

THE GREEN FINGER INITIATIVE REPORT

A reflection, explanation and dissemination of The Green Finger Initiative

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INTRODUCTION

A paper about the current food system and how it came to be rightfully identified that “the work undertaken to produce food is one of the most fundamental and ancient forms of labour human beings must engage in to survive and flourish” (Böhm, S., Spierenburg, M., & Lang, T. 2020). Civilisations were built around food, water and safety however today, “people’s intimacy with nature is fast fading” (Louv, R 2009). Researchers based in London described the current food system as “both a blessing and a disaster that feeds 9.7 billion people also causes soil erosion, food inequality, pollution from shipping and transportation, illnesses from the rising use of pesticides and chemicals affecting both the planet and its people. Places like London are also food insecure as the country does not make enough food to fulfil its requirements” (National food strategy, 2021). “In the future the population will reach 9.7 billion people and with dwindling resources the foodscape of the future needs to look very different” (Foodnavigator.com 2019).

SPECULATING FROM THE BIGGENING

2050 is an important year, the European commission, United Nations amongst many other governments and organizations have a goal to be “climate-neutral by 2050 – an economy with net-zero greenhouse gas emissions” (climate.ec.europa.eu, n.d.). With current farming practices becoming heavily industrial “The gap between primary production and final consumption has lengthened, gone is the romantic picture of doughty yeoman farmer, and in comes the reality of ready-made food, supermarkets, home delivery, advertising and marketing, data mining, plant and animal breeding, and supply chain management. This has transformed how increasingly urbanised populations receive their food since the 19th century”(Böhm, S., Spierenburg, M., & Lang, T. 2020). This applies to all industries but especially to the British food and consumption industry which is “currently responsible for 15,483 kt CO₂eq of carbon emission annually” (C. Thompson, D. Smith, S. Cummins, 2018).

Speculators around the globe paint a preferred and necessary future that looks quite different where there is ample for everybody without harming the planet, this comes from completely re-imaging the current food system. This according to the foresight team at Arup looks like “decentralised food production, collaboration between citizens, blockchain based tracking, collaboration between citizens and organisations, near sourcing and most importantly regenerative farming” (Arup, 2021). Additionally, Sainsbury’s future food report explores “increased flexitarian diets, meat alternatives, lab grown animal products, and expanded oceanic diet and again a far more active involvement of citizens in food production” (Foodnavigator.com 2019).

The proof of this speculative future becoming real, lies in the few but impactful practices that currently exist. For example, in “Madagascar, food and nutrition security levels were very worrying: 35.5% of children under the age of five suffered from delayed growth, then in 2022 the RUAF foundation rolled out an urban agriculture plan that empowered the woman of the community they helped scale up urban farms from 1,000 to 5,000 which provide food for over 500,000 people in Antananarivo, greatly improving food security, nutrition, and environmental sustainability. This example highlights how urban farming can build resilient and equitable food systems, even after disasters like the pandemic” (kappy, 2023). More locally, the “Culpepper, is a London Pub with a rooftop that grows a major chunk of the items listed in their menu going towards creating a more eco-conscious dining experience” (agrotect, 2023). London based architects “Peer & Burloiu aim to use temporarily empty buildings of London to create food streetscapes and mega spaces along the ground floor.” And, in comparison to other temporary spaces, it will have the added benefit of the “food tasting spectacularly fresh and being extraordinarily nutritious, but also being grown right above your head.” (Agritecture, n.d.).

While the COVID-19 pandemic severely impacted the world and expedited the current economic conditions it also gave rise to people reconnecting with nature, there was a rise in homesteading practices not just out of necessity but also as a “method of relaxation and enjoyment” (Scott-Reid, 2024), a sub-Reddit about homesteading had close to three million followers with millennials at the heart of it (Scott-Reid, 2024).

A NEW FOOD EDUCATION TOOL

Children's education is complicated there are bureaucracies, school and family budgetary concerns, lack of interests and also from a research perspective a lack of access to the target audience. In analysing places and stakeholders around children in regards to food and education I found that teachers and parents are two very important stakeholders in a child's development. This lead to me broadcasting questionnaires to both. I mainly asked parents what their own fondest memories were as a child, how exposure to nature might impact their own children and what they might learn from it. In summary, their fondest memories were always with a dear family member or friend playing with nature in a light hearted atmosphere and they strongly felt that a connection to nature and farming was important not only for their mental health and for a digital detox but to teach values like respect, patience, introspection and hard work, teachers also agreed to the importance of this renaturing.

The current British food education however is severely lacking, the director of the Centre for STEM notes that "agricultural literacy, or the understanding of food, fibre, and fuel production, is dwindling at an alarming rate" (Beierle and McKenna, 2024). Another study examined "the role of school food education and school food culture in England and their potential to support pupils' capabilities to adopt health protecting and promoting behaviours" (Hart and Page, 2020).

THE GREEN FINGER INITIATIVE

This is a phygital game designed to reconnect children aged 8-12 in urban London with nature and British seasonal produce. It aims to spark their interest in food systems and agriculture, potentially guiding them toward careers in these fields and making them engaged members of a sustainable future.

It puts together the identified important factors in food based education which are play, community, technology and knowledge. It employs a multimedia approach with a physical kit (seeds, and IoT camera) and an app for plant monitoring, social connectivity, and food system learning. The activity is predominantly school-based, involving all students and engaging parents, with complementary activities like farm visits and cook-along but may also be bought individually, this is also equally engaging.

IMPACT

The Green Finger Initiatives fosters a sense of community by bringing together parents, children, teachers, and local farmers, enhancing collaboration and shared experiences. By supporting schools' efforts in food education, it helps bridge the knowledge gap and promotes sustainable practices. The initiative not only educates and engages children but also builds a stronger, interconnected community dedicated to a sustainable future.

Over time, this grassroots approach can lead to systemic changes in how food education is perceived and implemented, contributing to a more sustainable and food-secure future. The success of the initiative in London can serve as a model for other cities and regions, potentially leading to global improvements in food education and sustainability practices.

PROTOTYPE



PROTOTYPE

MATERIALSDIRECTIONS

TIPS



STEP 1

Preparing Your Material

It's important to ensure that the pots you buy have some drainage holes in them. If not, quickly drill some in the bases. Then, start by mixing some bone meal in with some soil.

MATERIALSDIRECTIONS

TIPS



Sow: March

Harvest: July

STRAWBERRIES

You will Need:

Strawberry seeds

Seed tray

Grow pot

Seed compost

Watering can with rose attachment

Plant Netting



STARTING A NEW MONTH?

SCAN THE CODE!

MATERIALSDIRECTIONS

TIPS

ON A BUDGET

01

An old Ikea shopping bag is a great replacement for a grow bag.



02

An Ice tray makes a perfect replacement for a seed tray



JOURNAL

PROFILE

5TH JAN 2025

Dare: Write a story about a strawberries life

I've been told I have bad handwriting.
This is how I usually write with an M nib.
My print writing is really bad.
I mostly only write cursive.
The quick brown fox jumps



2ND JAN 2025

Truth: Where are Strawberries available locally?





29TH DEC 2024


Dare: Find 5 recipes that use Strawberries





JOURNAL

PROFILE



HI, TANNI

Age: 8

Grade: 2nd


School: Ark Bentworth Primary Academy


Location: 72 Bentworth Rd, London W12 7AJ

CURRENT

STRAWBERRIES

HISTORY





PROTOTYPE



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