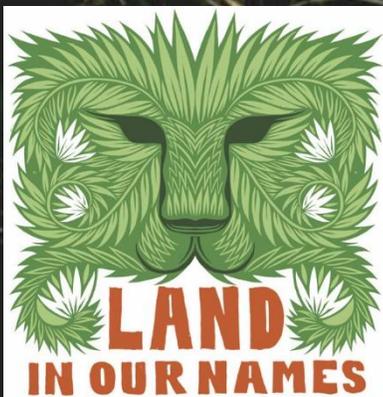




ROOTZ INTO FOOD GROWING

KNOWLEDGE AND EXPERIENCES OF
SOCIAL ENTERPRISE FOOD GROWERS
FROM BLACK / COMMUNITIES OF COLOUR

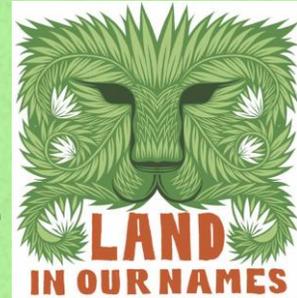
MARCH 2021



JOSINA CALLISTE,
SAM SIVAPRAGASAM, MARCUS MCDONALD
LAND IN OUR NAMES

Cover photo by Sandra - gogrowwithlove

ORGANICLEA



Rootz into Food Growing is a collaboration project between [Ubele](#), [OrganicLea](#), [Black Rootz](#), [Land In Our Names](#) (LION). It is a 15 month programme (November 2020 – February 2022).

The project aims to more clearly identify, understand, plan and implement a series of interventions which subsequently reduce barriers to entry into the social enterprise growing system and begin to identify appropriate land for commercial food growing purposes. It will promote food justice by identifying and training a new generation of BPOC growers who are empowered to develop their own food growing systems and enterprises; grow local, culturally appropriate and indigenous food (which can be grown in the UK) which is often imported and sold at inflated prices; encourage people of all ages from BPOC communities to create social enterprises, thereby creating livelihoods.

This research project was undertaken in winter 2021 to shed light on the experiences of the few Black / people of colour (BPOC) with experience of growing food for social enterprise and sustaining livelihoods in and around London. This report is based on interviews with food growers past and present. We asked about their journeys into food growing and enterprise, the challenges and opportunities in a city with limited spaces for growing and selling produce.

Throughout this report quotes from interviewees are used to illustrate the conclusions drawn from the research, to do justice to their experiences and share their stories with the individual readers and organisations for whom this research was commissioned.

With thanks to our funders from [Farming the Future](#)

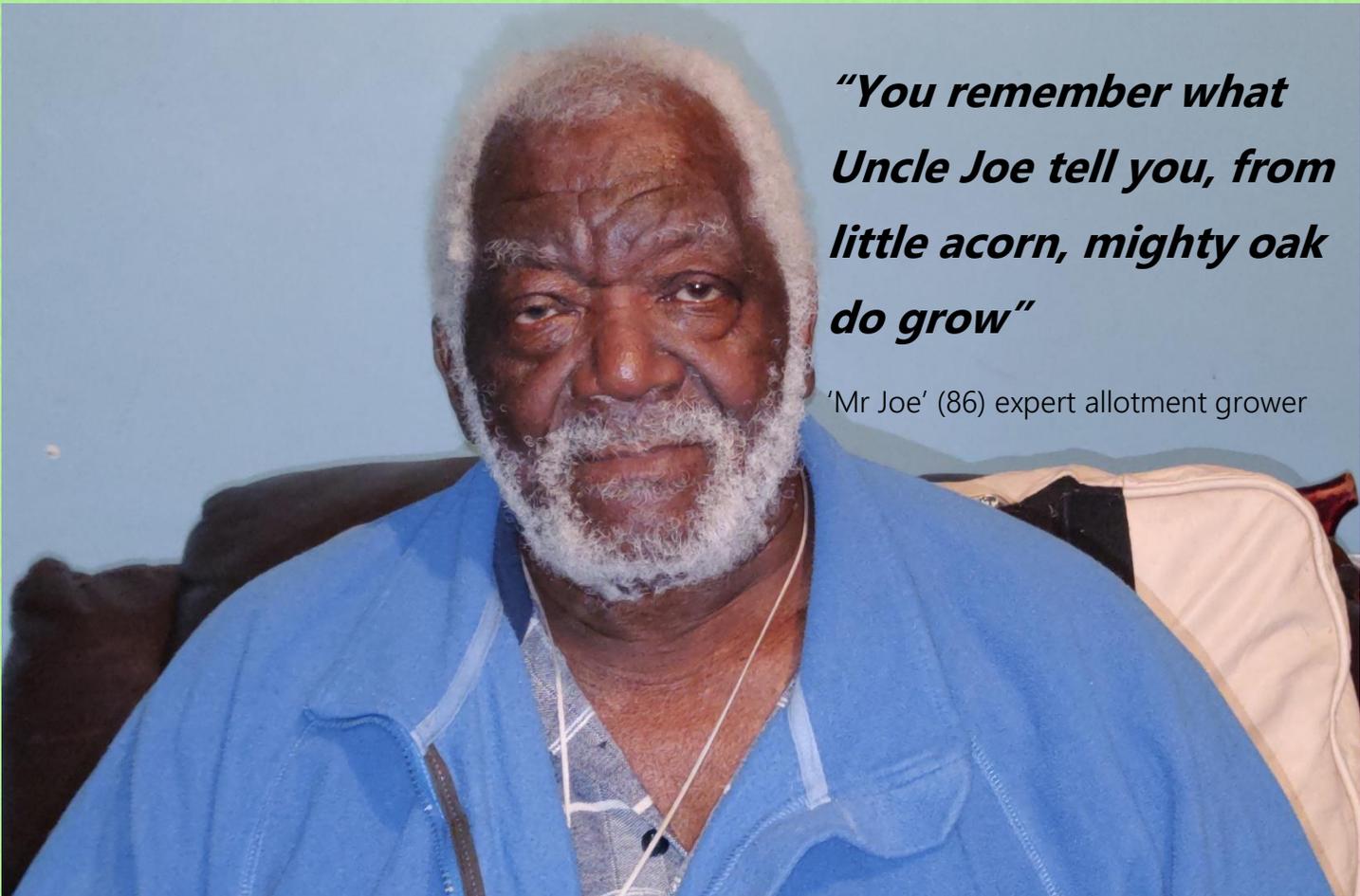


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The research for the *Rootz into Food Growing* project was undertaken in winter 2021 to understand the experiences of Black people's and people of colour's (BPOC) experiences of growing food for social enterprise and sustaining livelihoods.

We want to thank all the BPOC food growers who shared powerful stories of resilience and transformation despite the many barriers present in food growing spaces and society. The research team have learned so much from your interviews, and we wish you every success with your growing journeys and enterprises. You are the educators, organisers, changemakers and healers that our communities need.

A portrait of an elderly Black man with a white beard and hair, wearing a blue zip-up jacket over a grey shirt. He is looking directly at the camera with a slight smile. The background is a plain, light-colored wall.

