FRC Food Policy Discussion Paper

Sustainable Food Hubs and food system resilience: Plugging gaps or forging the way ahead?

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Introduction

This Discussion Paper looks at how sustainable food hubs, as locally embedded, grassroots organisations distributed across the country, view the contribution they already make, or potentially could make, to 'food system resilience'. It is the last report in the Food Research Collaboration's (FRC) research investigating the role and capabilities of sustainable food hubs in the UK.

Given the polycrisis (environmental, geopolitical, economic) facing the global community, resilience of the food system – the ability to maintain the status quo, 'bounce back' or 'bounce forward' in response to various stresses and shocks – is emerging as a key challenge.[1,2,3]

We have defined 'sustainable food hubs' as enterprises that source food directly from multiple producers, aggregate the produce, and sell it on, while applying a set of standards or values in their sourcing and operations that uphold various sustainability principles.[4,5] Exploratory research by the FRC in 2021 discovered more than 250 sustainable food hubs, spread across the UK, operating at scales from national to neighbourhood level, and supplying a range of foodstuffs, including fruit and vegetables, meat and fish, eggs and dairy, bread and bakery, as well as preserved goods.[6] Since 2021, many of these hubs have closed (though others have probably opened), so our research provided no more than a snapshot at a particular time. Nevertheless, it demonstrated a widespread network of channels through which food was being bought from producers and supplied to customers, operating largely independently of the mainstream supermarket/wholesale distribution system. It also showed that a cadre of workers existed, again spread across the country, with extensive knowledge and experience in operationalising these food supply channels. On the face of it, the existence of these people, their knowledge and networks, and the infrastructure they have established represent a resource that could be very useful in times of food system crisis.

This Discussion Paper has been written for people working in the food system or campaigning for greater food system sustainability, who want to gain insight into the perspectives of sustainable food operators on resilience. We hope it will also help inform policy-makers, funders, campaigners and the financial sector on how they can help sustainable food hubs to enhance their resilience as part of contributing to a more resilient UK food system. Our research links to a larger study of food system resilience being conducted by Professor Tim Lang for the National Preparedness Commission.[7]

What do we mean by food system resilience?

The global and UK food systems are complex systems, vulnerable to stresses and shocks.[8,9,10,11,12] *Shocks* refer to abrupt events, which may be unimagined; examples include extreme weather events, geopolitical events, disease outbreaks and conflict.[13,14,15,16,17,18] *Stresses* refer to longer-term tensions exerted on the food system, including for instance social and cultural norms, climate

change, urbanisation and natural resource degradation.[19,20,21,22,23,24,25] Both can have major impacts on food system outcomes.[26] Recent stresses and shocks for the food system, such as the 2008 food price crisis, Brexit and the Covid-19 pandemic, have contributed to an increased political, societal and scientific interest in how to enhance resilience of the food system.[27,28,29,30,31,32]

Scholars have defined food system resilience as the ability to maintain the status quo (robustness), as the ability to recover quickly after disruption (bounce back), and as reorientation to accept alternative outcomes before or after disruption (bounce forward).[33,34,35] According to this definition, robustness, recovery and reorientation can all involve a reorganisation of food system activities. Three overarching strategies to reorganise food system activities have been described: 1) reorganising activities in the food system; 2) reorganising food system environments such as the political, social, technological and biophysical environments; and 3) reorganising views on food system outcomes.[36,37,38] This framework was used as a basis in our analysis to explore perspectives of sustainable food hub operators on resilience.

Food system resilience and Sustainable Food Hubs

There is growing evidence that alternative and local food systems, often (but not always) utilising short supply chains, contribute to the resilience of food systems.[39,40,41,42] Sustainable food hubs often form part of these systems.

During the Covid-19 pandemic, a major shock to the food system leading to multiple disruptions on various levels, alternative and local food systems demonstrated their own resilience and were able to contribute to the resilience of the UK food system. Evidence from across the UK and 12 other countries showed that alternative and local food systems, grass-roots organisations, community-scale food providers and short food supply chains were able to contribute to food system resilience during the crisis by their provisioning of healthy food.[43,44,45] Studies further showed that they were able to maintain access for the most vulnerable groups, as well as directly address food insecurity, which had been exacerbated by the pandemic.[46,47,48,49,50,51] Factors contributing to resilience of these organisations and systems included their flexibility and innovation, as well as their rapid adjustment to increased demand and rapid reconfiguration of their supply chains, partly due to their small scale, local ties and the involvement of decision-makers in their operations.[52,53,54]

