



# UNICORN'S

## — NEWS —

Autumn  
2020

# POWER TO THE PACKERS!

We have been packing porridge, polenta and pea flour for over two decades now but 2020 has maybe been in the most challenging circumstances.

More people have been cooking from scratch and that means increased demand for basic ingredients, like flours and rice. Top that off with restrictions on the number of workers we can safely have in the packing room. But we have a hard grafting (somewhat behind the scenes) team who, with a great deal of camaraderie and co-operation, have managed to keep the shelves full. Our production team have continued to do a sterling job. Here is what packing supervisor Joel has to say,



*"Unicorn's Production Team has definitely pulled together during the last seven months. Times have undoubtedly been hard. Unprecedented demand for every conceivable product emptied the shelves for a moment there; but aprons were tightened, hairnets pulled on and bags were packed in their thousands... So please raise a glass of your chosen tippie and join us in thanking the HARDCORE packers!"*

## VEG NEWS

### What a year; where to begin?!

April and May saw a pronounced hungry gap - that period after the winter crops have ended but before the new season's plantings are ready to harvest. Thankfully, sunny spring weather helped boost leafy crops grown in polytunnels, such as lettuces and chard - always first to come in from Strawberry Fields in Lincolnshire. The extremely hot and dry weather meant a tricky start to the growing season for little seedlings planted outside.

Drought conditions turned to downpours from June onwards, causing further issues for many growers. Ward & Thompson in particular were affected by the flooding of their land in The Fylde, Blackpool. They sadly lost a big part of their lettuce harvest, highlighting once again the impact of changing weather patterns. Lack of sunshine generally decreased productivity of sun-loving crops such as courgettes and beans in this period.

During the first stages of the pandemic, the majority of our growers experienced a huge...

*Continues on Page 4...*



*\* for now.*



# SOLIDARITY IN CO-OPERATION

Every year we set aside a sum equal to 5% of the previous year's wage bill to support projects that meet our core aims of creating a fairer, more equal society for everyone. Our two funds; the 1% Fund for local and national projects and the 4% Fund for international projects, enable us to stand in solidarity with people here in the UK and around the world who are fighting for economic, social and environmental justice.

## COVID AND OUR COMMUNITY

2020 has certainly been an unusual year for all of us. Lockdown and physical distancing rules brought much of our normal, day-to-day activities to a standstill, and for many of us created a new opportunity to value and appreciate our communities and local amenities.

We have been heartened by the rise of mutual aid groups - a natural fit with our

co-op principles and values - in which mutual support for community benefit is paramount. From Good Neighbours to food banks to hot meals for NHS workers, from domestic violence support to care packages for those experiencing mental health crises, we're proud to have played a small role in helping some of the wonderful groups working to support the most vulnerable people in our city through the pandemic.



## THE FIGHT AGAINST RACIAL INJUSTICE

2020 is also the year racial injustice came to the forefront of the social justice agenda. The death of George Floyd challenged all of us to look at our lives and question what more we can do to be actively anti-racist. We are proud to support organisations such

as Kids of Colour here in Manchester, which creates a platform for young people of colour to explore race, identity and culture and challenge the everyday, institutionalised racism that shapes their lives. We have also been able to help fund an exciting new

initiative, The Black Land and Spatial Justice Fund. Their aims include establishing a Black co-operative movement, enabling the acquisition of community-owned land and assets in the UK to build regenerative and reparative infrastructure.

## RECLAIM

This year we have also funded RECLAIM, a social change organisation working to support and amplify the voices of working-class people who are aiming to create a society in which being from a working-class background no longer presents barriers to achievement or influence.

RECLAIM champions campaigns that are created and led by young people, using innovative radical approaches to get attention. Their work includes a campaign focusing on the challenges and inequalities faced by the working-class community during the global pandemic, and the #IfWeDidThis campaign to put an end to politicians using violent and dehumanising language.



*"RECLAIM has benefited so many of us young people and has contributed hugely to making us the people we are today and who we are yet to become", Olivia, RECLAIM Alumni*



*"Our long term goal is to create a Britain where those from working-class backgrounds are proud of - and not held back by - their roots. We want working-class people to be represented in places where decisions are made about their lives and to be recognised for their talent, strength, and diversity. We want to see working-class young people at the heart of this, in a country that ensures that they are seen, heard, and leading change."*

## OUR GLOBAL COMMUNITY HANDWASHING AND PPE

Beyond Manchester, we receive regular updates from projects telling us of their concerns as Covid-19 arrives in their communities. From Bolivia to Zimbabwe to Bangladesh, we hear of people struggling with lack of access to clean water for hand washing, and the difficulties of physical distancing for people living in crowded,

insecure housing. Many of these communities are already struggling with the impacts of climate change, and the added threat of Covid-19 poses additional hardships and insecurity. We have been able to help with costs for PPE and handwashing stations for several projects.



## CRICE: REGENERATIVE AGRICULTURE IN BENIN



Following a successful pilot project last year, we have now entered into a three-year funding relationship with Circle of Initiatives for Culture, Education and Environment for Sustainable Development (CRICE) in Benin. CRICE is a grassroots project run by and for young people. Through training programmes and a demonstration garden, their aim is to create a network of 'eco peers' trained in regenerative agriculture. A key

component of their work is connecting elders with young people in their communities to ensure traditional farming knowledge is passed on and to help secure food resilience for the future. The use of intergenerational community dialogue helps to rediscover and revive seed stocks of traditional varieties of vegetables, as well as to rebuild the confidence of communities in reconnecting to nature and traditional culture.



