



WHAT YOU TOLD US...

Thanks to everyone who fed back in our survey at the end of last year. Here's a quick summary...

Basically: You want less packaging - a lot less packaging (you can see we have been doing a lot of work on this, more on page 3); you don't like the carpark and the queues to get in it (we agree) and many also don't want the car park to be bigger as that would inevitably lead to more cars and queues (we've got a wonderful student placement Matt trying to find solutions that are clean, green and free from the machine); many of you are lovely long term loyal customers (and yes, we love that too, we get to see you and your kids

grow and change over the years, it's ace); some of you are ageing with us but loads of you new customers are pretty damn young (wonderful - you young folk are saving the planet and us all); you think our pricing is good value (thanks for noticing, it can be a challenge but this is very important to us); sometimes our opening times don't suit your lifestyle (we get that, sorry); a lot of you are motivated by the ethics of the place (us too!); a lot of you were very interested in kombucha (we have it now!); you love, love, love so many

things - the word love came up 88 times, 20 times more than any other single word (thank you, that made us all feel pretty good) and you would like us to do more things that we just can't at the moment - like open later, open on Mondays, open a cafe, host cooking courses, have music in the shop. But maybe in the future some of these things could happen, given space and time?

Thank you so much for contributing your valuable and constructive thoughts. We love you too.



As you can imagine, Brexit and the ongoing uncertainty around it has been causing us major headaches. We have never been in a position where so much of our operation faces such major disruption, and have certainly never experienced this scarcely credible scenario of having to try and plan for what is still such a big range of unknowns. It's hard to swallow, or to believe it is really happening. Of course, by the time of reading, things could all have changed again, so bear with us!

If we do leave the EU in October, our aim is of course to keep any disruption to trade to the absolute minimum, and we've put a lot of work into making it so. We're fully up to speed with all the new administrative groundwork related to agencies like HMRC, and have got our heads around Incoterms (international rules governing the terms of trade for the sale of goods), import tariffs (irrelevant for us until now as part of the EU) and commodity codes (knowing which types of goods will be subject to which rate of tariffs). We've also been investigating alternative routes for lines with origins outside the EU, to bypass the border.

We've always purchased in bulk to keep prices affordable, but we're ramping this up by securing a significant amount of offsite warehouse space, so we can build up enough stocks of long-life goods to ensure some continuity of supply if there is major disruption. We're solidifying relationships with our European suppliers - by the time this is published our veg buyers will have been out to spend time with our major suppliers on the continent, helping to keep our trade with them as smooth as possible. Having said that, because we can't build up stocks of veg, this is where any chaos at the border will be most keenly felt. Worry not, you won't go hungry! Far from it. Apart from anything else, our many years of focusing on UK produce, growers and relationships will keep us all in veg, albeit perhaps a bit more reliant for a short time on UK brassicas (green leafy veg), squashes and roots.



HAPPY BIRTHDAY TO UNICORN

On September 21st 1996 we opened our doors for the very first time with a pretty simple vision; The kind of place our workers wanted to shop in themselves. A place where a wide range of wholesome, carefully-sourced, tasty food would be sold at affordable prices. A shop owned and run by motivated worker-owners following a shared social and environmental agenda. A friendly, diverse and welcoming space that would act as a hub in the community. It seems that, happily, that vision wasn't just ours, because thousands of you have shared it too; allowing us to grow and thrive and strive towards those ends. Thanks for supporting us to do what we do. Here's to the next 23 years.





HULME GROWN

Fans of Hulme Community Garden Centre (HCGC) will be seeing some exciting developments after the centre successfully raised £204,850 from 221 community investors in 42 days (including a £10,000 investment from Unicorn). Work will now begin on building a new shop, volunteer hub and cafe which includes upgrading to three flushing toilets.

The centre's work, which includes lots of outreach with kids & excluded groups, draws on its commitment to promote organic growing, sustainability, horticulture and environmental awareness, civic engagement and voluntary activity, urban gardening and food production, independent living and health and well-being. Follow their progress on the HCGC Facebook page.

"HOW A SUPERMARKET SHOULD BE"!

We were honoured to top the Ethical Consumer 'supermarkets score table'...

After scrutinising the impacts of our business on human, animal and environmental well-being, Ethical Consumer describe us as "how a supermarket should be" – high praise indeed!

They go on to say that "Unicorn has demonstrated how a mission-orientated business can humbly tackle complex supply chains without losing sight of its core values."

We constantly work to sell groceries the best way we can, so it was lovely for someone to recognise us on a national scale.



CHORLTON TO MCR CYCLING ROUTE CONSULTATION

We supported the Chorlton to Manchester cycling and walking route in the city council's consultation at the start of the year.

The Ethical Consumer team investigated our policies and sourcing criteria for the products we sell, with specific attention to cocoa, cotton, palm oil and GMO. We also submitted information about our business structure, payment of tax, and practices regarding packaging and waste.

To our delight, we also have links with the other top five businesses in the table. The exciting HISBE supermarket in Brighton used our 'Grow a Grocery' guide when they were starting out, and we're off to visit them very soon. Several of our suppliers also made the grade, namely sister worker co-ops Infinity, Suma & Essential.

Riverford Organics also appears toward the top of the table – founder Guy Singh-Watson made us blush after a recent working visit to Unicorn



as part of their transformation into an employee-owned business when he said, "being with you for two days made me proud to be human." Well now, that's a pretty lovely thing to hear. More about his visit on page nine.

To see more information about Unicorn and the others at the top of the score table, visit ethicalconsumer.org/retailers/shopping-guide/supermarkets.

34 GARDENS RAISE £10,181

Chorlton Open Gardens is a gorgeous event every June, letting garden lovers peek into some of the nicest, most creative, well-tended gardens in the area whilst raising much-needed funds for Refugee Aid Chorlton and Survivors of Torture. We welcomed about 500 of you to our green roof on the day, where you (and we) enjoyed the sunshine whilst snacking on Walnut Gatherer cheeses and Wye Bakehouse bread. The event raised over £10,000, which the charities will use to finance the transport of food, clothes and toiletries to refugee camps in Greece and Cyprus, and the provision of emergency aid to refugees who are homeless or sofa surfing in the UK, plus individual therapy and legal support.

