide. How could they be brought together into a single scheme?

Each farm would need an annual sustainability audit- to trigger rewards. Welsh Government should take the lead- already doing much better than DEFRA.

Huw Irranca Davies- accepted that a sustainable farming could be as productive/ more productive than other forms of modern farming.

If we pay farmers to transition to a sustainable model, how do we not disadvantage those already doing the right thing? Would they be eligible for extra reward?

PH- Conversion payments could be followed by maintenance payments. Accurate measures of sustainability outcomes would prevent this problem.

We couldn't reward everyone on this strategy. E.g. grain would drop by half and double in price. Cheap chicken/ pork would be unviable. Red meat from proper grass-fed animals would become cheaper. There'd be a need to invest in public education into what to eat. Critical of plant-based only diets. Must move to sustainable diets relevant to our climate compatible with a productive, sustainable farming system.

David Melding- was pleased that meat could be classified as sustainable as an enthusiast for red meat.

PH- Red meat is wrong to be targeted. Even David Attenborough wrong about this. Need better public messages about diet. Current messaging about what to eat and be sustainable is ignorant at the moment.

Nick Fenwick- agreed with most of what had been said. Abandonment of mixed farming leads to environmental degradation. Disagrees that Wales could do this on its own. Withdrawal of support for intensive farming would simply lead to intensively produced products being imported as had happened with pork production. FUW represents big and small farmers with a huge variation in farming conditions. Travel ten miles and farms will be totally different. so the new farm payments need a safety net to take all this in account if we want to avoid abandonment. Scotland regards food as a public good. I agree with the Welsh Government it is not. Good to hear UK Labour Party saying public goods must only be part of overall picture. Jobs created and food we produce also crucial. Welsh Government is struggling with this.

PH- Delivering jobs is a public good. Little disagreement between us. Need to refine definition of public good so we highlight where market is failing to deliver sustainable incomes and outcomes. Need to make it clear that doing right thing is rewarded and wrong thing is not.

NF- EU doing well with developing this approach.

Don Woosnam- Supermarkets have distorted the market by insisting on only one supplier of dairy products. Tomlinsons biggest dairy processor and distributor in Wales went under, due to terms dictated by Sainsbury.

50% of milk produced from cows which never see or eat grass.

Do supermarkets really care where milk is from as long as it's cheap? It's a huge change for dairies etc to commit to these changes.

When pig tethering was banned, we simply exported the problem.

PH- Category management policy by supermarkets is awful. Ruining abattoirs/ producers etc. Massive reduction in small family farms driven by dishonest accounting. Need money to drive things in better direction. Farmers whose cows don't get out to grass should be financially penalised from receiving public money. No public subsidy for nothing benefitting public good.

NF- FUW represents everyone from small to huge farms. Issue is consumers here. Not realistic for all organic, locally produced stuff. People want cheap food. Can't rush it. Will end up exporting the problem to other countries. Production moving to another country makes the problem worse and bankrupts us.

PH- One Impact of Brexit could be tariff barrier to stop imports of cheaper stuff with higher environmental damage. Price goes up on cheap food and brings down cost of properly sustainable food.

NF- People would stop buying our food. Don't want to rush ahead too quickly.

PH- So we get the other UK countries to do it too and then deal with other countries.

NF- We need access to America post-Brexit. Tough negotiations.

PH- The US Corn Belt is unsustainable.

Graeme Wilson- PH's farm is like ours at Slade Farm. Mega-dairies etc damaging in the long run. Can't not move forward.

Jenny Rathbone- 80% of UK economy depends on services. After Brexit, what chance the UK Govt would stand up for our farmers against the wave of cheap food the US wants to dump on us?

NF- The proposed tariff rates tells us where we are on UK Government's priority list. Export of agricultural products face potentially very high tariffs.

Shea Buckland Jones - Lots of strategies being developed. What does a sustainable system look like? Impact not just on climate change but biodiversity, as well as public health. Freshwater pollution is really worrying. What's the impact of deforestation from in Wales?

PH- Leadership needed. Wales is small enough to lead the world with swift change.

