

# FEEDING THE FUTURE

The Landworkers'  
Alliance



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**Small and Medium Scale  
Agroecological Farmers can address  
the Agricultural Challenges of the  
Twenty-First Century**

**...but we need DEFRA's support!**

**The Landworkers' Alliance**  
www.landworkersalliance.org.uk  
landworkersalliance@riseup.net

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**The Landworkers' Alliance** is an organisation of small and medium scale, agroecological<sup>1</sup> family farms, agricultural labourers, horticulturalists and woodland workers. Such land workers are in a strong position to address many of the challenges facing UK agriculture today. Our vision for UK agriculture includes more farmers, better quality food, a fitter population, a healthier environment, fewer greenhouse gas emissions, increased biodiversity, and flourishing, vibrant rural economies. We uphold the principles of food sovereignty<sup>2</sup>. Small scale farmers<sup>3</sup> comprise about 50% of humanity and produce 70% of the food we all need to survive, and yet they constitute some of the most marginalized and culturally stigmatised people in the world. The UK is no exception; the political interests of traditional farmers are not represented by either a major political party or a vocal trade union. The Landworkers' Alliance (LWA) was founded in 2012 by a group of like-minded producers who recognized the need for a political campaigning alliance to work alongside existing growers' forums. The LWA was officially accepted as a full member of La Via Campesina in June 2013.

**La Via Campesina** is an alliance of an estimated 200 million peasant farmers and landless workers across five continents. Membership is only open to individuals who are actively involved in food, farming, fuel and fibre-based livelihoods. As a result La Via Campesina commands an authority that can't be matched by NGO's or other civil society organizations and since 1994 it has become recognised by the United Nations and the World Bank as the official voice of smallholder farmers around the world, forming a political space in which to advance its Food Sovereignty platform. LWA is working to defend farmers' rights alongside other organisations within the European Coordination of La Via Campesina (ECVC).



## • A NATIONAL FOOD POLICY

We urgently need a national food policy based on food sovereignty principles to ensure an integrated approach to farming, health, environment, food safety and marketing. Such a policy would give the UK greater control over food safety and environmental regulation, and protect erosion of our civil rights by global partnerships such as TTIP.

## • LEVEL THE PLAYING FIELD

DEFRA should implement the cap on Pillar 1 payments at €150,000 per farm and redirect the money saved thereby to support new entrants and stronger greening measures. Subsidies should be directed towards those farmers who are delivering social and environmental goods as well as producing food, to bring prices for “eco-products” in line with conventional food prices.

## • SUPPORT NEW ENTRANTS AND CORE PRODUCTION

Funds should be made available to help new entrants with core food production costs. Only 3% of farmers in the UK are under the age of 35. Capital costs for core food production in start-up businesses are a major barrier for young farmers and new entrants. The issue of aging farmers could be overcome by greater support for new businesses.

## • LAND ACCESS

Implement measures to limit the concentration of land ownership, increase opportunities for affordable access to land and tied accommodation, and halt the sell off of County Council farms.

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### Challenges facing UK agriculture today

- Feeding a growing population with healthy, affordable food
- Climate change causing extreme weather, such as floods and drought that impact on crops. There is urgent need to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from agriculture.
- Resource shortages (eg oil, minerals for fertilisers) and soil compaction, erosion and fertility loss.
- Loss of biodiversity
- Low farm gate prices
- Aging agricultural work force, and lack of opportunities for new entrants

It is possible for small and medium scale ecological farmers to feed Britain.

All that is needed is the political will to level the playing field.

If small, agroecological farmers were given equivalent subsidies and funding for R&D, there is no reason why they couldn't exceed yields of industrial farms, whilst providing environmental and social benefits that large-scale farming simply cannot match.

