

# GROWING COMMUNITIES IMPACT REPORT & ACCOUNTS 2021/22



# WELCOME TO GC'S 2022 IMPACT REPORT

**“Nowadays people know the price of everything  
and the value of nothing.”**

**OSCAR WILDE, THE PICTURE OF DORIAN GRAY**



Julie Brown with former Better Food Traders project leader Natasha Soares, conducting their own plant-based bushtucker trial - to decide whether tomato-leaf pesto might be the new superfood the world has been waiting for (probably not).

We are facing hard times: what with the climate emergency, the cost of living crisis and Matt Hancock being on *I'm a Celebrity*.

Thankfully, the latter at least will be over by the time you read this, but I'm distinctly less certain – nay fearful – that as we move through what is going to be a difficult year for all of us (and for some of us more than others), that many will start to view the food we get from the veg scheme and the farmers' market not as a necessity (we all need to eat after all) but as a luxury, an extravagance, an indulgence that we can cut off our list of expenses.

Unlike the 'people' in Oscar Wilde's quote, here at GC we do know the value of the food we sell through the veg scheme and the market. Our annual review last year showed that [for every pound you spend via Growing Communities you create at least £3.70 of value to your health, your community and the environment](#).

I say 'at least' because some of the environmental benefits were hard to quantify through that kind of analysis. Some parts of GC's work were not included in the study: the volunteer and trainee programmes, the additional benefits generated via the Better Food

**“While buying this veg  
might not guarantee  
you a place in heaven, it  
is certainly one of the  
most useful investments  
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collective future.”**



Shed and the [Better Food Traders](#) network that we also set up and run.

And while we know this food might not be the cheapest (and it isn't always the most convenient or easy to cook with if you're feeling tired or uninspired) it is without doubt the **best possible value for your money**.

Moreover, none of it goes to waste. We distribute any food that is surplus or left at collection points to good causes and you can actively and easily choose to share your food with others less fortunate by donating to the [food credit scheme](#) when you take a break from the veg scheme.

And in terms of it being an indulgence – well, as a lapsed Catholic, I can pretty much say that while buying this veg might not guarantee you a place in heaven, it is certainly one of the most useful investments you can make in our collective future – a future that there is still just about time to make more heaven than hell on earth. Simply look

through the pages of this report if you need more convincing about the impact of your investment and the change that you are contributing towards.

According to the latest [Emissions Gap Report](#) released in the run-up to Cop 27 (which will have finished by the time you read this), “there is no credible pathway to 1.5°C in place”. The UNEP report said that the only way to limit the worst aspects of the climate crisis is a “rapid transformation of societies”.

What GC is doing, albeit on a small scale, is absolutely part of the transformational change needed.

And each of you is a crucial part of that.

In the tricky months ahead, please keep seeing this food as the necessity it is. For those of us that still have choices, this is a way we can make sure those food choices really count. Thank you.

**Julie Brown, Director  
November 2022**



**This year, Growing Communities' annual review is all about your impact. It highlights what you have achieved and enabled by shopping with and supporting GC. You're amazing.**

## **YOU BOUGHT...**

**76,577**  
**fruit and veg bags**

Growing Communities packed and delivered over 75,000 bags to collection points in the year to 30 September 2022. Crop Drop packed many thousands more before merging into GC at the end of August.



**£754,713**  
**direct to market producers**

When you shop at the farmers' market your money goes direct to the farmers and producers who grow and make your food. It's a lifeline for them.

**8,500**  
**people fed**

You tell us that you share the food you buy with at least one other person on average, so we reckon this many people in and around Hackney were nourished by food from GC last year.

## **YOU ATE...**

**5.44**  
**portions of your five-a-day**

As members of the veg scheme, you munched through a healthy amount of fruit and vegetables every day. This puts you way ahead of the general population, where just 33% of adults and 12% of children eat five portions of fruit and veg a day ([Peas Please Veg Facts 2021](#)).

**160**  
**types of fruit and veg**

You adventurous folk ate your way through the seasons, embracing everything from apples and asparagus to watermelon and wild garlic, and learned to embrace kalettes, kohlrabi and komatsuna along the way.

**8,320**  
**bags of Hackney-grown salad**

And lots of tomatoes, cucumbers, beans, chard, kale and basil grown on GC's Dagenham Farm, which celebrated its tenth birthday this year.



