

Small Edible Horticulture Business Support Grants Pilot

Evaluation by Dr Amber Wheeler
on behalf of Food Sense Wales

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Summary

In 2021 Food Sense Wales, with funding from Peas Please and facilitation by Social Farms and Gardens, ran a pilot of a small grants scheme pilot to fund equipment for small scale horticultural growers in Wales who previously had minimal opportunities to access capital investment grants. Wales' commercial horticulture sector is composed of a large number of small scale producers, therefore one way in which commercial production could be expanded to meet need is through optimizing small scale production. The idea being tested by the pilot was that a little investment in this sector could go a long way to increasing vegetable sales and therefore help to increase consumption in communities across Wales.

A small amount of funding was available – just £20,000, but in a 22 day application window 21 applications were received, showing the need for the scheme. Five growers were successful and the grants went towards the purchase of two polytunnels, two packing sheds, a bore hole and a windrow compost turner. Evaluation of the small capital grants pilot showed that these small grants had a big impact on the growers. Sales of veg increased on average by **74.5%**, with a range (of those who had successfully spent the grant) of between 30% and 133%. Overall an **extra 79 families** a week benefitted from a veg box.

The community benefits were clear. In addition to more sustainable vegetables being grown in communities across

Wales, we saw improvement in working environment for volunteers, increased ability for growers to host educational visits and community events, and more vegetables going to low-income families. There were also environmental benefits including improvement in biodiversity and soil health, greater productivity, greater efficiency and less waste and increased resilience to water shortages.

In 2020 the [Tyfu Cymru baseline survey](#) found that there were around 200 edible horticulture businesses in Wales, though now there are more. In 2020 those businesses were estimated to be producing ¼ of a portion of fruit and veg per head of population in Wales. Based on the findings of this pilot, a small-scale grants scheme could significantly increase this and see the expansion of sales of veg in Wales by on average 74.5% per year.

It is recommended that Welsh Government take the findings of this evaluation and use them to develop a larger scale pilot of a bespoke infrastructure small grant scheme for horticulture in Wales. This would significantly speed up the growth of the small-scale horticulture sector – and lead to greater sales of vegetables as well as wider community and environmental benefits across Wales.



To hear more about the pilot study, [listen to a recent Food Sense Wales podcast](#) presented by Dr Amber Wheeler that features some of the grant recipients as they further discuss the project's results and impacts.

Small Grants, Big Impact.



£20k
5 growers



79 families receiving
a weekly veg box*



74.5%

Average increase in veg sales
from 4 grants fully spent:



Environmental Benefits

Improvement in biodiversity and soil health, greater productivity, greater efficiency and less waste, increased resilience to water shortages.



Community Benefits

More sustainable veg in communities across Wales, improvement in working environment for volunteers, increased the ability for growers to host educational visits and community events, more veg going to low-income families.

2 Polytunnels

2 Packing Sheds

1 Bore Hole

1 Windrow Compost Turner

Recommendations

A new bespoke infrastructure small grant scheme for horticulture is needed in Wales – it would significantly speed up the growth of the sector and lead to greater sales of veg as well as wider community and environmental benefits.

*More veg was being grown using permaculture principles thus increasing the land with greater biodiversity and soil health. Greater efficiency in packing and storage meant less wasted veg. Cold storage also meant gluts could be stored and used over a longer time frame reducing the risk of not being to sell produce all at once and wastage.



Background

As part of its work to ensure sustainable food and farming is at the heart of a just, connected and prosperous food system, [Food Sense Wales](#) piloted a small grants scheme for small-scale (under 5 ha) edible horticulture producers in Wales. The grants were for equipment and infrastructure (such as packing sheds and polytunnels). The work was funded by [Peas Please](#), a UK National Lottery funded programme whose main aim is to drive up veg consumption.

The rationale for the pilot came from [evidence](#) that horticulture, particularly small-scale production, has been historically under resourced as producers working land of under 5 hectares have been less eligible for Government grants or subsidy. Food Sense Wales wanted to test and evaluate the difference small capital grants could make in horticultural production. Specifically whether they could lead to an expansion of sales of fruit and veg in communities across Wales.