Want to open your garden next year? Email chorltonopengardens@gmail.com



Although we mentioned a few areas that we felt needed more thought (especially dealing with disruption caused to other local traders during construction of the route) we were mostly just really excited by the idea of this level of

investment into non-car travel - for ourselves as commuters and for the positive impact we think it'll have on Chorlton's vitality... and air quality! We've got our fingers firmly crossed that the route will go ahead.

UN-PACKED: ROUTES TO REDUCING PACKAGING AT UNICORN



No need to use a single-use bag for your veg! Paper production has a high climate impact and we're more than happy to have fruit and veg loose and free at the tills. Small organic cotton bags now also available.



Almost half of the salads, olives and dips we sell at the deli are now dispensed into your re-used tubs, pots & boxes. Great work! And you're saving the 18p pot price every time. Just remember to make sure they're clean, dry and wide enough to spoon stuff in! We're also encouraging folk to bring in containers for pasties, bread, cakes and flapjacks. Same rules apply!

UP NEXT!!

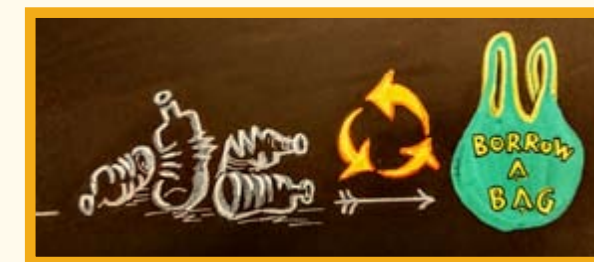
This is a constantly evolving picture. We've just had a day's visit from a pioneer and real expert in zero-waste retail. Catherine from Unpacked is going to help us plan changes that we can implement in the space we have. She's also giving her thoughts on how, with more space (if we manage to get a little more... see next door update on the next page), we could make more significant changes. She is looking at our whole offer, including food-to-go, household, frozen food and dried goods. Catherine will also catch us up with the latest developments in zero-waste and help us to work out where we might be able to expand our 'unpacked' approach across the shop. So expect to see more unpacked in the coming months and years.

We're gradually rolling out more bulk dispensers for dried goods. The most eco way to use these is to bring your own containers... the scales are set up to be able to 'tare' the container weight easily, just follow the steps. The new organic cotton produce bags are great for this. Ask if you're unsure!



No one's organised enough to never need a bag at the tills! We don't offer plastic carrier bags anymore, and constantly having to buy new cloth bags is annoying and not very sustainable either. So we've introduced one you can borrow.

The £1.85 price is fully returnable next time you shop, and the deposit bags are made out of recycled plastic bottles too.



Several of our UK made bodycare products now come in returnable packaging - FitPit, Heavenly Organics and Little Green Cream. We've got a good range of low- and no-packaging soaps as well.



Instead of a single-use cup for soup, bring a flask, hot cup or rent one of our deposit mugs! You can even sup while you shop and return it at the till when you pay.



BODYCARE HACKS (AND UNPACKS)

A few staff picks for great skin & low packaging...



Shampoo Bar & Travel Soap from Friendly Soap Co:
Shampoo works well, makes a good lather. For holidays, save space & plastic by taking away a single bar of travel soap for body, hair & clothes!



Little Green Cream face oil in returnable bottle:
Use a small amount in place of a face cream. Available £1 cheaper without the pipette, so keep your pipette when you return the jar.



Truthpaste powder:
Good taste, easy to use, gentle and effective. Note, it does not actually make you tell the truth.



FitPit deodorant in returnable tubs:
Really effective and you can stop chucking plastic deodorant sticks in the bin. Easy to use, just scoop out a little and spread it on.



Lyonsleaf Beauty Balm & organic muslin facecloths:
Balm works very well as cleanser or make-up remover with our small muslin cloths, or use a tiny bit as moisturiser. Very popular with staff, gentle and richly moisturising. Oil-based with no water.



Heavenly Organics solid Hand Balm:
Just rub between hands like soap. Softly nourishing, organic, smells great. Looks small because no water is added, but it lasts for ages.



Coconut oil for shaving & body moisturising:
Can be more moisturising, and just as effective, as a shaving soap or foam. Also a simple, economical alternative to body cream, suitable for many skin types. Find in our Oils and Seasonings section! Note, try the deodorised oil if you aren't a coconut fan, smell-wise!

NEWS ON NEXT DOOR



Many of you have been asking if we still have plans to expand into the baths next door. Our answer is, we are very much in the dark. We know - this has been going on for ever! We would love to see some progress but there has been an eerie silence from Manchester City Council. We have heard a whisper that both the demolition of the existing building and the tendering process will happen very soon.

Unicorn and Southway Housing Trust are still keen to work together on a development that will provide a little more space for us and some social housing, plus space for a health centre if that is still part of the council's strategy for the site. It looks like we will be putting in a tender along with others. **Please do tell your local Councillor if you support our bid, it really could help.** You can find out how to contact your Councillors at www.manchester.gov.uk/manchestercouncillors.

Fingers crossed. And if you know anything more, please tell us!



LIVING WAGE ACCREDITATION

This spring we became accredited by the Living Wage Foundation for paying a real living wage to all our staff and sub-contractors. We have paid employees above the Living Wage for a long time already; co-op members currently receive £12 an hour, whilst our casual workers earn 80% of that (presently £9.60) OR the real Living Wage, whichever is higher.



Unlike the government's 'national living wage,' which is somewhat arbitrarily targeted to reach 60% of average earnings by 2020, the Foundation calculates its wage according to what people actually need to earn to get by. This is currently £9.00 per hour, or £10.55 in London. More at livingwage.org.uk.

UP: CYCLED



Two great companies are turning fabrics diverted from landfill into beautiful, durable new products.

Upso reclaim lorry tarpaulins (waterproof & VERY durable) once their life on the road is over, and turn them into bags & bike panniers. Work is all done at their factory in Lancashire, which uses solar energy to power its sewing machines. They also use old fire hoses and seat belt webbing as components. Originality as standard...no two bags are alike!

