Pathways to Land for BPOC

By Jo Kamal, Nicola Scott, & Pauline Shakespeare

"...land is power, land is wealth, and, more importantly, land is about race and class"

Nick Estes, Lower Brule Sioux Tribe (US), academic, author, and activist

Contents

Summary

This report focuses on issues our Pathways to Land project addresses, namely the barriers facing BPOC (Black and people of colour) to access farmland and finance for it, and recommendations to challenge them. It provides a brief overview of finance for, and securing farmland in the UK, and highlights learnings from the US about BIPOC (Black, Indigenous and People of Colour) farmers and their experiences of accessing land. The report is informed throughout by the lived experiences of BPOC farmers and community food organisers in England in relation to farming and securing land. Report recommendations will be useful to those with finance and funding for farming, particularly those seeking to make farmland access more equitable; they will also inform the design of the project's autumn forums.

Key Findings

These findings include our analysis from desk-based research and conversations with BPOC commercial farmers (past and present), as well as BPOC community food organisers.

- The prevalence of **fears of indebtedness** to banks by some BPOC interviewees.
- Some BPOC communities face **barriers to accessing finance** from large commercial high street banks or are less likely to do so.
- Barriers to accessing finance are mirrored in the social investment sector as BPOC are disadvantaged by a lack of intermediary assistance, are less likely to receive investment, have less trust in this sector, and have less access to inclusive finance options.
- The **challenge of starting a land search** and knowing who to approach is particularly difficult for first generation BPOC farmers without peer support and professional networks for advice about finding suitable land.
- **Concerns about engaging with the land planning process** and gaining permission for housing near or on farmland.
- Having **access to Council farms or publicly owned land** in perpetuity, especially in peri-urban and urban settings, as a more affordable way to access land, with fewer financial risks.
- Advocating for **cooperative or collective use of farmland** as a way to share the financial risks of farming and reduce feelings of isolation from BPOC peers.
- Learnings from the US about BIPOC farmer **networks of support and action**, as well as **public policy initiatives** to support BIPOC access to land.
- Ideas emerged about the need for land reparations for BPOC in the UK in response to the legacy of the British Empire.

Key recommendations for practice

This list represents recommendations that emerged from desk-based research and through conversations with BPOC landworkers.

1. Include **racialised, and ideally, intersecting identity data** by national and local government, as well as funders of farming initiatives to evidence and map the representation/underrepresentation of BPOC in farmland and farm ownership.
2. Access where required for BPOC to **financial education** around receiving loans to secure land.
3. A need for **patient finance** to secure land with longer repayment terms and/or lower interest rates.
4. The availability of **grants or loans for those without inherited wealth** or large savings, to initially cover a farm owner's income when moving site or setting up a new one.
5. Accessing **land organisations with a good understanding of business skills** to share such as financial literacy, and financial projections when a farmer takes on a piece of land.
6. Provide **accessible and inclusive resource packs** or manuals on the legalities of owning land.
7. Add to voices which call for **Council farms to be saved as community assets** that offer more affordable and secure land tenancies, along with transparent governance processes.
8. Create **projects to support landowners to work with BPOC** farmers/community food organisers in viable ways (through tenancy agreements and beyond).
9. Have well-resourced BPOC farmer/community food organiser networks of support or "communities of practice".
10. Explore **ideas for wealth holders around resourcing BPOC-led farming initiatives**, such as securing farmland to be cooperatively stewarded by BPOC farmers/ community food organisers.
11. Have **flexibility with land ownership or stewardship**, including opportunities to leave or step out of the agreement if needed.
12. Grant funding, especially considering the history (and ongoing legacy) of colonialism, to **raise the idea of land reparations.**

Glossary

CSA - Community Supported Agriculture

EDI - equality, diversity and inclusion

BIPOC - Black, Indigenous and people of colour. Specifically used in the US, this word aims to highlight the experiences of Black and Indigenous communities and show unity among communities of colour.

BPOC - Black and people of colour/BRM - Black and racialised minorities (see the Introduction for an explanation of our use of these terms)

ELC - Ecological Land Cooperative, a land trust securing land for, and creating low impact residential agroecological starter farms.

LION - Land in Our Names is a BPOC grassroots collective that reimagines land management in the context of climate and racial justice, and addressing disparities in access to food and land.

LWA - the Landworkers Alliance is a land-based UK members union that supports agroecological farmers and farming

NESS - New Entrant Support Scheme. A DEFRA-funded scheme from late 2022 to May 2023 for start-up and scale-up farmers which included mentoring, coaching, farm visits, and online learning linked to supporting them to develop successful farming businesses.

Patient capital - a long-term investment in an organisation through providing a loan to or buying shares in it where sustainable growth of the recipient is prioritised over financial returns by the investor, usually over a number of years.

Social investment - repayable finance for an organisation whose operations have a social purpose

1
Introduction to the Pathways to Land project

Who do you see when you hear the words 'farmland owner' or 'farmer'? Have you thought about why such images appear to you? If you are a racially minoritised person, do these farmers you see share aspects of your heritage, food culture, or lived experiences?

From the starting point that acknowledges Nick Estes's words above, the Pathways to Land project addresses a specific barrier to BPOC farmers and community food organisers - that of accessing land securely. It also addresses the barriers BPOC face in obtaining the finance needed to do so. With UK farmland in 2023 reaching an average of £8,951/acre compared with just over £2,000/acre in 2003, inclusive ways to source farmland would enable people from a diversity of backgrounds to start to thrive in the sector. Currently the majority of those in the UK who farm and nurture land is a manifestation of societal inequalities and the colonial legacy of White[1] supremacy worldwide.

We also want to emphasise that a range of models and viewpoints by BPOC exist for accessing, securing, and utilising land, and indeed other BPOC exist who do not wish to gain access to land purely for farming. People who we identify as BPOC are not one homogeneous community, and the report presents a range of views on key themes that emerged during our research and conversations with various Black and people of colour.

While our focus is on experienced farmers and community horticulture organisers who use sustainable techniques that work with nature – more commonly known as agroecology - information has additionally been collected about and from farmers from the wider sector. While we use available data about farming and finance from across the UK, due to capacity limitations our engagement with BPOC farmers and community food organisers for this project is limited to England. It is imperative to state here that the lack of data recorded and analysed about BPOC farmers and farmland owners in England (as well as Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland), has also been a barrier to us mapping both groups. Linked to this is the absence of established BPOC farming networks (in comparison to the US). We address these absences in Parts 1.4 and 3.3, and also acknowledge the lack of BPOC farmer representation in research and the media.

For clarity of positionality, this project is led by three BPOC women and non-binary people.

We have chosen to use the terms BPOC/BRM (Black and racialised minorities), and Global Majority - peoples and countries colonised by European countries mostly in the southern hemisphere which when combined, include most of the world's population. These are terms corroborated through research and in conversations by project partners with prominent land justice activists and equality groups. Though from a reparations perspective, using this term does not acknowledge the specificities of different peoples due to the varied legacies of colonialism in different parts of the world.

We recognise these terms are and will always be limited and limiting. So whilst we use them for ease, we wish to name the reality that they may never fully encompass the ranging identities and experiences of those living under racial capitalism[2].

Funding for this project is kindly provided through the Joseph Rowntree Foundation's Emerging Futures stream and we gratefully acknowledge the feedback on this report provided by the project's BPOC Critical Friends.

1.1 Stages of the project

There are two parts to this project:

Stage 1

- Build on the Jumping Fences and Rootz into Food Growing reports by creating a baseline to work from about barriers BPOC farmers have faced and/or continue to face in their profession to secure finance for land, as well as successes they have had with this.
- Identify existing social investment and/or finance available in England for BPOC farming/land
- Outreach to experienced BPOC farmers and community food organisers about their experiences in the sector, specifically, how they have accessed and secured land
- Identify examples of land finance for BPOC beyond the UK to assess their usefulness to BPOC farmers/growers in England
- Produce a report to document our findings from the above points

Stage 2

- Insights from Stage 1 will inform two forums with BPOC farmers, BPOC-led food and farming organisations, progressive funders, lenders and others working in the sphere of land assets for food and farming. These will begin to explore more flexible financial products, tenancy agreements and alternative land stewardship models, including those which account for culturally informed land use preferences
- Forums will include a BPOC-only space and aims to create the foundation for more equitable land access models for BPOC farmers/community food organisations in England

1.2 Methodology for Stage 1 research, this report, and its limitations

For Stage 1 of this project we drew upon information from a mix of existing publicly and non-publicly available reports and articles. This was complemented by findings from a study visit to Philadelphia (US) by a project partner in late 2023, including to BPOC community-led food and farming projects, plus attendance at the annual US Black Farmers and Urban Gardeners Conference (BUGS).

