

Cynulliad Cenedlaethol Cymru | National Assembly for Wales  
Y Pwyllgor Newid Hinsawdd, Amgylchedd a Materion Gwledig | Climate Change,  
Environment and Rural Affairs Committee  
Ailfeddwl am fwyd yng Nghymru | Rethinking food in Wales

RFW 02

Ymateb gan : Tîm Food Values  
Evidence from : Food Values Team

A response from the Food Values team: Jane Powell (independent writer), Dr Sophie Wynne-Jones (Bangor University), Sam Packer (Woodland Trust) and Rosa Robinson (Work with Meaning).

## Background

Food Values ([www.foodvaluesblog.wordpress.com](http://www.foodvaluesblog.wordpress.com)) was a project initially run by Organic Centre Wales and Aberystwyth University in 2015 with RDP Supply Chain Efficiencies funding, and then continued by Bangor University in 2016 with ESRC funding. We worked in partnership with the Public Interest Research Centre to see how an approach based on values, as put forward by [Common Cause](#), could help people understand and shape the food system. This starts from the premise that people are not rational actors and we need to consider the role of people's beliefs, identity and emotions if we are truly going to change our food system. As part of the project we launched a [Food Manifesto for Wales](#) which is an ongoing project from which a new [Food Network Wales](#) is emerging. We are no longer funded, but we continue to work together informally to develop the approach.

## Our vision for the food system in Wales

Our work, summarized in our 2015 report Food Values [available here](#), showed how people respond to food as an important means through which to connect to each other in our families and communities. Our project worked with diverse groups, including refugees seeking asylum and isolated older people in rural areas. Food was seen to offer a focal point to come together and look beyond difference. We all eat and thus food has enormous potential as a social equaliser. Linked to this, there was an overwhelming concern that everyone should have *enough* to eat, and that food should be of high quality; premium produce should not be a niche commodity for the more affluent.

Exploring people's motivation to tackle food waste and poverty reaffirmed the benefits of reconnecting with values to communicate and consolidate progressive action. People also want to know where food comes from, and valued traditional food skills such as gardening and cooking. Whilst there are clear challenges to enhancing this in our current social and

food system, there was an appetite to re-connect. These findings have been confirmed in [wider studies by the Food Standards Agency](#).

Through our project we saw a contrast between a 'community' approach to food, which sought to address the issues raised above, and corporate framings of food as a commodity and a source of income and jobs. We found that there was a tendency to alternate between these two approaches to food in government policy (see [our analysis here](#)). The current action plan *Towards Sustainable Growth* for instance has a strong business focus, while the earlier *Food for Wales, food from Wales* placed more emphasis on community. At the same time, there is general agreement that both viewpoints are valid and that what is needed is to bring them together more closely so that each serves the other. There are of course many other points of disconnection in the food system; this is just one example.

### **How to get there**

Joining up the dots of the Welsh food system will mean working across sectors, which is as challenging as it is potentially productive. We offer the values approach as a means to dig deep beneath cultural differences and find common ground. There are many ways in which it could be used, including [video communications](#), events and especially shared meals that bring different groups together in a shared enquiry, as well as case studies of good practice and the use of Welsh Government staff volunteer days to make stronger connection with local communities and businesses.

We would be happy to discuss this approach if it is of interest.

[www.foodvaluesblog.wordpress.com](http://www.foodvaluesblog.wordpress.com)