

Annual Report

Newsletter No 9

April 2005

This issue of our Newsletter presents the first ANNUAL REPORT of the Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes and Oxfordshire (BBO) Food Groups Federation

Contents

1	Main Stakeholders	2
	South East England Development Agency	2
	South East Food Groups Partnership	2
2	BBO Food Groups Membership	4
3	Members Promotion	5
	A. Food Guide 2005	5
	B. Website	5
	C. Producer shows	6
	D. Newsletter	6
	E. SEFGP e-bulletins	7
	F. Press Releases	7
4	Trade development	7
	A. Producer portfolios	7
	B. Working with supermarkets and local shops	7
	C. Local Trade Shows	8
	D. Public procurement market research	8
5	Capacity Building	9
	A. Training	9
	B. Producer meetings	9
6	Working with partners	10
	A. Linking with healthy living projects	10
	B. Reconnecting producers and local schools	10
7	Financial overview (2004-2005)	11

The principal Objectives of the federation are to:

- Support producers to sell locally;
- Promote the benefits of food produced in BBO area;
- Enable as many people as possible to have access to good locally produced food;
- Initiate and support projects that enable the production and consumption of locally produced food;
- Encourage producers to use environmentally friendly methods and practise good animal welfare.

2004-2005 Highlights:

- The three food groups started working together as a federation in April 2004;
- Launched the quarterly BBO Newsletter in April 04;
- In June the Berkshire Food Group was constituted;
- In November we launched the new Membership Scheme;
- Our new website www.local-food.net was launched in December;
- January 2005 was marked by the first and very successful three-county Trade Show 'Linking Local Food and Tourism';
- Secured funding for Eating Local food in Thames Valley Schools Project, and worked with four schools in BBO to increase use and understanding of local food.

Priorities for 2005-2006:

Capacity Building

- Strengthen partnerships with local authorities and supporting organisations;
- Grow membership pool;
- Increase presence at Farmers' Markets and local shows and fairs;
- Enhance members' participation in training and networking events;

Promotion and Trade

- Focus on Local Food and Hospitality Industry across BBO;
- Promote Quality Assurance Schemes;
- Link local producers into Public Procurement and schools;
- Improve promotion through website, Food Guide, newsletters, Producer Portfolios and presence at shows and fairs.



Binfield Vineyard, Berks



Rumsey's Handmade Chocolates, Bucks



Duns Tew Organic Beef, Oxon

I Main Stakeholders

South East England Development Agency

The South East delivery plan, Farming and Food: our Healthy Future, published in January 2004 proposed a regional framework for implementation of the Government's Strategy for Sustainable Farming and Food, which was published in December 2002 in response to the Curry report.



The South East England Development Agency (SEEDA) backed this programme with a 3-year support package of 'cluster funding' for each food group across the South East. It required the food groups in Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes and Oxfordshire to work as a federation, with core activities administered by the Oxfordshire Food Group. The sum earmarked for the BBO area is £135,000 over three years, starting in April 2004 and supported by match funding from local authorities and private sources.



South East Food Groups Partnership

SEFGP is the sector group for local and regional produce in the South East of England. SEFGP is funded by SEEDA and brings together food groups in the South East – BBO, Kent, Hampshire, Isle of White, Surrey, and Sussex.

Working with SEFGP has enabled us to offer more training and advisory support to our members, to organise local shows and to be represented at national level (for example sector strategy development and regional representation at international trade shows). Two of our producer members – Cross Lanes Fruit Farm and Copas Turkeys sit on the SEFGP Board.

Berkshire Food Group was created in summer 2004 and is supported by the unitary authorities in Berkshire. The Steering Group includes representatives from Primary Care Trusts, Berkshire Healthy Schools, Thames Valley Farmers' Markets Co-op, local food producers and farm shops. In January 2005 the Community Council for Berkshire took over the running of the Berkshire Food Group for the following twelve months.



To contact Berkshire Food Group, email Elaine Cook from the Community Council for Berkshire Elaine.cook@ccberks.org.uk

Buckinghamshire & Milton Keynes



Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes Food Group was launched in 2001 as a partnership comprising Buckinghamshire County Council, Aylesbury Vale District Council, Chiltern District Council, Milton Keynes Council, the South-East Food Group Partnership and Business Link.

To contact the Food Group, email Nancy Pound from Buckinghamshire County Council npound@buckscc.gov.uk

*To promote the production and consumption of local food
our mission*



Oxfordshire Food Group was set up in 1998 and was launched as a membership organisation for producers in 2002. OFG is governed by the Steering Group, which consists of the local authorities, Business Link, Oxfordshire Economic Partnership, NFU and the Thames Valley Farmers' Market Co-operative, as well as local producers. OFG employs a full-time manager who also co-ordinates three-county activities and works to individual targets developed within the context of the 2004-2007 Business Plan¹.

