

# Understanding the journey from field to fork

Agricultural firm Syngenta helps Londoners learn more about where food comes from — and its value

We take it for granted that the supermarket shelves will always be well stocked with the foods we want when we want them. But there's actually no guarantee that everything that makes up a traditional Christmas dinner will be available or affordable.

Potatoes, sprouts, parsnips and carrots were all affected by a wet spring and dry summer. With some yields down by 30 per cent, prices could be higher and some vegetables may well be in short supply.

Has this made you think? Agriculture company Syngenta has been asking Londoners to do just that as part of its The Future of Food series held in major cities worldwide.

JB Gill — the JLS star-turned-TV-presenter and farmer — is passionate about food and farming and wants consumers to feel the same. "We value having a choice of foods, but we are not connected to that choice," he says.

So, as part of Syngenta's project, he accompanied a group of Evening Standard readers on a day trip to

Thrales End farm, just outside Harpenden, to find out more about how the foods we eat — including oats, wheat and barley — are produced. Although close to London, it was far removed from most of their daily lives.

Ian Pigott, whose family has worked the land for generations, showed the group that science could be the solution to sustainability, enabling farmers to produce more crops while protecting the planet.

To preserve the soil's moisture and nutrients, for example, Pigott no longer ploughs the fields, instead rotating crops using self-drive tractors with GPS, far right, to ensure pinpoint planting. He also uses crops that have been developed to withstand the weather, including shorter barley.

Tonnage per hectare has more than doubled since the Fifties as a result of innovations such as these.

But many of the consumers taking part in the Syngenta discussion were divided when it came to the use of technology in food production. With a third of all food produced globally going to waste, solutions to preserve fresh produce were seen as a positive.



*We all need to learn more about where our food comes from and how it was produced*



**Hands on:** JB Gill, left, JLS star-turned-farmer, encourages people to think about where our food comes from and how it is produced

Yet the use of GM crops was not. While consumers favoured organic foods as a way to preserve our environment, they were not prepared to pay the price in terms of food shortages or higher food bills.

However, those taking part in the debate universally agreed on two things: food production needs to be more sustainable, and most of us do not know enough about how our food gets from farm to fork. In order to take this important discussion forward,

Gill adds: "We all need to learn more about where our food comes from and how it was produced."

Join the debate at  
[syngenta.co.uk](http://syngenta.co.uk)

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