The report also presents the voices of 9 experienced BPOC farmers and community food/horticulture organisers based mostly in the southwest, south and southeast of England with whom we had remote conversations (see Table 1). All have secured or tried to secure land for their farms or projects, or work for these farms after land was secured for them. We acknowledge this is a very limited sample, and though we contacted BPOC farmers outside of these locations in England, we were unsuccessful in arranging interviews with them. We also recognise the shortcomings of not having interviewees from areas of England which have historically faced state disinvestment and this feeds a false narrative that BPOC farmers, or those seeking to become one, do not exist in these areas.

Table 1 BPOC Participants/Interviewees

Richard *real name*	Community Food Grower, Organiser & Nature Engagement Practitioner in London. Has considered moving to a different part of London to access land, but that area lacks the established food/community networks he has amassed.
Val *real name*	Community food organiser in London who has negotiated the use of Council owned land for their growing project.
Sarah	Grower (non-owner) at a commercial farm in southeast England.The land was bought using inherited land and the farm is looking into collectivising its land.
Fatima	Grower at a not-for-profit farm in London, growing for scale for selling. Has investigated acquiring land to set up their own farm, but found the cost of that combined with infrastructure costs too expensive to do so.
Ian	Commercial farm owner in the southeast. Has secured land as a tenant of a Council farm (aka county farm - see Part 2.2 for details)
Antonio	Former Director of a Community Supported Agriculture commercial farm using rented land by a landowner not directly working on the farm. The farm was granted a 10-15 year lease by the landowner.
Flora	Herbalist in London with 5+ years of experience and different growing sites on publicly-owned land.
Karen	Community food organiser and grower with commercial growing experience in London. Has negotiated the use of private land for community food growing.
Carla	Commercial farm owner in the southeast with 5+ years of experience. Has a long-term lease on the land they use.

Note: Information has been withheld which identifies a person, unless they stated their name could be published or similar public information already exists about them.

This low number partly reflects the lack of recorded data about BPOC landworker and farmland owners in the UK as previously mentioned which our report later refers to, as well as the resources and capacity we had to undertake this research. The geography of these participants also mirrors the established geographical presence of alternative, progressive food and farming support networks in England we are familiar with, including those for BPOC. These include Landworkers Alliance (LWA) members, particularly in the south/southwest, and Land In our Names (LION), the Black Farmers Market, Black Rootz, and Sustain's Food and Racial Justice working group members based particularly in London/the southeast. The geographical spread of interviewees also aligns with where more farm applications originate from to one progressive farming funder's programme we mention in Section 2.2. We also contacted the National Farmers Union for data about BPOC landworkers and farmers, but did not receive a response.

It is important to acknowledge that participant views in relation to finance and accessing land do not always align. Also, while participant views for this report mostly included those who advocate for smaller scale agroecological approaches to farming, insights from others who do not strictly follow this approach are also used.

We greatly appreciate the time and insights they provided, without which this report would not be informed by the lived experiences of being a BPOC landworker in the UK.

1.3 Why is Pathways to Land needed?

In England and Wales, figures reveal farming has the least diversity of any sector in terms of racialised identity, with only 0.8% of farmers identifying as persons of colour, and 97.2% as White[3], while 18% of the population identify as BPOC. This contrasts with information published about the identities of new entrant farmers in the UK who are LWA members, which found that 9% identified as BPOC. While the racialised identity of new entrant farmers in the farming sector as a whole in England and Wales is not available, this indicates a higher proportion of BPOC entering agroecological farming compared to existing farmers in the wider sector.

Comparable data for Scotland and Northern Ireland is not available as Scotland records that BPOC employees make up 5% of its "Agriculture, Energy and Water" sector, rather than focus on farmers only. While Northern Ireland records the nationality identity of its farmers by their farm size and farm type as "British only", "Irish only", "Northern Irish only" and "Other identity or combination" with the last category making up 8% of all farms.

If marginalisation and underrepresentation is not seen, it cannot begin to be addressed, compared to what we explore in Section 3 of the report about BIPOC, land and farming in the US. So the view of accessing farmland being the preserve of racialised White people and/or those with enough money to use as security to fund this access, pervades, without sufficient questioning of this status quo or how to challenge it.

Our report follows on from the groundbreaking Jumping Fences study by Naomi Terry, which in which 16 BPOC farmers and landworkers in the UK were interviewed about their experiences in the sector. It evidenced the racialised oppression of BPOC farmers and landworkers, such as not being viewed as competent by their White peers because they were BPOC. Our work also builds on the foundation which the Rootz Into Food Growing report established - the first ever report to present the lived experiences of BPOC farmers and landworkers in the UK. Others have also spoken publicly about the "casual racism" within UK agriculture.

While the provision of educational support specifically for minoritised people seeking to become farmers has tentatively begun, specialist support for how such people access farmland is less available. The need to increase diversity in farming and land access is important as Natasha Pencil of the Black Farmers Market says it can:

> *...encourage positive representation in this space of melanated people...there are so many people in our community who are struggling to get a piece of land, a space to call their own, and to grow, to feed ourselves.*

This approach is needed as the Food Foundation found BPOC communities in the UK experienced persistently greater levels of food insecurity than non-BPOC groups during the Covid-19 pandemic, further widening the insecurity existed between some BPOC and non-BPOC groups when compared to pre-pandemic data. Breaking down government data further, Black-headed households were more food insecure during this time compared to any other groups, though Asian/Asian-British-headed households were almost as food secure as White-headed households. While investigating the differences in food security between different communities is beyond the scope of this report, these figures highlight inequities to access food based on a person's minoritised status, still exists in the UK.

Consequently, our Pathways to Land project recognises that a lack of diversity in farming and farmland ownership is part of a wider issue of structural racism and economic injustice in the food system and beyond. It delves deeper into land access issues raised in Jumping Fences, namely finance and funding for it, and the need for more stable and long-term access to land for BPOC. It also seeks to ensure funders of farming have an equitable and inclusive approach to BPOC who need their support.

2
Financial context and securing farmland

Defra data in the New Economics Foundation Credit Where Due report on agriculture in the UK presents that the majority of farm balance sheets include £20.5 billion in financial obligations primarily financed by bank loans and overdrafts. Almost all of the major high street banks have divisions specifically devoted to financing for agriculture. Building societies and the Agricultural Mortgage Corporation (AMC - part of the Lloyds Banking Group), cover an additional £4 billion of the debt.

Table 2

Source	Scale (£ billion)
Bank loans	£9.70
Building societies	£1.60
AMC (Agricultural Mortgage Company) SASC (Scottish Agricultural Securities Corporation)	£2.50
Family loans	£0.55
Trade credit	£1.50
Bank overdrafts	£2.40
Hire purchase	£2.20

Triodos Bank UK advocates that people and organisations can utilise its sustainable financial products to allocate their funds in ways that are environmentally friendly and beneficial to people. It has specialised loan teams that concentrate on lending to agroecology and organic farming, including for business development. However, with a minimum commercial loan of £100k, with larger loans ranging from £500k-£20m, both tend to suit well-established farms with the resources to secure such loans. In 2.3 we identify challenges that BPOC farmers have faced to access business finance, so a question arises about how a BPOC-led farm can develop the initial security necessary to access large amounts of farming finance.

