



Charlie Cole

Goat Kid Farmer
Broughgammon Farm,
Northern Ireland

Charlie Cole is a first-generation farmer who manages Broughgammon on the North coast of Antrim. His farm, famous for its award-winning rose veal and goat burgers, has been championing sustainability and the principle of 'forward thinking farming' since 2012.

Broughgammon is a mixed system aiming to demonstrate high welfare standards, environmental stewardship resilience and profitability. Charlie is a passionate advocate for locally produced sustainable food, highlighting that nature friendly farming can play a key role in addressing many of the current problems facing food and farming at present.

How has the Coronavirus pandemic impacted your business and distribution?

It's been an absolute nightmare. Our business is completely dependent on us selling directly to the customer. So now that the Government restrictions are in place, the farmers markets and street food events have come to a close and we've had to shut the café in the farm shop which are all usually reliable sources of income.

To adapt to the situation, we've started a "click and collect" service through the online farm shop which enables customers to buy and collect our produce in Belfast, Dublin and the farm shop. People can also order produce online that can be delivered to their door

Are you involved in any initiatives that support the local community or people?

When we set up the click and collect service, we introduced a more stock than we usually supply to reduce the burden on local markets. Traditionally we only stocked fresh produce from our farm.

What would you like to say to people at this time about

the role of UK farms to protect nature?

The current crisis provides people with time to reflect on the importance of food and farming to all humanity. We must remind ourselves is that food and farming is the result of a complex relationship with nature. Our food can only be sustainable and bountiful if it's produced in harmony with the environment and wildlife. As tenants of the land it's vital that farmers maintain it in good condition.

What would you like to say to people at this time about the role of UK farms to provide food for people in the UK?

This crisis has made it very clear that we have lost the resilience in our food and farming system, with value being placed on "cheap". This has led to degraded soils, diminishing wildlife and imports of lower food safety and farming standards. We need to shift back to a more sustainable, mixed farming system for resilience across the board. Farms that use sustainable methods provide not just for human needs, but

also for nature.

How should we use this opportunity to buy British and support British farmers?

Localised supply chains are far more robust and resilient than those of the supermarket that involve importing food from abroad. We should use this opportunity to seek out small, local independent businesses and give them the support they need to survive. A localised economy benefits all, not just the retailer.

How can the public benefit from what you're doing on the farm?

Our business is intrinsically linked to the local economy and community. We're completely committed to reinvesting back into the localised supply chain and improving nature so that others can enjoy it. The more the public source our high-quality meat and vegetables, the more we can reinvest and the bigger the impact we can have.

What do you need from consumers?

Covid is impacting the whole

supply chain – from farm to fork. We need consumers to buy locally from farmers that are working hard provide for the country. Covid's arrival has created unprecedented disruption to farmers, and they desperately need consumer's help to keep their businesses alive.

What do you need from the government?

We are trying to adapt to the current situation, by offering a click and collect service, but our cash flows have been badly damaged. We're only a small farming business so margins were already tight and we're really struggling. ANY business support that the Government can provide would be extremely valuable.

What needs to change in farming policy to support the future of farming?

Food is greatly undervalued, in order for environmentally friendly food to be even vaguely obtainable it will need support from Westminster. We also need

a huge shift in the structure of the supply chain and the way that people value their food.

As for nature, it's the very essence of our survival/being and it needs to be supported by the Government and held with the utmost regard.

How do nature friendly farming methods make you more resilient to climate change?

Farming in a nature-friendly way increases our resilience to varying farm costs, extreme weather events and more. We're also increasing our diversity, which is good because not all of our eggs are in one basket.

Why is the NFFN important?

The NFFN not only acts as a discussion group, allowing fellow farmers to share best practice, but more importantly it allows us to lobby for environmentally friendly policies that can deliver a more diverse and resilient farm and food chain for the future.

A white goat with large, curved horns is grazing in a lush green field. The background features rolling hills and mountains under a clear sky. The text is overlaid on the image in a white, sans-serif font.

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CHARLIE COLE, NORTHERN IRELAND