To contact Oxfordshire Food Group email [Tamara Schiopu localfood@brookes.ac.uk](mailto:Tamara.Schiopu@brookes.ac.uk)

Oxford Brookes University BBO Food Groups federation is hosted by Oxford Brookes University (OBU), in the School of Built Environment. OBU provides an office, payroll, personnel, financial and IT services; printing and design services. The service provided by OBU is financed through a management fee of 10% on the core funding. This involves a considerable (in-kind) contribution from OBU to the Food Group. The arrangement has been very successful in providing a stable base and supportive working environment for the manager and the work of the food groups federation.



TVFMC

The BBO region is covered by the Thames Valley Farmers' Market Co-operative (TVFMC), and there is considerable scope to work with TVFMC in order to avoid duplication of efforts. A marketing strategy has been developed jointly with TVFMC with the following highlights:

- TVFMC members enjoy Full Membership benefits offered by the BBO Food Groups after applying and paying the Associate Membership fees.
- BBO Food Groups support the creation of new Farmers' Markets every year throughout the three counties. Windsor FM in Berkshire was launched on 5 March 2005 and BBO Food Groups sponsored the publicity campaign and development of promotional handouts and signs.
- The 2005 Food Guide is distributed through all local Farmers' Markets, and is available to the public throughout the year.
- TVFMC members sit on Steering Groups in each of the three county food groups and ensure that the interests of their members are respected and followed.



BBO Food Groups are also supported by:

Association of Councils in the Thames Valley Region	Oxfordshire County Council
Aylesbury Vale District Council	Oxfordshire Economic Partnership
Buckinghamshire Community Action	Oxford, Swindon and Gloucester Co-operative
Buckinghamshire County Council	Rural Issues Action Group
Business Link for Oxfordshire, Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes	Sheepdrove Organic farm
Cherwell District Council	South Oxfordshire District Council
Chiltern District Council	The Chilterns Conservation Board
DEFRA	Vale of Aylesbury Primary Care Trust
Food From Britain	Vale of White Horse District Council
Government Office of the South East	West Berkshire Council
Milton Keynes Council	West Oxfordshire District Council

¹ This Annual Report is based on headings of the 2004-2007 BBO Business Plan. You can download the Business Plan from our website www.local-food.net/content/aboutus.asp

2 BBO Food Groups Membership

During the summer of 2004 a membership package was developed in consultation with producers and consumers. The new Membership Scheme started in November 2004 with a formal launch from January 2005. This includes paying membership categories for producers, consumers and businesses, with the possibility of a sliding scale related to expected benefits.

BBO Food Groups members can choose from four different types of membership:

- Associate Membership
- Full Membership
- Patrons
- Food Forum

Complete information on membership categories and fees is on our website: www.local-food.net/content/benefits.asp

At the time of writing this report BBO Food Groups have registered 110 active members:

In Berkshire – 28 members, including Patron member – Doves Farm Foods;

In Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes – 30 members;

In Oxfordshire – 52 members;

The Food Forum has been joined by 12 members of the public and local public organisations.

The list of all BBO Food Groups members is on our website www.local-food.net/directory/



Copas Turkeys, Berks



Benson Fruit Juices, Glouc.



Quince Products, Oxon

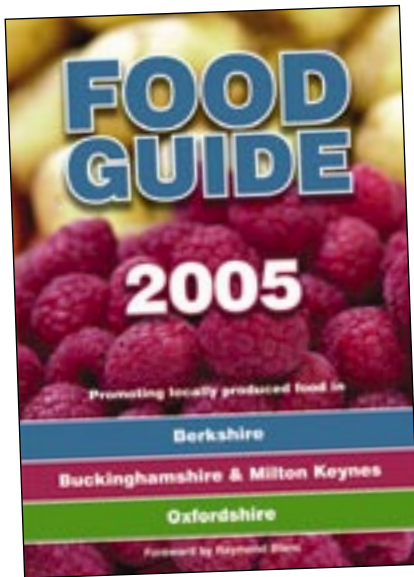


Brightwell Vineyard, Oxon



Berry Leys Farm, Bucks

3 Members Promotion



A. Food Guide 2005

For the first time this Food Guide covers the whole BBO area. We have improved the listing, maps and indexing and sought the views of producers to ensure it is as user friendly as possible. The Guide has been very successful in attracting advertising and sponsorship.

