



STUDENTS
ORGANISING FOR
SUSTAINABILITY
UNITED KINGDOM



Fun, Learning
and Achievement



How Farming Can Cool The Planet, March 2022 to June 2023 report

A Collaborative youth project between SOS-UK, FLAME and NFYFC

Project aim

To enable young people with different lived experiences to share their stories with each other, to find common ground, and to ultimately have a united voice so they can tackle the climate crisis through food and farming together.

Project partners

1. Students Organising for Sustainability (SOS-UK)
2. National Federation of Young Farmers' Clubs (NFYFC)
3. Youth branch of the Landworkers' Alliance (FLAME)

Key activities and outputs

As documented in our annual report, we slightly shifted our project aim within the first year of the project in response to feedback from the young adults we're all working with. To fully reflect this aim we also needed to slightly revise our activities and outputs although they still included farm visits, events, and creating resources.

Farm visits

In July 22 we visited Abbey Home Farm in Gloucestershire

- 650 hectares, certified organic
- Dairy, beef, sheep, pigs, poultry (eggs and meat), cereals (300ha) and vegetables (10ha)
- Farm shop and cafe

In Sept 22 we visited Knepp Estate Farm

- Wild Range meat is sold as part of the Knepp Castle 3500 acre rewilding project - free roaming herds of Old English Longhorn cattle, Tamworth pigs, Red and Fallow deer.
- Organic 100% pasture-fed Sussex suckler herd
- Free-range hens and a market garden

In May 23 we visited Yeo Valley Farm in Somerset

- 2000 acres, inc. 600 acres of woodland
- Regenerative, organic and non-organic farming
- Over 400 British Friesian cows and 800 sheep
- Work with over 150 organic dairy farms across the UK
- Running the Yeo Valley Soil Carbon project with 20 other organic farms to measure and benchmark soil carbon levels



Events

Landworkers' Alliance Land Skills Fair at Abbey Home Farm in Cirencester, July 22

- 200 attendees (9 young people from our project).
- Building the Food and Land Justice movement through diverse, celebratory and creative workshops, talks, activities, music, and food.
- We had a tent and organised several activities including recording fourteen 20 minute interviews enabling participants from our project to share their views on food, farming, and the climate.

FarmED Emergent Generation 2022 at FarmED and the Royal Agricultural University, Sept 22

- 3 days, 120 participants (10 young people involved in our workshop).
- Launch event for "A new ecosystem of young champions building sustainable farming & food systems", aimed at 18-26 year olds.
- Young people from FLAME, NFYFC, SOS-UK, supported by Sarah Palmer from NFYFC, ran a workshop entitled 'How Collaborating and Farming Can Cool The Planet' sharing insights into the practicalities of collaborating (benefits, challenges, fundraising) so we can achieve more together.

SOS-UK Student Sustainability Summit at Lincoln University Students' Union, Feb 23

- 100 delegates from universities/colleges (18 young people in our session).
- We delivered a panel session entitled 'Farming and the climate and nature crisis: The importance of recognising different peoples lived experience when you want to create change - finding commonality and a united youth voice.'
- The session was facilitated in an 'In conversation with...' format by Anya from Landworkers' Alliance and the panel consisted of an active member of FLAME who grew up on a farm, a former NFYFC Youth Forum Chair who works for the largest independent hatchery in the UK, and a Business Studies student passionate about the climate and nature crises.

Food Ethics Council 25th anniversary event in London, June 23

- Event to promote discussion and listen to the concerns/advice of the next generation, attended by NFYFC and FLAME members.
- Panel aged 25 or under: a new entrant farmer who operates a cow-with-calf dairy, a Sustainability Executive at a major food retailer, and the founding co-chair of BiteBack 2030 and food justice campaigner.

Resources

Infographic

- Three informative infographic images collaboratively created by young people in our three organisations by finding content everyone agreed on
- Versions created for Instagram stories and posts as well as Twitter.
- A project logo was created as part of the process.
- A press release was written and the infographic was shared via social media, websites, etc by all project partners.