Wyatt & Jack do a similar job converting old bouncy castles & deckchair canvas (sturdy stuff) into bags and pouches. You can even send them your damaged inflatable (of any kind!) and they will try to transform it into something lovely. Find all these products in the window display near the deli.

SCHOOL VISITS



TO AN URBAN OASIS

For many years we have welcomed groups of pupils from local schools to our shop. In recent years, space constraints have made visits a more difficult experience, so we now fund a number of primary school visits to Hulme Community Garden Centre, where they've got bags of indoor and outdoor space.

The lovely staff at the centre introduce kids to plant propagation and organic food growing, bugs & bees, eating & health (of us and the soil), and loads more. So, if you're a parent and this sounds good, tell your kids' teachers to drop us an email - office@unicorn-grocery.coop.

THE BOOCH IS LOOSE

Did you know that we now sell kombucha from our chiller?

The good folks at SODADA know their scoby and came to us with an offer we couldn't refuse. All three flavours of kombucha are brewed in the Peak District using organic, Fairtrade white tea, which gives the drink a lovely, delicate taste and low caffeine content. To enhance the tea, SODADA use locally sourced ingredients in their rhubarb and elderflower varieties. Organic cane sugar facilitates the fermentation process, however the scoby yeast cultures eat most of the sugar to create the gut-loving microbes for which kombucha is famous. This process means that the finished drink is fairly low in sugar. Add on top of that, that they are a local(ish) family run business and 10% of their profits go to charity.



The only way this could be a better fit for Unicorn is if they offered a bottle return scheme...oh wait, they do! So next time you're browsing our chiller, why don't you try a bottle of SODADA kombucha? Be sure to save your bottle for your next visit for 10p off your shop.

NEWS FROM THE FIELDS

Veg news wouldn't be veg news without a paragraph about the weather and its impact on growing conditions, so here it goes: The main challenges in 2019 were caused by heavy downpours. Waterlogged fields see veg going to waste if it cannot be accessed to harvest. Lack of sun may also stunt growth at a sensitive stage, to the point where the crop may never recover. In addition to unstable weather conditions, almost all growers have noted an increase in crops being plagued by pests, from the suzuki fly which ruins stone fruit yields, to wasps and hares, to the diamondback moth that decimates anything in the cabbage family. The weather most affected brassicas, with cauliflower shortages even making national news. All that said, we have been pretty chuffed with the options in our range so far and can only continue to thank our growers for their hard work and resilience.

Seeing the challenges faced by organic growing combined with the knowledge it's not a profession that attracts many new people, we sometimes worry about the future. Our concerns grew when Carey in Herefordshire

decided they'd stop growing veg in 2019 and only continue with fruit. Some of their reasons being the level of insecurity in the industry and lack of reliable seasonal workers. For years we have depended on Carey's quality produce, particularly French beans, cucumbers and squashes. However, the upshot is that a number of North West growers have stepped in to produce lost veg lines for us, either expanding their current production or trialling a crop for the first time.

We're really happy with the increase in Lancashire/Cheshire-grown veg, and this summer we decided to use the Growers Fund (see below) to help two farms invest in producing the extra crops, and to enable FarmStart to purchase an indoor work and storage unit in Stockport. The latter deserve a special mention since they do not only deliver us excellent produce twice weekly, but also run training programmes as a springboard for aspiring farmers. It's important for us to contribute to the long-term sustainability of businesses like FarmStart and their success is making us really excited and hopeful. See bottom right for more!

Another major theme is packaging. We've always offered veg unpackaged wherever possible, but current trends around waste reduction have allowed us to extend our loose offer to soft fruit as well. Loose strawberries were a big hit and customers have enjoyed the move to cardboard packaging for other currants & berries. As we continue to strive to reduce the amount of packaging coming into our building, we also need to focus on what customers take home. And that's where you can play a key role. The use of paper bags for veg is optional; we are always happy to take it loose at the tills! The new, low-cost organic cotton produce bags are another way to minimise single-use packaging.

Finally, we are preparing for different outcomes to the political chaos around Brexit. Our main focus is on maintaining good relationships: close links with our UK growers will be invaluable as ever, and ties with suppliers and hauliers on the continent will potentially play a big part in the coming months. For us, that's (kind of) business as usual!

INVESTING IN OUR GROWERS

A few years ago, the veg team established a Growers Fund, through which we put aside 1% of veg sales for our UK organic growers to invest in their farms.

The Growers Fund recognises that we can only supply the best and freshest produce with support from our growers. Reinvesting our profits back into our supply chain builds sustainability, trust and mutual benefit, as we carry on working together for a fairer food system. We also wanted to build in some security, keeping some money in reserve for times when our farmers most needed some help: bad weather, crop failures and the many other external hardships they face. Organic growing can be a very difficult task; our farmers work long hours for little pay, and the Growers Fund provides some small recognition of the incredible job they do. This year we have made grants to two small farms in the North West, as well as a contribution to the FarmStart initiative featured on the next page.

Duncan Gielty has grown organic veg at Lyncroft Farm for over twenty years and supplied Unicorn for the past five; he grows an impressive range of produce and always looks for ways to diversify and expand production. Covering an area of 2,000 square metres, the glasshouse we've funded provides temperate conditions to grow crops that are more sensitive to the cold - veg such as peppers and aubergines, as well as cucumbers and tomatoes.

Libby Flintoff at Brookhouse Farm in Preston also received funds. With help from Unicorn, she has built a new polytunnel on her farm to increase production of French beans, aubergines, tomatoes and leafy crops like rocket and watercress.

We're really excited to be able to support our suppliers in this way. It feels sustainable and progressive to share our financial success with the people who make our offer so unique, especially as both growers are local to the North West, and both demonstrate the biodiversity and other benefits of organic growing.



FROM SEED TO PLATE



Dan Weston spent nine years as a member at Unicorn, mostly working as one of our veg buyers. He recently moved to the other end of the supply chain, to join Unicorn friends & suppliers down the road at Glebelands City Growers. This shift gives him a unique perspective on the whole process of getting organic veg from seed to plate...