*"Disconnection from the elders, nature and culture was increasing in Oueme Valley at a worrying rate. Support from Unicorn has been key for helping us to reconnect the youth to the elders and to develop a holistic sense of cultural belonging. This is leading to preserving of seeds for food sovereignty via regenerative agriculture. We have been so delighted by how the youth are engaging with the project. We are excited to see how it unfolds over the next years. Thank-you!"*

Edonandji Jacques GBEGNIHO  
African Earth Jurisprudence Practitioner, Promotor of CRICE for Life Initiatives



## SYRIA TO SOUTH AFRICA

Current projects we support through the 4% Fund include an initiative to promote water security in Rojava in Syria; a home gardening programme in Cape Town; a permaculture project in Kenya; village plant nurseries to boost food security in three communities in Zimbabwe; a project to send bikes to The Gambia, and tools and training for rural women to learn tailoring in Tanzania. More on Rojava on Page 10!



# BECOMING A FARMSTARTER



UNICORN VEG BUYER, HELEN,  
WORKING THE LAND

In my role as a veg buyer, I work closely with farmers around the UK to understand what's happening in the fields each year. There are so many factors which determine the quality and yield of a crop, and each year or 'season' is different to the last. To consistently produce top quality, beautiful vegetables takes expertise, and the veg

we receive from our local market gardens usually demonstrates their mastery. Keen to gain direct experience and develop my own growing skills after eight years on an allotment, I took the plunge and enrolled on Farmstart 2020, a nine month commercial growers course, run by the Kindling Trust at their 1.5 acre organic market garden site in Stockport.

Growing organic veg on this type of small-scale farm is both rewarding and challenging because everything is done using hand tools, which enable you to tend to the soil and plants with considerable care and attention. Minimal tillage maintains the soil structure and ensures that microorganisms can thrive. The result of this intimate process is high quality nutritious crops which can be harvested to order, thus ensuring optimal freshness. I quickly learned that most of the tasks on the farm are physically demanding and very time-consuming, so skill and efficiency are key to making it work. Market gardeners around the world have invented amazing tools and techniques to make light work of onerous jobs, although they do take some getting used to!

After months of prepping beds, sowing seed and transplanting, the bulk of our labour

quickly switched to harvesting, a focussed task that I found to be rather meditative (most of the time). A wet and windy day of harvesting is testing, but as a small team of 4 trainees, our enthusiasm and motivation to do a good job kept us driven and determined. We found it immensely satisfying seeing our much-nurtured produce boxed up and ready for delivery. The amount we earned from all our hard work each week provoked much deliberation over what a successful market garden business would look like. To earn a living from growing veg is not an easy undertaking.

It's nearly the end of my trial as a farmer, it's been a rollercoaster of struggles and joyous moments. My experience has emphasised the importance of Unicorn's commitment to paying fair prices to growers, whilst highlighting the challenge of remaining competitive in a world that demands more for less. For local organic farms to thrive they need to be valued as a sustainable food source; and to encourage new market gardeners and farmers to emerge we have to start showing our respect for their toil, expertise, and artistry.

Interested in growing? Find out more @ [kindling.org.uk/FarmStart](http://kindling.org.uk/FarmStart)

## VEG NEWS

...continued from the front page

increase in demand from the wider market. Some attribute this to reports of potential food scarcity underlining the importance of UK-grown produce. Additionally, more people are switching to healthier, more sustainable diets as they grapple with the impact of Covid-19.

Despite the challenges this season presented during spring and summer, we were often very proud of the abundance of our displays; the UK offer in particular. Local and Lancashire-based growers accounted for the majority of our summer sales, topped up by long-standing suppliers Strawberry Fields in Lincolnshire and the Wasses in Yorkshire. We're so grateful for all the hard graft put in by the farmers and market gardeners who supply us.

As ever, our main focus was on traditional seasonal produce, which offered a multitude of delights: Glebelands' radishes, Carey's Herefordshire greengages, Duncan Gielty's ratatouille – it's really special to see Lancashire grown peppers & aubergines – and Libby Flintoff's stunning loose cavolo nero and picture perfect French beans! An honourable mention goes to plants. The guys at Glebelands' Market Garden in Sale rose to the occasion as we transformed the kids' area into a mini garden centre and supplied everything from tomato seedlings to herbs to squashes in order to satisfy the boom in 'growing your own'.

Still lots to enjoy as the Autumnal harvests are in full swing and the Winter crops are beginning to make their appearances: an unrivalled selection of squashes and pumpkins, delicious potatoes, colourful kale varieties and of course, brussel sprouts! Keep track of our 'veg news' updates on the blackboard and on social media.



# WORKING WITH NATURE

## GROWER FEATURE - CAREY ORGANIC

Over at Unicorn we have been relishing the change of season with the new abundance of autumnal crops. One that we have been particularly enjoying is our humble, native fruit - the apple.

Regular rainfall, cooler temperatures and just a dash of English sunshine create the optimal conditions to cultivate a vast range of varieties and flavours. One to suit any kind of taste! We have been tasting each apple fresh from the orchard and putting together guides on our chalkboards above the display so that you can find your perfect match whilst shopping. From sharp, crisp and refreshing varieties such as James Grieve and Lord Lambourne, to candy-sweet, juicy and rosy-red varieties such as Red Devils and Blaze.

You may also have noticed some of the more unusual varieties we have had in stock recently from our Herefordshire based supplier Carey. These have included the Pitmaston pineapple-flavoured apple as well as the nutty, golden-skinned heritage Russets.

Carey Organic is a family-run business owned by Martin and Rachel Soble. The farm, encompassing seventy acres of



gently-sloping land with rich, sandy soil on the banks of the River Wye in South Herefordshire, is ideal for organic farming. In 2004 they planted their orchards and since then have been producing apples, pears, plums, cherries and other soft fruits. They currently grow 20 varieties of apples alone over two acres which have gone from strength to strength each year thanks to the carefully managed soil, upheld to the highest organic standards.

To minimise food waste they produce their own range of ciders and apple juices, both of

which you can also find on Unicorn's shelves, from any apples which are unsaleable. Each juice is by variety and you may notice that the juices change depending on the season and availability of apples for pressing.