[Social Farms and Gardens](#), given its proven track record of administering grant schemes to small scale producers in Wales, and its knowledge of the needs of the sector, particularly Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) Schemes, was chosen as a partner to administer the grants. Social Farms and Gardens dealt with funder issues, established Memorandum of Understanding

between parties, agreed application criteria, advertised the grants, received applications, evaluated them on their merits for the panel, organised the panel assessment, received funds from the funder and contacted successful applicants and purchased their items as well as providing on-going monitoring/assessment.

The total amount available for the grants scheme was just £20k and it was advertised for 22 days from the 9th to 30th November 2020 but during that short time frame 21 applications were received. The applicants were asked what they were applying for and how the grant would help to increase production and expand customer base. Given that availability of capital is an issue for the sector, as profits are often low, the grants scheme offered 100% funding to a range of growers. Baseline data was collected on the amount produced per year and annual turnover from fruit and veg sales. As part of the sifting process 5 applications were rejected due to incompleteness or lack of fit with grant objectives.

Context:

Covid-19

The administration of the grants, the allocation, the investment in capital and the evaluation all happened during the Covid pandemic.

This time saw a significant increase in demand from communities across Wales for fruit and veg from local providers due to the disruption of usual supply chains and lockdown restrictions. According to Wales based [research](#) most growers experienced sudden and dramatic increases in demand for their produce which continued beyond the initial phase of panic buying.

This is backed up by [Peas Please figures](#) that show that there was an increase in sales for box schemes across the UK at the beginning of the pandemic (March-May 2020) of 111% and although veg box sales from May to November decreased by 18% they still increased by 65% overall from February to November 2020.

At the same time as increasing demand, access to labour became problematic with usual avenues for labour, for example from overseas (such as Worldwide Opportunities on

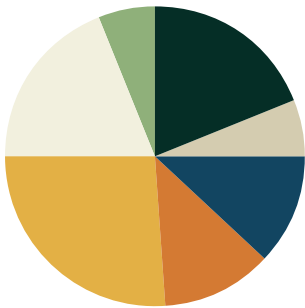
Organic Farm volunteers (WWOOFers) and other workers) not possible. This meant that producers were under considerable pressure of both increased demand and reduced capacity and many were thinly stretched and relied on volunteers. More information on the impact of Covid on labour can be found in the [Tyfu Cymru Labour Monitoring Survey 2020](#).

Many box schemes played their part in the Covid response by providing outdoor, Covid-safe volunteering opportunities, education and recipes, mental health support and referral, and donations of fresh produce to people in need. In many cases this time drove innovation such as improvement of packing facilities and online ordering systems.



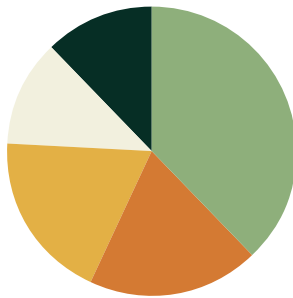
Applicants

Sixteen applications were put before a panel with representatives from Food Sense Wales, Social Farms and Gardens, Tyfu Cymru and Land Workers Alliance. Four applications were to install a packing shed with veg washing facilities, four were to expand outdoor cultivated area, three were to erect/ restore polytunnels, two were to expand fruiting rooms for mushroom cultivation, two were for machinery or tools and one was to install a bore hole.



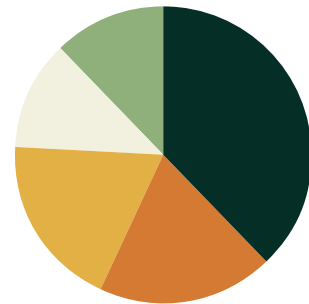
Local Authority Location

- 19% from Carmarthenshire*
- 6% from Ceredigion*
- 12% from Gwynedd
- 12% from Monmouthshire
- 26% from Pembrokeshire*
- 19% from Powys*
- 6% from Swansea.



Length of time established

- 38% had been established between 1 and 2 years
- 19% between 5 and 10 years
- 19% were start up or established for less than 1 year
- 12% between 2 and 5 years
- 12% for more than 10 years.



