



Growing Urban Agriculture in Cork: Can Cork be a greener, healthier and more abundant food producing city?

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COST-Action Urban Agriculture Europe



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The enthusiasm and energy in Cork for looking at food issues is apparent in both individuals, voluntary groups, Cork Food Policy Council and within the public sector. Despite difficult financial constraints, there is an appetite for working together to find practical ways of making Cork a healthier, greener and more productive city. There are great examples of food growing and community gardening in the city, and this report has provided an opportunity to look at the potential to move this forward in a more joined up way.

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1. Introduction

1.1. This brief report was compiled following a 'rapid appraisal' over two weeks in November 2015, with the aim of exploring opportunities to establish and maintain a cross city network of food growing within Cork, Republic of Ireland. It was carried out as a 'short term scientific mission' funded by COST Urban Agriculture Europe.

1.2. The work was carried out with the support of Cork Food Policy Council (CFPC), and Dr Colin Sage at University College Cork (UCC). As a multi-disciplinary group working closely with the Cork Healthy City initiative, the CFPC has pioneered innovative approaches to bring food systems thinking into the city, at both local and policy levels. The opportunity to look at urban food growing in Cork in more detail recognises the potential of this activity to meet some of the aims around food policy development. (<http://corkfoodpolicycouncil.com/>)

1.3. The publication of the **Cork City Development Plan** (2015-21) by the city council, presents an impetus to look at food growing in more detail. The plan includes a number of references to food, partly recognising dialogue with CFPC. In particular, **Objective 7.15 b** within Neighbourhood Recreation & Amenity highlights an aim, 'To encourage the development of food-growing spaces such as allotments and community gardens' (<http://www.corkcitydevelopmentplan.ie/>). This has provided an opportunity to look at how food growing might be embedded more into the fabric of the city, enabling both civil society and public sector to work together.

1.4. The report was developed with learning from Cork's existing food growing initiatives across the city, and through conversations with a wide range of stakeholders, including community gardeners, food producers, voluntary sector groups, as well as people involved in strategy and service delivery within the public sector. It culminated in a stakeholder workshop, attended by 40 representatives from these groups. This approach has helped to show the potential for a people-centred vision for community food growing and urban agriculture in the city, and possible ways forward.

1.5. In this report, **Section 2** looks briefly at the context and reasons for urban food growing and urban agriculture, drawing on examples from around the world. **Section 3** sets out the background and context to this activity within Cork, and explores how it might contribute to some of the city's strategic aims.

1.6. **Section 4** summarises the findings from the rapid research work, breaking the findings into themes, including some case studies of local work. **Section 5** finally summarizes some of the potential ways forward to enable a more joined up approach to the work. The appendix contains brief descriptions of the food growing and community gardening projects found in Cork, and identifies its links to strategic aims.

1.7. Whilst this is a very brief initial look at the Cork context, it is hoped that it will contribute to highlighting the good practice in the city. It could be the first steps to developing a vision for how Cork could develop a more strategic and joined up approach to food growing, in order to become a greener, healthier and more abundant food producing city. The recommendations made are general, and it is hoped that the Cork Food Policy Council will endeavour to identify how and who might take them forward.

2. What is urban agriculture?

2.1. The last decade has seen an upsurge of interest and activity in urban agriculture (UA) across cities of the globe. UA is defined as ‘an industry located within (intra-urban) or on the fringe (peri-urban) of a town, a city or a metropolis, which grows and raises, processes and distributes a diversity of food and non-food products’ (Mougeot 2000:10).

2.2. UA has of course long been an integral part of cities, practiced over thousands of years. Many in Cork can remember market gardens and farms around its edges and domestic gardens providing food within the city. Cork retains its links to rural hinterland today.

2.3. Urban food growing is practiced in poorer and middle income countries, as an essential part of food security, increasingly recognised by WHO and other agencies. Cuba is often highlighted as an example. ‘Organoponicos’ or small farms have been developed on open space within cities to supply fresh produce to local citizens, as a response to embargo and economic constraints. Many residents of African and Asian Cities rely on urban food production, both as a source of nutrition and livelihood. Volatile food prices and climate change, are bringing increasing focus on food security and a recognition of the value of urban agriculture in these contexts.

2.4. There is a growing urban agriculture movement on cities of the North, including across North America and Europe. The activity ranges from allotment gardening, rooftops, windowsills, to ‘community gardening’, social and therapeutic gardening, local food production schemes and market gardening (www.cityfarmer.info)

2.5. Initiatives embrace broad objectives, and range from policy driven and civil society led approaches, to ‘illegal’ guerrilla or informal gardening making use of unallocated and marginal public space, as in the case of Incredible Edible, Todmorden, UK.



Photo: <http://www.incredible-edible-todmorden.co.uk/>

2.6. UA in the North is driven by a range of motives, ranging from concerns around food safety and security, obesity and diet related ill health, climate change, and urban decline. UA is highlighted as contributing to sustainable development, innovative healthy planning and green infrastructure, development of more ecological food production and 'short food chains', community regeneration, food policy and public health.

Example: Sandwell, in the West Midlands, England, led on the development of a co-ordinated approach to urban or community agriculture during the 1990's and 2000's. Driven by Public Health, the vision for a greener, healthier and more productive Sandwell underpinned the development of food growing and community gardening initiatives. This was linked into wider attempts to develop healthier local environments, resilient communities and a more sustainable food system. Led by local user-led charity **Ideal for All**, **Salop Drive Market Garden**, a three acre local food scheme was developed from derelict land.



Transformation of once derelict sites is an example of the 'co-creation' of a resource for healthy activity, involving disabled, local people, health and other professionals. **Ideal for All's 'Growing Opportunities'** offers a year round programme of public health and therapeutic activities, based at its gardens. These include 'Ready, Steady, Grow' schools programme, urban food growing courses, healthy cooking, physical activity, hands on gardening and vocational training. The Salop Drive Market Garden grows and sells fresh vegetables and fruit for direct sale to over 60 local households a week in its 'Bag your share' scheme, reducing 'food miles' travelled and providing fresh, local food. www.idealforall.co.uk
<https://www.facebook.com/growingopportunities/>

2.8. The activity of food growing is linked to health benefits including improved nutritional skills and awareness, increased physical activity, improved mental health and wellbeing, and community resilience. A recent report, 'The benefits of gardening and food growing to health and wellbeing' (Schmutz et al 2014) provides case studies and evidence review.

