



Food Security Action Cymru

Proposals for decisive action by the next Government of Wales

February 2026

The challenges we face

- Our food system is very fragile. The groundbreaking report last year by Tim Lang, [*Just in Case: narrowing the UK civil food resilience gap*](#), shows how our highly centralised just-in-time food distribution system, on which we are wholly dependent, is not resilient to shocks already happening - cyber-attacks, closed ports, global conflict, extreme climate events.
- Food prices will rise inexorably, driving food poverty.
- The extreme price of farmland land is blocking farming from a new generation of farmers.

Three flagship policies to catalyse change

- 1. Rebuild urban-rural food supply chains in Wales for fresh food.**
 - Creating new access to secure markets is the single biggest way to enable farms to diversify and to enable new farms to start.
 - Take inspiration from the French territorial food strategies.
- 2. Build affordable farms with homes for a new generation of Welsh farmers.**
 - Work with housing associations to build homes for farms, inspired by the lead being taken by ClwydAlyn Housing Association.
 - Update national planning policy to enable homes for small farms producing local food.
- 3. Build community food resilience.**
 - Establish nation-wide programme of community food growing projects for families who cannot afford fresh food.
 - Create a National Food Security and Resilience Council to make plans for emergencies, with particular attention to mobilising the resources we have in our communities, farms and food businesses.

The benefits from these changes

- We will build food security through diversifying our supplies and by making food affordable.
- We will support new enterprises on farms, linking to expanding markets for fresh food.
- We will support the rural economy through new businesses and local trading.
- We will keep ownership of supply chains close to farmers, so farmers get a better deal.
- We will open farming to a new generation of farmers.
- We will repopulate our agricultural areas.
- We will contribute to climate change mitigation, regenerating biodiversity and keeping our rivers clean, by implementing agroecological growing methods.

The [Future Farms Partnership is working to build 100 new farm enterprises](#) in Powys, growing agroecologically for local and regional markets. This is modelling the change proposed for all of Wales – building new farms, rebuilding the supply into its nearest city (Birmingham), and developing the concept of “affordable farms” with ClwydAlyn Housing Association.

Voices

Professor Tim Lang, in [Just in Case: narrowing the UK civil food resilience gap](#), 2025:

“Part of the policy problem facing the UK on food resilience is that government’s default position (‘leave it to Tesco et al’) sidesteps the issue that not even mighty retailers have the capacity to prevent climate heating or land flooding or mass zoonoses outbreaks or global conflicts affecting chokepoints in the event of major shocks.”

James Rebanks, in a [BBC discussion](#), November 2025:

*“We have a just in time food system... but it’s not robust or resilient enough. Through public policy we have to design a system that has far more resilience. **What we need is lots of local food production.** We need British veg production, British horticulture, British fruit. If you live in Manchester, you need thereto be some food production near to you.”*

Guy Singh-Watson, in a [joint letter to the Prime Minister](#), July 2024:

*“Almost half of our veg and more than 80% of our fruit is imported. This cannot go on. **We urgently need more – not less – home-grown fruit and veg, or we face further disaster for supermarket shelves, our health, and the environment.** With the right support from government, growers can be empowered to grow more and in a nature-friendly way, like our organic and regenerative producers who are nurturing the land, restoring wildlife and protecting waterways. Your intervention could make it possible for all fruit and veg producers to thrive – from field scale horticulture, to orchards, organic farms, market gardens; could help restore the resilience of our food supply, improve the fairness of our supply chains, and get more British produce on people’s plates.”*

Students and alumni of Black Mountains College, open letter to governments, March 2026:

*“We are students of Black Mountains College, studying agroecological farming. **We are developing the skills to practice this farming, but we are blocked from practising it.** We ask you to change this....The price of land is prohibitive [and] this kind of farming needs homes for people living and working on the land. We urge Welsh Government and all rural local authorities in Wales to develop policies and plans that open up many more thousands of acres for affordable small farms with homes. In so doing, we can build food security, rejuvenate the rural economy and respond to climate over-heating, biodiversity loss and river pollution.”* Full letter in Annex.

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1. The challenges

1.1 Future disruption and food price inflation will demand ever more attention.

The report by Tim Lang, [Just in Case: narrowing the UK civil food resilience gap](#) (summarised for Wales at [FoodSecurityAction.org](#)), describes the fragility of our food system and its extreme vulnerability to shocks that we already see happening – cyber-attacks, closed ports, global conflict, extreme climate events. Severe problems lie ahead for which we are wholly unprepared.

Food prices will rise inexorably. [Food price inflation in 2025 was 4.2%](#), which would lead to a doubling in price in 17 years. But Tim Lang’s analysis shows that the pressures will get worse. Severe climate over-heating in Europe will increasingly restrict our future imports of fresh food. The [UK imports](#) 84% of the fruit it consumes and 50% of the vegetables. (For a recent analysis of future global food supplies and price rises, see Guardian, [How climate breakdown is putting the world’s food in peril – in maps and charts.](#)) Domestic growing of fresh foods is concentrated in the East of England, which is particularly vulnerable to both flooding and drought. Global conflict is escalating, restricting trade routes and driving up the price of fuel used by our carbon-intensive food system.

