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Economic and sustainable growth in Kirklees – an academic perspective

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EU Partnership  
Event – 5<sup>th</sup>  
February 2015

**Economic and  
sustainable growth  
in Kirklees – an  
academic  
perspective**

**Health, food and  
sustainable  
development**

# Sustainable Development & Health



*Sustainable Development can be defined simply as a better quality of life for everyone, now and for generations to come.*

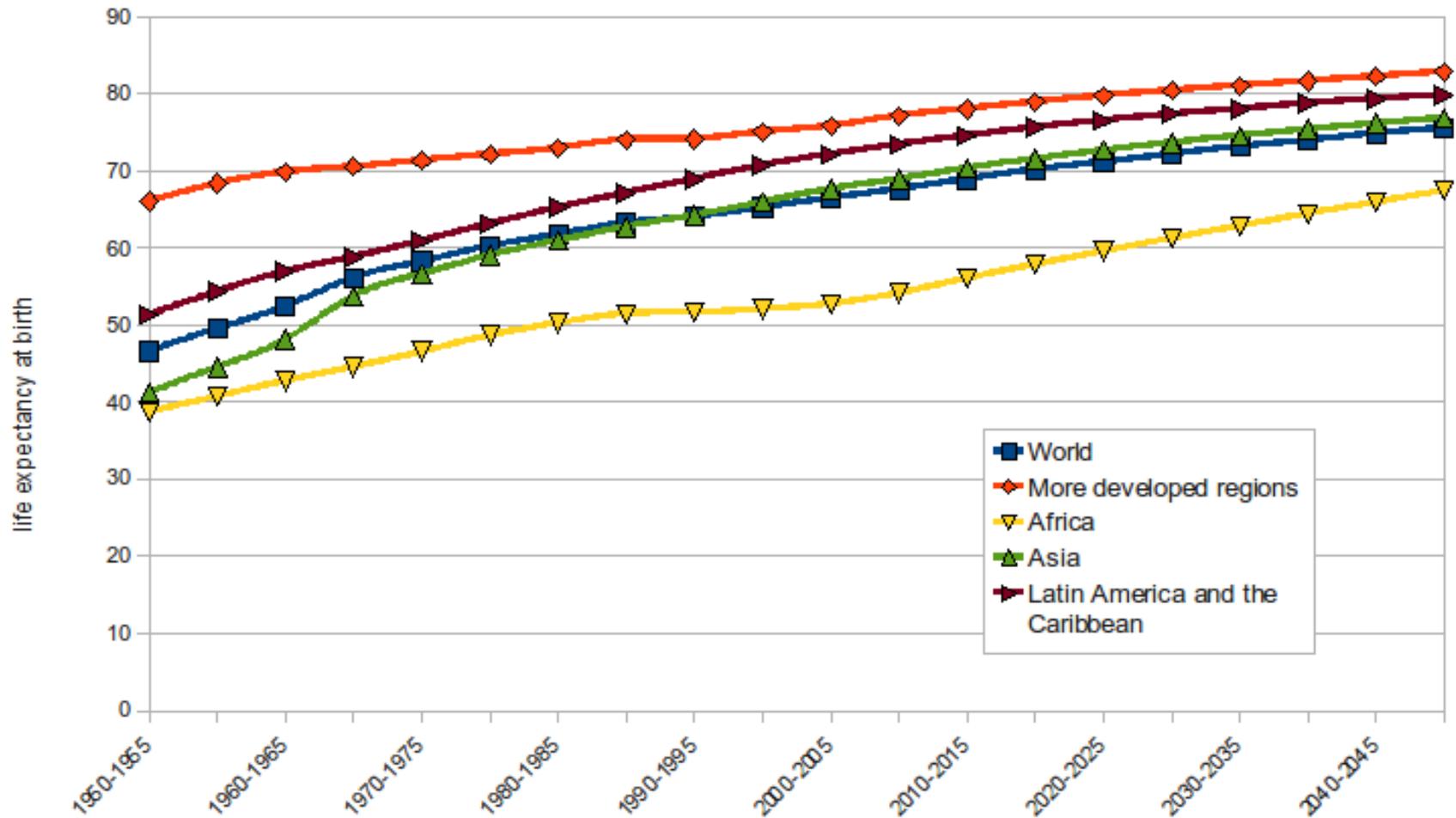
***Measuring health** can tell us how well development is advancing the three pillars of sustainability – social, environmental and economic.*



# Economic Development & Health

Life Expectancy at Birth by Region, 1950-2050.