How did the move to Glebelands come about?
An interest in (allotment) growing was actually my route into Unicorn 11 years ago, and this never faded over the years. Having traded with the folk at Glebelands for 8 years, they were well aware of this, and we had a good professional relationship. Having taken some time out to travel, they needed someone for cover and

knew I was at a loose end. Things went from there really. The idea of working in a small motivated team appealed to me, and I've always found physical graft quite meditative!

Describe the work, day to day.
We're picking and packing crops for Unicorn (and other customers) three days per week. At peak harvesting times (spring to early autumn) this can take up the majority of the day. Much of this time is spent not just picking a crop, but in the post-harvest processing (washing, trimming, weighing etc.) that's necessary to make a product 'shop floor-ready'. Outside of peak harvest months, less of the working week is generally devoted to picking, though this is not always the case. For example, harvesting salad leaves in the depths of winter from protected

cropping spaces is a time consuming business... with low light levels and temperatures, they're barely growing, necessitating some nifty scissor work to harvest individual leaves - painstaking work with numb fingers.

Outside of picking, much of my week is spent preparing beds and planting. As soon as one crop is harvested, we're looking to turn that bed over ready to plant the next crop. Once this is done, it's in with the next, often on the same day that the previous one was harvested!

At Glebelands we raise all of our own plants on site in Sale. Consequently, this season I've been spending one day a week on plant raising tasks in the glasshouse. Seed sowing, sorting the seedlings, listening to Smooth FM. All vital stuff!

Several Unicorn members have now moved from retail, specifically veg buying, into veg growing. Any thoughts on why?

Well, for at least two of those members, the interest in growing pre-dated their role in veg buying! Perhaps that's what attracted them to the buying role?

What I have found fascinating is observing all the details that add up to mean a crop looks sensational, or at other times, perhaps less than perfect. After 10 years at Unicorn, I became reasonably adept at knowing when a product would or wouldn't work on the shop floor. What I could not have told you is exactly what it was about the growing & harvesting process that had made this so. It feels like I'm gradually working my way back along the supply chain, deconstructing how to get a crop to the end customer in the best possible shape.

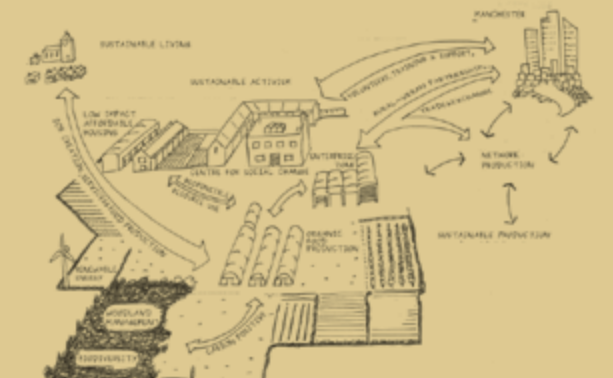
GROWING NEW GROWERS

You'll see us selling lots of veg from nearby Stockport between Spring & Autumn. This produce isn't just super local, it's also helping brand new organic growers to get started in farming!

The first of its kind in the UK, FarmStart provides a plot of land, equipment and ongoing training to give people the opportunity to make a start in farming and learn on the job. FarmStart's growers work together co-operatively and sell their produce to like-minded organisations, such as the lovely folk at Veg Box People and us at Unicorn. The initiative is run by Greater Manchester's Kindling Trust.

Kindling hopes that the FarmStarters will go on to play a co-operative role in rebuilding our local food economy from field to plate, addressing the urgent need to grow more organic fruit and veg in our region.

Kindling have set up a range of projects and enterprises to address the diverse challenges faced by those trying to establish a sustainable food system. From volunteer days on local farms, to social prescribing schemes run with local GP practices, from commercial grower training to community cooking days; they've even set up two co-operative businesses, Veg Box People and Manchester Veg People! Kindling has invested at every stage of the food supply chain, and next they are setting up a community farm close to the city. For more, go to kindling.org.uk



co-operative
co·op·er·a·tive
also cooperative
Plural: co-operatives

1. noun
A co-operative is a business or organization run democratically by the people who work for it, or owned by the people who use it. These people share its benefits and profits. As businesses driven by values, not just profit, co-operatives share internationally agreed principles and act together to build a better world.

1 MILLION OWNERS??!!

We want more workers in the UK to own their workplaces like we do - so we're part of a campaign calling for government investment now to make it happen.

Worker ownership has been getting a fair bit of exposure recently. The Labour party set out significant aspirations for growing the co-op sector, and there's been growing exploration in the growing media of co-ops' potential to provide a viable grassroots alternative to cut-throat capitalism.

And now the Employee Ownership Association and Co-operatives UK are working together to champion the expansion of employee and worker ownership. With some ambition, these organisations reckon we could see a fivefold expansion in employee and worker ownership

over the next decade, leading to one million employee and worker owners in the UK by 2030. That is such an exciting thought!

In a proposal for the 2019 Comprehensive Spending Review, they ask government to:

- Make the voluntary expansion of employee and worker ownership a national policy objective.
 - Adopt Scotland's ambition for a fivefold increase in employee and worker ownership by 2030.
 - Allocate £2.17 million to support five local pilot schemes providing expert advice and support to increase awareness, understanding and confidence in employee and worker ownership among workers, entrepreneurs and business advisors.
- Sound good?! Add your voice at uk.coop/1millionowners/pledge.



FAIR. EQUAL. DEMOCRATIC.

WHY GREATER M'CR IS EXPLORING CO-OPERATIVE SOLUTIONS TO INEQUALITY

Last year Mayor Andy Burnham announced the creation of a 'Co-operative Commission' to explore how to best support co-op development in the city.

The Commission has since been gathering evidence on the opportunities for, and barriers to, co-op growth, and on what makes supportive conditions for co-op formation and development in a city. Unicorn's Kellie sits on the nine-person panel as the worker co-op representative. Here she shares some thoughts on a more co-operative future.

