

Just Food

CEL members introduce January's *ecocell 2* workshop on Food



Rolling back the frontiers of the market – but not of Balham Market

In the communal house that Tony lived in, in the early 1980's – in Tooting! – his job was to do the fruit and veg shopping. After consulting with the people whose names were on the cooking rota – oh it was another world – he would go to Balham market. Then he would look at what was on the market stalls, at what was in season: the winter vegetables, the summer salads, the strawberries in June. Because that was all he knew, having been brought up in a gardening family in the west of Ireland.

But when Laura was on the rota, that did not work. Laura believed in Choice. She would decide on the day what felt right to cook. She had cookbooks with recipes from around the world (in that pre-web era)... And go out and buy whatever ingredients she needed, irrespective of where it was grown, when, or how. She was a great cook. Laura was Modern. She had Choice.

So the commercial market was taking over from nature in menu decisions, in decisions about what to cook. The next stage in the commercialisation process was also beginning to happen in the 1980's (if not before) – if not in a communal house in Tooting! The 'market' started to offer us ready made meals, 'industrialised cooking' as Michael Pollan, an American journalist and academic, described it in a lecture at the LSE this year. And industrial 'cooking' leads to industrialised farming, as the food firms dictate to the farmers what varieties of crop, grown to what standards, in what volume and when it requires. Industrialised farming is not sustainable.

Industrialised cooking is not healthy – apart from particular ill-effects through excesses of salt, sugars, various chemicals, it just produces too much food too cheaply too well-marketed, in the 'developed' world. So we get the obesity epidemic: too high a food energy intake which combined with lack of physical activity, increases the likelihood of various diseases, particularly heart disease, type 2 diabetes, certain types of cancer, and osteoarthritis. Michael Pollan¹ makes the point that if we want to eat healthily and sustainably, many more of us need to have the skills and the time to cook. Really cook, not just open packets from the freezer.

Beware of the corporate marketing man taking over from the man on the Balham market stall.

Simultaneously in the 1980's we had another development – the dual income household, the rise of consumer society, the time pressures in the home: giving further impetus to the rise of industrial cooking. More industrial cooking further re-enforces industrial farming.

Rosie Boycott, now a food campaigner, was editor of the feminist magazine *Spare Rib* in the early eighties. She now very much regrets the way they portrayed cooking in that era, as a rather demeaning activity, restricting women to the home. Pollan argues strongly for the reduction in working time all round so that all adults have the time to develop their coking skills, and commends Scandinavian trade unions for their campaigns to reduce working hours.

We need to roll back the frontiers of the corporate marketing man. But How?

Governmental Level, Political Action

In recent decades the response to concerns about food security, and the large number of hungry people, has been to concentrate on increasing food production regardless of the cost to people or the land and its creatures. Small-scale farmers and rural communities, such as Via Campesino, have called for support to resist the imposition of industrial agribusiness and have claimed that their way of producing food is better. The 2008 influential IAASTD report from the World Bank and the UN's Food and

'Just Food'

An *ecocell* workshop on Food

Upper Vestry Hall, St George's Church,
6 Little Russell Street,
London WC1A 2HR
(near the British Museum)

Saturday 18 January, 2014

11am to 4.30pm

Keynote speaker: Prof Tim Lang

(President of Garden Organic and
Professor of food policy at City University)

This workshop is open to all-comers interested in discussing food within an environmental and faith-inspired context. More information on www.greenchristian.org.uk

Cost: Free – but donations on day welcome. Booking is essential as space is limited. Deadline for receiving bookings is Saturday 11 January.

To book a place email or phone
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Agricultural Organisation recognised the importance of small-scale farming and the high productivity that can be achieved by small-holders and especially women farmers. Garden Organic President Prof. Tim Lang, with others on the now defunct UK Sustainable Development Commission, developed a wider understanding of the complex nature of the food supply. Rather than just focusing on agriculture they proposed an aspiration for 'genuinely sustainable food systems, where the core goal is to feed everyone sustainably, equitably and healthily; which addresses needs for availability, affordability and accessibility; which is diverse, ecologically-sound and resilient; and which builds the capabilities and skills necessary for future generations.'¹²

Community and local level, Parochial Action

All GC readers will no doubt be aware of the rise in locally grown food initiatives in cities, towns and villages across the country. This has taken many forms, eg transforming back (and front!) gardens from lawn to food cultivation, allotments, garden shares, community gardens and orchards, community supported agriculture (CSA) projects, farmers' markets, food co-operatives and food growing lessons in schools.

