

A close-up photograph of hands holding green beans over a crate of cherry tomatoes. The background is a blue plastic crate filled with green beans. In the foreground, a hand holds a bunch of green beans over a crate filled with red and yellow cherry tomatoes.

REGATHER

Impact Report 2021

REGATHER



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This impact report was collated and written by Jamie Veitch, an independent social enterprise consultant, and Tim Feben of Regather. It draws on a survey of Regather customers and interviews undertaken by Jamie with Regather partners in April and May 2021, and data collated by Tim and Jamie with the support of Regather members. We are grateful to UnLTD for supporting the production of this report.

HELLO AND WELCOME TO REGATHER'S IMPACT REPORT

Together we have faced incredible challenges since 2020. The climate emergency, compounded by COVID-19, Brexit, supply chain disruptions and increases in the cost of living have made life tougher than ever for many Sheffielders.

Some of our responses to these challenges are forging a better way of living. As a society we faced an immediate crisis in the Coronavirus pandemic, and addressed it in ways which were previously unimaginable to many. More and more of us understand we can and must act now to reimagine our future and address the damage humans have done to our world.

This won't be news to Regather's customers, farmers, suppliers and partners. You have chosen to be part of a food system which seeks to mend damage and make the world better. And by measuring what we achieve – our impacts – we can better understand the contribution we and you are making to a better world. We can celebrate our achievements, gain clarity on what we need to improve, and set further milestones on our pathway to progress.

The data and numbers you will find in this report tell a story of co-operative, ethical business growth. Interviews with our farmers and suppliers give more of the picture. And the insights from our customers show how buying locally-grown, organic produce has changed their own lives.

We're profoundly grateful to our customers, farmers and suppliers for helping to make these amazing impacts a reality. Read on to see what we, and you, have achieved together – and to hear more about our goals for the months and years ahead to do even more to address the crisis in our food system and on our planet.

Together, we make an impact. Enjoy our report and please drop us a line with any feedback or questions. You can reach us at: info@regather.net

WHEN GROWTH IS GOOD

At the beginning of 2020 we were making just over 300 vegetable box deliveries in a typical week. Customer numbers increased gently during January and February. Then the UK entered its first lockdown. The media was filled with reports of empty shelves in supermarkets, and of panic-buying, and in the final weeks of March 2020 we increased customer numbers two-fold.

Doubling in size almost overnight would be a challenge for any business. For Regather, that meant working flat out with our suppliers to secure enough produce for every box ordered, and we ended up stopping all other areas of the business to focus on our veg box scheme and rapidly recruiting extra staff to meet demand.

Welcoming our new customers while we looked after every box scheme user is one of the achievements we're most proud of in 2020-21. We're thrilled, too, to have retained our new customers. We know many chose a box scheme in March and April 2020 for the first time because of lockdown. But they have remained loyal: By the start of April 2021 our drop count had grown to over 700 deliveries regularly every week.

This rise in customer numbers supports our mission to create a better food system for everyone. It has meant we could offer meaningful support to our growers and suppliers throughout COVID-19, as you can read later in this report. It facilitated our aim to pay all Regather staff the Real Living Wage – in May 2021 we were officially accredited by the Living Wage Foundation. And it allowed us to make enormous investments into Regather's Farm which would have been impossible without such growth.

It also means we're helping more people to make meaningful changes in how they eat, with direct positive impacts they can see in their lives, which you'll hear about later.

Before we get there we'll cover how Regather's box scheme creates positive impacts for people, planet and wildlife.



OVER £500,000

TOTAL SPEND ON ORGANIC PRODUCE LAST YEAR (OCT 20 - OCT 21)

34,852

ORGANIC FRUIT & VEG
DELIVERED LAST YEAR (OCT 20 - OCT 21).

BOXES



ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

ORGANIC FOOD, CLIMATE CHANGE AND SOIL

What we eat and how it is grown and transported has a major impact on climate change. A fifth of the UK's carbon dioxide emissions are caused by growing and serving our food. In the UK each person's food is responsible, on average, for around 5kg of CO2 emissions every day (WWF, 2018).

Sheffield is home to over half a million people, which means feeding our city creates more than two million tonnes of CO2 emissions every year. But we can eat well and slash the emissions caused by our food if we are more aware of how food gets from field and farm to our plate.

Regather's Box Scheme exists to fix a broken food system. Industrial-scale farming has incentivised the use of ecologically destructive pesticides, wrought havoc on the environment, exploited workers and left many small farmers receiving less for their produce than it costs them to grow it. And it wreaks havoc on our soil.

Healthy soil is fundamental for food production: 95% of the food we eat comes from soil (Sustainable Food Trust, 2021). It's essential for much more too. The UK's soils store 10 billion tonnes of carbon – they lock-in greenhouse gases and are essential for combating climate change (Environment Agency, 2021). Soils are home to a quarter of earth's biodiversity – “nowhere in nature are species so densely packed as in soil communities (United Nations, 2020).” Soil helps defend us against, and from the impact of, flooding and drought. We have been destroying this precious resource ten times faster than it is created, contaminating it with toxins, destroying its health and – through intensive agricultural methods including the overuse of pesticides and fertilisers – decreasing its diversity, eroding and degrading land, and causing nutrient imbalances (Soil Association, 2021).

Organic farming is kinder to soil. Organic farmers nourish their soil with compost and by rotating their crops. That means they are restoring our deteriorating soil and preventing further soil loss. And hundreds of artificial pesticides or fertilisers used in conventional farming are derived from burning fossil fuels; some also release huge amounts of nitrous oxide into the atmosphere. Organic farming avoids this destruction.