Growing space

- 44% grew on 1 acre or less
- 38% on between 1.5 and 5 acre
- 12% on 5 to 10 acres
- 6% on 10 to 15 acres

*denotes that these Local Authority areas are highlighted as being within the Top 10 Local Authorities with the highest child poverty rates in Wales.



Gwynedd

Henbant Permaculture (Seabear Limited)

Grant offer: £4,375

Items: Packing & Storage Shed
& Polytunnel Re-cover

The original intention was to support 4 growers with £5k each, but the applications were so strong and not all asked for the full amount (and some accepted a reduction) so one more could be funded. The five successful applicants chosen by a panel were:

- Glasbren (Bronhaul Farm)
- Ash & Elm Horticulture
- Angle Walled Garden
- Troed y Rhiw Organics
- Henbant Permaculture (Seabear Limited)

Ceredigion

Troed y Rhiw Organics

Grant offer: £4,375

Items: Windrow
Compost Turner

Powys

Ash & Elm Horticulture

Grant offer: £4,375

Items: Bore Hole

Carmarthenshire

Glasbren (Bronhaul Farm)

Grant offer: £2,500

Items: Packing shed extension
& Polytunnel Re-cover

Pembrokeshire

Angle Walled Garden

Grant offer: £4,375

Items: Polytunnel

Evaluation Methods

The aim of the pilot was to test and evaluate the difference small capital grants could make to edible horticultural producers, particularly whether they could lead to an increase in vegetable production and sales. The impact of the grant was evaluated by the researcher, by establishing baseline and post grant production levels as well as wider impacts through qualitative data gathering. Evaluation was in the form of site visits and semi-structured interviews, once the applicant had purchased the items or carried out the work funded by the grant. In practice, and due to Covid lockdown restrictions, site-visits were conducted between May–December 2021 and these were backed up by requests by email for further information.



Specific findings:

Glasbren

A Community Supported Agriculture project growing on 2 acres providing weekly vegetable boxes for more than 40 families. Established 3 years.

Grant for: An extension to packing shed and re-covering of polytunnel.

Visit: www.glasbren.org.uk



Summary of Grant Spend:

The extension to the packing shed showed ingenuity and an impressive use of limited funds, sustainable and recycled materials (for example roof tiles made from old wellies) to create an organised space for packing veg, a cool area, a veg processing area and a volunteer area. The extra polytunnel was under construction at the time of visit. Overall, the grant spend and outcome represented good value for money, partly based on use of reclaimed materials but also on the ability of the growers to turn their hand to construction.

Increased production/increased sales:

The CSA had been able to be more organised with an increased amount of space and room for more boxes. This had eased the packing process considerably and reduced waste. This increased efficiency in packing enabled more time for the growers to engage in production. The growing season, with the extra polytunnel coverage extended the season from 26 to 33 weeks. Veg production increased 20% and the amount of own produce in the boxes went from 60 to 80%. Veg Box members went from 40 to 62. This increase of 55% was greatly facilitated by the grant.



Grant Amount: £2500



Community Impact:

Throughout lockdown a regular group of volunteers from the local community attended weekly. Improvement and extension of the packing shed meant that the experience for the volunteers was greatly enhanced and the CSA was able to care for them better, e.g. with tea and coffee making facilities and indoor seating. The CSA hope to use this space to facilitate educational activities and community events post lockdown restrictions. The CSA also supplied solidarity boxes (funded boxes for people on low incomes – [see here](#)) and supplied veg to local organisations (including those supporting mental health) and cafes in the local town. The ability to do this was enhanced by the grant.

Environmental impact:

The fruit and veg was being produced using permaculture principles, which leads to high levels of biodiversity and good soil health. There was also extensive use of recycled and reused materials to minimise environmental impact. Extension of the amount of veg being grown using this farming method is likely to have a positive environmental impact.



Specific findings:

Ash & Elm Horticulture

Grant Amount: £4,375

An off-grid Community Supported Agriculture enterprise growing on 5 acres selling direct to the public and business to business. Established 9 years.