"At their best, and most commonly, co-ops emerge as solutions to problems. A coming-together of people to find a collective solution toward a common good. Do you remember why the Rochdale Pioneers started selling basic foods in the 1800's? They noticed an injustice - poor and hungry hard-working folk were being sold adulterated food; sand in the oatmeal, plaster of Paris in the flour. Selling pure and wholesome foodstuffs at the correct weight hardly seems radical, but it was. That's why others tried so hard to destroy their little Toad Lane shop!

Twenty three years ago Unicorn opened its doors to trade, based on clear principles, to challenge the dominant food retail culture and its economic, social and environmental impact on people and planet. Put simply, decent food for all. Again, a group of people coming together to work towards a practical solution to a societal problem. A problem highlighted in a recent report by The RSA's Food, Farming and Countryside Commission, which points out the true cost of our current food system 'is simply passed off elsewhere in society - in a degraded environment, spiralling ill health and impoverished high streets.'

Once we notice and understand the structural injustice of the current 'normal' and accepted way of doing things, collective action can harness the entrepreneurial energy inspired by positive social, economic and environmental ends. Sounds so much better than extra pounds on the bottom line simply because it is. No BS required.

We see examples throughout history and the globe and currently the ground is so very fertile for co-operative solutions. From the Rojava co-operatives in Syria, Fairbnb in Venice and the new and exciting Equal Care Co-op in West Yorkshire's Calder Valley, co-operative seeds are multiplying and growing stronger. There are so many different kinds of co-ops - as many co-operative solutions as problems created by the current global system - we just don't get to hear about them as much as we should. Some co-ops are more radical than others, but most are trying to buck the trend that the bottom line is merely profit. In deed and word, co-ops shout that it's worth working for a more just system for people and planet.

Co-ops work! Britain's thousands of member owned co-operatives are worth £36 billion to the economy, but it's not just the economy that benefits...

As a member of a worker co-op for 20 years, I understand the challenges. But day-in day-out, I see the benefits too, the ones that ripple out beyond individuals into wider society: to a more equitable economy, more respect for people and more nurture for the planet we care for.

The fabric of co-ops has beautiful threads weaving positive purpose throughout them. As fellow Commissioner Cliff Mills argues, "in the modern world, mutuals and co-operatives are providing new solutions to old problems.

It's not because they have a magic wand;

- it's because they don't need to include an investor's profit-margin in their selling price;
- it's because the people who depend on the business own it, and make sure it responds to their needs;
- it's because customers and workers are bound to find better solutions for customers, workers and local communities, than investors.

At this critical time when it is so difficult for governments around the world to address the biggest challenges of climate change and species extinction, and when big business is bound to focus simply on generating profits, there is an urgent need for businesses dedicated to pursuing the common good: co-operative, mutual and social enterprises."

Wouldn't it be wonderful if the North of England, the birthplace of the co-operative movement, could be flooded with co-operative solutions to make better, for all, the way we live, work and play? We can build a better and more equitable infrastructure for the many.

Hopefully, the outcome of the commission will be more opportunities for co-ops to flourish, more visibility of their successes, fewer barriers in their way (maybe even a helpful leg up for some) and a better understanding of their contribution to wider society by the council agencies who make decisions day in day out about the future of how we live, work and play.

The Commission wants to work with co-operatives to reduce inequality, improve education and employment and help the sector grow to make ours the most co-operative region in the UK.

For more information go to gmcommission.coop

INVESTING IN PEOPLE-LED SOCIAL CARE

We've just invested £10,000 in West Yorkshire's Equal Care Co-op, the UK's first social care 'platform co-op' (a co-operatively owned business that establishes a computing platform, and uses a website or app to facilitate the sale of goods and services). The co-op's aim is to "radically reshape the care system and put power back where it belongs - with the receivers and givers of care and support".

Seeing care work properly valued and approached with a radically different, co-operative mindset is really exciting. 'Solidarity in co-operation' (one of the international principles for co-ops) can come in many shapes; as a well-established business we're in a good position to invest financially in enterprises that are just getting started. And as a young, innovative organisation, Equal Care have shared technology and tools that have really helped us out, too.

UNICORN IS A WORKERS' CO-OPERATIVE



WORKERS DO IT FOR THEMSELVES

The UK's worker co-ops are pretty well-networked, largely thanks to the work of the Worker Co-op Council. The Council organises an annual gathering and a collective fund (SolidFund) through which existing co-ops can support other workers to own and control their livelihoods. Unicorn member Britta helped establish both initiatives during her time on the Council, stepping down to be replaced by colleague Debbie earlier this year. "Connecting Unicorn with not only the UK worker co-operative movement, but the movement worldwide, has been incredibly rewarding. Knowing that our little shop here in Chorlton has like-minded people all over the world makes being a co-operative a unique experience." Unicorn member Britta.

The Council also acts as a sounding board, reflecting the worker co-op perspective to the wider movement. "We've recently been asked to contribute to Co-op UK's response to a government consultation on the role of worker-controlled businesses in providing public services. It's good to feel we have a channel for our perspective as worker-owners, and a chance of feeding this into national policy-making" Unicorn member Debbie.



— NEW FACES AT UNICORN —

What's it like joining a multi-tasking, non-hierarchical grocery business driven by values? New Unicorn co-op members Claire & Gavin share their thoughts...



Gavin: I'd been working as a casual worker for a while when the opportunity for a permanent position came up. I'd shopped at Unicorn for years and always admired the development of a business based on strong principles, so I really liked the idea of joining. I've never done any psychometric tests at work, but if I did I'm sure that they would say that I'm a team player, which you certainly need to be to work in a co-operative environment.

Unicorn was something completely different for me as I've worked mainly as a professional musician for many years since I came to Manchester to do a Masters degree at the Royal Northern College of Music. I'd always been self-employed prior to Unicorn, which I'd found both a blessing and curse, given the freedoms and insecurities that come with it.

