CFBoA SUSTAINABLE FOOD AND DRINK GROUP (SFADG) update – November 2024

1. **GOOD NEWS:**
   NEW - THE WILTSHIRE MARQUE AND LOCAL FOOD WEBSITE AND DIRECTORY have been launched by Wiltshire Council – see **here.** A CFBoA proposal for such an initiative was put to a WC meeting on 21st July 2020 (**here**, pp.6-8). It is great news that this is now up and running. Many of our BoA businesses should meet the eligibility criteria and GrownGreen@HartleyFarm has led the way. Ask the businesses you use if they will be signing up. Let's get BoA fully represented on the map and make it a useful resource for shoppers, diners, visitors and businesses.
2. **SFADG MEETING** We had a good turn out for this meeting on 22nd October.
   Speakers:
   David Robinson, **Head Gardener at the Walled Garden at Woolley Grange Hotel.** David manages 14 acres with the help of 2.5 other gardeners and 4 volunteers. Claire, the General Manager for the last 14 years, does not want pesticides or herbicides on the site, so he was off to a good start, and Jon, the Head Chef, is keen on nutrient content and flavour. Jon may have some specific requests for the kitchen, but will also use whatever David and team can produce with the seasons. David clearly enjoys the educative work with hotel guests that the job involves, especially with the children. (See further down for useful links from David.)
   Jonathan Francis, Avonleigh Orchards, gave feedback on the recent **Bath Community Convention: Growing Our Local Food System.**
   Around 70 people came together from across the local community for a day of connection, reflection, learning and sharing about how we can together develop a re-localised, fair, nature-restoring food system.
   This was clearly a day packed with interest and Jonathan shared many points of interest with us eg the Pantry in Bath takes fresh produce and is sold for 20% of the regular price; Grow for Life scheme which helps people growing in their own garden ; Keynsham Growing in the Park scheme; the Urban Agriculture Consortium; volunteer sharing; BANES Food Strategy; Community kitchen; *We Are Avon* - the Bath river bioregion group which Jonathan finds very supportive.
   The **post-meeting summaries** sent out by the organisers, Bath Area Growers, including slides from the talks, were kindly forwarded to me by Juliette Pollard, Transition Bath. She says "Please share with anyone in your group who may be interested in seeing this, and anyone who would be willing to contribute to the network mapping. So, please contact Ros at climatechampions@gmail.com if you would like the meeting summaries to be forwarded to you..
3. **MEETING WITH MP** Some representatives from CFBoA had an opportunity to put up to three questions to Brian Mathew, MP, on the 12th October. My questions on food and farming are **here**. Brian has a background as an agricultural engineer and his work has included working with Water Aid in Africa. So he definitely has an interest in agricultural matters and 'Good Food for All'.

4. **CHOOSING SEASONAL FRUIT AND VEG** - see **here** for a season to season guide compiled by Riverford Organics and the Soil Association. For our Trowbridge Apple Festival display, I made their lists into posters, see **here**. Print off, if you wish, and have the list of seasonal fruit and veg for the current season close at hand, or on your fridge door
5. **SHOULD WE BE FARMING IN THE DESERT?** I found this article, posted in the Sustainable Food Trust daily update, very interesting.
6. **PLANET-FRIENDLY FOOD: WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW BEFORE YOUR NEXT GROCERY SHOP:** How farmers are fighting climate change one field at a time. This Good Housekeeping article has good information on the state of the UK harvest (from Defra) and regenerative farming, including from Vicki Hird, strategic lead, agriculture, at The Wildlife Trusts - see **here**
7. **THE FIRST GENE-EDITED WHEAT HAS BEEN HARVESTED FROM TRIALS IN THE UK** according to a report in the Farmers Weekly on 25 August 2024, saying it marks a significant step "towards full commercialisation of such crops in England… the three cereal varieties being trialled are a wheat bred for superior baking, toasting and processing properties, another with bigger grain, and a barley aimed at lowering livestock methane production… England is the only country in Europe that allows gene-edited material to be grown in farmers' fields." This Defra project is costing £2.2m of public money over 3 years. "Gene-edited wheat and barley varieties are expected to be grown on commercial farms in England as early as 2026" The founder of the organisation leading the project, Bofin, said that the project is "incredibly important" and that there is a need to produce more food with fewer resources and less impact on the environment, On the other hand, the director of Beyond GM, said that "stubborn questions around transparency, monitoring and actual need remain". See also Beyond GM article, **UK government raises the GMO stakes: open trials of gene edited crops** (Oct 10th 2024) **here**. It includes their areas of concern, a list and contacts, if you wish to write to the Secretary of State, Farming Minister, food and farming spokespeople in other parties, your MP, or any of the big supermarkets with any questions or concerns. **This is important** as the legislation removing regulatory controls and paving the way for widespread use of gene technology in our farming and food production was pushed through under recent Conservative administrations "under cover of darkness" according to Baroness Barbara Young.
8. **NEXT SFADG MEETING** will be in the New Year (date to be confirmed) when we will be continuing our review of local growing.
9. **LIKE TO TRY A SLOW COOKER, PRESSURE COOKER OR AIR FRYER?** See **here** for details of the short-term loan scheme, set up by the TC and CFB. Then click link if you would like to add your name to the list.
   We're delighted to hear that this loan scheme is successful in enabling people to make an informed decision as to whether these cooking appliances suit their needs or not.

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From David Robinson, Head Gardener, Woolley Grange Hotel:

Thanks for inviting me to talk at the meeting last night. It was great to meet such passionate individuals working to make our locality better.

Here are a couple of links to easy to access items, which tell essential stories:

- https://youtu.be/OiLITHMVcRw?si=uKtHgvV0zNPGSaBB -5minute you tube video about soil great for kids
- https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/m001lyrn- 30minute radio 4 show underpinning the above

The Apps I really value are:-

- https://apps.apple.com/gb/app/seek-by-inaturalist/id1353224144 - great for kids
- https://apps.apple.com/gb/app/inaturalist/id421397028 - the adult version of Seek, citizen science project supported by the National Geographic to document nature globally
- https://apps.apple.com/gb/app/treezilla/id1487537492 - Treezilla another citizen science project mapping & valuing the trees of the UK. It suddenly makes you realise all the things a tree does in the landscape & then helps understand the difference between them & the need for more of them.

Lastly, here is the podcast which explains simply how we can make a difference. It's very topical & underpins much that you are already doing & crucially gives hope:-

The episode is Gardening for a greener Future & is the third down in the list https://www.rhs.org.uk/about-us/what-we-do/publications/podcasts

Hope you find these useful. (David)

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Ros Edwards