For the BPOC participants we listened to, gaining finance from organisations who 'understood the context of the sector' was crucial. To multiple participants, this meant organisations who could cater to the unpredictable and varied nature of agroecological farming, particularly in terms of income generation, such as what farm owner, Carla, recommended:

> *[Ideally] a lending organisation that understands we have 6 months of the year to make money, and to understand different payback scenarios [such as during the negative impacts to profits of bad weather conditions].*

Carla also mentioned the need for an extended initial loan period in which the loan did not require being repaid, to reflect how building a farming business can take a number of years.

> *As access to land must be sorted out - usually new land - we need a financial buffer to cover the first 5 years - something to protect people.*

In response to the tailored needs of farmers such as Carla's, finance from providers with an understanding of these requirements are available (see Box 1 and 2)

2.1 Specific funding for farming and acquiring land

The examples below are included as the first focuses on funding for community-focused commercial agroecological farming, while the second funds all types of farming.

Box 1

Example 1: LEAP - Loans for Enlightened Agriculture Programme
A smaller scale approach to farm funding has been developed by The Real Farming Trust's LEAP. It "offers funding and mentoring to small agroecological businesses which are producing good food for their local communities." LEAP's focus is on supporting early stage community-based food and farming businesses with unsecured loans of between £10k-100k for between 5-9 years, as well as grants and mentoring. Due to the high costs of farmland and not having security on loans awarded, it focuses on finance for capital and revenue costs for businesses which already have some security of land tenure.

Currently the programme does not record the racialised identity of applicants, but two areas where a higher proportion of applications have been received from are southwest England and London/southeast[4]. Interestingly, these are the same two regions where progressive food and farming support networks have traditionally been more active (see Section 1.3). Whether or not there is a direct link between the two is something that can be explored further. This would identify if such networks contribute to people, including BPOC, being more aware of funding opportunities for progressive farming.

Box 2

Example 2: Oxbury Bank
Launched in 2021, Oxbury Bank, the UK's only specialist agricultural bank, offers loans of up to 25 years for amounts between £25k-£10 million, with payback schedules that accommodate a farm business's unique demands and seasonality. It also has a New Gen Scheme. For the latter, Oxbury can provide up to 100% of the financing needed for new entrant farmers between ages 18-40, who have a new farming business established in the last 3 years that does not yet provide a wage. Their funding can be used to purchase land, as well as other inputs such as machinery and living costs incurred when starting a business. As it takes a few years for a new farm to generate more income than it spends due to large startup costs, providing some financial security to farmers when they will be earning little is crucial to helping farms to succeed, and to keep new entrants in the sector.

This is vital as in the UK less than 1 in 6 farmers are under 40 years old. However, there are many financial obstacles for young farmers to overcome such as limited profitability, high land costs, and expensive rents, as well as an unpredictable policy environment in the future.

One New Gen recipient we heard, from, Ian, was enthusiastic about the scheme:

> *Oxbury – the Agricultural bank – has been amazing. They have a scheme for first generation farmers. You send your business plan, they see if it's a viable business. Some investors are farmers. High street banks didn't have a clue!*

Oxbury provides a much needed financial safety net to farmers without financial and land inheritance to rely on, or a substantial amount of savings to utilise for their business. The issue of not having savings is pertinent as Natwest's Banking on Racial Equality: A Roadmap for Positive Change report found savings among BPOC are much lower than non-BPOC, in that at least 60% of BPOC customers did not have any compared to 33% of non-BPOC.

Like the LEAP, Oxbury does not record information about the racialised identity of those who secure funding from it. In both cases, recording the identity of applicants to farm funding schemes would help to see where communication and outreach about them can be made, or the areas for further research needed. For example, partnering with BPOC farming and food support groups could help funders to learn why some people may be more or less represented when applying for their funding.

With financial barriers to be able to own land outright, alternative options include the provision of land by land trusts and county farms.

2.2 Farmland provision: small scale land trusts and county farms

Firstly, we must acknowledge the challenge of starting a land search and knowing who to approach. This is particularly difficult for first generation BPOC growers without peer support networks for advice about finding suitable land (see Sections 3.2. and 4.3). For example, estate agents can be a source of information about available land. The LWA has piloted a landmatch project in southwest England to help match new entrants in agroecological farming to landowners and land managers, with the project expanding into other regions.

Another source of land provision comes through land trusts. In order to protect land for present and future generations, a land trust can hold it. A growing number of farmers are retiring without passing on their land to other family members, making trusts a potentially important component for farmland succession. Land trusts purchase or are gifted land and guarantee that it remains as farmland. Although the trusts mentioned below do not provide finance to farmers seeking land - they support farmers to access land in other ways - it is useful to mention them as they usually offer alternatives to market rates to access and secure land, and/or advocate for community-orientated or collectively owned farms, ideas which, as we will see later, resonate with many farmers we had conversations with.

Ecological Land Cooperative

The Ecological Land Cooperative (ELC), buys farmland and plans three to five ecological smallholdings for the location. They then choose qualified farm stewards (farmers) to manage the smallholding plots after planning for residential smallholdings is granted. Affordably priced plots often with lower loan interest rates compared with standard market ones are either sold with a 150-year lease or rented to new entrants. Planning requirements and ecological standards on holdings are met by a farmer through measuring their performance against a legally mandated management plan. The ELC holds about 160 acres across the south and south west of England, as well as in south Wales.

One participant we listened to with experience of leasing ELC land was generally positive about this, while recognising an element of land insecurity still existed using this model of land access:

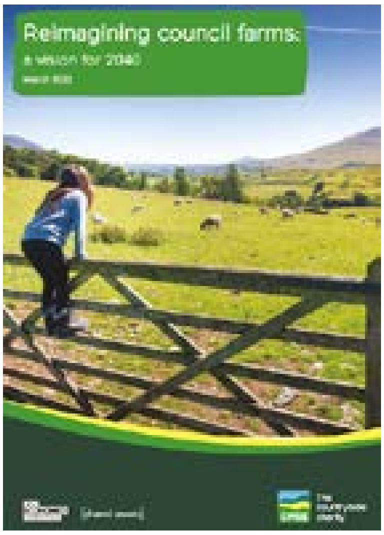
> *With the ELC informal mortgage, I have the leasehold and the ELC has the freehold. In principle it's a secure 150 year lease, though planning permission has been sought and denied for the land, so if the appeal against this wins, I could lose the land, even though I've met all the due diligence needs set by the ELC.*

Biodynamic Land Trust

The Biodynamic Land Trust is a nonprofit community-benefit society based in Gloucestershire that secures UK land in trust, providing additional opportunities for sustainable agriculture and new entrant farmers to conserve and promote biodynamic, organic, community-connected farms. By using donated land, BDLT obtains the land's freehold while reaching an agreement with the farmer for a ground lease, usually for 99 years with options to renew for farming families. It tends to lease land to community-focused/nonprofit farms, rather than individual farmers and holds about 550 acres mostly across the south west and south of England.

LAND TRUST Soil Association

The Soil Association Land Trust holds farmland in northwest, the midlands, southeast and southwest England, as well as in Scotland. It offers farmers a farm business tenancy, with the aim of these being for 10 - 15 years. The trust has about 650 acres they currently hold or that is bequeathed to them.



Council farms, also known as county farms, were founded in the late 19th century when councils purchased property to form them. As with land trusts, council farms provide an alternative to having to purchase land outright. They enable Councils to rent the land to tenant farmers for a reasonable price, so they are particularly attractive to established farmers, like Ian, without inherited farmland or new entrant farmers with farming experience who want to run their own farm. Ian explained about the process of applying for one of these farms and the tenure it includes:

> *We got a Council farm last year – it's rented and we went through an application process. A 7 year lease with an extension of up to 10 years to then have money to buy land. I would have preferred longer, but it's good to have the pressure of a shorter lease. [The application included] submitting an Expression of Interest [for the vacant land], submitting a financial forecast and business plan [for one's farm business], and a rigorous interview.*

While having some apprehension towards Council farms, Antonio a former director of a community supported agriculture farm (CSA), also had positive views of them, especially in relation to the governance of land:

> *Though there's lots of red tape, Council rent can be more affordable and secure (in the long term); it's an option that can be really helpful to get people onto the land. Plus a Council will be more transparent about who can get access to land. County farms are a positive concept...The Council should have peppercorn rates on land, for example, 1-2 years' free rent and free business advice and understanding about cashflow – it's so difficult in this sector - capital costs such as machinery, labour. Managing cashflow support from ethical banks is needed, so loads of interest isn't charged at the beginning.*

Local authorities were also named by some participants as providing potential radical solutions to individualised land ownership, such as Richard, a Community Food Grower & Nature Engagement Practitioner:

> *What I would really love to see is municipal authorities buying up land in the peri-urban environment and transitioning things from equestrian centres and golf courses and turning them into agroecological communities and not charging rent… I would like to see local authorities with socialised land providing long term access to land in perpetuity.*

This also links to some views expressed by participants in Section 2.4 which advocate for not owning farmland outright as an individual.

