

Cynhadledd  
GWIR  
Fwyd  
a Ffermio  
**CYMRU**



**WALES**  
REAL  
Food  
& Farming  
Conference



Picture: Arie Coetzee, Daffodil Hill

# WALES REAL FOOD AND FARMING CONFERENCE 2024

20-22nd November

University of Wales Trinity St David,  
Lampeter

[info@wrffc.wales](mailto:info@wrffc.wales)  
[linktr.ee/walesfoodfarming](https://linktr.ee/walesfoodfarming)  
#WRFFC24

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### Wednesday 20<sup>th</sup> November

Time	Arts Hall	Cliff Tucker Theatre	Old Hall	Arts 1	Lloyd Thomas Dining Hall
<b>10.00-11.00</b>	1. * Welcome by Dr Amber Wheeler, WRFFC Guest speakers: Derek Walker, Future Generations Commissioner for Wales, staff and children from Farms for City Children				
<b>11.00-11.15</b>	<b>Break</b>				
<b>11.15-12.30</b>	2. * How can we best achieve food resilience in Wales?	3. Food procurement for good	4. Exploring feminine values in the context of successful livestock farming	5. An agroecological revolution for Wales	
<b>12.30-13.45</b>	<b>Lunch break</b>				6. How was your season?
<b>13.45-15.00</b>	7. * What needs to be prioritised in the next Government on food? Have your say	8. Sustaining the sea: Stories and practices of Welsh fishers	9. Navigating trade-offs in agroecology: A balancing act	10. Seed sovereignty films	
<b>15.00-15.15</b>	<b>Tea / coffee break</b>				
<b>15.15-16.30</b>	11. Farm data to empower Welsh farmers	12. Enabling wider participation in food system change	13. Why farmers and ecologists need each other, now more than ever	14. Desert Island Seeds: Seeds for a resilient future	
<b>16.30-16.45</b>	<b>Break</b>				
<b>16.45-18.00</b>	15. * The interrelationships between the environment and food production	16. Working bioregionally for food system transformation	17. What is the future for organic food and farming in Wales? Followed by drinks reception (until 19.00)	18. Conservation grazing - and what they *don't* talk about	19. Food - the musical!
<b>19.30</b>	Evening meal at Bwlchwernen Fawr, by the kind invitation of Patrick and Becky Holden. TICKETED				

Plus, in the **Arts Building foyer**: Carreg Creative\*

\* Session partly or wholly in Welsh; translation available

## Thursday 21<sup>st</sup> November

Time	Arts Hall	Cliff Tucker Theatre	Old Hall	Arts 1	Lloyd Thomas Dining Hall
9.15-10.15	20. Guest Speaker: Denise Bentley, First Love Foundation and Food Farming and the Countryside Commission Commissioner				
10.15-10.30	<b>Tea / coffee break</b>				
10.30-11.45	21. Social prescribing: Can farmers benefit?	22. Improving water quality: Small interventions make a big difference	23. More resilience: What can communities do?	24. Bio fertilisers and bio char	
11.45-12.00	<b>Break</b>				
12.00-13.15	25.* Belonging to places, relating with the land	26. Improving the performance of agroecological horticulture in Wales	27. Crafting a roadmap for sustainable farm health and resilience	28. Creating spaces of learning across difference	
13.15-14.30	<b>Lunch break</b>				
14.30-15.45	29.* Hir oes i amaethyddiaeth! Long live farming! Increasing resilience and profit	30. Training for new entrants: What's out there and what's missing?	31. Genetic engineering: From deregulation to dystopia?	32. Agriwilding: Farming's sweet spot for food and nature	33. Defining healthy food
15.45-16.00	EXTRA TIME for this session				
15.45-16.00	<b>Tea / coffee break</b>				
16.00-17.00	34.* Guest Listeners: Reflections, lessons and more				

Plus, in the **Arts Building foyer**: Carreg Creative\*

\* Session partly or wholly in Welsh; translation available

# Welcome to the sixth Wales Real Food and Farming Conference!

It is a pleasure to be back on the lovely Lampeter campus of the University of Wales Trinity St David for the 2024 Conference. This year, we gather together under the theme “More Food – More Farmers – More Nature – More Resilience”.

