

GROWING COMMUNITIES' ANNUAL REPORT 2010/11



Transforming food and farming
through community-led trade

www.growingcommunities.org

Foreword by Julie Brown, Director, Growing Communities

It's time to write the annual report again – so it must be autumn. The season of mists and mellow fruitfulness turned into 'pew what a scorcher' earlier this month and that unseasonal hot spell was rapidly replaced by the tail end of a hurricane!

Oil, gas, electricity and food prices have continued to rise and – by the time this foreword is actually printed – we could see the global financial markets in free fall and the UK back in recession...

Forgive me if I sound a little too cheerful at the prospect – I don't mean to be – it just seems that the predicted 'perfect storm' of climate change, energy constraints and

economic volatility has actually arrived. We're in it.

And like most people, I fear recession. On the other hand, I also fear the pursuit of economic growth because it seems to me to be the engine driving environmental destruction and exploitation of the planet's resources. Perhaps it makes no difference which I fear most because I suspect that we're not going to be able to 'return to growth' – certainly not in the way our current economic system defines it – even if we wanted to.

While I do not mean to detract from the very real hardship that many people are going through at the moment, I also think that we need to

try and think about our situation a bit differently: if we are facing a slow (ish) but inevitable economic contraction, it makes sense to acknowledge and manage the process of having less. And to start thinking about how to use the money we do have to buy things that bring us more: to work out what's important to us and to invest in those things that bring added value into our lives.

This is not about 'talking us down' or suggesting we give up – quite the opposite. Because, while we may not be able to have more stuff, if we rise to this challenge, we might just be able to have more of lots of other good things: mutual support, connectedness, local jobs, sharing, space (once we share some of that stuff around), resourcefulness (less waste), self-reliance, protection of the environment, community.

And funnily enough, the next few pages are packed with more of all of these things.

The added benefits of the community-led trade carried out through the box scheme and the market shine through this report – benefits which are available to everyone in our community, but which are only given the opportunity to emerge because you continue to be a member of the box scheme or to shop at the farmers' market. So thank you.

Perhaps we may not be able to grow the economy but, together, we are growing community.

Julie Brown, November 2011

What you say about us

“Through involvement in the box scheme and coming to the farmers' market, I recognise more faces in the neighbourhood and have made new friends. I hadn't expected to, so thank you for these hidden and enjoyable extras!”

Member, September 2011

“I really love getting the Growing Communities veg bags, they've made me a more adventurous cook and introduced me to several vegetables I had never cooked or eaten before. I rave about the bags to my friends and have convinced at least one to sign up themselves!”

Member, autumn 2011

“When I changed my pick-up point from Stoke Newington to Clapton, the first week I went to pick it up the lady in the shop had given my bag to someone else. Growing Communities rang me straight away and offered to drop a veg bag round to me (in the rain!) and were very apologetic (even though it wasn't your fault!). Great response.”

Member, autumn 2011



Em Fitzgerald

Stoke Newington Farmers' Market at St Paul's Church, July 2011

What we've achieved in 2010/11

Over the past year we've been able to make new connections across our community and further afield – we have a new farmers' market site and four new box scheme pick-up points. We have also extended our work outside London by working with five community groups across the UK through our Start-Up Programme to help them set up community-led box schemes based on the Growing Communities model.

Here in Hackney, we continue to provide a key outlet through the box scheme and the farmers' market for 33 small-scale, local, organic producers and processors. The relative security of this income has been even more important to

these small producers over the last year as the recession hits and the economic pressures increase.

The box scheme now supplies fruit and vegetables to about 700 households in Hackney. We estimate that the box scheme and market combined provide sustainably produced food to around 3,500 people in our community every week. More than 1,200 bags of fruit and vegetables are packed each week – over 100 tonnes annually.

