



**Farming
the Future**

2025

Annual Report





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2025 Reflections

A note from Bonnie Hewson, FtF Director

Through all of our work we seek to build together a shared understanding of what it takes to create a just transition towards agroecology and food sovereignty in the UK. Each year, this report offers us an important moment: to pause, reflect, and share with you—the philanthropic community powering Farming the Future—what we are learning, building, and achieving together.

For us 2025 has been a year of gently nurturing the new growth developing from previously planted seeds, and observing what is needed to nourish the work we undertake together. It has also been a year of both reflection and future-gazing, and one in which we have given more time to communicating about our work.

The context in which we work is changing all the time and both the need for collaboration, and the trust that enables this, are growing across the sectors we bridge, creating the conditions for new possibilities to emerge. The need for systemic, movement-building, network-led resourcing continues to grow within the food and farming

sector, while the philanthropic community experiences many more pressures and expectations on its resources.

To realise the potential of agroecology, we need bold, collective investment—not just in projects, but in the movements, infrastructure, and narratives that will sustain long-term transformation. We firmly believe that joining together to collaboratively resource work in the spaces in between individual strategies is an impactful and learning-rich space to inhabit for all funders, large and small. Finding ways to embrace trust-based practices through collectives like Farming the Future is also an essential part of philanthropic evolution.

This report is structured to help you navigate our work, our learning, and our reflections from the past year. We invite you to explore it, to challenge it, and to see within it the growing opportunities for philanthropy to drive systemic change. Most importantly, we invite you to stand with us in strengthening the flow of resources into the UK’s food and farming transition—because the stakes are high, and the moment for action is now.

Developments in the Food and Farming Policy

2025 was a year of transition for the farming community from post-Brexit subsidy schemes to a more productivity and nature-focused framework. The previous DEFRA priorities of net-zero, nature and productivity (in that order) have been rejigged to food production, farm business viability and diversification and nature restoration (alongside production).

Food security has moved to the forefront, prompting renewed conversations about local food sovereignty. With subsidies expected to decline, farmers are increasingly focused on long-term farm viability. The previous emphasis on net zero targets and carbon credits has shifted toward recognising nature as a public good, alongside the urgent need to tackle freshwater pollution—much of it linked to poor farming and planning practices—without compromising on-farm productivity.

The March 2025 pause in the Sustainable Farm Incentive, following over-allocation, damaged trust between Defra and small-scale farmers — a strain compounded by July’s family farm tax announcements. Although the scheme later reopened with adjustments and inheritance tax thresholds were raised, confidence remains fragile.

The June spending review confirmed £2.7bn annually for farming and nature through 2029, protecting core funding while reducing administrative costs and reaffirming investment in Environmental Land Management. As [Sustain](#) said “The UK has a real opportunity to be a world leader in sustainable farming systems, but only if investment results in tangible change on farms”

Developments in Philanthropy

In 2025, a major focus in the food and farming civil society space has been the small size and short-term nature of grants. Although the data may be skewed by numerous small Lottery awards, the broader reality remains: for many small organisations, the “juice isn’t worth the squeeze,” with significant time and effort spent on applications that yield relatively little funding.

In response, philanthropy has begun encouraging greater collaboration among NGOs to address this inefficiency. For example, Esmée Fairbairn Foundation and Rothschild Foundation have funded a group of ten NGOs to explore shared back-office functions. These and other funders are also engaging with the newly forming Better Food and Farming Funders group within the Environmental Funders Network, aiming to better coordinate and align funding strategies and draw in new allies. Farming the Future has played a key role in encouraging this collaboration since 2024, when we brought these funders together to present to the Funders Commitment on Climate Change group.

A positive development this year has been increased funding for infrastructure organisations driving systemic change—particularly peer-to-peer learning networks and advocacy groups such as the [Nature Friendly Farming Network](#) (NFFN) helping to ensure farmers’ voices are central in policy debates.

However, broader networks representing diverse food-sector organisations continue to struggle to secure long-term, unrestricted funding. Despite limited resources, many have continued to innovate, incubate new ideas, and collaborate across the system in ways that far exceed what their funding levels might suggest.

At the same time, a persistent divide remains between those working on health and nutrition and those focused on food supply and farming—both within civil society and philanthropy. Bridging this gap is essential to unlocking more effective collaboration and resourcing for systemic change.

Historically, philanthropy has often concentrated on relatively narrow strategies, such as dietary shifts or habitat restoration. In 2025, however, there has been growing recognition of the interconnected ecosystem linking these agendas, and of the need for diverse theories of change and complementary levers within broader movement ecologies.

Increasingly, there is an ambition to build solutions collaboratively. For instance, [TILT Collective](#), a large pooled fund focused on dietary change, has assembled a diverse portfolio of grantees and actively brings them together to co-develop strategy. Others are convening funders around shared thematic or place-based interests, such as Wates Family Enterprise Trust, which is building momentum around [Nature-Based Neighbourhoods](#).

Agroecology is also gaining traction as a concept that extends beyond on-farm transition to encompass supply chains, routes to market, land access, fairness, and just transition. However, many philanthropic donors interested in agroecology continue to prioritise its application in the Global South, often as a pathway to delivering multiple sustainable development goals.

As climate change and weather volatility increasingly affect the UK, it is becoming clear that agroecological transition can strengthen domestic resilience—buffering against global price shocks while advancing climate and nutrition goals.

However, critical elements of this transition remain underfunded, including local processing hubs, regional procurement networks, and improved land access for new entrants and expanded horticulture.

The Year in Policy and Practice

The following publications, alliances and sector developments shaped the food and farming landscape over the past year.

They reflect a period of significant policy uncertainty, public debate and strategic realignment. They also provide important context for our funding decisions and illustrate the wider ecosystem in which agroecological transition is unfolding.

Key 2025 Policy Publications

25 Year Farming Roadmap

Announced in January 2025 but not yet published, this is intended to set the long-term direction for UK agriculture. The sector is looking to it for clarity on infrastructure, technology, environmental schemes, succession, land use, energy and water – all of which depend on policy stability. Issues about whether it measures the right indicators.

Farming Profitability Review

Led by Baroness Minette Batters and published in December 2025, this independent review highlighted long-term pressure on farm margins and called for fairer supply chains, skills development and longer tenancies. [Some concern](#) remains that a narrow focus on profitability could undermine nature-friendly practices.

Land Use Framework

A [consultation](#) on a multi-functional land use framework ran from January to April 2025, with publication expected in March 2026. The Food, Farming and Countryside Commission has played a leading role in shaping thinking in this space.

The Good Food Cycle

Launched in July 2025 as a government framework for healthier diets, stronger food security and greener supply chains. It is stronger on farmer and environmental support than on diet-related regulation, and has not yet been used to address market concentration among major retailers.

UK Food Security Digest 2025

A new annual Defra statistical publication (December 2025), focusing on domestic production resilience and climate shocks such as the record-dry spring. [Debate continues](#) about whether it measures the right indicators.

Just in Case: 7 Steps to Narrow the UK Civil Food Resilience Gap

Published by the National Preparedness Commission in February 2025 (Prof Tim Lang), this report helped frame food resilience as a national security issue. Our Food Trust produced [an accessible digital version](#).

Movement & Sector Highlights

Food in Our Hands March (April 2025)

A broad coalition including the Landworkers' Alliance mobilised in London, shifting the narrative from food charity to food sovereignty and systemic justice. Farming the Future funded LWA staff mobilisation costs.

Local Food Growth Plan (April 2025)

A major collaborative report from Sustain, LWA, the Food, Farming and Countryside Commission and the Sustainable Food Trust, focussing on regional infrastructure and SME supply chains. Several follow-on collaborations applied to our 2025 grants round.

A Citizen Mandate for Change (May 2025)

Published by the Food, Farming and Countryside Commission, this research demonstrated strong public support for a fairer food system, challenging the perceived trade-off between affordable food and nature restoration.

Family Farm Tax Protests (July 2025)

Proposed changes to Agricultural Property Relief sparked significant opposition, with over 270,000 petition signatures and sector-wide concern about generational succession.

Agroecology Comms Network

Continued strengthening the movement's shared voice through policy digests, parliamentary engagement, webinars and in-person convenings.

Roadmap for Resilience: A UK Food Plan for 2050 (October 2025)

Published by the UKRI AgriFood Net Zero Network, setting out a long-term vision amid delays to the government's own Roadmap.

Food Strategy Alliances (December 2025)

Five major alliances representing over 160 organisations presented [17 joint policy asks](#), calling for a cross-departmental strategy linking farming, health and nature.

Riverford – Get Fair About Farming

Secured backing from over 66 MPs for an Early Day Motion. The government has since reviewed [the Groceries Code Adjudicator](#), with growing calls for a stronger single regulator.

Philanthropy & Finance Shifts

Where the Green Grants Went 9 (September 2024)

Found that less than 10% of environmental giving supports food and farming – and only half remains in the UK – prompting greater philanthropic focus on food system resilience.

Food Issues Census (2025)

Co-funded research strengthening alignment between funders and civil society, with organisations such as the Food Ethics Council helping bridge these conversations.