Source: UN World Population Prospects, 2008.



# Public Health and Environment @ World Health Organisation

## Health indicators to monitor progress on sustainable development

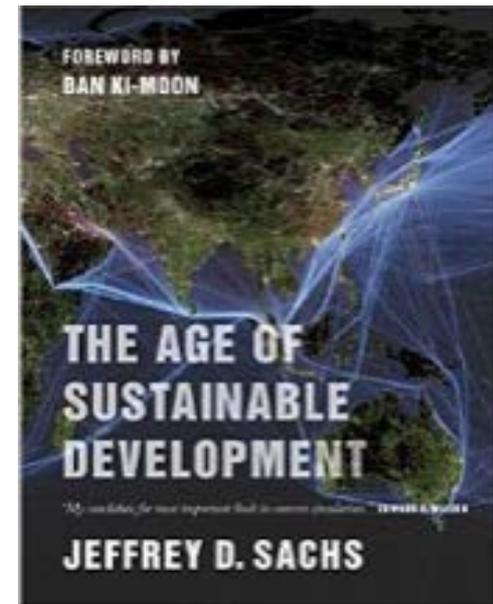
- Food access, dietary quality and sustainability
- Food market & trade policies that support health and sustainability



# Harvard Economist Jeffery Sachs

*'Our economic incentives have often been aligned against the very kinds of foods that are better for our health'*

- This is interesting when set in the context of local food!
- Current research in Kirklees



# Another kind of market – local food



What is local  
food?

- Short supply chains and ‘socially embedded economies of place’ can facilitate trust between producers and consumers
- Community food enterprises often recover the lost dimensions of the market as a place of ‘social interaction’
- Local food is assumed to be **fresher**, more **nutritious** and **healthier** – of better **‘quality’**!

## | Community FOOD Enterprises |

- Farmers' Markets
- Community-owned Shops
- Country Markets supporting 'home producers'
- Food Co-operatives
- Community Supported Agriculture
- Organic Buying Groups
- Local Food Hubs

*greenvalleygrocer*

• your local cooperative grocer • your local cooperative grocer •



# Co-operatives UK et al. (2008)

- **Market creation** -- the propensity to innovate and take risks to enter into markets that are unattractive to the private sector
- **Community engagement** -- defined as the goal of strengthening community capacity by involving hard-to-reach groups and by providing joined-up services
- **Localism** -- the tendency to operate within a local area, thereby reducing transport costs and emissions while at the same time providing a multiplier effect on the local economy
- **Multiple outcomes** -- the achievement of benefits that are not just economic, but also social and environmental - *the triple bottom-line of sustainable development!*

