and we are winning change. multinationals, and promoting alternatives bns MD Jznings, against GM and campaigning for more organic, local food, Mational and local organisations are gardens by a group of local people? near you be transformed into productive on neglected land. Could that waste land

Community gardens are sprouting up

food compared to non-organic farming.

other examples of direct food.

Changing the facts

communities produce large amounts of

"power down" to a world where self-reliant

result either in catastrophe, or a planned

depleted. This is "Peak Oil", which could

reserves of easily accessible oil are

The age of cheap oil is ending though, as

contributor to climate change - responsible

food is the average household's number one

methods of modern agriculture, this means

40% of UK road freight. Added to the

atmospheric pollution. Food contributes to

choice, and also been a major cause of

has eroded locality, diversity and

This mass transportation of food

cheap labour costs elsewhere.

globe, taking advantage of

can now be moved around the

Fuelled by cheap oil, produce

globalisation of the food industry.

for London largely resulted from the

The Lea Valley's decline as market gardens

petrochemical-intensive

production

for nearly a third of our climate impact.

less energy to produce the same amount of

Local 'box' schemes and farm shops are

directly to consumers), there are now over

the UK in 1998 (where local producers sell

The first farmers market appeared in

Organic farming in general uses 25%

fertile ground for resistance. Reclaiming controlling food production, it is also a Just as there is profit to be made from For these reasons, it has been strongly

environmental sustainability at its core. communities and our welfare, or Yet this is not a vision that has vision of food in the future. feed cars before people represent one place where we all live. modified foods and agrofuel crops which a sense of meaning and belonging to the the big bucks food chain. Genetically culture offers opportunities for restoring message to those pulling the strings in and diversity. Enhancing our food sustainably grown food send a powerful food we eat, celebrating local varieties people with growing and celebrating It means reconnecting us all with the The many initiatives to reconnect production and distribution process.

## Whose future? Food future:

gardens, supplying the capital with fresh

could once again be a patchwork of market

contributor to climate change,

flights a day are a major

whose thousand or more

the world's biggest airport

One day the site of Heathrow,

prosecution.

budget for investigation and Monsanto even in the face of its \$10million We seed savers continue to stand against year to the next as significant competitors. describe growers who save seed from one powerful too. Monsanto internal reports their fingertips. Yet small beginnings can be governments, suppliers and customers at more invisible ways of exerting influence on patents to protect 'their' seeds, and many have all the force of legal mechanisms like just a few powerful global players, who to an industralised food chain controlled by

towns power down. people can come together to help their groups have been set up worldwide, where their own food and energy. Transition Town

These initiatives may seem tiny compared

internationally, check out The Land land struggles here, in the sticks and For information and ideas about sovereignty, water access and elsewhere, undermining food

Africa, South East Asia and buying huge swathes of land in companies and wealthy states are Globally, a new land grab is taking place:

otherwise go underused or sold for private new allotment sites on land that might generate local pressure for the creation of lists. However, this demand can be used to over 100,000 people on allotment waiting This law is being flouted, with currently citizens on demand.

boroughs) is obliged to provide to its every council (except for the inner London the creation of allotments, which by law land hunger of previous generations forced most unlikely and challenging places. The London continue to grow food even in the

sold direct to consumers by the farmers.

advertising campaign for its

for other local shops.

£1.6 million television

Heinz launched a

in a can: in 2007

Farmers' Market

was actually imported.

where the produce inside

stories of English growers on packaging

found supermarkets using pictures and

A Guardian newspaper investigation

caused drops in business of 30-40 per cent

Tesco 'Express' stores have reportedly

supermarket apples were sourced from the

varieties, a 2005 survey found only 35% of

there are over 2000 traditional UK apple

fresh potatoes to Germany, and brought

vegetables we consume are imported.

we eat is grown here, and up to half the

and vegetables, yet less than 10% of fruit

Consumers are urged to eat more fruit

stoal eht gaios-

food: in 2006, the UK sent 1,500 tonnes of

👂 Οίτεη countries are simply 'swapping'

Eroding local diversity and choice: whil

UK, encompassing only 25 varieties.

1,500 tonnes of fresh potatoes back.

neither local nor seasonal, and had not beer

, farmers' market' soups, produce that was

out of the person: people in magazine. the garden, but they can't take the garden profit. They can take the person out of forced off the land in the name of descendants of people who were the vast majority of us are urban areas. Wherever we hail from,

therefore land hunger) highest in 90% of the land, with land prices (and Instead, 10% of the UK population own evenly distributed. person to possess one acre, if land was Britain, there is enough land for every pressure? Even in densely populated due to "pressure on the land". But what fertile river valleys, which are then built on

across the globe: humans often settle near concrete. This tragic irony is repeated been largely covered in tarmac and Lea Valley London's bread basket have now The alluvial floodplain soils which made the

# su sbəəi The land that

15%; today it's less than 2% the Second World War that had fallen to some was employed in agriculture. By the start of In 1900, around 40% of the UK population than 60% of the international food chain processing and shipments control more involved in seed, fertiliser, pesticides, Corporate consolidation: 10 companies

> (UK Government data 2000-2006). residues were found to contain them continues. 60% of apples tested for pesticide established, yet their widespread use associated with pesticides are well The health risks to humans and wildlife

> > -acing the facts



quarter of young people knew apples A 2006 survey found that less than a

about when different fruit and veg are lose touch with knowledge year-round supply, it's easy to supermarkets, them too; thanks to the catch-all marketing term for

Seasonal' has proven a good specialised shops out of business. street, often putting smaller local and their reach ever further into the high and 'market' style stores extending have also taken advantage with 'local' small-scale initiatives, but supermarkets

