Can Community Food Enterprises Inform and Deliver Food Policy?
Insights from Case Studies

A research report completed for the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs by The Plunkett Foundation.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Executive Summary

Introduction

This scoping project was designed to explore Community Food Enterprises and assess how they could play a role in informing, influencing and delivering food policy. Funded by the Cabinet Office and the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, the research was carried out between June 2010 and June 2011 by a partnership of 5 organisations:

The Plunkett Foundation (lead partner),
The Social Enterprise Coalition,
Co-operatives UK,
The Development Trust Association (now Locality),
RISE (Regional Infrastructure Social Enterprise).

Although small scale and focussed only on the South West of England, the research was the first of its kind to explore the potential for Community Food Enterprises to support delivery of policy objectives – timely and relevant in view of the Coalition Government's commitment to localism and the Big Society. It was a two-way transfer of learning, seeking to understand how delivering policy could also help the enterprises to build stronger and more successful businesses.

Project Aims and Objectives

The aims of the project were to:

- Research the current impact and effectiveness of Community Food Enterprises in delivering food policy goals

- Understand the level of awareness that Community Food Enterprises have of the role they are playing in food policy

- Provide Defra and the Cabinet Office with clear recommendations of how they can support Community Food Enterprises in effectively delivering food policy

The objectives of the research were to:

- Map and describe community food enterprises in the South West of England

- Provide evidence of the impact and effectiveness of community food enterprises in delivering food policy goals.

- Help community food enterprises become aware of the role they are playing in food policy

- Through case studies show how community food enterprises develop and learn – the journey they take

- Identify opportunities for community food enterprises in helping deliver policy goals and the key barriers to growth

Methodology

The primary research was divided into two stages: mapping and case study research.

The mapping exercise identified all social enterprises in the South West with an interest in food. This produced a unique single dataset – a snapshot of Community Food Enterprise which revealed the number, type, size and scale of enterprise in the region.

From the mapping dataset, the project team selected 12 enterprises to explore. Interviewers from each of the research partners engaged with staff, volunteers and customers, and gained an in-depth understanding of how these organisations operated, what motivated their people and the potential they had to inform and deliver Defra policy. This information was written up into short case studies of each enterprise, and these case studies provided a volume of rich and complex information for analysis.

Research Limitations

The project was intentionally designed as a small-scale scoping exercise. As such, the findings should be treated with some caution. The case study research used mainly a qualitative approach rather than a statistical or quantitative one. The sample size was small, the organisations themselves were very diverse and were all based in one region of England.   The report presents a series of insights representing the experiences of the enterprises and the informed views of the research partners and interviewers. Further research is required to explore whether the issues discussed in the report are relevant to the sector more widely.

The Hypotheses

As the sample size was small most analysis of the data used qualitative methods, primarily testing the evidence against a series of hypotheses drawn up by the research partners:

Hypothesis One: Communities are inspired and motivated to take more control of the food they eat. Inspired communities are well placed to increase public understanding of, and community connection with, food policy.

Hypothesis Two: A powerful lever for behavioural change is communities seeing action on food exemplified within their communities.

Hypothesis Three: Despite having no awareness of Food 2030, the Community Food Enterprises are helping to deliver many of the policy objectives in it .

Hypothesis Four: Community Food Enterprises take on the role of providing food education to their community.

Hypothesis Five: Food policy initiatives are good areas for business opportunities.

Hypothesis Six: Collaboration between enterprises is positive and to be encouraged.

Hypothesis Seven: For Big Society to become a reality a big challenge is to find areas of interest that people are drawn towards – food is one of those draws.

Hypothesis Eight: Community Food Enterprises add value across other Defra agendas as well as across a wider range of government issues.

Key Findings and Conclusions

The case study enterprises who participated in the research:

- Are well placed to help increase public understanding and connection to food policy. Food excites and stimulates community action/enterprise making them well placed to deliver the food policy agenda at a community level.

- By "doing" rather than "telling", are able to influence behaviour as people see action on food going on within their communities. This action can normalise behavioural changes and can show by example what is possible.

- Despite being unaware of a food policy or its objectives, they are delivering it not because of a wish to engage with government policies but because the policies happen to chime with their own principles. For policy makers, finding ways of being able to engage with these groups will help deliver food policy more effectively at a community level.

- Are providing some food education within the community and much of this education chimes with government policy.

Implications and Opportunities

Three headline messages emerged from the research:

- Community Food Enterprises are a great example of Big Society in action and there is scope for further development and expansion as new initiatives related to sustainable food such as 'green food' are promoted by the Department. These enterprises represent a type of localism different from the usual suspects i.e. planning, development and waste collection: communities assessing and meeting their own food retail needs – localism with a distinct "Defra flavour".

- Community Food Enterprises and the intermediary organisations that support them would be beneficial partners for the Department: both in terms of acting as a sounding board during food policy design; and also in terms of acting as delivery partners on key/shared initiatives at the local level.

- It would be mutually rewarding for Defra to advocate and champion the work of Community Food Enterprises, both within Government and to the wider community, given their role both as contributors to the green economy and as influencers of sustainable behaviours. A constructive two-way relationship could encourage the Community Food Enterprise sector to be even more supportive of "green" policies, acting as exemplars for environmentally responsible behaviours at the local level.

A number of other implications and opportunities, which may have relevance for future food policy, are as follows:

- All the enterprises demonstrated a passion for taking action on food issues with their community. Harnessing their enthusiasm could enable future policy work to reach a wider audience.

- Community Food Enterprises are already delivering on food policy objectives, despite most of them having no knowledge of the policy. There may be an opportunity for greater engagement - but there was also an expectation that active delivery of policy should be supported by the provision of resources.

- There may be opportunities to influence sustainable behaviours by supporting the impact of Community Food Enterprises in this area.

- Future food policy communication could make explicit reference to the role of Community Food Enterprise - several enterprises had examples of community action on food which inspired local people to engage.

- Some of the enterprises are delivering educational programmes themselves without access to any support materials or assistance. Consideration could be given to supporting and developing this work.

- The enterprises expressed frustration with knowing where to take queries about barriers. Given that removing unnecessary barriers is a Government priority, providing a single place to raise issues would encourage more dialogue with civil society bodies.

- Community Food Enterprises need business support and advice that is appropriate and specific to their size and requirements.

- All of the enterprises said they recognised the value of collaboration in its different forms. Most types of collaboration are seen as positive, and many enterprises were already collaborating informally with others.

- The enterprises who took part in the research had connections or regular contact with support organisations. Recognising the importance of these

relationships could enable the Government to maintain contact with the enterprises in a cost-effective manner.

- Community Food Enterprises all have to compete with the multiple retailers. Helping them to find ways of getting their message across to potential customers would be of value. Enterprises often felt that policy makers could do more to openly support the benefits of local food.

- Communicating the relevance of Community Food Enterprises to other Government Departments and establishing channels of communication could be of benefit to both the development of Government policy, and Community Food Enterprises.

- Policy language is an issue which could be tackled. Governments (and opposition parties) frequently change language to aid their communication, but communities take time to understand and adopt such language and there is an interim period where such language can cause. confusion or even cynicism. Policy formers need to find ways of communicating in a language which both works in policy circles and respects the current language used at grassroots

Volunteering at Stroud Community Agriculture

1   Introduction

1.1   This report presents findings from a research project designed to explore the role of Community Food Enterprises, and assess how these enterprises could potentially play a role in informing and influencing food policy. This research was commissioned and funded by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs and the Cabinet Office, and was designed to explore if and how Community Food Enterprises are important to food policy in terms of their ability to encourage sustainable food behaviours. The project also explored the potential for Community Food Enterprises to play a greater role in delivering food policy goals.

1.2   The project supported a two-way transfer of learning between Defra and the Community Food Enterprise sector. It explored where there may be scope for Community Food Enterprises to contribute to support delivery against policy objectives and build more successful businesses. Through focusing on a number of case study Community Food Enterprises, it explored how this is already being done and identified actions which should ensure wider understanding of Defra's goals by Community Food Enterprises.

1.3   Since commissioning this research the government has announced its intention to refresh its food policy and this document aims to provide analysis and evidence to aid that process. The project adopted the main headings of Food 2030[1] (the research was initiated prior to the general election in May 2010), which were used as the prompts in this research and to guide the scope of the work. No comparable research has directly connected Community Food Enterprises to food policy before. It has also explored how the Coalition Government's commitment to localism and the Big Society could benefit from engagement with Community Food Enterprises.

Project Scope

1.4   The project was designed as a small-scale scoping study. This is the first

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[1] The Food 2030 Strategy was published during the last administration, and therefore does not necessarily reflect current Government policy.

time research of this nature had been undertaken, specifically looking at the role of small community social enterprises such as Community Food Enterprises. The research was based solely in the South West of England. The South West was chosen as there is currently a lot of food-based community enterprise activity in the area.

1.5   The project was delivered by a partnership of five leading organisations involved in community food policy and social enterprise. These organisations were:

The Plunkett Foundation (lead partner),

The Social Enterprise Coalition,

Co-operatives UK,

The Development Trust Association (now Locality),

RISE (Regional Infrastructure Social Enterprise),

Bringing together such a range of social enterprise expertise enabled the project to look at a far broader range of Community Food Enterprises than the expertise of any one organisation could achieve.

Project Aims and Objectives

1.6   The key aims of the project were to:

- Research the current impact and effectiveness of Community Food Enterprises in delivering food policy goals

- Understand the level of awareness that Community Food Enterprises have of the role they are playing in food policy

- Provide Defra and the Cabinet Office with clear recommendations of how they can support Community Food Enterprises in effectively delivering food policy

1.7   The objectives of the research were to:

- Map and describe Community Food Enterprises in the South West of England

- Provide evidence of the impact and effectiveness of Community Food Enterprises in delivering food policy goals.

