Climate Friendly Bradford on Avon

SUSTAINABLE FOOD AND DRINK GROUP (SFADG)

Update – August 2026

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1. Wildfire prevention requires 'nature-based solutions'

Watch this very interesting, short interview with Alexander Held, Senior Expert of the Resilience Programme for Integrated Fire Management at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OtNvQK9eKuc

"Held explains how Europe's escalating wildfire crisis is exposing the limits of a response model built around emergency suppression rather than long-term resilience… Climate change may intensify the conditions for extreme fires, yet the scale and destructiveness of these events are also shaped by decades of land abandonment, fuel accumulation, changing agricultural practices, and political incentives that favour highly visible emergency responses over less visible preventive measures.'

(France 24 on Aug 4, 2026 #Wildfires #ClimateChange #France)

Heid talks about the need to accept that there will always be wildfires and asks "What can we influence?" In Germany there are early warning and response systems. The fires have been fuelled by the availability of biomass. The toolbox for reducing the ferocity and extent of the fires includes:

- rewetting
- grazing
- controlled burning
- nature friendly forestry
- organic and small-scale farming.

Throughout much of Europe there has been abandonment of upland farming which helped to keep the biomass under control. Held says thousands more shepherds are needed.

Heid questions whether, or not, tourism is supporting local production and farming, which helps to keep uplands populated and land managed.

- A farmer from Herefordshire interviewed on Radio 4's Today programme in the last week about the wildfires talked about the urgent need to improve the capacity of agricultural soils to store water, which increases the land's resilience to both drought and flooding, and the ability to filter water, thereby replenishing ground water.
- Groundswell's Principles of Regenerative Farming are here https://fixourfood.org/groundswell-insights-principles-and-tech-for-regenerative-agriculture/
- A report from the British Ecological Society in April 2025 has confirmed the key role that regenerative agriculture will play within farming. The report, titled 'Regenerative Agriculture in the UK: An ecological perspective', finds there is strong evidence that soil health and biodiversity can improve under regenerative agricultural practices.

Dr Roy Neilson, soil ecologist at the James Hutton Institute and lead author on the report said: “There are five principles of regenerative agriculture but there’s no one principle that delivers clear change on its own. “To achieve meaningful change requires a good understanding of the context of the farming system, when possible, multiple principles ideally need to be adopted.”

Of the core principles of regenerative farming – minimising soil disturbance, minimising bare soil, increasing on farm diversity, integrating livestock, and favouring nature-based methods over synthetic inputs – the report finds the strongest evidence of benefits from minimising bare soil.

Keeping roots in the ground year-round, through practices like cover crops, can increase soil organic matter, improve soil structure, improve nutrient availability, and increase biodiversity.

The report also finds good evidence that integrating livestock into arable land benefits weed, disease, and pest suppression.

Despite the prominence of a no-till and minimum-till approach as a key regenerative agriculture practice, the report finds weaker evidence for the benefits associated with this.

While a whole systems approach achieves the biggest impacts, the report authors warn that this should not discourage farmers from taking up just a few approaches.

Dr Lucie Buchi, a researcher in crop and weed ecology at The Natural Resources Institute of the University of Greenwich, is the lead author on the report. Dr Buchi explained: “Moving from one farming system to another is complex, difficult, and risky… yield loss is a major concern for farmers thinking of transitioning to regenerative agriculture. The report finds some evidence that initial yield reductions when transitioning may reduce or even reverse over the longer term through enhanced biodiversity and ecosystem services. However, this has the added benefits of reducing reliance on external inputs and improved soil health. But the evidence for this is variable, and realising these potential benefits takes time. A greater understanding of these impacts requires long-term experiments. The report also warns that during a transition period of three to six years, there is a need for careful management to prevent issues like competitive weeds and pests.
(All of the above, in this bullet point, is taken from the summary by Agriland News Correspondent, Richard Halleron)

2. Climate Action Fund – Food Systems Potential for major funding application for BoA and beyond was discussed at the SFADG meeting on12th August. Thanks to Helen Taylor for chairing this meeting.
Caroline Le Quesne, Engagement and Partnership Lead, Wiltshire Council, led us through the terms of the application. See Climate Action Fund - Food Systems | The National Lottery Community Fund.
Some great ideas were sent in for discussion. The feasibility of applying for a grant of this scale in this area will need much further consideration.
The Climate Action Fund aims to support systems change through support for agroecology (which works with nature to create resilient, sustainable and equitable food systems). It draws on a book by Colin Tudge *Good for Everyone Forever*, which was written on behalf of the Campaign for Real Farming. In 2010, Tudge and his wife, Ruth, and the

agricultural writer Graham Harvey, set up the wonderful Oxford Real Farming Conference, which takes place in January each year.