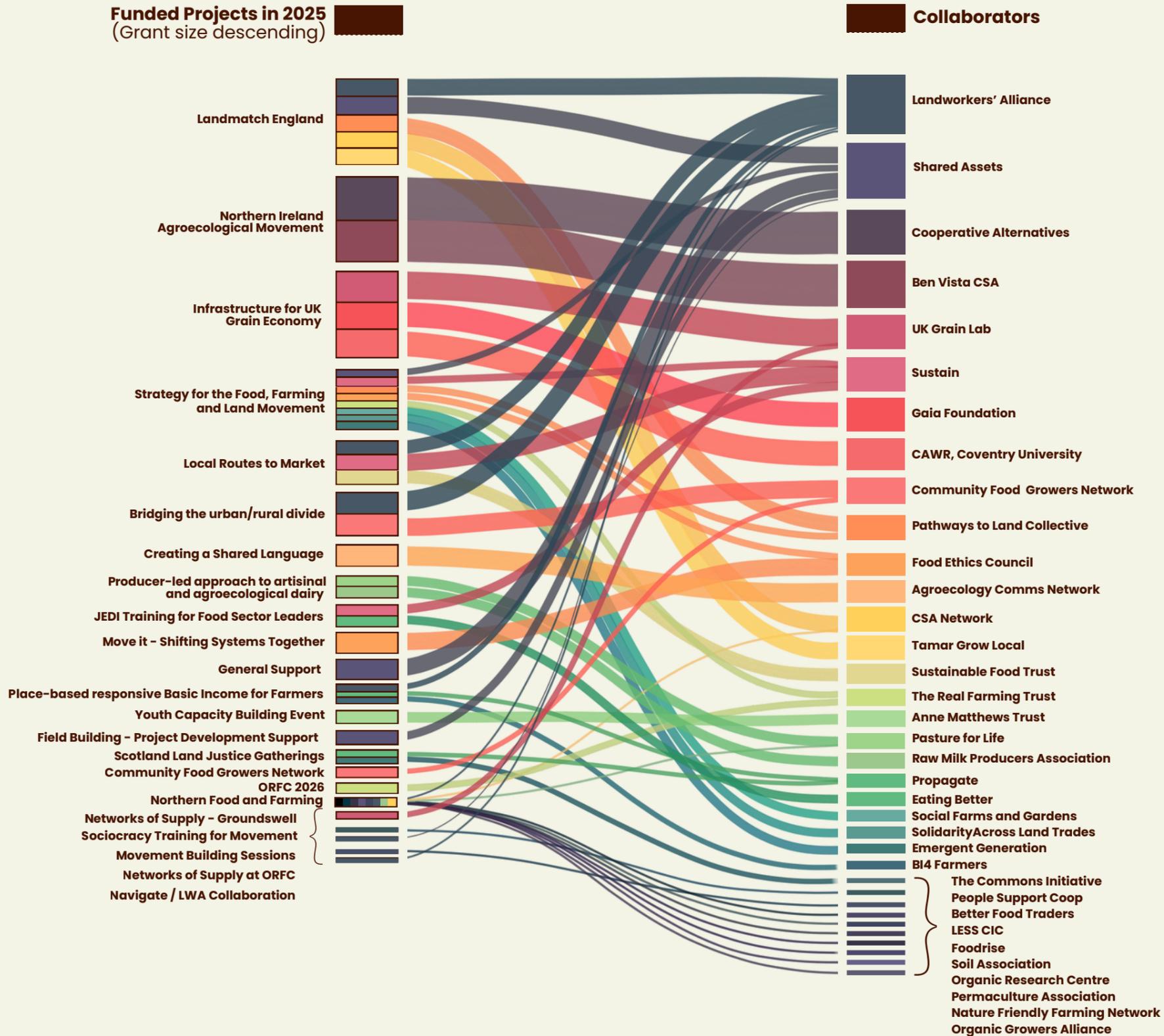
Banking for Change (October 2024)

A British Business Bank and Soil Association Exchange report identified financial risk as a barrier to transition. Oxbury Bank subsequently launched a Transition Facility supporting lower-carbon, soil-positive farming.

UKRI Transforming UK Food Systems (September 2025)

A synthesis identifying 27 priority action areas, providing a clearer evidence base for targeted investment.

Who was working together in 2025?



Five of these organisation are new to the Farming the Future network:



- Community Food Growers Network
- The Commons Initiative
- Emergent Generation
- Pathways to Land Collective
- Ben Vista CSA
- Anne Matthews Trust

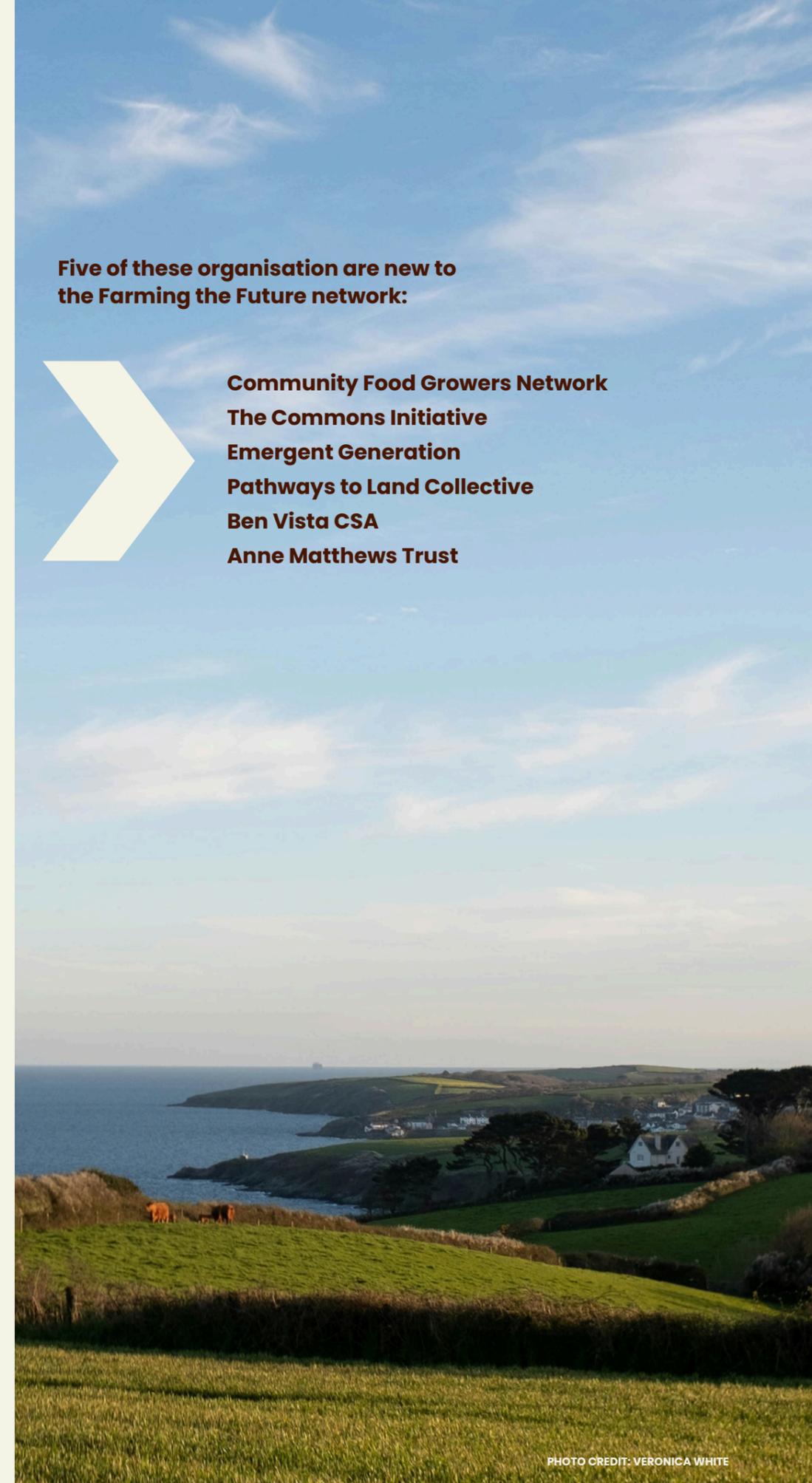


PHOTO CREDIT: VERONICA WHITE

About Us

Farming the Future pools resources to fund collaborative approaches that support a shift to regenerative farming and local food resilience.



Vision

We strive for a less extractive, more socially just economy—one that places the wellbeing of people and planet at its centre. At the core of our work is a focus on the health and resilience of the whole system.

Purpose

Our purpose is to flow resources towards transformational change within the UK's food and farming systems—and to do so in a way that models the change we seek by working in movement-informed, power-sharing, participatory, relationship-centered, collaborative and trust-based ways.

