

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 05

Ymateb gan : Prifysgol Caerdydd
Evidence from : Cardiff University

On 2016, we conducted a thorough study on the Welsh food system as part of the EU funded project TRANSMANGO. TRANSMANGO is an interdisciplinary research project funded by the European Union that focuses on the vulnerability and resilience of European food systems in a context of socioeconomic, behavioural, technological, institutional and environmental change. It aims to enhance understanding of the new challenges and opportunities that the food sector will face in the future and to identify, and enable transition pathways to improved food and nutrition security for Europe's future. Throughout the project we use participative methods such as scenarios and transition pathways to aid in the review and design of policies at different levels. TRANSMANGO activities are developed at the European level and national level involving the following countries: Spain, Latvia, Netherlands, Belgium, Italy, Finland, UK and Tanzania.

In the case of the UK, we are working with Food Cardiff and the Wales Food Poverty Alliance to explore different scenarios and transitions pathways towards a more food secure Wales. For that propose we held two workshops with relevant stakeholders from civil society organisations, public and private sectors. These workshops were informed by a previous survey with participants around the main challenges and strengths of Wales' food system which highlighted welfare reforms, labour conditions, cost of living, knowledge and skills as key aspects affecting food security in Wales.

Please see attached a summary of the main findings of these workshops and a longer [report](#) where key evidence is explained.



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: TRANSMANGO Scenarios workshop: Towards a Food Secure Wales

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In the case of the UK, we are working with the Sustainable Food Cities Network, Cardiff Food Council and Wales Food Poverty Alliance to explore different scenarios and transitions pathways towards a more food secure Wales. For that propose we held two workshops with relevant stakeholders from civil society organisations, public and private sectors. These workshops were informed by a previous survey with participants around the main challenges and strengths of Wales' food system highlight welfare reforms, labour conditions, cost of living, knowledge and skills as key aspects affecting food security in Wales.

The first workshop started with a visioning exercise, consisting of brainstorming and clustering of elements that describe how a food secure Wales might look like. The result of this exercise was a list of twelve prioritised goals that are key to achieve a food secure Wales according to workshop participants. The three most voted goals - Integrated Food Systems Strategy for Wales, Food education and Diverse farming systems - were selected for back-casting. Back-casting is a systematic process for working backwards from a desirable future to identify the steps required that connect the future to the present. Therefore, these three goals were turned into a specific plans that detailed the steps needed to achieve an *Integrated Food Systems Strategy for Wales*, a population with a broad range of *Food Knowledge* and skills, and a *Diversified Farming Systems for Wales*. The final part of this first workshop consisted of adapting European scenarios developed by TRANSMANGO to the Welsh context. Scenarios are a useful tool for future-oriented thinking in a way that is mindful of future uncertainty and the multidimensional scope required to look at planning contexts, accepting that the future might not be just a continuation of current trends. Throughout the workshop different stakeholders developed exploratory scenarios engaging multiple legitimate perspectives involved in framing and addressing messy challenges such as food security and sustainability. The result were three Welsh scenarios for 2050 (see below for an extended summary): *Wales Wails* is based on privatisation of resources and public services, growth of the precariat living just above the poverty line and increasing health and environmental problems; *It's Wales, Dai but not as we know it!* describes a future where the state has intervened to deliver healthy food through high-tech solutions dis-embedding the agricultural and food sector from its context and causing job and skills losses; and *Preserving Wales* is a story where the majority of Welsh people return to rural lives embracing vegetarian diets out of necessity due to high levels of poverty and health inequalities, exacerbated by global environmental pressures, and in the context of strong EU policies and decentralisation of state support and investment. The development of these scenarios included describing the main elements and drivers operating in these future worlds,

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identifying the steps and process that have led to that particular reality and exploring the chains of cause and effect amongst the main elements of the scenario by drawing causal maps.

The second workshop revolved around developing more robust plans for the *Integrated Food Strategy*, *Food Education* and *Diversified Farming System* by using the scenarios developed in the first workshop. Stakeholders analysed the plausibility of the steps needed to reach each one of these goals under very different circumstances as defined by the three Welsh scenarios. This process allowed to develop more robust plans, think creatively and prioritise key actions (see below for a summary of revised action plans). Finally, participants discussed results and agreed that there is a sense of urgency coming out of the analysis under different scenarios, calling for extra efforts to change food culture and mobilise civil society and the public sector. The main actions identified revolved around influencing the new education curriculum, linking these plans –and particularly the creation of a food policy council as proposed by the integrated food strategy plan – to ongoing processes and spaces such as the Food Poverty Alliance, The Food and Drink Industry Board, Food Cardiff, The Food Manifesto, Wales Future Generations Act, etc.; and develop a study on dietary preferences, needs and the suitability of Wales' food system to deliver against health and sustainability goals.

