

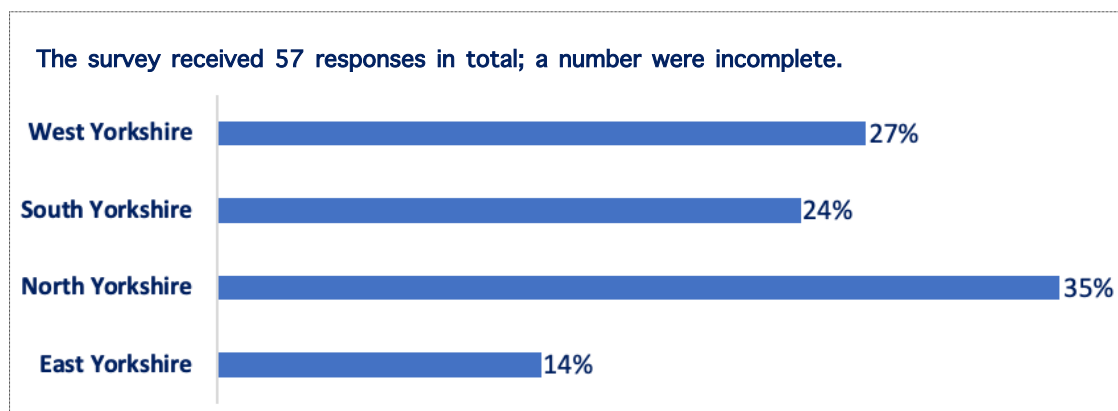
Covid-19 Regional Food Fact Sheet

The experiences of regional food enterprises across Yorkshire during 2020 (Lever and Downing 2021)

Drawing on data from a Qualtrics survey distributed on social media during the fourth quarter of 2020, this fact sheet explores the experiences of regional food producers and food enterprises across Yorkshire during the Covid-19 health pandemic. It concludes with a number of suggestions made by respondents to improve regional food system resilience and sustainability.

Key findings

- The Yorkshire food system has untapped potential for greater collaboration.
- During 2020, 46% of those completing the survey had supported other regional food enterprises.
- Almost 38% had experienced an increase in demand, with some continuing to expand after lockdown ended.
- More than 50% had supported vulnerable and isolating groups across the county.
- There is potential for the regional food system to contribute to a Yorkshire circular economy.



- 21% were farm shops; 11% were independent food retailers; 11% were small farms; and 13.5% were small producers.
- The remainder were from a range of:
 1. Primary food producers, including large/medium arable and mixed farms; and diary, beef, pig and poultry farmers/ producers.
 2. Various food enterprises, including community supported agriculture schemes, an agroecology market garden and box scheme; a city-wide food network; a food partnership; an allotment group; community gardens; and artisan food producers/ climate groups.

Workforce and support

- 75% had less than 10 employees; 12% had between 10-40 employees; and 14% had more than 50 employees.
- During the first lockdown, 35% furloughed employees and 27% received financial support. 19% took staff on and just 5% made staff redundant.

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Supply

- During the first lockdown, 24% experienced higher wholesale prices and 10% experienced increasing pressure from supermarkets (notably primary food producers & farm shops).
- More than 24% expressed concerns about the impact of changing environment land use policies; 16% about Brexit; and 8% about climate change (mainly primary food producers).

Demand

- Almost 50% gained new customers and experienced increased demand in the first lockdown; a third continued to expand when lockdown ended (mainly farm shops, small producers and small farms)
- Around one third lost customers during lockdown (mainly independent retailers and cafes) although many of these returned when lockdown ended.
- Approaching 15% experienced increased demand for fresh produce; demand for more sustainable and healthy choices, and new product ranges also increased.

Innovation

- 46% supported other regional food enterprises during lockdown.
- More than half supported vulnerable and isolating groups.
- 32% started using alternative sales methods, notably online methods, during lockdown.
- 13.5% worked across a wider geographical area and more than 7.5% joined a local food partnership or other food network.

Waste and circular economy

- 24% send waste to landfill or incineration.
- But evidence of high rates of recycling waste and reusing the by-products of production.
- 54% have heard of the circular economy.

Suggestions and requests

An open question in the survey received a number of suggestions about ways to improve the regional food system, including:

- initiate a regional food partnership and encourage local authorities to procure local food.
- improve support for Yorkshire produce and improve access through food markets.
- enhance understanding of the quality and availability of regional produce and artisan food.
- improve access to the workforce and reduce waste costs, which can be prohibitive.

Conclusion

Although many regional food enterprises experienced problems during 2020, the findings outlined in this fact sheet demonstrate the potential of the Yorkshire food system to make a greater contribution to local economies, communities and people across the region.