## OUR VISION FOR THE FUTURE OF FARMING

### More farmers, better food

To face today's challenges and achieve food sovereignty, agricultural policy must prioritise the following:

- **Resilience** – Uncertainty over future resource availability (eg oil, water, agricultural inputs) and the impacts of climate change (droughts, flooding etc) mean it is wise to aim for a diverse and flexible agricultural sector, with the skills to use traditional and modern methods, at different scales. As a country we shouldn't put all our eggs in the one basket of agribusiness.

- **Food Security and Justice** - The UK should be producing as much food here as we can, prioritising domestic consumption over the export of food and the production of biofuels. We need to be ready with a locally appropriate and diverse farming system that is capable of supplying the majority of our food needs locally. We currently import 42% of the food we eat in the UK<sup>4</sup>.

- **Sustainable Food Production** – Agriculture that focuses on cutting greenhouse gas emissions, protecting soil fertility, using natural resources (such as water and minerals) more efficiently, and enhancing biodiversity.

#### More Farmers

We need to get enough people on the land within the next 10 years to produce the majority of fruit, vegetables, dairy, meat and cereals we consume. If all UK farming was ecological/low input a total of 158,000 new full time jobs would

be created, in addition to the 159,000 already employed in agriculture, while in a post-fossil fuel era it is predicted that seven million part-time jobs could be created if more labour were to replace machinery<sup>5,6</sup>. A larger agricultural workforce would have a multiplier effect as new entrants bring fresh ideas and create further opportunities in manufacturing, retail, and catering.

#### Better Food and Farming

All farmers would use more environmentally sustainable techniques and local distribution systems to provide better quality food, including:

- Direct and local marketing: food produced closer to the point of consumption will be fresher, and require less processing, additives and packaging.
- Lower pesticide and heavy metal contamination, and higher anti-oxidant levels when organic farming methods are used<sup>7</sup>.
- Soil care: building soil organic matter by using animal wastes, compost and green manures, to improve water retention and drainage, sequester carbon and provide natural fertility; prevention of soil erosion by use of cover crops.
- Conservation of biodiversity and landscapes: combining mixed farming appropriate to the locality with conservation measures such as hedgerows, field margins, ponds, woodlands orchards and smaller fields.
- Resource efficiency: recycling materials on-farm as far as possible, rather than relying on outside inputs and designing farms that are energy and water efficient.



## OTHER WAYS OF MEASURING EFFICIENCY

In contrast to our vision, the food system promoted by DEFRA, branded as “sustainable intensification”, is one where small and medium scale farms are being phased out to make way for agribusiness. The message coming from government programmes is “get big or get out”. Such economies of scale only result in efficiency when it is measured in terms of production per unit of labour. When efficiency is measured in production per unit area, smaller farms often perform better than larger units<sup>8</sup>. Furthermore, there is evidence that smaller, agroecological farms generate positive economic, environmental and social goods, such as those listed below, and fewer negative externalities such as rural depopulation, soil erosion and biodiversity loss

If large farms are considered to be so efficient, why do they need subsidies? When small farms offer so many benefits, and are often more efficient per unit area, how is it possible to justify industrial farms being so highly subsidised, while farms under 5ha get nothing?

		Large-scale Agribusiness	Small-scale Agroecology
<b>Economy</b>	Employment	Employment reduced through use of ever larger machines	More jobs and greater job satisfaction <sup>9</sup>
	Rural economic vitality	Loss of jobs impacts other rural services and businesses.	Network of interdependent rural businesses is created
<b>Environment</b>	Soil	Soil erosion and compaction; soil biology disrupted by prolonged use of fertilisers and pesticides.	Organic matter increased with composts, manures and green manures, while cover crops reduce erosion.
	Carbon sequestration	Modern agriculture is a net producer of greenhouse gases, through fertiliser use, tillage and machinery use.	Organic matter, green-manures, field margins, trees and hedges can contribute to farms being carbon positive <sup>10,11</sup>
	Biodiversity	Monocultures, GM crops and pesticides erode diversity	Traditional practices, small fields and diverse crops favour indigenous biodiversity
	Energy use	Fertiliser manufacture and low labour to land ratio mean modern agriculture is highly fossil fuel dependent	Efforts to reduce fossil fuel dependence through good design, natural fertility building and reliance on human labour
<b>Society</b>	Food quality	Food is a commodity, often highly processed and transported long distances	High-quality, diverse food produced close to consumers
	Rural society	Countryside becomes a dormitory for commuters	Vibrant communities culturally connected to the countryside



## “Level the Playing Field” - Implement the voluntary cap on Pillar 1 payments

Although most policy makers in Europe agree that they want to promote “family farms” and smaller scale production, the Common Agricultural Policy in fact rewards larger producers.