However, as highlighted by the Reimagining Council Farms: a vision for 2040, compared to the past, there are fewer council farms today. When economic privatisation and council budget cuts took hold from the late 1970s, since then these farms were reduced by almost half. Alongside further cuts to Council budgets at the time of writing, generating income - including selling land assets - is needed to fund high cost services.

Arguably however, protecting Council farms can generate local economic benefits. For example, they can regulate farming approaches to develop future cost-saving climate mitigation and adaptation strategies such as agroecology and agroforestry, to help counter extreme weather conditions. They can also help to form networks of farm tenants to learn from and support each other, or link tenants up to potential customer organisations within council networks, such as schools, hospitals, and local businesses. Furthermore, a Zimbabwean Council farm tenant in Cambridgeshire, David Mwanaka, shows how having a secure tenancy[5] has enabled him to develop his business to provide culturally appropriate food usually grown in Sub-Saharan Africa, throughout the UK.

Crucially, such farms can reduce the financial risks inherent within farming. It is therefore useful to explore ways for Councils not to sell, or otherwise enable these farms to be kept as community assets, as advocated by participants in Section 4.2.

2.3 Financial barriers for BPOC and high street bank ethics

While commercial financial help is available to businesses including those in the farming sector, BPOC are generally less likely to access such support compared to non-BPOC. For example, Natwest reported that in contrast to 4% of White-owned enterprises, 44% of Black African, 39% of Black Caribbean, 31% of Bangladeshi, 21% of Pakistani, and 9% of Indian firms stated that they had refrained from applying for loans required for their businesses because they were afraid of being rejected. Natwest acknowledges that this is because BPOC are much more likely than non-BPOC to have their loan application declined. Consequently, it has begun to develop initiatives to address this such as enhancing financial inclusion for BPOC through partnering with the not-for-profit Fair4All Finance.

Participants also highlighted the need for loans tailored specifically both to farming and to the needs of BPOC who may be daunted by the prospect of being in financial debt as we explore below, and that land is secure for farming use in perpetuity, especially when the need for more home building exists in the UK.

For example, Val named low interest, or interest free loans as a particularly important way in which some barriers to land access could be addressed.

> *For the loan to be interest free would be less scary - ideally we can just pay the value of the land back over a period of time with a bit of flexibility from the land owner where there is no interest being paid on it. Which sounds absurd - the way our current society is set up.*

Adding to the challenges faced by BPOC to access finance, a recent report by Fair4All Finance found that 1 in 5 BPOC banking customers said they had been discriminated against, such as experiencing suspicion from staff due their racialised identity, and having to submit multiple loan applications while receiving contradictory information about them, leading to a greater uptake of higher interest loans. Their report findings were validated by other high street banks, including Barclays, Lloyds Banking Group, and Santander.

A word of caution must be raised here in relation to the larger commercial banks' diversity and inclusion initiatives for BPOC. Such banks can use EDI as a way to increase their customer base to include more BPOC in the UK, while some customers may not be aware that having an unsecured bank loan affects one's own ability to obtain other credit.

Furthermore, larger commercial UK banks do not openly acknowledge the harmful impacts their investments have on BPOC outside the UK. This includes funding the manufacture of nuclear weapons, and for some big banks, investing in arms manufacturers which export weapons to countries in conflict. For example, Ethical Consumer is highly critical of Natwest (and other big banks) due to its record on investments not fully prohibiting investments in forestry, fisheries and agribusiness sectors which displace Indigenous communities, nor banning investments in companies which use "non-harmful" child labour in the mining and metals sectors - sectors operating in the Majority World.

Linking the two is worth mentioning as the global finance sector continues to invest in carbon-intensive sectors which contribute to the climate crisis (and biodiversity loss) with Barclays, HSBC, Santander, Natwest, and Lloyds Banking Group in the top 60 list of fossil fuel investors globally[6]. These are crises that disproportionately affect BPOC, especially those on lower incomes.

While it is good to see high street banks acknowledge that their practices must change to be more inclusive to BPOC, and are attempting to instil equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) initiatives, the Pathways to Land Project focuses mostly on finance, funders and those with farmland resources who already have, or seek to develop, an understanding of the financial needs of farmers and/or BPOC specifically.

2.4 Social Investment, including for BPOC and for farming

The challenges for BPOC to access commercial finance is mirrored in the social investment sector. The Pathway Fund finds they are disadvantaged by a lack of intermediary assistance, less likely to receive investment, have less trust in this sector, and have less access to inclusive finance options. Though in recent years, social investment providers run by and/or specifically aimed at supporting BPOC have emerged.

The Pathway Fund, established by the Black Global Trust, The Social Investment Consultancy and Voice4Change

England, aims for BPOC led groups to have better and more access to financing to foster inclusive and fair economic growth in the UK, leading to a meaningful and long-lasting social impact. It has co-created the Make It Big programme with Do It Now to provide 12 UK-based charities and enterprises with £30,000 of grant funding, bespoke support and training. While the grant is not sufficient to fund land access and security, it has an attractive repayment model that also includes business advice. The amount repaid is dependent on the amount of social investment raised during the grant period, with a maximum of £10k of the grant needing to be repaid if social investment is found within this period.

Social Investment Business, The Ubele Initiative, and Create Equity have also partnered to create the Flexible Finance Fund. This enables 15–25 BPOC charities and social businesses in England to expand or acquire assets and strengthen their resilience by providing £4 million in funding and support.

An example of social investment that supports the development of BPOC food and agriculture provision is the Joseph Rowntree Foundation's Pathfinders grant support programme allocation to the Black Farmers Market. This is a London-based organisation that strives to bring back the value of agriculture and the environment within Black communities and provides a supportive space for new and local businesses and producers to expand their customer base.

It is worth noting here that The Ubele Initiative and Co-operatives UK, through their Co-operative Lines of Enquiry project, are investigating why so few Black and racially marginalised communities opt to generate capital through community share offers or invest in them, as well as why so few adopt a co-operative business model to do so. They found that in a previous decade which included over 130,000 community share investors who gave £210m to Community Share Offers by Co-operatives and Community Benefit Societies (CBS), 92% of investors were White. This deserves mentioning as Triodos bank, for example, accepts capital raised from community shares as loan security, while Cooperative and CBS business models provide its workers and communities with a say in how a business operates with a view to responding to its members' and communities' needs.

Linked to this, a Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) model of farming is one that establishes direct contacts between local farmers and their customers (members) where the latter subscribes to buying produce from the former in advance of it being available through seasonal, yearly, or instalments payments. Members are also invited to farm visits and community events, both of which develop a level of financial security to producers and trust between suppliers and consumers.

Such models are conducive to generating and redistributing money within local economies, such as through local jobs that are invested in by local people as customers, for the benefit of their communities.

Various alternative solutions by particpants were raised to the idea of individual land acquisition. Some participants outlined that ideal ownership frameworks could reflect those of Community Interest Companies (CICs) i.e. companies established to benefit a community rather than shareholders, or workers' cooperatives where a business is jointly owned and managed by its workers, thus reducing the insecurity that individual land ownership can bring. Linked to this, Sarah said that they wish to create a situation in which active participants on the land have a stake in it, but it is legally owned by an organisation rather than an individual, and the people living there are the stewards.