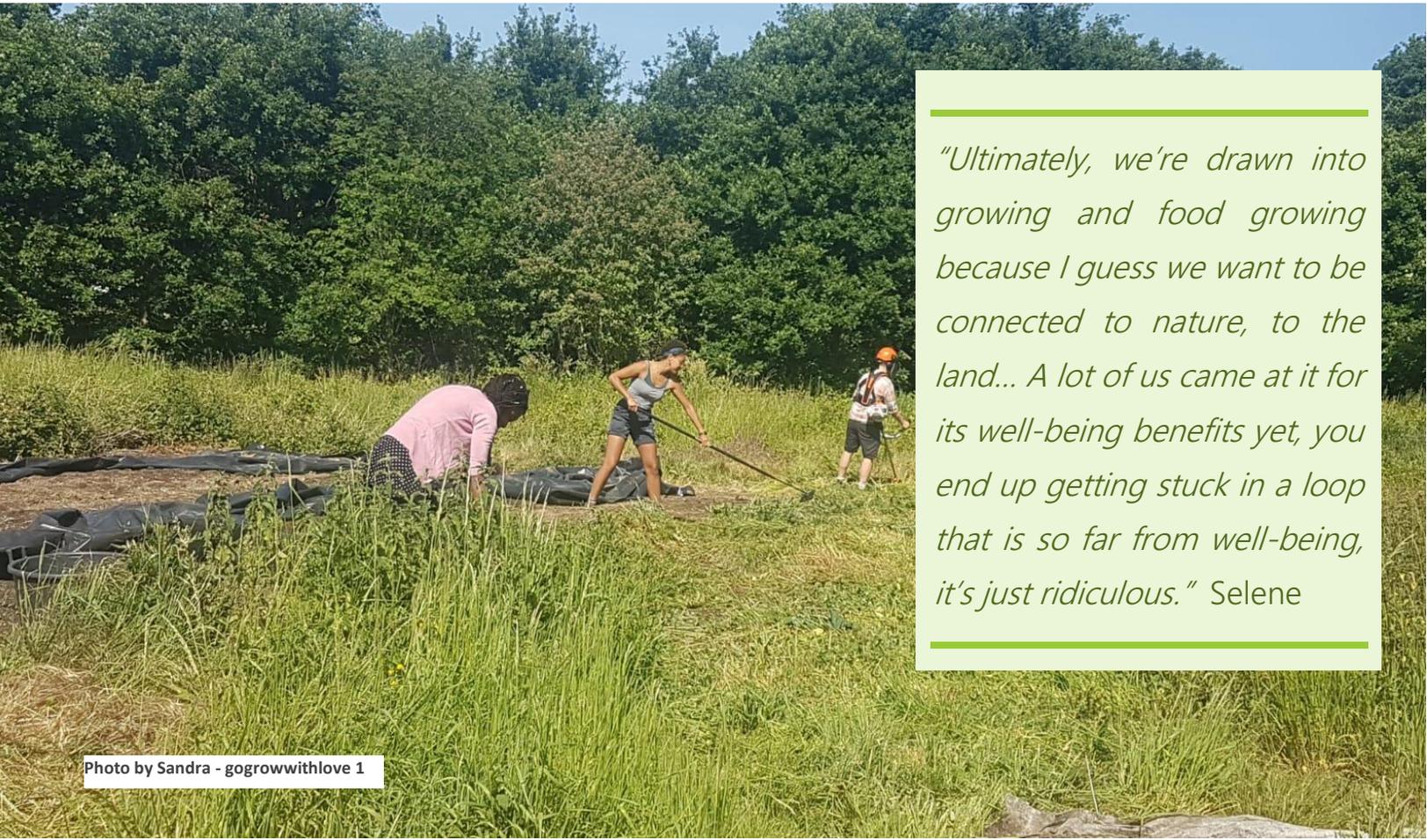
***“You remember what
Uncle Joe tell you, from
little acorn, mighty oak
do grow”***

'Mr Joe' (86) expert allotment grower

Introduction to Rootz into Food Growing Research

In order to achieve food justice, all communities must be empowered to 'grow, sell, and eat healthy food, which is fresh, nutritious, affordable, culturally-appropriate, and grown locally with care for the well-being of the land, workers, and animals' ([Food Justice Glossary](#)). A sustainable food system in London's future will need growers from its minoritized communities, in particular Black people and people of colour (BPOC).

The challenges and needs of BPOC food growers must be addressed in order to inspire, mentor and nourish new entrants. This report showcases the passion and growing wisdom our BPOC growers bring to London's social enterprise growing scene and the multitude of challenges they face in a system which offers little support for them. The entrance and retention of BPOC food growers demands greater access to financial resources, mentoring and enterprise development.



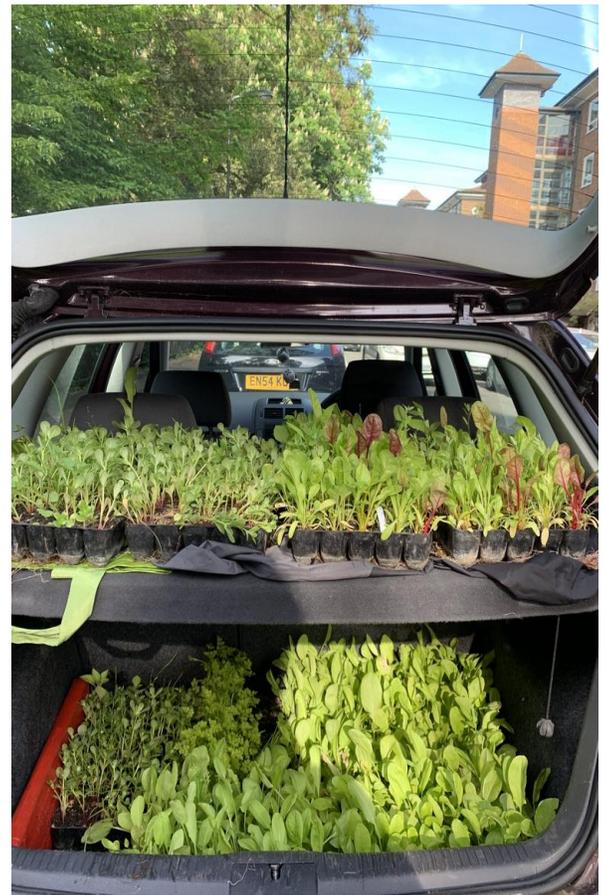
"Ultimately, we're drawn into growing and food growing because I guess we want to be connected to nature, to the land... A lot of us came at it for its well-being benefits yet, you end up getting stuck in a loop that is so far from well-being, it's just ridiculous." Selene

Who is a Social Enterprise Food Grower?

Commercial farming is typically on a large-scale and for profit, using advanced technological means. London's shortage of available land for food growing means there are very few opportunities for commercial farmers in its urban and peri-urban areas. Social enterprise food growing (SEFG) is more common, but still less common than allotment or hobby growing. Similar to subsistence farming, SEFG is usually in small-to-medium scale sites, uses more people than technologies and may sell produce.

We defined social enterprise food growers as those who grow to sustain their livelihoods, are employed by a food growing enterprise, sell and distribute their produce including via box schemes, restaurants, farmers' markets and more.

According to a 2017 report by the Policy Exchange, horticulture and agriculture are two of the least diverse, or whitest professions in Britain. The LION research team expected that of the growers in our collective networks, few would have had the opportunities to develop food growing businesses. We broadened our definition of 'grower in the pan-London area' to account for the dearth of land for food growing in the city and include those who grow outside of London to sell within the city, as well as those who are not currently SEFG (see appendix).



Background

(With special thanks to SOAS students Randa Toko and Dora Taylor for their writing contributions)

BPOC Farmers and Food Growing

Literature around BPOC farmers in Britain is sparse. There are very few academic papers on the subject, with the majority being written about the United States of America context. Furthermore, books and journals about the food system in Britain overwhelmingly neglect race as a topic.

Most of the relevant information is in the form of newspaper articles, blogs, and survey data. These sources identify a lack of BPOC farmers and racism experienced within the farming sector. Within this material, there is sometimes a narrow definition of what a farmer is, which excludes urban and small-scale food growers.

A 2017 report by the Policy Exchange²² concludes that agriculture is the least diverse sector in the UK, with 1.4% of farmers being non-white, and that 'the least diverse jobs all tend to be tied to animals or the outdoors or skilled crafts'. Similarly, the Office for National Statistics' data from 2016-2019 finds that around 1% of British agricultural workers are from 'Black and Minority Ethnic' (BAME) backgrounds²³.

Wilfred Emmanuel Jones was named by newspapers as Britain's 'Only Black Farmer'²⁴ in 2005, and was later joined in 2006 by Britain's 'Other Black Farmer'²⁵, David Mwanaka. Whilst there is an objective dearth of Black farmers in Britain, the exceptionalist framing of these men, who are not the only Black farmers in Britain, suggests that the criteria for being a farmer in the public imagination, does not include small-to-medium scale, urban growers, social enterprises, or community food growing projects. Given this perception, statistics reporting on agricultural workers and farmers may not be entirely representative.

Experiences of racism within the agricultural sector have been discussed in some recent articles. Jones was the star of the 2006 television show 'Young Black Farmers', in which Black youth competed for an internship by working on Jones' farm. The show revealed the racism and alienation experienced by Black people entering into agriculture, and a recent article re-visiting the show finds that none of the contestants went on to work in farming, confirming Jones' assertion that 'not really much has changed'²⁶.

Shockingly, in a 2021 report, graduates and students of top agricultural university Harper Adams reported racism, sexism and homophobia, including incidents of blackface²⁷. Two 2020 Farmers' Guardian pieces cite Navaratnam Partheeban, co-founder of the British Veterinary Ethnicity and Diversity Society (BVEDS), pig unit manager Flavian Obiero, and farm vet student Uma Selvon, who attest to the discomfort felt by BPOC agri-vets and livestock farmers due to a lack of non-white role models in the sector²⁸, as well as having to withstand racist micro-aggressions²⁹. In a 2018 article for Farmers' weekly, Partheeban expands on his experiences of racism on farms, concluding that 'we need to encourage people of all backgrounds to see farming as a viable option for employment'³⁰.