Mission

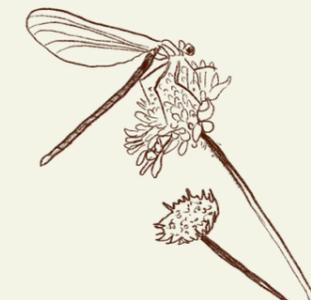
Our mission is to channel more—and better—funding to the diverse network of people and organisations building a future where nutritious food is produced through nature-friendly, agroecological farming where producers are paid fairly, and where access to food is fair and universal, rooted in the principles of food sovereignty.

Theory of Change

At the centre of Farming the Future's theory of change are the movements and networks driving the transition towards agroecological and regenerative food systems in the UK. These movements bring together farmers, growers, communities, researchers, and advocates who are developing practical solutions, building fair and sustainable food economies, and influencing policy to create the conditions for systemic change.

This ecosystem comprises a diverse range of organisations and initiatives committed to transforming the food system to one that restores ecosystems, supports livelihoods, and ensures equitable access to healthy, nutritious food. Farming the Future focuses its resources at the intersections of these efforts—where collaboration among farmers, citizens, scientists, policymakers, and environmental groups can generate collective impact.

For these movements to succeed, cross-sector collaborations must be supported to pursue complementary strategies - as well as the capacity and skills needed to collaborate well.



This work includes the establishment of collective infrastructure like seed networks and agroecology training programmes, the development of new models of food distribution and land stewardship, advocacy for public policies that enable and protect agroecological approaches, and the development of positive shared narratives.

Through our funding, convening, and strategic partnerships, Farming the Future aims to strengthen and connect these multi-sector movements across the UK, building the capacity, coherence, and influence required to accelerate the transition to a just and regenerative food system.

Our People



The team behind the work

We work collaboratively with our Ambassadors, funders and wider network.

Core Staff

Our core team provides continuity and coordination across all areas of our work. Staff play a central role in supporting each of our working circles and ensuring effective collaboration across the organisation.

While we use shared decision-making practices, the staff team has a particular responsibility for monitoring how our processes are functioning and helping to address issues as they arise.

Our core staff are:

- Bonnie Hewson, Director
- Ashley Erdman, Head of Programmes

[Find out more about our team here](#)

Ambassadors

Ambassadors are representatives from across the agroecology sector who bring lived experience, strategic insight, and strong movement connections. They contribute to our strategy, field-building activities, and grantmaking processes, and they hold ultimate responsibility for final grant allocation decisions.

In 2025 we had eight Ambassadors.

Ambassadors stepping down at the end of 2025:

- Josiah Meldrum (Hodmedods)
- Abby Rose (Farmerama Radio and Vidacycle)

We published blogs from [Josiah](#) and [Abby](#) to share more about their journeys with Farming the Future and the change they've seen in their own work at Hodmedods and Farmerama.

Funders

Funder Partners contribute financially to the pooled fund and commit to our shared principles through the Donor Partner Agreement. Some choose to take an active role by joining working circles and offering expertise in areas such as strategy, governance, field building, and the design of grant making processes. Others engage through our Donor Partner Advisory Group or our wider funder network, supporting learning and collaboration.

In 2025 we had seven donor partners contributing to our pooled fund: A Team Foundation, Roddick Foundation, Be the Earth, Savitri Waney Trust, Kreitman Foundation, John Ellerman Foundation and Esmée Fairbairn Foundation. The National Lottery Community Fund (Growing Great Ideas Fund) continued to cover our operational costs and field building work.



Our Fund to date

Farming the Future is the UK's only pooled fund dedicated to supporting collaborative work towards an agroecological transition, co-initiated by the A Team Foundation and Roddick Foundation in 2019.

Fund overview to date, from 2019

£3.1M

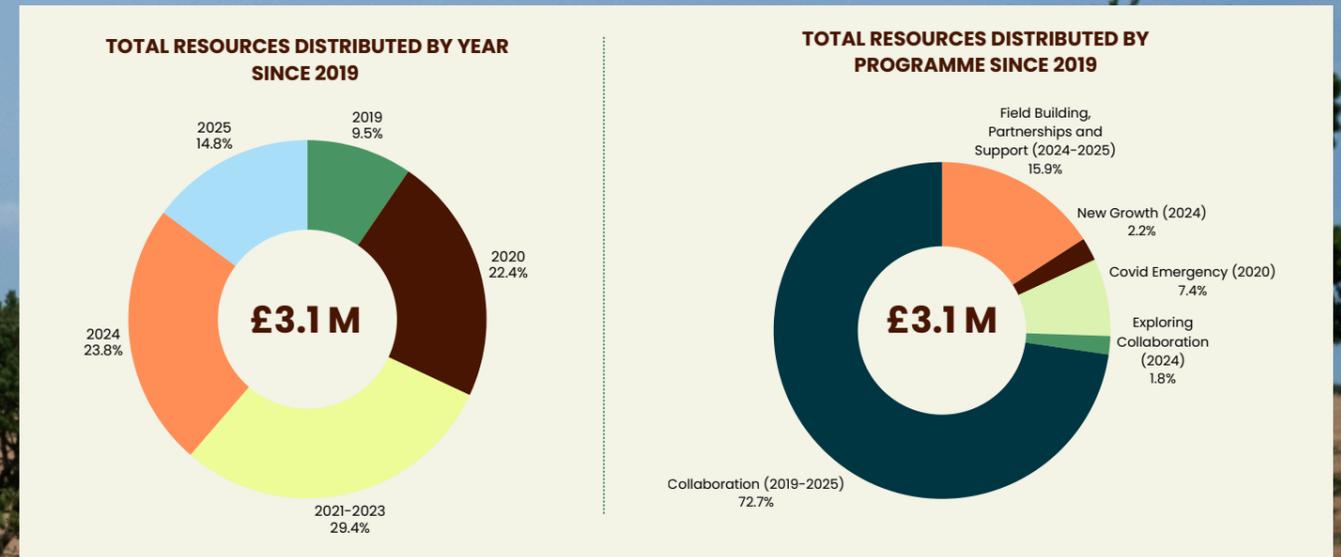
Funds Distributed

129

Collaborations Funded

141

Organisations Supported



2019

Fund Inception

- Established by the A Team Foundation and the Roddick Foundation to strengthen collaboration between funders and the wider sector in response to the ongoing under-resourcing of the agroecology movement.
- Launched with support for 11 collaborations, distributing £268,278 in funding.

2020

Ambassadors introduced

- Recruited sector ambassadors to inform decision making.

COVID-19 Emergency Aid and Collaborative Grants

- Allocated £233,500 through 10 emergency grants and supported 16 collaborative projects with £481,181.

2021

Fund Evolution

- Transitioned pooled fund management to Prism the Gift Fund.
- Distributed £551,902 through 11 collaboration grants.
- These collaborations received continuation grants until 2023 totalling £361,987

2022

Lottery Resources Secured

- £1.5 million secured through NLCF Growing Great Ideas fund for our core costs, including £500k for capacity building for the movement through a Field Building Programme. **This funding runs to January 2027.**

2023

Participatory Grant-making

- Strengthened our team by hiring key personnel, established foundational organisational structure.
- Implemented sociocracy governance—Ambassadors have full decision making powers over grant decisions through Participatory Grant Making.
- Co-designed our field-building programme and the next round of grants with Ambassadors.

2024

Strategic Development

- Implemented our Field Building approach and started distributing resources through Partnership Agreements.
- Began using Social Change Nest as our pooled fund agent. The distribute our funds in line with our trust based funding approach.
- Developed our MEL framework based on reflection and collective impact approaches.

2025

Bridging between the Movement and Philanthropy

- Supported our Field Building work to develop and influence our granting approach
- Directed grants towards areas of movement need in response to listening
- Improved our communication (developing our [website](#) and [resources](#))
- Focused on developing collaboration in philanthropy

How we work

We work collaboratively with our Ambassadors, funders and wider network.

We aim to model power redistribution in how we work as a collective. Internally, we use sociocracy and work through decision-making sub-groups (“circles”) that enable shared responsibility, transparency, and distributed leadership.