The Soil Association's robust research shows that we could slash agricultural greenhouse gas emissions almost in half by 2050 if all of Europe's farming transitioned to agroecology – sustainable farming that works with nature. Regather's Box Scheme, which is fully Organic certified by the Soil Association, takes us a step closer.

135 TONNES OF **ORGANIC PRODUCE**
SUPPLIED IN OUR BOX VIA LOCAL PRODUCERS AND OUR FARM OVER THE LAST YEAR.



THE UK'S **SOIL STORES 10 BILLION**
TONNES OF GREENHOUSE GASES

ORGANIC SOILS ARE AROUND **25%** MORE EFFECTIVE AT
STORING CARBON IN THE LONG-TERM

ZERO LITRES OF
ARTIFICIAL FERTILIZER
USED ON OUR FARM



OVER 1KM OF HEDGEROW PLANTED.
TWO NEW BEE HIVES.
TWO ACRES OF WILDFLOWER MEADOWS.
TWO NEW 100 SQ/M PONDS.
BENEFITING FROM A THRIVING WOODLAND
ADJACENT TO THE FARM.
INSECT CORRIDORS AND WILD EDGES
THROUGHOUT THE MARKET GARDEN.

REGATHER'S SUPPORT FOR LOCAL WILDLIFE INITIATIVES
IS IMPORTANT TO MORE THAN 9 OUT OF 10 OF OUR
CUSTOMERS

BIODIVERSITY

The UK has lost hundreds of species of wildlife. Since the 1970s, 41% of all UK species have declined in abundance and more than 15% – 1200 species – are at risk of extinction. Populations of farmland birds have more than halved since 1970. Agricultural management and climate change are key drivers for this decline in the UK's biodiversity.

Three-quarters of the types of crops we grow need to be pollinated by insects, and we face an “insect apocalypse” – four out of ten insect species are threatened with extinction and we may already have lost 50% or more of our insects since 1970. The direct and indirect impacts of pesticides are key drivers of insect decline.

The climate emergency could make more species extinct. Between two and three in ten of known species could be at risk of extinction with just a 1.5% average temperature rise. And intensive, industrial agriculture drives biodiversity loss.

Regather's organic farm, like our box scheme, is fully certified by the Soil Association which means the produce in our box comes from sustainable land management and supports a healthy ecosystem. We don't just avoid pesticides, we and our organic-certified fruit and vegetable suppliers grow a variety of crops in ways which help wildlife to thrive. And we take proactive steps too, like establishing one kilometre of new hedgerow in Sheffield over the past 18 months as a haven for wildlife, birds and insects.

In addition to this we've introduced bees back onto the site to drive natural pollination. We've established two new ponds in partnership with Natural England to provide further useful on-site habitat. And we've worked in partnership to benefit from a thriving woodland adjacent to the farm, great for birds, great for agroforestry.

HALF OF OUR INSECTS
HAVE BEEN LOST SINCE 1970

3/4 OF THE CROPS WE GROW NEED
TO BE POLLINATED BY
INSECTS



EATING SEASONALLY IN THE UK



VEGETABLES	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
ARTICHOKE (GLOBE)												
ARTICHOKE (JERUSALEM)												
ASPARAGUS												
AUBERGINE												
BEANS (BROAD)												
BEANS (FLAT/FRENCH/RUNNER)												
BETROOT												
BROCCOLI (CALABRESE)												
BROCCOLI (PURPLE SPROUTING)												
BRUSSEL SPROUTS												
CABBAGE (RED)												
CABBAGE (SAVOY)												
CABBAGE (SPRING GREEN)												
CABBAGE (WINTER WHITE)												
CARROTS												
CAULIFLOWER												
CELERIAC												
CELERY												
CHARD												
CHICORY												
CHILLI												
COURGETTES												
CRESS												
CUCUMBER												
EDIBLE FLOWERS												
FENNEL												
GARLIC												
HORSE RADISH												
KALE												
KOHLRABI												
LEeks												
LETTUCE												
MARROW												
MIXED SALAD BAGS												
MUSHROOM (CULTIVATED)												
ONIONS												
PAK CHOY												
PARSNIPS												
PEAS												
PEPPERS												
POTATOES												
POTATOES (NEW)												
PUMPKIN												
RADISH												

VEGETABLES	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
ROCKET												
ROMANESCO												
SHALLOT												
SPINACH												
SPRING ONIONS												
SQUASH												
SWEDE												
SWEETCORN												
TOMATOES												
TURNIPS												
WATER CRESS												

FRUIT AND NUTS	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
APPLES (BRABURN)												
APPLES (BRAMLEY)												
APPLES (COX)												
APPLES (DISCOVERY)												
APPLES (EARLY WINDSOR)												
APPLES (ERMONT BUSSET)												
APPLES (ROYAL GALA)												
BLACKBERRIES												
BLUEBERRIES												
CHERRIES												
DAMSONS												
GOOSEBERRIES												
PEARS (COMICE)												
PEARS (CONFERENCE)												
PEARS (WILLIAMS)												
PLUMS												
QUINCE												
RASPBERRIES												
RHUBARB												
STRAWBERRIES												
WALNUTS												

● IN SEASON: PRODUCE WIDELY AVAILABLE AND AT ITS BEST
● PRODUCE COMING IN/OUT OF SEASON OR GROWN IN POLYTUNNEL
● STORED PRODUCE: PRODUCE GROWN IN SEASON AND STORED

WWW.REGATHER.NET

94% OF REGATHER CUSTOMERS
EAT MORE SEASONALLY
 NOW THAN BEFORE THEY BOUGHT OUR BOXES

SEASONALITY

Eating locally-grown, organic food? Then you’re already reducing your food-related greenhouse gas emissions. But there’s another dimension: seasonality, or eating seasonally, and we know from what our customers tell us that this is an important reason for choosing Regather.