Multimedia video

- By taking photos and recording video footage from the farm tours and events we were able to map the journey of those involved in the project, sharing their experiences, perceptions and positive messages and giving them a bigger platform for their voices to be heard.
- The full video is 8 minutes long and includes animated text, sound, graphics, quotes, etc.
- There is also a shorter 1 minute version that will be used on social media by all project partners to hopefully encourage people to watch the full video on YouTube.

Project impact

We estimate our farm visits, events and resources have directly reached around 300 young people across our three organisations, with many more having seen social media posts, read newsletters, etc. But our deliverables only tell part of the story. What has been most exciting has been the conversations had and the relationships built. The bringing together of young people who all have an interest in and expertise of food, farming and/or climate but have very different experiences has been eye-opening for all. The respectful way the young people involved have listened to each other and learned from each other should teach us all something! We have created a photographic summary, with participant quotes, of all the How Farming Can Cool The Planet activities from March 2022 to June 2023.

"I was sitting at Yeo Valley having lunch and listening to the conversations of those all around me. On one side there was a deep discussion happening between a science university student and a young farmer about soil health. They were comparing notes between the theory learnt and observed on field trips and the experience of a young farmer on their farm. On the other side there was a member of FLAME discussing access to land with a new entrant farmer and what could be done to improve it. For me it is an enabling space for these conversations to happen which is so exciting about this project"
Anya Hyndside, FLAME staff support

Impact of the project on NFYFC members

- It has highlighted the positive impact of collaborative working: funding, ideas, opportunities, discussion, ironing out misconceptions, knowledge exchange, and using different platforms to share messages.
- Provided the opportunity for communication to a wide-ranging audience.
- The opportunity to play a part in changing a narrative: farming being part of the solution for tackling the climate emergency as well as food production and creating environmental benefits.
- When the chair of the Youth Forum was asked "What has been your group's greatest achievement this year?" the response was:

"This year we have been involved in a joint project with SOS-UK, FLAME and the YFC AGRI Steering group, called 'How Farming Can Cool The Planet'. The collaborative project aims to promote the positive impacts agriculture can have on the environment. The project isn't completed yet, however it will be a good resource for young people and it has been great to work with other youth organisations."
Rosie Finney, NFYFC Youth Forum Chair

Impact of the project on FLAME members

Members of FLAME have benefitted from doing joint farm visits and attending or speaking at events. Not only did farm visits enable them to visit a variety of farms and events that they wouldn't otherwise have been able to visit, but to do so alongside others with different experiences.

I particularly noticed this at Knepp where the specific and experience-informed questions from young farmers were fascinating and gave a new level of depth to the learning that FLAME members received. FLAME members have told me that they were surprised just how much common ground they found with the other groups, despite having different lived experiences of the issues.

FLAME have very limited funding so this project is influential in enabling FLAME members to visit farms and attend events that many participants couldn't otherwise do. The project also provided an opportunity for young people to have their voices and stories heard, something which we hope to increase in the next iteration.

"It's been really great to meet like-minded people during the How Farming Can Cool The Planet project. I've met people who I might not ordinarily come into contact with but share many of the same values. The knowledge sharing aspect of the project has been insightful."
Lawrence Weston, FLAME member

Impact of the project on students

Unless students are studying agriculture they don't tend to get the opportunity to visit farms. Despite this, many are passionate about the climate and nature crises and in research conducted by SOS-UK in 2021, 78% of students said that if they knew more about the environmental impact of food production, they would be willing to make changes to reduce their impact.

This project is enabling students to see and understand how food is produced first hand, to understand the positive impact agroecological farming methods can have, to talk to young people who have spent their lives producing food, and to those who are advocating for food and land justice.

"The How Farming Can Cool the Planet project provides an opportunity for students to learn more about the agrifood system. Through field visits and interactive activities, I have gained new knowledge of sustainable agriculture outside the classroom."
Ruihan Zhu, student at the University of Oxford

Food justice and addressing inequities in the food system

The negative impacts of sustainability inaction disproportionately affect underrepresented groups globally and in the UK.