Boosting local food systems is seen by some as a necessary strategy to enhance resilience of the UK food system.[55,56] Scholars have highlighted how the contribution of local food systems during the pandemic demonstrated their importance in the response to other short-term shocks, as well as to long-term stresses to the food system.[57] However, in spite of their crucial role during the pandemic, these systems faced technological, practical and resource barriers.[58] Recent evidence has also shown that local food systems in the UK did not receive sufficient support or guidance from government during the pandemic.[59] The 'Farm to Fork summit' convened by the Prime Minister at Downing Street on 16 May 2023 was criticised for privileging mainstream food industry actors and excluding representatives from local food systems, taken to be a sign that these systems are not visible or salient to policy-makers.[60] This demonstrates a need to better understand and communicate the experiences of people working in these systems,

including sustainable food hub operators. This is necessary to address barriers and create a supportive policy environment for sustainable food hubs, and local food systems more generally, to enhance resilience of the UK food system.

What we did

Building on previous work,[61] the FRC conducted a study to explore how sustainable food hubs in the UK see their role (if any) in UK food system resilience. We wished to learn more about how they are coping with the current stresses and shocks that affect their food hubs and the wider UK food system, what role they see for themselves in future times of crisis, and what barriers they feel exist to enhancing their resilience. Finally, we aimed to understand how policy, infrastructure and resources could support their resilience. The FRC interviewed seven sustainable food hub operators across the UK, in April and May 2023. Some participants had previously contributed to research on sustainable food hubs by the FRC, while some were newly recruited for this project. The findings have been anonymised in this report, with 'S' denoting the term stakeholder.

What we found

The findings are organised around four main themes that emerged from the interviews.

1. Sustainable food hubs contribute to food system resilience

Sustainable food hub operators all saw their hubs as resilient and as playing a role in emergency food planning. Interviewees attributed this resilience mainly to their direct relationship with growers/farmers and paying them fair prices which could provide viable incomes. They felt this resulted in a guaranteed supply chain and growers/farmers not going *"somewhere else"* (S4). These sentiments are summarised in this comment by a sustainable food hub organiser:

> *"The broader message or idea that we're trying to promote with [name of food hub] is about direct buying as well. It's about knowing who you're buying your food from, having a relationship with them, understanding that... And it travels from them to you without a middle ground. And that just seems to make for much greater resilience as well in guaranteeing your supply chain, knowing it's going to arrive." (S1)*

Participants saw this direct and fair relationship with growers/farmers as providing further benefits, such as supporting better farming practices, providing high-quality food and supporting the local economy. Generating strong local food and economic systems was then viewed as having *"a knock-on effect of making the global macro picture much stronger. As units, [food hubs] are*

tighter, more efficient, more organised, more environmentally friendly" (S2). Interviewees ultimately saw food hubs and local food systems as better equipped for a crisis than mainstream food systems, *"bolstering the argument for why we need to move in this direction*" (S1).

For sustainable food hub operators, the resilience of sustainable food hubs and local food systems was clearly reflected during the Covid-19 pandemic. They emphasised for instance that in contrast to supermarkets, their food hubs were able to continue to supply all their local vegetables to their customers without any disruptions. All the sustainable food hubs also very rapidly increased their capacity, in some cases scaling-up by 500%, to meet the increased demand for local food and home delivery. This scaling-up involved for instance increasing the amount of packing stations and hiring additional staff. In some cases, they were able to scale up rapidly by relying on their local networks and volunteers, until they were able to catch up and employ more people. Further reflecting the contribution food hubs were making to resilience of the food system during the pandemic, one sustainable food hub had started up their business during the pandemic to provide an outlet for local growers/farmers who had lost their previous markets due to closures. These views on the resilience of sustainable food hubs and their contribution to the food system during the pandemic are reflected here:

> *"[During the pandemic], its time had come. Local food systems, organic food. I say we doubled our turnover. Had we had the resources and capacity to do so, we probably could have quadrupled it. And as I say, there will be maybe another pandemic, but almost certainly some kind of climate-related crisis is going to hit us, and at that point, our local food ecosystems will be massively valuable. It'll be like, oh, this is the resilient food system that we're looking for." (S5)*