Some articles also touch upon the erasure of BPOC people's voices from the alternative farming movement. For example, within the 2020 USA film *Kiss The Ground*, the exclusively white perspective, which 'erased the voices and

power of Black, Brown and Indigenous farmers and food producers³¹, has been noted. One short article, based on fieldwork undertaken at OrganicLea in London in 2012³² observed a 'white elephant in the room' which limits the participation of diaspora because of an '*unawareness* of how white ecological identities have been formed through historical processes of racialisation and contemporary power patterns of whiteness and coloniality' (p79).

This lack of awareness is beginning to be explored in very recent literature, spurred by a recent resurgence of discourses on decolonisation. Corinne Fowler explores the colonial links of the English Countryside³³, pointing to gardens such as the Chelsea Physic garden, which were funded by slavery, discussing the importation of plants from Caribbean and African countries which have now been named as English, and the parallels between botanical and racial classification systems. The organisation Decolonising the Garden also explores these dynamics, pointing to the colonised nature of plant-names, usually named for the white men who falsely claimed to have discovered them.

Within the wider literature, discourse around the 'Young farmer problem' is relevant to the topic of BPOC growers. Studies identify the need to increase the number of new entrant farmers in England³⁴ and describe the British farming sector as being a closed profession which is difficult to pursue without inheriting land³⁵. A 2017 policy paper 'New Entrants in Agriculture', written by the Landworkers' Alliance³⁶, identifies the need to increase young and new entrant farmers into the British agriculture sector, and does link these groups to increased agricultural sustainability and food sovereignty. However, none of these studies explore BPOC or refer to the increased entrepreneurship of younger people, as well as the open-mindedness of new-entrant farmers of any age, as routes to increased racial diversity.

Another relevant area of literature concerns the barriers faced by alternative farming movements, urban farmers, and community growers. Larch Maxey³⁷ identifies tensions between the aspirations³⁷ of small-scale farmers in Britain and the realities of operating within a neoliberal food system dominated by supermarkets, and the excessive fees and paperwork required to partake in Organic, Soil Association approved and other certification schemes. Organisations such as Sustain, the Ecological Land Cooperative and the Sustainable Food Trust have also published many articles on this topic, but explicit explorations of race-based barriers to farming are absent. Mainstream and leading books on the food system, such as 'Sitopia'³⁸ by Carolyn Steel, and Tim Lang's 'Feeding Britain'³⁹ also notably lack references or discussions of BPOC growers, colonialism or structural racism within the food system.

There are a growing number of community projects aiming to increase BPOC participation in gardening, growing and environmentalism. Mona Bani, director of May Project Gardens, cites the importance of 'connecting to nature in an urban environment' as central to their Hip Hop Garden course, which teaches growing, cooking and food history to young people in south London, many of whom are refugees. Similarly, the food campaign organisation Feedback identifies the need for 'organisations across the environment sector [to] become both more inclusive and more diverse' as the foundation of their eco-talent internship scheme, which aims to increase the presence of 'BAME' people, and other underrepresented groups within the sustainable food sector.⁴⁰

Against this background, the Rootz into Food Growing (RIFG) research team interviewed growers with experience of commercial or SEFG. The rest of this report presents their stories and perspectives on the past and future of BPOC SEFG in London, Britain and UK.

Systemic Racism and Access to Green Spaces

Green spaces including parks, allotments and woodland are increasingly recognised as important assets for supporting health and wellbeing. In a country where less than 1% of the British population owns half the land¹, there are clear inequalities in access and use of the natural environment². In fact, due to the rise in demand for land due to urbanisation and property development, green spaces are becoming an increasingly scarce resource.

Access to this natural resource is dictated by various systematic social and economic inequalities. It is no surprise the relationship between wealth and health inequalities go hand in hand³. Evidence shows that the most economically-deprived areas have less available quality public green space⁴.

It is evident that people who live in wealthier and whiter neighbourhoods are more likely to live in closer proximity to good quality green spaces and air leading to having better health outcomes and living longer⁵. People living in the least deprived areas are 10 times more likely to live in a green area than people in the most deprived areas, while the most affluent 20% of areas have five times the number of parks and green space than the 10% most deprived areas⁶.

Government studies show white people are the ethno-demographic group least likely to live in socially deprived areas⁷ while people of colour^a are overrepresented in the most socially deprived communities. In England, Black people are nearly four times more likely compared to white people to not have access to an outdoor space at home in the form of a private garden, patio or balcony⁸; even when comparing data for people from similar class, age, area and living situation, white people are 2.4 times more likely than Black people to have a private garden⁹.

Systemic racism underlies the history of settlement patterns for racialised communities in Britain's cities. This is compounded by structural inequalities which cause deprived communities and BPOC communities living in urban areas to be the hardest hit by air pollution^{10,11}. People living in white and affluent areas or rural areas live in walking distance from a green space at a higher percentage than people from a BPOC background¹². BPOC communities live mostly in urban settings with barriers to accessing green spaces and nature's health benefits, which means they are disproportionately affected by urban environmental conditions. This became further exacerbated by the lockdown measures during the recent and ongoing Coronavirus pandemic¹³. These geographical and physical exclusions result in inequalities in being able to access nature for physical and mental wellbeing due to environmental and systemic racism.

Until recently, the experiences and consequences of being a racialised person have not been considered a salient factor in the studies that have tried to understand the reasons for visiting natural environments¹⁴. Public Health England's 2020 study¹⁵ recognises more than just the physical barrier to access green spaces, such as geographical distance, lack of transport or facilities. It also recognises social ("feeling unwelcome or out of place", "being out in a natural setting is

^a We acknowledge the varying terminologies used to describe racialised groups across research studies. These include "non-white", BPOC, BIPOC and "BAME". All terms are imperfect, as living under white supremacy is oppressive. The LION research team have tried to be consistent in our use of BPOC to describe our own research, as well as be faithful to the language used by other research studies and organisations.

not part of social expectations or background”) and cultural (“experiences of racism”, “fear of bullying”, “failure to provide for the needs of a minority community”) barriers to spending time in nature.

The study recognises the need to further investigate the personal values and perceptions that influence motivations and barriers to visiting green spaces, though it mentions the experience of racism only once.

Natural England¹⁶ found that 41.9% of white people spend time in nature, compared to 38.8% of mixed-race, 25.7% of Asian, and 26.2% of Black people. In the national imaginary, the rural, natural environment and English countryside are constructed as white spaces¹⁷. This leads to experiences of alienation and feelings of unbelonging for people of colour and apprehension about spending time making use of these natural resources¹⁸.

Beth Collier points out that this alienation is also due to BPOC mainly living in urban areas with less access to green space and having to travel to a new environment and navigate the relationship with other people due to how they are perceived in a natural environment¹⁹.

In Western contexts, ethnographic research suggests BPOC’s relationship to nature is rooted in recent historical experience of colonialism and slavery. Thus BPOC are continuing a legacy of cultural disconnect from nature as a survival mechanism²⁰. For centuries colonial and imperial imaginaries born out of racist Western philosophical thought have denigrated populations of colour as primitive and backwards because of close association to nature or rural and agricultural contexts. Consequently, an association with nature can spark negative feelings or consequences.

This generational disconnect means natural environments are not normalised and the meaning of nature loses its cultural significance²¹. In contrast to a romantic ideal of relaxing nature available for generally white and middle-class people, being associated with nature for BPOC may induce painful connotations of racist encounters (such as being perceived as threatening due to gendered and racialised stigma).

These statistics and studies suggest some of the British population are disproportionately impacted by environmental factors due to race and socioeconomic status, and that there is systematic exclusion of BPOC communities from green spaces. However, there are grassroots initiatives by BPOC that wish to disrupt the notion of nature as a neutral space.

Initiatives such as [Climate in Colour](#), [Black Girls Camping Trip](#), [POC in Nature](#), [Decolonise the Garden](#), [Wisdom in Nature](#), [May Project Gardens](#), [SolidariTree](#), [Black Girls Hike](#), [Wild in the City](#), and countless others, speak to needs of BPOC to have inclusive experiences in nature that prioritise healing the relationship to nature from a socioecological justice and food sovereignty lens.

Further related reading material:

Lessons in resilience from Social Justice focused farms in the USA (Stewart, B. 2019):

<https://www.wcmt.org.uk/sites/default/files/report-documents/Stewart%20B%202018%20Final.pdf>

Learning Pathways into Agriculture: The Motivations and Approaches of Young Entrant Farmers (Taherzadeh, A. 2020):

<http://orca.cf.ac.uk/130571/1/Learning-Pathways-Into-Sustainable-Agriculture-Report.pdf>

Removing Barriers to Access at a City Farm in Bristol (Maunganidze, M et al. 2020):

<https://www.swcityfarm.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/SWCF-Equity-Report-October-2020.pdf>

Journeys into Food Growing

How would you describe your heritage, ethnicity, nationality?



