



## Local food and nature conservation?

Some stats:

- 1953 Herts had 373 dairy herds – now perhaps 6?
- Loss of 95% herb-rich meadows in Herts and elsewhere
- In Herts, no abattoirs, or livestock markets, one knacker left. Tring alone had 5 abattoirs.
- Loss of 66% all orchard sites, over 90% recognisable orchards (PTES)
- 2,889 S41 Priority Species Actions - not *all* Herts.....

Yet

- 10 yrs ago, no apple juice produced in or around Herts; last year, around 200,000 bottles
- 15 years ago, no Farmers Markets; today at least 8, possibly 15+ in Herts
- Increase in Farm Shops and local food in restaurants
- Local Food Strategies e.g. Dacorum –
  - Farm it!
  - Grow it!
  - Process it!
  - Buy it!
  - Eating out!
  - Eating in – cook it!
  - Economics – reducing waste, making ends meet
  - Healthy eating
  - Food, glorious food!



*Tring's own Favourite  
Apple Recipes  
25 delicious fruity dishes  
for you to try  
from Tring's Own Apple Fayre*



## What has any of this got to do with biodiversity?

Natural England's Green Infrastructure Guidance 2009, **Food production and productive landscapes** states:

*'The potential for reducing the environmental impact of the food chain through a more local system was identified by the Curry Commission report and has been highlighted by organisations such as Sustain. The main potential impacts are reduced transport demand and increases in environmentally benign farming practices'.*

Loss of high quality habitats, increased fragmentation and decline in associated species are primarily linked to changes in land management practices and economics – whether a drive for cheaper food or land prices which drive land towards development potential and leisure pursuits. Development pressure is now having an increasing impact on what's left, but planning policies don't eat grass.

Massive disconnect with environment – 'Nature Deficit Disorder'

Massive disconnect with food – where from, how produced, and food culture.

### However:

- Some farms still include biologically important land
- Some farms farm biologically important land elsewhere
- Smaller farms help maintain the agricultural infrastructure enabling such practices to take place and develop local markets
- In places, farming and food provide a powerful and fundamental connection linking people to their environment and other cultural activities, as well as securing biodiversity in places. Venison & the Deer Initiative.
- Address disconnect? 'They've put cows in there to stop people entering' or 'Why do we have to have animals in there at all?' - views expressed in a Herts Country Park of woodland, wetlands and open grassland....

We support / promote agri-environment but the primary product is naturally environmental; the *farmed* product invariably disappears into the black hole of the food chain, losing any connection or profile.

BAPs, LNPs, Biodiversity 2020 now demand 'Living Landscapes' and Mosaics as part of the maintenance and restoration of sites and ecological networks, but without any real promotion or perhaps even recognition of the primary driver of land management itself required to deliver these; the holistic picture is rarely presented, promoted or even perhaps understood....at least from a farm business perspective.

Our counties are pretty densely populated; relatively affluent, providing a massive potential market and engagement opportunity – on top of London, a world market in itself. Yet there is little or no link. So what?

- How important is this aspect?
- Should we be concerned or support a local food agenda where that has the opportunity to provide direct and indirect environmental and biodiversity benefits?
- Should we be considering ways to help sustain this where genuinely effective?
- What existing initiatives are there regionally or within counties? Taste of Anglia, East Anglian Food Link, Big Barn? Grazing flock meat a click away?
- Any thoughts / ideas?