Our Decision-making Circles

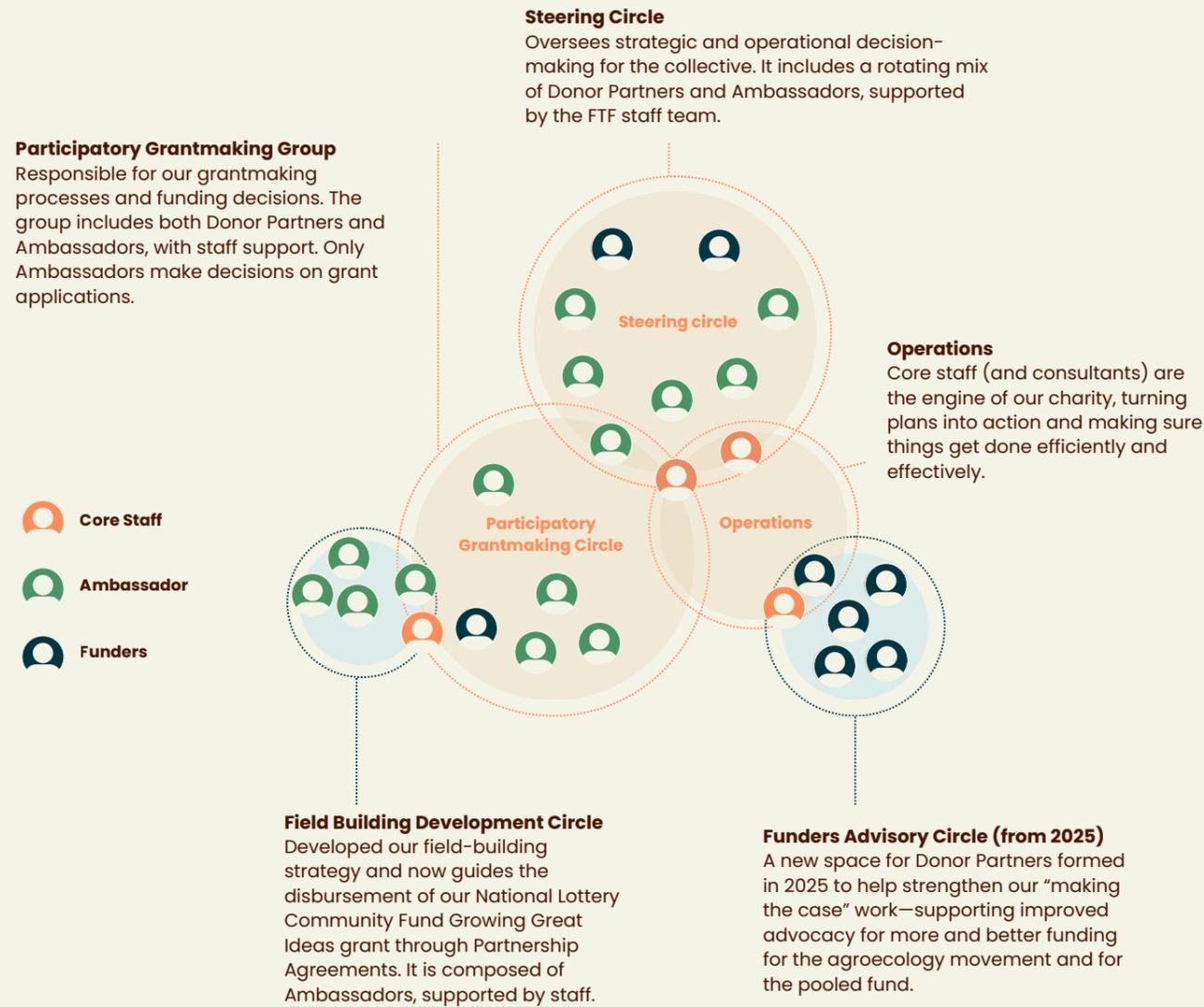
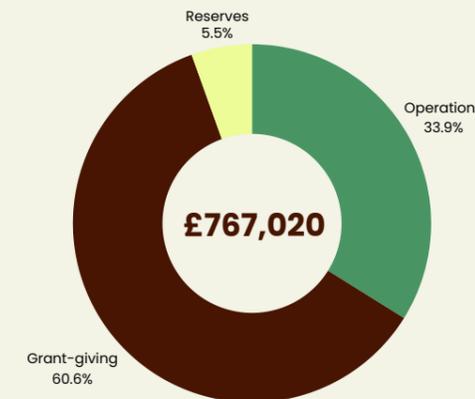


PHOTO CREDIT: VERONICA WHITE

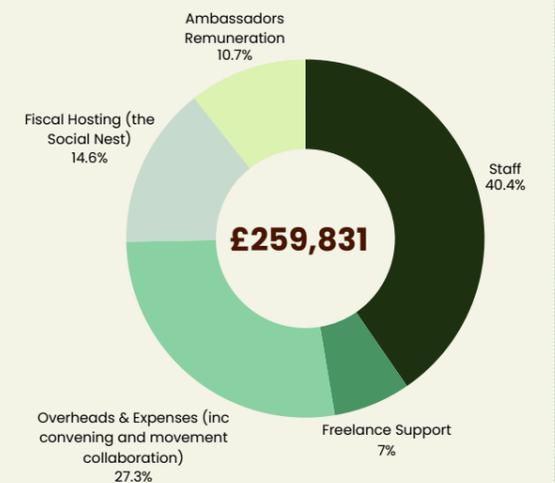
Use of Funds: 2025

We are committed to directing the majority of our income towards grant-giving, ensuring that funds reach the Agroecological movement. We work to keep operating costs proportionate and efficient, recognising that strong internal systems enable effective delivery, and that participatory processes, movement building and convening all need investment. A small portion of our income is set aside as reserves to maintain stability and resilience for the future.

Allocation of Income



Operating Costs



How we create change

Farming the Future exists to accelerate the transition to fair, sustainable and resilient food and farming systems by pooling resources and amplifying the collective impact of funders, movements and communities.

As the UK's only pooled funder dedicated to agroecology, we are uniquely positioned to support work at scale, enable deeper impact and respond flexibly to the evolving needs of the movement.

Our model allows us to listen closely to farmer networks, communities, and partner organisations, shaping funding decisions around lived experience, practical insight and long-term ambition. Guided by our Ambassadors and funded partners, we use participatory approaches to decision-making to ensure our strategy remains grounded in the realities of those driving change on the ground. We prioritise trust-based, relational funding, maintaining regular personal contact with funded partners rather than relying solely on written reporting.

Our three interlinked strategies:

- 1 Resourcing the movement by supporting work that builds the enabling conditions for change through our pooled funds.**
Investing in initiatives that strengthen the social, economic and policy foundations needed for agroecological transformation, rather than isolated short-term interventions.
- 2 Listening and responding to needs**
Ground our funding in the knowledge, experience and priorities of farmers, communities and movement partners.
- 3 Advocating within philanthropy for more and better funding**
Influencing the wider funding ecosystem to unlock greater, more strategic, and more equitable investment in agroecological solutions.

2025 Pooled Fund Priorities:

We welcomed applications for events and convenings relationship building, collaborative projects and joint campaigns & policy work in 3 thematic areas:

New Economies for Food and Farming

Shifting economic control of food and farming systems to producers, citizens and communities in a way that humanises the food system and builds solidarity and wellbeing. This includes: shortening production and supply chains; democratising governance of land, seeds and other key assets within the food supply chain; creating the policy and financial environment to support producers to transition.

Supporting a Diverse Farming Movement

Addressing barriers to entry to agroecological farming, ensuring there is equitable access to all necessary training, skills, and assets including land & other opportunities with a focus on uplifting more marginalised communities. This includes: developing progression pathways for new entrants to agroecological farming; ensuring diverse experiences are centred in storytelling.

Movement Infrastructure

Supporting the movement's capacity for collaborative working across thematic areas, including: prioritising collective capacity and common infrastructure that supports the broader movement (e.g. communications, research, learning & education platforms, networks.)

PHOTO CREDIT: JASON TAYLOR



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Resourcing the Movement

In 2025:

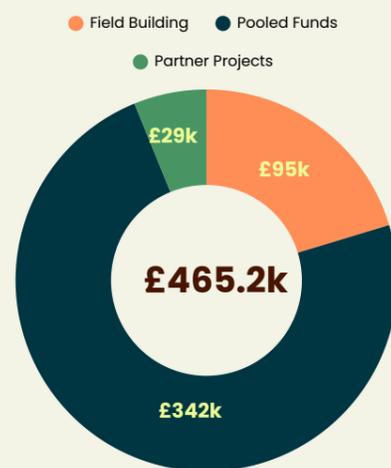
£465.2k
 Funds Distributed


17
 Projects and Collaborations
 Funded


35
 Organisations Supported

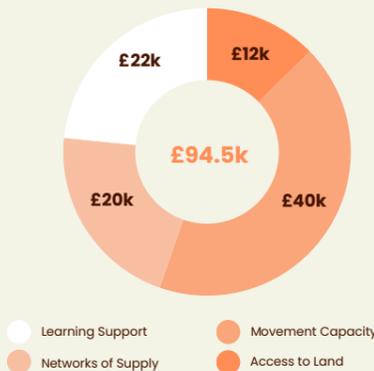
2025 Funding Breakdown

FUNDS DISTRIBUTED BY PROGRAMME

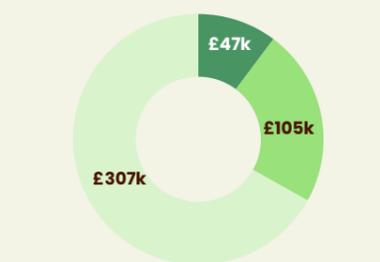


 A full list of our funded partners is in the Appendices on p.21

2025 FIELDBUILDING BREAKDOWN



2025 POOLED FUND BREAKDOWN



This totals more than £342k and over 100% as some grants fell into more than one category

Pooled Fund Update

The overall pooled fund has remained stable, with some donors increasing and others reducing their contributions. In 2025, 6% of funds were allocated to Social Change Nest for administration, and 4% to Farming the Future's operational reserves, meaning **90% of pooled funding was distributed directly to funded partners.**

At the same time, Lottery funding available through field-building partnerships (outside the pooled fund) is tapering as the Field Building programme concludes. As a result, the total resources distributed to the movement in 2025 were lower than in 2024, underlining the importance of continued funder engagement and diversification.