Grant for: Bore hole

Visit: www.ashandelmhorticulture.co.uk

Summary of Grant Spend:

The installation of the bore hole for this business was transformative. Although established for 9 years on 5 acres, all watering had previously been done with rainwater with only enough storage for 20,000 litres – enough to last 3 weeks without rain. Over the summer of 2020 they ran out of water and lost their strawberry crop as a result and were forced to travel 4 miles to get water and spend most days watering rather than developing the business.

The installation of the bore hole meant that this was no longer the case. The reduced stress and increased time available enabled the business to concentrate more on production and marketing. The bore hole cost more than the grant but the business match funded the rest themselves. Whilst the ability of the business to grow in the short term was greatly facilitated, the bore hole is also likely to lead to greater growth in the long term.



Increased production/Increased sales:

The stable supply of water enabled greater watering and hence yield increased. It also created a large time saving for the growers who were able to concentrate more on production and marketing. Veg box customers doubled going from 10 to 20. Turnover for the business went from £18k the previous financial year to £23,500 from April 2021–December 2021 with still another quarter to go. It is likely at least 30% increase in turnover would not have been possible without this grant.



Community Impact:

The installation of the bore hole meant that an onsite nursery selling direct to the public could be set up. This greatly increased the number of members of the public accessing the site and buying plants. Solidarity boxes were also being supplied to people on a low income ([See here](#)). When Covid restrictions are lifted more volunteers will be able to access and use the site, for example people with learning difficulties, and educational and community events will now be more likely.

Environmental impact:

Having a bore hole means that the business is less vulnerable to water shortages and more resilient to climate change and periods of dry weather going forward. It has also meant that the area of land under agro-ecologically produced vegetable production, with its benefits to biodiversity and soil health, has been expanded.



Specific findings:

Angle Walled Garden

A medieval walled garden that grows a traditional range of produce with the environment and sustainability at the heart of its practice. Angle walled garden has been established for 2 years and grows on 6 acres selling through a box scheme, direct sales at farm gate and local restaurants.

Grant for: Polytunnel

Visit: www.anglewalledgarden.co.uk

**Summary of Grant Spend:**

The grant went towards the construction of a 30ft x 80ft polytunnel which significantly increased indoor growing space and facilitated year round veg and salad production, as well as acting as a storage area for winter squashes and providing space for packing of veg boxes. The grant spend and outcome represented good value for money as it was part funded and constructed by the business themselves.

Increased production/Increased sales:

The lengthened growing and selling season facilitated provision of an impressive variety of veg, including heritage varieties, to the local community year-round, providing winter income. The growing season was expanded by 5 months. This meant more veg being supplied and sold through boxes (up from 5 to 12 boxes per week), restaurants and at the farm gate – at a small stall on a main road. Turnover from veg sales went from £5k in the previous financial year to around £9K (April–November 2021) with another 4 months to go. This 80% increase in veg sales was greatly facilitated by the addition of the polytunnel.



Grant Amount: £4,375



Community Impact:

Having a roadside stall in a prominent position on a road used by locals and holiday makers alike meant that more fruit and veg and flowers were being made available and sold in the heart of the local rural community. In time the business hopes to bring the community in for educational courses but this would require investment in additional facilities such as parking.

Environmental impact:

An increased amount of land being cultivated using organic and no dig principles is likely to lead to increased biodiversity and soil health.



Specific findings:

Troed y Rhiw

An established mixed organic farm that has been growing fruit and veg for 12 years on 15 acres, feeding 50 households (pre-covid) through box scheme, as well as selling at a local farmers market and on site stall.

Grant for: Windrow compost turner

Visit: www.troedyrhiwfarm.co.uk

Summary of Grant Spend:

Due to lack of availability of parts, driven by the Covid pandemic, the compost Windrow turner was not operational at the time of visit (December 2021). The main part however had just arrived and was ready to be fitted to the mechanism which was being made bespoke by a Wales based mechanic. The compost turner once in operation will enable the farm to triple compost output per year from

30t to 90t and create a huge time saving for the grower. Currently the grower turns a compost pile 30 times a year by moving it from one pile to another with a tractor bucket. The new system will mean that the pile will remain in the same place and the compost turner will move over the pile turning it as it goes creating a huge time saving for the grower that can be put into growing and marketing.



