

Land Base – Land Futures Workshops October 7th 2017

Land Workers Alliance – Renting Horticultural Units from Larger Farms Rebecca (Bea) Laughton (Tamarisk) and Ash Wheeler (Trill Farm Garden)

The workshop began with Bea and Ash introducing themselves and their experiences renting growing land on larger farms. Followed by other examples of successful models – Adam and Dee of Southern Roots Organics, Lucy Otto of The Fold.

Participants were then asked to place themselves on a spectrum line of what they would want/need from a piece of growing land. At one end was bare land and at the other 'Plug and Play,' land with a higher level of established infrastructure. The spread was pretty even.

We identified 2 common models for 'new entrant' growers:

- Growing on someone else's land for a wage
- Running your own business on rented land

We discussed the need to find a balance/choosing between high risk for potential greater rewards, and low risk for stability of wage.

Colin raised points on landowners forming workers co-ops.

Gareth talked about CSA's filling in some of the middle ground between the two models.

Attractions/Drawbacks of Horticultural Tenancy

Attractions	Drawbacks
No initial outlay/capital for land/infrastructure	Less creative control
Less risk	Potential legal/administration costs
Less immediate commitment	Security of tenure
More flexibility	No return on rent/labour investment
Get a chance to 'test the water' and suss out the area to get a foothold in the community	No asset to borrow against
Chance to get the history of the land from previous owners/landworkers	Short term vision – risk to soils
More sociable. Potential for collaboration and sharing resources	Parallel cost for renting housing
Less responsibility than landowners e.g. trees falling, boundary disputes, fencing, amenities etc.	
Building up high levels of trust towards the potential of buying the land in the future	

Discussions were had about the untapped potential of River Cottages previous project LandShare, (<https://www.hortweek.com/fearnley-whittingstalls->

landshare-scheme-shuts/retail/article/1385607) and how this resource may be tapped into, reinvigorated and adapted for the needs of current growers.

We then rounded off the workshop with an action plan, with proactive suggestions for the Land Workers Alliance on how they can support growers in their search for suitable land.

- Create a database of case studies with evidence of (regionally specific) successful models
- Create networking events
- Engage with current farmers networks. Holding farm/study tours
- Share successful business models/plans
- Make informal traineeships more standardized with formal accreditation.