We are therefore seeking to grow the pooled fund, increasing the availability of flexible, trust-based funding to enable deeper collaboration and systemic change.

To support this, we have developed a [targeted donor pitch deck](#), are strengthening our communications to clearly articulate the strategic case for joining the fund, and [relaunched our website](#) to better reflect the scale of opportunity and potential for impact.

JEDI Leadership Training

In 2025 FTF funded a Justice, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (JEDI) training programme for food sector leaders. Designed and held by Eating Better and Sustain the training focuses on dedicated support for directors and senior leaders, providing mutual support, and guided learning, to embed JEDI principles across the wider food and farming movement.

Facilitators will lead the cohort through a structured journey designed to deepen understanding, challenge existing paradigms, and develop practical strategies for embedding anti-racism and equity into organisational culture and governance.

In addition to funding the training, Farming the Future's own Director, Bonnie Hewson, is taking part in the initial cohort and will be bringing learning back into Farming the Future's own on-going JEDI organisational development.

New Funding Strands in 2025

We invited applications for events and convenings, relationship-building activities, collaborative projects, and joint campaigns and policy work across three thematic areas which we envisage continuing for at least two years:

New Economies for Food and Farming

Supporting a shift in economic power within food and farming systems towards producers, citizens, and communities, creating a more human-centred system rooted in solidarity and wellbeing. Including:

- Shortening production and supply chains
- Democratising ownership and governance of land, seeds, and other key assets
- Shaping policy and financial frameworks that enable producers to transition

Supporting a Diverse Farming Movement

Addressing barriers to entry into agroecological farming and ensuring equitable access to the training, skills, land, and other assets required to succeed—particularly for marginalised communities. This includes:

- Developing clear progression pathways for new entrants
- Centring diverse lived experiences in storytelling and sector leadership

Movement Infrastructure

Strengthening the movement's ability to collaborate across themes by investing in shared capacity and core infrastructure. Including:

- Communications and narrative development
- Research and evidence generation
- Learning and education platforms
- Networks and other forms of shared infrastructure that benefit the wider movement





Resourcing the Movement: In Practice

The Agroecological movement is not built through projects alone. It depends on strong relationships, shared purpose, and the often-unseen infrastructure that allows people to build trust and work together effectively.

Through our pooled fund, we prioritise support for initiatives that strengthen the foundations of the movement: enabling collaboration, amplifying collective voice, and creating the conditions for lasting systems change.

The two grantees highlighted below show how strategic funding can strengthen the ecosystems around agroecology: resourcing young people in policy-making and agroecology spaces, and building resilient regional food systems through community kitchens. Both illustrate how investment in people and structures lays the groundwork for long-term change.

Youth Voices in Policy Spaces Back the Future

Building on the How Farming Can Cool the Planet project—where young people from diverse backgrounds and perspectives came together to find common ground—the original partners, SOS-UK, FLAME and NFYFC, expanded the collaboration by bringing in two additional organisations: Sustain and the Nature Friendly Farmers Network. Together they created a youth ambassador programme called Back the Future.

Six young people from across the UK were selected as youth ambassadors: two farmers, two students and two FLAME activists, based in Coventry, Fife, Totnes, Hereford, Teesside and Edinburgh. What followed was a genuinely youth-led programme, with staff from partner organisations providing support, advice and opportunities for skills development.

Each ambassador developed their own approach to policy and advocacy work related to food and farming in the UK. The ambassadors have since spoken at events and panels across the country and built relationships with other youth-focused groups, including Emergent Generation.

Their activities have ranged from advocating for stronger food and farming content in the education curriculum to engaging with policymakers and participating in international food forums.

Looking ahead, several of the ambassadors are now collaborating to develop a UK Youth Food and Farming Forum, with a mission to “convene diverse youth voices, spark bold conversations and drive collective action towards a just and sustainable agrifood future.”

Partners: SOS-UK (Students Organising for Sustainability), FLAME, National Federation of Young Farmers' Clubs (NFYFC), Sustain, Nature Friendly Farming Network (NFFN) Scotland

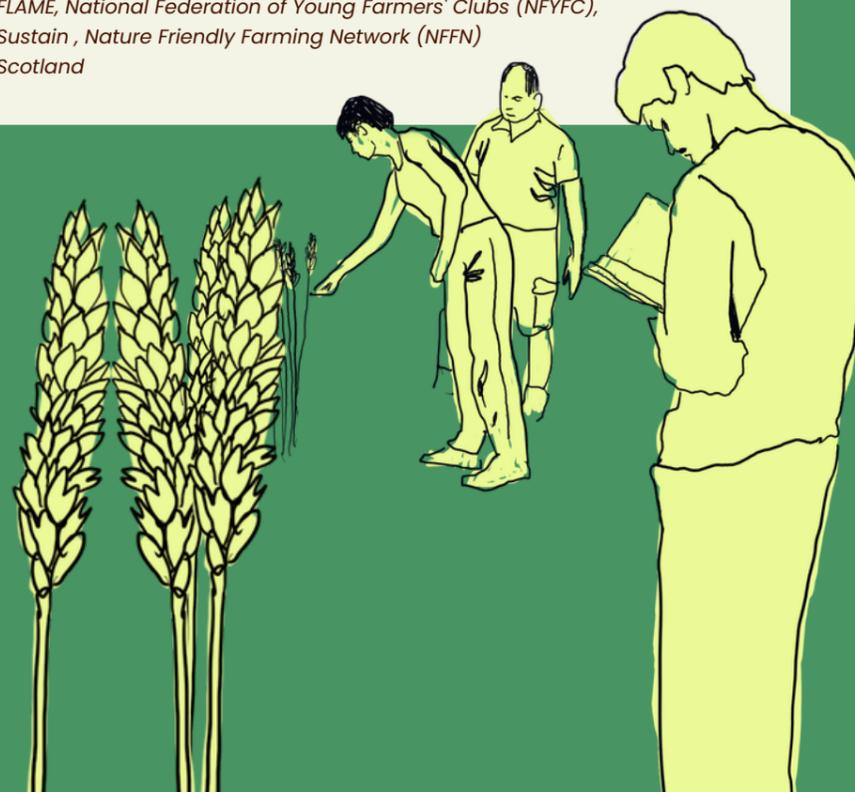


PHOTO CREDIT: BETTER FOOD SHED

Bridging the Urban-Rural Divide Landed Community Kitchens

This project laid the groundwork for eight prototype Landed Community Kitchens (LCKs) across the North of England. LCKs are an approach to linking agroecological farmers with food-sovereignty-oriented urban community kitchens, while also building broader connections between urban, peri-urban and rural communities.

Eight locations and partner organisations were involved in developing these prototypes: Ecoworks (Nottingham), Regather (Sheffield), LESS (Lancaster), Cooperation Hull (Hull), Kirkstall Valley (Leeds), Refuse (Chester-le-Street, Durham), Food Links in partnership with Calderdale Ecological Land (Calderdale), and Northern Lily (Oldham).

Across each region, the project has focused on laying the foundations for Landed Community Kitchens by building relationships, sharing tools and supporting local exploration. This has included visiting and connecting with partners on the ground, mapping local needs and existing networks, and supporting groups to develop their ideas.

A key resource developed through the project is the LCK Playbook, which sets out the conceptual framework for Landed Community Kitchens. The Playbook includes a value compass, practical exercises to help regional groups hold internal conversations, and tools such as tables and questionnaires to support the collection of materials for analysis.

The project has also facilitated learning exchanges between the different regional groups, including a running series of six webinars. Plans are underway to expand these exchanges in 2026 by bringing in European speakers and sharing examples of similar models from across Europe.

Alongside this collective learning, each group has received one-to-one support sessions to explore emerging business models and consider how Landed Community Kitchens could develop in their local context.

Partners: Regather Ltd, Centre for Agroecology, Water and Resilience (CAWR), Urban Agriculture Consortium, Real Farming Trust, CSA Network

Listening & responding

Listening to and learning from organisations and communities across the movement remains central to our approach. It informs our strategy, shapes our decision-making, and guides our funding priorities.

In 2025, we continued to deepen our commitment to participatory practice, ensuring that those closest to the work help shape how we operate and evolve.

Strengthening the Movement through Ambassadors

We work closely with our movement Ambassadors, who play a vital role in shaping our strategy, grantmaking and shared learning. Drawing on lived experience and deep sector knowledge, Ambassadors ensure that our funding approach reflects the realities and ambitions of the movement.

The 2025 funding round marked the first full cycle for the new cohort of Ambassadors who joined in 2024. Participating in the entire grant process, from design and priority-setting through to application review and final decision-making, strengthened their understanding of our work and created space for meaningful input. Their insights have directly informed improvements to our processes and helped us refine how we communicate, assess and support funded partners.

