

## Suffolk's only Community Agriculture Scheme Crowdfunding Campaign a big success!

The Oak Tree Low Carbon Farm in Rushmere-St-Andrew, which has been running for seven years, is Suffolk's only Community Supported Agriculture project.

The ecological, not-for-profit farm, which offers 65 vegetable shares to 200 members, is now looking to the future following the resounding success of its crowdfunding campaign, which raised over £27,000 in less than one month, saving the farm from closure.

Owner, Joanne Mudhar, is now cautiously optimistic about the future. "Thanks to the amazing groundswell of support from people both locally, and around the world, we will be able to continue to produce food for our members while caring for people, the planet, our animals and local wildlife".

Farm members celebrated the good news at the farm harvest party last Saturday.

"But the red tape and hostile government policy are still there. We will have to work very hard in the future to ensure that the farm continues to be a success. We are ready for the challenge and we will continue to highlight the unfair playing field on which our much loved farm operates".

Thanks to the campaign the farm growers can now earn the minimum wage, buy some essential farm equipment, and develop their promising fruit and cut flower enterprises. The crowdfunding campaign page is still live, and supporters are now invited to contribute towards fruit trees and bushes to help secure the success of the farm into the future.

Farm members continue to offer rewards including limited edition photographic prints, cooking and bee-keeping courses, artwork, etc.

Joanne said, "The campaign has been such an amazing experience, we have had messages of support and contributions from around the world, including North America, India and Australia".

"Supporters include farm members, animal welfare campaigners, environmentalists and ecological farming experts, and many members of the public who support the farm goals."

There are about 65 small community farms across the UK offering food that's ecologically grown, pesticide-free and produced locally and a price within the normal family budget.

Community Farms like The Oak Tree offer an alternative to the supermarket affordability, low food miles, freshly picked seasonal vegetables, free range eggs and chickens, happy pigs, fruit, English cut flowers, bees and maybe even some honey. There are huge benefits too for wildlife, the environment, the soil and for farm members who get their hands dirty in physical and mental health wellbeing too.

Plus, says Joanne, there's good evidence to show they are able to produce more food per acre than giant size commercial farms, which in world where there's issues about food production can only be a good thing. However the odds are stacked against them in terms of subsidies/business help from the Government and the EU because they say small farms are not sustainable.

Any farm below 5 hectares is not entitled to any help at all.

Many are also bound by endless rules, regulations, red tape regarding planning, putting up buildings, selling produce like chickens and eggs which all work against them. As a result many community farms are struggling to find a business model that works with full time workers struggling by on the minimum wage (or less by choice).

The farm would now like to construct a small community building to be able to welcome visitors to the farm, including local school children.

The farm annual tour, which is open to all, will take place at 2pm on Saturday 17<sup>th</sup> October. Please visit [www.the-oak-tree.co.uk](http://www.the-oak-tree.co.uk) for details.

#### CONTACT

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