Seasonal eating came up often within more than 1,600 comments received in this year’s survey. One customer switched to Regather because a different box scheme sent neither local or seasonal produce. Another said “each week’s box feels like a gift and makes me think a bit more creatively about how to use seasonal produce.”

It’s a simple concept: eating seasonally means eating food as it is naturally grown and harvested (or eating food which can be barn- or field-stored). And if we want to reduce the carbon emissions from our food it’s important because food that is locally-grown, but out of season, can require huge amounts of energy to grow it with artificial heat or light under plastic tunnels. University of Edinburgh research has shown that growing lettuce in the UK in the wrong season creates even more carbon contributions than flying it in from Europe.

That’s why Regather offers a UK-grown box filled with seasonal produce. Regather’s relationships with local suppliers like Wortley Hall Walled Garden (run by Heeley City Farm) mean we do get access to some of the first crops of the year, after the impact of the ‘hunger gap’. This is where supply of UK grown produce dwindles around the April-June period, as overwintered veg has been harvested and stocks of root veg run low, while we wait for produce from the new growing season. To ensure our boxes offer variety we do import some fruit and veg, especially during the hunger gap, but never, ever by air freight. That helps us to remain viable as a box scheme and has far less of an environmental impact than growing the same produce here using artificial heat.

OVER 50 VARIETIES OF VEGETABLES, HERBS AND FLOWERS IN OUR MARKET GARDEN.

WE ALWAYS AVOID AIR FREIGHT TRANSPORTATION, WITH AIR EMITTING AROUND 50 TIMES AS MUCH GREENHOUSE GASES AS TRANSPORTING THE SAME.





REGATHER FARM: DOWN ON THE FARM FOR HIGH INTELLIGENCE, LOW IMPACT GROWING

The disruption caused by COVID-19 was no laughing matter for Doug Kemp, who looks after Regather's Farm. But he's got a smile on his face now, and it's nothing to do with silly jokes about Doug being a great name for our head grower (sorry Doug).

Like everyone at Regather, Doug chipped in with packing our fruit and vegetable boxes during Spring 2020 to help meet the sudden doubling in demand. Although this dragged him away from his beloved farm there was a silver lining: "It gave me confidence at a time of great national and local uncertainty because I knew that everything we wanted to do at the farm was backed by a robust trading arm."

Doug's journey to organic vegetable production started with community gardening in East London, moving on to long-term WWOOFing on smallholdings, then commercial veg box ventures, before joining the Regather box team in 2016. A passion for the outdoors, practical work, delicious local organic veg and the implementation of robust working systems has helped direct him towards setting up the Regather Farm.

"I just love doing this kind of work, the physicality, being in the outdoors, the ecology, the connection with nature – it is so varied," he says. And it connects with issues central to Doug's heart: "local food, a short supply chain, the myriad environmental and ecological impacts and supporting the local economy."

We started transforming a 15-acre site on the edge of Sheffield into Regather's Farm in 2018 because demand for local produce was already

outstripping supply of Sheffield-grown, organic produce. Since then we've developed a market garden, an orchard, a kilometre of new hedgerow, beehives, a new pond, an agroforestry project with an onsite woodland, trackway to get around, and new facilities for events and gatherings.

But we've also become "cleverer about what we grow," says Doug, "and our four large poly-tunnels are yielding so much more this year. Tomatoes, chillis, cucumbers, peas and climbing beans are all doing really well, so much better than last year when we had no highly-productive tunnel-grown produce. Our tunnels also come into their own growing winter salad," adds Doug.

As take-up of our box scheme increases, we can grow still more fresh, seasonal produce in Sheffield. "Local food is a big tick for people because everyone understands the joined-up nature of it: it's fresh, it doesn't travel far, it cuts down on plastics and it avoids pesticides." So what's the hardest part of growing organically?

"A few years ago it would have been making a living, but even though many of us don't understand what 'organic' really means – it's about much more than not using pesticides – most people today have a sense that it's better for the planet, and the success of schemes like Regather's show many people really do want better food that contributes to a better, sustainable, future.

"So today the biggest challenge is probably certification. Getting, and staying, certified by The Soil Association means keeping really,

really good records: compost in, vegetables out; every stage of the operational and supply chain. Rigorous record keeping is vital: if we say we are selling organic carrots from a local farm, how do we prove it? But because it's so rigorous it makes the word 'organic' meaningful, something people can trust."

Regather's Farm secured full Soil Association certification in August 2020, after our veg box – which has its own certification, which sells produce from fantastic local organic farmers.

It means when we say we grow 'organic' food on our wonderful Moss Valley site on the edge of Sheffield, customers know that what they're buying is genuine and fully traceable back to the farm.

With our farm at the heart of our mission to improve food for Sheffield, organic farming means we are managing the land in a way that works in harmony with nature, builds healthy soils and with minimal ecologically harmful practices.

"IT'S FRESH, IT DOESN'T TRAVEL FAR, IT CUTS DOWN ON PLASTICS AND IT AVOIDS PESTICIDES."

DOUG KEMP, REGATHER FARM



**THIS YEAR WE COVERED 1609 KM
BY TRICYCLE MAKING BOX DROPS**

TRANSPORT

Today almost half of the vegetables we eat in the UK are imported. In 1984 more than three-quarters of our vegetables were home-grown; in 2021 only 56% are. And just 16% of the UK's total supply of fruit is now home-produced (DEFRA, 2021), a figure which has plunged since 2019. Importing all this food creates insecurities in our food supply. Flying in perishable fruit and veg has an enormous cost to the environment too, creating ten times more carbon emissions than road transport and fifty times more than transport by sea.

