



Coventry University's research aims to create a more sustainable UK food system through public sector food procurement.

Coventry University's Centre for Agroecology, Water and Resilience (CAWR) is leading a new £1.9 million four-year research project aimed at creating a more sustainable food system in the UK.

The recently launched project 'Procurement for Good' was awarded funding from the UKRI Economic and Social Research Council and was co-designed with the Open Food Network, Garden Organic, and Social Farms & Gardens.

With a focus on 'place-based procurement', the project will examine how to improve opportunities for food buyers in schools, hospitals, and other public sector organisations to include sustainable, locally sourced food in their menus.

It will use a combination of knowledge exchange, peer-to-peer learning, and technical innovation to help establish new place-based food procurement networks and monitor their impacts.

The research will deepen understanding of how the public sector can procure efficiently from local producers in a way that benefits the environment, local communities, and economies. The project will work with four pioneering food hubs in England, Wales and Scotland: Cambridge Food Hub, Growing Communities Better Food Shed, Cultivate Food Hub and Propagate/Galloway Food Hub.

Through the project, the Open Food Network will extend the functionality of their open-source digital platform to enable food producers to sell to public sector organisations through food hubs. Garden Organic and Social Farms & Gardens will play a key role in supporting the food hubs and promoting knowledge exchange with other food hubs and with public sector buyers across the country.

Professor Moya Kneafsey, Director of CAWR, and project leader, said:

"This project will explore how innovation in place-based food procurement can deliver more sustainable, healthy foods for citizens eating from the public plate. We hope that the significant buying power of the public sector – around £2 billion annually – can be leveraged to make genuine change in the food system, and we're thrilled to be collaborating with some amazing organisations on this project."

Currently around 80% of the UK's fruit and nearly 50% of the vegetables are imported and the Procurement for Good team hopes the research can help to shift the balance towards more local and regional produce being served up in delicious meals across the public sector.

To find out more, visit procurement-for-good and Centre for Agroecology, Water and Resilience, Coventry University.

Notes to editors:

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