The Food Guide (50,000 print run) is distributed through public libraries, tourism information centres, local authorities offices, local shops, restaurants and pubs, farmers' markets and is also available to the public from our office. The information can also be found on the website, in the form of a searchable database, which includes links to producers' own websites.

The Food Guide has been published for the whole of BBO area in 2005. The Guide has been very successful in attracting advertising and sponsorship

Our new website promotes producers of local food and drink across the three counties and is an essential tool to support our members in their marketing.

B. Website www.local-food.net

Our new website promotes producers of local food and drink across the three counties and is an essential tool to support our members in their marketing.

This is a clean, simple and fast-to-use online information service whilst at the same time presenting a clear, easy to navigate and visually stimulating website. BBO Food Groups members find the new website a useful facility to promote their produce, to find new suppliers and markets, and to update their details on-line. The site includes a powerful search mechanism, which enables wider public and food group members to find information about local food and drink.

Individual portal pages for Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes and Oxfordshire make everybody feel 'at home'.



C. Producer shows

Participation in shows is often considered expensive and time consuming for producers, but we constantly encouraged our members to benefit from our assistance and support at various shows. In 2004-2005 producers from BBO were invited to exhibit and many received our support.

In order to raise the profile of BBO Food Groups at various events, we had twenty T-shirts (saying 'Ask me about local food') and Food Group banners produced before the show season.

Berkshire:

- The Royal County of Berkshire Show, 18-19 September
- A Taste of Berkshire, Wickcroft Farm Shop, 20 May

Buckinghamshire:

- Bucks County Show, 2 September
- The Henley Show, 11 September

Oxfordshire:

- YFC and Oxfordshire County Show in Didcot, 22 May
- Wychwood Fair, Oxfordshire, 5 September

National:

- Speciality and Fine Food Fair in London, 5-7 September
- IFE¹ 2005 in London, 13-16 March, 2005
- Great British Cheese Festival at Blenheim Palace, 24-26 September

Three-county (BBO) shows:

- 'Linking Local Food and Tourism' Trade Show in Wallingford², 26 January 2005

¹ International Food and Drink Event

² please see more about the Trade Show on page 8



BBO Food Groups at the Newbury Show



Cross Lanes Fruit and The Green Bean, Oxon at The Henley Show



Wychwood Fair



The Speciality and Fine Food Fair, London



The Cheese Festival at Blenheim Palace



D. Newsletter

We published three issues of the BBO Food Groups newsletter in May, July and November 2004. This Annual Report is the latest newsletter. Between 400-600 copies are printed and sent to members as well as distributed at exhibitions and as promotional handouts. Digital versions are available on line at www.local-food.net

E. SEFGP e-bulletins

The e-bulletin is issued by the South East Food Groups Partnership and is forwarded to food group members and non-members on the mailing list, with the addition of relevant local news. A link to the e-bulletins is available on our website at www.local-food.net/content/partners.asp

SEFGP also owns the Local Food database www.buylocalfood.co.uk (consumers); www.sourcelocalfood.co.uk (trade buyers) which is updated by each county food group. Our members automatically become members of the SEFGP database with wider coverage.

F. Press Releases

With support from SEFGP and Oxford Brookes University, BBO Food Groups issued 14 press releases throughout the year on various events, such as up-coming local trade and consumer shows, new website launch, new membership launch, 2005 Food Guide, the Local Food and Tourism Trade Show. We have a rich portfolio of published articles now and most press releases are on our website www.local-food.net/content/news.asp

4 Trade development

A. Producer portfolios

This is a trade development initiative to support producers. Individual product profile sheets are designed for business promotion and to form part of a trade development pack 'Quality Food from Berkshire, Buckinghamshire & Milton Keynes, and Oxfordshire'. Twelve businesses have signed up in the last year. More than 1,000 packs were sent to retailers and catering outlets across BBO. The packs are also used to promote food from the region at local and national food fairs and festivals. Each participating business receives 1,500 copies of their profile page for their own use.

Producers are encouraged quarterly to apply for this promotional tool which is subsidised by BBO Food Groups up to 50%.



Speciality Breads, Bucks



Copas Turkeys presenting to Waitrose



Tolhurst Organic Produce, Oxon at the Royal Show

B. Working with supermarkets and local shops

BBO Food Groups worked with Waitrose to identify and introduce potential producers into the suppliers network under a special 'Locally Produced' scheme. Various producers of pork, turkey, ice cream, wines, and eggs were introduced to Waitrose experts in local foods. Negotiations are currently underway with most of them regarding future supplies. However, selling into supermarkets can be a very challenging ambition, therefore perseverance is required from all producers wishing to pursue such an initiative. We will continue to support our members by offering special training courses preparing them for this highly competitive market.