## YOU SAVED...



**67,000**  
miles of transport

Almost all of you (97%) collect your weekly veg bags on foot or by bike. Between you all, you cover more than 1,320 miles a week. In a year, that adds up to the equivalent of going round the world more than twice - with zero emissions! Healthy for you and great for the planet. GC delivers to five of the collection points by bike and we're planning to switch all your deliveries to zero emissions in 2023.

**250,000+**  
pieces of plastic packaging

All organic produce sold through supermarkets has to be wrapped to keep it separate from non-organic food. GC delivers your fruit and veg loose, bunched or in paper whenever we can do that without compromising quality and freshness. This saves hundreds of thousands of plastic bags, wraps and punnets every year.

**1,000+**  
tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub>

A third of veg scheme members and a quarter of market customers are vegetarian or vegan, compared with around 10% across the UK. Shifting towards a plant-based diet is one of the most significant changes you can make to reduce your individual carbon, water and ecological footprints.

## YOU DIRECTLY SUPPORTED...

**25**  
veg scheme farmers

And 20 farmers and producers at the market. A new supplier to the veg scheme this year was [Sitopia Farm](#), a new ultra-local, peri-urban farm in south-east London. Metske from [Bore Place Market Garden](#) in Kent joined us to sell vegetables at the farmers' market this summer, alongside week-in week-out stalwarts [Ripple Farm](#), [Wild Country](#) and [Petersons Farm](#).

**86%**  
UK-grown veg

A huge proportion of vegetables sold through the fruit and veg scheme was grown by UK farmers, along with 36% of the fruit. [Defra figures](#) show that across the UK as a whole, just 57% of veg and 15% of fruit eaten last year was grown on UK farms and orchards.

**36**  
good jobs at GC

GC is a [Real Living Wage](#) employer, so the people that pack and deliver your bags earned a minimum of £11.39 an hour, compared with the UK Minimum Wage of £9.50. The highest-paid person at GC earned less than twice as much as the lowest. In contrast, Sainsbury's chief executive [Simon Roberts](#) [earned £3.8m last year](#), 200 times as much as his lowest paid employee.

GC  
lowest  
pay

GC  
highest  
pay

Sainsbury's  
lowest  
pay

Sainsbury's  
highest  
pay



# YOU GAVE BACK...

## £11,868 to the Food Credit Scheme

You donated the value of 1,099 bags of fruit and veg when you went on holiday. We spent this on crates of fruit and veg for the Foodbank in Hackney. Leftover bags and surplus from the pack went to several other charities including Martha House in Tottenham and NLAH in Stoke Newington. Crop Droppers' extra weekly donations are helping to fund discounted bags for those who need them.

## 48,258 bags in Hackney

Every time you return a plastic or fabric carrier bag to your collection point, you save a new recycled bag from going into circulation. As well as Hackney bag returns, those of you who were part of Crop Drop returned many thousands more.



## 1,454 Hackney volunteer hours

The incredible volunteer team spent nearly the equivalent of a full working year helping Sophie on the sites in Hackney. Volunteer [Millie Sandy](#) created a beautiful installation for the open day at our Clissold Park market garden, inspired by the many Hackney growing sites she visited. ➡➡

**“Each volunteering session I have attended has reinvented my opinion of the importance of being in an outside space - always positive and always joyous and always slightly different. It’s here that I discovered how mindful and mindless the act of harvesting can be. You’re instantly brought back down to earth when exposed to the sweet damp aroma of soil and calmed by the sound and smell of watering the sorrel.”**

**“PLACES WHERE PEOPLE GROW”  
MILLIE SANDY, ARTIST, WRITER &  
SPRINGFIELD VOLUNTEER**



Art: Millie Sandy. Photo: Curtis Connor @connecurt



# YOU'RE PART OF A NEW FOOD MOVEMENT

## BETTER FOOD TRADERS

The [network of retailers](#) that put people and planet before profit continues to gain momentum - as well as gaining a new project leader this year, Julia Kirby-Smith. At the end of September, the 63 traders in the network included veg schemes, grocers, community-supported agriculture (CSA) schemes, community farms and farm shops. Between them they fed 37,471 households from Penzance in Cornwall to Fife in Scotland.

## BETTER FOOD SHED

The wholesaler set up by GC to connect farmers from around London with the city's small shops and veg schemes has continued to thrive. It delivered over £1 million worth of fruit and veg from 20 farmers over the year, with half of those deliveries by electric van.

