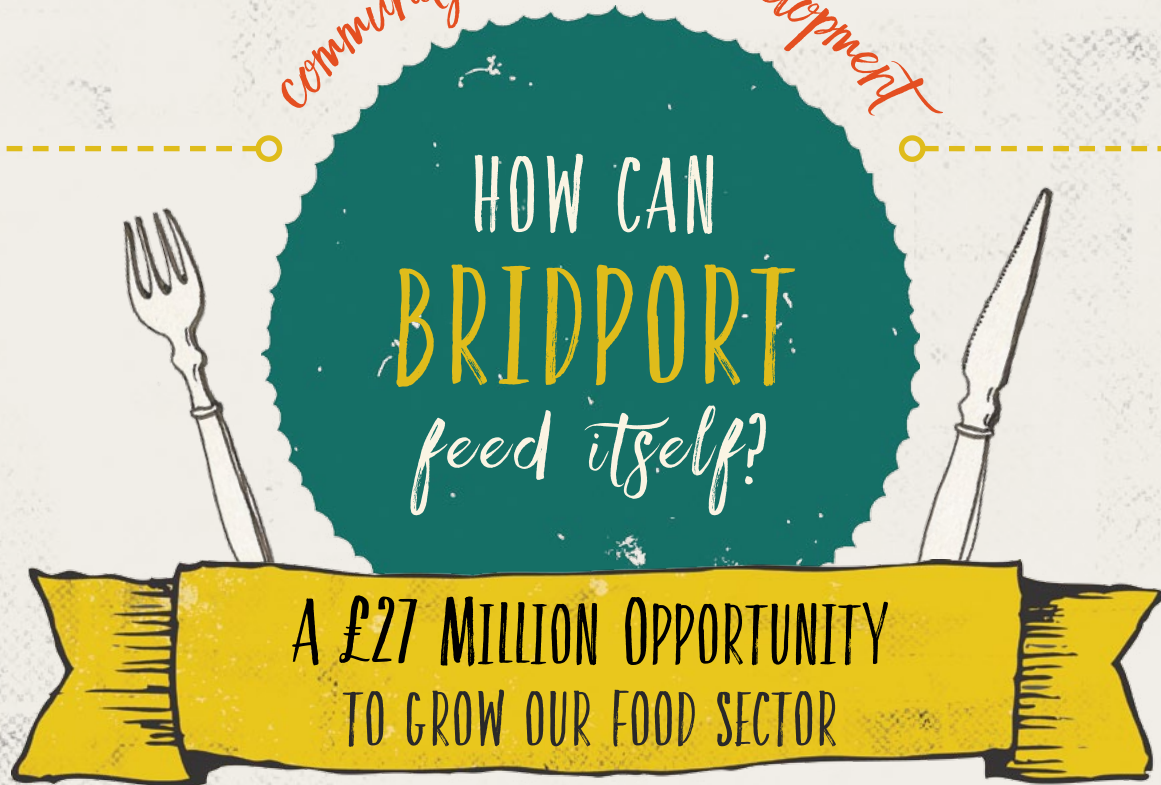


community economic development



What is this?

'Food Future Bridport' – a Communities Living Sustainably in Dorset initiative beginning in 2013 – worked with a myriad of producers, retailers, community projects and consumers to promote local food. We realised the need to do more to address the local economy, and being a vibrant town with a strong history of local food work, we embarked on a Community Economic Development research process in Bridport in late 2016 – and are also looking at Health & Social Care, and Construction.

Why ask the question *How Can Bridport Feed Itself?*

Current trends and anticipated disruptions to international trading regimes indicate that our food systems are vulnerable. On the one hand, the climate is changing, the effects of which are challenging agricultural producers in the UK and beyond. While drought or mis-timed precipitation can diminish yields over a season, extreme weather events can lay waste to crops in a day. We have already experienced shortages of some imported vegetable produce due to unpredictable changes to weather patterns.

On the other hand, leaving the EU is bringing further challenges. The EU's Common Agricultural Policy, which has provided supports to domestic producers, may or may not be replaced by Parliament. If not handled well, this adjustment could spell economic disaster for some producers. The free trade of food products between EU members states, which ensures bountiful supplies of vegetables from southern Europe, may be replaced by new trading arrangements with tariffs and other barriers raising the cost of imports. Already, currency exchange markets have devalued the Pound Sterling, directly raising the cost of imported food, and indirectly, the prices of domestically produced food.



These and other factors pose serious questions about our ability to provide for our food needs. The UK does not produce enough food domestically to feed its citizens. Food self-sufficiency in the UK has been declining over last 30 years, according to NFU, and currently stands at about 61%. This and many other factors we don't have room to touch upon in this report suggest that making our food systems more resilient and sustainable has never been more important.

This has been the motivation for "How Can Bridport Feed Itself?", a project to assess the opportunities to strengthen the local food system, engage local leaders, and spark new entrepreneurial activity in the sector. For Dorset, a major agricultural region, and for Bridport, with a particularly rich sustainable agricultural heritage, this work also points to opportunities to build on these strengths while improving local food security, creating jobs, and increasing resilience. **So, what does this sector look like in Bridport and what are the opportunities?**

How much do we spend on food and drink?

Data from MINT UK, as provided by Dorset County Council¹, indicates that there are about 300 food related business in the Bridport area turning over almost £100m per year. This sector provides 27% of the local jobs and most of the employers in the sector, 81%, are considered 'micro enterprises.' According to this data, over half of this turnover is through retail channels – almost £57m, although this data may include some non-food products. This is a category of particular importance because it represents, at least in part, the day to day food needs of local residents. The ONS publishes estimates of weekly spend for food and drink for people living in the South West, which indicates that local residents spend about £32.5m per annum².

