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Regional food system resilience post Covid-19

Place-Based Economic Recovery Network (PERN)



Dr John Lever

Reader in Sustainable & Resilient Communities

Since 1st May, we've conducted around 20 interviews

1. pressure points in food supply and demand during the Covid-19 crisis;
2. solutions that emerged in response to these challenges, and:
3. innovations required to enhance resilience in the short, medium and long term.

Situated between Manchester, Leeds and Sheffield, Kirklees has population of 422,458 and covers a mixed urban and rural area of 408.6 km².

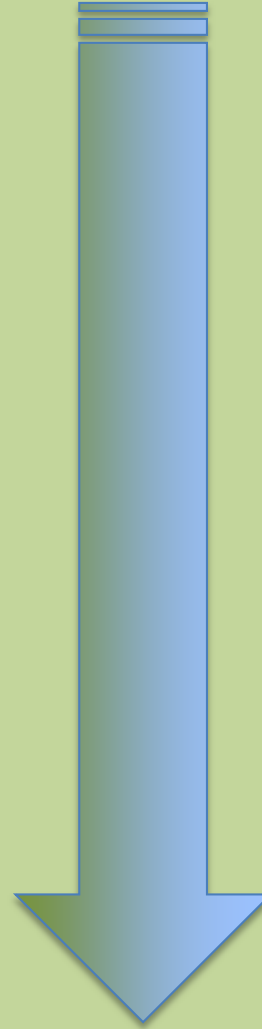


- **We've spoken with farmers, farm shops, food producers, food artisans, business networks, supermarkets, independent food retailers, food banks and policy officers...**
- As the conventional/ global food system closed or locked down, regional farm shops, independent retailers, and home delivery services experienced a sudden and rapid increase in demand.
- **It soon became clear that the 'Kirklees food system' had the capacity and flexibility to respond to the crisis in new and innovative ways**
- Significantly, farmers and producers who weren't tied into supermarket supply chains had the flexibility to respond and provide produce for regional food businesses throughout lockdown!
- **While lacking the capacity to serve the region entirely, the crisis has shown that regional food business can play a greater role enhancing the resilience of the regional food economy going forward!**



What should be learned from the COVID experience?

- In the published food system literature, an interesting narrative has emerged...
- **It is not just the impact of Covid-19 on the food system that's important...**
- ...the impact of the food system on Covid-19 is also highly significant (**e.g. obese people & those with poor diet are more vulnerable**).



- 1. Disruptions in accessing ingredients, processing, and packaging due to lockdowns and illness.**
2. Constrained affordability, accessibility and changing consumer preferences towards not only local, but also to lesser quality foods!
- 3. Farmers have been dumping (waste) fresh produce, especially high-value commodities such as fruits, vegetables, meat, fish & dairy.**
4. Increased levels of financial difficulty and food poverty!
- 5. Availability of food has not been only impacted by Covid-19, but by climate and by a lack of workers to pick produce.**

To balance productivity and competitiveness with inclusion and tackling the climate emergency!



- We need to develop collaborative solutions that foster more resilient place-based food economies.
- Such an approach potentially transforms cities/urban areas and their rural surroundings **into self-reliant regions and places that produce, store, process, consume and dispose of food locally to the maximum extent possible!**

➤ Lever, J. (2020) [Covid-19 Policy Brief: A regional Approach to Food System Reform](#)

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Thanks

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