Creating Participatory Spaces

The design of the 2025 pooled funding round was grounded in learning from dedicated listening spaces with Ambassadors and the wider movement. These sessions surfaced shared priorities, challenges and opportunities, ensuring that our themes and processes reflected diverse perspectives and lived realities.

From these conversations, we developed three grantmaking themes:

- New Economies for Food and Farming
- Diversifying the Movement
- Movement Infrastructure and Support

We also continued to evolve our reporting approach, moving towards more conversational and relational formats. This shift has supported deeper shared learning, enabling more open discussion of emerging challenges, adaptations and opportunities.

For the first time in several years, funding decisions were made together in person. We recognised that face-to-face connection strengthens the quality of discussion and decision-making, while also investing in the long-term relationships that underpin collaborative and trust-based grantmaking.

Relational Input and Reflection

In 2025, we maintained regular engagement with funded partners and the wider movement, while also testing new mechanisms for feedback. We introduced a feedback survey for funded and philanthropic partners and invited funded organisations to share reflections via voice notes, creating more accessible and flexible ways to contribute insight.

This feedback was reviewed collectively during our annual retreat and has sharpened our focus on areas for improvement. It is helping us refine our processes, strengthen communication and explore how our funding model can continue to evolve in response to sector needs.

Engaging Across the Sector

We actively listened, built relationships and contributed to collective learning through participation in sector events and convenings, including:

- The Oxford Real Farming Conference, where we co-hosted a funder breakfast with Be the Earth and chaired a session on funding the UK agroecology transition.
- Fields Good Festival, a festival in Northern Ireland celebrating farming, food and the future.
- Our Field Building Programme convening in Leeds.
- The Gathering Table, a summit focused on racial justice in food and farming.
- Agroecology Comms Network skills sessions.
- Regular local meet-ups with Bristol-based agriculture and climate communications organisations, including Global Strategic Communications Council, Carbon Brief, DeSmog, the Food Farming and Countryside Commission, and AdBlock.
- CTRL Shift meet-ups, including a workshop on “Hacking the Emotional Code” focused on narrative change.

Through these engagements, we have continued to listen actively, contribute to shared insight, and strengthen the relationships that enable collective progress.

What's next in 2026

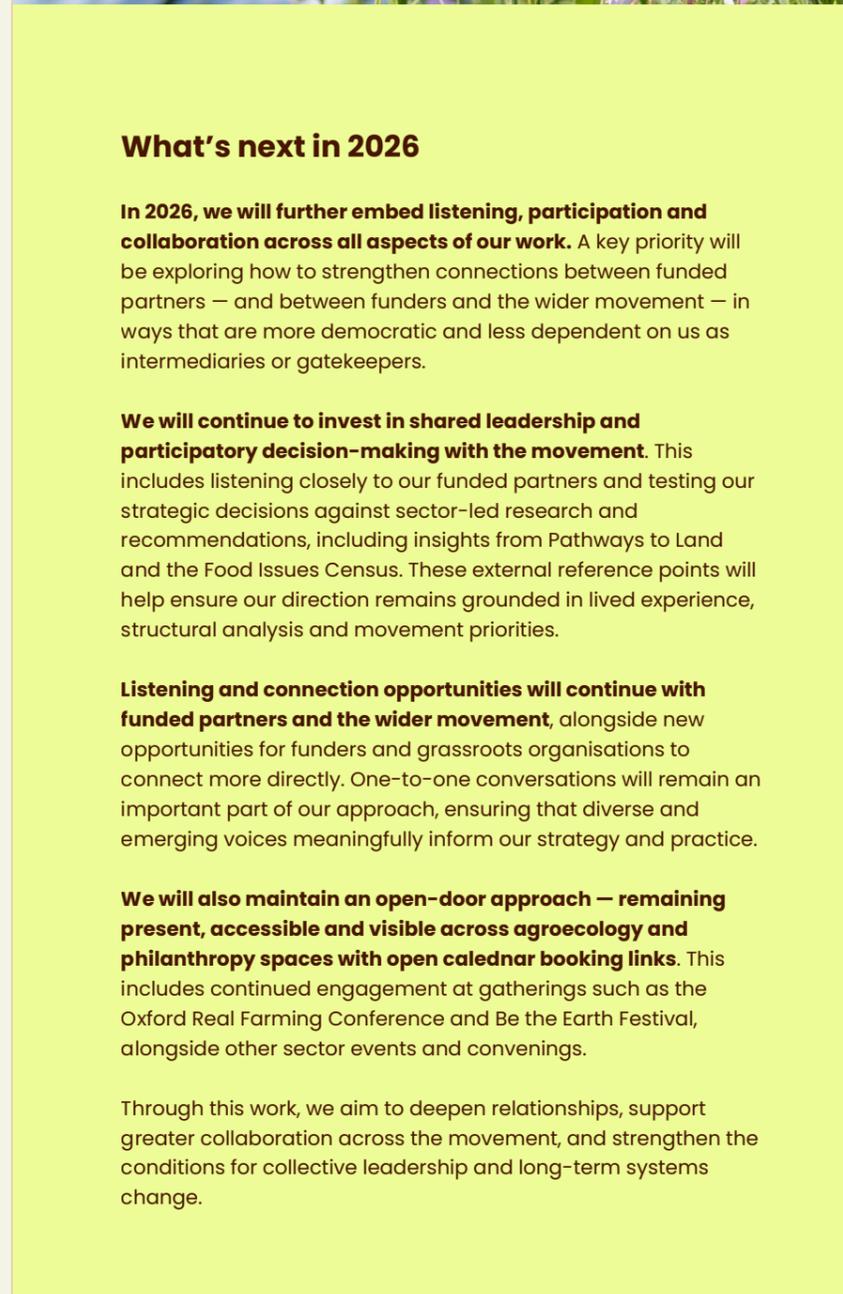
In 2026, we will further embed listening, participation and collaboration across all aspects of our work. A key priority will be exploring how to strengthen connections between funded partners – and between funders and the wider movement – in ways that are more democratic and less dependent on us as intermediaries or gatekeepers.

We will continue to invest in shared leadership and participatory decision-making with the movement. This includes listening closely to our funded partners and testing our strategic decisions against sector-led research and recommendations, including insights from Pathways to Land and the Food Issues Census. These external reference points will help ensure our direction remains grounded in lived experience, structural analysis and movement priorities.

Listening and connection opportunities will continue with funded partners and the wider movement, alongside new opportunities for funders and grassroots organisations to connect more directly. One-to-one conversations will remain an important part of our approach, ensuring that diverse and emerging voices meaningfully inform our strategy and practice.

We will also maintain an open-door approach – remaining present, accessible and visible across agroecology and philanthropy spaces with open calendar booking links. This includes continued engagement at gatherings such as the Oxford Real Farming Conference and Be the Earth Festival, alongside other sector events and convenings.

Through this work, we aim to deepen relationships, support greater collaboration across the movement, and strengthen the conditions for collective leadership and long-term systems change.



Advocacy within Philanthropy

Advocating for More and Better Funding

Advocating for more — and better — funding for the UK food and farming transition has been central to our work in 2025. This includes championing increased support for agroecology and food sovereignty approaches, while also strengthening support for Farming the Future itself.

Our focus is two-fold:

1. Increasing the volume of funding flowing into UK food and farming transition.
2. Improving the quality of funding, promoting practices that are equitable, trust-based and grounded in the needs and realities of the sector.

By engaging individual donors, trusts, foundations and funding networks, we seek to both grow the overall resource available to the movement and influence how those resources are distributed and governed. Through Farming the Future, we are creating a collaborative space where funders can work together on issues that sit between their strategies, helping to build the enabling conditions for long-term systems change.

Championing and Connecting the Sector

A core part of our role is acting as a connector — linking funders with organisations, and organisations with one another. In 2025 alone, our Director made over 100 connections introducing people, sharing intelligence, contributing to research, and responding to enquiries about trust-based funding practice.



This relational work has led directly to new funding flows and collaborations. As Sophia Cooke from the Environmental Funders Network reflected following an event we chaired on funding collaboration:

“I came away thinking how, if every funder spent just half an hour with you, the entire sector would work a lot better.”

Alongside facilitating direct connections, we ensured visibility across diverse funding communities by attending and contributing to key conferences and convenings, including:

- The Agroecology Coalition’s Funding and Investment Convening (Rome)
- The Healthy Food Healthy Planet Conference (Poland)
- The Good Ancestors Conference
- The Environmental Funders Network Retreat
- The Ariadne Network Skills Day
- The AgriFood Charities Partnership Gathering

We also presented workshops to stimulate discussion on funder practice and sector needs, including at:

- The Environmental Funders Network (EFN) Virtual Conference, where we chaired a session on funding collaboration more effectively
- Regenerosity’s [Nurture Community of Practice](#), presenting on our pooled funding model
- The Healthy Food Healthy Planet Conference, sharing our funding approach and helping shape the 2026 programme

Internationally, we continued engagement with collaborative platforms including the Agroecology Coalition, Healthy Food Healthy Planet, the Global Alliance for the Future of Food, the European AgriFood Co-Funding Alliance, and the Agroecology Fund.