We have taken great care to enable any young person to feel they could be part of the project if they wanted to be. For example, we have been inclusive with our comms, paid travel expenses and speaker fees, made different communication platforms available, and offered bursaries to help with any financial barriers to taking part such as work or caring commitments.

"I think a better join up between young people who are campaigning for changes to our food and farming system and those who are producing food on farms is one of the most powerful ways of advancing food justice for the future."
Anya Hyndside, FLAME staff support

"The infographic, press release, farm visits and multi-media video, all enabled knowledge exchange, discussion and consideration of the different food growing (and selling) systems. They also helped to share a positive message from young people about sustainable food production."

Sarah Palmer, NFYFC AGRI & PR Manager



Working in a collaborative partnership

The collaboration in this project has been brilliant - for the young people involved and for the staff! We needed to take a bit of time at the start to get to know and trust each other, understand the context of the project, learn exactly what each of our organisations do, and how we all work with young people as this varied significantly. Once we had this understanding and worked through how to work together it's been really fun throughout. In general collaborative projects take time to establish so short funding pots are not ideal.

Summary of challenges

- Slow start to ensure everyone had an opportunity to get to know each other.
- Aligning busy diaries of project staff leads.
- Aligning timetables to accommodate meetings, plans and project work with existing work/study and time commitments for young people involved with the project.
- Establishing effective working practices e.g. day/time/frequency of regular meetings, deciding on and setting up a Slack workspace and shared Google Drive.
- Planning events and opportunities, and creating interesting appealing visits with opportunities for informal discussion as well as structured knowledge exchange, that were appropriate to young people in each of our organisations.
- Equitably capturing feedback and footage for evaluation and production of the multimedia video.
- Enabling on-farm visits for participants who may not have previously had the opportunity to attend and trying to make them as inclusive as possible e.g. with bursaries and pre booking travel to visits when needed.

Summary of positives

- We were able to break down misconceptions by discussion and sharing information - harnessing the power of communication.
- Once the project name, aim and work plan were established, the conversations, opportunities, personal interaction through farm visits, attending conferences, etc provided positive and uplifting experiences.

- The experience of meeting different young people, engaging in diverse opportunities, going on visits, taking part in meetings and discussions enthused the young people involved.
- An ‘energy’ noted of different young people gathering to look, learn, discuss ideas, eat, socialise and share their experiences.
- Collaboration has led to extended inclusion in associated work and further opportunities for input to events.
- Friends made and opportunities created for further collaboration on existing and future work (between both the young participants and staff).
- Establishing effective working arrangements with project partners led to trust and genuine collaboration making the most of an extensive skill set.
- Reaffirmation of the power (and enjoyment) of collaboration.

Project challenges and lessons learnt

Within the project there wasn’t that much funding for staff time and delivery once it was split between three organisations, collaborative projects probably need more staffing than people anticipate, especially if you are also trying to facilitate real youth ownership of a project *and* deliver its objectives on time. The time frame has also been short once you build in the time needed to build really strong relationships between the three organisations. But we have made it work and the working relationship built between young people and the staff team between the three organisations has been brilliant!

We had some learning that was really good when we developed the infographic. The learnings there were around how to enable young people from one organisation to take a lead in developing comms material, but supporting the facilitation to ensure that what was developed represented the views of all three. This is a hard thing to do, and we were so impressed at the way in which the teams of young people worked together to find a way through it to develop something that they all agreed with. We can learn from this in future comms work; it is essentially about how you enable different voices and viewpoints to sit alongside each other within one project.

We also learned that young people really want to do farm visits and attend events together and are sick of organising or attending online webinars! We’ve also moved away from developing ‘educational resources’ and towards sharing and amplifying youth voices and views from different perspectives which feels good as it feels more respectful and inclusive. We are now leading from young people’s perspectives rather than just giving them information (i.e. educational resources we’d originally planned to create and share) so they can plan, discuss, learn and innovate together.