Interviewees identified with a range of ethnicities and heritages. Most had British nationality or citizenship, some with dual nationalities. Most of the research participants were Caribbean. We value the insight from the multitude of heritage and lived experience of participants, especially in relation to growing.

We are aware of limitations of the research in terms of our sample. Participants varied in their perspectives of the importance of race to their experiences. Some participants were forthcoming in talking about structural barriers they faced, others' focused on overcoming adversity and described their successes. Terminology around race/ethnicity varied among RIFG partner organisations, and some degree of self-selection may have occurred regarding participants' identification with the research team's preferred term of "BPOC".

Our interviews did not collect information about sexuality, social class or disability. We are limited in drawing conclusions regarding these intersections' relationships with participants' growing journeys. The majority of our sample identified as male (see Appendix).

The Covid-19 global pandemic placed restrictions on our approach to the research. We recognize the limits of the video call format for conducting interview, who this allowed us to speak to and how it could influence the content of the discussions. Without the need for social distancing, interviews would have been conducted face-to-face, and on the land people grew food on.

Our sample was reflective of the remit of the project, short timeframe for finding participants with social enterprise food growing experience, and the networks of LION and RIFG project partners. We had hoped to interview people from a spread of projects across the pan-London area. But as the table below shows, OrganicLea is where most participants developed their growing skills and expertise, and most relevant sites of experience were concentrated in North and East London peri-urban areas. There appeared to be a limited number of BPOC with the relevant social enterprise experience, despite high levels of engagement and enthusiasm for the project in the wider network.



Photo by Sandra - gogrowwithlove 2

Table 1 - Experiences of learning to grow food

Interviewee journeys	<i>Quotes from interviewees</i>
1. Volunteering at an urban rooftop farm in a USA city. Level 2 OrganicLea qualification - organic principles. Patchwork market garden traineeship. (Paid) Traineeship on a larger scale farm in SW England.	<i>"Realising you could grow food in seemingly implausible places"</i>
2. Father was a farmer, crop money used for family's subsistence in Antigua. Grew food in private family garden, then six plots on an allotment site.	<i>"I just like farming. I grow up in a farm, I love everything and I will give you advice with a farm, and I will give you for even nothing"</i>
3. Inspired and learned from family & friends with farms in Jamaica/Barbados, gardens in London. Self-taught: YouTube, books, Instagram, podcasts.	<i>"Why I can't get to sleep is that it's a never-ending journey of gaining knowledge"</i>
4. Invited to help at a patchwork market garden. Completed level 1 & 2 at OrganicLea. Spent almost two years volunteering, enrolled in informal courses (about half a dozen)	<i>"18 months almost solid volunteering, three, four days a week"</i>
5. Known about growing food his whole life, from a family of growers. Did garden maintenance, landscaping & commercial gardening. Horticulture & growing qualifications. Hobby grower on allotment sites, then shadowed a course with OrganicLea.	<i>"I grow for family, sisters, aunties, mum. Every season I'll grow certain things. That was just my hobby, but it grew into a passionate career, and now it's everything I do."</i>
6. Grew back home in Guyana, took to market to sell for pocket money to go to the movies. Invited to a friend's allotment & given seeds. Self-taught: Learning from borrowed library books - when & how to plant. Experimented to find out what works.	<i>"I had to read and find out how to grow things. I never go to school how to learn or anything"</i>
7. Learning through volunteering for two years at allotment site with a community group. Level 1 food growing certificate in 2018 at Capel Manor, after taking on an enterprise project without "actual growing experience". Learning through doing - figuring out how to grow & testing things like salads.	<i>"There was lots of opportunities for learning about foraging, different types of herbs, vegetables from the allotment holders then flowers. [The allotment] was an incredible kind of playground, really"</i>
8. Capel Manor - extended gardening course. OrganicLea - volunteering for 2-3 years & production course. Her own and others' allotments.	<i>"At the end of [the extended gardening course], I hated herbaceous borders with a passion" [laughing].</i>
9. From an early age, planting fruit trees in Zimbabwe. "Trial and error" growing white maize since 2006; there is no literature about growing culturally appropriate foods in Britain.	<i>"Farming was just part of me".</i>
10. Grew food as a child in family garden (Netherlands). Encouraged away from growing, came back to it as an adult. Apprenticeship in Germany for two seasons, linked to a horticultural college. OrganicLea box scheme.	<i>"I was very much interested in food production. Not just growing as a hobby or as a side-line, but really producing food for people"</i>

Growing Journeys – courses, volunteering and family subsistence

The research team noticed some patterns among the RIFG interviewee experiences. Many of the growers who had taken courses or volunteered did so at OrganicLea and/or Capel Manor. Conversely, several growers were entirely self-taught – through autonomous study and/or experimenting on their land. Self-taught growers within our sample were more likely to be male and have land they owned or space they could access and trial their growing practice on.

Many, if not most of the people we spoke to had been inspired to learn to grow food outside of Britain (USA, Germany) or grew up growing food in their countries of birth or heritage (Zimbabwe, Caribbean islands). We could speculate that there may be more opportunities to see BPOC representation in farming in BPOC-majority countries. A couple of interviewees spoke of being discouraged from outdoor pursuits, the aspiration of many South Asian immigrant families not to do physical labour, and the importance of representation of seeing people of colour, of Asian descent as well as people from her class background *“doing food growing, farming, working the land”* to know this was a career choice she could make.

Three interviewees from subsistence farming families grew up in the Caribbean and described their families’ farming practices. These interviewees also tied growing food to wealth and avoidance of hardship. Our oldest interviewee told us his family would use the sugar cane crop money to buy big bags of flour and sugar, as well as school and church clothes.

“That’s how I always associated it growing up. If you don’t have money, you don’t need to starve because there’s earth. You can always grow something in it.” [Laughing].

“I used to grow back home in Guyana because growing up our parents were not so well off”

“You can make a living in one allotment. Can feed up to eight people. You can eat from it, plus buying your own clothes. That’s how you can sell it”

The above aspirations for food security and wealth through food growing are commonly found among immigrant families. As is the desire to move away from agricultural employment, physical labour and land work towards education and so-called tertiary employment. These desires for security and wealth from food growing contrast sharply with the experiences described in the next section on “enterprise”. Several of our interviewees struggled to sustain their livelihoods from growing food and running enterprises.

Our sample is too small to make generalisations from. However, we note that our interviewee growing journeys mostly began in adulthood (late 20s onwards). This aligns with other similar research conducted on new entrants into growing (see [Taherzadeh 2020](#)) and suggests a need to shift from a focus on supporting young people into food growing, into support for new entrants of all ages. Adults are more likely to need remuneration for their labour, alongside job security and a steady income. The nature of much growing work, being seasonal, part-time and low-waged is a huge barrier. This is in addition to cultural barriers described above, which push people away from growing careers towards non-manual professions.

Growing Journeys : related professions and inspirations

Some growers' journeys began in 'bridge' professions working with soil, land or plants. Examples include mining, horticulture and landscape gardening. People becoming aware of environmental, climate and food justice created opportunities to move away from "destructive" jobs and use relevant knowledge for social enterprise food growing. Wage parity between growing careers and such 'bridge' jobs would support this.

"I was in the trenches, so to speak, working in the commercial front line of horticulture, dealing with billionaires, millionaires, and their mansions and their pretty gardens and ornamental plants and tending things they knew nothing about, heavily using chemicals and pesticides of other kinds" Sirius

"...as I got more aware of the environment and the impacts of our lives and waste, etc... I think I just naturally lent to thinking actually, food growing is probably - it's the first place, land is the place where everything begins from and, I guess growing food was the place where you could actually make a whole circle out of it, instead of just taking it all out. You could do stuff to put things back in." Selene

"I just got to a point where I was fed up of taking stuff out of the ground, and I really wanted to put stuff into the ground." June



One interviewee's "against all odds" growing journey demonstrated the resilience and perseverance found among our BPOC SEFGs. Having grown fruit trees as a child, he migrated to Britain as a journalist, Douglas got into growing in England because he missed the food he ate in Zimbabwe. Despite significant setbacks and hostility in local farming communities, police harassment and racism from locals and ramblers as well as significant land losses, this farmer has managed to set up and run a successful business with shops in London and the West Midlands, distributing culturally appropriate foods he learned to grow in this climate through trial and error.