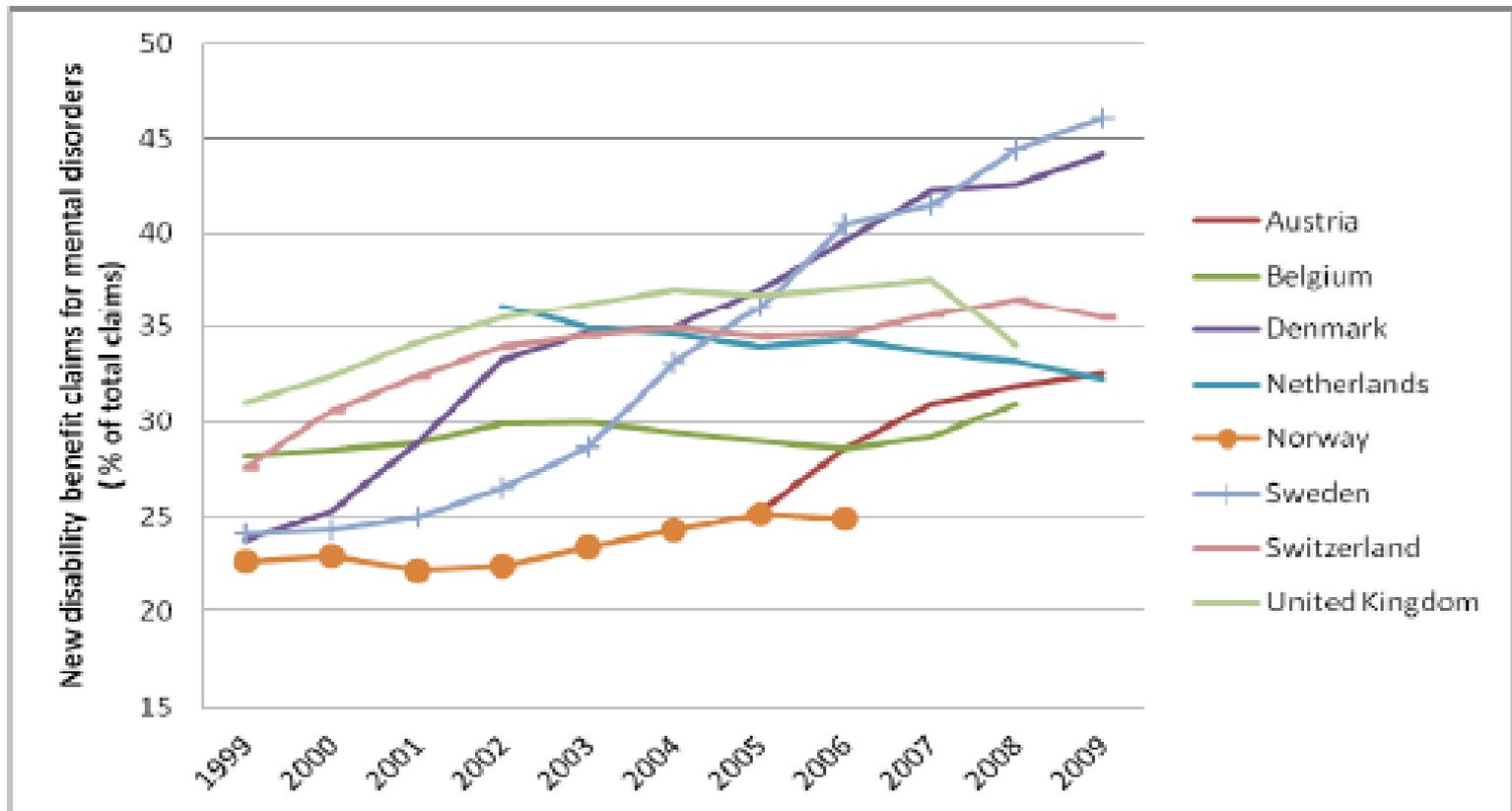
# Multiple outcomes in Kirklees!

*“So it’s like getting multiple outcomes from one intervention, so growing food is one outcome, the food value, but you’ve also got the people who are employed on the land, so you’ve got local economic development potential...”*

*“...you’ve also got the social aspect of getting people with perhaps mental health issues onto the land, and then you’ve got things like managing land better.”*

*“So you’ve got win win win...”*

# Economic incentives?



--- % of new disability benefit claims per year for mental health related issues in selected European countries (OECD, 2011)

# So is local food the solution?

*'I think local food is a bit of a red herring, I don't say this too loudly a lot of the time because obviously it's quite emotive...*

*'...because the UK is small I think we should be thinking much more about a sustainable UK supply chain and how best that serves the country.'*

# The Local Trap

The tendency of local food activists to assume that 'the local' is inherently good

- **Ecological sustainability**
  - **Social justice**
  - **Better nutrition**
  - **Food security**
    - **Freshness**
    - **Quality**

*‘Local social relationships... and environmental management practices are not always positive, and communities can pursue elitist or narrow ‘defensive localization’ strategies at the expenses of wider societal interests...’*

# The Local Trap

The argument here is that those caught in the 'the local' often assume that 'the local' is the most preferable way forward for the food system