Although external events continue to test the food and farming system, and it is easy to be discouraged by them, we hold on to the hope that our theme describes. And it is not just a vague hope; it is a call to action. We want to see more food, farmers (and growers and other land workers) and nature in our countryside and in our cities, and we want them to be better – providing health, wellbeing, and resilience to the challenges ahead. Many people are already taking up this challenge, and lots of them will be here in Lampeter, speaking and listening, planning, co-creating – and perhaps singing. You are probably one of them! If not, do join in, ask questions and find out more.

This year, we are joined by Carreg Creative and their Wrth Wraidd – At Root project; please visit them in the foyer of the Arts building (see details below). Maia Thomas, a graphic harvester, will also be in some of the sessions to produce visualisations of the discussions. So, welcome one and all to WRFFC 2024. Let’s keep collaborating and creating a more resilient and sustainable 2025.

The Wales Real Food and Farming Team

## Wednesday

### 1. Guest speakers: Derek Walker with staff and children from Farms for City Children

Welcome by Dr Amber Wheeler, WRFFC.

Then Derek Walker, the Future Generations Commissioner for Wales, will open the Conference before handing over to Gethin Jones and Alan Wheatley from Lower Treginnis Farm for City Children. They will be joined by children from schools in Barry and Pembrokeshire to talk about the theme of the conference and what it means to them.

### 2. How can we best achieve food resilience in Wales?

Chair: Tom Bajjada, Miller Research (UK) Ltd.

Speakers: Jon Parker, Food Farming and Countryside Commission (FFCC) Wales; Katherine Langton, Langton’s Farm; Simon Cutter, Model Farm

With the food system appearing to lurch from crisis to crisis, the need for a vision on how we can achieve food resilience in Wales seems increasingly urgent. However, the best way to achieve this is not always clear. The session

will explore potential solutions from across the supply chain, ranging from production methods such as agroecological vegetable growing and innovative farming techniques, to accommodating and adapting to wider consumer demands.

[Carreg Creative](#) will be hosting **Wrth Wraidd - At Root**: a bilingual space for questions, considerations, mapping and dreaming in the foyer of the Arts Building.

#### Invitation!

You are invited to join us at any time. Bring along:

- a small amount of soil or roots from home
- your unanswered / unasked questions from your conference experience.

We will be hosting a reflection session in the foyer of the Arts Building at the end of each day.

For more information:

<https://tinyurl.com/wrth-wraidd>

### **3. Food procurement for good**

Chair: Fiona Taylor, Garden Organic

Speakers: Katie Palmer, Food Sense Wales; Symon Dovey, The Big Fresh Catering Company; Hannah Gibbs, Sustain; Patrick Holden, Sustainable Food Trust (SFT)

It is now accepted that we have a broken food system that needs to be transformed in the context of climate change, biodiversity loss, soil fertility depletion, water pollution, food insecurity / poverty, and diet-related diseases. Public procurement could have the potential to make large-scale changes along food supply chains (from farm to fork), leading to food system transformation. This panel discussion will tease out what resources and solutions we have, what more we need to do, what the barriers are, and what we need to do to remove them.

### **4. Exploring feminine values in the context of successful livestock farming: Balancing care and commerce**

Chair: Lindsay Whistance, Organic Research Centre

Speakers: Jackie Pearce-Dickens, Whole Health Agriculture; Jamie McCoy, Agriculture and Horticulture Development Board; Delyth Robinson, dairy and beef farmer

This session explores whether women possess distinct qualities that make them particularly well-suited to livestock farming. We'll be discussing traits such as compassion, receptiveness, nurturing, and intuition — often viewed by society and industry as inherently feminine — and examining how these elements influence livestock health, yield, and productivity. With participation from the audience, we hope to go beyond gender stereotypes to articulate and capture the subtlety and nuance of what lies behind successful livestock farming, something that often goes unseen and unacknowledged.

### **5. An agroecological revolution for Wales: Using the power of the imagination to get us there**

With: Ann Owen, Tyfu Dyfi, Partneriaeth Bwyd Ceredigion and Einion's Garden; Jane Powell, Biosffer Dyfi - Dyfi Biosphere

In this interactive session we will look at the agroecological principles and what our food system would look like if we used agroecology as its main framework. What if food was no longer grown for profit, but as a service to the community, free at the point of use, just like the services of the NHS, with biodiversity being valued as highly an outcome as the crop yield? We will draw on the power of the imagination to explore where applied agroecology could take us.