2.9. With rising focus on food poverty and concerns about food security linked to climate change, UA is often cited as a solution. Whilst it is recognised that 'local food projects' can contribute to food skills, awareness of healthier eating and resilience to an extent, they must not be seen as a 'quick fix'. They must not be used to divert attention from a focus on food as a human right, highlighting the underlying economic and systemic causes of food insecurity and the need to create sustainable and socially just 'food systems' (Caraher and Dowler 2007). October 2015 saw the launch of the *Milan Urban Food Policy Pact*, signed by over one hundred cities from across the globe, calling for coordinated international food policies to tackle these pressing issues. <http://www.foodpolicymilano.org/en/urban-food-policy-pact-2/>

3. The setting for Cork

3.1. Cork, as Ireland's second largest city, with a population of 119,230 is vibrant, energetic, and innovative, naturally facing outwards with its port and international links (Census 2011). It is a centre of learning and commerce, with University College Cork, and Cork Institute of Technology attracting students from worldwide.

Cork is also a city of geographic inequality. 'Employment, education and income levels vary widely, as do levels of opportunity, social inclusion and overall health' with a divide typically between North and South Cork. Cork has a strong community and voluntary sector providing diverse services with and for local residents. However, the economic recession and austerity programme has had a negative impact on the fabric of the city, and this sector in particular (Kelly and Hayes. 2014). Signs of a slow recovery are apparent. http://www.hse.ie/eng/services/news/Cork_City_Profile.pdf

3.2. Food has long played a significant part in Cork's identity. Sometimes described as 'the food capital of Ireland', Cork has a strong culture of food, linked both to its past history and present activities. Rural areas surrounding Cork are well known for support of local growing, production and consumption, and the city itself brings food to its heart through its markets, restaurants and artisan foods. Farmer's markets and Country Markets are found in most towns across the county http://www.tastecork.com/cork_producers.php?t=19. Cork's food culture is a strong pull factor for tourism within the region and a valuable contributor to the economy, and much has been done to promote the identity of locally produced food.

3.3. Cork Food Policy Council (CFPC) was established in 2012 as a forum through which to develop a wider analysis of the 'food system' within the Cork city-region. It encourages a wider examination of the issues surrounding food production, consumption, and sustainability, providing a voice for a more just and equitable food system. As a multi-disciplinary group that works closely with the Cork Healthy City initiative, it has pioneered innovative approaches to bring food systems thinking into the city, working at both local and policy levels. This recognises the position and value of food within the fabric of city life, and for its multifunctional benefits to health, community, infrastructure and spatial thinking. As food poverty is on the increase in Ireland, addressing these food system issues becomes more important. <http://corkfoodpolicycouncil.com/>



Cork Food Policy Council; taking a food systems approach

3.4. Urban agriculture and food growing can be a way to support and complement Cork's local strategic objectives, encouraging partnership working between voluntary groups, health and local authority to achieve shared aims. It is not just about food growing, but using the *activity, process and outcomes* of growing to embed principles of health, wellbeing, sustainability, skills and economic development, social inclusion in a people centred approach. *Identification of strategic links are outlined in the Appendix.*

3.5. The work of this report enabled information about food growing and community gardening initiatives in Cork and its margins to be gathered. This was challenging to do, as many groups were not aware of each other, and there is no central database. In total, over thirty initiatives, excluding school food growing, were identified in and around Cork (See list in Appendix), and it is clear that many more initiatives are taking place as well. These varied in their approach and motivations, broadly across models of *allotments, community gardening, social and therapeutic horticulture, gardening for education and training, and market gardening initiatives.*

4 Consultation and themes arising

4.1. During the rapid appraisal, face to face interviews were held with over thirty individuals, representing voluntary groups, growers, community gardeners and public sector. In addition, a stakeholder workshop was held on November 13th 2015, attended by 40 people, and focusing on the opportunities, barriers to urban food growing in Cork, and exploring creative ways forward. Other conversations were held by phone and email. All Cork Primary schools were contacted by email, to see if they were involved in food growing. The themes arising are outlined below.



Stakeholder workshop. 13th November 2015 at Camden Palace, Cork.

4.2. Throughout discussions, many concerns raised indicated a sense of disquiet with the current food system, including concerns about food quality, sustainability, and food poverty. Many spoke about loss of skills in food growing, production and preparation, as the older generation passes on, rural links lessen and the younger generation understood and valued this less. There was a sense of Cork being at a tipping point, where this knowledge might be lost irretrievably.

Many people of the older generation remember difficult times...and had skills to grow and process food. We are losing that now, lost the skills of preserving, processing and growing food...we are losing vital knowledge, and it's essential to find ways to sustain and develop these skills.

People spoke about their hopes and fears around community and food. This highlighted concerns about future impact of climate change on agriculture, systems 'shock' and the need to seek more resilient ways of living.

Are people aware that we only have three days-worth of food in the system? Once you are aware that this is a big thing, maybe you can look up from daily living and think about how we would manage. The future is a real concern. Food growing can contribute to some level of resilience.

4.3. The vision emerging from these conversations had people at its heart. Food growing was seen as a way to achieve wider community and individual aims.

Themes arising included:

- a) Improving **local environment**, derelict **land**, and access to green space, with a focus on resilience of the city to climate change
- b) **Growing**, preparing and distributing locally sourced and sustainably produced food and other products
- c) Improving **health and wellbeing**, through giving people the tools to improve physical and mental health
- d) Enabling development of **skills**, knowledge and independence
- e) Building **community and social inclusion** through bringing people together
- f) Building an **effective network** among growing groups, with links between strategy and the grassroots

4.4. Taking each theme in order, we will highlight some of the key issues that arose, including opportunities, barriers and potential way forward.

4.4. a) **Land and environment**

Land access by groups



Shine's 'meanwhile' site at Kyle Street, Cork and potential land?

Finding and accessing suitable land identified by groups and individuals for varied purposes was one of the key concerns raised by community members. Land suitable for growing included land that was accessible, safe, free from contamination, had potential for services and was based within the locality. Some groups were actively looking for land, or had been for some time. There was an awareness that there were land banks available if they could be accessed.

There is a lot of institutional land available in every town...and groups ready or interested to take it on...they just need matching and support

If land was made available, people would be really interested...