Although emphasising their resilience, participants felt they were only a very small part of the food system, which they felt limited the contribution they could make to resilience of the overall UK food system, as reflected in this comment:

> *"I mean we're such a tiny part of that. I know how much of a tiny part we are of just the organic sector and then to put the microscope in further of just the veg in the organic sector, we're just… And even amongst the wholesalers, you know, there's not many of those and we're just a tiny, smidgen of a dot on a massive map when it comes to food resilience." (S4)*

However, interviewees then highlighted that although they presented only a 'tiny' part of the food system, their concept more generally could demonstrate *"what a sustainable food system looks like"* (S5). And further, they felt that as part of trying to achieve a more resilient food system, sustainable food hubs were *"something that could be scaled…And [they should] be valued in that way. And experimented with and developed and explored in that way"* (S3).

2. Sustainable food hubs are struggling

Interviewees found running sustainable food hubs to be difficult in the current system. At the same time as sustainable food hub operators felt they demonstrated resilience, as reflected during the Covid-19 pandemic, they all spoke about the fragility and struggle of running sustainable food hubs, affecting their resilience negatively.

A main struggle revolved around food hubs achieving and retaining financial viability. This struggle was expressed for example by a participant as *"a constant worry, whether we can keep afloat, financially"* (S7) or by another as *"only just about [coping]. We're about as busy now as we've ever been and we're not making any profit currently"* (S4). As part of describing this struggle, sustainable food hub operators spoke about their own and their employees' and co-owners' lower wage in spite of very hard work. They explained that this was partly a consequence of setting lower profit margins to ensure fair prices for farmers while

still offering competitive prices to customers. These sentiments are reflected in these comments:

> *"Not only is it not lucrative, it is jolly hard work. I've spent 25 years doing my business. We're doing over 1,000 veg boxes a week. But I'm not quite destitute, but I am not at all wealthy." (S5)*

> *"We can't really treat our workers as we want to. Obviously, for a long time they were on much more than the minimum wage, when we started, because our aspiration is to pay a good wage because it's important work, but we're only just managing to pay the minimum wage now." (S6)*

Interviewees also described how this struggle for financial viability and survival affected their growers/farmers, as well as small food enterprises they worked with, exemplified in the following comments:

> *"We made a film to convey the vision for the food hub. And we featured eight or nine local independent businesses that would be considered actors in the local food ecosystem, and in the time since we've made that film, I think a good two thirds of them are no longer trading." (S5)*

> *"What I think is a big problem is that it's not easy for anybody to earn a living growing vegetables, and farmers probably know that. And I think given the government that we've got and the lack of support for small-scale producers, I think that is a long-term stress. The price of vegetables, the price of growing them, doesn't add up." (S6)*

Linked to this financial fragility, some participants spoke about a lack of capacity and resources, which affected their resilience. Several sustainable food hub operators for instance had very small financial reserves or in some cases had used up most of their reserves to deal with recent overlapping crises, leading to an inability to invest if necessary:

> *"We don't have big reserves, and what reserves we do have, we mobilise quite quickly to carry on doing good things. So, if we need to do something new, we don't necessarily have the money available to do it if it requires significant capital investment." (S3)*

In spite of this financial struggle, economic accessibility to their food hubs was important for participants. While one organiser felt they were *"not resilient enough to address [issues of access]"* (S6), others were of the view that they were *"able to address food inequality and to make good-quality, healthy food more accessible to the lower-income segments of our society"* (S5). Some sustainable food hub operators had set lower profit margins in order to compete with supermarket prices and be as accessible as possible for different socioeconomic groups. These participants for instance explained that:

> *"We are trying to present an offer that is comparable to a supermarket shop. Prices at supermarkets, every week, we put it on our social media. The point is not to try and be the cheapest at all, and I think it's unethical to even have that as an ambition, but we really do want to be as accessible to as many people as possible." (S1)*

> *"And we have very little margins, we work on 15% margins, which is typically half of what a wholesaler would use, to try and keep the price of food down." (S4)*

The fragility experienced by sustainable food operators was often described as having been exacerbated by recent shocks and stresses. The most frequently mentioned shocks and stresses food hub operators felt had affected them negatively or would in future included:

- **Brexit**. This was only an issue for sustainable food hub operators importing food from Europe. For them, Brexit had significantly increased the cost of food, and was still adding more red tape and work.
- **Climate change**. For some, climate change was already affecting their growers/farmers in the UK and abroad, while others felt it was not an issue yet. However, all agreed it would be an issue in the near future.