- Help Community Food Enterprises become aware of the role they are playing in food policy if they don't already have an understanding of this

- Through case studies show how Community Food Enterprises develop and learn – the journey they take

- Identify opportunities for Community Food Enterprises to help deliver policy goals and the key barriers to growth

Defining Community Food Enterprises

1.8   Social enterprises are defined as "businesses with primarily social objectives whose surpluses are principally reinvested for that purpose in the business or in the community, rather than being driven by the need to maximise profit for shareholders and owners."[2]

For the purposes of the research, Community Food Enterprises were defined as:

- Social enterprises run by communities for their benefit;

- Enterprises which are directly involved in at least one part of growing, harvesting, processing, distributing, selling or serving local food.

Examples include farmers' markets, Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) enterprises, community-owned shops and food co-operatives.

1.9   There is no universally accepted definition of local food, but it is generally considered to be food grown or produced, processed, traded and sold within a geographic radius of up to 30-50 miles. This is the definition used in this research.

1.10   Community Food Enterprise is an emerging sector. Whilst more is known about larger sustainable enterprises, it was recognised that there were benefits to learning more about smaller scale enterprises. This project has

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[2] Business Link: www.businesslink.gov.uk

been an important opportunity to understand how different types of organisations can and do work to promote sustainable food behaviours, and to help identify future opportunities for Defra to work with organisations of this type.

Methodology

1.11   To achieve these objectives, the research was divided into two key stages:

1. Mapping social enterprises in the South West with an interest and involvement in food
2. Undertake detailed research with 12 case study Community Food Enterprises, to explore a range of areas of interest (which were developed into a set of eight hypotheses tested through the analysis of findings from the case studies).

Additional details concerning the process of identifying, mapping and analysing the case study data can be found in Appendix A.

1.12   A central part of the methodology was the decision not to use an outside consultant but to use instead a broad range of intermediaries in the sector, either national or regional bodies, to undertake the research. Their knowledge and experience of working within the sector allowed them to make judgements on how typical the sample interviewed were to other organisations they had worked with previously. It also helped each partner to consider its role in relation to food policy, and ensured that the learning would remain in the sector after the survey was completed.

1.13   An initial mapping exercise was undertaken using desk research to identify and describe the Community Food sector in the South West of England. The research team sought to identify all community enterprises in the South West that were involved in the production, processing, selling or serving of food. Using existing datasets from databases held by Co-operatives UK, Locality, Social Enterprise Coalition, RISE and the Plunkett Foundation, combined with knowledge from the various partners, a single dataset for the South West was created. This gave a snapshot of the number of such enterprises and the types of activity they undertook. It also revealed the size and scale of the sector in one region of the country.

1.14 From the results of the mapping exercise, the project team then selected and focused on the work of 12 case study enterprises. The project team explored the work of these case study enterprises in-depth and worked with staff, volunteers and customers to explore food policy issues. The selection criteria used, and a note about the decisions around consumer co-operatives, agricultural co-operatives and distribution co-operatives can be found in Appendix A. This approach allowed for in-depth engagement and detailed assessment of the work and understanding of the enterprises.

1.15 The research with the 12 selected Community Food Enterprises was undertaken by the different partners. Each of the case study enterprises was visited by a researcher from one of the partnership organisations. In-depth semi-structured interviews were carried out with key staff, volunteers and customers. A total of 18 semi-structured interviews were conducted with key members of the enterprises (founders, committee, trustees, staff), and additional interviews held with customers and producers.

1.16 The value of different partners undertaking interviews is that their own different perspectives have been brought into the way they engaged with the enterprises. While there was a topic guide and a code of conduct followed by all, guidelines were deliberately kept flexible to allow for differences between the enterprises and keep the discussions relatively open.

1.17 Once the interviews were complete, each researcher wrote up a short case study of the enterprise, and provided comments and observations on their work. This provided a considerable volume of rich and complex information for analysis.

1.18 The analysis of the case studies was carried out in a number of different ways. The aim was to capture the depth and complexity of the material whilst at the same time being able to pull out clear policy messages and recommendations. Some of the material collected is factual, some is reflective and some tells a story. In addition, the different researchers have added their own style, emphasis and knowledge to the mix. It is also worth highlighting that the enterprises themselves are very different - in terms of size, activity, importance of food within the overall organisational aims etc.

Research Limitations

1.19   Due to the nature of the research, there are a number of limitations which must be considered when reading the report and interpreting the findings discussed in the report. These limitations are outlined below.

The qualitative nature of the research method:

1.20   The case study phase of the research followed a qualitative research approach. Qualitative methods are designed to investigate attitudes and behaviours in depth rather than to provide a statistical measure of the incidence or significance. This means that findings from qualitative research cannot be generalised across the Community Food Enterprise sector as a whole. The research was purposively designed to provide an in-depth snapshot of the experiences of a select number of Community Food Enterprises who participated in the project.

The diversity of the sector and sample sizes:

1.21   The project focused on investigating the experiences of 12 Community Food Enterprises. The case study Community Food Enterprises were purposively selected to include different types of enterprises, drawn from the results of the mapping exercise. Whilst a case study was selected for each of the different types of enterprises, the sector as a whole (and within the different types) is very diverse. The findings discussed in this report represent the views and experiences of a very small sample of enterprises operating in this sector. The findings presented in this report should only be seen as insights from a selective group of enterprises. Further research is required to explore whether the issues discussed in this report are relevant to the sector more widely.

The location of the research:

1.22   In selecting the location for this work, the project was guided by its own knowledge of the Community Food Enterprise sector. The project was based solely in the South West of England, as there was a lot of food based community enterprise activity in the area already. Whether the findings from the project are relevant to enterprises operating in other locations in the UK is unknown. Further research is required to explore the experiences of

Community Food Enterprises in other locations in the UK.

Involvement of different partners in the project

1.23 The different project partners were involved in undertaking the interviews with different enterprises. While there was a topic guide and a code of conduct followed by all, this was kept deliberately flexible to allow for the differences in the enterprises and keep the discussions relatively open. Whilst there are strengths in the approach taken, as the project partners could bring their expertise to the project, this could have introduced an element of bias in the analysis. This also has implications in terms of how comparable the results are across the 12 case study enterprises.

The limitations of the mapping exercise:

1.24 The limitations of the mapping exercise are that the information was compiled from existing datasets and that each dataset had different characteristics. There may have been quality issues associated with the existing datasets (e.g. accuracy of the information provided) which this project was unable to address. As this was the first time that such data has been collated there was no single place to go for the information. In addition there was no standard definition of Community Food Enterprise. The mapping was therefore compiled from intermediary data sets each of which collected data in different forms and varying levels of detail.

Analysing and Testing the Research Data

1.25 The initial mapping phase helped to identify known Community Food Enterprises in the South West. The project partners then drew up a series of eight hypotheses based on their collective knowledge of the sector and tested each of these against the qualitative data from the research. The hypotheses used were:

Hypothesis One: Communities are inspired and motivated to take more control of the food they eat. Inspired communities are well placed to increase public understanding of, and community connection with, food policy.

Hypothesis Two: A powerful lever for behavioural change is communities seeing action on food exemplified within their communities.

Hypothesis Three: Despite having no awareness of Food 2030, the Community Food Enterprises are helping to deliver many of the policy objectives in it.

Hypothesis Four: Community Food Enterprises take on the role of providing food education to their community.

Hypothesis Five: Food policy initiatives are good areas for business opportunities.

Hypothesis Six: Collaboration between enterprises is positive and to be encouraged.

Hypothesis Seven: For Big Society to become a reality a big challenge is to find areas of interest that people are drawn towards – food is one of those draws.

Hypothesis Eight: Community Food Enterprises add value across other Defra agendas as well as across a wider range of government issues.

2 Mapping and Describing Community Food Enterprises

Mapping Community Food Enterprises in the South West

2.1   The initial task undertaken by the project research team was to map all the existing Community Food Enterprises in the South West of England. This gave a snapshot of the number of such enterprises and the types of activity they undertook. It also revealed the size and scale of the sector in one region of the country, which had never been done before anywhere in the UK. The dataset provides an overview of a growing sector and for the first time enables the interlinked nature of such enterprises to be seen. The research methods and the datasets used can be seen in Appendix A.

2.2   The Community Food Enterprises were then categorized into a number of subsectors, based on our interpretation of the mapping data. This enabled the project to classify and sort what is otherwise a relatively large and varied grouping of community enterprises, each of which has food on its agenda. The mapping exercise was the first attempt to capture the size, scale and diversity of the sector; therefore while the results provide valuable insights into the sector, an element of caution is needed when interpreting the results.

Dataset Results

2.3   A summary of the results of the mapping exercise is shown in table 1 below:

Table 1 – Results of New Dataset

Category	Type	Number
Retail	Community shops	77
Retail	Farmers markets	17
Retail	Country markets	14
Retail	Cafes/catering	14
Community growing	Community supported agriculture	35
Community growing	Community farming	24
Community growing	Allotments/growing	6
Production/processing/distribution	Food hubs	51
Production/processing/distribution	Food cooperatives	20
Production/processing/distribution	Farmer cooperatives marketing	9
Production/processing/distribution	Farmer cooperatives producing	3
Production/processing/distribution	Other	5
Initiatives	Transition	43
Initiatives	Other	36
Not classified		16
Total		**370**

2.4   A number of quality issues arise from the database generated from the mapping phase:

- The various databases hold different information and different formats. The end result is considered accurate, but limited in its strategic use.

- The main limitation is the lack of economic data at a level of confidence that could be presented. Some of the databases are strong in this area, but others are not.

- Not all databases include start up data, so it is hard to monitor growth trends. From the data available, it is clear that there are widely differing growth rates. Community owned shops and Community Supported Agriculture appear to be the fastest developers.

2.5   The main learning from this exercise was the need for all with an interest in Community Food Enterprises to work together to produce more robust data on the enterprises, given the policy interest in social enterprise. Such data could be used for measuring the impact of policy interventions and the continuing growth of the sector.

Describing Community Food Enterprises

2.6   Using the findings from the dataset, the research team was able to group the enterprises into twelve distinct and different enterprise types. Although the dataset only covers South West England, these enterprise types should be broadly applicable throughout England based on the knowledge of the partner organisations for the project. The types are listed below with a short description and an explanation of their fit within the overall national picture of Community Food Enterprises. A case study was selected for each of these types.