These ideas are explored further in Section 4.3, but it is important to say here that from the farmers we listened to, ideas around collective land ownership and stewardship highlight the desire to be able to generate community or cooperative governance of farmland. Given the relative absence of BPOC in practices such as community share offers and worker or member cooperatives, it may be that some BPOC farmers and farm owners may need skills support in these areas.

2.5 More than just land - funding for culturally appropriate food systems

Through conversations with some of the BPOC-led finance organisations mentioned, it was found that there is support to develop finance initiatives to help BPOC farmers/community food organisers to secure farming resources - including accessing land. Using a similar concept to the Black Farmers Market, this is seen as a way to potentially help to create local economies with diverse populations that provide culturally appropriate food, and where feasible, food that is grown locally, ecologically and ethically, while importing produce from suppliers that mirror these ethics. This can also help to reduce carbon emissions from cheap fresh food imports by large scale global agribusinesses which often use exploitative labour practices and ecologically destructive methods in the countries they operate in. See GrowNYC in the US for an established, citywide model to illustrate what this could look like.

Over the last few decades, often in response to urban decline, Black Indigenous and People of Colour (BIPOC) led urban and peri urban food spaces in the United States have developed to provide culturally appropriate, healthy, and affordable food. While issues around land access for racialised groups still exist in the US, exploring the successes and limitations of such initiatives has helped to inform the Pathways to Land project.

3

BIPOC farming in the USA

A step ahead, creating models to learn from and adapt for the UK?

One notable difference between BIPOC farming in the US and UK is the fact that data about the racialised identity of farm and farmland owners is recorded by citizens, academics, and government in the US. We have no such data in the UK. Recording such information is imperative as it focuses a lens on the issue of structural racism in farmland and farm ownership - without it, it is difficult to fully grasp the extent of the situation.

For example, in the US, those who identify as White make up just under three quarters of the population while representing 96% of farm landowners. In contrast, Black or African American people make up just over 12% of the population, but only 1.5% of farm landowners. Due to inheriting land, and having more access to wealth or credit to buy it compared to BIPOC farmers, White farmers in the US own and operate farms with a higher acreage than other farmers, which also results in them receiving a higher income from farming than BIPOC farmers do (unless BIPOC own the farmland they cultivate). This also leads to White farmers' receiving better access to loans and government payments in a system that is dominated by large industrial scale farms.

A systematised lack of access to intergenerational wealth brings a barrier for BIPOC farmers to build strong credit histories, which can further a cycle of financial instability, making them ineligible for future loans. Because of a history of discrimination at financial institutions, they are also more likely to lack clear titles to the land that they inherited. It is therefore clear that systemic barriers exist to support BIPOC in farming or enable them to remain in it.

3.1 Initiatives to support BIPOC to access farmland and meet farmers' needs

While there are no known countrywide nor county-based initiatives in the UK to provide support to BPOC farmers and their access to land, such programmes exist in the US at the national (federal) and state levels.

3.1.1 Federal level

As recognition of some of the barriers faced by BIPOC farmers, the US Department for Agriculture (USDA) has made changes to better accommodate a wider range of farmers, for example, by establishing the Office of Advocacy and Outreach, which encompasses a programme for socially disadvantaged farmers and ranchers. In 2023, the Biden administration announced the Increasing Land, Capital, and Market Access Program consisting of US$300million worth of funding to 50 projects for underserved producers. As well as improving land ownership, land succession, and agricultural business planning for such farmers, it aims to expand access to markets and capital that impact their capacity to obtain land. One programme recipient is the American Indian Mothers Inc's project 'Restoring Resilience in Indigenous and Land Based Communities'. Its premise is that reclaiming land has a significant impact on healing cultural traumas, as does granting access to farms and fostering collaboration between Indigenous-led regional organisations.

3.1.2 State level

At the state level, California has introduced initiatives to reduce racialised inequity in land ownership and farming. In 2022, a grant of $1.25 million was given to the nonprofit Ujamaa Farmer Collective by the Californian legislature to purchase a medium-sized piece of land in the state following advocacy efforts by local agricultural groups. This initiative is part of a broader state commitment to reduce inequity among historically underprivileged BIPOC farmers, which began in 2017 with the Farmer Equity Act. It mandates that the California Department of Food and Agriculture give these growers more access to resources, outreach, technical support, and decision-making authority - in essence, providing practical help and a political voice in addition to having their existence recorded by federal agencies.

Another Californian initiative includes a $40 million grant to Allensworth, the first African-American governed and financed community established in California in 1908. This will fund planning, preservation, and enhancement projects, as well as the restoration of land for tribal groups and an organic farm, following previous decades of disinvestment in the area. The deed guarantees the right of several farms to function on separate parcels of land that vary in size from half an acre to five acres, each with access to common resources and a say in collective governance.

A model of collective ownership and stewardship is one that emerged from our interviews with BPOC farmers and community food organisers in England which we mentioned in Section 2.2 and 2.4, and will be explored further in section 4.3.

See Box 3 for a more detailed case study of a city wide initiative in Philadelphia to transform the local food system to better serve the needs of marginalised communities.

Box 3 Case Study: Philadelphia Part I

In Pennsylvania, the Philadelphia Urban Agriculture Plan was launched in 2023, aka "Growing from the Root". It was stewarded and written by Ash Roberts, Philadelphia's first Director of Urban Agriculture, BIPOC, non-binary, third generation farmer turned city planner. In the process to implement the Plan, it is key to acknowledge the importance of BIPOC allyship, diverse skills and vision creation in developing new systems to replace old - the Plan was not just about being a 'farmer' as it was developed in response to some of the challenges faced by marginalised communities such as:

1. **Racial Disparities in Food Insecurity**
   Research from Philadelphia highlights differences in food insecurity related to experiences with racial discrimination. Lifetime experiences of discrimination are strongly linked to household and child food insecurity.
2. **Redlining and Food Apartheid**
   A discriminatory practice, which systematically excluded Black communities from homeownership and wealth accumulation. This historical disinvestment in certain neighbourhoods disproportionately affected BPOC access to quality food and green space.
3. **Growing Food Insecurity**
   The number of food-insecure Philadelphians increased from 248,046 to 302,685 between 2012 and 2017. Approximately one in five residents struggles with hunger. The economic fallout from the pandemic is expected to further exacerbate food insecurity, affecting roughly 16% of households.
4. **Structural Racism and Land-Based Oppression**
   As well as the history of land theft, discriminatory policies and unequal opportunities faced by BIPOC people, land oppression refers to gentrification, rising property costs, and environmental disparities that affect land value and ownership.

The full Plan can be reviewed here.

Plan Values and Focus:

- **Equity Focus**: Addresses racial and economic justice, aiming to uplift BIPOC communities.
- **Resource Allocation**: By identifying a range of government and civic resources, policies, and programs, the plan supports urban agriculture opportunities for all Philadelphians, including BIPOC farmers.
- **Historical Context**: It confronts the legacy of structural racism and land-based oppression, recognising the unique challenges faced by BIPOC farmers, including a Land Acknowledgement from the City of Philadelphia explicitly detailing the origin of the land and the origins of the population who were once its stewards. .
- **Investment Framework**: Establishing a 10-year framework for investing in agriculture and food justice ensuring longer-term support and greater land security for BIPOC-led initiatives.
- **Path to Fair Food System**: The plan puts Philadelphia on a path toward a fair local food system that supports urban agriculture, benefiting BIPOC farmers and communities.

While the Plan is a little over a year old, it has left several local agricultural community members unimpressed, among them Martha Gryphon, executive director of Millcreek Urban Farm who claimed that the strategy has "not been fully embraced" and has yet to demonstrate any progress.

3.2 BIPOC farmer support networks in the US

At the grassroots level the Black Farmers Index has a comprehensive online open access directory of Black farmers throughout the US as a way to publicise their businesses to consumers and agricultural support agencies. It has also partnered with the Organic Trade Association to support organic certified Black growers and to encourage and support those without organic status to gain it, thus opening up more markets for them. In Section 4 our interviews with BPOC farmers in England show the need to feel less isolated and more supported is key for some to remain in the sector.