SUMMARY OF SCENARIOS

Wales Wails: Wales is experiencing a mixture of diet-related diseases, with diabetes and obesity widely spread among the population and causing premature deaths. The welfare system has largely collapsed just supporting those that are temporary out of work due to illnesses. The NHS is completely privatised having to pay for healthcare and devolving responsibility for health to individuals. Unemployment is very low, but there is no decent work; employers offer bad working conditions that allow people to live just above the poverty line. There is a clear growth of the precariat, mostly working on manufacturing industries and with families struggling to get by. The industries that had fled Wales looking for cheap labour abroad have come back. There is a need for food to be cheap in order to feed low income families. There is poor access to local and healthy food, with a clear proliferation of fast food outlets and processed food provided by few and powerful companies. Concentration of power in the food supply chains also affects infrastructure, owned by few global retailers and where local food has been replaced by cheap imports. There are small pockets of wealth that enjoy better food and services. Consumer options have also been individualised, with the media and other actors running a moral crusade against consumption. Despite the increased availability of information around products, there is a steady loss of knowledge and skills particularly in the food domain.

Wales is also suffering from climate change impacts, with summers being a reminiscence of the past. Floods are common and housing developments compete with other land uses, which together with intensive farming practices contribute to soil degradation. There are also increasing water pollution problems linked to low environmental standards of manufacturing industries. Wales' impact on the environment has increased steadily, partly due to meat production replacing fruit and vegetable fields. Despite the decreased life expectancy, population increases due to migration. Places are more crowded and there are also increasing flows between urban and rural areas. The mood swings between social unrest and apathy, since people have just enough to get by. Politicians pride themselves on this 'absence' of poverty and blame migrants and global dynamics when discontent rises. There is a mixed-bag of diluted policies in midst political apathy. The Common Agricultural Policy has disappeared and the private sector is taking over most services, including catering in schools. Income and corporate taxes are low, but other services are taxed such as food or tolls in order to pay for the basic welfare provided. We arrived to this scenario by basically doing nothing and letting current trends deepen.

It's Wales, Dai, but not as we know it! In this scenario, Wales is changing fundamentally, but to many, the changes go unnoticed until they are complete. The UK government and the EU are responding to challenges of increasing (global) demand of livestock products and the perceived need to make food systems more efficient and better able to provide healthy and safe food by enacting strong policies, with intensive and exclusive collaboration with large food companies. These alliances create highly integrated, intensive food systems that proceed to out-compete traditional agricultural production and create clinically healthy and safe, but standardized, highly artificial and processed foods, which are introduced without fanfare, while attempts to educate consumers on diets have been abandoned as failures. In Wales, this heralds the end of traditional agriculture, including lamb production, and the end of traditional Welsh landscapes with it. Due to these changes, small-scale farming becomes less and less profitable, and in combination with other failing rural economic activities, this strengthens the already existing rural decline and urban growth. People are flocking to cities and rural areas become unmanaged, with those few who remain caught in poverty traps. Local farmer's markets and shops disappear. The disappearance of farms, especially sheep farming, means that parts of the countryside become inaccessible – people are mainly living in towns and cities and on the coast. The tourist sector suffers. Cities struggle to accommodate this influx of new inhabitants.

Unemployment rises both in rural and urban areas, resulting in distinctly rural and urban types of poverty, and welfare is extended to deal with this – but it is difficult to get out of such welfare traps because of the exclusivity of the marketplace. The stricter control of available foods and drinks means that physical health increases on average, with obesity decreasing as people simply are not able to easily attain unhealthy foods. Older people are an exception – these still suffer from legacy effects on their health. The homogenizing economy means that employment also becomes less diverse – the main increase in jobs happens in the food industry and technology sectors, but these are highly skilled jobs. Food production and processing that happens in Wales is based around highly processed and artificial foods, based on insects and, more recently, in vitro meats, with nutrients added. Production is safe and fairly efficient, with fewer environmental impacts and reduced food waste – but there is no connection to the environment and culture of Wales. Unemployment and a loss of identity has created political unrest – nationalism has increased among those who struggle the most; those who cherish rural life rally against a highly artificial and urbanized existence. Niche movements aim to provide unprocessed food, but this is often too expensive for most; allotments expand and with the rewilding of rural areas, foraging also increases.