We now have 12 community pick-up points in the borough, which makes the scheme even more accessible to people across Hackney. Our new pick-ups



Martin Mackey harvesting kale at Ripple Farm in Kent



Emili Bendixen

“ One of the reasons why our customers love our milk is because they're actually making a connection with the farm the milk's coming from. ”

Steve Hook, Hook & Son

this year are the Dalston Eastern Curve Garden, Dalston Lane; Organic & Natural on Lower Clapton Road; Passing Clouds in Richmond Road and the Happy Kitchen café at London Fields.

This year's erratic weather and extreme temperatures again had major impacts on the farmers. Reduced yields and crop failures meant that the box scheme bought slightly less produce direct from farms and had to top up the bags with more veg from co-ops and wholesalers. Despite this, overall 85% of our veg came from the UK, slightly more than last year. Over the past year, 58% of the veg and 24% of the fruit in our bags came directly from local farms.

In July this year, Stoke Newington Farmers' market relocated to St Paul's Church on Stoke Newington High Street. We would like to thank Niall Weir, the vicar of St Paul's West Hackney, and his congregation for all their support.

The connection of the market to our local community is reflected in the fact that despite the economic downturn, which has affected retailers and supermarkets across the UK, local customers have continued to support the market and our small farmers and producers – the overall turnover for the producers at the market remains the same as last year at £430,000.

New farmers and producers at the market this year include: Hook & Son, a family-owned dairy in Sussex producing raw organic milk, butter, cream and buttermilk; Kate's Feast, a ready-to-go salad stall selling salads made from seasonal veg from farmers at the market; and a new cake stall, Flo's Neighbourhood Bakery. OrganicLea ran several seasonal stalls at the market selling organic fruit and vegetable plants.

The market's new location at St Paul's has also allowed us to make more of our existing links with North London Action for Homelessness who already use leftover bags from the box scheme to make meals for their weekly drop-ins. Farmers at the market are donating excess produce to NLAH on Saturdays



Em Fitzgerald

Salads from Kate's Feast

“ I'm really happy with Growing Communities salad! There's a fantastic mix of leaves which are bursting with flavour, and it keeps incredibly well. Regulars at the e5 bakehouse just can't get enough of it! ”

Ben MacKinnon, E5 Bakehouse

and the Open Door project, also based at the church, is now running a monthly fundraising event at the market.

Our grower Sara Davies and assistant grower Pip Bromley, along with apprentices and volunteers, produced a whopping 877kg of salad during the season from a growing area of 312m². This is equivalent to 28.1 tonnes per hectare per year. Add to this more than 500kg from the four microsites in our Patchwork Farm and we've harvested and packed over a tonne of Hackney grown salad since October 2010.

The high yields this year meant we could put salad in every veg bag on the scheme for six weeks in a row this summer. In fact, harvests were so plentiful that we were able to sell 250kg of the salad to various local restaurants and cafés, such as the Duke of Cambridge in Islington, the E5 Bakehouse in London Fields and Medcalf in Exmouth Market. Our salad was highly commended in the Soil Association Organic Food Awards 2011.

But despite the high yields and extra sales, our urban growing still doesn't cover its costs. We choose to subsidise it because of the additional benefits urban growing brings, but it reminds us just how hard it is for small farmers



Sara Davies

Apprentices (left to right) Jo, Shelagh and Julie packing salad with Pip

to make a decent living and fuels our commitment to them.

Our Patchwork Farm, which is training new growers and increasing the amount of organic salad produced in Hackney received a major funding award from the Big Lottery in April 2011. Over the year, we have trained four urban apprentices: Jack Cox, Shelagh Martin, Julie Porter and Jo Wilson. We have also opened two new Patchwork Farm micro-sites at Hackney Tree Nursery and St Michael and All Angels Church. Stephanie Irving who joined us as the Patchwork Farm Co-ordinator in April is working to find more sites which will be run by our graduate apprentices.

As part of our commitment to promoting knowledge we ran a programme of food-growing workshops over the growing season funded by Capital Growth. Almost 100 people participated.