I had one small advantage over my fellow new recruits in the first few weeks in that I knew everyone's name already, but of course that was only one small part of the steep learning curve we were on. My eagerness to find out more about the business was only tempered by the volume of information and new tasks I was taking in. Getting a taste of each area of the business made for a hectic few weeks but I really enjoyed getting a broad overview of how Unicorn functions. It took a few weeks before I started to feel that I was fully absorbing the new routines.

A year later and my role has refined and settled somewhat. Joining teams has allowed me to get involved in the nuts and bolts of particular processes, which I've really enjoyed. As a casual worker, most of my work revolved around the packing room (where we pack down the Unicorn-branded commodities), so it is nice to be part of the decision-making in that area now. I've liked working with the Store team and learning the logistics of getting products from

delivery to the shelves. This warehouse work has contrasted nicely with the finance secondment I've been doing, which has given me a feel for the business on a more macro level.

Like any rewarding job, there are challenges, such as maintaining the delicate balance of focusing on day-to-day tasks whilst keeping a sharp eye on the director responsibilities of the wider business. But a co-operative structure works well for me; In contrast to my previous self-employment, which could at times feel isolating, the shared responsibilities of a co-op make me feel like a valued part of a cohesive whole.

Of course, people and personalities make the business what it is and I feel that at Unicorn I have a great mix of talented and committed colleagues. I'm looking forward to developing my roles and expertise further, and I'm excited about the structural changes to our co-operative model over the next year.



Claire: Before joining Unicorn I had a number of different jobs including roles in Supply Chain for the Co-operative Group. Most recently I was a youth and community worker at the LGBT Centre in Manchester where I ran a community cafe and allotment.

The initial training programme at Unicorn is excellent but the first few weeks are an intense experience! There's definitely a lot to learn and we're a large team of folks carrying out quite a breadth of tasks which takes some adjustment. It was a friendly and supportive environment to be in though, which helps you get used to the business of a Saturday shop morning.

Almost a year on and I'm really glad I made the decision to apply and join. The sense of community within the co-op feels quite unique

and peoples' different skills and strengths are given equal value here, which is refreshing. It is hard graft though, and can be physically exhausting (I hope this isn't just me).

Decisions here are made thoughtfully and there is a willingness and openness to consider the social and environmental impact of what we are doing, as well as the commercial.

WHO'S THAT GUY? (IN A UNICORN PINNY)

Founder of national organic box scheme Riverford, Guy Singh-Watson, put on a Unicorn apron earlier this year for a two-day working visit to the shop.

Since 2018, Riverford has been 74% employee-owned, and Guy came to Unicorn to investigate our co-operative culture and the ways we cultivate the sense of ownership among staff. It was a great two-way learning experience, and his feedback was a lovely cherry on top.

"Last month I spent a few days working at Manchester's Unicorn Grocery, founded 24 years ago to make wholesome food affordable. This functionally complex workers' cooperative with 70 directors, packs, processes and retails with an efficiency which allows them to pay staff 50% more than most retailers, treat suppliers fairly, and price affordably."



"They achieve this by harnessing an extraordinary level of staff autonomy, motivation and engagement. It is principled, human, joyous and highly successful."



WHAT SQUASH: A QUICK GUIDE

Summer Squash (a short season, less mature with less-developed flavours):

Patty pan: Mild tasting, buttery & juicy.
Courbut Squash: Mellow taste. Courgette-like.

Dense Winter Squash (sweet, store well – into February or longer in ideal conditions):

Orange Pumpkins: Classic squash flavour, suited to many uses. Sweet but more subtle than green/blue.

Green Pumpkins: Reminiscent of Chestnut. Smoother, sweeter & more floury than orange pumpkin.

Queensland Blue: Silky smooth, melt in the mouth, sweet.

Galouse d'Bynes: A massive squash! Sweet. Super smooth, great for purees & soups.

Blue Kuri: Super sweet, floury, rich, chestnutty, creamy flavour.

Crown Prince: smooth, moist, sweet and bursting with flavour.

Marina Di Chiggia: Dense, sweet and floury.

Blue Ballet: Dense, dryish and sweet with a hint of nuttiness.

Less-Dense Winter Squash (moister & lighter with more texture to the flesh):

Festival: Sweet chestnut flavour.

Green Acorn: Nutty, sweet, rich, buttery.

Autumn Crown: Delicately sweet, soft, creamy & moist. Looks like spaghetti but melt in the mouth.

Cream of the Crop: Buttery, light, nutty.

Table Gold / Acer: Slight honey flavour.

Bolet (a.k.a. Little Gem). Juicy, sweet, smooth & creamy. Inedible skins.

Celebration: Between sweet potato and banana! Sweetcorn flavours.

Harlequin: Creamy, moist, buttery, sweet.

Jack Be Little: Deep savoury flavour, subtly sweet, edible but thick skin.

Delicata: Creamy, honey-like, moist, reminiscent of sweet potato.

Turk's Turban: Savoury cabbage-like flavour.

Georgian Candy Roaster: Mildly sweet, creamy, light, melt in the mouth texture.

Other Squash:

Spaghetti: As the name suggests, forms translucent spaghetti-like strands when cooked. Plain flavour but good for stuffing. Fun!

Pyjama: Type of spaghetti squash.

FOOD: A FORCE FOR PLANETARY HEALTH?

A recent European study identified food as “the single strongest lever to optimize human health & environmental sustainability on Earth”.

With the future of UK farming at a crossroads, the Soil Association gives us their perspective...

The Soil Association is the UK's leading membership charity campaigning for healthy, humane and sustainable food, farming and land use. It was founded in 1946 by a group of people who were concerned about the health implications of increasingly intensive farming systems following the Second World War. With those founding concerns feeling more relevant and urgent than ever, we took our 'Setting the Bar for a Green Brexit in Food and Farming' paper to Parliament to highlight the possible opportunities and barriers brought by Brexit.

The report shows that the UK cannot continue in the same vein if we are to address the urgent and connected issues of climate change, wildlife decline and diet-related poor health, and shares inspiring case studies from around Europe, where...

In France, farmers are supported to plant more trees and adopt agroforestry.

Denmark is well on track to providing 60% organic food in public institutions, like schools and hospitals.

