SUSTAINABLE FOOD AND DRINK GROUP (SFADG) UPDATE – DECEMBER 2023

COP28: UAE Declaration on Sustainable Agriculture, Resilient Food Systems and Climate Action (4th Dec) seems have been broadly welcomed and has been signed by 134 nations. It is short and can be read in plain English here. It is the first time that agriculture and food systems have been included in the COP talks, but is progress stalling? Read more here.

At SUSTAIN'S AGM on 8th Dec, Lord Deben, who stepped down as chair of the Climate Change Committee in July after 11 years, gave a recorded message saying that action on climate is vital, government policies will not reach net zero by 2050 and this government is backtracking on environmental commitments. The role of soils is central. He said that soils and animals need to be treated with respect and farming needs to be integrated with nature. Currently, we are depleting and poisoning soils: losing fertility and biodiversity, and that the UK does not have enough trees. The Environmental Land Management scheme has been so vague that farmers have been unable to make decisions. The government are failing to address obesity and the broken food system. A vision for climate change, health and agricultural resilience is required starting where Henry Dimbleby left off (in the National Food Strategy). The future of food is either sustainable or there isn't one.

PLANET EARTH: Sir David Attenborough showcases vast, intensive, agricultural monocultures whilst talking about plant-based diets. I'm not sure who is advising him on food and farming. Ade Adepitan, on Channel 4, has taken it upon himself to try to stop people eating beef and swap to chicken or pork. However, a UN report indicates that efforts are underway to develop metrics that account for nutrient density when measuring the impacts of different foods, rather than the emissions per kilogram of product, and this may present a different picture with respect to dietary recommendations for planetary health (and in UK, beef and lamb which are mainly fed on grass score better than chicken and pork when nutrient density is measured). The UN/Food Climate Research Network recommend a diverse diet.

WATCH: In this webinar, Pasture for Life discusses the nutritional benefits of pasture based meat with two globally renowned experts: Alice Stanton, professor of cardiovascular pharmacology at the Royal College of Surgeons and Dr. Stephan van Vliet, a nutrition scientist studying the effects of food and physical activity on human health at Utah State University. [This is an important watch whatever your dietary preference.]

SUSTAINABLE FOOD CONFERENCE: Somerset plans for 2024 – this looks exciting. The Context is interesting to read – see here.

TURNIPS: Nigel Gerdes was chatting with the shop-owner while buying veg in the Shambles this morning. He was buying turnips for a stew. Graham told him that nobody under 60 years old buys turnips and younger folk think they are food for cattle. Demand is so low that he cannot find a grower in the UK and his turnips come from France. Very nice they are too in a good winter stew.

ECO:FEST: Good conversations on the SFADG stand. Great Bread Art: see pics here

HAPPY CHRISTMAS and THANKS TO FARMERS, PRODUCERS, RETAILERS AND HOSPITALITY OWNERS and STAFF for providing lovely food and drink