The importance of support networks is also prevalent in the US for BIPOC growers, not just to grow food but also to:

- develop social engagement programmes
- conduct academic research
- lobby and hold policymakers to account
- preserve generational knowledge and storytelling
- build food sovereignty and seed stewardship programmes
- teach youth leadership
- run community supported agriculture schemes

All these as well as examining planning policy and building sustainable housing was showcased effectively at the Black Farmers & Urban Gardeners (BUGs) National Conference, the USA's biggest annual national conference for Black agriculture. In October 2023 it was attended in Philadelphia by Pauline Shakespeare, one of the Pathways to Land project partners, and in recent years it has been held in a different US city. This helps to ensure its outreach to BPOC is countrywide.

Bringing together more than 600 delegates, the conference "...contributes to the empowerment and resilience of Black agriculture worldwide, with the specific goal of creating more equitable and sustainable food systems." It is organised around three pillars:

- Building Community
- Making Change
- Paying Respect

Consequently, it is important to understand that alongside the desire for long term land occupation is a need to hold space which is rooted in values held by a community. For such a community, food growing forms part of spiritual, social and cultural practice, as well as community wealth building. Balancing community held beliefs with the need to fundraise (in order to hold onto long-term land security), can often lead to burnout and/or a loss of vision, especially while also securing short-term funds based on the delivery of time-bound outreach projects. These are goals that may distract from the core activities/intentions of the community.

3.3 BIPOC-led farms as part of "intentional communities"

Pauline's trip to Philadelphia involved meeting with a number of Black-led food and farming groups. These included Sankofa Community Farm, a 4-acre community-led, African-focused urban farm; Life Do Grow Farm, a 3-acre farm with a seasonal CSA veg box scheme within a Neighborhood Creative Commons, set on the ancestral lands of the Indigenous Lenni-Lenape; and One Art Community Center which as well as food growing, is focused on sustainability, youth engagement, skills development, wellness, and community events.

It is notable that none of these projects own the land they farm on, but instead have lease agreements with varying degrees of security. They also carry out a number of public programmes with a high degree of reach and interaction with BIPOC communities addressing food poverty, food sovereignty, youth skills development and employability, education and wellbeing.

These projects also lean into the concept of intentional communities, models of communal living and togetherness featuring developed governance structures and membership with a shared vision which is site specific and land-based. The importance of the principles of intentional communities as a framework and rationale for seeking land ownership, particularly for Black people seeking a place of safety, sustainability, and connections with the earth, resonates strongly in conversations Pauline had with BPOC growers she met in Philadelphia and those in London engaged with the Rootz into Food Growing project. It also resonates with some of our Pathways to Land participants in Section 4.3 of this report.

3.4 BIPOC farming in the USA – a false narrative of growth

Despite the positive policy and ground level initiatives in the US,it is important to take a historical step back and immerse ourselves in some key points of legislation, as well as understanding policy messaging which has sought to draw false narratives. This will help to set the scene of what is currently happening in the US for BIPOC farmers and food producers.

As identified by the HEAL Food Alliance, BIPOC's underrepresentation in the current US farming system is a consequence of the continued legacies of historical agricultural and labour policies which dispossessed BIPOC of their land and excluded agricultural workers from labour laws[7]. These include the Homestead Act of 1892 which promoted farming in the midwest on Indigenous land that was stolen by European settlers, and the Agricultural Adjustment Act of 1933 which is the basis of the current Farm Bill. The latter provided subsidies for landowners (mostly White), but not to sharecroppers and tenants (mostly Black), a situation which continues today. Combined with the exclusion of BIPOC within agricultural policy making systems, to the Alliance this explains the dominance of White farmers in the US and farming policies that do not meet the needs of small and medium-sized BIPOC farmers. Consequently, such initiatives focus on the transfer of land to BIPOC within the confines of existing land ownership systems which largely exclude them within policy and planning decision making circles. Box 4 delves deeper into such issues that emerged from the Philadelphia case study in Box 3.

Box 4 Case Study: Philadelphia case Part II
Despite the positive initiatives in Philadelphia, the Philadelphia Land Bank (created to reactivate vacant land[8]) reveals that while equitable access to city land bank properties is crucial for community resilience, food justice, and sustainable urban agriculture, a conflict of interest between community and private business needs may undermine its relationship with the community. That is, Black-led food growing groups face challenges in acquiring the Philadelphia's Land bank resources due to limited available land, competition with developers for it, financial constraints, and complex bureaucratic procedures. They may struggle to secure funding for infrastructure development, soil enrichment, and water access. Furthermore, trust issues by these groups arise from historical disinvestment in Black neighbourhoods. Consequently, community engagement by the Land Bank is crucial. For example, as the city's zoning regulations decide where land can be used for farming, this may limit farming opportunities. Involving Black-led groups in gaining an understanding of these very technical planning system decisions is therefore essential, and one that has not been addressed in relation to BPOC farmers/community food organisers in the UK. Long-term stewardship and sustainability are also crucial, with long-term land tenure and infrastructure development requiring stability and commitment from governmental organisations like the Philadelphia Land Bank.

While this is a basic and brief summary of the background to land acquisition and ownership for BIPOC in the US, including on stolen Indigenous land, our report does not specifically delve into the complexities of Indigenous land ownership and farming both in the past and present.

3.5 Lessons learned from the US

In England and the UK more broadly, we are far from implementing BPOC-influenced city or county-wide food and farming initiatives like those mentioned in the US. This is partly because the lack of diversity in the farming sector and in farm ownership goes relatively unnoticed particularly in the industrial farming sector as well as farming policy circles, and data about it is not adequately recorded. Support is also needed for BPOC farmers in the UK to tell their own stories, ideally without a fear of repercussions, as cultural history is being lost as well as data. Consequently, it is not viewed as something which needs addressing.

Ideally, intersecting data along with a person's racialised identity should be recorded about farmland and farm owners/custodians e.g. social class background, gender, religion, and location. This is because, in reality, it is often a combination of factors that more thoroughly explain why some people face barriers in their sectors. Such data would also help map where existing BPOC in farming are based and could help to establish or strengthen regional and/or country-wide networks of BPOC support. It could also lead to exploring and identifying why BPOC farmers are severely less represented in some regions compared to others.

For example, while DEFRA records the gender identity of farm owners, its New Entrant Support Scheme (NESS) - which included a scale up path for farmers with up to 10 years' experience - did not request demographic information about applicants to the scheme due to data protection regulations. The information from participants that was recorded included: the type of farming practised (livestock, horticulture, mixed), the farm's acreage, location, tenure type, and the amount of farming experience the NESS participant had. This meant the scheme did not record the number of BPOC applicants nor those accepted onto it, or consider the unique needs of BPOC farmers on the scheme.

Instead, during the scheme a few BPOC participants created an informal support network of BPOC farmers on the NESS and beyond, to share with each other the barriers they faced in farming due to their identity, and ways to overcome them. Also in the UK the LWA has a Racial Equity, Abolition and Liberation in Landwork member-led group for its BPOC members, while SUSTAIN, an umbrella advocacy organisation for systemic change in the UK's food and farming system, has recently established a food and racial justice working group of participants from various food and farming organisations.

In the same way that BIPOC-led organisations in the US have mobilised support, learning and skills shares for each other, plus advocacy for food systems change which meet a diversity of needs, these newly formed national networks in the UK are a much needed step to mobilising support around the barriers faced by BPOC in farming and acquiring land. However, they are under-resourced and underfunded, if funded at all, meaning it is hard to sustain networks, and again, momentum is lost

This section's insights from the US has highlighted some themes that are also experienced by BPOC farmers in the UK. The final part of the report will now draw attention to these and other emerging themes from our conversations with them.

4
Exploring BPOC experiences of accessing and securing land in England

In addition to the many issues about finance for land and farming presented earlier in this report, our conversations with BPOC participants highlighted the following: barriers to land access; balancing housing and farmland needs; utilising alternative ownership models and collectivity to combat isolation; and acquiring the resources, networks, mentoring and support to finance land access and farming, as well as finance and land security recommendations tailored to BPOC needs.