### **6. How was your season? Debrief / chat session for farmers and commercial growers**

With: Kate McEvoy, Real Seeds; Nathan Richards, Troed y Rhiw Farm

This has been a difficult season for all in many ways. This session is a chance to sit down over lunch with fellow farmers and growers, and talk about the good, the bad and the ugly of 2024. Hopefully, as well as a chance to unload, we can share any strategies and ideas that have worked well for us and that might be useful for others.

### **7. What needs to be prioritised in the next Government on food? Have your say.**

Chair: Katie Palmer, Food Sense Wales

Speakers: Holly Tomlinson, Land Workers' Alliance (LWA) Cymru; Simon Wright; Andrew Tuddenham, Soil Association Wales; Augusta Lewis, Bwyd Sir Gâr Food; Angelina Sanderson Bellamy, University of the West of England

With the 2026 Senedd elections approaching, this session will ask "What do we need from the next Government to enable civil society to transform the Welsh food system to deliver sustainable, healthy and just outcomes?" We will explore what needs to go into the

programme of Government and invite participants to have their say.

### **8. Sustaining the sea: Stories and practices of Welsh fishers**

Chair: Prof Louise Steel, University of Wales Trinity St David (UWTSD)

Speakers: Prof Luci Attala, UWTSD; Tracey Gilbert Falconer, Câr y Môr; Dr Alissa Flatley, UWTSD; Andrew Davies, Carmarthen Coracle and Netmen Association

This session will present the Coastal TALES research project, a groundbreaking international collaboration led by the UNESCO-MOST BRIDGES at the University of Wales Trinity Saint David (UWTSD). It will describe a Wales case study on traditional coastal farming and fishing, including success stories and the practical applications of the project's findings.

### **9. Navigating trade-offs in agroecology: A balancing act**

Chair: Lawrence Woodward, A Bigger Conversation

Speakers: Pat Thomas, A Bigger Conversation; Ann Owen, Einion's Garden; Nathan Richards, Troed y Rhiw Farm

Understanding the process of trade-offs is critically important to scaling and developing a broad agroecological movement and sector, especially in maintaining the cohesion and integrity of a values-based system amid pressure to automate and digitise farming. This collaborative session, based on the new report, Agroecological Intelligence, aims to engage farmers, activists, policymakers and researchers in identifying key trade-offs in consideration of agroecologically appropriate technology. Features short presentations from Welsh farmers / growers, followed by practical breakout groups for sharing and learning.

### **10. Seed sovereignty films**

With Katie Hastings, Gaia Foundation's Seed Sovereignty Programme

Five beautifully crafted films by director Andy Pilsbury, produced by the Gaia Foundation's Seed Sovereignty Programme. Sit back and absorb five seed stories from across the UK and Ireland. Four films in English, one in Welsh.

### **11. Farm data to empower Welsh farmers**

Chair: Andrew Tuddenham, Soil Association Wales

Speakers: Patrick Holden, dairy farmer and SFT; William Leabeater, Soil Association

This panel will discuss how data can help Welsh farmers navigate and get prepared for the new Sustainable Farming Scheme, focusing on the Soil Association Exchange platform and the Global Farm Metric (GFM) framework. It will discuss how farm data collected by Soil Association Exchange using the GFM framework can help farmers to navigate the scheme's requirements to unlock funding and improve sustainability.

Insights will be shared from Holden Farm Dairy's participation in the Exchange programme and the session will end with a Q&A.

### **12. Enabling wider participation in food system change**

Chair: Alex Cook, Carmarthenshire County Council

Speakers: Lydia Dibbens, Primrose Market Garden; Jessica Fearnley; Deri Reed, Cegin Hedyn

A sustainable, resilient, healthy and just food system cannot be achieved by a small segment of society alone. It requires the building of mass participation across demographics. This session will explore case studies from Torfaen, Monmouthshire and Carmarthenshire. These will illustrate ways in

which participation can be fostered through speculative and co-design, community building around food production and preparation, and using the public and the social commons as inclusive and neutral spaces for developing a good food movement.