This engagement enables us to compare UK approaches with developments in Europe, share learning, avoid duplication and strengthen collective advocacy. For example, research between the Global Alliance on the Future of Food and Philea’s EFSAF group, [Regenerative and Agroecological Food Systems Transitions in Europe](#), estimates that an additional €25–35 million is needed in the next 18–24 months to meaningfully advance identified opportunities beyond current philanthropic investment.

Developing a Collaborative Funder Network

During 2025, plans for a Better Food and Farming Funders Network progressed significantly, with agreement to develop this space within the Environmental Funders Network. The network is due to launch in 2026, supported by the Esmee Fairbairn Foundation, the Rothschild Foundation, the Samworth Foundation, and Farming the Future.

The network will support strategic collaboration between existing farming funders while providing an accessible entry point for new funders. A shared commitment underpins this work: to “grow the pie” of available funding rather than simply redistribute existing resources.

To support this ambition, we undertook research combining data from 360Giving, Where the Green Grants Went 9, and Food Issues Census 3 to explore how funding data can help assess and strengthen sector resilience. This research will be released in 2026.



Sharing Learning and Best Practice

In 2025, we formalised our Funders Advisory Group, creating a structured space to draw on donor partner experience and strengthen both our advocacy and learning offer.

We strengthened our operational capacity by recruiting a freelance Communications Lead. Having designated communications support has enabled us to move from reactive updates to a more intentional and strategic approach, clarifying our narrative and more effectively articulating the case for agroecology and collaborative funding. A key output of this work has been the redesign of [our website](#) alongside refreshed and newly developed resources:

- [Movement Listening & Signposting](#)
- [Advice for Funders of UK Food and Farming](#)
- Farming the Future’s [Theory of Change](#) and [Agroecology](#) explainers
- Our [Approach to Collaboratively Resourcing Systems Change](#)
- Our [Invitation to Funders](#) and accompanying [slide deck](#)
- An [article](#) by Bonnie on assessing funding portfolios against agroecology principles
- [A Best Practice Resource Library](#)
- Articles from Ali Taherzadeh on building a movement capable of transforming the food system ([Part 1](#) / [Part 2](#)).

Together, these resources position our website as a “shop window” for philanthropy — showcasing diverse approaches, needs and impact across UK agroecology, and making visible the enabling role Farming the Future plays within the wider ecosystem.



What’s next in 2026

In 2026, we will continue advocating — in collaboration with partners — for more and better funding, while strengthening transparency, shared learning and trust-based practice across the sector.

We will:

- Co-develop a UK Food and Farming Funders Network with EFN and partners
- Participate in communities of practice where we can flow learning back into UK philanthropy
- Expand signposting resources to help funders better understand and support agroecology
- Deepen engagement with existing donor partners
- Strengthen storytelling and communications to highlight collective impact and ripple effects

We will continue promoting sector research, including [Food Issues Census 3](#), [Where the Green Grants Went 9](#), [Pathways to Land for BPOC](#), and [Future Directions for Urban Agroecology: Ten Gamechangers 2025–2030](#).

Our participation in UK and international funder networks will remain active, including engagement in the Fito Network’s Pando Funding community of practice alongside peers such as the Joseph Rowntree Foundation and the Rockefeller Foundation.

2026 will also be a critical year for our own sustainability. As support from the National Lottery Community Fund concludes, we will be bold in attracting new donor partners, both for our pooled fund and for Farming the Future’s core operations. We are confident that our role — connecting actors, strengthening practice and helping to flow more and better funding into UK agroecology — is essential to building a fairer, healthier and more resilient food and farming system.



PHOTO CREDIT: VERONICA WHITE

Impact in motion

The change we support ripples across the food and farming system. From shifting power, to directly supporting farmers, to reconnecting communities with land and food, our funding and collaborations create interconnected, long-term impact.

The stories in this section offer a glimpse at how this ripple effect takes shape in practice. Change often happens through steady, connected work over time as projects build on one another, relationships deepen and shared ideas turn into collective action.

Whether through long-term collaboration, practical experimentation or simply bringing the right people together at the right moment, small steps can help shift the wider movement in lasting ways.

PHOTO CREDIT: JASON TAYLOR

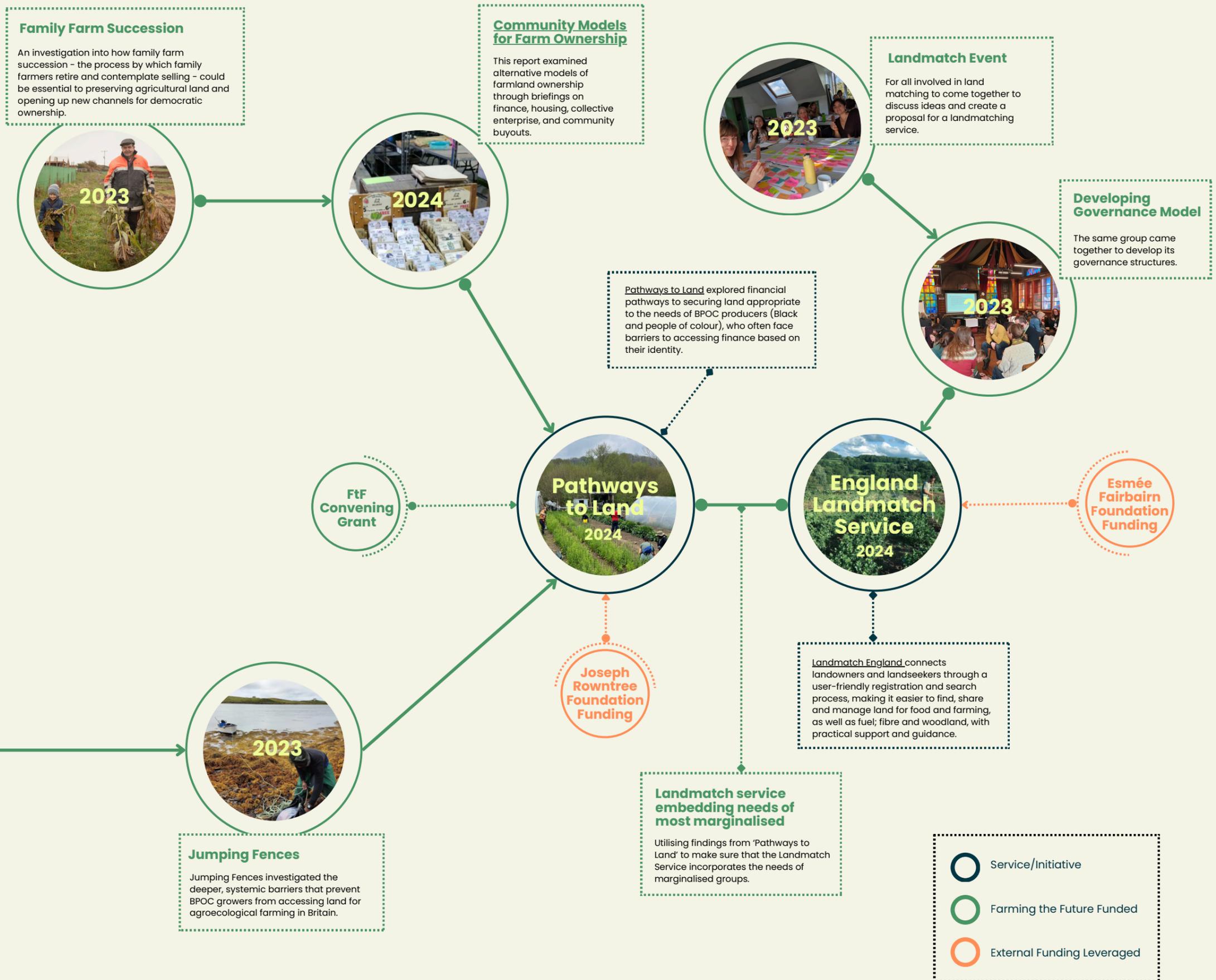
1 | Ripple Effects: Just Access to Land

Our work on land access shows how projects can feed into each other, creating cumulative impact.

Early funded projects explored preserving agricultural land, opening democratic ownership channels, and highlighting the knowledge and experience of BPOC food growers.

Insights from these projects directly informed subsequent work, from reports and investigations into systemic barriers to services that match land with growers.

The trust built across the field through long-term collaboration has made it possible to develop deeper, movement-wide work on a shared Food, Farming and Land strategy.



2 | Place-based pilots: Alternative Economies for Farmers & Communities

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.

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



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.



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.



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.