"I never thought I was gonna go into farming in the UK...I missed some of the food that I grew up eating in Zimbabwe, and that led me to start doing trials of growing those, those crops...but I ended up a farmer in the UK because I missed something that I grew up eating in Zimbabwe that wasn't available in the UK. To the point where I thought, well, the only way to enjoy the food that I grew up eating is to grow it myself. And actually I didn't grow it because I wanted to sell it. I started growing because I wanted to enjoy the food with my family." Douglas

Social Enterprise / Sustaining Livelihoods Journeys

“The ‘in’ to the food growing movement for me, was through wanting to change the way the food system was structured from the inside. The society that we live in insists on work being commercially viable for it to be successful. So, I really want to work in places where the potential for something to be commercially successful is there. So that’s the path I chose once I finished my apprenticeship, I chose to work in places that had the ability or were already commercially viable enterprises.” Seeta

We applaud the tenacity of our interviewees who have endeavoured to make a living from growing food. The LION team found the experience of researching SEFG very eye-opening, as none of us have personally attempted, or even thought it possible to sustain livelihoods through selling produce we grew ourselves. We want to make sure we celebrate the successes of enterprise food growers, while acknowledging the many challenges our interviewees raised.

“Mr Joe” had a generally positive experience of growing and successfully selling produce to his local church community, through word of mouth for distribution and sales. Customers would come to his allotment; he repeatedly told us you can feed a family of eight from one allotment plot.



Participants tackled different aspects of food justice within their projects, which presented challenges for their enterprises. Blue spoke about the specific timeline he needed to hone for seed-to-harvest “veganic” growing on a medium scale, at the same time as attempting zero waste sustainable farming practices such as using no plastic. Growing culturally appropriate foods on a large scale presented distribution challenges for Douglas. Sirius told us his distribution challenges for a community box scheme, mainly that people did not know how to cook what was in the boxes. Creating outlets and markets for produce was a common problem, particularly for those who were not already working within a project.



Participants suggested the need to change attitudes around food for local box schemes to work within BPOC communities:

"There is lots of opportunities, it's just to get the people...take for instance our colour people, they will go to the farm, whole farm food and buy their stuff, expensive stuff, but they come to your stall they wouldn't want to pay the money charging. This needs to change. You need a pricing. So, when they come to the market they want it cheap, because you're selling from a wheelbarrow, but then they go to the supermarket and buy, buy their expensive stuff and pay, but then they come here haggling for you". Phil

Participants told us the ways they overcome problems in order to create markets and have their own networks where people could buy directly from them (Phil, Mr Joe, Douglas). For some of our allotment growers, selling was opportunistic: *"harvest my stuff, bundle everything up, put them in bunches and different things and take them to the market"*. Douglas successfully created his own networks and sold through shops and delivered to people directly, within a tight turnaround. This was despite a constant struggle to have enough land to grow on.



Several interviewees had experienced gatekeeping, bullying or abuse in their enterprise journeys. Phil told us that he and other growers of colour had been turned away from their local farmer's market, and his perception was this was a broader problem rooted in racial prejudice: *"... if you go to any farmer's market in this country, it's very difficult to get colour or black or so African or Indian people in there, there's always a problem."*

Women interviewees we spoke to were more likely to report experiences of bullying and gatekeeping from within a growing project. These ranged from the extreme *"it was probably one of the most abusive work situations I've been in"*, to the less-severe *"I don't really know, why that person decided to have something against me personally, but it always felt very personal. They didn't want me to be there for like, no real good reason."*

Exclusion was described by one woman interviewee as racially motivated and detrimental to her voluntary engagement in a large growing enterprise:

"When [new project] was put together by [bigger project] I wasn't invited to join. So it was pretty much all white faces. And at the end of our traineeship, he said that I was the best one. And I kept thinking why didn't you even include me in the conversation? I actually felt really hurt. I felt really hurt, actually...Um, I don't think I did [speak to them about it], because I felt really hurt about it, and I just thought, well, they excluded me. They haven't even included me in any conversation, because they didn't think I was good enough or whatever. I don't know, but I didn't say it, I don't know. I don't know, and I just withdrew."

Other participants also raised being perceived as less competent compared to white grower colleagues, and experienced (from customers):

"[a] very narrow-minded kind of approach to what people of colour know, or, to not see them as professionals. So, like I would have people, like, actively choose not to ask me questions about the produce or the food or the growing, because they thought that I didn't know anything about it or I wouldn't be able to communicate it to them."



Photo by Sandra - gogrowwithlove 4

A lack of safeguarding and care for women seemed to emerge from the interviewees. Some growers experienced a series of negative experiences in their growing journeys. Two Black women spoke of the trauma from negative experiences impeding their ability to learn or remember, and in the example above, to engage in food growing projects. One woman experienced horrific bullying and abuse from the farmer during her traineeship with him:

"It actually deteriorated my capacity to withhold information, learn and piece things together. There were times when he'd ask me questions about irrigation. If you'd asked me in London a year before, I could've answered. But there I was just constantly doubting myself because it was never really explained to me, I don't know it goes together. And any time I would think I could explain something, it always felt like he was trying to catch me out, and then, he'd give me a task that he knew he'd never explained to me and knew I'd be too afraid to talk to him about."



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Conversely, Seeta named the confidence she gained from a positive experience of a growing apprenticeship, which helped her see the value of her labour and time, a good support network of friends and family. Everyone who described gatekeeping, bullying or abusive situations still voiced their love of growing. It was concerning that some interviewees had multiple negative experiences, but clear that positive and negative experiences did coexist for participants within the same food growing spaces. Furthermore, the rural racism and gatekeeping of rural growing spaces experienced by some growers was often voiced as an anti-city sentiment, highlighting the importance of urban growing spaces as the frontline for equity and justice in SEFG.

"There was very much this snarkiness about me being a city bellend...it was just very much a rejection of me in that space. It was a real 'you're not made for this', 'No you're not, this isn't for you', 'I don't know what you're doing here', 'Is this a joke?' And while there was no explicitly racial aspect to it, there's no way a white person would have been treated with so much rejection, no matter how "city or urban" they were perceived to be." Cara



Thus, addressing harmful power dynamics including gender seems necessary to retain good food growers from all backgrounds, in both rural and urban spaces. Our research suggests Black women and women of colour are the least likely group of all demographics to run their own food growing enterprises. It is important for larger organisations to consider and address the vulnerabilities to bullying of women and gender minorities in food growing spaces, as well as offer opportunities for repair and healing. Comments from the women interviewees suggest that projects led by Black women and women of colour may be more inclusive around various facets of difference (class, disability, sexuality), that *“Women build Communities”*.

Participants have big aspirations, despite needing support, particularly around models of enterprise and sources of support for people. Some people needed more knowledge around how enterprise and businesses work, including laws and permits. Others needed more infrastructure and networks. Funding and financial support emerged as a key need, combining with some participants’ lack of decision-making power in relation to larger food growing enterprises they worked with(in). Selene told us she was discouraged from running her project as an enterprise and earning an income, ultimately being “pushed out” after being bullied and harassed by the larger organisation running the growing site.



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“...financially supporting myself. That feels funny as a question. Coz that’s not happened since entering this field. I’ve done nothing but lose money.” Selene

It was common for interviewees to have several part-time jobs at once and have to supplement their income through other, non-food growing, part-time or full-time work. These jobs were often manual or physical, which contributed to the burnout, ill-health and “churn rate” of growers reported.

“I’ve just had a baby that is 15 months tomorrow, and I can’t afford to live in London on grower wages” Fahid

Finances played a big role; Fahid was frank about not needing to pay rent enabling him to do growing traineeships and volunteering when starting out. Having capital was a gamechanger for Blue and Selene, enabling them to buy land and run their own projects. At least half our interviewees had been long-term volunteers in growing projects and had contrasting reflections on its value.

"It's my personal exchange, but I know that I'm getting so much reward out from it than what I put in" said Sirius, while acknowledging he had done more volunteering than paid work.

"I think there's this big issue within food growing especially when it comes to charities and, that they're very against the idea of money and unfortunately, we live in a world that is driven by money and people need to be paid to live" Selene

Mr Joe and Sirius both described feeling let down when friends or people in the community helped them at their allotments and had expectations to be paid for their labour. Selene felt discouraged from earning a living or running an enterprise, that:

*"People just don't really get paid, especially within the 'alternative' food system. It's almost like it is acceptable to be paid sh*** or not be paid at all. When you come into this space, you come into that thinking it's normal and you'll just have to supplement this work, because you have the privilege of working in such a lovely space um, with other outside side work to bring money in."* Selene



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Two interviewees (both women) described projects they ran ending because of a lack of financial support, training, or connections through larger organisations with outlets or markets which would have kept the project running. Conversely, Fahid reported success and lots of support from a larger organisation when setting up a growing project for a restaurant. These stories demonstrated the need for multiple aspects of sustainability - not just growing practices, but also of people in the growing projects, and those projects themselves.



