



Sustainable Places Research Themes: Food, land and security

Redefining the 'new food equation' the food, land and security programme is developing new thinking about place-based food interactions that takes a holistic perspective of food systems in order to move towards greater sustainability: from ecosystems to production practices to movement and consumption of food. Our research involves studying the environmental and social components together in order to identify pathways to greater food security and food sovereignty.

The greatest challenge that we face is how do we achieve transformations in the food system to promote a holistic and sustainable approach to food production based on local, place-based food interactions?

Other questions that we address include:

- What are the pressures and challenges that face food interactions in different places and times?
- How are places reconstituting food interactions? How do practices, networks and policies work together in co-producing (un)sustainable places? What are the linkages that create lock-in to unsustainable food interaction pathways? Where are the leverage points at which interventions can instil change via a ripple effect?
- How do we assess adaptive process in sustainable place-making? Is 'place' a new metric for measuring the dynamism of sustainability in different places and across time?

Projects and places in this programme

- Costa Rica: drivers of land use change and how to balance livelihoods with ecological integrity. Other projects in Costa Rica look at improving the environmental impact of Rainforest Alliance certification in banana production and how to improve harvesting of melons so as to reduce food waste throughout the supply chain.
- Turks and Caicos Islands: seagrass conservation and food security. This work interrogates the link between ecosystem services provided by seagrass meadows and food security. It also explores the gendered experience of food (in)security across a Caribbean archipelago.
- Building a strategic network to identify how to incorporate land use policy in coastal zone management in a developing country context. Countries included in the network span Latin America, East Africa and Southeast Asia.
- Agroecology Project: a collaboration with researchers at Exeter and Essex Universities looking at the expansion of the “Nexus” to include social, economic and political dimensions. This is in addition to the focus on environment, water and energy in food production systems, as well as identifying the limits and opportunities for growth of agroecological businesses in the UK, the EU, Brazil, India and Costa Rica.
- Aran Islands (Ireland): research has also been undertaken in the Aran Islands, examining soil ethics, food growing and place belonging. In addition, avenues for policy transfer and lesson learning around the conditions necessary for the promotion of sustainable islands are being explored with European colleagues.
- The Sustainable Management of Natural Resource (SMNR) framework: commissioned by the RSPB, this project is establishing a framework and principles to ensure the effective delivery of biodiversity commitments and the sustainable management of natural resources under the Well-Being of Future Generations (Wales) Act.
- Transmango: Food security drivers in the UK and Europe.
- UK Food Research Collaboration with City University: engaging civil society, as well as an ESRC seminar series ‘The Future of Our Food’
- Trust and integrity of food in the face of ‘appropriateness’ of food as a core pillar of food and bio-security – This bridges into the health programme.
- Developing links with food-land and nexus policy development with the Welsh, UK and EU governance frameworks.

Research team



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