Scenario 3: Preserving Wales: 'Preserving Wales' is a story that sees the majority of Welsh people returning to rural lives because of changing social norms and political conditions; for many out of necessity due to high levels of poverty and health inequalities, exacerbated by global pressures; and in the context of strong EU policies and subsidies supporting re-ruralisation and sustainable local food production. The process of renationalization happening in Europe, results in more devolvement of power to Wales. The Welsh government invests in building infrastructure and the provision of goods and services in rural areas. This transition is facilitated by decentralized service provision which leads to increased employment in local schools, hospitals etc.; as well as technological advances in communications which allow people to have creative and intellectual off-farm work whilst residing in thriving rural villages. These changes boost Welsh cultural heritage around rural lifestyle including language, sport, countryside skills hedgerow laying and local music.

The Welsh government, in partnership with many social movements and cooperatives initiates major campaigns about nutrition and sustainability, cooking and farming. These issues are eventually fully

incorporated into mainstream education. Social change and the nature of distributed local food production means different skills and jobs are valued differently than they are around 2015 – farmers are valued more than bankers. Within Wales, growing your own food is seen as ‘decent work’. To some degree resilience of food supply goes up because Wales has a wider range of produce, more of which is produced locally, however, there is more vulnerability to shocks effecting local food production and distribution because there is less of anything coming from abroad. Only the very rich live in cities, these people are large land owners who subcontract farm work to others. People travel to cities for tourism because they are novel as most people don’t live in them anymore. There are tensions due to poverty, vegetable rustling and land wars take place but these ultimately strengthen the necessity to collaborate in communities. Population declines because there is an aging population and very low immigration.

Following up on a number of food safety scares in Europe, vegan and vegetarian societies (motivated themselves by environmental and ethical concerns) undertake massive marketing campaigns. Slowly, there is a shift in dietary patterns so that vegan and vegetarian diets become the norm, though people still eat some lamb, particularly for cultural reasons. Many lamb farmers go out of business and the uplands change to arable and horticulture, fuels and energy generation, particularly wind farms. However, these changes boost Welsh cultural heritage around rural lifestyle include language, sport, local rugby, countryside skills hedgerow laying, fox and rabbit hunting and local music. Climate change leads to more wineries on the south west coast of Wales. Destabilisation of the retail sector means less consumerism. People are much healthier, getting much more fresh air, eating healthy food, getting more exercise and spending more time living outside. In general people are happier living rurally in rich cultural communities. The health benefits of lower consumption of animal products become apparent together with increased mental health from contact with nature and social inclusion in community activities result in reduced health care costs overall. There are some vulnerable communities in this scenario – anyone who can’t grow their own food, such as the elderly, rely on volunteering and community support structures. Fortunately, community spirit is strong.

SUMMARY OF PLANS:

Food education:

Vision: The population in Wales has a broad range of skills and knowledge around good food allowing them to build a more food secure society that is also resilient to future shocks or changes in the food system. This vision has four sub-objectives:

- a) *Changing our environment, including the built environment but also working conditions or advertisement.* This sub-objective includes mapping land and promoting food growing, using planning regulations to exclude unhealthy foods and promote good food, changing workplace environments and transform food advertisement. The review under different scenarios highlighted the importance of introducing planning regulations earlier in the process, as well as establish strong partnerships to map the available land for growing food. In an scenario with little public support and low interest of very busy and badly paid citizens, it is important to consider who will develop some of the voluntary work that is being done by communities and civil society organisations or how to maintain that interest in society. Also, in scenarios where corporations are key actors and there is a lack of regulation it is paramount to find triggers for behavioural change within business, for example to change advertisement.

- b) *Changing food culture through educational institutions (schools, universities):* this objective includes using schools and other institutions as community hubs, influencing the design of the new curriculum by the Welsh government and be creative about campaigns and the role of other institutions and organisations in changing our food culture, such as public health services and trade unions. Among others, in this sub-objective it is paramount to acknowledge the importance of nurturing an engaged civil society, considering for example the mid-term role of trade unions, student population and other to be critical and politically engaged to build a better future.
- c) *Community initiatives and knowledge sharing platforms:* Under this objective several steps were identified such as creating networks and harnessing technology to deliver benefits and education. This knowledge sharing platforms need to consider the different means of creating and sharing knowledge, from face to face to internet but also the increasing use of other technologies such as apps or intelligent fridges.
- d) *Joined up thinking, policy and action!:* In the Welsh context the use of the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act (WFGA) is considered key to bring all the elements outlined above together. As some scenarios show, the lack of political leadership and will might truncate many of these activities and therefore it is paramount to act promptly to assure implementation. In order to support this process, participants proposed to identify current funding calls and bring people together to look for resources for capacity building, map ongoing food education activities, crystalize recommendations to local and national partners and create an independent coordination hub.

