

Opportunity to establish new growing enterprises in Powys

Call for Expressions of Interest
June 2024

This briefing sets out the scope for grower opportunities on new farms in our region.

Who are we?

The Future Farms Partnership* is developing a new concept to tackle some of the fundamental barriers to increased fresh food production in rural areas, based around unlocking land for small, agroecological farms as the engine of a new local food economy and boosting security of food supplies.

To support this, the partnership will:

- Create supplementary planning guidance to support the interpretation of planning legislation in relation to essential rural enterprise dwellings on farms.
- Test new approaches.
- Support access to new local and regional markets.
- Work with training providers to increase the supply of skilled agroecological fruit and vegetable growers to populate the new farms.
- Support the significant expansion of a small farm network.

*Cultivate, Gwlad Consortium, Gweithwyr y Tir, Lantra Cymru, Nature Friendly Farming Network, Powys County Council, Our Food 1200, Social Farms & Gardens



Opportunity: Pilot Farms

We are looking for experienced growers to start new, commercial agroecological primarily fruit & vegetable enterprises on council-owned land near the village of Sarn in Powys – about 6 miles from Newtown. Further site details can be provided on application.

Three new small farms of approximately 12 acres each are being developed on flat land which is divided by a stream.

Each new farm will be provided with:

1. On-site private accommodation connected to water, electricity and drainage. Shared wash/packing facilities, road access, vehicle hard standing.
2. Support to access to newly developing local and regional market opportunities as they arise.
3. Support via local grower networks and mentoring
4. Security of tenure: An initial 5-year lease in order to prove the business model, after which our aspirations are that tenants will be able to:
 - Continue renting on an extended lease
 - Purchase a leasehold tenancy of up to 90 years [to be negotiated with PCC – see risks below]
 - Apply to Powys Council for permanent agricultural workers residential permission. Housing provided for the first 5 years may be purchased from the project or removed and replaced by an alternative dwelling if required.

Who we are looking for

It is important for the future development of many more such farms that the growers involved in this pilot can give the new farms the best possible chance of commercial success. Accordingly, we are seeking experienced growers who can establish their new enterprises quickly and soon be thriving. (We anticipate future opportunities for those with less experience for on-farm learning).

Therefore, applicants must have:

- At least 2 years' experience working on a fruit and vegetable farm selling its produce e.g as either a lead or assistant grower or apprentice, ideally involving planning and management of the operation.
- Access to sufficient start-up funds for their proposed new enterprise.

Preference will be given to those who can evidence:

- A sound understanding of ecological growing
- The motivation to be part of a movement to feed the community and the flexibility to try new approaches.
- Willingness to collaborate with other farmers in shared spaces.
- Sensitivity to concerns of neighbours and an intention to integrate into the local community. **We are particularly keen to see applications from those local to the area.**
- Awareness of potential markets, how you might reach them and what support you would need to achieve this.
- Willingness/ability to contribute to the hands-on building of farm infrastructure

Risks and Uncertainties

We are advertising for expressions of interest now in order to secure tenants for the site before the end of 2024. Joining the team at this early stage provides an opportunity to help shape the development of the farms and get involved in aspects of set up. It will also enable the creation of site-specific business plans, (together with carbon zero and nature recovery roadmaps – for which help will be provided). However, several elements of the project are yet to be secured, without which we will not be able to proceed. Therefore, there is a level of risk associated with preparations to set up on the land in Sarn.

1. Planning permission. A planning application was submitted in March 2024 for the development. It will be assessed against new guidelines that we have developed in collaboration with Powys County Council. Since this is the first test of the new guidelines, we don't know what the outcome will be, though we are optimistic.
2. Long-term lease of the land from Powys Council. Discussions are underway but at the time of writing this has not yet been secured.
3. Capital funding. We are applying for grants to provide the basic infrastructure (e.g. connection to utilities, sewage, shared packing facilities, hard standing, dwellings), but until these funds are secured, works cannot commence and we cannot confirm precisely what will be provided.

The Process

If you are interested in joining us on our journey to create new opportunities for growers in Powys, please send us a profile about yourself, showcasing your experience of growing fruit and vegetables for sale, together with your aspirations for establishing a new enterprise on this site. Your expression of interest (no more than 4 pages), should demonstrate an awareness of potential markets for your produce. It should also evidence your commitment to farm agroecologically. For example, this might take the form of a description of what the term 'agroecological' means to you, together with examples of the kinds of practices you plan to implement, or a commitment to convert to organic farming.

Further information is available on request. If you want to discuss the opportunity or submit your profile (any time before 14th August) please contact: cheers@our-food.org

We anticipate there may be quite a lot of interest in these opportunities, so please don't be shy!