Grant Amount: £4,375

Increased production/Increased sales:

This farm business already had a high turnover from veg sales (£51,085 pa). Veg box sales went from 50 pre-Covid to 130 in November 2020 to 190 May 2021 and stabilised at around 115 boxes per week. This was in addition to sales at the farmers' market. This increase in sales cannot be attributed to the grant as it had not been spent yet. When the compost turner is functional however there will be a huge time saving for the grower which will free up time to concentrate on production and sales.



Community Impact:

Better soil health and biodiversity on farm for the benefit of the local community.

Environmental impact:

The hope is that the extra compost created by the compost turner will mean that any increase in sales of veg and upping of production will not be to the detriment of farm soil and will hopefully lead to an improvement in soil fertility and biodiversity which will improve sustainability and productivity and the ability to feed more customers long term. The farm often hosts (when permitted) other farmers, many interested in diversification, and growers who come to see good practice in terms of organic veg production on a field scale and so funding this piece of equipment is likely to lead to spreading of knowledge about creating good compost and maintaining soil fertility and biodiversity more widely in Wales.



Specific findings:

Henbant

A CSA that's been running for just over a year on a mixed permaculture farm of 80 acres – growing veg on 1.5 acres supplying veg boxes for 30 families. A great example of a mixed farm system.

Grant for: A veg shed for storage/packing/customer hub

Visit: www.henbant.org

**Summary of Grant Spend:**

The grant had enabled the construction of a large attractive shed with a working area and little shop as well as large cold storage area, packing area and washing station. The grant covered the cost of materials and the ability of the grower to turn their hand to construction, as well as use of recycled and reclaimed materials e.g. second hand cold store, made this value for money. Funds had run out before the packing shed could be fully completed but the shed was functioning well, acting as a shop and welcoming area for customers who were more able to drop into the farm to purchase items.

Increased production/Increased sales:

Boxes went from 30 to 70 boxes per week by December 2021 (133% increase) and this was greatly facilitated by the new shed, in fact the grower said it would have been impossible without it. There were also additional sales through the shop.



Grant Amount: £2500



Community Impact:

More members of the community were accessing the farm and many volunteers were benefitting from the use of the shop and facilities. More veg was being made available in the local community, through the box scheme and also to those on low income through the local food bank and through a solidarity box scheme – [see here](#)) and supplied veg to local organisations (including those supporting mental health) and cafes in the local town. The ability to do this was enhanced by the grant. The farm was keen for community members to have a good experience when coming and working on the farm and the shed certainly improved this.

Environmental impact:

More veg was being grown using permaculture principles thus increasing the land with greater biodiversity and soil health. Greater efficiency in packing and storage meant less wasted veg. Cold storage also meant gluts could be stored and used over a longer time frame reducing the risk of not being to sell produce all at once and wastage.



Summary of Impacts

Increased fruit and veg sales and customers

All but one of the grants (because the equipment was not yet functional and was related to improving soil health and longer term sustainability rather than to sales) led directly to an increase in sales of veg from 30% to 133%. The average increase, without the grant not yet fully spent, was 74.5%.

Greater community impact

All of these grants went into supplying more sustainable veg into local communities in Wales. Four out of five improved the working environment for volunteers and increased the ability of the growers to host educational visits and community events in future. Three out of five were providing solidarity boxes to low income families in their areas (See TGRAINS below) as well as linking to local food charities

Greater environmental impact

All of the grants led to supporting production that aims to enhance biodiversity and soil health, with one of the grants focusing specifically on improving soil health. Better packing and storage facilities, in the case studies where implemented, led to greater efficiency and less waste. One of the grants was used to increase resilience to water shortages and periods of dry weather due to climate change.