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



Partners working on alternative economies:

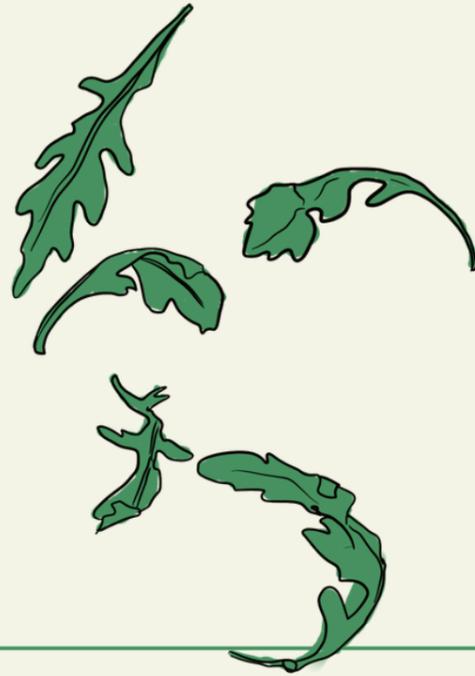


-  Fringe Farming
-  Landed Community Kitchens
-  Food Forests
-  Food Hubs



3 | The impact of small grants: The UK Fruit and Veg Coalition

Small grants enable strategic convening and relationship-building and, as shown here, can lead to significant, lasting impact.



Members: CSA Network, The Food Foundation, Organic Growers Alliance, Landworkers' Alliance, Soil Association, Sustain, Lantra, Growing Communities, Organic North, Regather Sheffield, Better Food Shed, Food Sense Wales, Bridging the Gap, Wildlife Trusts, Propagate, Permaculture Association

2024

2025

Farming the Future awarded a **£5,000 grant** to bring together a group of organisations with a shared interest in organic UK fruit and vegetable growing for a strategic meeting.

That initial convening generated enough momentum and enthusiasm for participants to formalise their collaboration as the UK Fruit and Vegetable Coalition.

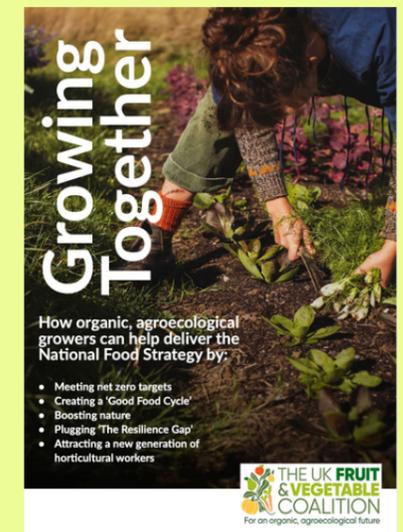
Since formalising, members have met monthly and established working groups focused on practical areas of shared concern.



The Coalition officially launched with a Parliamentary event on 25 November 2025, attended by MPs and senior DEFRA officials and supported by a pamphlet of joint actions and policy proposals.

As a result, the group has been invited into regular dialogue with DEFRA and is currently coordinating a farm visit for departmental staff.

Read more



The Coalition is an **alliance of organisations representing organic and agroecological growers** across the four nations of the UK.

Its shared aim is to:

- Increase domestic fruit and vegetable production
- Reduce reliance on imports, and
- Make agroecological growing a valued and accessible career path

The Fruit and Veg Coalition shows how even modest funding for coordination and connection can build lasting infrastructure, strengthen a shared voice, and create direct pathways for policy engagement.

PHOTO CREDIT: JASON TAYLOR



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Appendices



PHOTO CREDIT: JASON TAYLOR

Appendix 1: Pooled Fund

Pooled Fund Partners

TOTAL: £342,000

Item	Description	Mar-Dec 25
Creating and Connecting a policy and place-based responsive Basic Income for farmers working group:	<p>Convening a collaborative working group to develop and promote a basic income for farmers policy in Scotland, supporting climate action and rural resilience.</p> <p><i>Partners: Propagate (Scotland), Landworkers' Alliance, B14 Farmers</i></p>	£12,000
Bridging the Urban-Rural divide	<p>Working to close the gap between urban and rural food growing through a mutual exchange of knowledge, praxis and skills between community food growers in London and farms across South East England.</p> <p><i>Partners: Community Food Growers Network, Landworkers' Alliance</i></p>	£35,000
Growing Routes to Market for the Local Food Sector	<p>Focused on implementing the data and evidence and infrastructure elements of the Local Food Growth plan. They will be working on making the case for local food systems with the DEFRA food strategy team and coordinating with partners to identify the key infrastructure needed to get local food to markets and ensuring farmers and producers' voices and perspectives are shaping the work.</p> <p><i>Partners: Sustainable Foot Trust, Landworkers' Alliance, Sustain</i></p>	£35,000
Strategy for the Food, Farming, and Land Movement	<p>The Movement Strategy Process is an effort to bring together the work of diverse organisations, projects, organisers, and collaborative networks and alliances across food, farming, and land into a more coherent and strategic movement - to gather collective power and move as one body. The work aims to help reshape the way we work, distribute resources, and think about strategy, both collectively and within organisations.</p> <p><i>Partners: Shared Assets, Sustain, The Real Farming Trust, Food Ethics Council, Social Farms and Gardens, Pathways to Land Collective, Solidarity Across Land Trades, Emergent Generation, CSA Network</i></p>	£50,000



Item	Description	Mar-Dec 25
Moving Together - Weaving the Agroecological Movement in Northern Ireland:	<p>Work supporting the development of the agroecological movement in NI with an emphasis on sharing untold stories and creating new narratives, mobilising communities towards collective action and exploring ways to connect farmers, growers, citizens, activists, and policymakers.</p> <p><i>Partners: Cooperative Alternatives, Ben Vista CSA</i></p>	£70,000
RISE: Resilient Infrastructure for a Successful Emergence in the UK's Grain Economy	<p>Work to support the development of regional grain economies, specifically around how to structure groups, hold collaborative decision making and manage resourcing and increase diversity within its membership. The project will also support UK Grain Lab's Movement Building circle to refocus itself as a community of practice, clarifying its domain, the community it represents and its ways of working.</p> <p><i>Partners: UK Grain Lab, CAWR Coventry University, Gaia Foundation</i></p>	£70,000
Landmatch England: Nourish and Diversify	<p>Resourcing Pathways to Land and Tamar Grow Local to support the newly developing Landmatch England to ensure it is accessible across England and that it can properly support those from underrepresented groups facing a host of additional barriers to land access and also support landowners to understand and appreciate these barriers.</p> <p><i>Partners: CSA Network UK, Landworkers' Alliance, Shared Assets, Tamar Grow Local, Pathways to Land Collective</i></p>	£70,000

Farming the Future Partnerships

TOTAL: £28,650

Item	Description	Mar-Dec 25
<p>Move It – Shifting Systems Together</p>	<p>Hold a day of creativity, care & joy in order to deepen and enrich the relationships between those building an agroecological system and those who do, or should, fund them.</p> <p><i>Partner: Food Ethics Council</i></p>	<p>£13,650</p>
<p>Justice, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (JEDI) training for food sector leaders</p>	<p>Create a dedicated learning journey on Justice Equity, Diversity and Inclusion for directors and senior leaders from within a broad alliance of actors, that provides mutual support, and guided learning, which will embed JEDI principles across the agroecological movement.</p> <p><i>Partners: Sustain, Eating Better</i></p>	<p>£15,000</p>



Appendix 2: Field Building Support

Core Learning Costs

TOTAL: £22,172

Item	Description	Mar-Dec 25
Field Building Project Development, Event and travel support	Awarded to Shared Assets to support field building members with project development work, coming together at events and travel to attend joint events.	£8,687
General Support - Shared Assets	Funding for Shared Assets to host field building convenings	£13,485

Movement Capacity

TOTAL: £33,082

Strengthening our Shared Voice: Creating Shared Language Across the Agroecology Movement	To build a shared language around agroecology by providing deep, collaborative and strategic opportunities for comms professionals in the movement to convene around three key facets of agroecology - social movement, economic resilience, and a solution to the climate crisis - in the form of three one-day action learning workshops.	£3500
Youth Capacity Building Event	Delivering a week long training for youth activists in the agroecology, land and food movements.	£10,000
ORFC 2026	Support for Justice Hub partner costs and general bursaries - approved at same time as 2024 support.	£5000
Northern Food and Farming	Support for members of the network to come together in person.	£4000
Movement Strategy Sessions	Stir to Action leading on convening around using Power to Change's platform to build a capacity supporting and mentoring matching service that can offer funder-subsidised training.	£8000

Movement Capacity cont.

Navigate/LWA work	Travel funds for LWA to work with Navigate	£800
Sociocracy Training for Movement	Farming the Future commissioned sociocracy training for funded partner network.	£1782

Just Access to Land

TOTAL: £12,000

Community Food Growers Network	Supporting a programme of training and talks focusing on how to access land in ways which centre justice and anti-oppression. Topics include workers' rights, disability justice, anti-oppression training and sustainable business modelling.	£5,000
Scotland Land Justice Gatherings	To hold spaces for collective visioning towards the creation of an autonomous educational space building understanding different approaches to land and belonging.	£7,000

Networks of Supply

TOTAL: £20,060

Nurturing a producer-led approach to artisanal and agroecological dairy through community building and events	Building capacity and community in the artisanal and agroecological dairy sector to provide an alternative approach to sustainability and quality than that offered by the big milk processors.	£16,000
Networks of Supply at Groundswell 2025 and Oxford Real Farming Conference 2026	Networks of Supply Groundswell stand (£3,080) and event support costs for ORFC networking event (£980).	£4,060