## BRIDGING THE GAP

This year GC joined [Sustain](#) (the alliance for food and farming), [Alexandra Rose Charity](#) and other organisations from the good food movement in an ambitious [project intended to bring healthy, planet-friendly, affordable food to communities on low incomes and those experiencing health inequalities](#).

As well as providing strategic input to the National Lottery-funded programme, GC will be designing and running an exciting pilot project on community procurement, channelling good food from local farmers to community food projects in London.



**“Stokey market is special. The market lives its values: a leader in the organic food movement, a true partner to the diverse communities it serves, social enterprise, affordable and they care... Everyone I've ever met from GC has made it clear that all the traders matter, the visitors matter and the environment matters. And when an organisation is true to its values, you can feel it.”**

**ANTHONY FERGUSON,  
NIKO B CHOCOLATES**

Nikolas Bahari (Niko B) has been coming to the market since he was a toddler and his dad Anthony (above) started selling chocolates there in 2009. Nikolas is now serving those chocolates himself. ➡➡



## GROWING COMMUNITIES ACCOUNTS 2022

### INCOME STATEMENT FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2022

	2022 (£)	2021 (£)
TURNOVER	<b>2,159,462</b>	2,156,711
Cost of Sales	<b>2,078,929</b>	1,935,725
GROSS PROFIT	<b>80,533</b>	220,986
Administrative expenses	<b>106,633</b>	139,529
	<b>(26,100)</b>	81,457
Other operating income	<b>3,657</b>	
OPERATING PROFIT	<b>(22,443)</b>	81,457
Interest receivable	<b>154</b>	446
(LOSS)/PROFIT BEFORE TAXATION	<b>(22,289)</b>	81,903
Tax on (loss)/profit	-	-
(LOSS)/PROFIT FOR THE FINANCIAL YEAR	<b>(22,289)</b>	81,903

**“We consider ourselves lucky to live in an area where it is (and remains, post Crop Drop) available! Thank you for all your hard and inspired work.”**

**ANON, VEG SCHEME SURVEY, 2022**

## BALANCE SHEET 31 MARCH 2022

	2022 (£)	2021 (£)
FIXED ASSETS		
Tangible assets	<b>73,782</b>	12,405
CURRENT ASSETS		
Debtors	<b>56,422</b>	67,386
Cash at bank and in hand	<b>290,977</b>	439,969
	<b>347,399</b>	507,355
CREDITORS: amounts falling due within one year	<b>(133,341)</b>	(200,679)
NET CURRENT ASSETS	<b>214,058</b>	306,676
TOTAL ASSETS LESS CURRENT LIABILITIES	<b>287,840</b>	319,081
CAPITAL AND RESERVES		
Retained earnings	<b>242,402</b>	273,643
Other reserves	<b>45,438</b>	45,438
MEMBERS' FUNDS	<b>287,840</b>	319,081

**“A great place to shop is the weekend farmers' market at St Paul's Church with small sustainable farmers and growers selling excellent produce.”**

**ROSE ENGLAND (@ROSEENGLANDLONDON) IN THE EVENING STANDARD**



## TREASURER'S REPORT FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2022

The year to March 2022 was stable in terms of finances for Growing Communities, but we did not see the growth that we have witnessed in previous years. There have been quite significant changes in buying habits at the end of the pandemic and this has been reflected in the numbers across both the box scheme and the Better Food Shed. Notwithstanding this, GC's overall income was £2.2m, which is the highest it has been. Given the competitive and economic landscape, this further demonstrates the continued financial sustainability of the organisation.

The approach of the team and the Board has been to retain sufficient reserves to weather financial bumps as they occur. But we also invest any excess above this amount in projects to further the aims of Growing Communities. This year we invested in our first electric van, which was a key milestone to move towards even more sustainable delivery methods. Overall, there was a £22k loss generated in the year. This was a planned loss and reflects the investments outlined above. We remain in a strong position, with net reserves of £287k and cash of £290k.