TGRAINS:

Transforming and growing relationships within regional food systems for improved nutrition and sustainability – Information about the Accessible Veg Project



Based on **TGRAINS** project results showing the impact of CSA veg box schemes on healthy and sustainable diets, we set out to explore how to extend those benefits to food-insecure households in our pilot project launched in June 2021, with financial support from UWE Bristol, Cardiff University, WWF Cymru and Food Sense Wales. The Accessible Veg Project was set up to figure out ways to improve healthy eating among food insecure households. It is a known fact that fresh vegetables can be some of the most expensive foods to buy in terms of calories. However, rarely do food aid parcels include fresh vegetables. As a result, food insecure households often find it very difficult to include fresh vegetables in their diet. This project seeks to support food insecure households to get fresh vegetables through subsidized membership of their local community-support agriculture (CSA) veg box scheme.

Accessible Veg works with 4 CSA farms who expressed an interest in exploring solidarity models for making their vegetables accessible to food-insecure households; those farms have partnered up with local food charities. Thirty-

eight households have received a weekly veg bag for a period of 2-4 months. The research team interviewed participants and collected 3-day food diaries at the project start and are in the process of interviewing participants again and collecting 3-day food diaries prior to the end of the harvest season. There have already been some really useful lessons learned about challenges and what activities can support food-insecure households experiencing the health benefits of receiving a weekly veg bag.

The pilot project has already generated some great interest from Welsh Ministers with two different visits to our farm partners, Graeme Wilson and Polly Davies at Slade Farm.

Dr Angelina Sanderson Bellamy (University of the West of England, Bristol) is collaborating with Dr Caroline Verfuierth at Cardiff University's ESRC-funded Centre for Climate Change and Social Transformation.

Small Grant Big Impact

Small Grant, Big Impact

Although this was called a small grant, in the words of one of the growers *'it didn't feel like a small grant to us.'* It was a big grant for many of these growers enabling them to invest in infrastructure that was of key importance to the growth and sustainability of their businesses and veg sales. In many cases these growers had never received a grant before and were used to *'making a little bit go a long way'*. In all cases, the cost of the infrastructure/equipment was greater than the amount of the grant but the growers used a mixture of ingenuity, free labour and recycled and reclaimed materials in order to make the grant go further – creating a value for money in terms of final outcome. All of the growers were family-run businesses with small profit margins, and thus not able to invest in the significant start-up costs for such businesses, as summed up by this comment *'as we are a small family business, also with a young family, and a new home, the limiting factor to production is finance for key infrastructure'*. Estimates of start-up costs from the Land Workers' Alliance (see box) range from £145,120 – £222,600. Lack of funding for this infrastructure is a barrier for horticultural farming in Wales.

Land Workers' Alliance

The [LWA](#) have created example costs for different types of new entrants into agro-ecological farming. Here is an example list of infrastructure costs for a 3 acre market garden, selling high value crops to local cafes and restaurants. The overall example infra-structure costs are significant, though many businesses start up on a lot less.

Item	Cost low	Cost medium
2-wheel tractor	£1,500	£4,000
Power harrow for 2-wheel tractor	£1,000	£2,000
Flail mower for 2-wheel tractor	£1,000	£1,500
Rotary plough for 2-wheel tractor	£1,000	£1,500
Delivery Van	£2,000	£5,000
Polytunnels 1250m	£10,000	£25,000
Propagation equipment	£2,000	£5,000
Crop covers, sandbags, ground cover	£5,000	£10,000
Irrigation	£5,000	£10,000
Misc handtools and sundries	£10,000	£15,000
Subtotal equipment & polytunnels	£38,500	£79,000

Processing Barn / packing shed 6m x	£15,120	£25,200
Hardstanding 100m2	£1,500	£3,000
Track 50m	£1,500	£3,000
Borehole	£5,000	£10,000
Coldstorage	£1,000	£4,000
Rabbit and Deer fencing 3 acres	£7,500	£8,400
Electric connection	£5,000	£20,000
Subtotal including infrastructure	£75,120	£152,600
Total including 9 acres of land at £10,000/acre and basic timber mobile home at £40,000	£145,120	£222,600