Fiona McAllister and Helen Carey greatly expanded our schools education programme with funding from Awards

for All. As a result more than 1,200 schoolchildren from across Hackney learned more about growing, composting and where their food comes from. The feedback from the primary schools who took part has been very positive: several schools have gone on to set up their own food-growing sites. We are now trialling a programme for secondary schools.

We celebrated Apple Day last October at the market with Jim Arbury from RHS Wisley on hand to identify unusual varieties. Hackney Harvest's map of fruit trees and lots of apple games. In March this year Iain Learmonth from Stocks Farm gave a sausage-making demo at the market – which as well as being entertaining also explained the amount of work that goes into rearing pigs in a sustainable way.

Our Plant Swap at Springfield in May and Open Day at the market gardens in September allowed more people to explore the sites and find out more about organic growing. We had 500 visitors on the Open Day alone and in all, we had 1,100 visitors to the sites last year.

The Growing Communities' Start-Up Programme started in January 2011,



Em Fitzgerald

“ We had a great session with you. The children are still talking about it! We also harvested our first crop of lettuce from our school garden, which caused a stampede to the salad bar (some children who sit on a 'vulnerable' table were munching on salad leaves... amazing!) ”

Teacher, summer 2011

providing mentoring and an online tool kit for Burnley Cropshare; Lets Eat Local in Moffat, Scotland; Bite in Hulme, Manchester; Windmill Community Allotment Box Scheme in Margate; and Local Greens in Herne Hill, London.

All five groups launched their new box schemes over the summer and between them have already packed more than 2,000 bags of veg and support eight organic farmers and at least two regional wholesalers. The box schemes are signed up to following Growing Communities' key principles, which include a commitment to prioritising buying direct from local, small-scale growers. Overall, some 86% of the produce bought across the five schemes came from the UK with 64% coming direct from local farmers.

GROWING COMMUNITIES ACCOUNTS 2011

GROWING COMMUNITIES PROFIT AND LOSS ACCOUNT FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2011

	2011 (£)	2010 (£)
TURNOVER	447,910	394,510
Cost of Sales	<u>402,388</u>	<u>321,059</u>
GROSS PROFIT	45,523	73,451
Administrative expenses	<u>53,005</u>	<u>50,264</u>
OPERATING PROFIT	(7,483)	23,187
Interest receivable	228	292
(LOSS)/PROFIT ON ORDINARY ACTIVITIES BEFORE TAXATION	(7,255)	23,479
Tax of profit on ordinary activities	-	-
RETAINED (LOSS)/PROFIT FOR THE FINANCIAL YEAR	(7,255)	23,479
Balance brought forward	<u>155,161</u>	<u>131,682</u>
Balance carried forward	<u>147,906</u>	<u>155,161</u>

The most recent pick-ups to joint the box scheme (left to right): Passing Clouds on Richmond Road, Mother Earth at Newington Green, Dalston Eastern Curve Garden under the mural opposite Dalston Junction, Organic & Natural on Lower Clapton Road and Happy Kitchen in London Fields



GROWING COMMUNITIES BALANCE SHEET 31 MARCH 2011

	2011 £	2010 £
FIXED ASSETS		
Tangible assets	14,871	11,759
CURRENT ASSETS		
Debtors	32,171	11,610
Cash at bank and in hand	<u>157,918</u>	<u>156,461</u>
	190,089	168,071
CREDITORS: amounts falling due within one year	(57,053)	(24,669)
NET CURRENT ASSETS	133,036	143,402
TOTAL ASSETS LESS CURRENT LIABILITIES	147,907	155,161
CAPITAL AND RESERVES		
Profit and loss account	<u>147,907</u>	<u>155,161</u>
MEMBERS' FUNDS	147,907	155,161



TREASURER'S REPORT

2011 has been another successful year for Growing Communities. Income has continued to increase, being made up of:

	2011	2010
Box scheme	362,311	333,124
Café sales	12,441	14,111
Farmers' market	36,672	37,991
Other trading income	6,470	9,284
Expenditure offset by grant income*	30,016	-
Turnover	447,910	394,510

Box scheme sales have continued to increase this year, albeit at a slightly lower rate than in the past five financial years:

2011	2010	2009	2008	2007
9%	16%	28%	35%	27%

* Expenditure offset by grant income:

Overall £60,566 in grant income for projects was received for projects in the year; however £28,105 of this income was not recognised and was deferred until future years when it will be matched to expenditure. £1,911 was released to income from a grant received in previous years meaning that overall £30,016 was recognised as income in the current year.