In England, the Basic Payment Scheme (BPS) provides flat rate payments of £57/ha for moorland and £199/ha for Lowland. These are not linked to production, but are conditional upon certain greening measures and maintaining land in cultivatable condition. The bigger the farm, the more subsidies it gets. The per hectare direct payment system creates an extremely un-level playing field for small producers. Across Europe 20% of the farms get 80% of the CAP money. In the UK holdings of under 5ha do not receive payments anymore, as a result of DEFRA’s decision to raise the threshold for eligibility for BPS, during the recent CAP reform.

Many small farms are highly productive, yet due to their size large farms get huge subsidies while small ones get marginal support. As well as being highly productive, small farms are often in a better position to provide public goods such as soil protection, carbon sequestration and conservation of biodiversity due to their detailed approach to environmental management. Yet to stay viable they have to charge “premium prices” for their products. The current discrepancy in support means that industrial farms can operate below the cost of production, driving down prices for small producers; a process which drives small producers out of business. The situation is exacerbated when supermarkets further reduce prices by subsidising “loss leaders”.

### Subsidies should be used to correct market failures, not to reward land ownership.

In the latest round of reforms of the Common Agricultural Policy the European Union gave all member states the option to reduce payments to individual landowners above a threshold of €150,000. We would like DEFRA to implement that payment cap. No farm should need more support than €150,000. The money saved thereby should be diverted to support ecological production on **ALL** farms, including those under 5ha, to enable eco-produce to be priced competitively, and to support new entrants. Furthermore, farmers not complying with greening rules should forfeit 100% of their Basic Payment Scheme subsidies, not just 30%, as suggested in the latest CAP reforms.

#### How much could be saved by capping the CAP?

In 2013, 1,349 landholdings in the UK received over £120,000 (equivalent to the €150,000 capping level suggested by the EU) in direct payments, totalling £415,620,250. If each landholding had their payments capped at £120,000 the savings would be over 400 million pounds<sup>12</sup>. We would like a portion of this money to be reinvested in support for small farms and agroecological farming. We acknowledge that some of these subsidies go to non-profit organisations and public bodies, and would not want to divert funds away from their valuable conservation work. However with the right criteria for subsidies, there could still be significant savings from subsidies to large private land-owners.

#### Policy Request

DEFRA should implement the cap on Pillar 1 payments at €150,000 per farm and redirect the money saved thereby to support new entrants and stronger greening measures.



## POLICY REQUEST 3

### New Entrant Support for Core Production

In order for small and medium agroecological farms to provide for our future food needs as fossil fuels become more expensive, Defra needs to start ensuring that there are enough producers with adequate skills and resources to farm in the best way possible. Currently Defra's rural development money can only be used to support marketing and processing, and not the costs of core food production. This is short sighted.

Pillar 2 money should help new entrants gain access to land, training, and the infrastructure (barns, fencing, water systems, renewable energy systems, livestock, trees, polytunnels, etc), needed to start producing food. There should also be ongoing support available for holdings that have high environmental benefits, employ people, have high animal welfare standards, and produce a significant amount of affordable food for the local economy.

