



CFF Carbon Calculator

Community Harvest Whetstone, Leicestershire

Community Harvest Whetstone is a newly established community supported agriculture (CSA) project near Leicester. Members pay a subscription to the project to pay professional growers, can visit the farm, work in the fields and receive a regular share of the produce through the year.

They used the CFF Carbon Calculator to see what their GHG emissions were, to pinpoint areas which could be improved and to give a baseline to assess improvements in the future.

Cultivation and cropping has been fairly small during the first year of the project so emissions have been quite low. A significant proportion of emissions have resulted from setting up a polytunnel for starting young plants and for winter cropping. The steel frame and plastic cover have caused GHG emissions during their production, although these emissions are offset over several years until they need replacement.



Members of the community farm

However by far the largest emissions figure is due to travel to the farm by growers, members and volunteers.

On a more positive note the figure for carbon sequestration was nearly 10% of the emissions figure, even though this only allowed for a few metres of hedgerow round the tunnel and some grass paths around the beds. Soil organic matter measurements have not been taken yet; an increase in this figure over time would represent a considerable carbon sink and, from available research, should be possible using fairly normal organic practices. Increasing the amount of carbon in the soil can also improve soil fertility, increasing yields, and help the soil hold more water, protecting against droughts and floods.

Although soil organic matter measurements need not be expensive (£7 per sample) they can add up if required from many small fields or parts of the rotation. But if they were done every year they could go a long way to showing that the project can be a net carbon sink – taking more CO₂ out of the atmosphere than it is putting in – which would make the produce taste all the sweeter.

The members now have some clear pointers on how to reduce emissions in the future. Bringing more land into cultivation and setting up a larger polytunnel will mean a short term increase but they can work to reduce transport use and to increase sequestration.

www.community-harvest-whetstone.org.uk/