Whether food is grown in the UK or overseas, other changes in the UK's food supply chain, such as the use of regional distribution centres, have drastically increased the amount of food transported by heavy goods vehicles and the average distance per trip. Moving food around the UK is responsible for a quarter of miles covered by heavy goods traffic according to the Department of the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA). Transporting food to and within the UK produces 19 million tonnes of CO2 every year – equivalent to around 5.5 million typical cars (DEFRA, 2005).

A courgette or potato sold in a supermarket in Sheffield might have ping-ponged all over the UK, from farmer to distribution centre to local hub to supermarket, before arriving in a heavy goods vehicle in the shop. It's a waste of precious fuel, of energy. It's clogging up roads and causing emissions we need to cut.

That's why we source our produce directly from our or a partner's farm in Sheffield wherever possible, and keep our supply chains as short. We're careful how we order and buy fruit too – and only order the fresh produce we need to meet customers' demand, so we know exactly what's coming in to Regather Works each week.

From there we make up our boxes – some for collection, others delivered locally by tricycle and small van. We've optimised our delivery runs using a bespoke software package developed by a small UK business – so we can make drops as efficiently as possible. And we even deliver by tricycle – this year we covered 1609 km by tricycle while making box drops. Whilst the majority of our deliveries are still completed by van we've ordered an additional 2 trikes to our fleet, allowing us to take more diesel vans off the road, and process we to continue into the future.

**TRANSPORTING FOOD AROUND THE UK IS RESPONSIBLE FOR
19 MILLION TONNES OF CO2 EMISSIONS**

FOOD WASTE

Households in the UK throw away over six million tonnes of food every year, and 4.5 million tonnes of this is edible. Although retailers are responsible for over a quarter of a million tonnes of food waste, households' food waste makes up 70% of the UK's total food waste, 9.5 million tonnes, which could fill the Royal Albert Hall 190 times. And the food we waste in the UK contributes more than 25 million tonnes of greenhouse gas emissions, with edible food wasted by households making up 14 million tonnes. Potatoes and carrots are the most wasted vegetables, according to WRAP (Waste and Resources Action Programme).

What a waste. We can slash our emissions of greenhouse gases and save enormous sums of money by reducing the amount of food we throw away. Instead of silos between growers, wholesalers and consumers, Regather's Box Scheme links farmers with households. Our fruit and veg box users can easily skip a week or change their order, and each week we only buy the produce we need to fill the boxes ordered.

We aim to be a waste-free organisation – but if and when we do find surplus produce on our hands, we have a better approach than tossing it into a bin. By adopting a “food systems approach” Regather is transforming Sheffield's urban food system. It's an integrated and cross-dimensional perspective on how our food gets to plates, and beyond, including food waste disposal. In practice this means:

- **We only get in produce that has been ordered that week** so there is no wasted excess food behind the scenes, and we help our suppliers plan their demand so they can plan ahead and reduce waste as well.
- **We operate a food waste supply chain, so if there is any food waste, we send it directly to Food Works Sharrow Kitchen, Food Hall community kitchen, or Shipshape Health & Wellbeing centre.** The produce we donate is used in several ways: to create delicious, nutritious hot meals; on sale as fresh but cheap ingredients; and even in outside catering. **Anything not usable gets composted at the Regather Farm.**
- The UK produces excellent crops of a wide variety of apples each autumn. But with so many apples being ready in one go, simply scoffing them isn't always an option. We want to make sure Sheffield's urban apples don't go to waste so **for the past 3 years we have received apple donations from orchards and gardens all over Sheffield and turned them into apple juice.**
- And we don't needlessly waste wonky or non-uniform veg.

“WE OPERATE A FOOD WASTE SUPPLY CHAIN, IF THERE IS ANY FOOD WASTE, WE SEND IT DIRECTLY TO SHARROW COMMUNITY KITCHEN JUST UP THE ROAD”



“WE ONLY GET IN PRODUCE THAT HAS BEEN ORDERED THAT WEEK SO THERE IS NO WASTED EXCESS FOOD BEHIND THE SCENES, AND WE HELP OUR SUPPLIERS PLAN THEIR DEMAND SO THEY CAN PLAN AHEAD AND REDUCE WASTE AS WELL.”



9 OUT OF 10 (92%) OF OUR CUSTOMERS USE
LESS PLASTIC
THAN BEFORE THEY WERE A REGATHER CUSTOMER

PLASTIC

Around 950,000 tonnes of plastic packaging is used every year in the UK's grocery sector for food and drink packaging, according to WRAP's Plastic Flow 2025 report. Under half is recycled. Billions of plastic bags are still produced, used and thrown away too: supermarkets produce over a billion plastic bags for fruits and vegetables, 1.1 billion single-use bags, and 958 million bags for life, according to an Environmental Investigation Agency and Greenpeace report.

Cutting down on plastic packaging is a major reason many customers choose a Regather box. Our box produce keeps plastic to a minimum, with the vast majority of items plastic free. Considering nearly all Organic items brought in a supermarket are wrapped in plastic to keep them isolated from Non-Organic produce, this is not an issue with an Organic produce Box. We also reuse the boxes – typically over 10 times – before recycling them. This makes it easier for customers to keep their excess waste to a minimum. We work with other local suppliers to encourage them to think about packaging and have successfully brought in traditional solutions like glass bottles for local milk. We are continually looking at ways to innovate further with a goal to eventually make the box fully plastic free.

We reckon we've saved well over 100,000 plastic bags from being used this year, and more than 9 out of 10 – 92% – of our customers use less plastic packaging than before they were a Regather customer.

“I LOVE THAT YOU HELP ME LOWER MY PLASTIC FOOTPRINT, I ENJOY EATING LOCAL AND HAVING LOCALS DELIVER THE BOX AND TAKE THE PACKAGING AWAY.” (REGATHER CUSTOMER WMK.)



