

*Farming Matters* welcomes comments, ideas and suggestions from its readers. Please send an e-mail to [ileia@ileia.org](mailto:ileia@ileia.org) or write to P.O. Box 90, 6700 AB Wageningen, the Netherlands.



## Developing sustainable food systems

It worries me that, at some point when politicians finally “get it”, they will try to legislate a sustainable food system into existence. What I really think needs to happen is that ordinary people, for the most part, need to take the lead in (re)developing sustainable food systems. Government needs to stand by and let it happen. It needs to stop supporting industry and a globalised food system led by profit. If profit is the goal, then that becomes the measure of success, and not whether or not people get fed. What farmers need is access to information. My recent experience in Senegal with urban farmers tells me that they are hungry for information. It should be up to them how they use that information to improve their production in ways that are most relevant to their social and economic situations.

*Stephanie White, in response to the AgriCultures blog “Wars are fought over food in the future”*

## Home-grown school feeding

In semi-arid areas, not many crops may do well due to inadequate, erratic and unreliable rainfall. However, crops such as sorghum, millet, cow peas and cassava can do fairly well. Despite this, production of such crops is limited, mainly because of low market demand (many people tend to rely on maize as their staple food). Promotion of home grown school feeding in such regions can trigger increased pro-

duction of drought-tolerant crops because schools will provide a ready market for them. This would be a win-win situation where both the school community and the surrounding farmers benefit.

*Titus Mutinda, on the online debate on Home Grown School Feeding*

## Regional food systems 1

The latest issue provided me with a wealth of information and inspiration. I work in Scotland as a nutritionist with the NHS and part of our work involves giving small lectures and demonstrations on the importance of healthy eating and diversified diets. The clients I work with suffer from obesity, heart disease, diabetes and various deficiencies caused by poor diet. I used the article about the Let’s Go Local campaign to encourage my patients to make changes in their diets. Of course, Pohnpei Island is very far removed from the areas where I work but the health problems caused by a poor diet and relying on processed foods are the same. The shift the campaign has made from imported foods to relying on what is available and produced locally is very positive and is the way forward for the diets of the future.

*Anne Morkyte, Glasgow, Scotland*

## Regional food systems 2

I was really inspired by your article about the Food Acquisition Programme (FAP). But while the authors leave no doubts that it does work, I am generally suspicious about initiatives like this that are centrally steered and enforced in a top-

down way. The article did not look at some of what I think are the important issues, leaving some unanswered questions. Is this programme sustainable? Do all target groups benefit equally from governmental support? Do farmers have influence over what they grow and how? I would have liked to see a more critical view on the FAP. I understand that it is promising that national governments recognise the need to support regional food systems. Yet, I believe that it is as important to look at how programmes are implemented as it is to describe their content.

*Marta Dabrowska, Wageningen, the Netherlands*

## Regional food systems 3

Thank you for your informative article on the “Incredible Edible” movement. This community supported agriculture project is inspiring. Reading about the current dysfunctional agriculture system can be quite disheartening, as such massive change is urgently needed. But articles like this one show promise and hope. I work with an organisation called Enfo (an Irish information service on the environment). We work a lot with children and young people, providing information about more sustainable living and informing them about environmental issues. After reading the piece about the Incredible Edible project we are determined to start our own project, perhaps amongst schools. The young people I have spoken to about this are enthusiastic about getting involved. Thanks again.

*Martin Hunter, Wicklow, Ireland*