The inability of people to afford food is one of the cruellest consequences of poverty. In January 2025, one in seven UK households struggled to afford food, according to the Food Foundation’s [food insecurity tracker](#). This problem is going to get steadily worse as prices rise.

1.2 The price of farmland is blocking a new generation of farmers.

As economic inequality grows and the rich become richer, the price of all assets rises, including land. In Wales, farmland is already priced at three times its agricultural value because it is seen as a good investment by those with wealth. This is gradually sucking farmland out of farming. In 2023, non-farmers [bought more than half of the farms and estates sold in the UK](#). Land is more valuable as a safe asset for storing wealth than for growing food.

This does not happen in France, because farmland is protected in law: it cannot be sold out of farming. The average price of farmland in France is three times less than in UK: [£2,600/acre in France](#) and [£8,200 in UK](#) (2024 figures).

2. The market opportunity

The market for organic fruit and veg is [booming in the UK](#). As current supply is squeezed, so will demand continue to increase.

Meanwhile large cities are paying increasing attention to food security. Birmingham has a [food strategy](#) that includes buying more fresh food from its rural hinterlands. The City Council has just placed its first order for fresh food from Powys farmers, a step towards restoring once vibrant food trade links between Powys and the city. Birmingham is showing the way to Welsh cities. In France, the Future of Agriculture, Food and Forest Law (2014) [requires territorial food planning](#).

3. Tim Lang's calls to action

Tim Lang calls on national Governments to take a decisive lead on three key things:

1. **Enable farmers to grow more food for regional and local markets.** This diversifies and secures our food supply ready for severe disruptions.
2. **Enable communities to build food resilience,** so that every community has capacity to look after people in a crisis when food prices spiral out of control.
3. **Make plans for collaboration during emergencies.**

The website, FoodSecurityAction.org, summarises Tim Lang's report, *Just in Case*.

4. Current Welsh Government policy

The Future Generations Commissioner has put food firmly on the national agenda, in his [Future Generations Report 2025](#). The Welsh Government has made a start. There is still far to go for the next Government to address food security at the scale and with the urgency the issue demands.

4.1 Changing planning policy to enable new farming enterprises

The Future Generations Report 2025 has a strong food theme and addresses planning issues.

“One of the biggest barriers to growing more local food is access to land. Local authorities should look to Powys’ Rural enterprise planning policy, which supports small-scale horticulture businesses by providing planning guidance for rural enterprise dwellings. By adopting similar policies, councils can unlock opportunities for new horticultural enterprises, shorten supply chains, and promote community supported agriculture.

“Public bodies face increasing tensions between balancing competing land uses, for example, housing and infrastructure, renewable energy deployment, food production, nature recovery and economic growth. We need a smarter, more joined-up approach to land use decisions, one that ensures that carbon emissions, nature recovery and food resilience are considered in every decision.

The [Wales Community Food Strategy \(2025\)](#) responds to the Future Generations report, promising to increase local food supply and horticulture, and to change planning policy in favour of both. (See Annex.)

4.2 Developing more horticulture

Horticulture was once at the heart of local and regional food systems and needs to be again. Welsh Government has a [horticulture strategy](#) (2024). This has led to active business support for new horticulture enterprises.

5. Modelling the change in Powys

5.1 Future Farms Partnership: 100 new farming enterprises

This briefing emerges from the experience of working to make food security action happen in Powys. Although still at an early stage, the experience so far has provided invaluable lessons about the realities of making change and has helped to define what national Government needs to do.

The [Future Farms Partnership](#) in Powys has set the aim of building 100 new farming enterprises in the county, growing agroecologically for local and regional markets. This not only involves building farms, but ensuring they are viable, by building access to secure markets, ensuring a supply of skilled new entrants, and advocating changes in policies to enable a new approach.

5.2 The start: three new farms, new planning guidelines, new trade with Birmingham, new farming skills for the future

The Partnership has already made the first four steps.

- **Building three new farms**

The Partnership has built [three new small farms in Sarn](#) as a pilot on 35 acres of farmland leased from Powys County Council. The first farmers moved in last April and were trading and organising community events by July.

Are small farms viable?

There is an argument in wide circulation that small-scale farming is not viable. This assertion is wrong. Small-scale farming is very hard work, like all farming, but it is economically viable. Intensive agroecological horticulture, typical of small farms, generates a net income of about £20,000/acre in a year – after all costs, including additional labour, but before paying the farmer. One acre needs the farmer’s full-time attention. So a two-acre market garden, managed by a couple, can earn £40,000/year, just enough to live on. Furthermore, small-scale farms work as networks. They specialise in what they grow and buy and sell from each other in order to provide their customers with a complete product.