An excellent overview of all of these initiatives can be found in *Local Food – How to Make it Happen in your Community* (2009) by Tamzin Pinkerton and Rob Hopkins (Transition Press).

In 2008 Incredible Edible Todmorden was launched⁵. Started as an idea by one resident, Pamela Warhurst and a few friends, fruit and vegetables have gradually appeared all over the town in all sorts of unlikely public places – outside the police station, in the bus and railway stations, at the local health centre and so on – so that people began to see food, often for the first time, in its natural state rather than wrapped up in cellophane on a supermarket shelf. And a knock-on effect has been the rise in job opportunities in local food growing and the success of local food businesses.

Churches in Todmorden have also got involved, opening up churchyards to community gardening and thus giving what might be sacred spaces over to God's creation.

What a wonderful way for Churches to bring communities together!

And Churches can also lead the way in adopting CEL'S LOAF (Local, Organic, Animal-Friendly and Fairtrade) initiative, not only for large celebratory events, but whenever refreshments are served after each Sunday service and in home groups.

Personal Household Level Action

For ideas on what practical actions we can take please read the section *ecocell 2 Food Module*, commencing '**A strategy for action**' (p3) <http://www.greenchristian.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/ec2/FoodModule.pdf> Also the annual food emission chart on the *ecocell 2 footprint measurement spreadsheet* can be used as a barometer of effective to personal action:

<http://www.greenchristian.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/ec2/ecocellFootprintCalculatorBlankJan2013NoMoney.xls> food chart 2.

Listening to the land

The Bible portrays God as a gardener who creates human creatures from the soil, Adam of *adamah*. In this oldest creation story people, as God's food gardeners, observe, serve, guard, and preserve God's garden earth (Gen. 2.15). We serve God when we listen and respond to the needs of the land. Jesus lived in an agrarian culture, familiar with soil, livestock, fields, food trees, micro-organisms and aquifers. At the land's centre is God, Creator and nurturer of people, birds, and lilies of the field. If people live in harmony, listening to the needs of their local biosphere, God bestows abundant fertility (Ps. 104.14-16; 27-30). If people rebel serving other gods, God withholds rain and fertility (Ezek. 36.25-32). Jesus' familiarity with this agrarian

culture, with the land and all its creatures, with soil and seasons, rain and drought is manifest in his imaginative parables and metaphors. If people live sustainably within their local soil community, trusting God as do the ravens and lilies of the field, God rewards their trust as he does his birds and lilies (Lk. 12.24-27). Jesus appreciated even shade, which was precious in burning Galilee. His soil wisdom and compassion is especially memorable in the parable of the tiny mustard seed which when sown grows into a large plant providing shade for the companionable birds (Mk. 4.39). When we listen to the land and respond to its need we flourish with our fellow creatures. The bible people were realistic. We now realise that when people level mountains for coal to burn, and frack earth strata for gas, climate deteriorates, fertility and rains cease. Yet whenever people listen to their local fields and grow food in harmony with fellow soil creatures they flourish with abundant – and local – food. Jesus compared the coming Kingdom to a banquet where he would share food and drink with his disciples (Lk. 22.14-20).■

Please read the *ecocell 2 Food Module* before the January workshop:

'Agriculture accounts for somewhere between 17% and 32% of human induced greenhouse gases. Livestock rearing in particular has been singled out for its high carbon footprint.... Rob Hopkins of the transition town movement says, "Conventional farming since 1945, has evolved into a system for turning oil into food, a process it does with considerable inefficiency" ... Agriculture is also part of the solution: According to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) agriculture can help to mitigate climate change, largely by carbon sequestration in the soil.'

<http://www.greenchristian.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/ec2/FoodModule.pdf>

References

1. Michael Pollan (2013) *Cooked: A Natural History of Transformation* Penguin Books
2. Tim Lang, *Food security and sustainability: the perfect fit*, Sustainable Development Commission, London, 2009.
3. <http://www.incredible-edible-todmorden.co.uk/home>

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