- **Competition**. One food hub organiser was particularly concerned about supermarkets approaching and taking on their growers/farmers, due to supermarkets aiming to be more resilient themselves by securing local supply chains. Another food hub organiser felt that venture-capitalist-backed companies were *"muscling in"* on the territory, while not *"truly wear[ing] their values on their sleeve and [not] really genuinely trying to change the food system for the better"* (S5). Further, mentioned by one sustainable food hub operator, was a concern around further proliferation of wholesale food hubs, which they felt would undermine the resilience of existing ones.
- **The cost-of-living crisis**. This was affecting the customer base and ability of customers to spend money on food.
- **Stresses in relation to growers/farmers**. Interviewees mentioned the disappearance of growers/farmers (due to a lack of successors, growers/farmers not being able to make a sufficient living, and a lack of labour since Brexit) as a major worry. More generally, it was not easy to find enough growers/farmers. Participants also saw balancing paying growers/farmers a fair price and offering accessible prices as a long-term stress.
- **The war in Ukraine**. This was seen as affecting food prices.
- **The fear of borders closing again**, as they did during the pandemic, especially during the 'Hungry Gap', the interval between winter and spring when UK-grown produce is scarce.

The Covid-19 pandemic was an exception to this, as was laid out under Theme 1 above. However, in spite of the positive impact of the pandemic on sustainable food hubs, for some operators it did eventually lead to stress further along the line. As the pandemic eased, customers started dropping off and returned to supermarkets, followed by the cost-of-living crisis with people not being able to spend as much or afford vegetable boxes, leaving food hub operators stuck with increased capacity.

3. Cultural perceptions and norms inhibit resilience

Cultural norms and perceptions around the value of food and the value of local food systems were seen as barriers to the resilience of sustainable food hubs. For instance, several interviewees spoke about the issue of people in the UK wanting food to be cheap, as reflected here:

> *"And another, I think, important thing is the public perception on the value of food … I read a really staggering statistic that was about the cost of carrots. It's gone down for the past five years. Five years ago, it was around about £0.80 a kilo. Now it's as low as £0.30 a kilo. And I just think, how has that been profitable? And why, a relatively wealthy nation, why are we obsessed with spending as little money as we can?" (S1)*

This was contrasted to cultural norms in Europe, where people were seen as willing to pay more for food and valuing food more. One sustainable food hub operator described for instance how they had lost European customers due to Brexit and felt this to be a loss *"because other European cultures, they do seem to regard food, healthy food, fresh food, local food higher up the agenda of where they spend their money. It comes ahead of other things"* (S2).

Participants also spoke about a lack of understanding of the value of sustainable food hubs and local food systems among local councils, the public and in some cases farmers. Examples given included how it had been difficult for a sustainable food hub operator to convince local businesses to act as a drop-off point for vegetable boxes, in spite of this potentially contributing to their own resilience by bringing people into their businesses. In another instance, a participant described how they had tried to convince local potato farmers, who had previously been selling to supermarkets, to start selling to their food hub.

However, the food hub operator felt that farmers did not think it was worth their while and had not *"bought into it, this idea that it would be a strength to the local community"* (S1). Another interviewee described their local council as not recognising the value of sustainable food hubs:

> *"The local council, but then it's the same barrier, people just not buying into it. They don't see it. They think it's some sort of strange, hippy thing. So it's that perceived… No, the perception, they just don't seem to see it. They don't understand." (S7)*

Consequently, sustainable food hub operators often mentioned the importance of communicating their values, their worth and their ethics to customers and growers/farmers, as part of enhancing their resilience. This participant spoke about this importance and how they aimed to enhance their communications:

> *"It's about really communicating and working with farms about our journey, what we want to do, the importance of it and how valuable they are to our model. And that's our role, which I don't think we do well enough yet. But it's about relaying that to the customers, relaying that to the farms so it becomes a really strong relationship amongst growers and people to understand the true value of food. I guess that's what we need to do and do more of." (S2)*

Others similarly aimed to engage *"with more people, more producers, more customers, educating more of the local people who maybe don't even eat vegetables much, or don't understand about seasonality, all those sorts of things"* (S7). Communication strategies to enhance resilience also included speaking to growers'/farmers' organisations about the value of being part of local food systems, and producing newsletters to explain to customers any price increases or lack of certain products.

