

# Building successful value chains for diversified cropping systems, using Hodmedods as an example

## Problem

Farmers wishing to diversify their cropping systems need to look for market outlets. However, agricultural product value chain configurations are commonly structured by large retailers and commodity markets. As such, there is a need to find niches for premium markets which accept small volumes of heterogeneous products.

## Solution

Value chains with close collaboration between actors, both from the supply chain and wider society, enable direct, dynamic and innovative relationships that better facilitate management and sales of smaller volumes of diverse products. Hodmedods is an example of a shortened supply chain, established to support farmers to grow novel pulses and grains, to process and market them and ensure a purposeful communication and fair price to farmers and consumers.

## Benefits

- Increased stability in routes to market for novel grains and pulses to enable a diversification of the crop rotation
- Consumers are more connected to the processes of production for novel and heritage crop species and/or varieties and understand different product quality attributes and value
- A regional hub for processing, packaging and distribution of grains and pulses to maximise value and return on investment throughout the chain.

## Practical recommendation

- Producing and processing regionally as much as possible can minimise distribution costs and reliance on external services necessary for participation in larger scale commodity markets. Alternatively, online direct sales can potentially reduce distribution costs as well as providing alternative routes to market.
- Find small-scale processors that are willing to take on small quantities or look to make the most of lulls in seasonal processing output i.e., quiet points in the year for processors, if applicable.
- Build relationships with processors who may become flexible on minimum quantity requirements to try something innovative with a social purpose.

## Applicability box

### Theme

Barriers and enablers, cropping system, value chain, actors, learning

### Geographical coverage

Regional market focus

### Application time

N/A

### Required time

Variable time to develop relationships and trust within the value chain network e.g., achieving verbal contracts

### Period of impact

For the duration for which agreements remain mutually beneficial. Impacting a variety of crop production processes, providing they meet minimum quantities.

### Equipment

Storage, shelling, drying, milling and or canning, packaging machinery

### Best in

Directly relevant to grain legumes, also applicable to cereals and field-scale horticulture value chains



**Picture 1:** Hodmedods' product display, Suffolk. (Photo: Rowan Dumper-Pollard, Organic Research Centre, 2021)

- Work with farmers to establish and build production capacity, and collaboratively build enough central stock to supply a processor (e.g., through contract arrangements).
- Identify key production and value chain stages where improvements could lever greater change in support for diverse cropping systems. For example, Hodmedods mobilises the following levers:
  - Supports with accessing seeds as well as seed bank.
  - Provides basic agronomic advice.
  - Guarantees minimum purchase price to ensure farmers cover the production costs.
  - Ensures support with logistics, collecting and cleaning.
- Widen the value chain so that consumers can connect with different stages of the production process in different ways. Support an understanding that the value chain is not linear and ending at 'distribution', but rather that different stages of production are relevant to many facets of civic life e.g., regional food security, nutrition, and economy.
- Build relationships between farmers and the local community through public events to develop interest for new crops. Such actions establish interest in the market, build evidence of market demand for farmers and minimise their perception of risk. For example, Hodmedods convened an evening public event (also picture 1), attended by many businesses, initiatives and individuals from the local community, to facilitate a conversation about the region's food system and the role of agroecology and diversity within that.
- Diverse communication channels and mediums to convey meaningful stories to consumers that better illuminate the processes in diverse cropping systems which contribute towards product quality, product value, and production skills (both innovative and historical). For example, by using social network platforms e.g., Twitter, Facebook, Instagram; photography and video making; as well traditional written formats e.g., brief and illustrative recipes on how to use the novel crops, poetry and short stories.

### Further information (approx 150 characters)

#### Video

- Rediscovering British Pulses (English) - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bgYUxb7Zr1k>

#### Further readings

- Economic and environmental value of European cropping systems that include grain legumes (English and French) - [https://www.ufop.de/files/5013/4121/8907/2006-07\\_GL45pp13-22\\_vonRichthofen\\_Special-Report.pdf](https://www.ufop.de/files/5013/4121/8907/2006-07_GL45pp13-22_vonRichthofen_Special-Report.pdf)

#### Weblinks

- Hodmedod's website and story (English) - <https://hodmedods.co.uk/pages/the-hodmedod-story>

### About this practice abstract and DiverIMPACTS

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**Project website:** [www.diverimpacts.net](http://www.diverimpacts.net)

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