In November, BBC’s [Escape to the Country](#) programme filmed in Powys picked this project as emblematic of the whole County. (Feature starts at 35m38s.) Lydia: *“I would never have been able to even think about getting seven acres of my own if I had to fund it all myself. If you want to live on site as we are, it’s unbelievably expensive.... I feel really blessed!”*

- **Developing new planning guidelines**

Prior to building the farms and in order to enable planning permission, there was a two-year period of research to develop new planning guidelines for Powys: [Rural Enterprise Dwellings for Small-Scale Horticulture](#). (Bannau Brycheiniog National Park issued [similar guidelines](#) shortly after.)

- **Re-building trade with Birmingham city**

A new trade channel is being piloted with Birmingham, with a test order at the start of 2026 of fresh agroecologically grown produce from Powys farms. This is a first step in re-building once thriving supply chains into this major city. Providing a large and secure market is the most valuable thing that can be done to enable new farming enterprises to supply local markets.

- **Building a partnership with Black Mountains College**

Black Mountains College is situated in Powys and teaches agroecological horticulture. Graduates, however, face severe barriers because of the lack of access to land. They have written an open letter to Government (in Annex) appealing to them to 'let us farm!'

5.3 The next stage: 100 new farming enterprises

Building 100 farming enterprises involves three kinds of project:

- diversification on existing farms
- building new farms with homes
- setting up non-commercial community growing projects to provide fresh food to families who cannot afford it.

5.4 Building affordable farms with ClwydAlyn Housing Association

A partnership is being developed with ClwydAlyn Housing Association to build farmhouses through Wales' social housing programme. This would enormously contribute to the financial viability of building new small farms in the context of hugely inflated land prices. The homes would be built and managed by ClwydAlyn, whilst the farmland would be secured and developed by a local community land trust.

This idea is a major innovation in farming, of international interest. The Centre of Food Policy, established by Tim Lang at the University of London, is planning a major research programme on land/farming/housing policy with this Powys initiative as a centrepiece.

Annex: Open letter from Black Mountain College students to public authorities – 'let us farm!'

To: Powys County Council, National Park Authority, Welsh Government

We are students at Black Mountains College, studying agroecological farming. We are developing the skills to practice this farming, but we are blocked from practising it. We ask you to change this.

The kind of farming that we are preparing for is crucial for the future. It enables our regions and cities to diversify their food supplies, which is vital for food security. Our methods specifically reduce carbon emissions, restore nature and do not pollute our rivers. We build the soil biome and produce food that is high in nutrition and quality and good for health. We help to rejuvenate rural communities. Small farms working together support farmers' social welfare and mental health. Our methods have been shown across the world to be extremely productive and economically viable, albeit very hard work, like all farming.

Horticulture and mixed farming were once mainstays of farming in this area. Economic incentives enacted through agricultural policies have all but eliminated it.

We cannot practise agroecological farming, however. The price of land is prohibitive – it is valued as a financial asset, not as a food-growing asset. Also, this kind of farming needs homes for people living and working on the land, but there have been decades of rural depopulation and a planning system that still reinforces the emptying of people from farming areas.

We warmly welcome the work already underway in Powys and Bannau Brycheiniog to change planning policy and build three small farms at Sarn. Within months the new farmers were selling produce and were holding community events. We also welcome the technical and financial support these farms have received from Welsh Government services.

We urge Welsh Government and all rural local authorities in Wales to develop policies and plans that open up many more thousands of acres for affordable small farms with homes. In so doing, we can build food security, rejuvenate the rural economy and respond to climate over-heating, biodiversity loss and river pollution.

Annex: Wales Community Food Strategy (2025)

<https://www.gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2025-04/community-food-strategy.pdf>

“Objective 6: To increase the production of fresh, nutritious and sustainable locally sourced food in Wales, maximising the opportunities for developing community growing and small-scale horticulture in Wales.

“In the past, Wales had a rich and varied horticultural industry. The movement to a global food system with specialisation increased the economy of scale and this led to a steep decline in Welsh, and indeed UK, horticulture production.

“Small-scale horticulture in Wales presents numerous opportunities and benefits, particularly in terms of environmental sustainability and biodiversity. Small-scale horticulture also offers economic benefits, like creating local employment opportunities and supporting rural economies.

“We will update Planning Policy Wales to emphasise the specific focus and importance we place on horticulture as a land-use, acknowledging its unique operational needs. The update aims to increase small scale horticulture in Wales by giving explicit mention to horticulture, our definition of and vision for the sector. This will enable local planning authorities and applicants to have the awareness and the knowledge needed for planning permission. We will subsequently look to update the relevant Technical Advice Notes (TANs) to reflect our ambitions to expand the horticultural sector in Wales. This will offer clarity for planning officers and growers, recognising the distinct requirements for evaluating horticultural planning applications from the current wider agriculture guidance. We want the guidance to enable improvements to the quality and evaluation of planning applications and the timeliness of approvals.”