According to Martin their aim has always been to

*“protect the natural environment and enhance wildlife habitats”*

by choosing to only ever farm organically. And we think the results of this speak for itself!

# IT'S IN THE BAG!



We've always believed that the best packaging for food is none at all, which is why we try to sell as much fruit and veg loose as we possibly can. The last few months however have changed things considerably, and we now feel it's necessary to offer things in 'grab bags' that we'd formerly only sell loose.

Obviously we wanted to avoid using plastic, so we have invested in a netting machine that uses organic, cellulose birchwood to offer a bagged option which you can compost at home. This award-winning technology hails from Austria and is made from birch recovered from forest thinning in Central Europe. Once the staples have been removed from the bag, the netting will decompose in your compost bin within a few weeks. Unfortunately, neither Manchester nor Trafford councils are currently able to recycle the nets so we must stress that they can only go in your compost bins at home. Still, we're pleased to have found a packaging solution that meets our needs without compromising our principles.



# GOOD GOURD!

The veg team had its annual squash tasting recently – we tried 15 varieties of pumpkin and squash from 3 different growers to devise a definitive guide to the incredible flavours, textures and cooking properties of this hugely versatile autumn crop.

The results were unanimous: despite shortcomings on many a level, 2020 is a spectacular year for squash! From the complex and creamy texture of the Queensland Blue, to the dense, chestnutty bite of the green pumpkin, the treacle-sweet Harlequin to the robust, parsnip-like Black Futsu, there's a squash option for all your cooking needs.



*“2020 is a spectacular year for squash!”*

We've distilled our feedback into snippets that will be written on the cards and we've included which varieties work best for soup, stuffing, curries and roasting. Newer varieties we have all enjoyed recently are the Rollette, Blue Ballet and Delicata squashes. These joined a line-up which already includes Celebration, Crown Prince, Acorn, Turban, Uchiki Kuri and Blue Banana. And not forgetting those gigantic pumpkins that carved up beautifully for Halloween! They were grown by our local Lancashire supplier at Lyncroft Farm.

## TASTING NOTES

### Crown prince (Gielty)

Very moist. Soft and slightly sweet flavours and a hint of nuttiness.

### Green Pumpkin (Strawberry fields)

Dense and sweet with chestnutty flavours. Ideal for sauces and curries. Staff favourite.

### Harlequin (Strawberry Fields)

Very sweet with excellent texture. Good roaster, with parsnip flavours. Staff favourite.

### Acorn (strawberry Fields)

Excellent roaster, reminiscent of roast potato. Good for stuffing and roasting. Creamy and smooth.

### Red Kuri/Orange Pumpkin (Strawberry Fields)

Dry-ish with classic pumpkin flavour. Crisps up well when roasted.

### Spaghetti (Strawberry Fields)

Light and moist. Fairly plain flavour wise but a unique string-like texture.

### Turban (Strawberry Fields)

Rich with slightly savoury flavours. Excellent roasted and very creamy with good depth. Staff favourite.

### Black Futsu (Farmstart)

Rich, buttery, and flavourful with a delicious, thick, creamy texture.

### Uchiki Kuri (Farmstart)

Smooth, creamy, melt in the mouth with classic deep squash flavours. Good for curries.

### Blue Kuri (Farmstart)

Starchy and on the dry side with a silky texture. Dense with delicate, savoury-like flavours.

### Green Hokkaido (Farmstart)

A deliciously nutty squash, dense with a creamy texture that would be excellent for puree or soup. The skin crisps up nicely when roasted.

### Blue Banana (Farmstart)

A smooth, moist, and creamy squash. Fluffy, yielding texture and lovely sweet potato-like flavour.

### Winter Festival (Farmsart)

A creamy squash with subtle sweetness and a nice buttery texture.

### Queensland Blue (Farmstart)

Gentle, sweet flavours with a great, super creamy texture.

### Fictor (Farmstart)

Dry, starchy and very flavourful. Nutty and rich. Perfect for soup.

### Golden Nugget (Farmstart)

Small but with firm texture and subtle chestnut like flavours.



# OAT SO DELICIOUS!



We love oat milk and, as we sell a lot, you must too! From our chiller we sell a scrumptious, fresh oat milk in a returnable glass bottle. The good folks at Oato produce this creamy goodness just up the road in Lancashire from UK oats.

*‘We believe that people should have access to healthy and environmentally low impact products delivered in a low impact way. We’re on a mission to deliver this.’ (Oato)*

We are happy to be a part of their mission! Their milk is fortified with calcium and has no added sweeteners. Although it's designed to be barista friendly it is just as delicious on cereal, or straight out of the bottle! Their return scheme means that each pint bottle can be refilled up to 40 times, creating a low waste alternative that doesn't compromise on quality.

Next time you oat milk lovers are browsing the chiller, pop a bottle into your basket to give it a try, bring the bottle back to get your bottle refund!

## SWEET TALK

You may have noticed some signage about sugar in recent months. As a wholefood shop, the vast majority of our products don't contain any added sugars – but we've spent an inordinate amount of time thinking about those that do! We wanted to share our thoughts with you.

### A simpler (syrup) time

As per our Principles of Purpose, Unicorn has always avoided added sugars. For many years, we also specifically avoided granulated cane and beet sugars. We did stock a few plant-based syrups in the belief that these were slightly better for people and planet.

But things have changed. Organic and fairly-traded cane sugar is widely available, while non-cane sweeteners have proliferated alongside misleading assumptions and health claims. We found ourselves selling

non-organic agave syrup, while refusing even a small amount of FairTrade organic cane sugar. Chutneys, sweet pickles and many jams – time-honoured ways to make seasonal gluts last all year – had no chance. Meanwhile, we overheard too many people saying ‘Unicorn doesn't sell sugar’ while buying syrup-rich stroopwaffles!