There was a lack of awareness about how to go about accessing land for food growing...who would know about land availability and ownership. There was no clear pathway or contact within local authority through which people could find available land or go to if land had been identified. Some groups had spent a long time navigating local authority departments to find information and contacts to be able to start moving forward, and some gave up as a result of difficulties.

Why isn't there a central point of contact in every council that groups could go to if looking to set up, and get advice and a way forward? There is a need for more understanding in local authority of the benefits of food growing and why communities might want to do it

Often land is in private, institutional ownership and it is difficult for groups to navigate the complicated issues.

If we could have a 'go to' person it would make a big difference...

There is lots of enthusiasm to tap into...but need for joined up thinking, there is no outreach from the council, it's always the community going out to them, and meeting lots of road blocks along the way, so people with initial enthusiasm fall off the route.

Need to have the 'top guy' filtering down into other areas...at the moment it's a 'mish-mash' of approaches, it's not coordinated, and not getting to the people who could make use of it

One community garden group had found a potential site owned by a private landowner, and had gone some way down the route of negotiating use. However, this failed in the end as the landowner was concerned about letting land for 'temporary' use, and the negative publicity that might ensue if they took the land back. The group themselves were less concerned, and were happy for this to be negotiated clearly up front, agreeing to temporary use.

We didn't see this as a problem...it could have simply been built into any agreement with us

Another group had been looking for land for some time, and had with the help of a planner been given some 'meanwhile' land on a temporary lease. The link with planning department had been invaluable in identifying the land, finding the private owner and negotiating a lease.

I had never thought that we could use a site like this, I thought a site like this would be a definite 'no'

X has been so helpful, step by step, going through all the things that needed to be thought through...she had a belief in the group and saw the potential, we couldn't have done it without her

There was a recognition that once models of lease and land use were established, and successful, they could act as 'pilots' for learning, and give landowners and local authority more confidence in moving forward.

HSE have been totally supportive from the start, we had a verbal agreement, but are now working on a formal lease...this could then be used as a case study and example of what is possible...there is potential for this elsewhere

Other issues around land that were raised by groups and individuals were

- Where to find advice to clear and develop derelict and unused sites, including infrastructure and services
- How to find insurance, negotiate leases, and information about potential land contamination
- How to develop site use processes including health and safety
- How to develop operational plans, funding applications, and growing plans

Local authority views

Conversations with planners, parks and green space officers and engineers within Cork City Council and Cork County Council revealed both an interest and willingness to support food growing initiatives. However this was tempered by a recognition of the constraints; lack of funding, capacity and resources. Whilst there is pressure on land, particularly in North Cork, and for housing and development needs, there is still land with potential. The addition of food growing into Cork Development Plan provides a valuable opportunity and statement of intent.

We want to be as progressive as we can but it is difficult with the constraints within which we work

There is a huge amount of background work to get sites to a stage where they can be used, and it's a complex process which needs expertise...

Officers held a huge amount of knowledge and expertise needed to assess, develop, and establish sites, including an understanding of the planning and legal frameworks, site histories, resource and infrastructure needs. Both Cork City Council and Cork County have established show case allotment sites at Churchfield and Ballincollig. There was a recognition that the local authority could provide the advice and support to find land, assess it for use, and act as a 'go between' when land was under private ownership. However, it was felt that support and leadership needed to come from 'on top' and not be left to keen individuals.

Various types of land were identified as potential for further exploration:

- Privately owned, public or institutional land for example City council, HSE, UCC, church owned sites, public housing, schools
- Landscape preservation zones within the city. Sites 'sterilized' from development, but with potential to be used for community and health value without being in conflict with zoning
- Vacant plots around the city including 'SLOAP' (space left over after planning)
- Derelict sites with potential for 'meanwhile' use, for instance pending sale or development or under asset reclamation plan (NAMA)
- Land earmarked for development as social housing in the longer term (5 to 10 years) which could be leased on a short term basis (e.g. Cork County)
- Potential for embedding food growing activity within Local Area and Action area plans
- Leasing or partnership opportunities from farmers and land owners on peri-urban sites, for example to establish market gardens or new public or private allotments
- Potential for Cork City and Cork County Councils to work together to identify land on the outskirts of Cork for allotments or market gardening
- Potential for citizens to take small growing areas, 'edge spaces' on spontaneously as in the example of Incredible Edible or diversifying a 'Tidy Towns' approach

Parks and open spaces were seen as having more constraints, the policy for parks has been to provide clean, accessible, safe, green open spaces. It has taken time and patience to establish planting schemes within the city, and vandalism has been a problem. The department is moving towards having parks which are gated at night. Concerns about additional costs and complaints of 'mess' for example from fruit trees, or food growing in parks was raised. This said, there are some pockets which could provide potential food growing space. The opportunity to integrate food plants into ornamental bedding were also discussed. There is potential for parks and open spaces to work more closely with the planning department in identifying and bringing forward sites.

Churchfield Allotments Cork

The first council provided allotment in North Cork, established in 2011 by Cork City Council. The site provides 50 plots, landscaped area, orchard, toilets and tool store. The gardens are the focus for community activities, food growing, learning and skills development. It is run and managed by the city council, with links to the active plotholders.



<https://www.facebook.com/pages/Churchfield-Allotments-Cork/237555192943296?sk=wall>

Whilst budgetary constraints are real, there was a recognition that other forms of ‘in kind’ support could be offered, through existing local authority capacity, working in partnership with groups. This included potential to bring machines, labour and expertise to clearing sites, as well as potential sources and transportation of manure, advice and input on site infrastructure planning (drainage, water, testing), possible use of JCBs to clear land, horticulture and carpentry skills, advice on funding bids.

Local authority officers expressed an interest in testing out pilot projects, working with local community groups in ‘co-creation’ of potential sites. It was recognised that interested groups would need to develop some level of structure, agreed aims, action plan and accountability in order for this partnership to be successful. Confidence from working together implementing pilots could move this forward onto other projects, if local authority could see that there was limited cost and additional work involved. This in turn could demonstrate to the wider council that this was indeed a viable use of land.

LAND: Suggested ways forward?

- LA planning and parks and open spaces to work together to develop inventory of potential sites within the city for food growing and community gardening, building on

Objective 7.15 b Cork City Development Plan. Include potential links with Cork County Council to explore potential for land on the edge of Cork.