Types 1 and 2: Community shops sector

2.7   Community-owned shops are typically in villages with between 400 and 1000 inhabitants and 30-50 volunteers are actively engaged in running them. There were 257 (May 2011) community shops trading in England, Scotland and Wales, 77 of them based in the South West of England. Due to the size of this sector, the largest single category, two types were defined with an example of each in this research. These were 1) shops with a particularly strong focus on local food and 2) shops with a broader food culture.

Type 3: Buying group/food co-operative

2.8   Co-ordinated buying groups using co-operative structures, whilst currently
       small in number, were identified as a growing sector in England. Food
       cooperatives or buying groups work by collecting together everyone's orders
       in advance and then buying in bulk.   This ensures better prices, but also
       provides access to goods which may otherwise be difficult to source in a
       particular location, such as local, organic or wholefoods. They can range from
       small informal groups of neighbours through to fairly sophisticated operations.
       There were currently 20 groups in the South West and most of these were
       linked to a wholesale wholefood co-operative (see type 5).

Type 4: Development Trust

2.9   Development trusts are community owned and led organisations. They are
       often based on a model whereby the community collectively own an asset
       (which may have been transferred from public or private ownership) on which
       to base a broad range of services. They use self-help, trading for social
       purpose, and ownership of buildings and land, to bring about long-term social,
       economic and environmental benefits in their community. Over 500 trusts are
       in operation in the UK and are multi-purpose in their operation, with food
       being just one of the areas of activity. The mapping exercise identified only
       two in the South West with a strong food interest.

Type 5: Worker co-operative

2.10   The worker co-operative model, where the workers own the enterprise, has
       been used in the setting up of a number of wholefood retail, wholesale and
       distribution enterprises. Some operate purely as local retailers, but others
       have a national reach, purchasing bulk quantities from suppliers or
       manufacturers and then selling to shops and other outlets, including own-label
       goods. Increasingly, groups of people have been forming food co-operatives
       to buy together at these bulk prices. These co-operatives tend to be larger
       than most other Community Food Enterprises however for the study a smaller
       scale one was selected so that it was a similar size to the other Community
       Food Enterprises selected. The one chosen is an interesting example that
       begun as a worker cooperative and is now being run by two partners.

Type 6: Transition initiative

2.11   The transition movement is a grassroots development where communities seek to tackle the fundamental changes they are facing through peak oil and climate change. Central to this movement are transition initiatives. The transition initiatives in a city or town will develop a plan of how the area can be made more resilient. Often this is split into individual projects that different groups then undertake. Food is frequently chosen as one of the first projects for a transition group to address, normally in the form of increasing the quantity of local food available through growing or distribution. There were 43 transition initiatives in the South West.

Type 7: Co-operatively run farmers' market

2.12   There were around 600 farmers' markets in England of which more than 40% were run by co-operatives (usually producer-led) or volunteers (mainly individuals or groups from the local community). Farmers' markets can also help stimulate trade in town centre locations by attracting more customers to the area. The mapping exercise identified 17 such markets in the South West.

Type 8: Community supported agriculture

2.13   Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) is a mutually beneficial partnership between a community and farmer. It is becoming an increasingly popular way for communities to gain access to local, seasonal produce directly from the farmer. Typically, the community will purchase "shares" from their local farmer; these shares will be in the form of a weekly box of vegetables, fruit and other produce. Often, the shares can be purchased with either money or time (or a combination of the two), so individuals will work alongside the farmer harvesting food. The mapping exercise found 35 Community Supported Agricultural schemes in the South West.

Type 9: Area based policy initiative

2.14   There is a growing trend for individual enterprises involved in local food to explore collaborative working. The Plunkett Foundation has suggested that this is the third stage of a community developing local food initiatives. The first stage sees the development of individual enterprises all working separately.

The second stage is collaboration, where the enterprises start to have links such as joint distribution or promotion through a local food guide. Plunkett has argued[3] that a third stage is now emerging where this local food system becomes mutual in its approach, seeking to share risk and support across suppliers and to connect with the area at a policy level. Often this is connected to a Local Food Plan and will also look at wider policy issues, such as health. The Soil Association is working with a number of these embryonic groups. Exeter was explored in this report, although Plymouth, Bristol and Swindon have also developed this approach in the South West.

Type 10: Farmers co-operative linking with consumers

2.15   Agricultural co-operatives, where farmers come together are one of the most common forms of co-operatives around the world. The nature of their co-operation varies and can include production, distribution, processing, marketing and joint buying. The South West operates at least 25 different agricultural co-operatives, often on a large scale. The report focused on those that have direct links to their local community.

Type 11: Food links project

2.16   Around 10 years ago, so called "food links" projects appeared in a number of parts of the country, and some have left strong enterprises behind them. Food Links co-ordinated local food projects and, in some cases, created Community Food Enterprises to deliver this. Food Links merged with Sustain around four years ago.

Type 12: Multi-agenda community enabler

2.17   As the research progressed it became clear that Stroud in Gloucestershire was difficult to fit into any one of the categories. Therefore it was selected as a case study in its own right, for the following reasons: it had a wide variety of enterprises connected through informal networks that exhibited a strong sense of common purpose and co-ordination; it was clear that community enterprise had been embedded into its local thinking for some time; and that it

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[3] http://plunkettfoundation.blogspot.com/2009/12/local-food-all-together-now.html

had developed a model of enabling further developments through networked support.

Selecting the case studies

2.18 The research team then selected 12 Community Food Enterprises to exemplify each of the twelve types. Enterprises were assessed for suitability to take part in this research, using three selection criteria:

1. the strength of the individual enterprises' connection with food;
2. the connection with community action on food;
3. the level of co-ordination of local food activity.

2.19 The final selection was made by the project partners, who each selected the enterprises closest to their area of expertise.

2.20 The twelve case studies chosen, and the enterprise type they represent, are listed below:

	Food Enterprise Type	**Name of Enterprise**
1	Community-owned shop with strong local food	Berrynarbor community-owned Shop
2	Community-owned shop with strong food culture	Thorncombe community-owned Shop
3	Buying group/food cooperative	Eastover Organics
4	Development Trust – City Farm	St Werburgh's City Farm
5	Worker Cooperative	Somerset Organic Link
6	Transition initiative	Shaftesbury Home Grown
7	Cooperatively run Farmers Market	Vale of Taunton Farmers' Market
8	Community supported agriculture	Stroud Community Agriculture
9	Area based policy initiative	Exeter area (7 enterprises)
10	Farmer cooperative linking with consumers	Somerset Local Food Direct
11	Food links project	Bridport Local Food Links
12	Multi agenda community enabler	Stroud Common Wealth

3 Case Study Analysis

3.1 The previous Chapter discussed how the dataset of Community Food Enterprises in the South West was developed, and how the research team used this data to categorise the different types of enterprise and select case studies. This section introduces some of the results of the case study analysis and explains why the results have been presented in a number of different ways in following chapters.

3.2 The aim was to capture the depth and complexity of the material whilst at the same time be able to pull out clear policy messages and implications. Some of the material collected is factual, some is reflective and some tells a story. It is also worth reiterating that the enterprises themselves are very different from each other - in terms of size, activity, importance of food within the overall organisational aims etc – therefore an element of caution is needed when interpreting the results (please see limitations section in Chapter 1 for further information).

3.3 The full case studies are presented in Appendix D. They provide additional data, analysis and comment that has not been specifically used in this report. The case studies have a value over and above this piece of work and can be considered a resource for the future.

Case Study Key Findings

3.4 In order to capture the breadth of this data the analysis has been done using four different approaches:

- **Tables**: Various tables (shown below and in full in Appendix B) collate the background information on each of the case studies and provide an easy way of understanding and comparing the enterprises.

- **Hypotheses**: Eight hypotheses have been constructed by the partnership to help explore the key food policy messages and to see whether the evidence from the research reveals the hypotheses to be true or false. (Chapter 4)

- **Additional findings:** Other findings not covered through the hypotheses analysis are picked up in this chapter.

- **Implications and opportunities**: This section captures the overarching implications and opportunities to success and growth for Community Food Enterprises. (Chapter 5)

Tables

3.5   These tables are an informative way of comparing and learning about the twelve enterprises. They highlight the very wide range of enterprise types included in the study and their different characteristics.

Table 2 (below) provides some introductory data showing location of enterprise, turnover, number of employees, year started and legal structure adopted.

 Table 3 (see Appendix B) shows the funding streams which the enterprises accessed on start-up.

Table 4 (see Appendix B) shows what prompted the enterprises to set up in the first place and what their key areas of focus are.

Table 5 (see Appendix B) details the contact the enterprises have had with local, regional and national government.

Table 2- Introductory Data

	Enterprise Type	Location	Number of enterprises	Turnover per annum	Employ-ees WTE	Year Started	Legal Structure
1	Community-owned shop with strong local food	Berrynarbor	1	135,000	1	2004	IPS - Coop[4]
2	Community-owned shop with strong food culture	Thorncombe	1	120,000	1	2009	IPS – Ben Com[5]
3	Buying group/food cooperative	Eastover	1	5,000	0	2005	Unincorporated food coop
4	Development Trust – City Farm	St Werburgh	1	163,000	7	1980	Company ltd by guarantee
5	Worker Cooperative (e.g. wholefood distributor)	Somerset	1	350,000		2001	Company limited by shares
6	Transition initiative	Shaftesbury	1	2,500		2008	Currently under consideration
7	Cooperatively run Farmers Market	Taunton	1	30,000[6]		1999	IPS - Coop
8	Community supported agriculture	Stroud	1	102,000	3	2002	IPS - ?
9	Area based policy initiative	Exeter	7	749,000		2004	Various: IPS's, charities
10	Farmer cooperative linking with consumers	Somerset	1	400,000	2	2001	Not for profit ltd company
11	Food links project	Bridport	1	500,000		1999	IPS – Ben Com
12	Multi agenda community enabler	Stroud	1	55,000		1999	Company ltd by guarantee

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[4] IPS – Coop: Industrial and Provident Society Cooperative

[5] IPS – Ben Com: Industrial and Provident Society for the benefit of the community
[6] This is the turnover of the operating company (actual market turnover is £475,000 per annum)

Additional findings from the data analysis

3.6 The following observations arose from the data analysis. They are not directly addressed by the hypotheses used in Chapter 4 below, but require consideration in their own right.