### **13. Why farmers and ecologists need each other, now more than ever**

Chair: Mandy Marsh, Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM)

Speakers: Sarah Faulkner, Faulkner and Mayne Sustainable Agriculture Ltd; Emma Williams, Coal Spoil Fungi; James Hitchcock, Rewilding Britain

Approximately 90% of land in Wales is agricultural, and farmers have huge potential to benefit (or harm) the natural environment. The agriculture and environment sectors can sometimes be at odds, and this needs to change if we are to achieve 'more food, more farmers, more nature, more resilience'. The Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM) is seeking to build some bridges - come join the discussion on the best ways to do this.

### **14. Desert Island Seeds: Seeds for a resilient future**

Chair: Katie Hastings, Gaia Foundation's Seed Sovereignty Programme

Speakers: Sue Stickland, Wales Seed Hub; Dee Butterly, Awen Organics; Dr Irene Griffiths, IBERS, Aberystwyth University

This session will ask four panellists the question 'if you could only take one seed to a desert island, what would it be?'. Hear from a market gardener, a seed breeder, a professional seed grower and a participatory plant breeder about the seed story they think will change our future! Underlining this session is the importance of genetic diversity in our future food landscape.

### **15. The interrelationships between the environment and food production**

Chair: Rachel Sharp, Wildlife Trusts Wales

Speakers: Jonathan Hulson, North Wales Wildlife Trust; Jack Cockburn, Treberfedd Farm; Carwyn Graves, author, public speaker and gardener; Piers Lunt, Bremenda Isaf, Bwyd Sir Gar Food partnership; Lynfa Davies, Farming Connect.

Nature provides the foundation for plants to grow and animals to live, so food is intrinsically connected to the environment. However, unsustainable food production and consumption practices have led to environmental degradation and exacerbated climate change. Regenerative farming, on the other hand, can have a positive impact on the environment by providing habitats and maintaining biodiversity in surrounding ecosystems. In this discussion we will examine the interrelationships between the environment and food production.

### **16. Working bioregionally for food system transformation**

With Jenny Rouquette, Shropshire Good Food Partnership and Marches Real Food & Farming Network; Jane Powell, Cyfan Cymru

A workshop exploring how landscape level action can contribute towards creating resilient and regenerative food systems. We will look at what kind of strategy and activities are most effective at a bioregional level and how this can be effectively connected with action and influence at the hyper-local, county and national levels. The question of scale will also be addressed: of scaling up - impacting greater numbers, replicating and disseminating; scaling out - impacting policy and changing institutions; and scaling deep - impacting cultural roots, values, beliefs, and 'hearts and minds'.

This will be an interactive session, sharing ideas and experiences and will feed into emerging plans for Cyfan Cymru and the Marches Real Food & Farming Network.

### **17. What is the future for organic food and farming in Wales?**

Chair: Steven Jacobs, Organic Farmers & Growers CIC

Speakers: Jon Parker, FFCC; Dai Miles, Calon Wen Organic Milk; Dr Nic Lampkin, Thünen Institute of Farm Economics, Germany; Lucy Watson, Watson and Pratt's.

Wales has a deep connection to organic farming, with some of the UK's most well-known organic brands rooted here. The organic market has seen twelve years of consecutive growth in the UK, but cuts in farm support payments and the continued squeeze on producer margins are pushing some Welsh farmers and growers to abandon organic. There is a pressing need for political vision and leadership for organic, the most evidence-based option for resilient and sustainable farming. The session will be a panel and audience discussion to explore prospects and solutions.

This will be followed by a drinks reception. All welcome.

### **18. Conservation grazing - and what they \*don't\* talk about**

With: Helen Upson and Emma Douglas, independent graziers; Jonathan Wheeler, The Oak Veterinary Group.

Two graziers from the opposite ends of Wales share the challenges of working with cattle to deliver habitat care and excellent beef - and why it's worth it. Attendees will learn about some of the complex web of planning that can trip up new herds; and a long-standing farm vet will shed light on the ever-present TB conversation.

### **19. Food - the musical!**

With: Camilla Cancantata and Dr Vole

Interactive workshop learning and inventing songs about food, dealing with topics such as corporate control / commodification, destruction of ecosystems and global warming due to agribusiness and farming - and how to change the narratives. Warning - there may be humour!