4. Local food systems need support to enhance their resilience

In discussions around shocks, stresses and resilience, the importance of supporting sustainable food hubs and other small food enterprises, small growers/farmers, as well as local food systems was evident.

A first suggestion involved the need for policy to recognise the value of, as well as support, sustainable food hubs and other environmentally friendly food enterprises. As described above under Theme 2, sustainable food hubs and small local food enterprises struggle to be viable in current conditions, which do not reward values and actions that contribute to a more sustainable and resilient food system. For instance, one interviewee explained how their sustainable food hub had been disproportionately affected by additional Brexit costs, compared to companies such as Tesco:

> *"We had some quite interesting talks with Defra around the time of Brexit legislation going through because we kicked up a real stink about how disproportionately Brexit costs on imports and exports affect a business of our size. So you pay a fee per consignment. And for us, a consignment is only ever a single pallet of produce. But a consignment for Tesco could be several hundred or more. So, obviously, as a percentage of our sales, our costs are a lot higher, and that feels … Businesses that were operating pre-Brexit, and then had to make the shift to [the] Brexit way, were just seen as like unfortunate casualties of the Brexit transition, and [we felt] that there wasn't really much care or concern given to our survival … There are many businesses that have failed as a result of the shift. So that would be nice, if there would be some sort of re-evaluation, or support, or breaks or … Don't know in what form it would be, but, yes, it just feels like … Sometimes it feels really hard. You're trying to do something which you know is good, and you believe it, and yet they just keep adding on these additional …". (S1)*

This necessity to support more 'ethical' food businesses, including sustainable food hubs, was further expressed by one participant as wanting them *"valued in terms of being safeguarded, protected and funded"* (S3). Another participant emphasised this point by highlighting that *"given the current ecological catastrophe"*, it would be beneficial *"if there was a differentiation at government level as to what type of company you were, based on what [your] practices [are]"* (S4). Another said:

> *"In order to have a sustainable, resilient local food system, we have to get to a point where it becomes possible for a small-scale food enterprise to actually start up in business and have a reasonable chance of making a decent living for themselves, because that isn't the way things are at the moment, for a multitude of reasons." (S5)*

Secondly, participants often emphasised the need to support small growers/farmers in the UK in order to transition to a more resilient and sustainable food system. As discussed above under Theme 2, interviewees described the struggles of small growers/farmers, including the difficulties of making a living and not being able to find sufficient labour post-Brexit. Sustainable food hub operators also spoke about their own struggles in relation to this, such as their worries about finding enough or new growers/farmers in their locality and about the disappearance of small farms due to a lack of successors.

When it was within their own capacity, some sustainable food hub operators supported small growers/farmers (in addition to buying produce from them) by for instance renting out one-acre plots *"to start-up horticulturalists"* (S3). In other cases, participants wished they could provide this kind of support if they had more resources, as explained here:

> *"We're hoping, in the future, if we can get some reserves, we would want to give grants or something to help our producers start off, a young person trying to do something." (S7)*

Interviewees highlighted how there was an urgent need to support these growers/farmers at government level, with some specifying the need to support small-scale horticulture. They suggested the following strategies: providing access to land, subsidising vegetable growing, providing a universal basic income for growers, providing affordable housing for growers, providing start-up cash for growers, a change in policy so growers/farmers can find sufficient labour, as well as rewarding environmentally friendly agriculture.

> *"Rather than helping the big boys, we need the policy to support lots and lots of local market gardens in order that people can access very local veg." (S6)*

Thirdly, it was evident from interviews that entire local and regional food system networks needed investment in infrastructure. This could for instance be part of local and regional food strategies. Sustainable food hub operators spoke about the current lack of local food infrastructure and how working in a network with other small food businesses was more efficient and supported the local economy, as reflected here:

> *"To be able to integrate with a broader food strategy for the region and say, okay, we're going to actually try and put this infrastructure in place so that there are transport routes specifically for local food, because the infrastructure at the moment is all geared towards national, global, big farms, big trucks going out. There is no infrastructure for local transport, storage of food, processing facilities." (S5)*

Conclusions

Given the global polycrisis, developing a sustainable and resilient food system which can withstand shocks and stresses is emerging as a key challenge. Previous evidence has found that local food systems form an important part of resilient food systems,[62,63] as demonstrated during the Covid-19 pandemic.[64] As previous FRC research has shown,[65] the UK has a large number of sustainable food hubs, which vary in scale and operations but share the aim of providing sustainably and often locally produced foods within their localities, as accessibly as possible. These distribution networks, which exist outside the mainstream wholesale and retail systems, and the skilled and knowledgeable people who operate them, potentially offer an avenue to greater resilience for the UK's food supply (its ability to withstand, bounce back or bounce forward from shocks and stresses).