- Develop clear pathway and contact point for those interested in food growing sites, or with sites in mind, to come forward for information and support, endorsed within the City Council
- Develop resource base for 'process' of establishing land parcels, building on existing models, expertise, and highlighting support from resources on line (for example in UK <https://www.farmgarden.org.uk/>) (This could cover insurance, site infrastructure, accessibility planning, contamination advice, health and safety, project planning, potential funding and 'in kind' support)
- Move forward on identification and development of potential 'pilot' sites with established groups, in order to learn and gain confidence in this co-creation approach

4.4.b. Growing, preparing, distributing and selling locally produced food

Although the focus of this report was not on commercial market gardening and food distribution, the potential to develop 'shorter food chains' and support the local economy through commercial food production is something that would merit more in depth exploration at a later date. Cork has obvious opportunities to build on its strengths, including nearby fertile rural hinterland, food growing and agricultural skills, well established 'gourmet' food culture and interest in local food. Many saw sustainably and ethically produced local food as a way of building resilience in food systems. Again loss of skills in food growing were cited as a problem for the future, as small farmers and vegetable producers struggled to compete with international markets, and heavy farming subsidies.



Ballintubber Farm, Middleton Farmer's Market

Speaking to a few small food producers at Farmer's Markets the following issues were raised:

- Need for more education and awareness within the public and institutions around unsustainable food production systems, climate impact, food waste, and value of organic or quality production and locally produced labels, in order to increase local demand
- For some, farmers' markets were not the ideal forum to sell in order to develop consistent sales. Some expressed a need for support with alternative models of accessing markets for local food such as potential for larger bulk buying coops, institutional procurement or more centralised local food retail centre (e.g. Limerick Food Coop <http://www.theurbanco-op.ie/>) which would enable 'ordinary' shoppers to buy a week's shop at one point, at more affordable prices.
- Support with marketing through business planning, social media, and other methods. Links to UCC marketing and food production courses were highlighted as a way of getting this support through hands on student projects linking small scale producers to 'real life' course projects in practical ways

For the community garden groups, many were involved in selling or distribution of produce, and value adding. This provided a small source of income generation for the projects, as well as a sense of 'giving' within the local community, building local networks, contributing a valued resource, and bringing people together in shared activity to eat, cook and buy. Fresh food distribution was also linked to perceptions of poor access to fresh produce within the local community. Some projects had developed links with local restaurants interested in sourcing local produced food, and social benefits. Lettuce Inn, on Barrack Street, a small greengrocer, is interested in using food growing locally to support the shop, whilst supporting the regeneration of the local area.

Support with marketing, developing labels and brands, and promotion of the social value of community produced food across the city was highlighted. New models of selling such as Country market style stalls were also suggested.

Marketing: Suggested ways forward?

- Work to raise understanding of the profile, sources, and benefits of good, sustainably produced and local food, in order to increase demand at a local level. Build on this through linking to food waste awareness, food poverty and community cooking initiatives

- In future, undertake a more in depth review of potential for market gardening within Cork and its hinterland, including local models for food production, and marketing. This would include understanding the potential pathways and barriers to markets. (For example, opportunities and barriers to institutional procurement, 'Community supported agriculture' 'box schemes', bulk marketing and challenges to local growing)
- On a smaller scale, explore ways of highlighting community produced food as opportunities for income generation and highlighting the value of local projects

4.4 c Health and Wellbeing

The health, social and therapeutic value of gardening and food growing taking place across Cork was recognised by all. The activity of gardening was seen to directly contribute to individual, community and family wellbeing and public health. This included mental wellbeing, increased physical activity outdoors, reduced isolation and increased awareness and skills around healthy eating, cooking and growing food. The shared activity of food growing was seen as important to many, bringing generations and people of mixed backgrounds together. Cork University Hospital also saw the benefits of creating decorative and edible gardens for patient and staff wellbeing, through creating healing environments to look out on and enjoy.



Transformation of courtyard spaces at Cork University Hospital

Gardens were also used as a venue and health promoting space for health and community based groups to use and link into. Midleton Community Garden Project for example saw the value of linking the adjacent hospital to the garden, and was developing links with wider health groups such as elderly day care centre, and local mental health services and Men's sheds. Knocknaheeny and The Glen community gardens, also acted as a focus for a wide

range of health and wellbeing activities, working with a cross section of groups, and attracting HSE, and HAZ public health funding. The gardens were used as a base for a variety of activities including cooking, arts based projects, schools and family programmes, all of which build community wellbeing.



Healthy activity at Knocknaheeny and The Glen

We are working with a parents group linking to food and nutrition, cooking and budgeting for meals, there is no shortage of interest

The connection between food growing and eating is very deep, seeing the pride when a child involved says 'yes I grew this radish myself'

It's all about bringing about the interaction with people...rather than being stuck in the house all day

Glen Community Garden in North Cork was set up in 2008 as part of a broader Food Focus initiative to assist local communities gain knowledge, access and awareness of health benefits of fresh fruit and vegetables. With funding from HAZ and ETB among other sources, the garden acts as a focus for community development and health based work involving local residents, schools, and community groups. Activities include food growing, cooking, composting and waste awareness, and vocational training, arts projects and volunteering. Benefits include improved social cohesion, awareness of healthy eating, reduced isolation, and increased physical activity.



'The garden isn't just about fruit and vegetables, it also provides a social outlet. I have made many new friends, and I always enjoy getting outdoors in all types of weather'

<http://www.healthactionzone.ie/site/index.php/148-new-haz-short-films>

The use of gardens in a more structured way for social and therapeutic horticulture and horticulture therapy was also an important part of some garden's work. This involved working with a range of groups including adults with learning disabilities, individuals with autism, and mental health issues, often with funding from HSE and social care budgets. 'New Directions' social inclusion strategy for changes to day service structure and personal budgets were cited as potential opportunities. Cope Foundation for example, work with adults with learning disabilities, using gardening for food growing, training, independence and job skills through running two garden centres and an allotment. Cork Autism's work with adults with autism, and find gardening has many benefits for people involved:

We see dramatic changes in people's behaviour...when they come to the garden we never have challenging behaviour, and that says it all really...

Others highlighted the way gardens reduced isolation.