KEEPING THINGS LOCAL

RESPONSIBLE SOURCING

56% of our customer survey told us that the single most important factor when joining a box scheme was to support more local farmers and local independent businesses.

Trading, the exchange of value, creating fulfilling jobs, unlocking opportunities – business can certainly be a force for good. But a business model which prioritises shareholder value at the expense of the environment, nature, wildlife, people's health and wellbeing is a force for destruction.

But organic farming, local supply chains and a kinder and fairer way of business can and already are making dramatic impacts. Our approach to responsible sourcing and working with our suppliers is a key part of how we do business for good.

As an independent, worker-led co-operative, Regather's primary purpose isn't to deliver profits to remote shareholders. We're rooted in the independent business community in Sheffield, building long-term relationships with partners and suppliers; joining forces with other local growers and award-winning independent businesses across the region. Our expanding and reliable customer base is a fantastic asset for our partners: we help them to accurately predict demand and sales. That's great for their cashflow.

And we're helping them to create and sustain jobs here in Sheffield. That has an enormous leverage effect in our local economy, with money spent by our customers with Regather circulating again and again because we buy from local suppliers. In fact the "Local Multiplier Effect" shows how for **every pound spent with a local supplier, like Regather, is worth £1.76 to the local economy, compared with just 36 pence if it had been spent out of the local area (NEF, 2020).**

This leverage is valuable at any time, but when Covid-19 hit our city, working with Regather was the difference between survival and extinction for some of our suppliers. As their income dropped over a cliff, we could take their products to market. And our increase in customers has enabled several suppliers to create new jobs and invest in their own businesses too.

Collaboration and relationships make for better business, ensuring quality and transparency. We're members of Better Food Traders, an organisation that helps food businesses trade in a fair, sustainable, and transparent way.

We're the lead delivery partner for the Sheffield Food Partnership, playing a key part in building a sustainable food economy here in the city. And our campaigning and advocacy has ensured the economic and social impact of local food production is recognised in Sheffield's city and city-region economic and environmental strategies.

We've asked several of our partners and suppliers to talk about working with Regather. Turn over to find out what they had to say.

70% OF OUR CUSTOMERS USED TO BUY MOST OF THEIR VEGETABLES AND FRUIT FROM CHAIN SUPERMARKETS BEFORE JOINING OUR BOX SCHEME

ALMOST ALL OF REGATHER'S CUSTOMERS SAY THEY FEEL MORE CONNECTED TO SHEFFIELD'S GROWERS, FARMERS AND PRODUCERS NOW THAN BEFORE

EVERY £10 SPENT WITH A BOX SCHEME WAS WORTH £25 FOR THE LOCAL AREA, COMPARED WITH JUST £14 WHEN THE SAME AMOUNT WAS SPENT IN A SUPERMARKET (NEW ECONOMICS FOUNDATION)

Partner Profile: FORGE BAKEHOUSE

Vegetables aren't the only things with roots. Independent retailers like Forge Bakehouse are planted in the communities they serve. Local shops are much-loved hubs for meeting, talking, sharing – and caring:

“A few years ago we launched a Pay Kindness Forward scheme,” says Martha Brown of Forge Bakehouse, baker of the white and dark peak, millstone, rye and other loaves and pastries so popular with Regather’s customers.

“Whether customers are making a purchase in store or online, they can choose to add a donation which allows someone local to access the food they need.

“Covid exacerbated food poverty issues and we developed the scheme with partners including The Social Supermarket and Food Works so it could reach more people and make a bigger impact. Working with Regather definitely created more awareness of Pay Kindness Forward, and donations.”

Regather’s customers are partial to a fresh Forge Bakehouse loaf and tasty pastry. Or two. We are Forge’s longest-standing wholesale customer, according to Martha, and account for between five and ten percent of her business’ turnover. So when Forge was forced to close for a while, an increase in Regather orders came at a critical time, she says:

“The pandemic has made for a tumultuous few years for independent retailers like us. When the first lockdown hit we only had a temporary and basic online shop, so we were limited in how we could find new orders when people stopped going out. Alongside our shop, our café is a key part of our business and of course we had to close it for much of the year.

“But the jump in orders through Regather has been a massive boost and helped sustain our business. Plus working with them takes away a lot of pain. They know how to look after our bread properly so customers get it as it should be. Sadly, that’s not always the case.

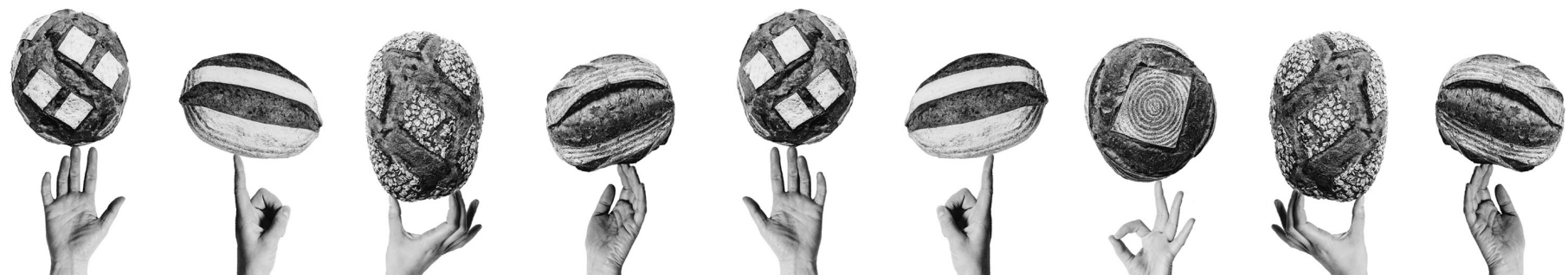
“It’s good to have like minded customers. We share a commitment to locally-produced food with Regather and the people who buy its boxes.