### Sugar, by any other name

After a lot of research, and even more discussion, we understand that most health concerns apply to all so-called “free sugars.” According to the WHO, free sugars include any added sweeteners, syrups and fruit juices, and exclude sugars present in whole fruits and vegetables. Thus, we now treat all free sugars the same, although we prioritise organic, ethically-sourced and minimally processed options.

### Sweets in the shop

In essence, our position hasn't changed: we don't sell (many) sweet things, and where we do, we aim to sell the best-sourced, lowest-sugar, tastiest food around.

Where we do sell food with added sugar, we aim for two-thirds or less sugar than conventional options. We also monitor our offer to ensure that we are not selling more sweet foods, and overall the food we sell is not getting sweeter.

You'll see a stamp on shelf tags where foods contain any “free sugar” – we don't stock any of these lines lightly! For now we are also highlighting any new additions with cane sugar, while everyone gets used to the change. Going forward, we will keep an eye on new research and adjust our policies and practices accordingly.

As ever, we hope our current guidelines enable us to sell the best groceries we can, for people and planet.





INTRODUCING...

# AGROECOLOGY

10 ELEMENTS

AGROECOLOGY is an integrated approach that applies ecological & social principles to food & farming. By optimising interactions between plants, animals, humans, & the environment, agroecological practices build a more sustainable & fair food system. Agroecology can transform food systems with an explicit focus on social & economic dimensions - including the rights of women, youth, & indigenous peoples. This approach addresses root causes of problems & provides holistic, long-term solutions.



## RESPONSIBLE GOVERNANCE

Transparent, accountable & inclusive governance mechanisms are integral to bottom-up agroecological change.

Equitable access to land & natural resources is crucial for social justice, & to ensure a commitment to protect soil, biodiversity, & eco-systems.



## RECYCLING

Waste is a human concept - it doesn't exist in natural eco-systems. Recycling delivers multiple benefits by closing nutrient cycles & reducing waste.

## EFFICIENCY

Agroecology cultivates natural resources, especially those that are abundant & free, such as SUN, CARBON, & NITROGEN.

Eg. producers can use fewer external resources by recycling biomass, nutrients & water - which reduces financial & environmental costs.

This increased self-sufficiency empowers producers & improves resilience to natural or economic shocks.

## DIVERSITY

THE BENEFITS ARE MANY!

Socioeconomic Resilience: Multiple revenue sources - such as diverse crops, local processing & agritourism - may help to stabilise household incomes.

Ecological Resilience: Multiple crops reduce the risk of failure in the face of climate change. Mixed grazing reduces health risks from parasitism, & increases the chance of survival in harsh environments.

Health: a diverse range of cereals, pulses, fruit, & veg improves diet & nutrition.

Soil/Ecological Health: Agroecology treats soil as a building block & a reflection of community & ecological health.

## RESILIENCE

Diverse systems are more resilient to extreme weather events, pests, diseases & more.

Eg. producers are less vulnerable to crop failure.

More self-sufficient systems are also more resilient.

Eg. producers are less vulnerable to economic instability.

Ecological & Socio-economic resilience go hand-in-hand - after all, humans are an integral part of eco-systems.

## CIRCULAR & SOLIDARITY ECONOMY

Agroecology promotes fair solutions based on local needs, resources & capacities, creating more equitable & sustainable markets.

A circular food economy can reduce global food waste by making food chains shorter & more resource-efficient.

## HUMAN & SOCIAL VALUES

Agroecology empowers people to become their own agents of change - it is a grassroots paradigm for sustainable rural development.

Key values include dignity, equity, inclusion, & justice. Agroecology also addresses entrenched inequalities by creating opportunities for women & youth.

## SYNERGIES

the whole is greater than the parts!

By fostering biological synergy, agroecology enhances ecological function, increasing resource efficiency & resilience.

## CO-CREATION & SHARING OF KNOWLEDGE

Agroecology depends on context-specific knowledge.

There are no fixed prescriptions - practices draw from environmental, social, economic, cultural, & political contexts. Agroecology blends traditional & indigenous knowledge, producer & trader knowledge, & global scientific knowledge.

## CULTURE & FOOD TRADITIONS

Cultural & local identities tie closely to landscape & food systems. As people & ecosystems evolve, cultural practices & knowledge inspire innovative solutions.





# VOICES FROM OUR COMMUNITIES

## STITCHED UP

Stitched Up have been operating a sustainable clothing hub in Chorlton since 2014. Until lockdown in March, we were providing 2-4 workshops every week as part of our public programme, enabling the development of skills in clothes making, mending and upcycling, as well as running a monthly Clothes Swap and Chorlton Repair Cafe.

During lockdown whilst we've been unable to run our face-to-face classes, we've been working behind the scenes on creating a new video guides subscriptions service (visit: [www.stitchedup.coop/video-guides](http://www.stitchedup.coop/video-guides)), as well as making some exciting plans for the future.

These plans include finalising our transformation into a Community Benefit Society, after eight years as a workers' cooperative. This means that we exist to benefit the community as a whole, and can open up membership of our board of directors to a range of stakeholders including community members, giving local people a real say in our future activities.

In other exciting news, after six months

away, we are delighted to be relaunching our public programme of workshops from a pop-up space in Stretford Mall. All our plans will be guided by the latest government advice and so are subject to change, but we hope to see courses and workshops restarting, including our Learn to Sew and Garment Making courses, holiday clubs for young people and one-off workshops in clothes upcycling and repair. Class numbers will be limited and measures will be in place for a Covid-secure environment.

We'll also be selling a range of reclaimed textiles and sustainable sewing supplies from the pop-up, which will be open for browsing from Weds to Sat.

You can keep up to date with our latest news, including shop opening times and other info by following our blog at [stitchedup.coop/blog](http://stitchedup.coop/blog) or finding us on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter @stitchedupuk.