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"I was doing the last two years pretty much by myself, like the growing side and everything. And so yeah, we just kind of run out of steam....it's hard [physically], but it wasn't just that. It was, like, getting the funding and all this, that, and the other. And I just, it just became a bit of a struggle." June

"...moving away from this idea you can't be paid to work in this space. And it's not right that it's frowned upon to be paid to work in this space. Yet, everybody moans that they're not being paid to work in this space. It's like this weird circle that just keeps going around and it's no wonder that most people that start food growing, start off, do it for a few years, get absolutely burnt out and then they leave and never go back to it. Like, that's not sustainable...there's people so traumatised by their experience in it they don't really want to go back to it. ... there's like a really high churn rate in this space... leaving the rat race for a little while but then you realise that well I've got to go back to the rat race because, I'm not going to make a living in this space." Selene

Despite many people having to grow as volunteers or for a low wage, most interviewees rejected volunteering models for learning to grow. Seeta brought up the issue of *expertise by experience*, which only enables certain people with access to finances and free time to volunteer. Within the organic growing sector there is an expectation of years of experience before achieving paid labour and if their experience is not seen as enough, their voice won't be heard or they won't be listened to.

Fahid and June both volunteered and developed their relationship with growing through the expectation of free labour. Fahid initially accepted his low wage, justifying it through a "greater good" mentality, though he acknowledges that this created resentment in the end, especially while being paid by harvest or season. He valued the steady regular wage in cooperatives.

Seeta noted that selling direct to customers either via a box-scheme or through local markets make more sense as you can have a mark-up compared to selling wholesale. On the whole, participants seemed simultaneously knowledgeable about food growing for enterprise, but at a loss regarding specific skills and environments needed to make it work. Overall, people felt the onus was on larger food growing enterprises and organisations (i.e., who runs farmer's markets) to support BPOC growers. Despite these many challenges, interviewees were positive about the possibilities of sustaining livelihoods through food growing.



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Selene explained it was *“completely doable”* because of the *“appetite”* in London to buy *“local”* food but the models needed to make it work are not in place, and the *“models that are in place being held up by certain people stop it progressing in the way that it should.”*

“... there is a movement for it you know. There were so many restaurants that would get in touch with us. And there’s so many independent places... Part of them selling their product or their food is selling the story behind it. And if they can say it’s grown in London in this like, place that’s doing this and that. That you can go and see, etc, like, that’s a huge selling point for lots of the like, hospitality market. London is full of a lot of people that like going to bougee supermarkets to buy their produce that comes from all over the country and the world. That could be supplied with things that are growing in like, peri-urban areas or within London itself.”



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New land for food growing?

Seeing opportunities:

Broxbourne is "completely littered with disused greenhouses". Further exploration possible in: "a report from Broxbourne County Council that lists about 30 potential sites for redevelopment within the Lee Valley area - that belt that goes up to Hertford [mentioned Tottenham Hale, Crossrail 2]. There's just like, boat loads of space up there." Selene

"Lots of hidden spaces around, which could be converted into food growing spaces, and I think a lot of, there's a lot of building going on around here. There's flats going up ten to the dozen. There's no outside space, there's no growing space. They could have growing spaces downstairs where people could meet in comfort and grow." June

People who had bought land outside of London were less optimistic about the possibility of new food growing projects inside the pan-London area:

"You have to go outside London, just off the M25 around there... the thing is in this country is, as soon as there's a piece of land someone wants to build a house on it." Phil

"I don't know if anything can change. It's just a question of, the land is just not available. So, if it's not available, there is nothing that can be done, because you can't demolish houses in order to start farming." Douglas

Working together to buy land: *"There's quite a lot of bases around London which like, that might also be kind of like a cooperative thing of like, trying to like, raise money to do a project where, people communally come together to buy a patch of land that's small outside London. Like, you can, you can do a lot on an acre."* Selene

"I have a hope for a scenario whereby we can create cooperatives that buy land, so it becomes more affordable. So, if ten of us bought land for £10,000, an acre for £10,000 ... the returns on what you can make on commercially growing on an acre would be, a huge return compared to that initial £10,000 investment." Blue

Several interviewees stressed the importance of building links with the council to protect, value and provide long-term contracts for food growing spaces – both enterprises and allotments.

Perceived nepotism: *"if you're a friend of the person who works in the council you will get more financial support for your allotment, this is how it work in the council at the moment. This needs to change."* Phil

Participants raised the struggles of “patchwork” growing projects (where one project grew food on multiple sites, of varying quality, terrain, and scale). The nature of land in London makes this type of farming more of a necessity, however, interviewees observed the precarity of these sites, and expressed sadness at the loss of these sites when they were taken back by landowners. Douglas raised the struggles of running a patchwork farm with different sites, in terms of operations, management and distribution – all requiring hours of driving across several counties. This is compounded by the cold chain or rapid distribution needs of culturally appropriate foods such as white maize with short shelf life.

Interviewees had varying degrees of awareness about how large projects such as OrganicLea, Sutton Community Farm and Forty Hall Farm had secured their land. RIFG could find out more about what each project did, to see what could be replicated, it seems all were growing spaces and now are leased or on arrangement with the council.

Seeta outlined that Sutton Community Farm, which she co-founded were “*lucky*” to sublet the land from a local resident who had a lifetime lease from the council. However, they have now negotiated their own lease with the council. She also explained that Forty Hall Farm is leased from Enfield Council on an agricultural lease by Capel Manor College. A tenancy type that just does not exist anymore.

There may be opportunities to learn about available land from Sustain’s peri-urban project officer, TCV (The Conservation Volunteers), Defra, and engineers working on flood defences.

Land and Space

"So I said if I don't have a job, what am I going to do? And the only thing I'm good at is growing vegetables. So, why not buy a piece of land somewhere?"
Phil

"I started by going round and knocking on some farmers' doors, asking if they had land to let, and they just turned their backs on me because they didn't who I was, they didn't know what I was doing for land, and they'd never known any Black person to be a farmer in this country." Douglas

"One thing I learned about growing food in London ... nobody's farming. You've got growers and people are working hard and skillfully. That's not to take anything away, but farming, I reserve now for a very specific activity. It's a scale thing, and it's also an intensity thing. OrganicLea are on the fringe of doing that. Forty Hall, Sutton, they're farming." Fahid

"a lot of land is either given to people on the basis of very short-term stuff, where, you can put in a lot of energy and money into something but then it might just be turned into a development in three years" Selene

"It was a disgrace. There's lots of empty plots but they don't want to give it to you, they give it to their own kind of people, which is wrong. That need to change first." Phil

Land loss: Precarity of land for food growing, and land loss were a commonly-cited challenge for interviewees. Douglas had experienced *"painful"* losses of land; moving four times - a *"not good experience"*. June described a popular, inclusive, *"open ethos"* project she led as *"running out of steam"* - having needed additional support with funding and enterprise development from a larger growing enterprise.

Ownership vs tenancy: There were clear differences in the experiences of people who had their own land or allotment, compared to people who had worked in land projects run by someone else. This was related to autonomy, perceptions of competence and lack of decision-making power that some experienced.

Allotments: Scarcity of allotments and perceived gatekeeping from councils led to contentious use of space for allotment growers we interviewed. Some experienced resentment and hostility from other allotment holders because of the number of plots they grew in, waiting lists and allocation caused problems.

Gender and ownership: We noticed gender differences in confidence and capital to buy land to grow outright, confidence to approach farmers/councils for tenancies, a willingness to 'go-it-alone' and self-teach growing skills, all of which we found among the men we interviewed. Our observations suggest women may be more likely to go through the route of traineeships and volunteering for larger food growing enterprises. Cara experienced sexism during her farm traineeship:

"They never taught me how to use the big tractor. It was very, very gendered when it came to who got to use machinery." Cara

Rural hostility: Two Black men interviewees who farmed in rural spaces reported hostility or outright racism. One interviewee, Douglas had police called on him, as well as locals who were *"very unfriendly or they throw some racial insults at you"*. Blue, a farmer with land in E. Anglia described a gradual change in rural space he grows in, BPOC may now have *"more space to be ourselves, to operate or be a little more empowered"*.



Recommendations for RIFG from Research Participants

Participants were asked the question “What would have made it easier for you?” as well as their recommendations for the RIFG project. They provided a wide-ranging recommendations around mentoring, a growers network, enterprise skills development, open sharing of knowledge and resources, remuneration and much more. Connecting growers and creating links with various stakeholders was important to participants.