“Regather really stepped up over this period and have continued to keep their new customers happy. It’s been tough and many independent shops have struggled, so we feel we’ve been very fortunate, thanks to our own customers and our relationship with Regather and its customers.”

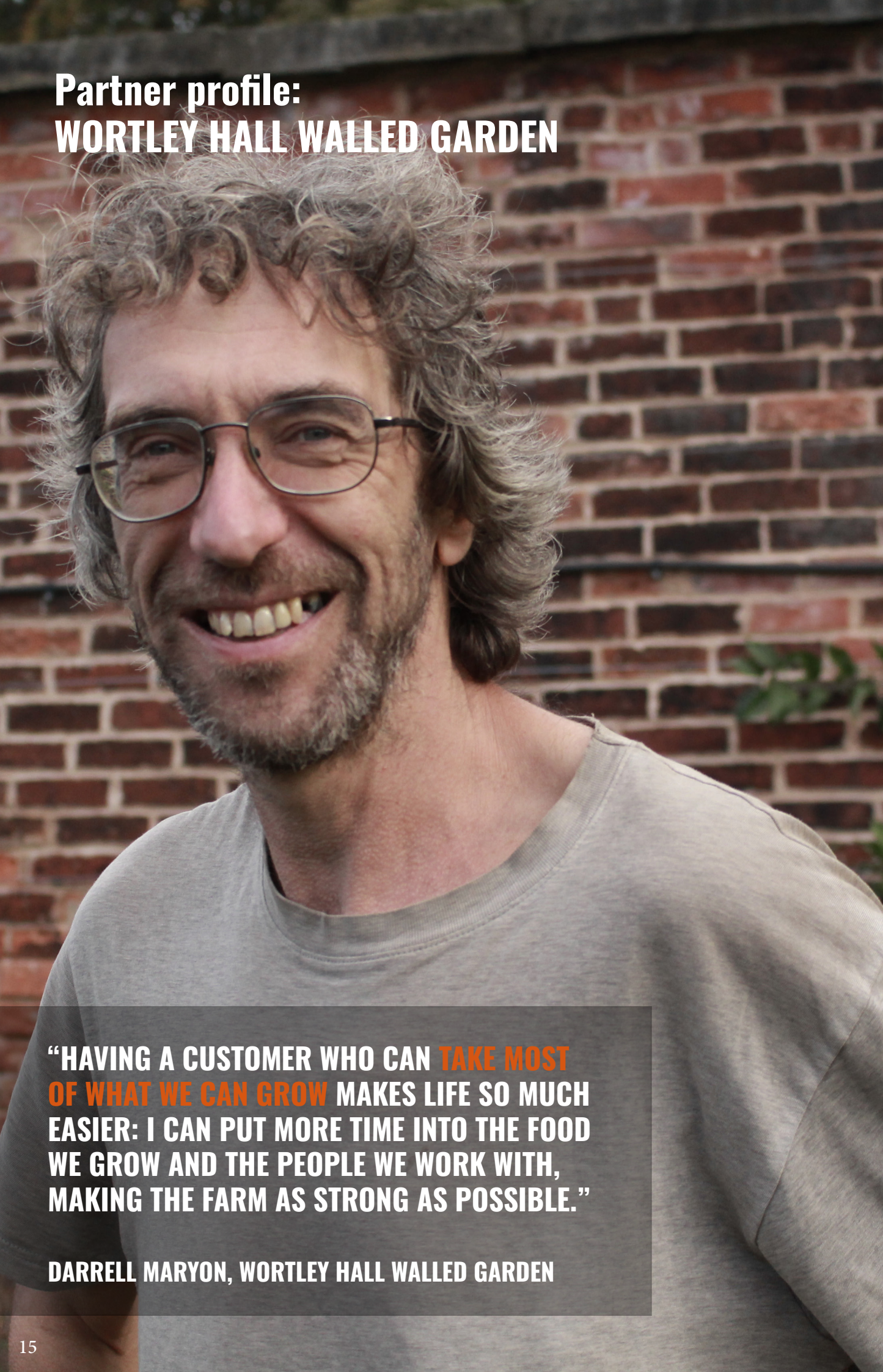


“MANY INDEPENDENT SHOPS HAVE STRUGGLED, SO WE FEEL WE’VE BEEN VERY FORTUNATE, THANKS TO OUR OWN CUSTOMERS AND OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH REGATHER AND ITS CUSTOMERS.”

MARTHA BROWN, FORGE BAKEHOUSE



Partner profile: WORTLEY HALL WALLED GARDEN



“HAVING A CUSTOMER WHO CAN TAKE MOST OF WHAT WE CAN GROW MAKES LIFE SO MUCH EASIER: I CAN PUT MORE TIME INTO THE FOOD WE GROW AND THE PEOPLE WE WORK WITH, MAKING THE FARM AS STRONG AS POSSIBLE.”

DARRELL MARYON, WORTLEY HALL WALLED GARDEN

SUPPORTING SUSTAINABLE LOCAL FOOD AND NURTURING PEOPLE

For Heeley City Farm, growing food nurtures people. The forty-year-old charity supports school children, young people, families, adults with disabilities and learning difficulties, older people, people living with dementia and carers.

It has been a long-term partner to Regather as Darrell Maryon, the farm's Local Food Manager explains: “When Regather started its box scheme we were the only grower that could support them. They've remained one of our main customers which is fantastic when it comes to supporting all the work we do in Sheffield.”