Speeding up the transition

One grower noted *'We are able to invest a little each year. Last year it was a small second-hand tractor which has been amazing. Unfortunately, the growth of our business, and thus growth of production, is painfully slow for us and our customers at this pace.'* This sentiment echoed by others who said they still needed to invest in further infrastructure for their businesses to grow quicker. If Wales is serious about supporting the expansion of horticulture and local supply chains, then investment in infrastructure is key and will be a significant factor in speeding up the transition. One grower, who was large enough to receive a farm business grant, said that, *'Last year we were lucky enough to get a grant for a cold store and this revolutionised how we use labour as we don't have to pick and pack on the same day'.*

A New bespoke small grants scheme for horticulture

Farm Business Grants in Wales are available to farmers growing on over 3 ha (7.4 acres) and receiving subsidies from Welsh Government. The grant provides a maximum 40% contribution towards capital investments in equipment and machinery, which have been pre-identified as offering clear and quantifiable benefits to farm enterprises. All items must be new. Forty-two items on the list relate to cattle farming, 10 to sheep, 4 to pig, 13 to arable, 6 to electric/heating/computer equipment and 3 to rain water harvesting/ bore hole. At present horticulture businesses might only benefit from the rainwater harvesting/ bore hole items. In reality this scheme

is not well suited to the horticulture sector, even if there was horticulture equipment on the list. The reason for this is the low level of capital available for investment – finding 60% of the cost of a new piece of equipment is often beyond the reach of small-scale horticulture growers, even if they are eligible.

This report recommends that a new bespoke horticulture small grants scheme be set up that is available to all horticulture businesses growing on less and more than 3 ha. This scheme would benefit from allowing the purchase of second-hand equipment and covering up to 100% of the cost of equipment. This could be enabled by having a third party like that used in this pilot. Having a third party that is experienced and knowledgeable about the sector – Social Farms and Gardens – significantly helped with the smooth running of this pilot grant scheme and meant that the process was very efficient. Applicants all noted the ease of application, being able to talk to someone about the grant, the administration of the grant – the third party bought the equipment and had it sent directly to the applicant in many instances.



A new bespoke horticulture small grants scheme in Wales could look like this:

£750k per year for 5 years (£3.75m total). 70 to 140 grants available for £5k to £10k to horticulture businesses on a competitive basis, only one grant per grower per year – therefore a maximum of £50k capital investment available per grower over the course of 5 years.

In 2020 the Tyfu Cymru baseline survey found that there were around 200 edible horticulture businesses in Wales, though now there are more. In 2020 those businesses were estimated to be producing $\frac{1}{4}$ of a portion of fruit and veg per head of population in Wales. Based on the findings of this pilot a small-scale grants scheme could significantly increase this and see the expansion of sales of veg in Wales by on average 74.5% per year. Better data on volumes and sales is needed. An in-kind contribution of a grant scheme, could be that growers assess and monitor volume and sales of veg, as well as environmental and community impact thus helping with the ongoing evaluation of impact.

Here in Wales, we at Social Farms & Gardens pride ourselves in supporting, representing and knowing the community food sector as best we can. We have a good geographical spread of staff through our three regional offices and this means we have close working relationships

with those delivering on the ground. Even though our sector is diverse we are all too aware of the issues and difficulties as well as the opportunities our members face. We were very pleased to be invited to be part of this exciting project, it brought a range of partners together, that had clearly identified a need, and some of the barriers. The partners pooled their limited resources to push through the processes in a timely, but professional manner, but perhaps the most pleasing element is seeing the results that even a small amount of capital funding can have in terms of outputs.

Having previously had funding (this type of flexible revenue funding is really hard to come by) to support a dedicated funding officer, we were and are, fully aware of the barriers to some sites in attracting government or grant support. In order to overcome those barriers we had to be creative and had to engage with the funders to recognise the problems.

We would very much like to support this type of work again, now and in the future. We will work hard with the partners to disseminate the learning from this pilot and to seek supportive funders to be able to replicate and scale up this small, but powerful intervention.