	£ 2020/21	2021/22
Veg scheme/Better Food Shed	1,900,402	1,935,840
Farmers' market	54,451	63,566
Urban market gardens	8,507	9,283
Dagenham Farm sales	30,088	38,609
Grant income and other	163,173	112,164
Total	2,156,711	2,159,462

## HOW TO INCREASE YOUR IMPACT

### KEEP SHOPPING

By buying weekly fruit and veg bags and shopping at the farmers' market, you are supporting the type of local, regenerative farming we desperately need if we are to survive the challenges ahead. So keep buying and eating the good stuff. Keep ordering those bags (order a bigger one!), munching that climate-friendly food, developing your kitchen skills and embracing what each season has to offer.



### SHARE ON SOCIAL MEDIA

Join the conversation with GC on [Instagram](#), [Facebook](#) or [Twitter](#). Show us what you have made with the food you've bought. Tell us your favourite recipes. Let us know if there's an event or a group of interesting folk changing the world in ways that you think we should know about.

### TELL A FRIEND

Pass on a flyer. Talk to your friends and family about the food choices you make and why they matter. Invite them to discover if there's a [Better Food Trader](#) near where they live.

### VOLUNTEER

Come and get your hands dirty in our [Hackney market gardens](#). Enjoy physical activity, good company and the chance to slow down, feast your senses and travel to the heart of where your food comes from.

# THANK YOU FROM ALL OF US

Behind the cabbages, cupboards and campaigns, there's a committed and hardworking band of GC staff, Board members, freelancers, patchwork growers and volunteers. Our staff and freelancers are Ailbhe Murphy, Alex Bloomer, Alex Tugume, Alice Holden, Ashlea Wane, Bren Bedson, Cath Goldstein, Chris Murphy, Danny Fisher, David King, Dave North, Dee Pascal, DeeDee Aitken, Denise McNeill, Dominic Stewart-Barton, Ellie Virk, Emily Vanns, Georgina Sutton, Hattie Hammans, Helen Bredin, Ian Atkins, Jo Barber, Johanna Valeur, Julia Kirby-Smith, Julie Brown, Kate Ford, Katy Barker, Kerry Rankine, Kwame Appau, Kyra Hanson, Maddy Hartley-Salim, Mark Courtney, Matt Moore, Michael Nutley, Natasha Soares, Nick Putz, Nicki East, Nicole David, Noah Birksted-Breen, Paul Harriss, Paul Kirby, Rachel Stevenson, Rebecca Page, Richenda Wilson, Sadegh Aleahmad, Sam Brooke, Shelagh Martin, Sophie Verhagen, Ursula Russell, Val Gwyther and Zosia Walczak.

The patchwork farmers are Dee, Jack and Suzy. This year's trainee in Hackney and Dagenham was Amber Baker. Thanks also to all the Zedify bike riders who have helped deliver your bags this year and Michael Calwell of Boxmaster.

Our volunteer Board members are: Sarah Havard (chair), Richard Dana (treasurer), Amanda McDonell, Geraldine Gilbert, Kath Dalmeny and Natalie Silk.

Special thanks go to Dewi, Elena, Imogen, Joanne, Julie, Lucy, Mat, Petra, Rachel, Rona and Xuying for regular volunteering in Hackney and to Damon for valuable site repairs. At Dagenham, we're very grateful to Dave and Cal for their support and kindness.

Huge gratitude to Rachel Dring for seven years of mouthwatering recipes, action-packed newsletters, marketing innovations and tasty office snacks. Also to Natasha Soares, who calmly and expertly steered the Better Food Traders network to the thriving 60+ strong community it is now. Thanks also to Sarah Warren for keeping our systems shipshape during Katy's maternity leave and to Ambreen Raja and Bren Bedson for ensuring we have a roof over our head (most of the time!) at the Old Fire Station in N16.

Some of the GC, Better Food Shed and Better Food Traders teams at Dagenham Farm ➡





Growing Communities is reshaping the food and farming systems that feed us so they work better for us, our community and our planet.

Our organic fruit and vegetable scheme and our farmers' market provide fairer, more secure markets for the farmers and producers who are the foundation of a sustainable agriculture system.

We produce fantastic local salad, fruit, herbs and veg – and new food growers – on our pioneering urban farms in Hackney and Dagenham.

Our wholesale arm, the Better Food Shed, connects agroecological farms with local routes to market, while the Better Food Trader network supports ethical retailers to change the food system together.

We also consider the bigger picture and work to create wider change; articulating our vision and advocating in support of our aims.

**[WWW.GROWINGCOMMUNITIES.ORG](http://WWW.GROWINGCOMMUNITIES.ORG)**