How does working with Regather help Heeley City Farm? “We grow a wide range of vegetables and fruit here and I know they will buy whatever we can offer on a given week,” says Darrell. “Having a customer who can take most of what we can grow makes life so much easier: I don't have to spend time marketing, doing drop-offs at pubs and restaurants or going to farmers' markets. That's time I can put into the food we grow and the people we work with, making the farm as strong as possible.”

The pandemic had a big impact, Darrell adds: “We had to adjust because of course not everyone could come to the site. We employ 35 people and some needed to shield or self-isolate. Alongside them, many businesses and organisations usually help with harvesting and other vital jobs and none of the corporate stuff could happen. But we made adjustments and thanks to our wonderful staff members and volunteers we were able to get through the year.

“We kept numbers down to a maximum of eight people on the site at any one time with

plenty of social distancing. And we increased the number of days people could come and volunteer.”

Heeley narrowed its range of crops a little in order to survive 2020, but increased productivity and efficiency, Darrell adds, focusing on crops most in demand. Sales to Regather's customers allowed the farm to continue its work addressing food poverty, loneliness and isolation:

“Produce from our Firth Park community allotment was given to food banks and used to make meals for NHS workers,” says Darrell “and although the allotment couldn't function normally through 2020, with lots of people on the site at once, we set up bubbles and shifts so anyone who wanted to could get onto it. We know what a lifeline it is for many people to be there.”

To keep children healthy and happy over the summer holidays, the farm ran Sheffield Healthy Holidays events over summer 2020 and 2021. The programme gave young people on free school meals a free meal during the long six-week holidays while they were not at school and lots of activities to get involved with.

Many customers love Heeley City Farm's blossom honey. Adding a jar to your order doesn't only support honey bees, it's great for other bees and wildlife too.



OPERATIVE

REGATHER
TRADING CO-OPERATIVE

REGATHER TRADING CO-OPERATIVE

REGATHER
TRADING CO-OPERATIVE

PEOPLE



A LIVING WAGE EMPLOYER

The Living Wage is an hourly rate of pay which is calculated against the cost of living in the UK. It is monitored independently by the Living Wage Foundation and updated annually so employees can benefit from pay levels that reflect the true cost of living.

Regather became accredited as a Living Wage Employer in May 2021 – we'd long aspired to do this and were able to reach this milestone thanks to the continued loyalty of our fantastic customers who support our goal: to build a better, sustainable, shared future globally.

MODERN SLAVERY AND EXPLOITATION

We've talked already about our responsibilities to the independent business community. We also have a duty of care to the people who pick the produce we sell. It's an uncomfortable truth:

Agriculture is one of the worst industries for modern slavery. Many vegetable and fruit workers work 15 hour days in horrific conditions. Many are paid far less than minimum wage and subject to dubious charges and deductions from what they are paid. Many are housed in crowded, unsanitary, uninhabitable and unsafe caravans and lodgings. And some workers have been trafficked illegally by criminal groups. A scheme launched to help the UK avoid post-Brexit shortages of agricultural workers has even been found to trap and mistreat migrant farm workers.

Regather's produce is picked, packed and delivered by workers who are paid fairly and treated well, wherever it is grown. We sell vegetables and fruit from our own farm and from trusted, Organic-certified farms in Sheffield, the North of England and sometimes Europe.

By building long-term relationships with our suppliers, and dealing with them personally and directly, we ensure they comply with our own principles to prevent worker exploitation and modern slavery. We also seek to work with Living Wage suppliers and encourage existing suppliers and partners to become Living Wage accredited, as we are.



REGATHER IS AN ACCREDITED REAL LIVING WAGE EMPLOYER.



AROUND TWO THIRDS OF OUR CUSTOMERS SAY THE QUALITY OF OUR PRODUCE IS HIGHER THAN THAT FROM ELSEWHERE

OVER HALF OF OUR CUSTOMERS TELL US THEY'VE MADE CHANGES TO THEIR DIETS SINCE BECOMING A REGATHER BOX USER

ACCESS TO LOCAL, HEALTHY AFFORDABLE FOOD

Research by The Food Foundation, an independent charity, shows “food insecurity” (defined as “the state of being without reliable access to a sufficient quantity of affordable, nutritious food”) was rising in the UK even before the pandemic.

Covid-19 has left more people than before struggling to afford or access a nutritious diet. During 2020 2.3 million children in the UK (1 in 8 households with children) were living in households that had experienced food insecurity in the previous six months (Food Foundation, 2021).

Food bank use surged during the pandemic and the cost of feeding a family on a low income rose. Independent food banks across the UK experienced unprecedented increases in the need for emergency food parcels

We believe good quality, nutritious food should be affordable. Eating in season helps customers to save money; we work with a number of local social enterprises and charities, such as Food Works Sharrow Kitchen, Food Hall community kitchen and Shipshape Health & Wellbeing Centre to ensure any surplus produce we have (which is rare – we minimize waste) is donated to help people who need it. We also continually review our prices to make sure we are offering the best value for money we can. Our box produce works out slightly cheaper than like-for-like organic produce from supermarkets.

As a member of The Landworkers' Alliance, Regather is part of a democratic, member-led union of farmers, growers, foresters and land-based workers.

Through the Landworkers' Alliance and with the support of the National Lottery Regather runs weekly gardening workshops during Spring and Summer with our neighbors at Landsdowne Estate in which people plant fruit and vegetables and then eat a freshly cooked lunch of local, organic produce.

Regather community gardens

Little Sheffield, Highfield & Sharrow

This site plan was developed in collaboration with Landsdowne Estate residents and other local people. Planting was undertaken by the Gardening Club each Sunday morning between May and September.