Spain has focused on improving trading practices in the food supply chain.

In Italy support gives a greater role for communities in farming.

Here, our siloed policies don't consider the wider benefits to society from enlightened food and farming policies. Further, we lack targets to drive more sustainable production.

A move to organic farming would reduce the cost of cleaning up our water supplies, for instance, while locking up more carbon in soils, and taking pressure off insect populations. Feeding children fresh, well-balanced meals would set them up better for academic success and a healthier future.

But food and farming policy is stuck, with the Agriculture Bill in Westminster weak and frozen, and the risk of no-deal looming over farmers.

Can organic feed our growing population?

Well, yes it can, according to the 'Ten Years for Agroecology' study published last year by European think-tank IDDRI. It explains how pesticides can be phased out and greenhouse gas emissions radically reduced in Europe through agroecological farming, while still producing enough healthy food for a growing population.

The paper suggests that agroecology – using ecological principles first and chemicals last in agriculture – presents a credible and holistic way of feeding Europe by 2050.

But, we need action now! The next 10 years will be critical in engaging Europe in this agroecological transition.

Rob Percival, head of Food Policy at the Soil Association, said, “Pesticide-hungry intensive production is not the only way to feed a growing population. The ‘Ten Years for Agroecology’ study shows that agroecological and organic farming can feed Europe a healthy diet, while responding to climate change, phasing out pesticides and maintaining vital biodiversity. The idea of an entirely agroecological Europe is often considered unrealistic in terms of food security because agroecology sometimes means lower yields. But this new research shows that by refocusing our diets, a fully agroecological Europe is possible. The UK government should respond by supporting agroecology within the Agriculture Bill.”

The 'Ten Years for Agroecology' study models a future in which:

- Meat production in Europe has been reduced by 40%.
- European diets include less meat and more plant-based proteins overall.
- Europe has achieved protein self-sufficiency, halting the import of protein crops for animal feed, which are often associated with deforestation and greenhouse gas emissions abroad.
- Europe's biodiverse and carbon-rich grasslands are maintained, nurturing biodiversity and contributing towards a 40% reduction in agricultural greenhouse gas emissions.

The study is being published in parallel with the UK launch of the EAT-Lancet 'planetary health diet,' which describes food as “the single strongest lever to optimize human health and environmental sustainability on Earth” and proposes a significant shift towards a more plant-based diet.

By Alison Muirhead, Soil Association



CO-OPS. COFFEE. CHORLTON.

MAKING LINKS WITH PRODUCER CO-OPERATIVES IN MALAWI

How the Manchester-based Co-operative College helps us show solidarity with coffee, tea & macadamia producers.

This is an edited version of an article by Dr Amanda Benson, Projects & Research Officer at the Co-operative College. www.thenews.coop

Two co-operative principles in particular – co-operation among co-operatives and concern for community – are at the heart of helping co-ops grow, and so at the heart of international development, too.

One organisation putting these principles into practice is the Manchester-based Co-operative College. A major focus of the College's work in recent years has been Malawi, where it has been helping the local co-operative movement in its efforts to grow and flourish since 2012. Supported by funding from the Scottish government, the College has worked with different partners to boost the numbers of co-operatives being established, as well as helping to create the Malawi Federation of Co-

operatives. Over the last three years, the College has also partnered with two UK worker co-operatives: Infinity Foods, and us at Unicorn.

Unicorn's involvement

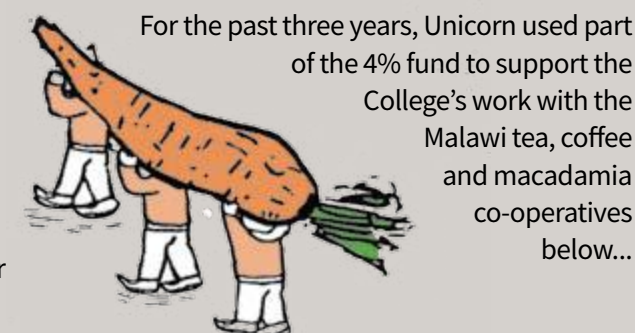
"Unicorn is a values-driven business, which sees success as something more than figures on a balance sheet. Every year we set aside a sum equal to 5% of the previous year's wage bill for project support - £91,000 in 2019. We choose to base the fund on our wage bill rather than our profits because in the world of corporate philanthropy, 'profit' levels can be interpreted and measured so variably. Our wage bill is a clearly defined amount, reflecting our growth as a business, and it means if and when co-op staff get better off (as wages increase), so too do the projects we support."

Unicorn co-op member Abbie

The 5% is split: the 1% fund supports local and national initiatives, mostly in Greater

Manchester, while the 4% fund supports projects overseas, generally in the Global South.

Unicorn increasingly develops long-term links with these projects. Current recipients include a home gardening programme in Cape Town, a tree-planting project in Syria, organic food producers in Nicaragua, women's rights advocacy in El Salvador, bikes for school pupils in Ghana, shea nut producer co-ops in Mali, a scholarships and rural community programme in Guatemala, and two permaculture projects in Zimbabwe.



For the past three years, Unicorn used part of the 4% fund to support the College's work with the Malawi tea, coffee and macadamia co-operatives below...

MANGONI COFFEE CO-OPERATIVE



Unicorn has supported the development of three coffee nurseries in Central Malawi's Mangoni district. The sites are in isolated spots at some distance from the tarmac road, which means access to good-quality seeds and seedlings was previously a challenge. In part through Unicorn's support, growers took part in a study visit and gained access to high quality organic seeds from Mzuzu Coffee Planters Co-operative Union, which has allowed them to enhance the skills they need to build their own nurseries.

NALIPIRI & MTENDERE TEA GROWERS CO-OP



Located in a mountainous area of dramatic granite outcrops and sprawling tea estates, one of the main issues facing these co-ops is access to a reliable source of tea plants. Tea plants are not grown from seed like coffee, but from cuttings, in this case from cultivars at the Malawi Tea Research Foundation (TRF). Thus, planting requires a more specialist knowledge and equipment. Support from Unicorn has given the co-ops the chance to visit the TRF and acquire seedlings, the sale of which has contributed to a revolving fund for the benefit of co-op members.