3. Pear Tree Community Farm – request planning support for a new fruit and veg growing site - closes 27th August – see https://www.peartreecommunityfarm.org/latest-news/
Elli Bate says "I'm writing because, excitingly, we have now submitted our planning application for Pear Tree Community Farm to Wiltshire Council, and we would be very grateful if you (and anyone else in Climate Friendly Bradford) felt able to add a comment in support on their portal."

4. 3rd Community Farmer Day 2026 at Avonleigh Orchards (free event)
Saturday 29th August, 9:30am – 4pm
A fun-filled day tending the crops and feasting on the farm! Celebrate local fruit and vegetable farming!



Jonathan says
This is the 3rd 'Be a Farmer for the Day' Community event of the summer. They have been great and if you didn't manage to make the last two, don't worry this one is going to be the best.
The event is open to all and we are designing the day to be family friendly.



There will be the opportunity to do some juicing and take fresh apple/grape juice home!

The event includes a Community Feast based on vegetables grown on the farm and prepared by our skilled chefs and volunteers)

We have the farm marquee, picnic benches and facilities that will allow us to host this event and we are grateful for the funding from Wiltshire Area Board and the support of Climate Friendly Bradford that has enabled these events to happen.

Find out more and book a place for this free event here https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/3rd-community-farmer-day-2026-tickets-1989615816466?aff=oddtdtcreator

5. Jamie's Farm at Lower Shockerwick (near Box) are having an **Open Day** on **Saturday 5th September 11- 3pm.**
Click here for details and to register to attend. Thanks to Kate Nottage for sending this in –

> From Jamie's Farm:
>
> Not only a working farm but also a charitable enterprise supporting mental health in young people. Jamie's Farm enables school children from inner city schools to be immersed in farm life, alongside highly professional counselling. Only a week living on the farm produces remarkable improvement in the teenagers' mental and physical health. They now have seven farms in various locations across the UK, having started in Ditteridge (near Box and Corsham).

jamiesfarm.org.uk



July 2026 [This is an extract from their newsletter]

Summer is well and truly here at Jamie's Farm, marked by the long, hot and dry periods which increasingly are becoming a feature of British summers. The question is now when the drought will come, not if; but through the regenerative practices we've established over the past few years, our farming teams continue to meet the challenges these conditions bring.

Stocks of silage are ready to feed our animals for the months ahead, and in fields where we have planted herbal leys, the animals are enjoying grazing on greener land, rich and diverse in chicory and clover. Deeper roots mean greater resilience in these tough conditions. Year on year, through summer drought and wetter winters, we're increasingly seeing the benefit of these regenerative methods, and we will continue to increase planting and diversification of our pastures across all our farms.

…..Nature recovery at Skipton (the most recent farm acquisition) is taking shape. Once drained for agriculture, 6 hectares of land have been transformed into wetlands, ponds and meandering streams, restoring natural water flows and creating space for wildlife to return. Already, otters, wading birds, dragonflies and other species are benefiting from this beautiful, thriving new habitat.

6. Bradford on Avon Flower & Produce Show 2026 Saturday 5th September
https://bradfordonavontowncouncil.gov.uk/bradford-on-avon-flower-produce-show-2026/

7. Fresh veg boxes to the Food Bank – Feedback
Jonathan Francis, Avonleigh Orchards, and Kate Collyns, Grown Green @ Hartley Farm, are jointly providing fresh veg boxes for Food Bank clients on the 5-month pilot scheme, funded by the Area Board described in item 1 of the March newsletter – see https://climatefriendlybradfordonavon.co.uk/sfadg-march-2026-update/
Cathy Hearn, Hub manager says: "The veg boxes are such a hit with our clients and are working a treat. They are so well received and appreciated. Thank you as always for CFBoA's continued support of the Hub."

ENJOY GOOD FOOD AND DRINK

If you wish to be on the SFADG circulation list, please contact Ros Edwards at climatechampions@gmail.com