4.1 Barriers to land access and strategies around this

Multiple studies in the past few years have shown the barriers to BPOC farmers in accessing horticulture and farming. Major barriers for BPOC include isolation, inequity, a lack of paid opportunities, and a lack of affordable access to land. These have been identified in Jumping Fences, findings from the DEFRA's New Entrant Support Scheme, and our interviewees also cited these barriers.

Most of them highlighted the high cost of land as a significant block to access land, particularly for people who are not from a landed or farming background. One farmer, Fatima, wanted to own her own farm but 'started looking at land and was really quickly put off'. She did not want to move too far away from where she lived in London, but the prices of land plus all the other infrastructure she needed would necessitate this - or a move out of the country. Consequently, she decided not to look for land in the UK.

Richard, another one of our participants, employed a particular strategy to overcome the cost of land:

> *Sadly the elephant in the room is always money; it's inconceivable at the moment to buy my own land. The way I've approached it is to rent land or to try to seek grant funding [for land] with a larger organisation, using them as an umbrella organisation.*

Others, like Ian, noted that being racialised as Black or brown posed issues for getting into farming as well as accessing land, as has been cited in numerous previous reports highlighting the difficulties for new entrant BPOC farmers. He stated: 'I do know that people have problems accessing land - especially if you do not "look like a farmer"'.

For some farmers like Flora however, access to land was not an issue because of the established working relations she had with a successful and well-known farm based near London who has land-matched Flora's land needs to those of local authorities and or housing associations with land to use. She voiced she had not experienced land access barriers because of:

> *...the situation I'm in in terms of the connections. Sometimes the farm offers us land, but the barriers are that we don't have the capacity to take on the land offered. It would be amazing if we were able to.*

It seemed that in some cases, the right connections and networks allowed the BPOC farmers interviewed to overcome barriers to land access. In general, however, most participants interviewed faced significant barriers to accessing land, in part due to their experiences of racialisation. The emotional toll this takes means that it is challenging to build up work experience, a track record in farming and business planning, which makes it harder to get funding and land.

4.2 Balancing housing and farmland access needs

Planning permission for housing poses another concern for BPOC farmers - some of which named this an even more pressing issue than financing access to land. It was highlighted that ensuring there are homes on the land is crucial for BPOC who often face isolation in the countryside. As Sarah identified, this issue linked closely with the problem of racialised rural isolation and a desire for collective land "ownership" or stewardship.

> *Finance is one thing but housing is another, and more important. Being able to build/create homes on the land is crucial for BPOC who often face isolation in the countryside.*

Conversely, when there is a need for housing, our research showed that even farmers and community food organisers who did have access to land from landowners, may find themselves in precarious positions of land insecurity, and resonates with ideas presented in Section 2.3 and 3.3. Val stressed that:

> *They [landowners] could very well turn around and say 'We want our land back' - they could even have it on their agenda for the next 10 years that this plot of land is to be turned into housing, we would be none the wiser.*

From Val's concerns, there is a need to increase access to knowledge and education around planning when evaluating the suitability of land, in order to manage the risk of losing land. In response to this, participants spoke of different approaches to not feel isolated as a minoritised farmer or community food organiser, which included securing land as part of a wider group.

4.3 Combating isolation, and nurturing collectivity and alternative ownership models

A major theme that arose in our research was the desire to combat rural isolation through collective land ownership. As the Jumping Fences report outlined in 2023, experiences of racialised isolation in rural areas and land work are common for BPOC farmers. For some, as the report outlines, the solution has been to find work closer to cities and towns [p29].

Reflections on the LWA's racial justice work highlight how over the last 10 years it has helped to increase BPOC involvement in LWA spaces, facilitated by its partnerships with Black-led groups such as Land in Our Names who has also collaborated with them on its annual Land Skills Fair over three years. The LWA also funded and supported Growers Retreats specifically for BPOC. These all help to reduce a sense of isolation for BPOC landoworker members.

Linked to participants' feelings of isolation, this report has highlighted that a large barrier to land ownership in England is the idea of making a business venture alone. One participant said that they felt intimidated by the idea of taking on land as a solo enterprise in a rural area.

Numerous reasons for this are outlined in many of the interviews. For some, it is about combating the specificity of isolation that comes from living rurally and being racialised as Black or brown. Fatima, a Black woman growing food full time said:

> *[One] barrier is access to community. If I'm going to do something as big as start my own farm, I really need my support system around me because inevitably there will be really low lows... I would need to fall back on family and friends and not be hundreds of miles away.*

Many participants outlined how collectively buying land would ease this tension, especially with the reality of land acquisition often only being possible - or affordable - but further away from cities and towns where BPOC communities have already been established.

So rather than interpreting a lack of BPOC in farming being simplistically viewed as BPOC not being connected to nature and land, BPOC face barriers in urban areas to access farmland near where they live, as land is more expensive there. Notably, in her blog The race factor in access to green space, Beth Collier found that most BPOC in the UK live in urban areas i.e. more than 97% of the average of all BPOC in the country live in urban areas. As the Covid-19 pandemic highlighted, this higher ratio of BPOC in cities and urban areas is partly due to various socioeconomic reasons. These include the historic migration of communities to certain locations in the UK over generations, the proximity to employment in lower paid service sectors BPOC are more likely to be employed in, and the locations people could afford which we and equality advocacy groups like the Runnymede Trust argue, is due to structural racism.

To address these barriers, Sarah rhetorically asked if:

> *...land could be put into a trust with a central value. People can come on and off the land but everyone*

who lives there has a say in how it is run. Kind of like a local authority which shares out plots of land, but in a cooperative sense, or like commons. Similar to buying up a row of houses as a cooperative - people that started it can put the money in but once you're in, you own part of it.

And in an ideal world, Fatima, endorsed ideas beyond collective ownership for farming:

...ideally it would be a mini village where there are lots of land-based workers that produce resources that are necessary, food, dyes, herbal medicines, everything that we would need. And we work together, not necessarily on each other's projects but looking after the land for communal interest, rather than looking after the land to make a profit out of it. Making sure biodiversity is protected/waterways are protected, that kind of thing.

Such views resonate with ideas earlier mentioned about intentional communities in the US (see Section 3.3). They also provide another link to the context of BIPOC land ownership (or the lack of) in the US, as it is important to understand that the desire for long-term land occupation to hold space is rooted in community values or a 'community of practice', through sharing, teaching, learning and collaborating. With these, food growing forms part of spiritual, social and cultural practice as well as community wealth building. To be able to reach out to and see others succeeding is so important for motivation, and provides much needed networks of support, which are less developed in the UK.

This also leads onto another way to secure land in the long-term that the US has begun to address, but where the UK has not, is through land reparations.

4.4 A case for land reparations in the UK

As LION advocates, BPOC who experienced or are descended from colonial extractivism and exploitation, are eligible for reparations due to the impacts of these practices used during colonialism. They include: forced labour, resource extraction, migration, enslavement, and their legacy.

Val concisely sums up the links between the impacts of colonialism in the past, and its lasting legacy in the UK:

We're talking about wealth distribution, about wealth that has been stolen, and wealth that has been extracted and come back to this country that we all live in and that we're all benefitting from at the same time, but not in the same fashion.

When speaking about land ownership, Karen questioned the premise on which much of colonialism and extractivism was based, that is, systems of land ownership and use based on colonial models:

Land doesn't belong to anyone - this is alien to us [BPOC]. I don't believe anyone should own land. Reciprocity, not just working for profit, but skill sharing - this has to be brought into the conversation and support collective healing of the land for all living beings.

Val had ideas about who would provide reparations and what form this could take:

I think there definitely needs to be some sort of a grant system even from the Church of England or from central government that gives grants to people like myself to "own" land but through creating some sort of framework of ownership, so its not ownership in the way we know it now, but ownership in the sense of stewardship.

Notably, in March 2024 the Church of England announced its plans to increase the £100m it had previously allocated from its endowment to address its role in the legacy of slavery to £1bn. This will be achieved with the help of other organisations, and with the money being used globally to invest in Black-led businesses and provide grants. Even though this acknowledgement is a progressive step and not formally reparations, if other organisations (or countries) use this financial approach, the Brattle Report (2023) from the University of West Indies calculated that the UK owes £18.6tn in reparations for slavery in the Caribbean and the Americas alone, through detailing the impacts and legacies of slavery in financial terms[9].