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Mentoring

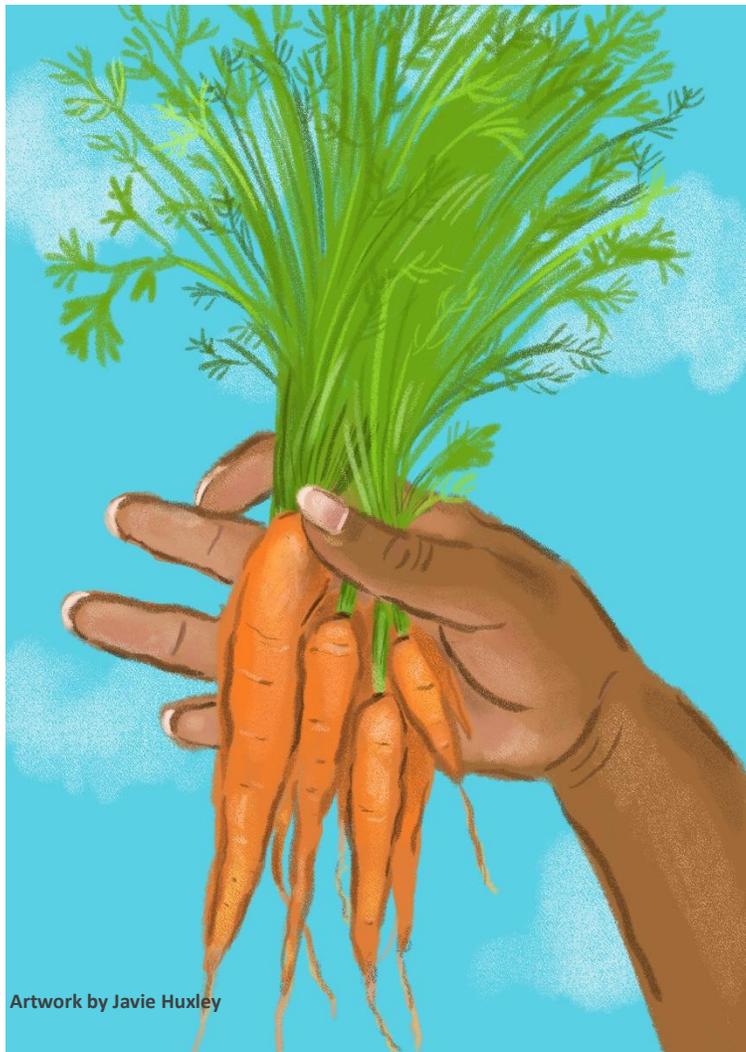
- Confidence building
- Sharing knowledge and networks
- Supporting mentees to value their labour

Grower's network

- A food growing community and having a network - not “going it alone”, knowing where to go for help (i.e., the Community Food Growers’ Network - CFGN)
 - Important for raising expectations (around how growers should be treated/pay)
 - Peer support/holistic support (not having to explain the nuances of race - e.g., the Landworkers Alliance’s Black, Brown, Indigenous & people of colour working group)
 - People to learn from who are doing organic/veganic growing (lack of information and suppliers/providers), for a commercial operation/specific timeline
- BPOC farmer’s network
 - A way to connect with other BPOC growers as a means of support and sharing knowledge and advice
 - The value of representation

Enterprise Skills Development

- How to put together an enterprise
- Financial literacy within a growing business
 - Set your forecast, cashflows and know the importance of these.
- Bookkeeping
- Production line
- Business planning skills
- Creating customer / client lists / base
- Promotion
- Deliveries of box scheme
- Marketing
- Support with logistics (transport - for growing helpers, deliveries)
- Making enterprise sustainable (zero waste, carbon neutral/negative)



Open sharing of knowledge and resources

- More transparency, openness, sharing within the food growing world
 - Financial mistakes made along the way
 - Opportunities to learn from people with experience of having food growing businesses
 - Support, conversations, learning from people with experience that is reflective of your own
- A database of farms and market gardens that are known to be safe environments to work in so that there is some way of protecting people from known abusive working environments

Remuneration

- People need remuneration/change in culture so payment for food growing labour is acceptable
 - Ties in with not relying on grants for food growing projects - businesses more likely to thrive
 - Normalise selling produce/creating enterprises “having a commercial mindset”
- Paid learning opportunities/traineeships
- Supporting community
 - Not just expecting volunteer labour - paying people for their time and energy
 - Empowering resilience and preventing burnout

Realistic parameters

- Being realistic about the challenges of working in the city
 - what a productive career could look like
 - a conversation around land
 - what growing looks like in London (probably cannot have your own project here)
 - how that translates into the possibility of moving to the peri-urban area or out somewhere rural
- Support for people who are not used to the part-time nature of food growing jobs / inclined to piece together a living.
 - Build confidence to create/curate a career in food growing.
 - Understanding taxes, expenses
 - Learning to “*mentally and emotionally navigate that kind of bobbing around*”

Skills, development, and training needs:

- 1) Access to programs & workshops about nature and enterprise
- 2) Nature & growing:
- 3) Importance of growing/nature
- 4) Looking after nature
- 5) Arts & crafts
- 6) Project management, admin stuff, “agile processes”
- 7) Worksheet/spreadsheet planning - “tell me what I need to be doing at all times throughout the year”
- 8) Horticulture and farming skills



Artwork by Javie Huxley

Creating links

- With Councils, so that :
 - Food growing is part of their work
 - Food growing projects/spaces are protected (with long-term proper contracts)
 - Connecting food growing projects to other areas: health, well-being, environment
 - So you have someone within inside in a position of power if there's ever a fight with the council
 - Mapping to justify use of space for food growing
 - "all different angles which these spaces are valuable for"
 - More equitable allotment allocation (improving relationships with councils)
 - Financial support for allotments
 - No gatekeeping or nepotism
 - No empty plots

- Radical relationships with white-led food growing organisations
 - Acquiring land for those without the “clout” or influence or who are from marginalised backgrounds so might be rejected (white organisations are more likely to be given resources)
 - Support with funding applications/accessing funds and distributing to those same groups
 - Connecting growers to restaurants/markets

- Links with distribution channels:
 - Connecting with local markets, shops & restaurants
 - Setting up more markets at growing sites (Wolves Lane Sunday Market)
 - Veg boxes that are culturally appropriate and affordable
 - Farmer’s alliance co-op (Phil’s idea)
 - Small farmers come together and grow food for people (on low income, instead of food bank).
 - Four to six areas have a “hub” to connect growers with customers
 - *“Farmers bring to sell people to those who can afford it. What is not sold is cooked for kids, parents on low income, pensioners to get a hot meal, people on benefits. All it costs is a seed, buy the bulk seed for cheap. All you need is do a crowd funding and people can donate the money or the seed.”*
 - Collective for enterprise growers to take to (farmers) markets
 - “A hub somewhere where everybody can come on by”
 - Power through supporting each other and make it easier to be certified organic
 - Support from councils and neighbourhoods

Research team recommendations

Our recommendations are based on findings described in this report combined with further discussions with our project partners and relevant stakeholders. Many problems emerging from growers' stories centred around power dynamics, both in wider society and the microcosms of growing sites. It is essential that progressive food growing projects support the expanding community of BPOC growers in addressing issues of gatekeeping, low-wage labour and volunteer models of learning. We hope that this project enables experienced food growers to increase their earning power and grow on sites or for projects which recognise their competence, expertise and leadership.

Assimilation and cultural barriers

Parental expectations and aspirations were raised by two South Asian interviewees as a potential barrier for BPOC new entrant food growers. We recommend that experienced food growers are supported in representing the positives of food growing careers, which must include enterprise and commercial growing. This will combat common perceptions of food growing, horticulture or agriculture as incompatible with careers that sustain livelihoods.

Networks, Spaces, Mentoring

Most, if not all interviewees described some level of isolation. They expressed a desire to learn from and be inspired by people like themselves. There is a need for support with problems when things go wrong and the ability to compare notes about wages and treatment as employees. We recommend provision of "collective space" and networks to combat poor treatment of BPOC growers and counter the isolation upon which this thrives.

Training, senior staff support

Participants' experiences of social enterprise and community food growing projects varied. Many spoke warmly about growing projects, however, some incidents relating to interpersonal power dynamics were subjectively, really bad. These were mostly experienced by women. Cara told us the impact of one job on her mental health, the "volatile space around race" that she entered, discovering *the "project represented gentrification without me knowing"*. For her, this meant "all versions of my identity, I was undermined and rejected... there's just no version of me that is comfortable in that space". Senior staff appeared ill-equipped for complex conversations arising from this dynamic, which was also heavily influenced by scarcity of land for food growing. We recommend that all food growing projects ensure all staff, especially senior staff receive ongoing training around oppression and discrimination, given the tangible link we describe above between trauma and growing expertise (see pages 13 & 16), the withdrawal of knowledgeable and experienced growers because of their experiences, and the high likelihood of such conversations arising in the future. There is a need for accountability by people with power, when harm has occurred to BPOC, and we recommend transformative justice models for addressing the root behaviours and systems. behaviours and systems.