New entrant support should include:

- grants for core infrastructure costs, not just diversification and marketing
- grants and loans for land purchase
- Basic Payment to new entrant farmers should be topped up by an additional 25% for the first 10 years of installation.
- training in agroecology
- peer to peer support to increase the productivity of small units
- planning permission for agricultural workers' dwellings
- support for development of Community Supported Agriculture schemes

#### Chagfood - A Successful Start-up

Chagfood is a Community Supported Agriculture scheme (CSA), now supplying 75 households in and around Chagford in Devon with seasonal, ecologically grown vegetables, and providing employment for two full time growers along with a part-time apprentice. Horse-drawn tools are used to cultivate a total of six acres of land, on two rented sites.

The scheme arose following a meeting in 2008 attended by more than 70 local residents, landowners, farmers and businesses, at which there was a consensus that Chagford - as an agricultural community - should act to shorten the distance between its producers and consumers.

In 2010 the group successfully applied to a National Lottery funding programme called Making Local Food Work for a one off grant of £38,000 to get Chagfood off the ground. This grant, as well as a subsequent £8,000 grant from Dartmoor National Park's Sustainable Development Fund, effectively subsidised the two year set-up of the market garden until April 2012 when their members' subscriptions fully covered the running costs and the wages of the two growers.

The start-up grant enabled Chagfood to invest in infrastructure and equipment, such as polytunnels, a packing shed, modern horse-drawn cultivation tools and hand tools, as well as covering the costs of land rental, seeds, insurance and wages for the first two years. Now, however, with 75 members paying a subscription of £440 - £600 a year, the project is a self-sustaining entity. Furthermore, due to being well funded in its start-up phase, the enterprise is now able to operate with no subsidy.



#### Policy Request

Funds should be made available to help new entrants with the costs of core food production.

## POLICY REQUEST 4

### Access to land

UK land ownership is extremely concentrated. This trend is intensifying through widespread investment in farm land as a commodity, expansion of holdings to maximise Basic Payment Scheme, and use of BPS by large land owners to purchase more land. Despite making up 71.1% of farms in the UK, small farmers have access to only 25.4% of agricultural land<sup>13</sup>. The small amount of land that is available for sale or rent is prohibitively expensive for the many people who wish to become involved in food production, while existing small and medium scale farmers are witnessing land around them being bought up by large farming estates, resulting in entire parishes being owned by only one or two landowners.

Limiting CAP payments to a maximum of €150,000 per farm would reduce the land purchasing incentive and the capacity of larger farms to buy land, lower land prices and make land accessible to new entrants. Furthermore, we need more robust measures to mitigate the effects of the market on land prices if we are to replenish the aging agricultural workforce and reverse the historical decline in numbers of farmers.

Improving access to land for new entrants must be at the heart of agricultural policy. Options for implementing this include:

**1) Introduce affordable and statutory access**

to land for those who want to farm. Options include reviving organisations like the Land Settlement Association and creating more county farms and smallholdings with smaller unit sizes, and protecting those that remain from being sold off. Any sell offs of County Farms should be restricted to those seeking to earn their living from agriculture

**2) Zone greenbelt land** and grade 1 agricultural land for food production only

**3) Increase the enforcement of agricultural ties**, to keep accommodation for agricultural workers affordable

**4) Support the development of Community Supported Agriculture schemes** and develop the community right to buy to include unused land not currently on the market.

#### Policy Request

Implement measures to limit the concentration of land ownership and increase opportunities for affordable access to land and tied accommodation.



## Small farmers can feed Britain!

Recent studies exploring issues of global and national food production, food poverty, sustainable land use and climate change, support a vision in which<sup>14</sup>:

- A growing population can be fed on less rather than more land;
- People eat less meat and dairy produce, and more fruit, vegetables, nuts and whole grains, in line with health advice.
- Greenhouse gas emissions from agriculture are dramatically reduced.
- Higher productivity per unit area of land is achieved by increasing labour intensity
- An agricultural system based on small and medium scale mixed farms and ecological market gardening could meet the UK's food demands on available land, as shown by the table below.