People come to the site for relaxation, and to meet others...one lady came up to me saying the garden had given her something to look forward to after church...whereas before she would just go home and see no one all day

We get lots of phonecalls from parents with children with autism, as a group they are quite isolated...so something like a gardening group could be very beneficial

Some gardens had undertaken training in Social and Therapeutic Horticulture and this was seen as a growing area in Ireland, although there was no umbrella organisation for this (most had made links with Thrive UK). Some groups highlighted the need to learn and understand more about the health and wellbeing benefits of gardening and food growing and how to evaluate them.

We would like to know what we are looking at in terms of developing the health and wellbeing work, and for advice and support on measurements and outcomes

Would like to learn more about therapeutic horticulture, and have more courses offered

Health and wellbeing: Suggested ways forward?

- Raise the profile and awareness of the value of community gardens and food growing schemes to health, recovery and wellbeing across Cork, and highlight pathways to access and funding through health and other agencies
- Showcase examples of gardening activities with public health and social care outcomes to raise awareness of links to wider strategic aims and objectives within health, developing links with health and social care professionals
- Identify ways of demonstrating 'evidence' of health and wellbeing value of activities, drawing on other examples of evaluation and measurement
- Use a 'growing network' to link those involved in therapeutic horticulture to share knowledge, develop training and evaluation and explore opportunities for wider work such as hospital and rehabilitation services, creating a sense of shared purpose

4.4.d) Skills, knowledge and education

Gardening was seen as a pathway to develop valuable skills and knowledge, linked to life-skills development, employment, citizenship and inclusion.

Many primary schools and some secondary have innovative programmes around growing food and gardening, often linked to the Green Flag award. Gardening in schools provides an active way of exploring all subjects within the curriculum, as well as sustainability, food and nutrition. It can provide a link for intergenerational work and wider community involvement.

Schools identified both funding, information and technical gardening skills as their support needs.

We have a very successful school garden. With parent (and grandparent) volunteers, the pupils of 5th class grow organic fruit, veg and herbs

As well as growing vegetables we do cookery activities with the produce from the garden. We also have a harvest festival each year - which has been a great celebration of all the gardening activities



Midleton Community Garden and Churchfield Community Trust

Some community based gardening groups working with adults, used gardening, selling produce and linking to community as a training activity. This was linked to job skills, literacy and numeracy, enabling development of social skills, and re-entry to social settings following life crisis. Some received funding for garden instructors from Education and Training Board to deliver FETAC level horticulture or permaculture qualifications, or non-vocational community based courses. FAS community employment scheme was also seen as a way to develop skills bank within community gardening, and for some trainees had resulted in employment within horticulture. Thrive (UK) had also delivered training courses in therapeutic horticulture, identified by many as of interest, and potential to deliver from within expertise already in Cork.

Informal community based courses and training were also offered from many gardens, including allotments. These focused on the practical skills of gardening planning and cooking, aimed at amateur gardeners and first time food growers, or the wider community. This support was seen as essential to both community gardening and allotments in keeping

up interest in food growing, building skills and preventing people becoming demoralized and dropping off.

There a big swell for 'Grow Your Own' but it needs education, people fuss over gardens too much, they need practical growing skills, to be able to grow food effectively

Some people take on plots, and expect it to be easy, in Ireland many people are growing for the first time, don't have the skills, and don't realise the amount of work involved...they take a plot on and give up after a bit as they lose energy...they need support and encouragement as it takes time....

Many of the gardening groups themselves held knowledge and expertise that could be shared more formally through themed training events and activities across the city. Enabling this to happen would build food growing and gardening skills at a community level. GIY (Grow it Yourself) Ireland was seen as contributing to this in a valuable way, although many felt there was an additional, more local need for skills development at a grassroots level.

A need for more support in the skills of setting up projects was also identified including issues around safeguarding, health and safety, site planning and infrastructure, insurance, policies and management, community development and volunteering. Much of this support is 'out there' but needs drawing together, and many groups did not know where to turn and avoid 'reinventing the wheel'.

College and education institutions also were seen as being able to contribute to skills, linking students to practical growing initiatives, citizenship and community outreach, or through university clubs and societies. UCC students for example grow food in polytunnels as part of the Environment Society. Kinsale College is well known for students with skills to offer in sustainable horticulture and permaculture. Potential for students to support food growing development through practical 'projects' was also raised.

Education and skills: suggested ways forward?

- Raise the profile of the value, and opportunities presented by food growing activities to skills, education and employment development, linking into existing objectives and learning initiatives across the city (e.g. schools, social inclusion agendas and local community development boards)
- Explore potential for more coordinated approach to support community members and schools, family centres to develop food growing skills, through informal, community

based workshops and events, and with higher profile encouragement and inspiration across the city

- Assess training needs within groups across Cork with the aim of developing existing resources under one banner (e.g. website page with resource links). To include point of contact for offers, exchanges and resources for food growing skills, organisational issues and wider training from within the expertise in Cork and beyond

4.4.e Community and social inclusion

Cork has a wide variety of 'community gardens' and food growing projects. Not all gardens are open to all, or about 'community' of place, but might be limited to identified groups or themes such as mental health recovery or training, or individual food growing. They come from diverse motivations from individual desires to grow food, permaculture or build resilience to climate change, through to community development objectives, including health, social inclusion and regeneration.

Some 'community' gardens were seen as exclusive or unwelcoming to the wider community, identified with 'gatekeepers'.

The public visit parks and feel they have a right to go there, but some community gardens are not like this, people sometimes feel they can't just wander in and sit there and enjoy...

Others raised concerns that 'community gardens' were being established without gauging community interest or needs beforehand. Valuable lessons had been learnt through the process of setting up community based gardens:

- Clarity of aims and objectives of gardens as an essential element at the outset, in order to avoid confusion and failure. What need is it you are meeting?
- Does the community really want a garden? Ensure that community development approach is taken at all stages and the community is engaged, consulted and on board. This takes time and resources
- Many gardens are focused on getting off the ground...but it is important to look at how gardens can be sustained in the longer term. This takes money, energy, time and resource
- If gardens are aiming to be open 'community gardens,' structure, accountability, and accessibility are essential to ensure they remain inclusive to all

The work of enabling, facilitating and supporting involvement in gardens in many cases fell to skilled volunteers, (for example GIY focus on bringing forward 'community champions') and was seen as an essential role. Some felt this work was best undertaken through a

salaried role if possible, even for a few hours a week, to provide continuity, coordination and a welcoming face. Lack of this presence and capacity in some gardens was seen as a limiting factor for developing the work further.