Wage labour, volunteering

The wellbeing aspect to this work must exist in tandem with labour being valued financially. Interviewees told us how normalised low-to-no pay labour was in regenerative, sustainable food growing spaces, with some mention of middle class communities and whiteness framing struggle and burnout as somehow "noble", while enterprise and profit were seen as bad. RIFG should recognise the problems which arise through scarcity of resources and space for food growing, and support new models of projects, so growers become less dependent on friends and family to help in allotment spaces for free, or volunteers to help in SEFG projects without remuneration.

The issue of land scarcity for food growing in the pan-London area is ongoing, and RIFG should use the recommendations from participants to seek available land for food growing. Selene told us about attending the Community Food Growers Network while in her first growing job:

"I didn't really know how to expect to be treated so I kind of thought that the way that I was being treated was normal. It was only when I then found that network that I realised that ok actually this isn't right and I shouldn't be treated like this and I shouldn't be made to feel like this. And I shouldn't be working as ridiculously as I am".

Healing

Many participants sought out a healing relationship to nature and the land, yet this was interrupted by their experiences of hardship, microaggressions and bullying. Phil told us his plans to use the land as a site for healing from grief. There is potential for RIFG to work towards healing for growers through this project. RIFG supports new growers and connects experienced BPOC growers. This provides a great opportunity to challenge burnout culture prevalent in food growing spaces, enabling growers to heal from the effects of low pay, working several manual jobs at once, as well as make sense of the gatekeeping, bullying and abuse that affected many of our interviewees, early on in their growing journeys.

Cara, June, and Selene described traumatising incidents relating to their growing journeys (physical injuries and bullying) affecting their memory, ability to recall information as well as causing serious ill-health and anxiety. This suggests to us that trauma, including racialised trauma severely impacts on the capabilities of experienced food growers, contributes to burnout and must be countered through provision of safer spaces and healing activities, such as retreats and anti-racism group events. We hope these would diminish the effects of previous negative experiences and enable experienced growers to flourish, feel confident and have additional capacity to educate, teach and mentor new growers. Selene, Fahid and Cara all fondly recalled their mentors helping them set and manage their expectations, that they would not be made rich, but they should expect to get paid. In order for BPOC growers to thrive, growing mentors must counter norms that *"community food growing can completely just rely on grants"* and support produce being sold.

"Competence"

Interviewees told us their competence was often questioned in growing spaces, overtly or covertly because of their ethnicity (Phil, Douglas) as well as being young (Sirius), from the city (Cara), a new entrant (Selene, June) or just perceived as unqualified based on appearance (Seeta). Selene told us she enrolled in and paid for course under duress, feeling that her competence was questioned, ultimately feeling she did not learn anything but was trying to stop the targeted harassment she experienced. These experiences were off-putting for some, a couple of whom had decided to disengage from community growing projects entirely, and a handful decided to do their own thing.

More than just food

We recommend food growing projects create spaces where BPOC growers' "competence" and expertise is accepted and warmly welcomed. Horizontal support networks are sorely needed; where different growing journeys, qualifications and experience levels coexist and all participants feel listened to, respected, and have increased decision-making power. It is so important to change the perceptions of BPOC farming and food growing, by championing our growers and their stories. All our participants expressed additional social justice aims embedded in their experiences or plans for growing projects, and this combined their enterprise desires with spiritual ecologies and fascination with plants and nature. Selene in particular expressed the "belief in the land taking care of us". Fahid described his good experiences in the growing scene, feeling welcomed, that the growing projects were supportive of each other, seeing diverse groups engaging. June had successfully curated a space where participants of all genders, sexualities, ethnicities and abilities were able to grow together. Mr Joe worked with young offenders and had much experience teaching people how to farm in small spaces in north London. Seeta expressed a desire to set up her own enterprise, bypass power hierarchies and temporary seasonal work. Both Blue and Sirius planned to run growing academies with young people to develop their enterprise skills, giving them experience distributing box schemes and self-managing distribution within their communities. Phil expressed various plans to work to combat food poverty, with schools and other growers. He expressed the need for BPOC growers to be valued by people currently gatekeeping organisations such as farmers markets:

"I think they need to be educated. And show them how black or African and Indian people grow food. And let them learn from that".

There may be opportunities in RIFG engaging with the London Farmers Market Group on behalf of a collective of BPOC growers, enabling them to secure regular food stands at the markets under the umbrella of RIFG. RIFG could then offer market stalls to their network of growers to trade at, and this works in tandem with securing land to grow on given that distribution was a barrier cited by many interviewees, the value of the produce's "backstory" which Selene raised and the need to enter markets where BPOC growers are currently underrepresented.

"I think it's really viable way of making a solid income. And that's something I'm really passionate about. Championing that actually, as small farmers, there is a model there that, not only can create, sustain, our families but can actually generate generational wealth. And I'm really interested in trying to demonstrate that through this project"

Blue

Appendix

Research Overview

Method

Ten semi-structured interviews were carried out for this research. The study used purposive sampling and snowball sampling starting with key contacts and organisations in Land in Our Names’ network, and from our partner organisations, in particular, Black Rootz and OrganicLea to seek suitable interviewees. We analysed the data using the framework analysis approach, where themes were indexed according to the interview schedule and supported through the team’s familiarisation with the audio recordings.

Sample

All interviewees in the sample had to meet the ‘social enterprise food grower’ criteria (see page 2). They were asked demographic questions – their age, and how they describe their gender and ethnicity/heritage. Interviewees were all above the age of 28, with elder growers represented in the sample. There could be many reasons why most interviewees came through two specific food growing projects in North and East London; this is where most of the RIFG partner organisations are based. There may also be a dearth of opportunities for BPOC social enterprise growers in other boroughs. However, the short time frame for completing the research should be taken into consideration when considering the representativeness of the sample and interpreting the research findings.

Age

26 – 35	1
36 – 45	4
46 – 55	3
56 +	1

Gender

Female (4)
 Male (2)
 Man (2)
 Masculine (1)
 Male androgenous (1)

Interviewee profiles

1. Cara, 37. Former market gardener in Hackney/Haringey.
2. Blue, 42. growing in E.Anglia, to sell as box schemes in Hackney.
3. Selene, 29. Former enterprise veg grower in Redbridge, now farming in SE England.
4. Phil, 53. Haringey allotment grower, also farming in E. Anglia.
5. Sirius, 39. Allotment grower in Ealing/Hillingdon and volunteer grower in Haringey/Waltham Forest.
6. Seeta, 42. Co-founder of Sutton Community Farm. Former box scheme coordinator and administrator Market Gardener in North East London and subsequently Kent,.
7. June. Enterprise and community grower in North East London.
8. Douglas, 54. Larger-scale commercial farmer in Enfield, Kent and Hertfordshire.
9. Fahid, 35. Former community and enterprise grower in Waltham Forest, Hackney, Brent and Dagenham. Now working on an organic farm in N.Ireland.
10. Mr Joe, 86. former allotment grower in Enfield.

Some names were changed to protect the anonymity of interviewees’ contributions. Images used in the report were voluntarily provided by the RIFG partner organisations and interviewees. The images are used to showcase enterprise grower’s journeys in London and illustrative of the report’s contents, not to identify the interviewees themselves.



Figure 1 London Boroughs of interviewees' social enterprise growing projects

London Borough	Project
1. Hackney	Growing Communities
2. Haringey	Wolves Lane (including OrganicLea, Black Rootz), London Grown, Black Rootz, allotments
3. Hillingdon	Allotments
4. Redbridge	Audacious veg
5. Dagenham	Growing Communities
6. Enfield	Capel Manor, own rented fields. Forty Hall, allotments
7. Bexley	Own rented fields
8. Ealing	Allotments
9. Brent	Allotments
10. Sutton	Sutton Community Farm
11. Waltham Forest	OrganicLea, Allotments

Table 2 Boroughs in the pan-London area interviewees grew food in

Outside London

Wiltshire, E. Sussex, Hertfordshire, Leicestershire, Kent, Cambridgeshire, N. Ireland, Suffolk,

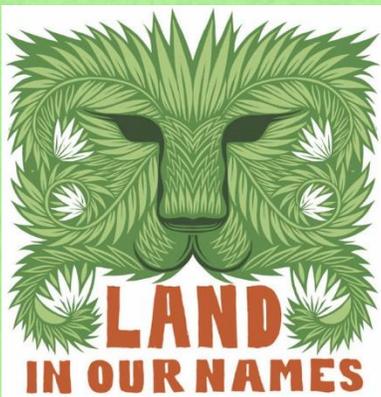
Outside Britain

New York City (USA), Netherlands, Germany, Africa (Gambia/Ghana/Zimbabwe), Caribbean (Trinidad & Tobago, Jamaica, Antigua, Barbados)

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