To investigate whether and how sustainable food hub operators see themselves playing a role in national food resilience – currently or in the future – the FRC interviewed seven sustainable food hub operators across the UK.

Our research found that:

- **Sustainable food hub operators *did* see themselves as resilient and as contributing to the resilience of the UK food system**, with their contribution highlighted during the Covid-19 pandemic. Overall, our findings suggest that sustainable food hubs *can* provide resilience to the UK food system, especially during crises. The Covid-19 pandemic illustrated both their strength and their weakness. Sustainable food hubs responded well to this shock, and indeed exceeded the performance of the mainstream supply chain. They experienced a surge during the pandemic, but this did not result in lasting transformation. Their ability to contribute to a 'bounce forward' of the UK food system, towards greater value being placed on local food systems, proved limited when customers reverted to supermarket shopping as the pandemic eased and there was a continued lack of policy support for these systems.
- **The food hubs struggled financially – a key vulnerability, which negatively affected their own resilience**. Their struggles to remain viable were exacerbated by long-term stresses and recent shocks to the food system, including Brexit, climate change, competition that threatened their business models, the cost-of-living crisis, growers/farmers being squeezed out of business by financial pressures, the war in Ukraine, and the closure of borders interrupting supply.
- **Cultural perceptions and norms, specifically a failure to value food and local food systems, were seen as barriers to the resilience of sustainable food hubs**. Cultural perceptions of local food systems in the UK, including being perceived as 'hippy', represent barriers to resilience.
- **Government support for sustainable food hubs, as well as other small food enterprises and small growers/farmers, was felt to be lacking, and was viewed as necessary** to enhance the resilience of sustainable food hubs and with it the resilience of the UK food system.

The shocks and stresses the hubs listed as threatening their viability **undermine all aspects of their own resilience**: their ongoing robustness and their potential to bounce back or forward after crises.

The lack of policy support for sustainable food hubs, local food systems and small-scale and sustainable growers/farmers, plus the fact that this sector as a whole seems to lack salience for policy-makers, **was seen as an existential threat**. This lack of policy recognition and support **translates into a lack of resilience – a weak link – in the UK's larger food system.**

For local food systems – in which sustainable food hubs often play an important part – to supply an effective layer of resilience in the UK's food system, they need to be secure *at all times* – not just in time of crisis. Without this robustness, they will not always have the capacity to stretch to meet new needs at short notice. Their ability to provide resilience depends on: their human operators and the skill and knowledge they embody; the infrastructure they use and maintain; the networks of growers/farmers with whom they nurture close relationships; the loyalty and understanding of their customers; and a supportive policy environment.

Policy actions to strengthen their resilience could include:

- **Recognising and bolstering the value of local food systems within all relevant policy**. This would include agricultural, environmental, health, planning and trade policy, and policy at national and local levels.
- **Recognising the importance of local food systems within national contingency and emergency planning**, including the UK's triennial food security assessment.
- **Rewarding and supporting sustainable food hubs and other small food enterprises for their contribution to a more sustainable and resilient food system**, for example through funding schemes; planning concessions; tax breaks; funded awareness campaigns; and through public procurement.
- **Supporting small-scale growers/farmers in the UK**, for example by easing access to land; subsidising either horticulture or fruit and vegetable purchases; providing a universal basic income for growers/farmers; providing start-up grants for small-scale growers/farmers; enabling access to housing for small-scale growers/farmers; supporting growers/farmers to find appropriately qualified, decently paid workers; and ensuring environmentally friendly agriculture is incentivised and rewarded by policy.
- **Investing in public infrastructure for local food systems**, including training, transport routes, rural broadband, renewable power, market spaces, small abattoirs, and storage and processing facilities.

This report has presented perspectives from sustainable food operators on the increasingly important topic of food system resilience. We hope it can provide insight for policy-makers, funders, investors, campaigners and people working in the food system on how to enhance the resilience of sustainable food hubs and local food systems, as part of enhancing the sustainability and resilience of the wider UK food system.

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