David Lloyd Thomas- We have to take account of the global food system. People buy on largely on price, research confirms. So what can we do? Focus on strengthening supply chains and how to provide help and assistance to businesses. WG developing clusters of businesses with shared interests- want to see more of this. Working together is vital for development. Improves diversity and resilience. Cornwall is brewing beer with Cornish barley; the only Welsh ingredient in Welsh brewed beer is the water. Wales should follow Cornwall's example.

PH- Will Welsh Govt have a policy to incentivise food businesses and farms to relocalise supply chains. Eg How to get Welsh meat back into the supply chains?

Feed own nation, then think about export. Infrastructure to do this has been disintegrating for a while.

DLT- We don't have a policy on abattoirs. Policy is working with anyone we think has the potential to go somewhere.

PH- No local meat without local abattoir.

DLT- We don't want to get trapped by determining how much local stuff needs to be made in Wales.

PH- Globalisation of food system is catastrophic. Gov should step in to combat market failure.

DLT- You're misunderstanding; Government has invested millions over the years. Broad brush approach taken.

Andrew Collinge- I'm a horticulturist, not agriculturist. Involved in restoring native varieties like Denbigh Plum. These things can drive local food and drink economy. Hydroponics offer new possibilities; we could use redundant dairies to grow more food.

PH- Unhappy with hydroponics as an idea.

Haydn Evans- Family farming background in North Wales. Concerns of loss of cattle grazing etc. Hope new policy can encourage return of old systems and make it more lucrative. Agree with NF food isn't a public good, it has market value. But way food is produced is absolutely a public good. Encouraging local and sustainable farming. Have discussed this with Lesley Griffiths. What we produce and how we produce it is key.

PH- NGO role is vital. Many members across UK. Need to stop demonising red meat.

Louise Shute- Food citizenship. Giving people a stake in it. Education and how we can build it in at grassroots level. Educating public is really important. I.e. standard system of food packaging would be much more informative.

PH- Citizen push is vital here.

JR- Big companies spend millions on encouraging people to buy crap which is not cheap. Stuff is poisoning people.

NF- People are buying on price because of food poverty.

JR- Not that cheap when you consider nutritional value. We have lost touch with what nourishing food is. At the same time, food is too cheap because waste so much of it. Food poverty is a significant problem. School food is vital for many families, in some cases the only food children get. Tomorrow we're debating Healthy Weight: Healthy Wales; we're the most obese nation in Europe.

Lisa Williams- Correlation between poorest and diabetes, heart disease etc. Must make good food affordable.

PH- Food For Life(Soil Association) standards not that high. In Copenhagen- the Mayor has policy that everything on plates must be sustainable and local. 90-100% food is local and organic. Don't need to focus on globalisation.

Tony Little- Children in Copenhagen much healthier. Importance of supply chain policy.

Rhys James- Need more focus on punishing poor behaviour, where schools etc failing to comply with guidelines. Caerphilly keen to work with others on good practice.

NF- Assembly previously passed Fairtrade legislation for food served in their buildings. Coffee fine, but would Fairtrade meat be viable for smaller organisations in Wales?

We've been asking different governments about discussions with supermarkets in relation to Brexit. How frequently do they meet the big supermarkets to assess how they treat people they procure from? Needs political will to confront supermarkets properly

PH- Nobody disagreeing with what we're saying round this table. Doesn't feel like there's significant dissent anymore between organisations. Cooperative approach could make a huge difference. Alignment from organisations here tonight would make supermarkets take notice.

TL- Need to cover food waste next key issue in relation to climate emergency. We're constantly told agriculture contributes 12% of emissions, but food waste contributes 8%. Suggest we have different buying policy. If we lose the support we get from EU Commission, could WG step in to prevent unfair trading practices etc?

JR- Good to see everyone in agreement. Need to use power of public procurement. Hospitals starting to ban unhealthy food from their canteens and meals served to patients. The Appetite for Life regulations need to be adhered to and strengthened.

Patrick Holden was thanked for provoking such a stimulating discussion.

Matters Arising from last minutes: any points of accuracy, let JR know. Highlighted the role of Public Service Boards to get public bodies to operate collaboratively. Lots of opportunities not being taken. (WAO report).

Date of next meeting TBA once speaker/topic identified.