The need to expand customer base

3.7 A number of the enterprises commented on how the drive for customers is of the utmost importance. It is the limiting factor to their growth or survival. For example: a key obstacle to growth for Somerset Local Food Direct is the size of the market for organic food. Their focus at the moment is to recruit new customers; however customer numbers have dropped sharply since the start of the recession from 230 in 2009, to around 170 by the end of 2010. They feel that the pressures of running the business on a day-to-day basis means that they are too busy to be able to focus on generating new customers. They reported that delivery services offered by supermarkets have dramatically improved since the business started, which has an impact on their customer base. As an organisation they are struggling to build their customer base.

3.8 Similarly for Vale of Taunton Farmers Market the main barrier to growth appeared to be a lack of customers. They reported that the recession appeared to hit farmers markets hard as customers refocused on price rather than value or quality. There is no shortage of producers in Somerset. Market organisers run regular price comparisons with local supermarkets on a basket of goods (the farmers market usually comes out cheaper like for like) yet it is difficult to get this message across.

3.9 The Community Food Enterprises all have to compete with the multiples (e.g. large supermarket chains) with their huge promotion budgets and this makes for a big challenge. Helping them to find effective ways of getting their message across to potential customers would be of value. Enterprises were promoting their own services, but they often felt that policy makers could do more to openly support the role of local food.

Business advice

3.10 Community Food Enterprises tend to be very small in terms of business size and with their unique community attributes it appears that they do not

necessarily fit within the normal business models that the average business adviser has come across. For example effective use of volunteers requires a very different set of skills to those required when employing people. The enterprises who took part in this research reported that, in their experience, business advisers often do not often have experience of this. The scale of the operations is often so small that they are off the radar of government funded business advisers: Shaftesbury Home grown had an annual turnover of £2,500 and Eastover Organics' figure was £5,000.

3.11 Somerset Organic Link believes they would have benefited greatly from a business mentor – someone who had the experience and expertise to help them plan the expansion of the business more effectively. Sales grew but not at a fast enough rate to cover the cost of the overheads. This enterprise felt that they were not quick enough to make cuts and redundancies in 2007/8 and as a result they have been on the "back foot" since. For policy makers the value of providing business advisory support is an important message.

3.12 The Community Food Enterprises, with their focus on collaboration and support networks, illustrate how often good business support comes from within the sector itself. This was exemplified in this research through the area initiatives in Exeter and Stroud. For example in the Exeter initiative five of the Community Food Enterprises have at least one person in their management team who is involved in one of the other enterprises. It was also achieved through the sector networks and organisations that were actively seeking to provide advice, mentoring and support to Community Food Enterprises. These organisations include Plunkett Foundation, Transition Towns, the Soil Association, Community Shops Network, FARMA (Farm Retail and Markets Association) and the Federation of City Farms. These support networks and organisations are providing valuable business support and enabling enterprise-to-enterprise skill sharing. In these ways they are ensuring that good practice is shared and there is no need for each small enterprise to "reinvent the wheel". In other words the support organisations are contributing to the sector growth and development over and above that which can be achieved by helping individual community initiatives alone.

3.13 A number of the case studies identified the culture of local planning departments as a barrier. The common feeling among the case study enterprises interviewed seemed to be that Local Authorities were sympathetic

to Community Food Enterprises, but planning departments had a culture which made little allowance for community needs and the challenges of running a small scale enterprise. For instance, to erect one small poly tunnel, Transition Shaftesbury had been asked for a full planning application including elevation and technical drawings (£70) then an ecology survey (£80), followed by a badger survey (£40). Finally a council tree officer was told to visit even though the small copse of trees was 700 metres away.

Berrynarbour community owned shop with local beverages

4   Testing Hypotheses

Developing the hypotheses

4.1   At a roundtable event involving all partners (see Appendix A) it was agreed that the project proposal had been based on a series of assumptions regarding Community Food Enterprises. The case study data presented an excellent opportunity to test these assumptions, which were then developed into eight separate statements or hypotheses. In this chapter, each of the eight hypotheses is examined in turn. Consideration is given as to whether the hypothesis was found to be true or false across all the enterprises, and evidence is presented which either supports or disproves the hypothesis. The opinions and conclusions are those of the research team unless made explicit otherwise.

Hypothesis One: Communities are inspired and motivated to take more control of the food they eat. Inspired communities are well placed to increase public understanding of, and community connection with, food policy.

Background

4.2   The assumption tested was that the importance of food in people's lives should mean that encouraging community engagement through Community Food Enterprises is an effective way of engaging people in food policy. The Food Ethics Council has estimated that civil society organisations spend £700 million a year on supporting food as an issue, employing 20,000 paid staff (FTE) and 80,000 FTE[7] volunteers in around 25,000 organisations. Food seems to be an important element in many peoples' lives and for some this acts as a motivator to take community action. Concerns over quality, provenance, environmental impact and health seem to lead individuals to want more knowledge about, and control over, the food they eat. Community action is an important way in which people try to achieve this.

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[7] Food Ethics Council: The food issues census – a survey of UK civil society 2011 page 7
  ISBN 978-0-9549218-7-3

Evidence supporting the hypothesis

4.3   Clearly for some of the enterprises participating in the research food was and is their primary driver. For example, at Stroud Community Agriculture their primary driver was producing organic and biodynamic agriculture and at Eastover Organics supplying fresh organic food and wholefoods is what prompted them to set up the enterprise. Bridport Food Links also showed a history of being driven by concerns over access to local food. Eastover were also drawn to action solely for the purpose of accessing food. For these enterprises, food alone has been the stimulant to community action.

Evidence that does not support the hypothesis

4.4   For other enterprises food is important but not the primary driver. The two community shops first and foremost wanted to keep a shop and a post office within their villages. Food is part of the mix on offer, but it has a different emphasis in the two shops. Berrynarbor shop is interested in supplying local food whereas Thorncombe shop has a broader focus providing a range of quality food with less emphasis on it being local.

4.5   For others the focus is on finding markets for their goods (which happen to be food). Somerset Organic Link and the Vale of Taunton Farmers Market, whilst selling food, are both driven by the need for producers to find markets for their produce.

4.6   A fourth category is where the driver is as much community as it is food. Shaftesbury Home Grown is as much a community project bringing people together as it is about food production. This enterprise grew out of the Transition Town movement which has a wider agenda of sustainable living.

4.7   Stroud Common Wealth is different to the other enterprises in that it is an enabler. It doesn't have food explicitly on its agendas. Its main focus is protecting land for local people to use, yet the enterprises it is helping and nurturing are frequently food related ones.

4.8   However, none of the enterprises which didn't have food as a primary driver saw food as unimportant or failed to have views on food policy issues.

Conclusion

4.9   The research showed that a number of the enterprises had engagement with food as a primary driver. Those who had it as a secondary driver still saw food as important. The research would seem to back up the view that Community Food Enterprises rely on a mixture of drivers which include food access, community development and creating alternative economies. All the enterprises had stimulated community action, and food was an important element. These enterprises therefore represent a potential group for whom active engagement in food policy development could be successfully implemented. The enterprises are motivated by food and have already shown their ability to make a difference.

Policy Opportunities

4.10   Future food policy could make greater use of the enthusiasm of Community Food Enterprises to help communicate relevant policy objectives to their communities, given their motivation on issues related to food.

Hypothesis Two: A powerful lever for behavioural change is communities seeing action on food exemplified within their communities.

Background

4.11   Theories about how to influence behaviours recognise that observing others who we respect carrying out an action has a direct impact on our own likelihood of carrying out a similar action. The assumption in this hypothesis is that individuals observing the actions of a local Community Food Enterprise were likely to be influenced to carry out sustainable food behaviours themselves.

4.12   It is worth clarifying that a clear distinction is being made here between those who influence or change behaviour and those that are engaged in educational activities. The educational aspects are considered separately in hypothesis Four. Here we were interested in the behavioural influences of exemplification and inspiration.

Evidence supporting the hypothesis

4.13   The researchers found that all the case study enterprises believed their business model demonstrated a sustainable approach to food production or sale, and there were examples of this in each case study. The question was then whether this influenced others, and whether Community Food Enterprises were more likely to influence their customers because of their direct, local links.

4.14   Bridport Local Food Links believes its work has influenced behaviour amongst the people of Bridport and surrounding areas by increasing understanding and transparency of the food chain through the programmes it runs.   In particular it believes it has increased demand for local food. The level of local food activity in the area, which is far higher than the national average, would appear to support this. They also believe that eating and preparing fresh, local food has wider benefits around encouraging healthy eating.

4.15   The organisation reported that it was very aware of the impact of its activities in the local community, and they believed that it has influenced substantial changes in behaviour. It is important to note however, that they had not formally evaluated this, but this perception was based on the increased demand for its products, and its ability to deliver new services based on the reputation of its existing ones. For them, this was very motivating – the fact that the community is buying into the ethics and beliefs of the enterprise.

4.16   Elsewhere, a number of the other enterprises saw themselves as change agents in their community. Stroud Community Agriculture, Shaftesbury Home Grown and Stroud Commonwealth all perceived themselves as able to influence behaviour. Shaftesbury could show behavioural change in terms of individuals growing food and influencing others at a micro level, whereas Stroud and its surrounding valleys have a very different food economy to neighbouring towns. However, it is important to note that this is based on the perception of the organisations, rather than any formal monitoring or evaluation of their operations.

4.17   Stroud Community Agriculture perceived that the behaviours of its individual members may have the effect of normalising behaviour for others in the community. Some individuals reported changing their own behaviours via the enterprise whilst others said that they joined because they already tried to live sustainably. Other users mentioned some change in diet or lifestyle due to

their interaction with the enterprise, such as increased composting, eating more seasonally or better practice on their allotments. The farm was also seen as playing a role in strengthening community networks and providing general support and 'normalising' sustainable behaviour.