The main element of the amounts not recognised and carried was the Tudor Trust grant of £25,000 which is due to offset potential bad debts arising from the loans issued to partner organisations as part of the Start-Up Programme. £17,470 of amounts owed by partner organisations are shown in debtors in the balance sheet (see left).

As only a very minor proportion of the grant income finances our core operations these remain largely self financing as in previous years. The organisation made a small operating loss (1.6% of turnover). However, this was planned and budgeted for and the organisation remains robust and sustainable financially, achieved without building up unnecessary reserves. Cash balances as seen on the balance sheet remain at similar levels to the prior year.

These financial statements were approved by the Board of Directors on 19 October 2011.





GROWING COMMUNITIES

Transforming food and farming through community-led trade

How do we feed urban communities in a sustainable way in the face of climate change, ecological crises and fossil fuel depletion? Growing Communities is a community-led organisation based in Hackney providing real alternatives to the current damaging food system.

The box scheme and market harness our community's collective buying power and direct it to farmers who are producing food in a sustainable way – allowing those small-scale farmers and producers who we feel are the basis of a sustainable agriculture system to thrive.

Growing Communities can only do what it does because of the energy and hard work put in by our staff, management committee and volunteers. We employ 20 part-time members of staff. They are Kwame Appau, Paul Bradbury, Pip Bromley, Julie Brown, Helen Carey, Marcus Cope, Nicole David, Nicki East, Phil England, Stephanie Irvine, Fiona McAllister, Amy McWeeney, Shelagh Martin, Giles Narang, Kerry Rankine, Ximena Ransom, Shelagh Martin, Tim Watts, Richenda Wilson and Alan Wilkinson, with extra support from Liz Brownless, Ebe Oke, Frank Newby and Maisie Kendall.

We believe that if we are to create the sustainable, re-localised food systems that will see us through the challenges ahead, we need to work together with communities and farmers to take our food system back from the supermarkets and agri-business. Over the past 15 years or so, we have created two main community-led trading outlets: an organic fruit and vegetable box scheme and the Stoke Newington Farmers' Market.

Growing Communities has also pioneered urban food growing and we produce salad for the box scheme on our small organic market gardens and micro-sites in Hackney.

We have launched a Start-Up Programme and are working with a number of groups who have set up community-led organic box schemes across the UK based on the Growing Communities model.

We said goodbye this year to Rachel Stevenson and Sara Davies (above). We want to thank Rachel for her stoic work in managing the GC office in her unflappable style. Thanks to Sara for her incredible work on the sites, not just in raising yields and launching the Patchwork Farm but also for being an inspiration to the apprentices and volunteers. Paul Bradbury is our new grower.

Our volunteer management committee are: Kath Dalmeny, Sarah Havard, Nick Perry, Nick Saltmarsh, Piers Vimpany and Penny Walker.

Over the year, 117 people volunteered on our sites. Special thanks to Sue Long, Precious Martini-Brown, James Cabbett, Doug Schwarz, Alice Roberts, Raymond Orsolyak, Francesca de Gasparis, Sherolyn Tramel, Martha Jackson, Ania Zymelka.

“I volunteered with GC along with other food-growing projects. This experience gave me lots of ideas for what I would like to do in the future. My plan is to set up a food-growing project and I am keen to use the Growing Communities model as I was really impressed by the organisation. I went on to work on an organic farm to gain more growing experience and now am undergoing social enterprise training.”

Growing Communities volunteer, October 2011



Our urban market garden in Springfield Park