Waitrose proved their commitment to supporting local producers through their Small Producer Awards scheme, which we promoted for the second consecutive year. BBO Food Groups members have won the 2004 Award in the Fruit and Veg category and we are happy to provide support to new candidates this year. Four members from the three counties have applied for the 2005 Award.

Through the South East Food Group Partnership (SEFGP) our members are supported to acquire various quality assurance schemes such as EFSIS (European Food Standard) accreditation for producers intending to supply new markets.

C. Local Trade Shows

In March 2004 we evaluated the success of the 2002 Big Breakfast project in South Oxfordshire and decided to embark on the second phase of the initiative to promote local foods across the BBO area. Together with Tourism South East and South Oxfordshire District Council, BBO Food Groups developed a project plan and sought Food From Britain support in organising a 3-county Trade Show preceded by educational workshops for local hospitality providers.



Woburn County Foods, Bucks



Duns Tew Organic Beef, Oxon



Susie's Preserves, Berks



Local Tastes, Oxon



Bread & Co, Oxon

Four workshops were organised in Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire which brought together more than 60 local B&Bs, hotels and restaurants. Buckinghamshire Tourism Officers were extremely helpful in organising their local workshop and bringing together 28 local B&Bs.

The workshops culminated in January 2005 with the 3-county Trade Show '**Linking Local Food and Tourism**' at the Springs Hotel in Wallingford. At the Trade Show we had 32 BBO producers (23 businesses) displaying and promoting their produce to more than 80 representatives of the local hospitality industry.

Producers had the opportunity to promote their produce in the cooking demonstration 'Creative Breakfast Ideas' performed by the Springs Hotel Chef. The two workshops 'Local Foods Distribution' and 'Creative Selling Ideas' gave participants new insights into enhancing their businesses through adding value to their produce and co-operation for marketing and distribution purposes.

As a result of the research into the local supply, a special database has been produced, comprising 57 BBO members interested in supplying to the hospitality industry. The database is available in pdf format from our home page www.local-food.net

We aimed to generate at least £10,000 worth of sales as a result of the event, and will work with participants to monitor the sales generated.

D. Public procurement market research

Research led by Oxford Brookes University is currently under way into the markets and conditions needed to increase public procurement of local produce across the BBO area. This follows the conference funded by Food From Britain, held on March 24 2004. We have also produced a special database of BBO food producers interested in supplying their products to public and private caterers (Read more about this in the 'Working with Schools Initiative').



Jonathan Wilkins at the Conference, March 2004

5 Capacity Building

A. Training

Details of training opportunities for farmers, growers, producers and processors of local food are available from the BBO Food Groups' one-stop shop on the website www.local-food.net and through the regular e-bulletins and the newsletters. We link with a wide range of organisations including RBAT (Rural Business Advice and Training Network), the Learning and Skills Council, LANTRA and other agencies. Thanks to additional support from SEEDA, our members can benefit from up to 75% subsidies in their training costs.

We have promoted three different ways for our members to benefit from available training courses:

1. Find your own course.

We have sent by post the RBAT Advice and Training Directory. Companies included in this directory provide services that are specific to rural businesses. If (staff) members need training, they are encouraged to find the courses that suit them and apply for subsidies. The application procedure is simple: fill in the special form (www.local-food.net/events) and send it back SEFGP (contact details on the Form).

2. Join regional courses.

SEFGP organises regional courses, such as 'Butchery Courses' in July, 'Applying for EFSIS' in October, 'Setting up and running a butchers shop' in February 2005. We promote the courses through our network and members can again attend with substantial subsidies.

3. Make your own course.

Alternatively, we can organise our own training events, for example 'Advertising on a Low Budget' in November, 'So, you want to sell in supermarkets?!' in March. These courses are only for one day, organised locally and tailored to our members' needs, as well as highly subsidised. Participants' comments have been extremely positive and we would like to encourage all members to take advantage of these opportunities to improve their business.



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B. Producer meetings

Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes Food Group has organised the most cluster meetings in 2004-2005 leading on this activity and setting a good example for networking among producers and other stakeholders. Their quarterly meetings bring together producers and Steering Group members and issues discussed include: local shows, advanced distribution schemes, the Food Directory, etc.

BBO Food Groups organised a series of 3-county meetings, such as the launch of the new website and of the new Membership scheme in December with 70 people attending and the Trade Show in February with more than 100 people attending.