## Thursday

### 20. Guest Speaker: Denise Bentley, First Love Foundation and FFCC Commissioner

With: Jane Powell, CyFAN Cymru; Pearl Costello, Food Sense Wales

From food poverty to systems change. Food banks were once seen as the answer to food poverty, but now the cost of housing in particular means it is becoming impossible for many people to hold their lives together at all. Denise works in Tower Hamlets where over half of the children live in poverty, and she will describe what system breakdown looks like. Then we will explore what that means for food and farming, and how food might be a way of bringing people together to drive systems change.

### 21. Social prescribing: Can farmers benefit?

With: Gary Mitchell, Social Farms and Gardens; Jim Bowen, Clynyfw Care Farm

With the publication of Wales' National Framework for Social Prescribing earlier this year, this session will support farmers to consider whether social prescribing is something they could get involved in, and provide guidance on how to get started. We'll hear from Jim Bowen at Clynyfw Care Farm who has been providing green care activities for many years from their family farm in Pembrokeshire.

### 22. Improving water quality: Small interventions make a big difference

With: Sian Mercer, Wye & Usk Foundation; Andrew Thomas, West Wales Rivers Trust; Catherine Hughes and Kirsty Allwood, Freshwater Habitats Trust

Small interventions make a big difference. Working with farmers and landowners to make changes to their yards and land to improve water quality, we will look at yard infrastructure changes, hedging on flow lines and the benefits of ponds and wetlands to the

farming system for the benefit of the water quality and biodiversity.

### 23. More resilience: What can communities do?

Chair: Alison Sheffield, Social Farms & Gardens

Speakers: Lowri Jenkins, Eden Communities Cymru; Paul Jennings, Social Farms & Gardens; Vicky Moller, Grŵp Resilience; Mike Eccles, Hay Community Resilience

We believe that when communities celebrate their diversity and have agency over the decisions that affect them, they are better able to face global and local shocks, now and in the future. Four organisations share their experience of bringing communities together at different stages to foster relationships, act together and build resilience. We explore the potential of simple activities such as shared meals, through developing shared growing spaces to alternative social and economic models for communities. Our speakers will invite the audience to participate and learn from one another's experiences.

### 24. Bio fertilisers and bio char - results of field trials

With Peni Ediker

A presentation on growing with biochar and bio fertilisers. Exciting findings from field scale trials near St. Dogmaels.

### 25. Belonging to places, relating with the land

Chair: Rachel Fleming

Speakers: Angharad Wynne, Animate Earth Collective; Abel Pearson, Glasbren; Owen Sheers

What does it take for us to become deeply connected and in conversation with the land and those other-than-humans in our places? This panel discussion will recall our land-

based wisdom traditions and ask how we can return in these modern times to a sense of deep belonging and a relationship of reciprocity with the land.

## **26. Improving the performance of agroecological horticulture in Wales**

Chair: Tony Little

Speakers: Martin Samphire, Bangor University; Alma Joensen, Caeriad CIC

Join this exciting discussion about different approaches to research, aimed at delivering improvements on yield and quality in agro-ecological horticulture in Wales, reported by two grower researchers. Martin Samphire has been a grower for twelve years, and has just completed his PhD in which he researches the use of Biodegradable Plastic Film Mulches in organic vegetable production. Alma Joensen has been a grower for 4 years, and is currently working with Câr y Môr, a pioneering regenerative ocean farm, in trialling a liquid seaweed biostimulant on a farmer-led basis.

In this session they will both give a brief summary of their work and discuss the values of the different approaches to research, as well as giving valuable insights into the subjects and the potential impact they can deliver.

## **27. Crafting a roadmap for sustainable farm health and resilience**

Chair: Lawrence Woodward OBE, Whole Health Agriculture

Speakers: Garry Ehm, So Good Organics; Peter Lewis, dairy farmer; Anne Evans, Blaencamel Farm & Shop

Resilience is defined as the capacity to recover, adapt, and thrive during stress or adversity. This session explores the strategies and practices of successful farmers and growers, committed to sustainable, “wholistic” principles, who demonstrate resilience through their longevity and commercial success. Participants will explore

the critical components that contribute to a resilient, thriving farm, identifying the key elements of expertise that result in success. The session aims to map a practical model, establishing foundational pillars for strengthening whole farm health and resilience, applicable to various farming contexts.