Unexpected positive outcomes

- The genuine interest for understanding more about sustainable food production (particularly by those who sought to buy sustainable ingredients but had never visited a farm).
- Young people’s grace when presented with facts and experiences to change their mindset.
- Eagerness to look, learn and experience.
- Opportunity to reach a wide and diverse audience with positive discussion, thoughts, ideas, feedback, particularly with the release of the video.
- Renewed passion and enjoyment whilst working on a project that works with young people to help share positive messages, experiences and great hope for the food system.

- Just how much better young people are at working together and being respectful of each others opinions than adults!
- The learning and fun had by staff as well as the youth participants.
- Wider opportunities being shared between the three organisations - e.g. invite from young farmers for a member of SOS-UK or FLAME to join the NFYFC Youth Forum, ability to join the SOS-UK sustainability summit, FLAME members being invited to be part of a focus group that NFYFC are doing on what soil training should include, and SOS-UK working with NFYFC to look at developing carbon literacy training for young farmers.

Future plans and opportunities

Having been awarded a year's continuation funding from Farming The Future we are about to embark on the next stage of the project and build on our achievements since March 2022.

We plan to continue creating opportunities for young people from the different organisations to do farm visits and attend events together with a focus on enabling good conversations to take place as well as joint learning. We will encourage more participation to build on a great start of 'culture and experience exchange' with the act of eating together being an important part of all visits.

We will provide and facilitate more opportunities for youth voices active in food, farming and the climate to be heard and amplified, and comms materials will continue to be shared by the different organisations to help expand knowledge and understanding within all our networks.

We will also develop the project message and brand to help others realise the great benefit of collaborative working, pooling resources and innovating. Information from the project will continue to be highlighted in future policy meetings to show how this work aims to change a negative narrative into a positive narrative. And the multimedia video will be widely shared.

There are many more exciting opportunities where our collaboration could have further impact but these would require additional funding. For example:

- Providing evidence for policy makers to highlight how important young people's voices are regarding their interest in sustainable food production and provision.
- Accredited training opportunities.
- Encourage further participation and understanding of soil science and the role of healthy soils not only in sustainable food production, but also carbon capture and increased biodiversity above and below ground.

Communications shared during the project

NFYFC

- Members of the [NFYFC Youth Forum](#) joined the group discussions, input to project work and took part in sustainability/farming events. This work has been highlighted by [Rosie Finney](#) (NFYFC Youth Forum Chair).
- Information was included in the [NFYFC Annual Report](#) and shared at NFYFC Council meetings, within e-newsletters (for example, '[Sharing positive messages](#)' in the YFC AGRI Newsletter), and on NFYFC website features.
- A [press release](#) was written and shared with accompanying social media to highlight the project.
- Detailed accounts of the [Knepp Castle Estate and Farm](#) and [Yeo Valley Farm](#) visits have been written up and shared.
- The project aims, progress and feedback have been featured widely to an audience including YFC membership, supporters, stakeholders and government. Approximately 23,000 members aged 10-28 have been reached through targeted membership communications.

- More than 40,000 people subscribe to NFYFC's monthly newsletter, the YFC BUZZ, which includes information on YFC activity, Council and steering group work as well as all projects, including How Farming Can Cool The Planet.

SOS-UK

- All opportunities such as farm visits and speaking at events, as well as updates such as the infographic created, have been shared via our main SOS-UK newsletter (13,800 recipients), our smaller Food & Farming newsletter, and all our social media channels.
- Information about the project is detailed on our [website](#).
- A [press release](#) was shared with accompanying social media to highlight the project.
- The How Farming Can Cool The Planet infographic has been used as part of training sessions delivered to hundreds of students undertaking soil sampling and biodiversity monitoring as part of our Farming for Carbon & Nature project.

FLAME

- All updates from the How Farming Can Cool The Planet project and opportunities arising from it have been shared in FLAME and LWA's newsletters and social media channels.
- A [press release](#) was shared with accompanying social media to highlight the project.

We have also created a [photographic summary, with participant quotes, of all the How Farming Can Cool The Planet activities](#) from March 2022 to June 2023.

If you would like more information about anything in this report, or you're interested in being involved with the next phase of How Farming Can Cool The Planet (July 23 to July 24), please get in touch with us

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