

CASE STUDY: GO LOCAL FOOD

A HORTICULTURAL CSA IN RURAL NORTHUMBERLAND



Established: 2012

Type: Community-led

Legal Structure: Cooperative Society run by a voluntary board

Paid staff: 1.2 FTE (Two people)

Trainees: 0 FTE

Volunteers: 1.6 FTE

Produce: Vegetables

Members: 116 supporter members.

Of these 63 subscribe to a crop share and 15 have work shares

Member radius: 12 miles

Shares: Year-round in three sizes

Buy in to supplement produce: Yes

CSA turnover: £54,000

Land: 1.8 hectares of rented land from a plant nursery and large estate on one-year tenancies

Infrastructure: Three large and two small polytunnels, lean to shed & events/field sales shed.

Approach: No-dig, permaculture

And... act as a hub for other producers; buy in wholesale groceries, citrus and olive oil for sale to members; and run various workshops

The seed...

Once upon a time a group of villagers dreamt of growing their own food rather than relying on big companies supplying produce wrapped in plastic, treated with chemicals and shipped miles. They imagined a community-owned farm in the rich land of the Tyne Valley and began sharing their vision with others. Initially they put together £3 bags of wholesale veg, selling them in a carpark whilst collecting emails and pointing out that the “local” veg in the bags still came from as far away as Lancashire and Cambridgeshire when it could be grown locally! Interest grew and Go Local Food was born.



Grew...

Go Local Food got initial support from members' shares and the Big Lottery Fund. It is now an established local food co-op growing a wide range of year-round vegetables and providing an additional offer of other products which has really helped build interest. In 2020 they expanded to meet this increased demand, taking on an additional hectare on a nearby estate. It's not ideal having sites 9 miles apart but it has supported them to grow. The relationships they have built up with their growers, members, funders and other local producers have been absolutely key to their success.



And...

Go Local Food's main business is the CSA providing food that is entirely grown by them. However, they are keen to encourage members to make all their food shopping as sustainable as possible and so share quarterly Suma orders, run a refill station, provide access to citrus and olive oil from Spain via Crowdfarming and act as a hub for other local produce like jams, honey, eggs and meat. They also run workshops, annual events and produce a weekly bulletin. They wish they'd known how long and difficult it would be to recruit members and how hard it is to make a surplus from growing veg!