Our public programme of workshops and courses can be found here as and when they are announced: [stitchedup.coop/workshops](http://stitchedup.coop/workshops).



## HEALTHY ME HEALTHY COMMUNITIES

**Healthy Me Healthy Communities is a social enterprise working across Manchester for improving health & wellbeing.**

We work with residents and partners to develop, grow and manage community ideas that will make a real difference in their area. At the heart of our work are our Community Grocers, who redistribute food, organise volunteer opportunities, activities, training and link people with services. As well as receiving food from retailers and manufacturers, we welcome donations from community groups, growing projects and allotments.



For more information please contact Amie Keating on 07910 879985 or [amie@hmhc.co.uk](mailto:amie@hmhc.co.uk)

## CO-OPERATIVE COMMUNITIES IN NORTH-EAST SYRIA



Unicorn members continue to be inspired by co-operative communities around the world, perhaps none more so than the revolutionary movement in North-East Syria, also known by its Kurdish name Rojava.

The Rojava Revolution was declared in 2012, heralding a radical experiment in creating a co-operative alternative to capitalism based on three pillars – direct democracy, ecology, and women's liberation. Despite the ongoing conflict and military action in the region, its citizens continue to build their new society to share power and responsibility through democratic neighbourhood assemblies, co-operatives and citizen committees. The co-operative model is central to this vision, based as it is on the shared values and principles of self-help, solidarity and equality, enabling people to take control of their economic future. The ultimate aim is for co-operatives to make up 80% of the economy.

Women's co-operatives play an important role. September 2020 saw the second Women's Economy Conference, which brought together 80 women from across Northern Syria to reflect on progress made and discuss proposals to further strengthen women's economic empowerment. Autonomous women's organisations support the creation of new co-operatives, giving loans which

are only repaid when the co-op is able to do so, and helping them find land and premises to operate.

Alongside the focus on co-operation and democratic organising, considerable emphasis is placed on agroecology and creating a sustainable food system. Local food production is a priority in the face of sanctions imposed on the region and the high cost of imported foods. One such initiative is the women-led Tirbespiyê vegetable garden project, establishing greenhouse and polytunnel production for a range of crops alongside planting thousands of trees to boost biodiversity. Many similar women's agricultural projects have been created, as well as bakeries, shops and food preserving co-ops, to increase food security, to offer food at a fair price, and to provide economic opportunities.

Today, around 12% of the economy in Jazira, the largest region of Northern Syria, is based on co-operation, and women's co-ops account for more than half of that total. Unicorn members are proud to have supported a number of projects in the region, and we are exploring options with the Solidarity Economy Association to take part in a co-operative twinning initiative to strengthen our solidarity connections. We continue to be inspired by the news from North-East Syria.

## CHORLTON CLIMATE ACTION PARTNERSHIP

**Get involved in the Chorlton Climate Action Partnership: For a healthier, safer, greener and more inclusive Chorlton. Here Councillor Eve Holt tells us why.**

For all our good green credentials, I'm afraid to say we have a long way to go before we can collectively claim to be good ancestors and to be playing our fair part in the shift to being carbon neutral.

Speaking with local residents, traders and schools over the two years since I became a Chorlton councillor, I've heard a unanimous wish to make this a greener, cleaner, healthier, safer and more inclusive place to live, work and play. And people want to help make that change happen. But whilst the energy and commitment for change was palpable, the translation of ideas into action has been slow. As our suffragette sisters once said, it is time for deeds not words!

Following a series of local Climate Action Workshops, I got to work with a small group of local residents and expert partners, to write a bid for funding. One year later and I'm delighted to say we are one of just 15 projects nationally to have been awarded funding through the Lottery's new Community Climate Action Fund to develop a strong Climate Action Partnership and to demonstrate what's possible.

Covid has led to more people reevaluating what matters and rethinking the way they live, work and get around. People enjoyed the safe, quiet streets during lockdown and the sound of birdsong.

This £207,000 of funding is the catalyst we need to now unlock the potential for sustained change so together we can realise our shared ambition to make Chorlton a place where people of all ages and backgrounds can live healthy, active lives - now and for

generations to come - stepping up to our responsibility to protect the planet, as we plant the seeds for a brighter future and #BuildBackBetter for all.

**So what does this mean in practice?**

The funding enables us to co-design the way forward together, taking a participatory approach. The project leads (we are currently recruiting for these roles) and partners (WalkRide GM, Groundwork, Sustrans, Open Data Manchester) will work together with local residents, schools and traders to gather local data and views on travel and pollution and pilot three projects with the aim to a) increase number of people walking and cycling to a local high street, b) to create a safer, greener school run, c) to make environmental improvements to a residential street.

The focus on active travel has been strategically chosen as the Manchester Climate Change Agency 2020 annual report shows that transport is the second-largest source of dangerous CO2 emissions in Greater Manchester. Reducing the number of short journeys made locally by car presents the biggest opportunity for us to make rapid reduction in carbon emissions. It is hoped the learning generated through this project will help take the city region a step closer to its ambitions to be carbon-neutral by 2028.

**How to get involved:**

If you are interested in getting involved in the Community Board or more broadly as a Climate Friend, or you are just curious at this point to know more, please email [cllr.eve.holt@manchester.gov.uk](mailto:cllr.eve.holt@manchester.gov.uk).





# EU EXIT UPDATE

Worker co-ops are designed to be resilient, step up to the challenges thrown at them and leaving the EU on the 1st January poses a steep learning-curve for us here at Unicorn. We've been busy all year getting to grips with new procedures, training ourselves in the not-so exciting world of customs declarations and getting familiar with a new vocabulary of incoterms, phytosanitary certificates and port badges. Rather than focus on the What-ifs beyond our control, we've done all we can in-house to be ready and prepared to become an importer of European produce at the start of the year.