4.18   The Shaftesbury enterprise had come out of the Transition Movement where there is strong emphasis on understanding and influencing behaviour, and the behaviour change agenda appeared to be more explicit within this group than any of the other case study enterprises. Within the group they gave numerous examples of what they had learned by growing produce together and the changes they had made in their own lives. These included:

"Fresh air"

"Company"

"Can do on my own as it is walking distance"

"Cheaper than the gym"

"Gives me something other than writing job applications to do"

"Gives me a buzz"

"Access to local food"

"I wouldn't do it if the people weren't nice"

"Just retired and was in a black hole"

"Getting to know the community"

4.19   Stroud Common Wealth describes itself as a think tank that enables innovation and sparks projects which take on their own identity. Behaviour change by example is part of this though closely linked to its more educational activities as well. They believed that the projects they have nurtured are all examples of bringing about behaviour change in the wider community in order to address all aspects of food security and climate change.

Evidence that does not support the hypothesis

4.20   Whilst none of the enterprises were against people carrying out sustainable food behaviours, not all saw themselves as influencing behaviour.

4.21   At Thorncombe community shop the concept of the shop influencing people in the community was not accepted by any of the participants interviewed;

instead they referred to the shop being influenced by the interests and values of the community. Several participants referenced the shop's efforts in environmental good practice and its support for the local economy, but felt that this reflected existing beliefs and practices within the community. They did not feel that instigating behaviour change was part of their role. One of the volunteers interviewed commented that:

"We all requested local food from the outset as most of us were already buying it, but it was something we could not previously get from this shop. If I came in here now to find that only produce from a distance, or abroad, was available, I wouldn't stand for it – I'd complain straight away, as I would if carrots came in polythene bags - and I certainly wouldn't be the only one".

4.22   This community enterprise is seen as being "our" enterprise, providing the things which the community sees as being important. It is an interesting example of a "virtuous circle" of a Community Food Enterprise both reflecting and influencing behaviours. Thorncombe promotes its own story to its local community through visible action, word of mouth and publications: a story about community ownership coupled with environmental principles, all central to its purpose of serving the local community. They are changing behaviour by "doing" rather than "telling" and as such are not necessarily aware of it.

4.23   There is an important learning point here in order to actively engage with communities in influencing behaviour. Whilst some enterprises see influencing behaviour as an important – or even fundamental – part of what they do, others may not recognise the value of their role in exemplifying sustainable behaviours.

Conclusion

4.24   The Community Food Enterprises are often "doing" rather than "telling" and, as such, are influencing behaviour by exemplifying sustainable behaviours as people see action on food going on within their communities, as well as making it easier for people to take action. The research showed that many of the case studies were willing to act as messengers in their community and were effective in this role because of their passion and commitment as well as their knowledge and experience. This had been achieved by them being seen

as doers and achievers in their own community. To those that they had regular interaction with, they were setting a norm in sustainable food behaviours because they were acting in a way which was consistent with the food behaviours they were promoting. These actions can help normalise behaviour and/or it can show by example what is possible. Individuals running Community Food Enterprises perhaps have a far better understanding about how their communities can get involved, make things happen and have an impact compared to institutions, be they private sector bodies, which can be seen perhaps as motivated by profit. These impacts may be directly food related but they can relate to other agendas such as sustainability, community vitality and health and social interaction. These other impacts are picked up in more detail in hypothesis Eight.

4.25 Importantly, the research also showed that there was very limited understanding of their potential in this role and, for some, a degree of reluctance to take on such a role. The conclusion is that Community Food Enterprises have great potential in the area of influencing behaviour, but will need assistance in ensuring that they are effective if consistent results are needed. Any support that they are given needs to be sensitive to this reluctance to be seen to be influencing.

Policy Opportunities

4.26 Future food policy communication could make explicit reference to the role of Community Food Enterprises as this would both increase public awareness and motivate the enterprises themselves

Hypothesis Three: Despite having no awareness of Food 2030[8], the Community Food Enterprises are helping to deliver many of the policy objectives in it.

Background

4.27   The project partners' experiences indicated that grassroots enterprises would have little or no awareness of national food policy. However, the partners were all aware of great examples of activities by Community Food Enterprises delivering food policy outcomes. The case studies were designed to explore awareness of delivery of food policy goals and to explore examples of unintended delivery.

Evidence supporting the hypotheses

4.28   Overall most of the community food enterprises who participated in the research were unaware of the existence of food policy, and even those who did know there was a policy generally didn't know any of the detail. Only one of the enterprises involved in this study had any detailed awareness. Yet despite having no idea of food policy, when prompted with the details of the policy, all Community Food Enterprises could give examples of where they were unintentionally delivering against some (or indeed all) of the objectives.

4.29   At the Vale of Taunton's farmers' market the stallholders and board members interviewed knew of the existence of a food strategy (Food 2030), but were not at all familiar with the content. When they realised that farmers' markets were ticking all the right boxes many were pleased, and hoped that this would lead to more active support from central government.

4.30   At Berrynarbor community shop the interviewees commented that until they took part in this research they had no idea that Defra had a food policy. For them Defra meant foot and mouth and dealings with farmers. Now that they were aware they did recognise and empathise with current food policy issues and believed that the ethos of the Community Food Enterprise actively supports the policies. Similarly at Thorncombe community shop the committee and customers had not been aware that Defra had a food policy, but felt that

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[8] This research was initiated before May 2010, and the food policy objectives used in the research were from Food 2030, which does not necessarily reflect current Government policy.

the shop was already embodying many of the criteria within the 2030 vision.

4.31   At Shaftesbury Home Grown the discussion on food policy was a fascinating one, given that the starting point of the Transition Movement is that the current political reaction to the challenges we face is wholly inadequate. Therefore, strong views were held on most areas. Despite this the group was unaware of the current food policy or strategy.

4.32   A number of the enterprises were keen to stress that whilst they welcomed food policies their motivation comes from delivering their own agendas/principles and not from delivering government policy. The staff at St Werburgh City Farm agreed that they welcomed a national food strategy to develop a more sustainable food system but that their motivation to deliver healthy local food to local people was more because it is important for people and the planet rather than as a result of a government strategy.

4.33   At Stroud Community Agriculture the farm was interested in delivering their principles not in delivering government policy. Some present government policy happens to fit with their principles and so they are delivering it, rather than the other way round. Similarly in Exeter it was considered coincidental that the majority of activities undertaken by these enterprises fit with Food 2030, as most of the interviewees were unaware of the policy, and none had read it. Many expressed both pleasure, and surprise, that the policy fitted so well with what they were doing.

4.34   Eastover Organics recognises and supports all the issues in the food policy, "they are the reasons we were established". However, they deliver through their own personal commitment to the issues rather than an awareness of the policy.

Evidence that does not support the hypothesis

4.35   We found no evidence that did not support the hypothesis.

Conclusion

4.36   The case studies showed that despite generally having no idea about food policy, Community Food Enterprises were delivering it. They were delivering it not because of a wish to engage with government policies but because the

policies happened to chime with their own principles.

4.37   Once made aware of their role in policy delivery, the case studies could be broadly split into two groups. For some this knowledge was not relevant or motivational and the attitude was that they were delivering their own agenda. Overall this group would prefer to have no contact with Government, but would be willing to work through trusted intermediaries. But the other group found this knowledge motivational. This does suggest that for policy makers, this represents an opportunity for greater engagement, although there was also an expectation that delivering policy should also be supported by the provision of resources. It also suggested that Government needs to support intermediary organisations if those who are less supportive of Government approaches are to be engaged.

Policy Opportunities

4.38   Future food policy could include deliverable objectives developed in partnership with Community Food Enterprises and the intermediary organisations that support them.

Hypothesis Four: Community Food Enterprises take on the role of providing food education to their community

Background

4.39   Knowledge of the sector suggested that Community Food Enterprises develop educational activities around food as they evolve, even going back as far as self-help organisations in the Nineteenth Century. These educational activities range from formal/informal information provision to skills development and training activities.

Evidence supporting the hypothesis

4.40   Most of the Community Food Enterprises felt that they provided food education within their community: this education may be structured and formally promoted or it may happen in more informal ways. In all instances food education was being delivered because the enterprises saw this as part

of their social mission.

4.41 Hypothesis Two has already considered the community food enterprises potential role in influencing behaviour. Here their conscious role as educators was examined. Many of them regarded food education as an important part of their offering and they provided this education in both formal and informal ways. For some of the Community Food Enterprises food education was at the heart of what they do: it was a recognised and declared part of their business model. For others food education was a consequence of what they do, a by-product of their activities. At both levels they believed they were taking on a role of providing food education to their communities. The people being educated might be their customers, membership, employees, volunteers or the wider community.

4.42 Eastover Organics ran sessions for a young mums group, as part of its outreach work to broaden its customer base, and also held regular smoothie and juicing events which provided information about the different nutrients available from different fruits and vegetables. They believed from informal customer feedback that their box scheme gives people an understanding of seasonality, as people are aware of the changing make up of their vegetable box over the year.

"...when I talk to a young mother and realise that we've had a positive influence on her eating habits and therefore her child's eating habits, or I think of the support we are giving to local farmers who want to farm according to the courage of their convictions, allowing their farms to have a positive impact on our local environment, then that motivates me. It's just hard to keep that in sight sometimes when the going gets tough."
Eastover Organics

4.43 At Stroud Community Agriculture much of the education on the farm was informal. Between 5 and 30 people attended monthly workdays and undertake farm work. Members were in the fields and barns at other times, often with children. There has been a regular informal children's group who organise activities such as tree seed collecting or nature hunts. There were many informal conversations about production and cooking and people swapped dishes and recipes. There was always a farm apprentice at the farm as part

of a training scheme and 3 of these graduates had set up their own Community Supported Agriculture schemes. The Steiner school ran regular lessons at the farm and at a handful of homes, educating families and adult trainees with special needs who regularly attended.

