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New research shows fewer than a third of children can identify a courgette or a beetroot

- **However, school gardening is on the increase and growing fruit and veg at school could be the ticket to eating a more varied diet**
- 12 London schools lead the way by selling their school-grown produce at the Young Marketeers Harvest Market Day in London's iconic Borough Market on 2 October

The proportion of children growing their own fruit and vegetables at school has increased by 10% since 2018, according to new research of over 1,000 7-11 year olds commissioned by Borough Market¹. Almost half (49%) of children surveyed have tried growing fruit and veg at school, up from 39% in 2018. What's more, children have cited growing their own produce as the biggest influence on them trying a wider variety of fruit and vegetables.

Since 2011, [Borough Market](#) and [School Food Matters](#) have been running the Young Marketeers programme, designed to help school children in London understand where their food comes from and how to cook with it. Children who take part in the programme grow their own fruit and veg at school, before selling their produce to the public at London's iconic market.

The research found that while children are familiar with many types of fruit and veg, there are still some gaps to be filled. When asked to identify different fruit and vegetables, the most recognised were carrots and strawberries (with 95% of children surveyed correctly identifying them). Yet, the low-cost, easy-to-grow courgette and squash were among the least recognised, with just 31% and 36% (respectively) identifying them correctly. The most mysterious veg was the humble beetroot which just over 1 in 4 (28%) children surveyed could identify correctly.

Almost a third (30%) said that growing their own would encourage them to try more varieties of fruit and vegetables. This was above seeing their family eating more (23%), being offered more at school (20%), seeing their friends eating more (18%) or even their favourite music star (9%), suggesting a rising hunger from children to get their hands dirty and get growing.

Nearly one in five (17%) children say they never help with cooking, with 20% of this group stating the reason they don't is that they are not allowed to. However, there is a desire to get hands on, with more than half (54%) of respondents said they would like to learn how to cook and 44% would like to learn how to grow their own fruit and veg.

Jane Swift, CEO at Borough Market, said: "It's really encouraging to see the passion and curiosity from school children around growing food and understanding about where it comes from. Growing their own produce is a great way for children to connect with the food on their plate and our research suggests it could even be the ticket to helping them eat a more varied diet. The Young Marketeers programme is a leading example of how this can be done and we are proud to have been supporting School Food Matters to reach pupils across London for the last 13 years."

Stephanie Slater, Founder and Chief Executive at School Food Matters, said: "It's a shame that so many children leave school without understanding that food comes from the soil, not the supermarket. The Young Marketeers programme exists to help change this, by taking children through the entire food journey - from growing and nurturing to harvesting and selling their own produce.

"Each year, children tell us how much they love learning outdoors and deploying their entrepreneurial skills on Market Day. There's a wider benefit too. Children who grow their own fruit and vegetables are more likely to try them, develop positive eating habits, and become more aware of issues around health and nutrition. It's for these reasons that School Food Matters is

calling for the government to kickstart a food education revolution across the country, so that every child in every school can develop the skills they need to lead happy and healthy lives."

On Wednesday 2 October, from 11am - 1.30pm, children from 12 local primary schools will be setting up stalls in London's iconic Borough Market to sell fruit and vegetables that they have grown from seed at school, as part of the annual Harvest Market Day. All proceeds will be donated to [Plan Zheroes](#), a food redistribution charity that collects quality surplus food from businesses in London and redistributes it to charities supporting vulnerable people across the city.

To date, the partnership has seen more than 250 schools attend trader training. Some students have grown their own fruit and veg and sold it at the Market, while others have made soup from seasonal produce. Over the years, over £14,000 has been raised for charities from these sales.

To find out more about the Young Marketeers programme, watch the following video:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Qwq2M1pH1ig>

For more information on the Harvest Market Day, visit: schoolfoodmatters.org/what-we-do/projects/food-education/young-marketeers

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Notes to Editors

1. The research was carried out by Censuswide, who surveyed 1,015 children aged 7-11 years old across the UK between 17-21 June 2024. The 2018 research was also conducted by Censuswide, and surveyed 1,002 school children aged 7-11 between 3-11 September 2018. Censuswide abides by and employs members of the Market Research Society and follows the MRS code of conduct and ESOMAR principles. Censuswide is also a member of the British Polling Council.
2. The schools taking part in the Harvest Market Day are: South Norwood (Croydon), Crampton Primary (Southwark), Henry Maynard (Waltham Forest), Cyril Jackson (Tower Hamlets), Tower Bridge Primary (Southwark), St Francis Primary (Southwark), St Stephen's Catholic Primary (Bexley), Trafalgar Infant School (Richmond), Snowfields Primary (Southwark), Langley Park Primary (Bromley), Rushey Green Primary (Lewisham), Yerbury Primary (Islington).
3. The Market Day will take place between 11am-1.30pm at Borough Market, 8 Southwark St, London SE1 1TL on Wednesday 2 October
4. Spokespeople will be available for interview, including Jane Swift, CEO of Borough Market, Stephanie Slater (Founder/Chief Executive, School Food Matters), traders involved in the programme, and students/teachers involved in the project.
5. Professional photography from the event will also be available.

About Borough Market

Borough Market is a source of quality British and international produce, but it is more than just a place to buy or sell food. It's a place where people come to connect, to share food and awaken their senses. Borough has long been synonymous with food markets and as far back as 1014, and probably much earlier, London Bridge attracted traders selling grain, fish, vegetables and livestock. In the 13th century traders were relocated to what is now Borough High Street and a market has existed there ever since. Many of the traders also now sell their produce online,

meaning those unable to visit can still access a selection of the Market's exceptional range of artisanal produce. Details can be found through the Borough Market [online directory](#).

In addition to the traders selling fresh produce from their stalls, Borough Market also houses a selection of restaurants and bars. Diners can enjoy Agora, Applebee's Fish, Arabica Bar & Kitchen, Bao Borough, Berenjak Borough, Camille, Elliot's, Fish! Restaurant, Kolae, Mallow, Maria's Market Café, OMA, Padella, Rambutan, Roast Restaurant, Silka, Tapas Brindisa, and Wright Brothers Oyster and Porter House, while those looking for something to drink can head to Bedales of Borough, The Cider House, The Globe Tavern and The Rake.

Borough Market's mission is to continue to provide a world class food market at Borough for the community of London and beyond. It is owned by a charitable trust and run by a board of volunteer trustees. The trust is committed to supporting the local community around Borough Market. We regularly run community events and we support local community projects and schemes.

@boroughmarket

<http://boroughmarket.org.uk/>

About School Food Matters

School Food Matters exists to teach children about food and to improve access to healthy, sustainable food during their time at school.

We provide fully funded food education programmes to schools. Our experience delivering these programmes informs and strengthens our campaigns, bringing the voices of children, parents and teachers to government policy.

@sfmweet

www.schoolfoodmatters.org

About Plan Zheroes

Plan Zheroes believes in a world where no good food goes to waste and no one goes hungry. We provide innovative solutions for businesses to redistribute their good quality surplus food to charities and community groups instead of letting it go to waste. This includes our online platform for surplus food donations at planzheroes.org as well as volunteer led surplus food collections at several London food markets.

Through our services organisations that are supporting homeless people, the elderly, low income families and other vulnerable groups have free access to healthy nutritious food for their beneficiaries. Our work results in both positive social and environmental outcomes by providing free food for people in need and at the same time reducing food waste and its negative impact on the environment.

planzheroes.org

@planzheroes