Unicorn exists not for short-term profits but to provide secure employment and good food for its community. As stewards of this business, we'd like to reassure our customers that leaving the EU does not compromise this valuable mission. Our relationships with suppliers in France, Italy, Holland and Spain have been built over

decades of trading; many of them remember Unicorn as a small shop with fewer than ten staff. These relationships mean the world to us, and we know they'll only strengthen in the years to come. While the administration and paperwork looks set to increase, the joy we get from buying this food will not be diminished.

While certain things - such as lemons and olive oil - will always be imported from mainland Europe, leaving the Union has also highlighted how dependent we are in Britain on food imports which could, given the right infrastructure and investment, be grown here instead. We believe in a sustainable food system and always source what we can closest to home before expanding the search outwards. In March of this year, we witnessed for a brief moment how it feels to question the security of our supply chains and many of us reflected for the first time on where our food came from.

We hope that after we leave the EU there will be a renewed interest and appetite for food produced in the UK. Our growers here run small-scale farms which privilege biodiversity, soil health and organic standards over high yields, pesticide use or monocropping. These growers currently face the daily struggle of competing in a market where a (carbon-heavy, freshness-lite) lettuce can be flown here from the USA and sold for 49p. We want more people to understand that there is an alternative food system to champion, one in which we grow food nearby and pay a fair price for it. Unicorn is in this for the long haul; let's work together to ensure the security of our food and planet for generations yet to come (like Kindling's plans below).

## THE KINDLING TRUST: REKINDLING OUR PLANS TO BUY A FARM.

Exciting plans from one of Kindling Trust's founders Helen Woodcock

Like everyone, Kindling's plans were thrown into disarray with Covid-19 last Spring. We were just a few weeks away from launching our community shares campaign to buy a local farm as part of our long term vision. We'd started discussions with the owner; just completed a valuation of the farm; were close to securing support from an ethical bank and had our publicity materials ready to go to the printers.

For those of you who haven't heard of our exciting plans, the Kindling Farm is set to be a pioneering vegan organic agroforestry farm on 100+ acres of land close to Manchester.

We will be growing organic fruit and veg, as well as cereals and pulses, to sell in Unicorn



and to our other partners like Veg Box People. The Kindling Farm will also be home to a Social Enterprise Hub for ethical food businesses and a Centre for Social Change, supporting people to create change in their own lives, communities and the wider world!

So it was a hard decision to put all this on hold, but we decided to focus on our immediate local work of producing fresh organic food and getting it out to those who need it. And we are proud to have been able to do that throughout lockdown, thanks to our very hard-working Kindling and Veg Box People teams and volunteers.

In the meantime we have also continued with cunning plans to keep the Kindling Farm fires burning. We've applied for funding for

an exciting Kindling-Unicorn Heritage Tree Nursery at Glazebury. If successful we'll be grafting (and planting) thousands of edible varieties of trees, which is great on its own, but will mean we can hit the ground running with the agroforestry once we buy the farm.

So, watch out for more news (keep your fingers crossed!) and keep an eye out for our community shares campaign too. To help make Kindling Farm a reality we will be launching a community share offer this coming Spring, beginning on Saturday 3rd April 2021 and running until July. It offers a unique opportunity not only to become a part owner of a farm but part of the growing movement to create a more ecologically and socially just food system for all.



# TRANSATLANTIC TRADE DEALS

## WHAT'S HAPPENING?

As the 31st of December and EU-Exit looms ever-closer, a Trade Deal with the US is being lined up to replace some of the trade agreements we currently enjoy within the EU. As a business that believes in a just food system that works to promote the health and wellbeing of people and planet, this is of particular concern to us.

Remember TTIP? The proposed Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership under negotiation between the EU and US until 2016, which was fiercely criticised for posing a threat to democracy and a lowering of standards in employment, health, environmental protections, consumer rights and the deregulation of public services. Many people are concerned that a UK-US trade agreement looks to go even further in eroding these protections.

## WHY DOES IT MATTER?

It matters because trade rules affect many aspects of our lives, from the food we eat, the healthcare services we access through the NHS, public health and nutrition labelling, to the levels of protection we have against the actions of big business (from workers rights to animal welfare to environmental safeguards). All of these protections are lower in the US than in the UK (under existing EU regulations), prompting concern that we are heading towards a race to the bottom for the UK food and farming industry if it is forced to compete against cheap, low-quality food imports post-EU Exit.

Another alarming prospect raised by the proposed deal is the inclusion of Investor-State Dispute Settlement clauses, which give foreign investors protections against any government action that could adversely affect their profits. Corporations have used this system to sue for compensation following environmental and social regulations in many countries around the world. Currently an ISDS case against the Dutch government is being threatened by energy firm Uniper, in response to the Netherlands climate policy to ban coal-based power generation by 2030.

## FOOD STANDARDS - EU PRECAUTIONARY PRINCIPLE VS US GUIDED BY SCIENCE

On the face of it, the claim that our food systems should be guided by science sounds pretty reasonable - who would be against using scientific evidence to guide food safety? Well it turns out that we should be when we realise 'guided by science' actually means that companies are free to sell any food items they choose to market, unless it can be proven that they are harmful to health. This is the system in the US where incidences of food poisoning are far higher than in the UK, where 72 pesticides banned in the UK are still routinely in use, where baby food has no limits imposed on the amount of sugar it can contain, where GM is commonplace, and where animal agriculture in large, industrial units is reliant on antibiotics, growth hormones, steroids and chlorine washes to mitigate against the impacts of the horrific conditions animals are reared in.

## WHAT CAN WE DO?

Read more, sign petitions, organise!

