

Alternative Economies for Farmers & Communities

Farmers cannot shift to new economic models in isolation. Change happens when the infrastructure exists to support different ways of producing, trading and sharing value.

Traditionally, investment has reinforced centralised supply chains and price-driven markets that leave the majority of farmers with limited bargaining power and few viable alternatives. The local infrastructure needed to support alternative, community-rooted food economies — such as shared processing, aggregation, distribution and access to land — has too often been fragmented or absent.

Alternative economies for farmers are possible. Models rooted in place, relationships and stewardship can generate fairer livelihoods and wider social benefit. But without practical and relational infrastructure to connect producers to communities and markets, these approaches remain small-scale and vulnerable.



Over the past six years, we have supported four initiatives working towards building some of the infrastructure for alternative economies.

Through landed community kitchens, food hubs, food forests and peri-urban fringe farming initiatives, our funded partners have strengthened the connections between farmers, growers and communities, and between people and the land.

It is about creating the conditions in which resilient, locally connected farming economies can take root and endure.



Food Hubs

Regional Food Hubs provide the physical and digital infrastructure needed to scale local, climate- and nature-friendly food into wider markets.

By aggregating supply, they enable agroecological producers to reach larger buyers- including businesses, public bodies and anchor institutions- unlocking trading opportunities that would otherwise be out of reach.

Operating primarily as B2B and B2G platforms, many hubs take a not-for-profit or triple bottom line approach, balancing people, planet and profit. In doing so, they help move local food from niche to mainstream, strengthening regional economies, improving food security and supporting environmental outcomes.

A recent peer-learning programme with 15 hub managers, identified the key conditions for success including business planning, diverse supplier and customer networks, inter-hub collaboration and an enabling policy and investment environment.



Food Forests

Community Food Forests are multilayered, biodiverse growing spaces made up of trees, shrubs and ground cover that produce food at different heights and throughout the year.

Managed by local communities, they increase access to free, locally grown food while strengthening wellbeing and connection to nature.

The Orchard Project partnered with four community groups in Manchester, Swansea, Edinburgh and Glasgow to pilot community food forests, supported by Farming the Future. Building on years of experience creating community orchards, this initiative tested an expanded model designed to deliver greater systems-level impact.

Developed in response to the climate and food crises, the approach aims to enhance biodiversity, improve soil health and build more resilient local ecosystems,, creating spaces that support both people and planet in the long term.



Fringe Farming

Fringe Farming is a collaborative initiative working to grow the peri-urban agroecology movement and create the policy and practical conditions for new small-scale farms around UK cities.

The partnership delivered a Fringe Farming Toolkit, convened Peri-Urban Practitioners Forums, and produced a policy report examining how current frameworks support, or hinder, agroecological farming,

The initiative has strengthened national networks, amplified the case for small-scale horticulture through engagement with policymakers-including giving evidence to the House of Lords-and built bridges between grassroots action and political influence. Grounded in principles of food and land justice, it seeks to make access to land, particularly small-scale market gardens in the outskirts of cities, training and farming more inclusive and representative.

By combining movement-building, practical resources and policy advocacy, Fringe Farming is helping to lay the foundations for a more diverse, resilient and climate-friendly food system rooted in the urban fringe.



Landed Community Kitchens

The Landed Community Kitchen is a land-based agroecological model that bridges the divide between food poverty initiatives and food sovereignty movements.