New consumer members



Local Foods Dinner at Headington Hill in Oxford

6 Working with partners

The following projects have been carried out largely by the food groups in their local areas. However the events have been promoted and supported whenever possible on a BBO-wide basis (Newsletters, press releases, website, various shows).



A. Linking with healthy living projects

BBO Food Groups developed a special flyer 'Delicious and Nutritious Packed Lunches' aimed at parents whose children take lunch boxes to school. The flyers were launched at the Henley Show in September and have been distributed to schools by request. All primary schools in Buckinghamshire received flyers for their children by the end of March 2005. For free copies please contact BBO Food Groups office.

Oxfordshire Food Group has also been supporting the 'Oxfordshire Playbus' in their initiative to run a local Vegetable Box Scheme in low-income areas around Oxford.

Bags with fruit and veg are sold at very affordable prices of £2.50. The Fruit and Veg scheme is simple and easy to run from a community centre, church hall, school, etc. Volunteers start the groups and find members interested in buying from the Playbus.

The initiative requires research into local supply market, distribution approaches, marketing the scheme and building up sustainability. These are areas where the Food Group helped with advice, training and distribution of information. At the moment the Playbus Fruit and Veg scheme needs support from suppliers and from community organisations and members of the public to promote it as much as possible.

B. Reconnecting producers and local schools

In partnership with the Centre for Environmental Studies in the Hospitality Industry (CESHI) at Oxford Brookes University BBO Food Groups won funding from the Government Office for the South East (DEFRA) to run trials of locally produced food in one school in each of the three counties. CESHI carried out the research element of the project, which involved changing some items on school menus in the spring term, to introduce local products.

At the same time, each school works to raise awareness about sustainable, healthy and nutritious food, and we will monitor uptake of school meals and satisfaction with the new menus. The environmental impact of using more local suppliers will be measured and three case studies will be produced for publication by DEFRA.



Ladymede School, Aylesbury, Bucks

The project has also produced a Directory of local suppliers which can be used by other schools in Berkshire, Buckinghamshire, Milton Keynes or Oxfordshire who wish to replicate the project and introduce some local food into their meals (available by request).

BBO Food Groups hope to achieve some continuity following the pilots, i.e. that the schools will carry on using the local suppliers and even extend the range that is locally sourced. We hope to facilitate local sourcing for schools by providing them with information - in the form of the directory mentioned above - to enable caterers to identify local produce and set up contracts with the producers. The project report will be published by DEFRA in April 2005 and will be available on our website as well.

7 Financial overview (2004-2005)

BBO Food Groups need to achieve financial sustainability by generating income from membership fees and services, and to consider the development of a formally constituted organisation as a social enterprise. The group believes, however, that local authorities will continue to have a role in supporting the groups' wider agenda after 2007, since their remit covers a wide range of economic, environmental, social and rural development issues, as well as schools and social care.

Income		£	Expenditure		£
Membership Fees		5246	Cost of Projects		
Advertising		2300		Newsletters	2844
Services		2697		Website	4191
LA Contributions				2005 Food Directory	19300
	West Berkshire Council	2800		Producer Shows	4946
	Bucks CC	8000		New Farmers' Markets	650
	MK Council	500		Producer Portfolios	1528
	Aylesbury Valley DC	500		Market Research	7500
	Chilterns DC	1000		Training and Networking	2831
	Oxfordshire CC	10000		Membership Development	932
	Cherwell DC, North Oxfordshire	2000		Linking with Healthy Living Projects	777
	West Oxfordshire DC	2000		Reconnecting Producers with Local Schools	8002
	South Oxfordshire DC	2000		Linking Local Food and Tourism	9031
	Vale of White Horse DC	2000			
Grants			Total Cost of Projects		62533
	SEEDA	40000	General and Administration		
	DEFRA - GOSE	8000		Salaries and part time fees	29990
	Food From Britain	7350		Salary-on-cost and overheads	13118
Sponsorship				Transportation and Consumables	1786
	Oxfordshire Economic Partnership	2500	Total General and Administration		44896
	Business Link, Oxfordshire, Bucks and MK	1000	Total Expenditure		107.429
	OSG Co-op	2000	Balance summary		
	Sheepdrove Organic Farm	500		Income	102,393
Total Income		102,393		Expenditure	107,429
			Income - Expenditure¹		-5,036

¹SEEDA have requested to roll over £5,000 into April 2005, thus increasing our projected income for Year 2 by 5K.



GOVERNMENT OFFICE FOR THE SOUTH EAST



WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