300 FOOD
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IN THE BRIDPORT AREA
TURN OVER ALMOST
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OVER HALF
OF THIS TURNOVER
IS THROUGH RETAIL
CHANNELS – ALMOST
£57M

From where do we buy it?

These datasets, those provided by DCC and those from the ONS, provide further estimates on what proportion of retail spend is with large supermarket chains and online services. These data estimate 87% and 84%, respectively, of this spend goes through these non-local outlets. This means residents are spending at least £27.3m per annum with national or international retail outlets, and only about £5m with local independent shops.

How much is produced here?

THIS SECTOR
PROVIDES 27%
OF THE LOCAL
JOBS

We have about 300 business in the local food sector and about 1,000 agricultural holdings in the West Dorset area producing a range of grain, vegetable, animal products, as well as beer and other processed products. Estimated turnover in this producer category is about £20m. Beyond these numbers, the data are incomplete making it next to impossible to estimate how much of the local produce is absorbed by supermarket and other supply chains, and how much ends up on local retailer shelves or restaurant kitchens. Primary research conducted by Communities Living Sustainably (CLS) indicates significant barriers for producers – access to land and financial capital, and for local retailers – lack of local suppliers and distribution networks.

What's the opportunity?

While much work has been undertaken in recent years by CLS and others to strengthen the local food system, there remain many opportunities to make improvements. For example, £27.3m per annum leaves the local economy through the supermarket and online retail channel. But awareness among Bridport residents of the importance of supporting local food and drink producers, restaurants and caterers, and independent retailers has grown. If this can be developed and mobilised to shift just 10% of what local residents spend online and in supermarkets to local producers and retailers, this would mean £2.7m more money circulating through the local economy. And because of the local multiplier, this could mean another £1-2m in secondary and indirect spending in the local economy. This would mean more local buying power and more wealth staying in the community.

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IF LOCAL RESIDENTS SHIFTED
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...£2.7m
MORE MONEY CIRCULATING
THROUGH THE LOCAL ECONOMY
AND OVER 50 NEW JOBS
IN THE SECTOR

According to Campaign to Protect Rural England's (CPRE) local food web research, local food producers and retailers support more employment than industrialised farming operations and supermarket retailers. For example, they found that, on average, supermarkets support one job for approximately every £140k of turnover, compared with local independents supporting about 3 times the number of jobs for the same level of turnover³. If local residents shifted 10% of their spending to local independents, this could mean over 50 new jobs in the sector.

Where do we start?

There are many initiatives already underway in Bridport, as well as others ready to launch or are being proposed, as seen in the table below. Broadly, this represents a new wave of transformational activity, including the work of the Neighbourhood Plan, ongoing network building, ongoing awareness raising and community outreach, initiatives to support new food entrepreneurs and new agroecology operations. From the Southern Roots Community Supported Agriculture (CSA), just in its launching phase, to the Kitchen Collective, which has been supporting new food entrepreneurs for the past two years, there are many exciting new initiatives ready to be taken forward by energetic citizens and supported by a mobilised community. And this last point gets to the heart of the strategy of how we will answer the question of how will Bridport feed itself. **The answer is up to all of us.**

This is the product of much information-gathering and involvement of many people - thank you! It forms part of an ongoing process. A detailed report on the **How Can Bridport Feed Itself?** research to date will be available soon on www.foodfuturebridport.org.uk and www.dorsetcommunityaction.org.uk/social-enterprises

~ candida.blaker@dorsetcommunityaction.org.uk

1 Policy & Research, Dorset County Council – their data sources include Mint UK and Bureau van Dijk (BVD)

2 Detailed household expenditure by countries and regions, UK: Table A35
<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/personalandhouseholdfinances/expenditure/datasets/detailedhouseholdexpenditurebycountriesandregionsuktablea35> – £32.5m figure is arrived at by multiplying weekly spending estimates with the number of Bridport households, which is 9180.

3 <http://www.cpre.org.uk/resources/farming-and-food/local-foods/item/2897-from-field-to-fork>

KEY:

Project is underway

• Partially funded/started

• Not yet funded/resourced

Strategic support and development of food enterprise

Southern Roots Community Supported Agriculture (CSA)

Development of Kitchen Collective

Community growing space and Local Food Centre at Vearse Farm

Influencing primary & secondary schools

Support Cupboard Love Foodbank

Prep (and training) kitchen at New House Farm

A small retailer/business network

Online shopping platforms

- Food Assembly
- Charmouth Dragon Online Shop

Integrating these ideas into the town's new Economic and Neighbourhood Plans

Hospitality providers to take part in a voluntary Coffee Tax

The Literary and Scientific Institute as potential host for enterprise hub and community enterprise breakfast networking

Develop a waste food project and other routes for distributing waste food - i.e. café, community fridge

Food club idea

Raise awareness and create demand

Continue to develop Bridport SOUP with potential to move to a full Local Entrepreneur Forum

Continue to support educational work with children and young teens via Discover Farming, HOME in Bridport and Bridport Local Food Group

Buy Local Bridport / Shift 10% PR Campaign

More agricultural and horticultural training for local and young farmers

Local food labels / branding: well-designed stickers/labels and 'brand' colour to highlight which products on offer in local shops come from local producers