## **28. Creating spaces of learning across difference**

With: Ali Taherzadeh and Hannah Pitt, Cardiff University

This workshop aims to explore ways of overcoming divisions in food and farming communities by creating spaces for transformative learning across diverse perspectives. It will begin with some recent research to frame such learning processes, followed by participatory workshop activities addressing the challenges of uniting diverse viewpoints. Participants will share examples of fostering learning across differences, identifying key considerations for creating such spaces. The goal is to motivate participants to develop more co-learning environments, recognising that meaningful change in the food system requires embracing challenging conversations.

## **29. Hir Oes i Amaethyddiaeth! Long Live Farming! Increasing resilience and profit**

Chair: Rhys Evans, Nature Friendly Farming Network (NFFN) Cymru

Speakers: Shea Buckland Jones, WWF Cymru; Ffion Evans, Bangor University; Aled Picton Evans, Rest Farm; Rhodri Lloyd-Williams, Fferm Moelgolomen; Huw Irranca-Davies MS

Join farmers, Rhodri Lloyd-Williams and Aled Evans, and academic, Ffion Evans, for a panel discussion and practical tips on how to increase farm resilience. Together we'll explore ways to become more resilient to extreme weather events and increase biodiversity, while increasing profits and maintaining, or even increasing yields. In

other words - more food, more farmers, more nature, more resilience! The Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Climate Change and Rural Affairs will join the discussion and answer questions from the audience.

### **30. Training for new entrants: What's out there and what's missing?**

Chair: Ian Rappel, LWA and the Agroecology Learning Collective

Speakers: Sarah Gould, Farming Connect; Kate Muddiman, Coleg Cambria; Charlie James, Black Mountains College

This session will start by looking at the training that is available in Wales and that is suited to new entrants into organic and agroecological farming and growing. We'll cover the full range, from short courses and mentoring through to multi-year apprenticeships and college courses. Following on from the presentations, there will be time for questions and discussion about what is still missing from the current offer.

### **31. Genetic engineering: From deregulation to dystopia?**

Chair: Leonie Nimmo, GM Freeze

Speakers: Steven Jacobs, Organic Farmers & Growers CIC; Pat Thomas, Beyond GM / A Bigger Conversation

The regulations governing genetic engineering are changing, and the potential ramifications are widespread but not widely understood. There's a lot at stake - from the sovereignty of the devolved nations to the viability of the organic sector, to the impact on food and seed sovereignty. Looking to the future, there's more to come, with gene drives, the genetic modification of micro-organisms and GM combined with AI. Come along to this session to find out more.

### **32. Agriwilding: Farming's sweet spot for food and nature**

With: Matt Swarbrick, Henbant; James Hitchcock, Rewilding Britain

The cross-over between regenerative agriculture, conservation and rewilding is too-little talked about, as conservation and farming are pitted against one another in the media. However, we know that 146 countries have signed up to securing 30% of land managed for nature by 2030, which is essential to ensure we maintain our life support systems and a stable climate. There's a growing number of people taking a different view on land management, and some exploring the middle ground. We look at Henbant's agriwilding approach, exploring how far we can push an ecosystem for both productivity and nature at the same? What do these patterns look like and how can they play out in the wider landscape? How do we ensure a just and fair way forward that benefits rural communities and economies? Join us for a lively debate, with examples from the field and our own experience.

### **33. Defining healthy food**

With: Cheryl Hillier

Cheryl will lead a discussion on how we can try to grow food that is healthy for all, resilient to climate change and provides a boost to biodiversity. Speaking from personal experience of the impacts of food on the health of her family, she will talk about why it's important that we focus not just on what we eat but how it is grown.

### **34. Listeners Panel: Reflections, lessons and more**

Join our panel of Guest Listeners to discuss what we have learned over the last two days, look ahead to the field visits tomorrow and perhaps see what our artists have been up to.

## Friday: Field trips

Having listened, discussed and planned, now is our chance to get out and see some of the principles and projects we have been learning about for real. The Conference website -

<https://wrffc.wales/ymweliadau-maes-2024-field-visits/> - has details of each trip. Please support these brilliant farmers and growers who are opening their businesses to us for free, but make sure you dress appropriately for the weather!