4.44 Somerset Local Food Direct spoke at schools, Women's Institute groups, Rotary clubs and other groups about their organisation and more generally about food production. Their educational activities included a quiz which enabled people of all ages to identify vegetables. They believed it was very simple but entertaining way to increase food knowledge.

4.45 Shaftesbury Home Grown was an example of an enterprise adding education to its agenda as its primary focus (growing food), established itself. Encouraging a healthy diet was a major feature of the group's work. Events such as an onsite lunch and the AGM were seen by the enterprise as education opportunities, introducing unfamiliar vegetables and explaining the growing process.

Evidence that does not support the hypothesis

4.46 The two community shops did not see themselves carrying out any educational activities directly – and yet in the view of the researchers, they were educating none the less. At Berrynarbor, following discussion, they did realise they were doing a number of things that had an indirect impact. They were producing healthy recipes using local products and encouraging cooking from scratch. All promotional material for the shop emphasised saving mileage and with their local suppliers they were educating their customers as to what was available locally.

Conclusion

4.47 All of the Community Food Enterprises provided food education within the community and much chimes with government policy. This education may be formal, it may be informal, it may be a big part of the work of the enterprise or it may be more consequential. In all cases aspects of the food policy were being communicated and individuals were being educated. Their main strengths seemed to be in the understanding of wider issues of sustainability.

Policy Opportunities

4.48　For policy makers there is potential opportunity to deliver food education through Community Food Enterprises. Some of the enterprises were delivering and developing programmes themselves without access to any support materials or assistance. Some support may be an effective way of increasing the impact of this work though this was not specifically explored during the research.

Hypothesis Five: Food policy initiatives are good areas for business opportunities

Background

4.49　One of the assumptions in the original bid by Defra to the Cabinet Office was that food policy goals could represent areas of potential growth for Community Food Enterprises. The research explored each of the headings in detail with the enterprises to see if they considered these as business opportunities. The five headings from Food 2030 were considered in turn.

Evidence supporting the hypothesis

Encouraging people to eat a healthy sustainable diet

4.50　All the case study enterprises considered this area as being important to them already, and an area that they would continue to develop. The research did not attempt to define what a healthy sustainable diet meant.

4.51　St Werburgh City Farm encouraged a healthy sustainable diet through its community garden, seasonal community celebration events, hire of incubators with eggs to hatch, meat club enabling local people to buy meat produced directly from the farm, sustainable livestock management workshops, a café providing wholesome food, a small orchard and a cooking and gardening space. These activities, by bringing food production into the city and raising awareness, were encouraging people to become personally engaged in raising and preparing food, which could encourage them to eat a more healthy and sustainable diet.

4.52　Stallholders at the Vale of Taunton farmers markets saw their role as

encouraging an interest in and helping people understand where their food comes from, as well as offering advice on growing food themselves. Again by personally engaging with individuals around food a healthy and sustainable diet was encouraged.

4.53   Local Food Links in Bridport originally came together with the aim of building a better food system more connected to the locality. Encouraging people to eat a more healthy and sustainable diet was a key part of this aim. This was in 1999 and since then the details of what the enterprise actually delivers has had to diversify and change reflecting changing business opportunities and the changing food landscape. This is a good example of how, like any other business, the Community Food Enterprises needed to be flexible and able to respond to changing conditions and situations.

4.54   The original focus of Local Food Links was to run farmers markets. It then diversified to a soup scheme and running hot lunches for schools. They then wanted to shorten the supply chain and worked with colleagues from the South West Local Food Partnership to address public procurement of food. This ultimately led to the provision of hot school meals in 23 Dorset primary schools and development work with older people. In all these activities the core principle of encouraging people to eat a healthy sustainable diet remained unchanged.

Ensuring a resilient, profitable and competitive food system

4.55   As enterprises, the case studies identified with the policy heading but interpreted it in their own terms.

4.56   Farmers markets are a way of supporting small farmers and producers to make a living by providing a cost-effective route to sell their produce. The Vale of Taunton Farmers Market recognised that farmers markets help keep small farmers and producers on their farms or in business, and keep money circulating in the local economy by increasing local trade and providing employment. For example, one stallholder said that they simply wouldn't be in business without the Taunton market. As small producers of rare breed pork, beef and turkeys they saw the farmers' markets as a route to supporting their livelihood and providing employments opportunities for four other part-time employees.

4.57   The Exeter Community Food Enterprises were all set up because of a perceived gap in the provision of products and services. For example, Exeter Community Agriculture and Broadclyst Community Farm were both set up to grow crops and rear animals, on a larger scale than is possible on small holdings or gardens, yet small by commercial standards. They also wanted to provide affordable food for the people and families involved. Harvest, a food growing project (Community Supported Agriculture), was conceived because of a lack of affordable fresh produce for the most disadvantaged people in Exeter.

4.58   Berrynarbor community shop reported that they were motivated to provide and promote local food. By doing so they believed they were giving the shop a "unique selling point" and that it played a significant part in its turnover and profitability. The community shops were providing a food outlet in those rural communities where commercial organisations cannot or do not want to operate. Yet they still had to compete with the supermarkets for their business and finding "unique selling points" was key. The Community Food Enterprises involved in this research believed that local food can be a very effective "unique selling point".

Reducing the food system's greenhouse gas emissions

4.59   All of the enterprises interviewed aimed to reduce the food system's greenhouse emissions as part of their agenda. They believed they were contributing to reductions and were keen to continue to do so. Community Food Enterprises are small scale, locally based, and with a strong sustainable lifestyle culture. We believe this research has shown that they are good advocates of this policy.

''It makes me feel that sustainable communities are a real possibility instead of a dream.'' Stroud Community Supported Agriculture

4.60   Shaftesbury Home Grown believed it would be hard to produce food with less impact than the way the group had set up its own production. This was a major motivator for the group and it hoped to go further with the introduction of renewable energy onto the site.

4.61   The majority of the case study enterprises were selling local produce to local consumers and hence seeking to reduce their impact. Eastover Organics

reported that customers were aware of food miles and the enterprises attempts to reduce them - ***"that's why our core customers use us"***. It is recognised that food miles are somewhat of a simplification of the issues but it was used as a useful shorthand measure by a number of the interviewees. Most of the 20 members interviewed from Stroud Community Agriculture saw emissions as important and mentioned reduced food miles as a way of reducing emissions. Some mentioned methane from animals as being problematic. One member mentioned transportation of animal feed as significant (pig food is brought in but cows and sheep are fed only on grass and hay). The researcher noted that none understood the CO2 advantage of not using nitrates. This illustrates that even with a highly motivated and interested group of individuals the complexities of greenhouse gas emissions were not necessarily understood.

4.62   Bridport Local Food Links aimed to reduce their carbon footprint through the design of efficient supply runs and deliveries, but recognised the unavoidable impacts caused by using four delivery vans. Distribution issues, particularly in rural areas, are a difficulty in terms of greenhouse gas emissions. It was believed that opportunities for Community Food Enterprises to share vehicles could help. This is where initiatives such as Stroud Common Wealth and the Exeter area based group have demonstrated some value in networking and putting local Community Food Enterprises in touch with one another so that they can maximise on any mutual benefits. This could be true for a wider range of issues than just carbon footprint and is picked up again in hypothesis 6.

Reducing, reusing and reprocessing waste

4.63   All the enterprises aimed to reduce, reuse and reprocess waste and were strong advocates for this policy. For some enterprises it was because it was part of their principles and for others the economics were also a driver. In some cases it was a mixture of both. Waste management can take place at various different points in the food chain.

4.64   For example Shaftesbury Home Grown reported to be passionate about using all the food produced and not wasting anything. Sales of misshapen vegetables to the customer were encouraged and any sub-standard produce was fed to the pigs.

4.65   Similarly at Stroud Community Agriculture farm waste was reported to be minimal. There were few vegetable grade-outs – members who have helped harvest a variety of sizes and shapes saw no reason to reject irregular vegetables. The few grade-outs were given to the animals. The animals also consumed stalks, weeds, and waste from the local brewery and organic vegetable wholesaler. Manure was composted. Total farm waste comprised of one bin bag every week and 12 bags of farm plastic for recycling per year.

4.66   The Vale of Taunton Farmers Market highlighted how customers were encouraged to be eco-aware even when their activities didn't actually benefit the stallholders directly. They said that many customers were already eco-aware - bringing their own bags to the market and returning bottles, jars, punnets and egg boxes etc. There was a perception that other customers may have seen this and then followed suit. Some stallholders said that it was sometimes too expensive to clean and recycle everything, but that they always accepted items returned by customers for recycling as they didn't want to discourage this type of behaviour.

4.67   Bridford Local Food Links also aimed to reduce food waste at the point of consumption. They did this by running taster sessions for new school meals, to gain feedback and assess popularity. This meant that if the product was not liked it wouldn't be put on the menu – a pro-active approach to minimising waste as well as good business practice.

> ***"Every effort is made to recycle cardboard and tins. Also, we produce 500 meals and there is no waste in production as the menus are exactly designed per portion."*** *Bridport Local Food Links*

4.68   At Thorncombe community shop potential food waste was diverted into home cooked meals for the café and shop - soups, quiches, pies, cakes and bread pudding were all on offer and made from produce that would otherwise have to be thrown away. This activity also made good business sense as the added value of the new products contributed to the shop's turnover.

Increasing the impact of skills, knowledge, research and technology

4.69   A few of the Community Food Enterprises had a direct impact on increasing skills, knowledge, research and technology for food policy. The majority may have had an indirect role to play, particularly as a part of the networks and

movements they belong to.

Thorncombe community owned shop reducing waste

4.70   Bridport Local Food Links and Stroud Common Wealth were examples of enterprises with a direct impact. Bridport Local Food Links has always had a strong research and development focus, working in partnership with regional and national organisations as well as universities in the UK and the Czech Republic. It had also researched the need for specialised workspace, and prepared a feasibility study for new food hubs to replace the existing Bridport Centre for Local Food and underpin expansion to other parts of Dorset. The latter research had led to further investigation of the potential to link food processing and catering, waste recycling and renewable generation in a small farm context. A partnership of Bridport Renewable Energy Group, Wessex Community Assets and Masaryk University, Brno, is now exploring this with a number of local farms.

