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Coventry University's research aims to create a more sustainable UK food system and help small-scale producers

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 project 'Procurement for Good' was recently awarded funding from UK Research and Innovation (UKRI- ESRC). It seeks to unite small-scale sustainable food producers with food buyers for local schools, hospitals and other public sector organisations.

Small-scale producers can face major difficulties getting their wares into the public sector. Barriers to entry include requirements for consistency in quality and quantity, logistical challenges, and unfavourable contractual terms.

Despite this there is an appetite in public sector organisations, motivated to make their food supply systems more sustainable and resilient by using local and small-scale producers.

'Procurement for Good' will use a digital marketplace developed by the Open Food Network to enable small-scale producers to sell direct to public sector organisations.

The research will deepen understanding of how the public sector can procure efficiently from small-scale producers in a way that benefits equally the environment and the local community and economy. The project will work with four pioneering food hubs in England, Wales and Scotland. Cultivate Food Hub, Cambridge Food Hub, Better Food Shed and Galloway Food Hub have already developed initiatives to supply their local public sector organisations. Through the project, they will extend their activities. Project partners Garden Organic and Social Farms and Gardens will play a key role in supporting the food hubs and promoting knowledge exchange to other food hubs and 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 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 80% of the UK's fruit and 46% 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 about Coventry University's Centre for Agroecology, Water and Resilience, visit [Centre for Agroecology, Water and Resilience | Coventry University](#) (insert link)