We need to develop a more consistent presence in the garden, a more structured approach, so when people drop into the garden there is a link, and someone to direct and be the point of contact for involvement

...need consistency, a 'go to person'...It's no good if people are just coming in when it suits them, or if one person takes ownership, it excludes others and there is no accountability...you need support, funding and clear guidelines..

The danger of 'burnout' among key driving individuals was also seen as an issue, and the need to support groups with formation, decision making and sharing the workload and responsibility were seen as essential for ensuring project sustainability.

It's maintaining it over time which is challenging, enabling the continuity of individuals and actors, people doing the work...how to sustain the networks, you need someone in the centre to make it happen...people move on, you can only do so much

The importance of linking out to wider community structures, and relationships was seen as important for building resilience.

You need lots of people to create the structures, but you can't do it by yourself...got to do it in groups, and build from that...link and engage and develop sustainable things, build relationships..

This was recognised as a strength. If gardening and food growing could be embedded within existing relationships and structures, policies and strategies, and not just through central gardens themselves, then the activity would have more chance of growing sustainably. For instance, Men's Sheds, and Tidy Towns were mentioned on numerous occasions as being a structure into which food growing could be clearly linked, as were health groups, family groups, schools and social housing. Linking to others' agendas within the community through introducing food growing and gardening was seen as a way of widening involvement and interest beyond a few, and building a point of interest through food, cooking and shared activity.

One housing association for older people for instance was very interested to learn about the potential food growing could bring to them

Growing could be a way of linking out into the community...a much needed link...bringing intergenerational work, social inclusion, and reengage people in what they did before 'light that spark again'

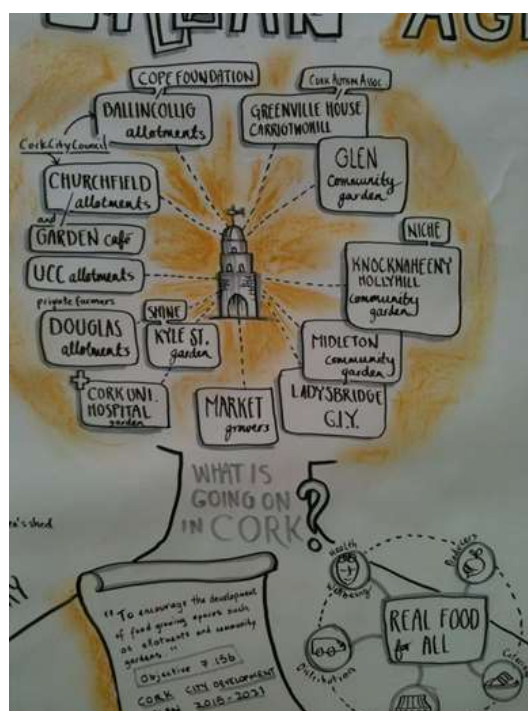
Land was available here within the housing stock. Much of this activity could be, with the right support, network and skills development be done within existing structures and organisations, with limited additional cost, once they could see the potential and relevance of food growing and gardening.

From our point of view, this is absolutely what we would want, it would be absolutely brilliant, enhance independent living and enable residents to give back to the community

Community and social inclusion: Suggested ways forward?

- Ensure that there is recognition of the diverse models and motivations and local conditions for food growing projects, and that there is not 'one size fits all'
- Make use of wider resources and examples of good practice for defining initial aims, objectives and pathways for establishing food growing projects, including working within a community development framework where appropriate
- Raise the profile and value of food growing and gardening as a way of building community links and social inclusion through working with groups not involved in the activity
- Explore ways to move food growing on, through linking with other networks and organisations such as Men's Sheds, Tidy Towns, social housing and others
- Highlight and draw on existing support and expertise from within Cork's community, voluntary sector and council agencies to draw down support and guidance on setting up, maintaining, and sustaining groups, fundraising, managing volunteers etc.

4.4.f. Building an effective network



Food growing in Cork- a joined up approach?

Across all of the above themes, the need for a wider network of those interested in food growing and gardening in all its aspects was seen as essential to move the agenda forward. Many of the groups interviewed had no idea of the other groups 'out there', and many were struggling with common issues on their own.

I had no idea that there were all these other groups out there...there is no real sense of a food growing network in Cork and around...

I would like to find out about other groups, and to network and to know who is out there doing what...

A network would avoid reinventing the wheel, to learn from each other...

If we set up a network, we could visit one another and see each other's work to gain more understanding, link volunteers etc...

If you had a 'hub' of projects joined together in activity, building on shared resources, a hub to meet and a shared service, it might work better

A network could provide somewhere to go to learn and gain information, support and skills from setting out with ideas, through to setting up, and maintaining projects...

Social media was seen as one way to build an effective communication network, share skills and ideas and create a 'social buzz awareness'. Following the workshop event on 13 November, a group interested in taking this forward established a 'facebook' page for communication 'Grow Cork' to get participating groups communicating.

(<https://www.facebook.com/growcork/>)

Bringing about a network, or networks that are diverse as well as focused was seen as important. With skill, it need not be unwieldy or time consuming. It needs flexibility to provide opportunity for bringing together strategic support, agencies as well as grassroots groups as appropriate for different purposes but with the overview of supporting the development of food growing.

Networks are a living thing...must be valid and valued...they need resourcing to make them happen, it's all well putting it into policy, but it needs to be connected to broad networks...with public, private and not for profit groups

The strategic network across the city can be fractured...often you don't see a level of integration or shared events...there are institutional barriers, time, funding competition...

Energy to do things is key, but this needs top down support to meet with the needs of grassroots bottom up projects, and that is largely lacking...if there were top down structures it would make a huge difference

You also need a champion, a person to drive it, 'doers' and people who are passionate about what they are doing

Networking: possible ways forward?

- Continue to map the varied food growing initiatives in Cork and its surrounds, using existing information from groups, Cork Council, Cork Food Policy Council, Cork Environment Forum, and the School's Green Flag. Make the map available in order to facilitate networking and communication between groups
- Establish a network development group to move forward and identify different aspects and levels and purposes of networking in order to address the issues raised within this report. Find resources (time, people, space, and possibly money) to support network development, and to make the links visible
- Ensure both grassroots and strategic aspects of networking are developed to move food growing forward across the city
- Use social media to build networks, as live, participatory and sharing with a central repository for information and advice on establishing food growing for groups, making use of local and national links and support
- Cork Food Policy Growing sub group to continue to support development of a wider food growing network

5 Appendix

5.1 Food growing in Cork: links to strategy and key documents

There is an opportunity to build on the work of community and productive gardening and social and therapeutic horticulture through linking and embedding the work within local and wider strategic objectives.