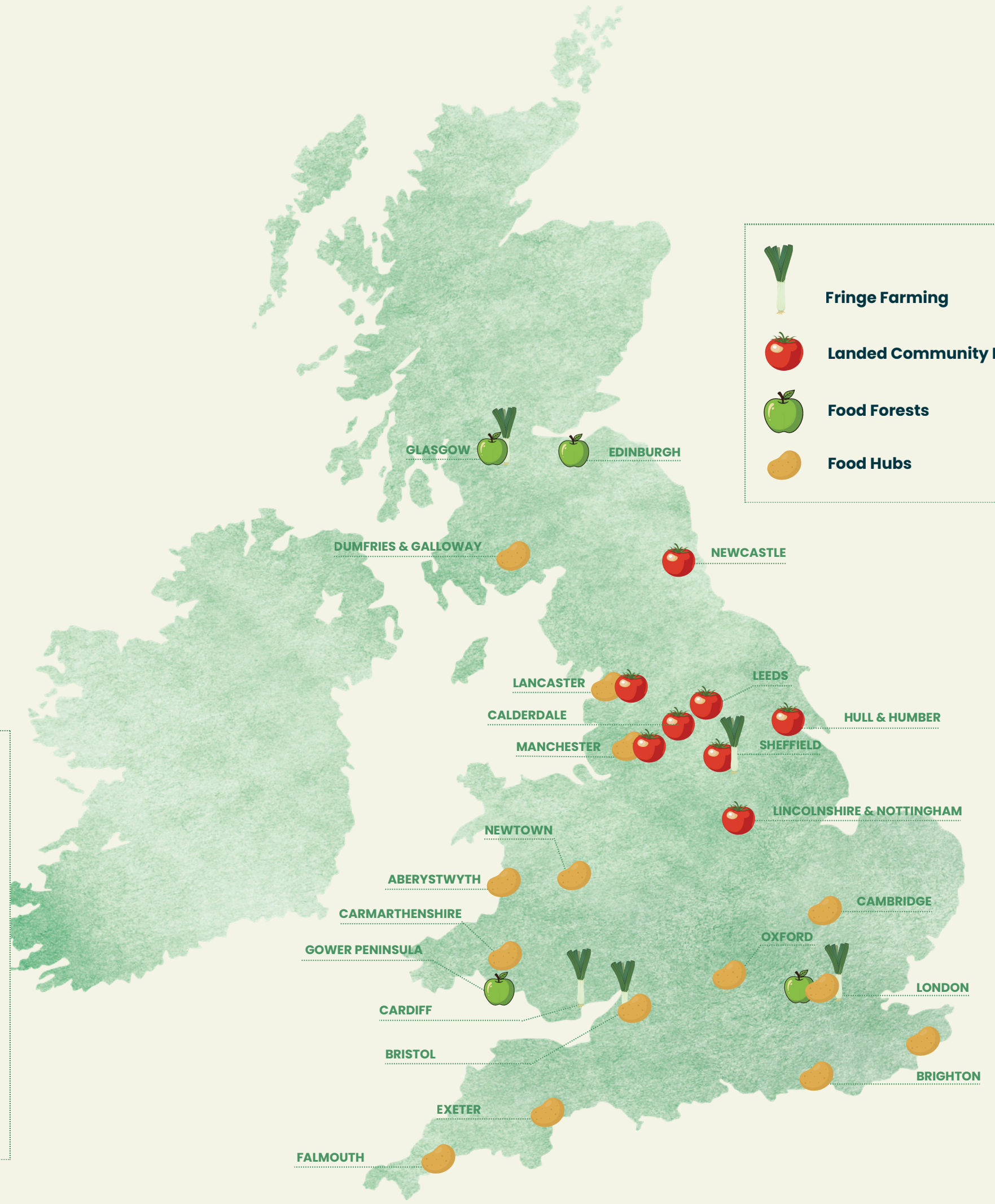
Rather than relying on surplus food, it builds direct relationships with agroecological growers, strengthening both access to healthy food and dignified livelihoods for farmers.

Combining local sourcing with some on-site growing, the kitchen connects communities to the full food cycle, from soil to plate. Alongside meal provision, it offers reskilling and political education programmes that build community power, deepen understanding of the food system, and promote more just and sustainable alternatives.

Designed as neighbourhood food hubs, Landed Community Kitchens aim to shift how food is valued, sourced and accessed, contributing to alternative local economies and longer-term food system transformation.

The map shows where our funded programmes are working on the ground across the UK – building resilient local economies, strengthening connections between producers and communities, and supporting viable futures for agroecological farming.

-  **Fringe Farming**
-  **Landed Community Kitchens**
-  **Food Forests**
-  **Food Hubs**



Collaborators on these Initiatives