Diversified Farming Systems for Wales

Vision: The food system is entirely integrated with public health and environmental sustainability agendas. Production systems are ultimately designed to meet local needs (rather than looking for profit externally) for a healthy nutritious diet that balances sustainability with the shortest possible local supply chain. Food system actors take an active role in public health. Some of the main sub-objectives and steps include the following:

- a) Conduct studies assessing *Welsh dietary preferences and nutritional requirements* to determine food supply needs that support nutritional outcomes according to local preferences and cultural diversity. Conduct studies of what food stuffs can sustainably be produced in Wales, and where. The scenario analysis reveals the urgency of conducting this assessment and look for appropriate funding and government support.
- b) *Capacity building about food production and the food system* through education systems and platforms designed to reach different food system actors. This step links well with the food education plan, however, it particularly emphasizes the development of skills around food production. Scenarios highlight the need to consider how and why people will be attracted to work in the agricultural sector before setting up educational programmes.
- c) Design and implement *improved food infrastructure* with the view to shortening supply chains. Decentralise logistics of food distribution by incentivising multiple small companies connected to local food chains. Scenarios reveal the importance of investing in social but also physical infrastructure and look for cost-efficient solutions. This step can contribute to the resilience of the

food chain in front of climate change or other environmental pressures and therefore might attract private investors. However, the term 'local' needs to be problematized since in the Wales Wails scenario means low-wages, environmental degradation and operating within supermarkets.

- d) The measures taken thus far change consumption patterns to a demand for more local, sustainable and nutritious food, as well as increase the participation of farmers in policy making processes. According to the scenario "It's wales, dai, but not as you knew it" this is only feasible if this plan is linked to policy action or the Food System Strategy plan described below.

'Integrated Food Systems Strategy for Wales'

Vision: Wales has an actively implemented, integrated Food Systems Strategy, which includes not just economic but also social/cultural/environmental dimensions, and conversely, is integrated into all other relevant strategies in other domains. This strategy has strong buy in across all sectors; focuses on responsible and locally supportive food system activities (production and beyond); and makes Wales a global frontrunner. This vision has four sub-objectives:

- a) *An integrated, multi-dimensional Food Systems Strategy which includes not just economic but also social/cultural/environmental dimensions, and conversely, is integrated into all other relevant strategies in other* This sub-objective includes the creation of a Food Policy Council in Wales, which will have to deal with several challenges such as the need of strong leadership but also independence and inclusion of different voices (socio-economic, geographical, cultural and sectorial diversity), funding to implement policy but also actions; and the establishment linkages with the Un Sustainable Development Goals and the WFGA, going beyond current strategies based mainly on economic growth and employment towards more holistic goals.
- b) *The Food Systems Strategy has buy-in and active participation from private sector, academia, civil society.* The plan makes references to ways of involving the private sector and civil society in this transition, such as developing league tables and specific targets for private sector and civil society including a mix of carrots and sticks measures for achieving change and innovation in the Welsh food system. The scenarios acknowledge the growing power of the private sector and their capacity to deliver change, however they also exemplify that there might be different ways of involving the private sector before it becomes the sole 'regulator' of the food system.
- c) *The FS Strategy focuses on responsible and locally supportive food system activities (production and beyond).* This sub-objective includes steps such as harness pride in Wales/Welshness for food produced/sold in Wales, linking it to tourism and jobs; celebrate food identity with communities, schools, public sector, etc.; and develop criteria to support good food that include aspects such as quality + ethics + environment + distance where trade-offs are explained.
- d) The FS strategy makes *Wales a global leader and example.* This last sub-objective includes encouraging leaders and businesses with a global perspective to participate in the strategy, 'it's hip to be a pioneer'. It is also paramount to develop a rationale where actors' activities guided by the action plan are measured and reported with a strong link to the Wellbeing of Future Generations act – highlighting its link to the Sustainable Development Goals to demonstrate the leading position of Wales in terms of food.

