



**Farming
the Future**

Movement Listening & Signposting 2025



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Introduction

Farming the Future pools funds, networks, and knowledge to grow and connect the UK's agroecology movement. As we've evolved, we've adapted our approach to better support a just agroecological transition.

In this report we share our key learnings from three listening conversations, involving thirty-six organisations and groups who we have previously funded, and signpost funders to wards identified needs

Right now, those working to transform the food and farming system face an economy built to reward extraction and environmental harm. It entrenches inequities across the food chain and hides the true cost of what we eat. As a result of these extractive systems, we are heading toward a future where climate breakdown and social collapse are real possibilities.

Transforming food and farming is therefore not optional — it is central to building a fair, sustainable model that puts the wellbeing of people and planet first. A resilient, just food system is essential to both mitigating and adapting to the changes ahead.

Achieving this demands a stronger, better-connected movement for food and farming — one that is well-resourced, skilled, and equipped for deep collaboration and transformational change. We must create the conditions in which new, climate- and nature-positive models can emerge and thrive locally, regionally, and nationally. **To do that, we need more — and better targeted — funding.**

At present, less than 10% of UK philanthropic environmental grants support food and farming, and only half of that funding stays within the UK. The funding sector must make a step change: recognising the pivotal role that investment and philanthropy play in enabling system-wide change. More funders need to see where they fit within the food and farming ecosystem — and be prepared to fund both more and differently.



Our Role

Farming the Future exists to improve the flow of resources into agroecology in the UK, making the case for increased, trust-based investment in food and farming transitions.

We do this by:

- Listening and responding to shared and emerging needs across the movement, sharing what we learn, and advocating for the priorities of the UK agroecology movement with other funders.
- Supporting funders to invest in transformational change by connecting them with those seeking funding and encouraging collaborative, system-wide solutions to complex challenges.
- Funding and supporting organisations, collaborations, and networks that provide vital infrastructure and bring people together — helping them work more effectively to create the enabling conditions for systemic change. Our aim is to shift power into the hands of producers and communities, advancing a just transition towards agroecological farming and food sovereignty.

Since 2019, we have distributed over £3million in funding and partnership support, adapting each year to the evolving needs and opportunities within the movement. You can learn more about the kinds of work we fund on our website.

PHASE 1

Listening to the Movement

In September 2024, we brought our network together for three Listening Conversations — spaces designed to share experiences, spark dialogue, and strengthen connection across the agroecology and food sovereignty movements.

We reached out to over 100 organisations and groups we've previously funded. Forty people took part, representing 36 organisations, networks, projects, and organising groups.

The response was overwhelmingly positive. Participants told us how valuable it was to connect with one another — and how refreshing it felt to speak openly with a funder about what their organisations, and the wider movement, truly need to thrive.

Who joined the conversation



What we heard



**Strong appetite
for collaboration**

**Desire for deeper
funder-grantee
dialogue**

**Shared commitment
to sustaining
movement wellbeing**

Click [here](#) for the Mural covering intelligence from all sessions



Thank you for giving us this opportunity to help shape future funding (and hopefully encourage a lot more funders to contribute!)

PHASE 2

Acting on what we heard

At Farming the Future, we take seriously our responsibility to listen and respond to the voices in our network. The insights shared through our Listening Conversations are already shaping how we fund, collaborate, and operate in the year ahead — and beyond.

We know that acting on what we've heard means making choices and trade-offs, and at times it will feel uncomfortable. But our commitment is clear: to respond to the realities within the movement, and to help fill the gaps where support is most needed.

PHASE 3

Sharing and Catalysing Change

Disseminating knowledge across our networks — and using it to spark collaboration between funders — is a core part of our approach. Much of what's needed cannot be achieved by a single funder alone. The insights shared with us have direct implications for funding strategy and practice across the wider sector.

That's why we're working to catalyse more joint action among funders, encouraging shared learning and collective responses to the challenges our movements face.





What we're sharing here

In this report, we've drawn together the key themes that emerged from the Listening Conversations — insights we believe will be most valuable for other funders in understanding where and how more support is needed.