Although not exhaustive, some of the key national, council and health based documents, where links could be made with urban agriculture, are listed below:

Health

- *Health Action Zones* with focus health promotion and public health in North Cork <http://www.healthactionzone.ie/site/>
- *Cork WHO Healthy Cities working to embed healthy city principles* <http://corkhealthycities.com/>
- *Cork City Profile 2014*: statistical and geographical profile of Cork City Authority Area focused on health and social inclusion, highlighting health inequalities across the city (Kelly and Hayes 2014) http://corkhealthycities.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/CORK-CITY-PROFILE-FINAL_COMPRESSED.pdf
- *Mental health division operational plan 2015*. Includes development of public mental health and recovery based services. HSE. <http://www.hse.ie/eng/services/publications/corporate/mhopplan15.pdf>
- Department of Health: *Forthcoming Obesity Policy and Action Plan* <http://health.gov.ie/healthy-ireland/obesity/> and *Physical Activity Action Plan* <http://health.gov.ie/>
- Department of Health. *Healthy Ireland – A Framework for Improved Health and Wellbeing 2013 – 2025* <http://health.gov.ie/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/HealthyIrelandBrochureWA2.pdf>

Cork City Council

- *Cork City Development Plan 2015-2021*, Objective 7.15 b within Neighbourhood Recreation & Amenity highlights an aim 'To encourage the development of food-growing spaces such as allotments and community gardens' outlining the <http://www.corkcitydevelopmentplan.ie/>
- *Cork City Local Area Plans* areas that require economic, physical and social renewal, and/or areas likely to be subject to large scale development within the lifetime of the development plan. This includes Cork's 'Major Development Areas' of Docklands, Blackpool and Mahon <http://www.corkcity.ie/services/strategicplanningeconomicdevelopment/localplanning/localareaplans/>
- *Forthcoming Cork Local Economic and Community Plan* due out in 2016 <http://www.corkcity.ie/localeconomicandcommunityplan/>
- *Cork City Climate Change Strategy 2010* and commitment to sustainable development principles <http://www.corkcity.ie/theenvironment/corkcitycouncilclimatechangestrategy/>
- *RAPID* (Revitalising areas by planning investment and development) <http://www.corkcity.ie/services/housingcommunity/rapid/> including enhancing opportunities for communities to participate in the strategic improvement of their area, including physical environment

- *City of Difference. Mapping Social Exclusion in Cork.* Highlighting geographical and economic nature of social exclusion across the city
- <http://www.corkcity.ie/services/corporateandexternalaffairs/socialinclusionunit/filedownload,2739,en.pdf>
- *Cork City Community Development Strategy 2004* highlighting community needs and community development approach
<http://www.corkcity.ie/services/corporateandexternalaffairs/communitydevelopment/>

Local documents from NGOs and other bodies

- *Cork Food Policy Council* works to a set of four common values, recognising the contribution that food consumption and production has to meeting these.
 - Health and wellbeing for all
 - A thriving local economy
 - Resilient food friendly communities
 - Lifelong learning and skills
- *Cork Environment Forum* building on the principles of LA21 and bringing local stakeholders to embed sustainability into the city <http://www.cef.ie/>
- *Cork City Partnership* <http://corkcitypartnership.ie/> supports communities, working collectively to meet local needs with focus on education, skills and engagement, in partnership with voluntary sector organisations
- *Cork Local Community Development Board* includes framework for building community development and focus on Cork as a city of learning in report '*Imagine our future. Integrated strategy for Economic, Cultural and Social Development* (2004). <http://www.corkcitydb.ie/imagineourfuture/>
- *Cork Volunteer Centre* supporting volunteering <http://www.volunteercork.ie/>
- *Cork Chamber (2014) Corks agri-food and drinks opportunities.* Highlights value of artisan and locally produced foods to tourism and local economy as Cork's unique 'food story'.
<https://www.corkchamber.ie/UserFiles/file/Policy%20&%20Research/CorkChamberAgri-Food&DrinksOpportunities.pdf>
- LA 21 Environmental Partnership Fund, Cork Council
<http://www.corkcity.ie/services/environmentrecreation/localagenda21environmentalpartnershipfund/>

5.2 Cork; food growing projects identified (excluding schools)

Community gardens; health and social inclusion focus	
Knocknaheeny Community Garden, North Cork https://www.facebook.com/KnocknaheenyHollyhill-Community-Garden-274010549349900/ http://nicheonline.ie/	Linked to NICHE, North Cork. Community health, arts, food and environment, community development. Dedicated staff
Glen Community Garden, Blackpool, North Cork http://www.healthactionzone.ie/site/index.php/gallery-glen/169-the-glen-community-garden	HAZ funded community garden offering training, food skills, health and wellbeing activities linked to Glen Resource Centre. Dedicated staff