Global Justice Now have produced an excellent guide to the trade deal

[www.globaljustice.org.uk/campaigns/trade-justice](http://www.globaljustice.org.uk/campaigns/trade-justice)

Friends of the Earth - How Trade Deals Affect the Environment

[friendsoftheearth.uk/climate-change/how-do-trade-deals-affect-environment](http://friendsoftheearth.uk/climate-change/how-do-trade-deals-affect-environment)

War on Want - Arguments for a Toxic US Trade Deal Debunked

[waronwant.org/media/us-trade-deal-myths-debunked](http://waronwant.org/media/us-trade-deal-myths-debunked)

Soil Association - Top 10 Risks for a UK-US Trade Deal

[www.soilassociation.org/our-campaigns/top-10-risks-from-a-uk-us-trade-deal](http://www.soilassociation.org/our-campaigns/top-10-risks-from-a-uk-us-trade-deal)

Sign

Sign the NUF Food Standards Petition

[campaigns.nfuonline.com/page/56262/petition/1?locale=en-GB](http://campaigns.nfuonline.com/page/56262/petition/1?locale=en-GB)

Sign the Which? Save Our Food Standards Petition

[campaigns.which.co.uk/save-food-standards/](http://campaigns.which.co.uk/save-food-standards/)

The long-standing EU precautionary principle system requires companies to prove their food is safe to sell before it appears on the shelves. So when we hear MPs talking about food standards guided by science, we can translate that to food standards with minimal regulation. And it's not just food safety standards that are at risk here. Environmental protections are crucial for minimising biodiversity loss, protecting soils, and fighting climate change.

*"The US's position is, generally, that their food is just as good as European food, and our standards are just protectionism. The problem is that American food is not the same, by any standards". Nick Dearden, Global Justice Now*

So if we don't want to see our food system exacerbate climate change and biodiversity loss, perpetuate inequality and drive down standards, then we must speak out against this deal before it's too late.



WIN!

—APPLELICIOUS—


WORD FIT PUZZLE

WIN!

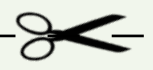
5 LUCKY WINNERS WILL EACH GET A £50 GIFT CARD

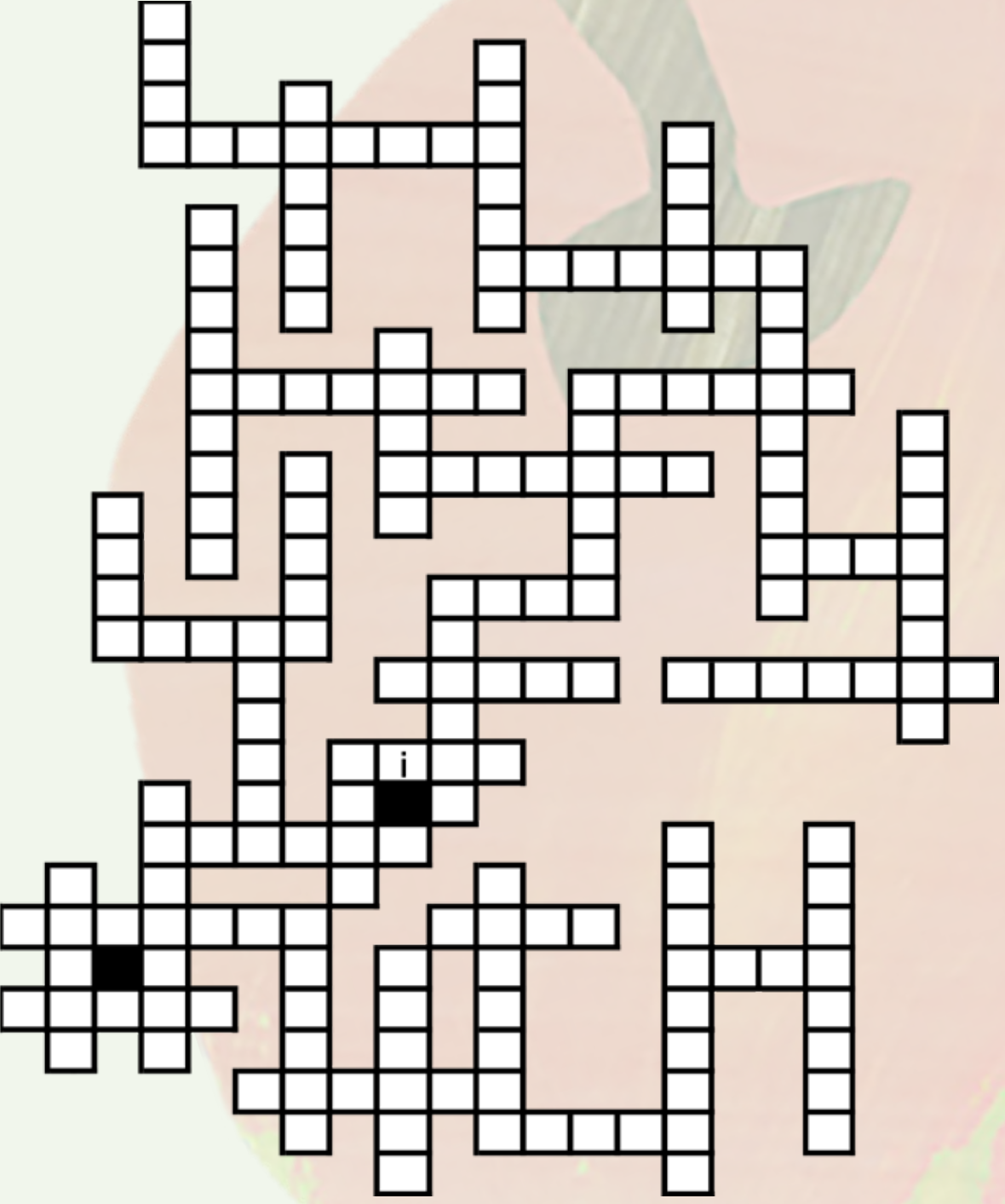
HAPPY PUZZLING!