4.71   St Werburgh City Farm did not see itself directly impacting on increasing skills, knowledge, research and technology for food policy. However it was contributing to this policy through its various workshops and through its membership of the Federation of City Farms and Community Gardens. This organisation is the national face of the community farm and garden movement, promoting its work and raising its profile with decision-makers, funders, the public and the media.

Evidence that does not support the hypothesis

4.72   There were very few examples identifying new areas of activity rather than business as usual. New business opportunities were seen as developing from the core values of the enterprise rather than any external policy messages.

Conclusion

4.73   The enterprises readily identified with the policy areas and could relate them to their day-to-day interests. However, the evidence seemed to be that this close match between policy headings and enterprise activity was more coincidence than planned activity.

4.74   Enterprises did not see the policy goals as generating new areas of activity, but did see them as a motivating factor in developing existing work further.

4.75   There is an issue of policy language where there is normally a lag between policy formers deciding to use a phrase and its adoption by communities themselves.

Policy Opportunities

4.76   There may be opportunities to engage Community Food Enterprises in the increasing skills and knowledge agenda. This would benefit policy formers in having a new set of delivery partners and would strengthen the Community Food Enterprises themselves.

4.77   There could be opportunities for policy makers improving the understanding of issues relating to reducing emissions as the enterprises reported they would be open to increasing their understanding on these issues.

Hypothesis Six: Collaboration between enterprises is positive and to be encouraged

Background

4.78 Participants in the Community Food Enterprise sector will often express an aversion to growing their enterprises to a scale at which the original community connections become lost. The alternative to scaling up is seen as connecting up, with close collaboration between enterprises. The research explored how much this was an aspiration within the case study enterprises.

Evidence supporting the hypothesis

4.79 All of the case study enterprises reported that they collaborate already and that they recognise the value of collaboration with area-based initiatives. For example, Stroud and Exeter indicated that there are major opportunities for developing collaborative local food systems. These opportunities included better promotion of local food, greater connection with public policy on health and economic development, mutual support to make individual enterprises more resilient and improved distribution systems. Collaboration between enterprises can happen on a geographical basis or it can be collaboration on a sector basis. Some of this collaboration happens naturally and some is stimulated and encouraged through support organisations.

4.80 An example of local collaboration happening naturally could be seen between Eastover Organics and Somerset Organic Links. Eastover Organics is a small volunteer-run organic vegetable and wholefood buying group. They were dependent on collaboration for their survival. They worked with Somerset Organic Links who provided them with organic boxes, and they worked with a wholefood wholesaler. This type of arrangement has frequently been observed by the research partners, both in this project and in other work with social enterprises. It enables enterprises to increase their offering and improve their economies of scale. Eastover reported that these collaborative business relationships are central to their survival.

Another example of geographically based local collaboration happening naturally could be seen in Taunton. The Vale of Taunton Farmers' Market had an informal link with Transition Taunton. The two customer representatives

on the board of the market were members of Transition Taunton, and the organisations worked together to explore ways of reducing the town's carbon outputs. Transition Taunton was not able to pay its network of volunteers, but instead it offered them vouchers redeemable at the Farmers' Market.

4.81 St Werburgh City Farm worked collaboratively with its neighbours such as the Narroways Millennium Trust and the local allotment association, which provided the farm shop with local produce. The enterprise believed this collaboration helped strengthen community cohesion as well as facilitating business development and exploiting synergies between the various organisations.

4.82 Examples of collaboration through a geographic, organised network could be seen in Exeter. Through the network, the Exeter community food enterprises were very aware of the potential for helping each other and working together more collaboratively. Love Local Food and Real Food were in discussions about sharing warehouse and kitchen space, which may lead to a possible merger. Harvest, Love Local Food and organicARTS were beginning to coordinate their educational work, which could then be disseminated to other organisations.

4.83 An example of sector-based collaboration could be seen with the community shops involved in the research. They were part of a network of more than 250 shops (257 in May 2011), which is supported by the Plunkett Foundation. This national network encourages and facilitates collaboration through an advisory service, an interactive computer network encouraging problem solving and sharing of experiences, a regular newsletter and funded schemes (when available) for start-up and development. Collaboration between communities is encouraged and enabled by the network. Berrynarbor, for example, enjoyed being used as an exemplar of community ownership and being visited by other communities thinking of setting up a similar enterprise. Thorncombe hosted the launch of the new network last year.

Evidence that does not support the hypothesis

4.84 Whilst there was a strong interest in collaboration, there were limited examples of collaboration at a scale where the benefits of collaboration for individual enterprises would outweigh the perceived disadvantages of getting

larger. Only the community-owned shops talked about what could be achieved together at a national scale[9].

Conclusion

4.85   All of the enterprises said they recognised the value of collaboration in its different forms. Most types of collaboration were seen as positive, and many enterprises were already collaborating informally with others. The size and scale of collaboration needs to increase, and the cultural and other barriers to increasing collaboration should be explored further. The evidence suggested that the main barrier was based on the perception of the enterprises that they might lose their connection with their founding purpose, rather than being based on actual experience.

Policy Opportunities

4.86   All types of collaboration were seen as positive by the case study Community Food Enterprises and this is an area where policy could encourage more, possibly to linking it to the Government's commitment to encourage joint consumer buying.[10]

Hypothesis Seven: For Big Society to become a reality a big challenge is to find areas of interest that people are drawn towards – food is one of those draws.

Background

4.87   One of the major challenges in promoting the concept of Big Society is the need to find concrete examples of the kinds of issue that it can be used to tackle. The research explored the idea that food was such a motivator. Food is an important part of most people's lives and for some it is a powerful motivation for further action. As such it is both a strong motivation for starting up an enterprise, and a good reason for the local community to start engaging

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9 A joint buying network for energy, insurance, telecoms and retail services was launched by the Plunkett Foundation after the research was completed.

10 http://plunkettfoundation.blogspot.com/2009/12/local-food-all-together-now.html

with that enterprise.

Evidence supporting the hypothesis

4.88   A number of the enterprises expressly saw themselves as "Big Society in action": the language of "Big Society" was volunteered and not prompted. Both of the community shops expressed this view. At Berrynarbor they commented on how much of the hard work and commitment is provided by volunteer contributions (25 regular volunteers – the average figure nationally is 30). They believed this brought the added bonus of community cohesion and social contact – all aspirations of the Big Society. At Thorncombe the sentiments of Big Society were seen as highly relevant to the project. They also mentioned the role of community shares[11] as an effective way of raising start- up funding (particularly in the context of less government funding for such projects).

4.89   At St Werburgh's City Farm the primary users were the families living within a two-mile radius that used the farm as a recreational resource and to find out more about food and where it comes from. Since opening in 1980 the farm has developed opportunities for vulnerable adults and young people from across the city. They were able to work on the farm carrying out useful tasks and gain an important sense of self-worth at the same time. In this way different community groupings were mixed together under the umbrella of a single enterprise and each experienced Big Society in action.

Evidence that does not support the hypothesis

4.90   Those enterprises with less connection to community volunteering seemed less likely to identify themselves as Big Society. Most demonstrated a degree of cynicism to the idea (but not the principles behind), seeing it as a political label rather than something they did.

Conclusion

4.91   The case studies made clear that the enterprises can be exemplars of the Big

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[11] Community shares – a form of community investment whereby shares or bonds are offered to communities of at least twenty people to finance ventures serving a community purpose. www.communityshares.org.uk

Society in action. As previously discussed, it was also clear that food is a powerful (although not always primary) motivator for engagement. From this sample, and the Plunkett Foundation's wider experience across the sector, it would appear that encouraging action on food issues through Community Food Enterprises could be advantageous for government and policy makers in promoting the Big Society.

4.92   Another possible learning point was that only one of the types of enterprise represented in the case studies, community shops, has been used by the Prime Minister and others to illustrate the Big Society. It was interesting to note that both shops identified themselves with the Big Society more than the other enterprises. The learning point for government and political communicators is that using social enterprises as examples does increase identification with a policy on the ground

Policy Opportunities

4.93   Greater use could be made of community food activity as an example of Big Society in action. The Big Society approach has faced criticism that it lacks concrete examples. DEFRA could be using the high numbers of people taking action on food as an example that, for many, the Big Society approach is already a reality.

Hypothesis Eight: Community Food Enterprises add value across other Defra agendas, as well as across a wider range of government issues

Background

4.94   Given the broad range of policy areas that Defra has responsibility for the assumption was that evidence would be found that other areas of policy were also being supported by the work of the enterprises, as well as those of other Government departments.

Evidence supporting the hypothesis

4.95   The evidence above indicated that Community Food Enterprises may deliver some food policy objectives, but their potential is broader than that, and they

also impact on a number of other Defra policies as well as across other government departments. Community Food Enterprises add value in the policy areas of pro-environmental behaviour and the vitality of rural communities. For other departments the Community Food Enterprises add value to some of the policies of health, employment, education and community cohesion.

4.96 There have been many examples throughout the report of Community Food Enterprises, and the people involved with them, carrying out pro-environmental actions and behaviours. Just as they have a passion for food some of the enterprises also had a passion for pro-environmental behaviour. Some will exhibit this through the mission of the enterprise and some through the way the businesses are run in terms of sustainability, reducing re-using and re-processing waste and actively reducing the food system's greenhouse gas emissions. Their impact is potentially wider than the enterprise itself as they act as exemplars to their customers and the wider community.

4.97 Many of the enterprises were contributing significantly to the vitality of their rural communities. Community shops not only provide food and other services - they become social hubs and a centre of village life. They were providing local employment and volunteering opportunities that gave people a strong sense of belonging and connecting with their communities.