NENO MACADAMIA CO-OPERATIVE



Members of this co-operative received Unicorn support to establish a plant nursery, as well as additional training from the College's main project. The training included increased awareness of how to better use local products and resources, which is especially important in the co-op's isolated location. For instance, new technologies such as natural fertiliser can help boost production, in some cases more than doubling macadamia production.

SUPPORTING CLIMATE ACTION



We have been feeling increasing frustration at the failure of government to take the necessary action to address climate crisis...

XR COMES TO CHORLTON

There's now an Extinction Rebellion group here in Chorlton, as customer Jo explains...

"Extinction Rebellion's inspirational London-based Spring Uprising generated significant public interest, enabling the Manchester group to create new local groups, including the Chorlton local group in April this year.

"I'm not an activist, I'm a normal person, a mum of two with a job. I am involved because I see Extinction Rebellion as a hopeful, peaceful solution to a grave and terrifying situation. All we have from the establishment so far is greenwash, and an inability to grasp the gravity of the situation. We desperately need serious action now."

We welcome everyone to get involved. We work to build awareness of the movement and it's

Taking better care of the planet through the way we trade is built into Unicorn's founding principles, and we've always supported environmental action through our 1% fund. This year we've really focussed on supporting UK climate campaigners, especially young people demanding to be heard. Here are two of the groups we've donated towards...

UK Youth Climate Coalition:

This campaign group consists of 18-29 year olds who volunteer and collaborate to campaign on climate change both in the UK (largely against fracking), and internationally, including lobbying at the UN.

UK Student Climate Network:

This group of predominantly under 18s have taken to the streets to protest government's inaction on the climate crisis, helping mobilise the recent Youth Strikes For Climate.

"As a mum of three and long-time member, I am delighted that we are supporting the UK Youth Climate Coalition and UKSCN. I've been to the school strikes a few times with my kids and I've been moved, humbled and amazed – the mix of optimism and realism has been missing from the wider debate and it feels vital for real change."

Unicorn co-op member Leah



IN THE PAST FEW MONTHS WE ALSO USED OUR 1% FUND TO SUPPORT...

- Affordable food provision for those in need at Mustard Tree's community shop in Ancoats
- Therapeutic gardening for refugees & asylum seekers with Revive in Beswick
- Cooking sessions with Love for the Streets at a women's homeless hostel
- Your Health is Your Wealth event for Black History Month in Moss Side
- Adblockers conference fighting corporate advertising
- Direct action against fracking in North Yorkshire
- A new website for Salford Community Theatre
- An after-school gardening club in Moss Side
- Extinction Rebellion's Northern Rebellion
- A new worker co-op café in Birmingham
- Enviolution festival in Platt Fields park

aims; supporting the regional and national campaigns and actions, and we also plan to host more local actions in the near future.

We meet fortnightly on Tuesdays at 7.30pm in The Yoga Café, 286 Barlow Moor Rd. Contact us at xrchorlton@gmail.com, we would love to

hear from you. Upcoming events are listed in the online diary at xrmcr.org where you can also sign up to receive the newsletter.

The next main event is the National Action in London, for two weeks starting 7th October."



DON'T CHUCK, CHOP!

Stalks, tops & outer leaves are often just as usable as the rest of the vegetable. Here's a couple of dishes from our deli that use the whole lot...

ROAST CAULIFLOWER, GREENS & ALMONDS

- 1 large head cauliflower (800g ish)
- 800g kale or spring greens
- 50g whole almonds (use our roasted salted ones if you want to skip the roasting!)
- 2 ½ tbsp rapeseed or sunflower oil
- ½ tsp salt
- ¼ tsp turmeric
- ¼ tsp cumin seed
- ¼ tsp chilli flakes

Preheat oven to 180°C.

If using un-roasted almonds, put them on a baking tray and toast in the oven until they smell nutty and are starting to brown - around 10 minutes. Remove from tray once done.

Roughly chop the greens (if using kale, slice tough bits of stem quite thinly) and combine in a bowl with a little of the oil and half the salt. Tip out onto a baking tray and roast for 10-15 minutes, until done but still quite green.

Turn up the oven to its highest setting. Chop the stalk and leaves off the cauliflower and chop them all into chunks. Slice into the base (where the stalk was) and use your hands to break the remaining cauliflower into florets.

Put the cauli in the oily bowl and add all remaining ingredients. Combine well - hands work best but beware turmeric can stain! Spread in a single layer on a baking tray (use the same one to save washing up!) and roast for around 20 minutes until starting to char but still fairly firm.

Mix all together and serve warm or cold.



BROCCOLI WITH BBQ ROASTED CHICKPEAS

This recipe has a lot of different spices! Because chickpeas are fairly plain on their own, they can take it - but any combination of these will work. Do include the smoked paprika and garlic powder for that smokey barbecue flavour though!

- 1 large or two small heads broccoli
- 1 tin chickpeas (400g)
- 2 tbsp rapeseed oil
- ½ tsp salt
- ¼ tsp each of smoked paprika, dill, cumin, coriander, turmeric, garlic powder

Preheat oven to 180°C.

Chop the broccoli stalks into bite size chunks and break the rest into florets. In a bowl combine the broccoli with 1 tbsp oil and ¼ tsp salt. Roast for 20 minutes.

Drain the chickpeas well (the liquid - aquafaba - can be kept and made into vegan butter or used as an egg substitute. See below).

Combine the chickpeas with the remaining oil, salt and all the spices. Spread out on baking parchment on a baking tray and roast 25 minutes or so, until starting to dry out a little.

Combine broccoli and chickpeas and eat warm or room temperature.

Using the aquafaba:

The chickpea juice (aquafaba) can be used to replace eggs in cooking, roughly three tablespoons of aquafaba per egg. More on our website, just search "replacing eggs."



DELI RECIPES ON OUR WEBSITE:

Our mobile-friendly website features hundreds of recipes including many deli favourites, these are just a couple to get you started. Find lots and lots more at www.unicorn-grocery.coop