Fill in your details below along with the completed puzzle and drop it off at Unicorn for a chance to win! There will be 5 lucky winners! The deadline is the 11th of December 2020.



Want to buy a unicorn gift card for someone? Visit our website for details





Fill in the puzzle on the left with the words below, you have to use every word and can only use each word once.

4 Letters

Core

Crop

Gala

Peel

Pies

Pips

Ripe

Tart

5 letters

Akana

Apple

Baked

Cider

Fruit

Juice

Sauce

Trees

6 Letters

Autumn

Cripps

Crunch

Elstar

Grieve

Leaves

Purees

Russet

Saturn

7 Letters

Ashmead

Bramley

Cooking

Crumble

Orchard

Pippins

Santana

Vinegar

8 Letters

Braeburn

Egremont

Pearmain

9 Letters

Discovery

Lambourne

Worcester

Contact Details (Please write clearly)

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Email or phone: \_\_\_\_\_



—WHAT'S—

COOKING?



APPLE COBBLER

This is a quick, super easy and very forgiving recipe. Use any variety of apple, or a combination. Sweeten it with date or maple syrup or sugar. Use whatever type of ‘milk’ and ‘butter’ you have. Add in some buckwheat flour for extra nuttiness, or use spelt flour. It is delicious straight from the oven with some oatly cream.

Ingredients

For the filling:

- 5-6 medium apples (800 g)
- 2 tbsp sugar or syrup of your choice
- 1tsp cinnamon
- zest of 1 lemon
- juice of 1/2 lemon

For the topping:

- 1 cup plain flour
- 1/2 cup sugar or syrup
- 2 tbsp odourless coconut oil/vegan block/margarine, plus a bit extra for greasing
- 1/2 cup milk of choice (a little less if using syrup)
- 1 tbsp baking powder
- 1/2 tsp cinnamon
- 1/4 tsp salt

Instructions

Preheat oven to 180°C

Core apples and cut into thin slices. No need to peel unless you really want to.

Toss apples in lemon, cinnamon and sweetener

Put apples in greased baking dish

Stir the baking powder, cinnamon and salt through the flour

Rub the fat into the flour

Mix in the sugar or syrup and enough milk to make a thick batter

Drop spoonfuls of batter over the top of the apples.

Bake 30-40 minutes

RECIPES, INFORMATION LEAFLETS AND MORE 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 unicorn-grocery.coop



APPLE ALMOND CAKE

This one is more apple than cake & can also be eaten warm as a pudding. Gluten free variation below.

Ingredients

- 2 tbsp linseed soaked in 60ml water
- 130 g wholemeal flour or 200 g ground almonds for gluten free
- 1 tsp baking powder gluten free if desired
- 2 tsp cinnamon
- ½ tsp ground nutmeg
- ½ tsp ground ginger
- 70 ml olive oil
- 90 g sweet freedom or other syrup
- 100 ml soya milk
- ½ tsp almond essence
- 600 to 800 g apples (5-6 apples)
- 50 g flaked almonds

Instructions

Preheat oven to 150°C, and grease a 20 cm round cake tin.

Whisk together dry ingredients (except for the flaked almonds).

Separately, whisk together wet ingredients (including linseed gel). Combine and stir gently. Fold in apple chunks.

Pour into tin, press down, top with flaked almonds and bake for 35-45 minutes (the gluten free version may take a bit longer).

It's done when the middle bounces back and edges just pull away from the sides (if testing with a skewer to see if the cake is cooked, some apple may stick to it).

Eat warm or rest in tin for two hours and eat at room temperature.

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# BUILDING RESILIENCE WITH A BIT MORE JOY AND SPACE TO MOVE AROUND IN.

Unicorn's shop floor is getting some much needed and long overdue nurturing! We are also creating a bigger footprint for you to move through while you select your delicious fresh fruit and veg,

Unicorn is working with local design consultancy Phaus. Chorlton-based directors, Heather Allen and Paul Swindles, are long-standing Unicorn customers and experts in retail design... so Phaus was a natural choice of partner for us to address some persistent issues and refresh our well-loved store.

The proposal features a new extension, replacing and improving our very creaky entrance area. This will add over 500sqft (14% of the current sales area) to the retail space, improving customer flow, lighting, and ventilation. The design also features a new deli and bakery section, as well as new shelving with greater flexibility to evolve the store with more self-serve goods. Phaus's proposal is practical yet visually exciting, with a bold use of colour.

Phaus collaborates with local Loop Architects - who we have worked with before - to develop the extension. The design of the new extension largely reflects the needs of the retail space within, specifically the challenges posed to Phaus of expanding our fruit and veg offer and alleviating congestion. We want to bring as much joy to your shopping trip as we can!

Covid has certainly played its part too at informing the design. The new extension includes a covered area (in case of queues), and greater space for customers on entrance and exit. It will maintain that all-important



*As stewards of a worker co-op, long-term resilience to deliver on our Principles of Purpose is a big part of our job. Got to look after the place for the future Unicorns! We are generally pretty frugal, putting a little profit away every year to invest back into the business. The planned work is a very visual and practical example of that reinvestment.*

natural light through large circular light tubes to the roof and glazed sections. The proposal also provides increased bike parking, a green living wall and what we intend to be the most beautiful covered trolley park in the West.

“As regular customers and local residents, working with Unicorn is such a privilege and a pleasure as it's pretty close to our hearts. We also get how sensitively we need to handle the design of this very much loved

cornerstone of the Chorlton community. This isn't about a radical rethink but an evolved better version of itself that delivers that familiar joyful feeling, in a well-functioning store for both customers and cooperative members, with sustainability at the forefront.’ – Heather Allen (Director at Phaus)

We hope you are as excited as we are about the proposals and we can't wait to share future developments with you.