This learning is complemented by our briefing paper, [Advice for Funders of UK Food and Farming](#), which highlights best practice and guidance for effective funding in this space.



Key themes and Levers for Change

Across our three listening conversations, participants identified several crucial areas for creating the conditions needed for a stronger, fairer food and farming system.

01

Strengthen collaboration among existing players

Prioritise work that builds the collective capacity of the food and farming movement and creates the infrastructure that enables effective collaboration.

Groups repeatedly emphasised the importance of **strengthening shared infrastructure** — the common assets that help all organisations thrive (e.g. communications, advocacy, data sharing, governance models, new ways of working, and access to training and advice).

Participants called for interventions that **support coordination, connection and strategic collaboration** between existing organisations and initiatives — not just joint projects, but work that helps the movement operate more cohesively and mature collectively.

There was a consistent appeal to fund activities that bolster under-resourced areas of the movement and **build on what is already working** within existing projects, rather than starting from scratch.



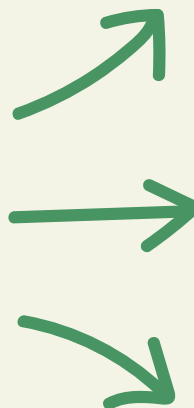
Learn more

There are lots of good reasons to build support for collaboration into your practices.

[The Nourishing Justice Toolkit](#) (pp.13–15) explores why collaboration is essential for a just and sustainable future.

You might consider funding networks as [Fito Network](#) suggests, or [collaborative capacity through alliances and convening spaces](#)

Or collaborating with other funders for ecosystems impact, as recommended by [Pando Funding](#), [Catalyst 2023](#) and [Modern Grantmaking](#).



How to fund collaborative capacity in the social enterprise sector



PANDO FUNDING IS A PRINCIPLED APPROACH TO DEPLOYING CAPITAL TO SUPPORT SYSTEM CHANGE.

Foster Diversity and Inclusion Within the Movement

Support work that actively promotes equitable participation and representation across the food and farming system.

Participants highlighted the urgent need to diversify the movement and encourage new entrants — especially focusing on race and youth education. Gender, socioeconomic status, and disability were also noted as areas requiring more attention.

A strong theme was the need to address inequities in land access and ownership, ensuring just pathways for BIPOC farmers and new entrants, including clearer advice and support to overcome structural barriers.

Groups also underscored the importance of centring underrepresented voices in storytelling and decision-making.



Learn more

The [Nourishing Justice Toolkit](#) has a great reading list (p.6) and [Pathways to Land for BIPOC](#) are great starting points that reference early reports like [Jumping Fences](#) and [Rootz into Food Growing](#).



To explore community-led organising, see the work of:



Shift the Narrative for Change

Invest in work that uses existing evidence to shape a compelling, shared story of why agroecology and food sovereignty matter.

Participants noted that the case for agroecology is not yet being won — we need to build confidence among decision-makers and the public that alternative systems can and do work.

There was strong support for **creating shared strategic communication assets** — messages, visuals, and stories that different groups can use to amplify their work and align their advocacy. Rather than more research, participants called for creative storytelling that connects emotionally and culturally — through photos, portraits, and narratives that speak to both heart and head.

They also stressed the need to raise public awareness of agroecology's role in building climate resilience and a fairer economy, linking food systems to human health and broader social change, tying in with other narrative shift work

Food sovereignty (rather than food security) was voiced as a possible way of framing this deeper storytelling and narrative work, as was connecting the story of human health and farming.



Learn more

Many pieces of this narrative already exist but need connecting into a wider story of cultural and economic transformation. Explore [With Land We Can](#), [A People's Food Policy](#), [Eating Better](#), [The People's Plan for Nature](#), and [The Food Conversation](#).

Further skills-building, advocacy, and convening work — such as through the [Agroecology Comms Network](#) — is vital. These conversations also intersect with broader movements like [Decolonizing Economics](#) and [Doughnut Economics](#).



Beyond the three core themes, four further areas emerged as critical levers for transformation — where addressing the enabling conditions for change could accelerate progress towards a fairer, more resilient food and farming system. These included: policy change, public procurement, producer support, and funding and finance to sustain innovation, enterprise, and farm transition.