- ✓ planting areas completed in 2021
- * potential planting sites for 2022

LANDSDOWNE ESTATE GARDENING CLUB

This Community Resilience project is delivered / supported by:



Want to be involved?
Want to share comments?
email: fran.halsall@regather.net
& landsdowne_tara@yahoo.com



VALUABLE VOLUNTEERS BUILD SKILLS, EMPLOYABILITY AND OPPORTUNITY

We never take our volunteers for granted. It's important that anyone who volunteers with us receives appropriate support and training so they have an enjoyable and meaningful experience, whether they're volunteering to give back to the community or to support specific personal development goals. And we know this is important to our partners too.

Volunteers on our farm, or working with partners including Heeley City Farm (on their main site or at Wortley Hall) or Sheffield Organic Growers gain learning, educational and training opportunities:

“We exist to grow the freshest possible seasonal veg, but we are also registered to offer supportive placements to adults with learning disabilities and autism. Most other places offering placements in Sheffield closed during Covid – as we are outside, we could re-open after the first lockdown in June 2020 and remained open.

Regather is a great customer and gave us the confidence to continue offering volunteer placements through difficult times because we know that anything we can grow, we can sell.” Huw Evans, Sheffield Organic Growers.



A CO-OPERATIVE, RUN BY AND FOR OUR COMMUNITY

Regather is a Community Benefit Society, an enterprise owned by its members and run “by the community for the benefit of the community.” This means any surpluses or profits we make can be reinvested into the business or distributed for social or charitable purposes (not to shareholders or overseas tax havens) – we are subject to a legal “asset lock.”

And this means we can ensure the business always maintains focus on our core values – an organisation must have a social or environmental objective to be a Community Benefit Society. We'd love to welcome new members to Regather – it's a great way to engage in our work and influence our decisions, because each and every member has one vote. In our 2021 customer survey over half of respondents said they are interested in learning more about becoming a member.

MAKING A DIFFERENCE TO CUSTOMERS' LIVES

Vegetables and fruit should make up over a third of the food we all eat each day, according to the NHS and the Eatwell Guide. But most people in the UK don't eat enough for a healthy diet.

More than half of our customers eat more vegetables and fruit than before they started buying from Regather – and hundreds posted comments in our survey about how they now eat a wider variety of vegetables, as well as more of them.

MORE THAN HALF OF OUR CUSTOMERS EAT MORE VEGETABLES AND FRUIT THAN BEFORE THEY STARTED BUYING FROM REGATHER



PARTNERSHIP, STRATEGY & GOOD FOOD MOVEMENT BUILDING IN SHEFFIELD.

Regather is at the heart of a 'good food' movement, working strategically, in partnership, to tackle unsustainable and unfair food systems, unemployment, health inequalities and unproductive land use in Sheffield.

SHEFFOOD

Regather, works together with 'food for purpose' organisations and city anchor institutions across Sheffield, to collaborate in a cross-sector partnership called ShefFood to create a more sustainable food system for Sheffield.

ShefFood is the Sustainable Food Places (SFP) member for Sheffield. SFP is a national programme supporting places across the UK on their journey towards creating sustainable, equitable and healthy food systems. Sheffield was awarded a SFP Bronze Award in 2021. ShefFood is now working to achieve the SFP Silver Award for Sheffield.

Through SFP, Regather has led innovative projects focused on local horticultural food production, and resilient, short supply chain food systems. These projects include Fringe Farming with Sustain & Shared Assets, and the Urban Agricultural Consortium with Green Futures Associates.

THE INSTITUTE FOR SUSTAINABLE FOOD

Regather has a long standing relationship with The University of Sheffield, where a new Institute for Sustainable Food has

been created, with Regather working as a community partner and receiving support - including to build polytunnels at Regather Farm.

"At the Institute for Sustainable Food we are keen to work with the local food sector to help transform the food system from the ground up. We want to use our expertise and advocacy to support local organisations to build a more sustainable food future. Helping the team at Regather purchase a polytunnel gave us a chance to work with the growers through knowledge exchange and strengthen our existing partnerships under the 'sustainable food' umbrella."

Professor Peter Jackson
Co-director of the Institute for Sustainable Food at the University of Sheffield

"The launch of the flagship institutes at the University of Sheffield really opened up the sustainable food dialogue for us. We can now talk to academics and experts from a variety of disciplines in a joined up way. Opening up these conversations is a real boost for Regather and for ShefFood, and will help develop a multi-stakeholder regional food partnership and food strategy. It builds awareness of the fantastic 'good food work' happening in the Sheffield City Region. This really matters as we work to influence policy at the national level. In a way it is like standing on the shoulders of giants."

Gareth Roberts
Founder member of Regather



**"THIS REALLY MATTERS AS WE WORK TO INFLUENCE
POLICY AT THE NATIONAL LEVEL. IN A WAY IT IS
LIKE STANDING ON THE SHOULDERS OF GIANTS."**

GARETH ROBERTS



JOIN OUR MISSION TO IMPROVE FOOD FOR SHEFFIELD

Regather is a co-operative and thriving community of local people working to improve food for Sheffield and contribute to a better, sustainable, shared future.

We've got to know so many knowledgeable, enthusiastic and passionate people whilst running our veg box scheme and local farm over the last few years, that we thought it was time to steer Regather on a more ambitious path. One that draws on that experience and passion for food, and really be the change we want to see in our local food system.

As such we are launching a new membership scheme this year and we look forward to inviting you. We're aiming to democratise the work of Regather, and will be reaching out to box customers, supporters, employees, and Sheffield residents to join us in shaping our ambition, focussing our work to benefit the wider community and using people power to get things done. If we are going to contribute in Sheffield to a better, sustainable, shared future, now is the time to act.

Join us on our journey to improve what we do, maximise our impact and to help us better represent the needs of our local community and build them into the heart of Regather.

Visit www.regather.net/membership for more details.