This has resulted in some genuine, widespread awareness and interest in documented, and there has been

food as simply big business are wellenvironmental risks created by treating crisis. Many of the health, social and just one symptom of a food system in globe has become phenomenal and is years the reshuffling of food around the production is nothing new, but in recent Dependence on imports and distant were

even chocolate. aubergines, pineapples, and 'seasonal' for hothouse supermarkets using the term reported Council has r o n s n m e r autumn. And the National

Behind the label

## In transition

# From plot to plate: our food system today

with increased local ownership of the

large companies. It means local food

and the planet before the profits of our food future means putting people

👲 The average person travels 893 miles

vehicles in a highly unbalanced struggle

people set against 800 million motor

agrofuel market; 800 million hungry

with plants grown for the expanding

Food crops now compete for land

dairy from animals reared on GM feed

supermarkets don't stock food labelled

genetically modified (GM) food means

the label: full scale public rejection of

or still in the food chain, but not on

with GM ingredients, but meat and

do not legally need a GM label

Chief Executive

shelter, clothing.

Bob Shapiro,

dealing

of money

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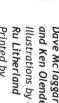
easy to

"It is truly





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## Why the Lea Valley and why food?

The Lea Valley, which straddles the River Lea from Hertfordshire into London, is at the heart of London's food history. For centuries, countless waves of newcomers set up their communities on the marshy, fertile soil by the river and used its passage as a food route, bartering their way along to the great Thames.

As with all sources of life, the Lea's food history reveals politics, intrigue, conflict and innovation. It also reminds us of the important part that food culture plays in connecting us to the places where we live.

In recent decades many of the problems with our food system have been recognised and challenged, although it remains fundamentally in crisis. As the search for solutions continues, what can the Lea Valley's food growing heritage teach us?

Under our feet, the earth of the Lea Valley boasts a rich food growing history, from Saxon settlers growing celery in the sixth century to mid-twentieth century Italians growing cucumbers in glasshouses, using the river to transport food to markets further afield.

The road from hand to mouth is short and easy enough at first, but as society grows, and division of labour is made, producers and consumers become widely separated, [then] the road from hand to mouth is a long one, and oftentimes a hard road to travel. Joseph Dart, 1865



Early Lea Valley residents grew for themselves and their communities, as people have continued to do ever since. Thousands today in the Lea Valley prefer food grown on their balcony or in their

garden, allotment community garden. Newcomers to the region have brought their own style of A growing, favourite plants and ways of preparing and eating them, enriching the food culture the Lea Valley. Others have kept traditional local crops and methods alive. A new generation of organic 📆 gardeners are creating productive plots that are also havens for wildlife and

people All are custodians of the Lea Valley food growing heritage.



A new glasshouse era (above and below left): Organiclea is renovating and operating a sizeable glasshouse in the valley, to grow food for local markets and plants for sale to other food growers and projects within the Lea Valley. Food is grown organically and the glasshouses are run on a sustainable ecological basis, with opportunities for all to learn skills and get involved.

The foolish seek happiness in the distance, the wise grow it under their feet. James Oppenheim



### A Glass of its own The glasshouse era brought new commercial production

of the Lea. It brought the region food growing fame, as producers harness the potential of this land and its river:

Fertile soils on the banks of the Lower Lea

possibilities to the banks

- Access to river water for irrigation
- Close to large number of mouths in London (and to London's soil-enriching

horse manure!) River Lea was the first navigable

river, used to transport and (through water power) to process foodstuffs.

## Breaking glass

The forces behind the decline of the glasshouses, a century later, begin to point to the roots of today's agricultural crisis:

London expansion pushed the market gardens upstream away from more fertile soils.

Soil and manure become out of favour as soil fertilisers. They are replaced by "hydroponic" methods, which supply food to plants in liquid, chemical form.

Piped water reduces the need to be close to river.

Motorised transport means closeness to London markets and processors is no longer so

Motor vehicles also spell the end of transportation of food

Grain mills now use fossil fuels, not water power,

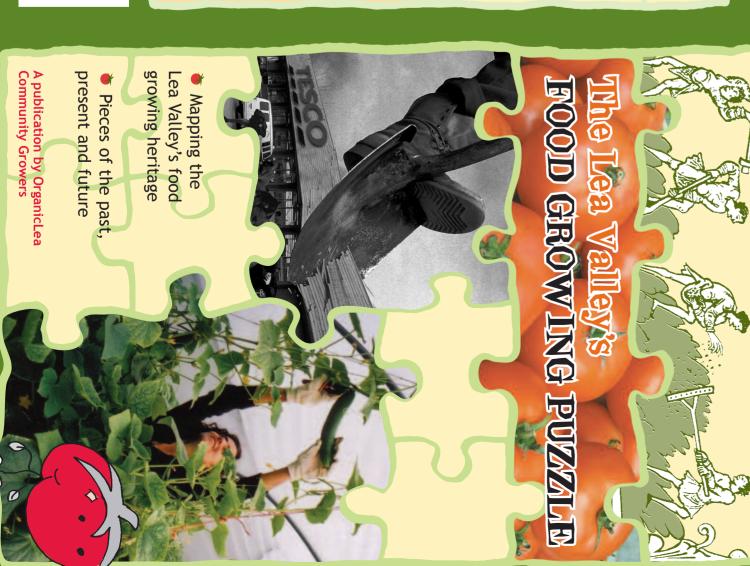


While the Lea Valley continues to produce vast

amounts of salad crops, there is far less land and people devoted to it. Thanks to hydroponic chemical growing methods, much of the valley's produce is not actually grown in the valley's soil, and thanks to our food distribution system, many residents have

These developments are raising serious social and environmental questions.

never even had a taste of it.



A lesson in history? A river seems a magic thing. A magic, moving, living part of the very earth itself.

Laura Gilpin from The Rio Grande, 1949 ting involved