01 Policy Change

Create the policy conditions that allow agroecological practices to thrive, and strengthen the capacity of the movement to influence decision-makers at local, regional, and national levels.



Learn more

Several organisations are already collaborating on policy influence in this space, including [Sustain: the alliance for better food and farming](#), [the Landworkers' Alliance](#), [Eating Better](#), and the [Real Farming Trust](#) (which convenes [Parliamentarians for Agroecology and Nature-Friendly Food & Farming](#)). The [Soil Association](#) and the [Food, Farming and Countryside Commission](#) are also vocal in this space.

For deeper insights into the complexities of food and farming policy, explore [TABLE Debates](#) — which offers podcasts, a research library, and live discussions.

02 Public Procurement

Develop the infrastructure to embed agroecology within public procurement systems — from local planning and data collection to sourcing policies that prioritise sustainable, locally produced food.



Learn more

Good entry points include the work of [Sustainable Food Places](#) and [Better Food Traders](#), both part of the [Sustain](#) alliance.

You might also explore Food Sense Wales' [Courgette Pilot](#) (January 2023), which demonstrated new approaches to local procurement, alongside Nourish Scotland's work on the [Right to Food](#) and [Good Food Nation](#) frameworks.



Simplify and strengthen the infrastructure of advice, training, and financial support that producers need to start, transition to, and thrive within agroecological systems – with a focus on new entrants as well as farmers in transition.



Learn more

A range of organisations are addressing different stages of the producer journey:

- **Training and skills:** [Bristol Food Producers](#), [Black Mountains College](#), [Land Skills Hub](#), [Apricot Centre](#), [Go Grow with Love](#)
- **Signposting and peer learning:** [Agroecology Learning Collective](#)
- **Land access for new entrants:** [England Land Matching Group](#) (developing from South West Land Match)
- **Business and finance support:** [The Nest](#), [Loans for Enlightened Agriculture](#)
- **Farm transition:** [Nature Friendly Farming Network \(NFFN\)](#), [Roots to Regeneration](#), [Soil Association Exchange](#), and events such as [ORFC](#), [Groundswell](#), [Agroforestry Show](#), [Organic Growers Gathering](#), and [LandAlive](#)
- **Enterprise stacking support:** [Pitch Up!](#) (helping match enterprises with diversified farms and projects)

Together, these initiatives represent a growing ecosystem of support that could be strengthened through coordination and investment.



04

Funding and Finance

Ensure long-term, patient capital and flexible funding to support innovation, farm transition, and the wider ecosystem needed for agroecological change.

- Long-term, high-value, patient funding and investment with less focus on short-term or restricted small grants
- More money available overall (not just new pots of funding) to reduce competition.
- Acknowledgement of the true costs of movement building, convening, and capacity work — especially for founders of smaller organisations and people from minority-led groups and communities

Two of the three sessions also emphasised that creating new funding pots doesn't help unless there's more money overall — so that organisations aren't competing against one another for the same limited resources.



Learn more

If you're interested in strengthening your own funding practice or collaborating with others to resource the UK food and farming movement, read our briefing paper: [Advice for Funders of UK Food and Farming](#) which brings together key insights and best-practice recommendations for funders in this field, including referencing the most recent [Food Issues Census](#).

The report [Credit Where Due: Financing a Just Transition to Agroecology](#) outlines three key recommendations for philanthropy:

- Pool finance to provide loans for small-scale agroecological enterprises.
- Establish a patient private equity fund for sustainable food systems.
- Use collective grant-making and influence to increase financing for agroecological transition.

Additionally, [Banking for Change: Addressing Financial Risk as a Barrier to Farm Transition](#) (Soil Association Exchange) recommends that funders invest in business model innovation and experimentation — both at farm level and across the food system — to accelerate the shift towards sustainability.

Participating Organisations

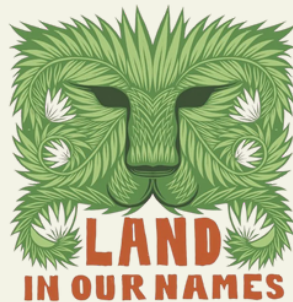




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