<p>Cork Simon Community, Garden projects working with homeless people https://volunteeringincolumbia.wordpress.com/2010/11/13/simon-community-gardens-cork-city/ https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XtDa460hr74 'Green Friends'</p>	<p>Established 'Mandala of community gardens' vision linking art, gardens, homelessness and community.</p>
<p>Shine, Kyle Street http://www.shineonline.ie/index.php/latest-news/381-new-shine-garden-to-get-cork-talking-about-mental-health</p>	<p>Developing 'Green Ribbon' garden on temporary derelict land. Raising awareness of public mental health issues</p>
<p>Dunmanway Community Garden http://healthyfoodforall.com/community-news/2015/06/dunmanway-grow-it-cook-it-eat-it/</p>	<p>Safe food funding initiative. Community garden, food based, growing and arts</p>
<p>Lantern Project, 14 Georges Quay Cork norma@lanternproject.ie http://www.lanternproject.ie/</p>	<p>Community food growing. Social inclusion</p>
Community gardens: community focus/ volunteer led	
<p>Mayfield Community Garden http://www.mayfieldarts.org/toolbox/toolbox/home.html</p>	<p>Linked to Mayfield Arts Centre/ Cork Development Programme. Volunteer run. Food growing.</p>
<p>GIY Ladysbridge https://www.facebook.com/ladysbridgegiy/posts_to_page/ https://www.facebook.com/thecottagemarketladysbridge/</p>	<p>Community garden and food initiative, cottage market</p>
<p>GIY Cork City giycork@gmail.com</p>	<p>Monthly meetings</p>
<p>Shandon Community Green Garden https://www.facebook.com/shandonarea/</p>	<p>Part of Shandon Area Renewal. Community growing and events.</p>
<p>Midleton Community Garden https://www.facebook.com/midletoncommunitygarden/</p>	<p>Based in hospital walled garden. Volunteer run, involves wide range of groups in growing food</p>
<p>Cork Environmental Forum; Community Gardens Awards http://www.cef.ie/</p>	<p>List of community gardens through this annual award scheme</p>
Education and training focus	
<p>Downs Syndrome Cork 'Field of Dreams' http://downsyndromecork.ie/fieldofdreams.aspx</p>	<p>3 acre market garden at Curraheen for education and training. Funding support from Dept. of Health. (opening 2016)</p>
<p>Churchfield Community Trust Garden, Assumption Road, Cork http://churchfieldcommunitytrust.com/</p>	<p>Education, training, (FETAC), rehabilitation, food growing, link to Garden Café.</p>
<p>Cope Foundation http://www.cope-foundation.ie/</p>	<p>Working with adults with learning disabilities. Gardens, allotments and Garden Centres. Food production, training and skills. Exploring potential</p>

	link to UCC Glasshouses and Kylemore.
UCC Polytunnels project, College Road	Student led projects
Social and therapeutic horticulture focus	
Cork Autism Association, Carrigtowhill http://corkautism.ie/contact/	Therapeutic horticulture, food production with adults with autism, STH Courses.
Shine Centre for Autism, Carrigaline	Sensory garden
Cork University Hospital	Hospital staff and enhancing healing environment
Cork Headway, Ballincollig ocallaghanp@headway.ie http://www.headway.ie/services/servicesbyregion/cork.html	Food growing, vocational training. Recovery from acquired brain injury
Slieile, Churchtown, Mallow, Cork http://www.slieile.ie/	Mental health recovery. Working farm, growing and selling produce
Market gardening and commercial food focus	
Lettuce Inn, Barrack Street https://www.facebook.com/The-Lettuce-Inn-414546255398184/	Greengrocer shop linked to community and food growing
Mealagulla Orchard, Knockane, Ovens, Co.Cork https://www.facebook.com/mealagulla.orchard	Commercial apple grower
Real Meat Cooperative. niall@realmeat.ie http://www.realmeat.ie/	Organic beef, lamb and pork direct to public
http://www.tastecork.com/cork_producers.php?t=19	Cork food producers
Sustainability and food focus	
Kinsale Transitions group http://www.transitiontownkinsale.org/	Various community based food growing and sustainable food activities across the town
St Mary's Health Campus, Gurrabraher Potential land on HSE site (80 acres approx.) http://eccowellcork.com/	Link with Cork Environment Forum/ Ecowell Food growing project Id/mental health/ Green Gym
East Cork Slow Food Educational Project http://slowfoodireland.com/campaigns/east-cork-slow-food-educational-project/	Led by Ballmaloe Cookery School working with local schools
Allotments: council and private sites	
Churchfield Allotments. Cork City Council (Potential site at Blackrock, Mahon)	Allotment plots with individual and community plots
Ballincollig Park Allotments. Cork County Council	Allotment plots with 80 individual and community plots.
Douglas Allotments, Douglas Brian Walsh douglasallotments@gmail.com	Farmer owned allotments, with support, on site facilities, and plot preparation etc

Mealagulla Allotments, Knockane, Ovens	http://www.allotments.ie/ privately owned site
Amberley Allotments, Amberley, Rochestown, Co.Cork	http://www.allotments.ie/ privately owned site
Myrtleville House Allotments, Myrtleville, Co.Cork	http://www.allotments.ie/ privately owned site
http://www.allotments.ie/ list of Cork city and county allotments and links	
Hydro Farm Allotments, Blarney http://hydrofarmallotments.com/	Privately owned. Courses and growing.

6. Useful resources

<http://www.giyinternational.org/> Grow it yourself support with food growing

<http://communitygardennetwork.ning.com/> Community Garden Network

<http://www.allotments.ie/?tag=co-cork> Irish Allotments

<http://www.socialfarmingacrossborders.org/> Social Farming Across Borders

<http://healthyfoodforall.com/> Healthy food for all initiative

<http://www.safefood.eu/Home.aspx> Safe Food. Ireland.

<http://sonairte.ie/> Meath, Ireland

<http://www.foodforum.ie/> Cork Kerry Food Forum

<http://www.garden.ie/> Ireland's gardening community

<http://www.theorganiccentre.ie/> The Organic Centre, Leitrim

www.atasteofwestcork.com West Cork Food Producers network.

www.westcorkfood.ie/ West Cork Food

www.tastecork.com Artisan Food in Cork

<http://menssheds.ie/> Men's Sheds Ireland

Other links

<https://www.farmgarden.org.uk/> Federation of city farms and community gardens UK

<http://www.thrive.org.uk/> Thrive UK. Social and therapeutic horticulture

<http://www.sustainweb.org/growinghealth/> Growing Health

Food growing strategies

<http://sustainablefoodcities.org/findacity/cityinformation/userid/447> Sustainable Food Cities (Cork)
Sustainable Food Cities

Capital Growth: London's food growing.

http://www.sustainweb.org/news/dec12_capital_growth_achieves_2012_target/

<http://www.nottinghamcity.gov.uk/CHttpHandler.ashx?id=34073&p=0> Nottingham Council Food
Growing Framework, England.

<file:///C:/Users/id916420/Downloads/growingcommunitiesstrategy.pdf> Growing Communities, A
citywide strategy for Belfast 2012-22.

Planning

http://www.sustainweb.org/news/apr14_planning_sustainable_cities/ Planning sustainable cities for food growing

http://www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/sites/brighton-hove.gov.uk/files/downloads/ldf/PAN6-Food_Growing_and_development-latest-Sept2011.pdf Brighton and Hove Planning Advice Note for food growing space in development

Housing

<http://www.neighbourhoodsgreen.org.uk/upload/public/Edible%20Estates/Edible%20Estates.pdf> Edible Estates. A good practice guide to food growing for social landlords

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