Furthermore, current approaches by funders of reparations work in the UK are mostly being developed in a partial way, for example through solely giving money. Whereas a reparative approach would identify how specific communities have been affected differently by the legacies of colonialism, and what must be done to redress these legacies by recognising a more holistic reparations framework, such as one that can draw on the following from the US-based Movement for Black Lives:

- Efforts to leverage power, influence, and resources to ensure cessation and non-repetition
- Restitution and Repatriation
- Compensation
- Satisfaction
- Rehabilitation

With a different view, Ian was one participant who disagreed that colonialism was responsible for problems experienced by former colonies or BPOC today, for example, by recognising the existence of successful Black business leaders. Other participants, however, overwhelmingly disagreed and some stated that the concept of land ownership was difficult to reconcile with their own value systems.

This poses a radical insight into the needs and experiences of BPOC farmers in accessing land, as well as the framework of land ownership as a whole and how appropriate and comfortable - or uncomfortable - it is to BPOC who would like to access land with more decolonised frameworks. Arguably these views about land are also reflective of the existence of less developed BPOC landwork advocacy networks in the UK and BPOC in positions of power, calling for a reassessment of current models of land ownership where they are a legacy of colonialism. The concept of reparations was raised repeatedly around this.

While not facilitating any payments of financial reparations, based in England, the Good Ancestor Movement supports wealth redistribution methods, which are non-extractive, reparative and regenerative, promoting ecological resilience, economic justice, and social equity. Its aim is to use its clients' wealth, or wealth managed by others, to resource progressive initiatives, rather than those through which the holders of wealth solely accumulate more wealth through their existing wealth. There is scope here to explore ideas around resourcing BPOC-led farming initiatives by wealth holders, such as securing farmland to be cooperatively stewarded by BPOC.

Though ultimately, most participants highlighted the importance of "dismantling the whole ownership of land structure as we know it", including Flora, who highlighted the importance of shifting the narrative to one in which 'land is a relationship, not a commodity'.

5
Recommendations

The final section of this report summarises key recommendations to help support BPOC pathways to land finance, farming resources in general, and a reparative approach by funders. These are based on our conversations with farmers/community food organisers, Critical Friends to the project, and background research.

5.1 Mentoring and support

In tandem with the right connections and resources needed to secure land presented above is the topic of mentorship and support. Ensuring farming businesses are successful was named as not simply about accessing the land to make the business happen, as voiced by Flora:

- Necessity [a funder of social and environmental justice work] has also offered mentorship – so a more personal, involved relationship with funders is beneficial, otherwise it's money without love.
- Engagement and bespoke mentoring about collective and/or cooperative governance models of land/farm stewardship
- Engagement and bespoke mentoring for BPOC farmers/food organisers about running successful community share offers (community wealth building)

Through mentoring and support, participants highlighted that it would be crucial to:

- Speak to people who had been through the planning system
- Connect with a land matching service for tenants as well as for buying land
- Create projects to support landowners to work with BPOC farmers in viable ways (through tenancy agreements and beyond)
- Provide accessible and inclusive resource packs or manuals on the legalities of owning land
- Have adequately funded and facilitated BPOC farmer support forums, mentors, and group chats
- Establish a well-resourced and vibrant BPOC farmers' support and advocacy network to exist in the long-term
- Access research into the histories of land that was being sold or leased, to support farmers to understand the contexts they are situating themselves within when they move

5.2 Finance and land security recommendations tailored to BPOC needs and actions by funders and BPOC

In addition to BPOC farmers' suggestions about finance for land and farming in Section 2, in general, participants and ourselves highlight a broad range of requirements and needs regarding loans and finance. These include:

- Leases of at least 10 years with break clauses (devoid of penalties). Some participants preferred to do this instead of buying land, if it could be secure
- Patient finance, without the need to pay back any money within the first 2-3 years
- Financial education around receiving loans, especially because the prospect of being in debt, sometimes for the first time, did not feel comfortable for many participants
- Land organisations with a good understanding of business skills to share such as financial literacy and financial projections when a farmer takes on a piece of land
- Funders/lenders to recognise that making projections in a farm business plan become reality takes time, at least 4 years if working on uncultivated land
- The availability of grants or loans for those without inherited wealth or large savings, to initially cover a farm owner's income when moving site or setting up a new one
- Flexibility with land ownership or stewardship, including opportunities to leave or step out of the agreement if needed
- Grant funding, especially considering the history (and ongoing legacy) of colonialism, to raise the idea of land reparations

5.3 Land reparations

While this report has a limited engagement with with the complex issue of reparations linked to European colonialism, we include recommendations from which to explore this area much further:

- Grant funding, especially considering the history (and ongoing legacy) of colonialism, to raise the idea of land reparations
- Fully funded reparations education for farming funders and for some project participants through the development of a reparations framework, with BPOC people accessing what it means for them

6
Conclusion

Whilst this in-depth desk-based and qualitative research highlighted some heterogeneity in terms of BPOC experiences of land access, major themes were also identified across the board. Costs, racialisation and land insecurity came up as broad barriers to BPOC farmers, as well as rural isolation and racism. Several recommendations and options for alternative land ownership/stewardship were also raised, including collectivity, mentorship, and patient finance. The hope is that with this knowledge we can move forward to create relationships with lenders and funders who may be able to bridge some of the barriers, and respond to the needs of BPOC farmers, in order to begin instilling equity within land access.

Endnotes

1 Throughout we use the term 'White' (with a capital "W") apart from in quotes based on a view in an article by the US Center for the Study of Social Policy which included: 'To not name "White" as a race is, in fact, an anti- Black act which frames Whiteness as both neutral and the standard … Moreover, the detachment of "White" as a proper noun allows White people to sit out of conversations about race and removes accountability from White people's and White institutions' involvement in racism.' Utilising the term "White" in a different context, like this study, helps to reclaim the term from far-right groups and social constructs that uphold power structures, and to debunk the notion that "white" is the norm. Though we accept that not all groups working on equality issues agree with us.

2 The term "racialised" or "racial" capitalism argues racism and capitalism developed inside the feudal system of Europe with landowners and tenants, to create the "racial capitalism" of the modern era. It is based on genocide, brutality, enslavement, and imperialism of racialised groups. The earliest European workers were racialised subjects, such as Jews, Roma, Slavs, and the Irish, who suffered from enslavement, colonisation, and dispossession, with such abuses being used during European colonisation i the Majority World. Today we can see similar racialised capitalist patterns, such as the dispossession of Indigenous land in many parts of the Majority World for companies to access raw materials to be processed and turned into goods/services to accumulate profits. See this article for more detail about the term and the Professor, Cedric J. Robinson, who coined it.

3 This figure excludes seasonal workers.

4 Email communication from LEAP's Social Impact Manager, 5/6/24.

5 Cambridgeshire Council offers starter holdings for up to 10 years, with a break at 5 years operable by either party. For more experienced farmers, tenancies run for a minimum of 15 years.

6 These UK high street banks are included in BankTrack's Banking on Climate Chaos (2024) list of the top 60 that continued to invest US$billions in the fossil fuel industry between 2016-2023. In order of the largest amounts invested, they were: Barclays, HSBC, Santander, Natwest, and Lloyds Banking Group.

7 The Alliance is a multi-sector, multi-racial coalition building collective power to transform the US food and farm system.

8 According to the Philadelphia Housing Development Corporation, the Philadelphia Land Bank's mission is to reactivate vacant land. It has the legal authority to acquire vacant and tax-delinquent properties to repurpose them. The Land Bank develops land disposition policies that it and other City land-holding agencies follow.

9 The Voice outlines the report considers factors such as lost freedom and wages, mental suffering, and hardship during slavery, as well as intergenerational trauma, loss of cultural legacy, variations in life expectancy, unemployment, inequality in income following emancipation, and considers the wealth garnered through slavery and colonialism through colonising countries.