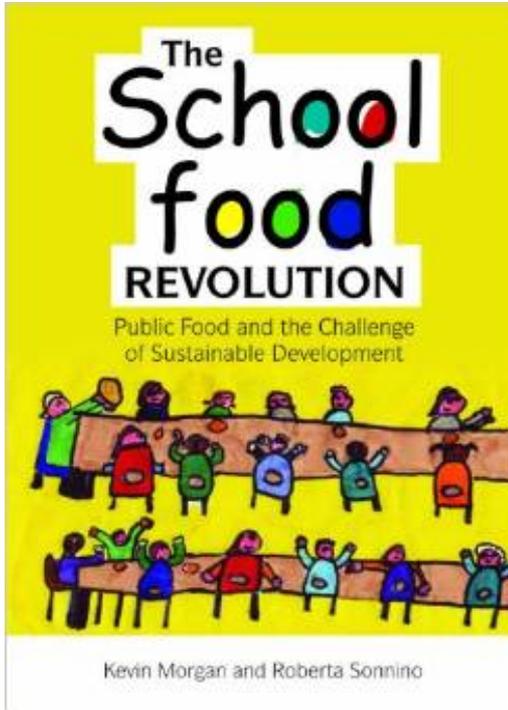
**They argue that this situation often conflates 'the scale' of food systems with 'desired outcomes'**



**And that this can obscure options at different scales that might be more effective in achieving 'desired outcomes'**



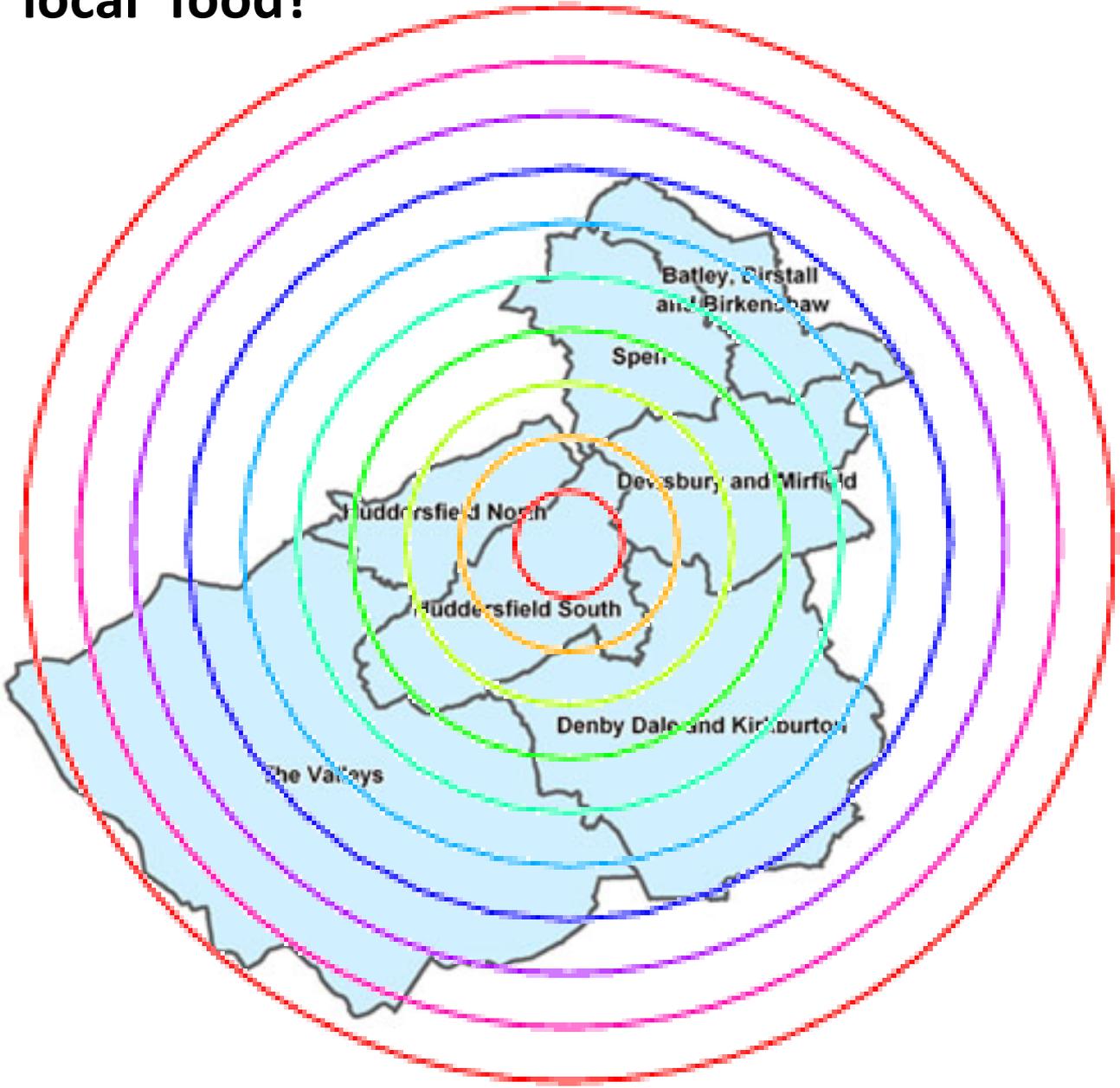
# Moving beyond the 'local' and 'global'