Social Farms and Gardens

Other findings

Great Horticulture Support in Wales

Many of the growers were keen to emphasize the quality of support that exists in Wales for horticulture. They mentioned training/events run by Tyfu Cymru, events/funding facilitated by Social Farms and Gardens, support available to growers in Mid Wales through the Pathways to Farming project/ Mach Maethlon and the Landworkers Alliance were mentioned in relation to their campaign and policy work.



Since 2017, [Tyfu Cymru](#) has focused on building the skills necessary to enhance the capacity and capability of the industry. It responds to both immediate needs and provides leadership to equip businesses with the knowledge and practical skills for green and inclusive growth. Supported by applied research and the appropriate use of technology, it has helped numerous growers and producer owned horticulture companies across Wales to adapt to environmental challenges and capitalise on market opportunity. It also hosts the Wales Horticulture Alliance.

To date, Tyfu Cymru has delivered over 950 training days and engaged with over 1500 horticulture professionals across Wales and beyond. Specific to the edible industry, Tyfu Cymru has provided 100% funded training and support to over 250 of 280 known edible enterprises.

Labour and Recruitment a limiting factor

Three out of five of the growers said that recruitment and paying for staff was an issue. There continues to be an issue with being able to recruit sufficiently trained and skilled staff, although there is good work in Wales going on to try and address this issue.



Growers in Wales and other parts of the UK have for some time identified lack of specialist education and training as an issue limiting entry to and career progression in horticulture, particularly for those wanting to follow organic or agro-ecological methods. One response is a specialist programme being piloted as part of [Resilient Green Spaces](#) – a £1.27m partnership project being led by Social Farms & Gardens to pilot alternative re-localised food systems using communities and their green spaces as the driving force for change across Wales until June 2023. This project has received funding through the Welsh Government Rural Communities – Rural Development Programme 2014–2020, which is funded by the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development and the Welsh Government. For the training workstream Lantra are using their unmatched knowledge and experience of horticulture training in Wales to develop a pilot training package covering the skills needed to run horticultural farming businesses. Training is delivered in partnership with Cae Tan CSA and The Landworkers Alliance. This allows new entrants to gain experience and training, by being hosted with an experience grower and participating in activities bringing trainees together. The trainees will also host visits by young people, to investigate how this influences perceptions of careers in horticulture farming as part of action research delivered by Cardiff University researchers.

Policy Context

We face the twin challenges in Wales of producing sufficient vegetables and consuming sufficient vegetables. Supporting rural economies, reducing health inequalities, reducing greenhouse gas emissions, protecting and enhancing biodiversity and increasing resilience of food supply within Wales are all reasons why creating opportunities to develop diverse and local supply chains for horticulture are vital.

Commitments made by Welsh Government through the Programme for Government and the Plaid-Labour Co-operation agreement recognise the need to develop these local supply chains through the promise of a Community Food Strategy and an explicit desire to increase

the amount of local food going into schools. In order to achieve the ambition of increased domestic horticulture production and supply, investment in infrastructure to support agroecological supply chains is one key element.

Mechanisms to support this could be developed through the Community Food Strategy or the forthcoming Agriculture Bill. Actions to support small scale horticulture could catalyse the development of alternative ways of supporting those on low incomes to access veg as well as potential opportunities for wider commercial and public sector procurement.

Summary of Findings and Recommendations

Twenty thousand pounds awarded to five fruit and veg businesses as part of this part of this pilot led to growth in sales of veg by an average **74.5%** (with a range of 30–133% for 4 businesses) alongside multiple benefits to their local communities and the environment. This pilot shows that a new infrastructure grant scheme for small scale horticulture in Wales should be considered.

This would significantly speed up the growth of the sector and lead to greater sales of veg across Wales.

To maximise benefits, a new scheme would benefit from being on a significantly larger scale, for example £750k per

year, and offer 100% grants of between £5k to £10k to 70–140 growers per year on a competitive basis. It would benefit from being administered by a third party to enable flexibility and adaptability, for example the purchase of second-hand equipment. This would also ensure accountability, sustainability and effective use of funding to achieve impact.

In order for horticulture to grow, alongside a new infrastructure grant scheme, there is a need for organisations in Wales to continue their work aimed at supporting the sector and for there to continue to be investment in skills and training.



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