	Mill. tons/ year needed for a pop'n of 70.5million <sup>15</sup>	Production capacity based on 18.5mill ha land (mill. tons/yr) <sup>16</sup>
Cereals	7.2	9.9
Dairy	7.8	12.5
Meat	3.7	2.68
Potatoes	2.7	19
Fruit and vegetables	8.3	24.81 <sup>(17)</sup>

**For all food categories, except meat, the production capacity of agroecological farms exceeds the projected demand for a population of 70.5million (projected for 2030).**

Health experts advise us to eat less meat, and more fruit, vegetables and cereals. Our vision, of a move to mixed agroecological production on small and medium mixed farms and market gardens, would thus bring health and environmental benefits, as well as doubling the number employed in agriculture.

### Food Sovereignty

Food Sovereignty is 'people's right to healthy and culturally appropriate food produced through ecologically sound and sustainable methods, and their right to define their own food and agriculture systems' (Via Campesina, 1996). It advocates agroecological production and aims to maintain native seeds, diversify crops, conserve natural resources and strengthen local food systems.

There are six principles to Food Sovereignty. It:

- Focuses on food for people
- Values food providers
- Localises food systems
- Puts control locally
- Builds knowledge and skills
- Works with nature.

This set of principles has inspired organisations, communities, NGOs, and even governments around the globe, and is increasingly being adopted in decision making at all levels of society.

### Agroecology

Agroecology covers agricultural systems that follow these principles<sup>18</sup>:

- Renewable and on-farm resources are used wherever possible, including biological nitrogen fixation and renewable energy use;
- Minimal production of pollutants such as greenhouse gases and nitrates;
- Conservation of soils, water, energy and genetic resources
- Diversifies local landscapes, biota and economies
- Adjusts to local environments and empowering local people;
- Management of ecological relationships;
- Values the health of ecosystems, humans, plants and animals

#### Publication Credits

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## Additional policy strategies we support

**Education** – Farming and horticulture represented as a viable career choice for young people, along with more training aimed at agro-ecological forms of farming. Higher value should be placed on rural science and horticulture qualifications.

**Wages** – Reinstatement of the agricultural wages board to ensure fair wages for agricultural workers. In addition, tax credits and the benefits system must recognise the seasonality and unpredictability of land based work.

**Planning** – A planning system that encourages sustainable agriculture, rather than working against it, as at present. New agricultural workers' dwellings face draconian resistance, whereas agricultural ties can easily be lifted, resulting in a chronic shortage of affordable, rural accommodation. Planning should also restrict the development of high-street supermarkets and fast food chains to allow the development of local food distribution models that can offer high-quality, locally produced food.

### **A More Accessible Environmental Scheme**

– The new “Environmental Land Management Scheme” should be accessible to all farmers engaged in environmental practices, wherever they are.

**Public Procurement** – Small and medium scale producers are often excluded from public procurement contracts, as individually they are unable to supply the quantities required. Government support for co-operative marketing arrangements would increase the choice and

quality of food available to schools, hospitals, prisons and the military settlements.

### **Machinery Rings and Communal Processing Facilities**

– Resource efficiency could be increased if the Government offered capital grants and advice to enable the establishment of co-operatives, enabling machinery and processing facilities to be shared. This would also reduce start-up costs for new entrants.

### **Investment in Sustainable Agriculture and Food Production**

– To encourage investment in start up farms and the development of existing farm infrastructure we want to see tax relief available to those investing in sustainable, agro-ecological farms and food businesses.

**Animal feed regulations** - The UK's most naturally productive crop is grass, and yet UK livestock is increasingly fed on imported, and often genetically modified, grain and pulses. This is a major barrier to food sovereignty. The situation is exacerbated by regulations that restrict the use of recycled animal feeds such as pig swill. A more sustainable regulatory regime would encourage safe and efficient use of waste food for feeding pigs and chickens, and a return to herbivores being fed on grass and tree foliage. A tariff on the import of soya as animal feed would encourage the production of lucerne as a protein alternative.

### **Seeds and Plant Reproductive Material**

- Halt the steady erosion of farmers' rights to use, save and trade seeds and other plant reproductive materials.

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