- ❖ *Examples of public authorities create a shared commitment to the values and principles of sustainable development*
- ❖ *New forms of procurement and sourcing that broaden notions of 'quality' food and 'local' food*
- ❖ *Moving beyond understandings of 'conventional'/'alternative' and 'global'/'local' when talking about food systems.*
- ❖ *Regional problems associated with health, local economies and sustainable development are starting to be addressed.*



# Redefining 'local' food?



In Kirklees – new thinking is emerging about regional food hubs, sustainable supply chains, and new ways of sourcing and collaborating across a wider area!



# A new local food equation



Forging new alliances between food producers and consumers, between urban centres and their rural hinterlands!

New food policy councils and urban food strategies across the UK



**Putting Food  
at the Heart of  
Local Policy**



## Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

- FAO (2011) recognises that we are witnessing the emergence of a:
- *“...territorial food system [that] seeks . . . to improve the local management of food systems that are both local and global.”*
- *Further research is needed to explore these trends and the potential for sustainable development!*

The research, published in the journal *Ecology and Society*, finds that 16 of the 21 foods examined reached peak production between 1988 and 2008.

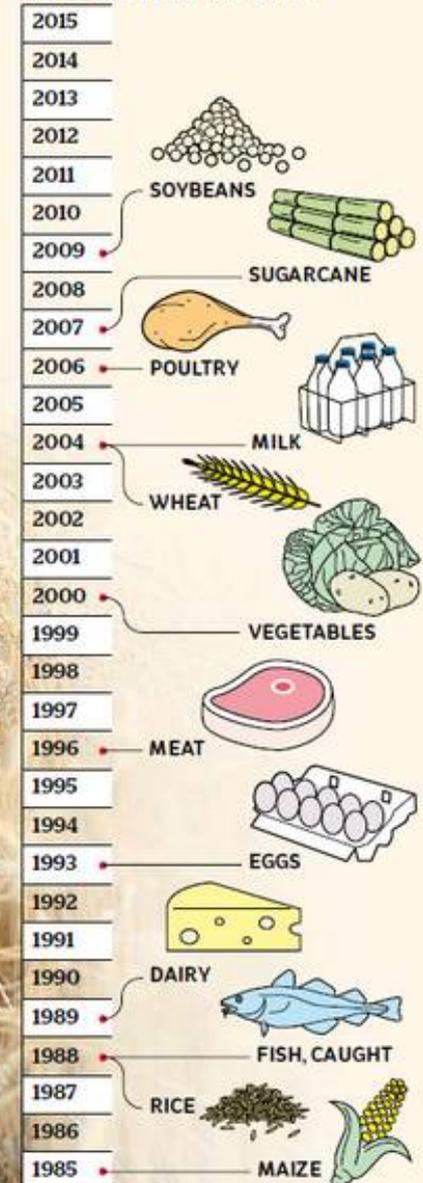
Thank you  
for  
listening!

Yale University, Michigan State University and the Helmholtz Centre for Environmental Research in Germany.

## Food peak production

Peak production refers to the point at which the growth in production of a crop, animal or other foodstuff begins to slow down. From this time, production will continue to increase but at a decelerating rate. This is the first stage of a process that typically continues with a flattening of production and then a decrease. Peak production is the point at which things begin to go wrong, acting as a warning signal of what is to come.

### YEAR IN WHICH FOOD TYPE REACHED ITS PEAK-RATE



SOURCE: ECOLOGY AND SOCIETY