4.98 *"The shop means a lot to me. I cannot drive, I can get everything I need and I would be lost without it. I buy local products – meat, vegetables, cheese, bread and honey. The staff and volunteers are so helpful. We chat, laugh and I am there lot longer than just to shop".* Customer at Berrynarbor community shop

4.99 Farmers markets provide face-to-face contact between customer and producer - literally bringing the countryside into the town. The Vale of Taunton Farmers Market recognised that this was particularly valuable during the foot and mouth disease crisis in 2001 as it led to greater understanding and awareness.

4.100 The Community Food Enterprises were also potentially impacting across the agendas of other government departments in the following ways:

Health and Wellbeing

4.101 Community Food Enterprises impact on health through their encouragement of eating a healthy diet, which has been covered above under Hypothesis Five. A number of the enterprises were also explicitly supporting the wider health issues of their customers and volunteers. St Werburgh City Farm was providing horticultural training for vulnerable adults and placements for young people struggling in formal education. These opportunities can improve the wellbeing of individuals and have a positive impact on their health. Recent research[12] on the impact for older people volunteering in their community shop showed overwhelmingly that the sense of purpose, routine and responsibility had a big impact on the overall health and wellbeing of the individuals concerned. In the sample of 22 older volunteers, 20 of them believed that volunteering was highly beneficial in terms of social contact, 17 of them believed it was highly beneficial to their sense of belonging in the community and 6 of them believed it to be highly beneficial to their overall health.

Employment

4.102 The Community Food Enterprises were providing employment opportunities and, equally significantly, a wide variety of volunteering roles.

Education

4.103 The discussion of Hypothesis Four above has already considered the role of Community Food Enterprises in providing food education to their community. They can also have an impact on other areas of education, such as being an information point for education opportunities.

Localism

4.104 All the enterprises were rooted in their local community and were about engaging local people in community action. The majority offered another form of involvement that was an alternative to public sector engagement or voluntary action.

"We used to know people in the village by the car they drove, or the name of their dog – our neighbours would be called Mrs Peugeot, or Mr

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[12] The role of older people in the setting up and running of community enterprises: using rural community owned shops as the exemplar. Commissioned by Hastoe Housing, Research by Plunkett Foundation August 2010 (unpublished)

Estate, but now we know these people as our close friends"
(Thorncombe Shop).

Community cohesion

4.105 The potential for Community Food Enterprises to impact on their wider
community appears to be significant. A number of the organisations have a
particularly strong role to play in terms of community cohesion. St Werburghs
City Farm regards itself as **"a green oasis in the heart of the city"**. Whilst it
is difficult to determine exactly the extent of its influence it considers itself a
key part of the development of the area since the farm opened in 1980. There
have been a number of environmental and health focused schemes such as
the redevelopment of a former scaffolding yard to create 41 self-built low-
impact homes, a climbing centre in a converted church, an award winning
organic supermarket and a nature reserve. Whilst it may be difficult to
attribute these developments directly to the farm it has had an influence by
acting as a catalyst.

In the market town of Stroud, Stroud Community Agriculture, along with the
many other Community Food Enterprises and other types of community
enterprise there, were perceived to make a significant impact on the cohesion
of the community. Stroud Community Agriculture has been indirectly
supportive to other local projects by setting an example of success, providing
experience of running projects, providing social approval or establishing
relationships and networks at the farm. Stroud Slad Farm (another local
community supported agriculture scheme), Thrupp Community Orchard and
Stroudco (a social enterprise trading local food) probably would not have
started without Stroud Community Action's influence. Other projects that
research participants said had been positively affected are Stroud Wood Co-
op (which has bought woodland with community finance), the renovation of
the social enterprise centre (funded with community loans), Stroud Brewery
and the wood fuel group (an informal firewood felling co-op). Some of these
would have perhaps succeeded anyway but have been strengthened by
Stroud Community Agriculture's presence.

Evidence that does not support the hypothesis

4.106 Not surprisingly, Defra responsibilities which are rooted in industrial regulation

or the technical support of agriculture were not found to have links. This seems mainly to do with community understanding of Government Departments, which is normally based on their name, aspects of their work covered by the media or which the community come into contact with.

Conclusions

4.107 Those enterprises which were based in rural areas seemed to have an important role in community development. All enterprises also showed links to other areas, although the strength of these varied.

Policy Opportunities

4.108 The contact Defra has with Community Food Enterprises could be extended to other Government departments. Defra already takes on the role of championing other issues across Government, such as rural affairs and sustainable development. It has a clear remit on food and could be active in raising issues with and facilitating links with other Government departments.

Produce from Somerset Organic Link

5   Conclusions and Implications/Opportunities

Conclusions

5.1   The case study enterprises who participated in the research:

- Are well placed to help increase public understanding and connection to food policy. Food excites and stimulates community action/enterprise making them well placed to deliver the food policy agenda at a community level.

- By "doing" rather than "telling", are able to influence behaviour as people see action on food going on within their communities. This action can normalise behavioural changes and can show by example what is possible.

- Despite being unaware of a food policy or its objectives, they are delivering it. They are delivering it not because of a wish to engage with government policies but because the policies happen to chime with their own principles. For policy makers, finding ways of being able to engage with these groups will help deliver food policy more effectively at a community level.

- Are providing some food education within the community and much of this education chimes with government policy.

Implications and Opportunities for policy

5.2   Three headline messages emerged from the research, which are:

5.3   Community Food Enterprises are a great example of Big Society in action and there is scope for further development and expansion as new initiatives related to sustainable food are promoted by the Department. These enterprises represent a type of localism different from the usual suspects ie planning, development and waste collection: communities assessing and meeting their own food retail needs - localism with a distinct "Defra flavour".

5.4   Community Food Enterprises and the intermediary organisations that support them would be beneficial partners for the Department: both in terms of acting as a sounding board during food policy design; and also in terms of acting as

delivery partners on key/shared initiatives at the local level.

5.5 It would be mutually rewarding for Defra to advocate and champion the work of Community Food Enterprises, both within Government and to the wider community, given their role both as contributors to the green economy and as influencers of sustainable behaviours. A constructive two-way relationship could encourage the Community Food Enterprise sector to be even more supportive of "green" policies, acting as exemplars for environmentally responsible behaviours at the local level.

5.6 A number of other implications and opportunities, which may have relevance for future food policy, are as follows:

5.7 All the enterprises demonstrated a passion for taking action on food issues with their community. Being community based means that they are able to communicate to their community in ways which can't be achieved by other mainstream communication channels. Harnessing their enthusiasm could enable future policy work to reach a wider audience within their communities.

5.8 Community Food Enterprises are already delivering on food policy objectives, despite most of them having no knowledge of the policy. They are delivering not because of a wish to engage with government policies, but because the policies happen to chime with their own principles. For policy makers, there may be an opportunity for greater engagement, but there was also an expectation among the enterprises interviewed that active delivery of policy should be supported by the provision of resources.

5.9 There may also be opportunities to influence sustainable behaviours by supporting Community Food Enterprises to increase their impact in this area. They already influence behaviour by example though are not always aware of doing this. Any support needs to be sensitive to this lack of awareness/reluctance to be seen to be influencing (despite effectively doing so).

5.10 Future food policy communication could make explicit reference to the role of Community Food Enterprise as this would both increase public awareness and motivate the enterprises. The Community Food Enterprises had generated examples of community action on food which had inspired local people to engage. Using such examples in future food policy communication

could be more likely to appeal to the public than food industry examples.

5.11   There may also be an opportunity to deliver food education through Community Food Enterprises. Some of the enterprises are delivering and developing programmes themselves without access to any support materials or assistance. Support may be an effective way of increasing the impact of this work though this was not specifically explored during the research. Consideration could be made to developing educational materials for Community Food Enterprises to use in their educational work.

5.12   The enterprises expressed frustration with knowing where to take queries about barriers. Given that removing unnecessary barriers is a Government priority, providing a single place to raise issues would encourage more dialogue with civil society bodies. The example used by some was the challenges that the planning systems cause them, but there was no place that they were aware of to raise issues. Making changes to the planning culture that exists in Local Authorities, through education and information provision, could help support Community Food Enterprises as a valued part of their communities.

5.13   Community Food Enterprises need business support and advice that is appropriate and specific to their size and requirements. There may be scope for Government to play a more active role in supporting intermediary organisations that are already providing support to Community Food Enterprises.

5.14   All of the enterprises said they recognised the value of collaboration in its different forms. Most types of collaboration are seen as positive, and many enterprises were already collaborating informally with others. However there are cultural and other barriers to increasing collaboration, for example the fear of losing connection to their founding purpose. Overcoming these barriers will be important for the size and scale of collaboration to increase.

5.15   All the enterprises surveyed had connections with support organisations, many of which maintained regular contact with Community Food Enterprises. Recognising the importance of this relationship could enable the Government to maintain contact with the enterprises in a cost-effective manner.

5.16   The Community Food Enterprises all have to compete with the multiple

retailers, who have vastly superior marketing resources. Helping them to find effective ways of getting their message across to potential customers would be of value. Enterprises were promoting their own services, but they often felt that policy makers could do more to openly support the benefits of local food.

5.17 The research showed that the work of Community Food Enterprises had a relevance to other Government Departments, but that they had no contact with them at present. Communicating the relevance of Community Food Enterprises to other Departments, and establishing good methods of communication, could be of benefit to both the development of Government policy and Community Food Enterprises.

5.18 There is an issue of policy language where there is normally a lag between policy formers deciding to use a phrase and its adoption by communities themselves. Governments (and opposition parties) will frequently change language to aid their communication (civil society for third sector, Big Society for mutualism, localism for area-based). Communities take time to understand and adopt such language and there is an interim period where such language can cause confusion or even cynicism. Policy formers need to find ways of communicating in a language which both works in policy circles and respects the current language used at grassroots.

5.19 This action research has demonstrated that Community Food Enterprises are a potentially rich area for informing Defra's policy development. It has highlighted the lack of comparable studies, and identified areas that warrant further study, in particular on developing robust data on the scale and nature of the sector, the role of Community Food Enterprises in local economic development, pro-environmental and other behaviour change, and how to foster increasing collaboration.