



Paul Sousek

Organic Livestock
Cottage Farm, Jacobstow
North Cornwall

Cottage Farm is an organic regenerative livestock farm powered by renewable energy. Paul raises organic Red Ruby/ North Devon cattle and organic Wiltshire Horn sheep, which they sell as meat boxes direct to customers, both locally and nationally. Paul also runs the North Cornwall Food Hub which supplies food and other products produced mostly by local farmers, growers and producers.

Tell us why you are a nature friendly farmer?

Because farming with nature rather than against nature is easier, healthier, cheaper and more satisfying than so called conventional farming.

What nature friendly farming practices have you introduced on your farm?

We do a lot on our farm to work with nature. We farm old native cattle breeds that do well in local conditions and the mob grazing simulates movements similar to that of wild herds. A variety of trees, bushes and plants are encouraged on the farm, increasing the diversity of the hedge for nature and self-medication for stock.

The ley is managed with a wide mixture of deep-rooted pasture plants, including cocksfoot, meadow fescue, tall fescue, foxtail, and many herbs - 34 varieties at last count. Our hedges are cut at most every 3 years and only on the sides, creating a mushroom shape which provides better wind, rain and sun protection for stock and wildlife.

We are powered almost entirely by renewable energy, as we have a wind

turbine, PV panels and solar-thermal tubes. We also use home-made biodiesel derived from used cooking oil for tractor, cars and deliveries of our produce and Food Hub orders.

What benefits in nature have you seen on your farm? Any specific impacts would be really helpful.

Mob grazing results in minimal weed plants remaining in fields and wildflowers have more time to regrow to a reasonable size without being continually set back by grazing, which promotes root development and thus resistance to adverse conditions. These deep-rooted plants reduce the impacts of both flooding and drought. I always say multiculture is better than monoculture!

Nature-friendly hedge management creates wildlife corridors and provides nesting habitats for farmland birds. The trees and bushes generate a real variety of food for the birds, which has led to the arrival of new species of butterflies and birds.

Our organic matter content has grown from 3% to 8% in 15 years, i.e. some 0.3% per year, further

improving growing conditions.

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

The farm's pasture is much less vulnerable to extreme weather events, such as flooding and droughts. We are also not dependent of suppliers of feed, chemicals, vets, wholesalers or supermarkets and external energy suppliers, which makes us more resilient.

How does nature friendly farming make your business more financially viable?

Farming with nature reduces our outgoings and we have no bills for water, electricity, heat, or fuels. By selling direct to the public we maximise our income and diversify our income from a few wholesalers to many customers.

How has the Coronavirus pandemic impacted your business and distribution?

Our turnover has increased by about 500% in our Food Hub. We can hardly keep up and may have to limit the total number of orders. However, it's positive to see that people are supporting local and sustainable

farmers during a pandemic and I hope to see this continue.

What would you like to say to people at this time about the role of UK farms to protect nature?

Buy local and organic produce. By buying your food from sustainable farms that you trust, you can guarantee your money is supporting the continued positive effect these farms have on the environment, such as improving wildlife habitats and addressing climate change.

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?

We should be importing food as little as possible. When we do import produce, this should only be for food that cannot be grown or produced in the UK and the environmental and welfare standards must not undercut those that British farmers work hard to keep.

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

The coronavirus shows us that most imports are unnecessary, and the act of importation is destructive. It may be desirable to import some foods from hotter countries, but why import vegetables, meat or flowers from countries with much the same climate as ours and lower welfare standards?

What do you need from consumers?

Now that we are experienced people supporting local producers and short supply chains, we are hoping that they do not switch back to supermarkets when the COVID crisis is over. The recent shift in behaviour is extremely positive for British farmers and the environment.

What do you need from the government?

We need tariffs on imports of foods that British farmers can produce, bans on imports from countries with lower welfare standards, and we need a pathway to rapidly transition all energy to renewables.

A scenic landscape of rolling green hills under a cloudy sky. In the foreground, a herd of cows of various colors (white, brown, black) is grazing in a lush green field. The hills in the background are covered in dense green trees and vegetation, with a larger, more prominent hill visible on the left side. The overall atmosphere is peaceful and natural.

“By buying your food from sustainable farms that you trust, you can guarantee your money is supporting the continued positive effect these farms have on the environment, such as improving wildlife habitats and addressing climate change”

PAUL SOUSEK, ENGLAND