Feasibility Study
March 2025

Feasibility Study:

Assessing the Lack of Organic Butcheries in Dumfries and Galloway

Contents

Executive Summary

Dumfries and Galloway is home to some of Scotland's finest meat producers, yet access to locally reared, high-welfare meat remains a challenge for both consumers and businesses. Despite strong consumer demand for ethically produced, organic, and local meat, the region faces systemic barriers that limit availability, affordability, and convenience. This study explores these challenges and identifies solutions to strengthen local supply chains, better support small-scale producers, and align with the Scottish Government's Good Food Nation Plan.

Research and Key Findings

Our research engaged over 120 local consumers and businesses examining existing infrastructure, shopping habits, and producer experiences. We found that:

- Customers prioritise ethics and locality but often resort to supermarkets due to convenience and cost.
- There is a significant gap in local processing infrastructure, causing meat to leave the region instead of supplying local businesses and consumers.
- Organic and high-welfare meat is in demand but lacks the necessary facilities to scale up production and distribution.
- Local butchers are valued for quality and service, but barriers such as price and accessibility limit their regular use.
- Producers face logistical and financial challenges, including lack of time, storage, and access to certified processing facilities, preventing many from selling locally.

Recommendations

To address these challenges and unlock the full potential of the region's food system, we propose the following actions:

1. **Develop a bespoke processing facility** tailored to small-scale producers,

with extended meat hanging storage, sustainable packaging, and bespoke labelling services.

2. **Ensure organic certification and wider regenerative agriculture support** to meet market demand while remaining financially viable for all producers.
3. **Enable value-added production** by incorporating facilities for creating pre-made meals and specialised product ranges.
4. **Invest in skills and training** by providing apprenticeship opportunities for craft butchers and securing future expertise.
5. **Enhance sales and marketing support**, including a retail outlet and digital platform to showcase and promote local meat.
6. **Improve logistics** with a shared chilled van service, making it easier for producers to transport and distribute their meat locally.

Conclusion

By investing in local food infrastructure and supporting small-scale meat producers, Dumfries and Galloway has the opportunity to build a resilient, sustainable, and thriving food system. These recommendations will not only meet consumer demand but also align with national food policy goals, creating a model for other regions to follow. With the right support, we can reconnect communities with the land, ensure fairer returns for farmers, and provide greater access to high-quality, locally sourced meat for all.

Background

Dumfries and Galloway boasts a rich agricultural heritage, with numerous heritage breeds hailing from the area that are world renown for their quality and taste.

The south of Scotland has over 6500 registered agricultural holdings which manage 79% of land in the region. Agricultural outputs account for 9% GVA which is over double the national average in Scotland. Indicating what a valuable and productive region it is. With approximately 2,262 agricultural holdings managing over 267,501 hectares of land in Dumfries and Galloway it's evident that farming is a cornerstone of the local economy.

In alignment with this agricultural prominence, the Scottish Government has set an ambitious goal: to double the area of land under organic management across Scotland by 2026. This initiative is part of a broader commitment to promote sustainable and regenerative farming practices, positioning Scotland as a leader in environmentally conscious food production.

Recent reports from the Soil Association indicate a surge in applications from Scottish farmers for support for organic conversion in 2024, suggesting that farmers are responding positively to the available grants and assistance.

The Soil Association's Organic Market Report 2025 highlights a growing consumer demand for organic meat products, presenting a significant opportunity for Dumfries and Galloway to capitalise on this trend.

A significant challenge facing the region's organic meat producers is the scarcity of local processing facilities. Currently, there is a lack of certified organic abattoirs within Dumfries and Galloway, compelling farmers to transport their livestock over long distances to maintain organic certification. This not only adds stress to the animals but also increases costs and carbon emissions. While there is one small-scale abattoir certified as organic in the region, its capacity is limited, and the absence of an organic butchery facility means that producers are often left with a difficult choice between loosing organic certification on their produce or processing outside the area.

This feasibility study aims to explore what the barriers may be hindering the development of organic processing facilities within Dumfries and Galloway. By identifying these challenges and proposing viable solutions, we aspire to foster a local infrastructure that supports the production and processing of organic meat. Such advancements would not only bolster the rural economy but also align the region with the Scottish Government's 'Good Food Nation Plan,' particularly its emphasis on sustainable agriculture and organic farming initiatives.

Aims & Objectives

- Assess the potential for establishing a small-scale organic butchery facility in Dumfries and Galloway.
- Evaluate interest and demand for such a facility among both producers and consumers.
- Explore the business case, including market viability and operational justification.
- Analyse the financial feasibility of a locally based organic butchery.
- Support the growth of organic meat production within Dumfries and Galloway.

Our process

During this study, we engaged with over 100 stakeholders across Dumfries and Galloway to gain a deeper understanding of the region's food landscape.

- **Independent Butcheries:** We identified and reached out to independent butcheries currently operating in Dumfries and Galloway, inviting them to complete a survey about their business.
- **Meat Producers:** We held open discussions with local meat producers to learn about their experiences, challenges, and ambitions in farming and selling meat within the region.
- **Farmers:** We distributed a short questionnaire to local farmers, gathering insights into their experiences producing food in Dumfries and Galloway.
- **Customers:** We spoke with a diverse range of consumers shopping through various outlets in the region (supermarkets, highstreet, farm shop, online) to better understand their needs and preferences.
- **Routes to Market:** We explored different pathways for bringing organic meat to market, studying successful organic butchery businesses to identify key factors that set them apart.

This engagement was conducted throughout March 2025

Key findings

Throughout our studies there have been several strong emerging themes across each of the groups we engaged with.

Indepentdant butcheries in Dumfries & Galloway

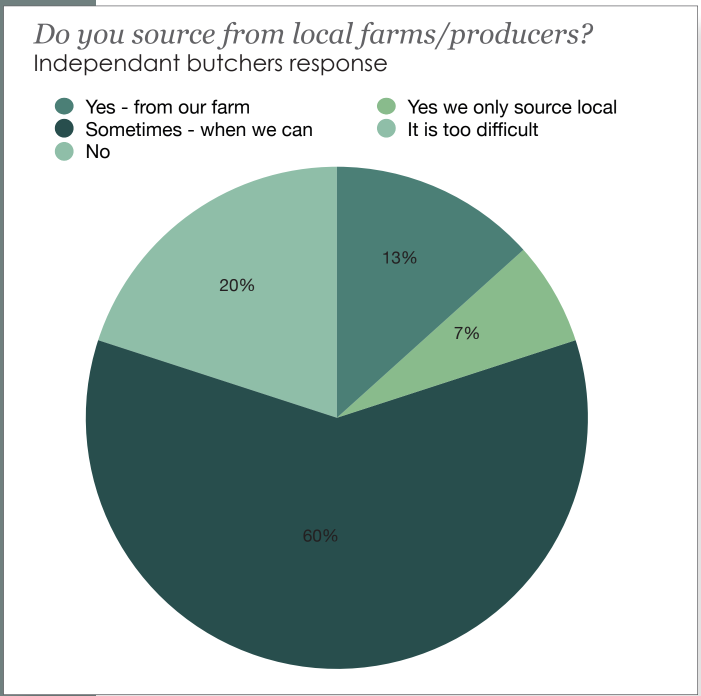
Dumfries and Galloway is home to over twenty independent butchers, with fifteen participating in our research.

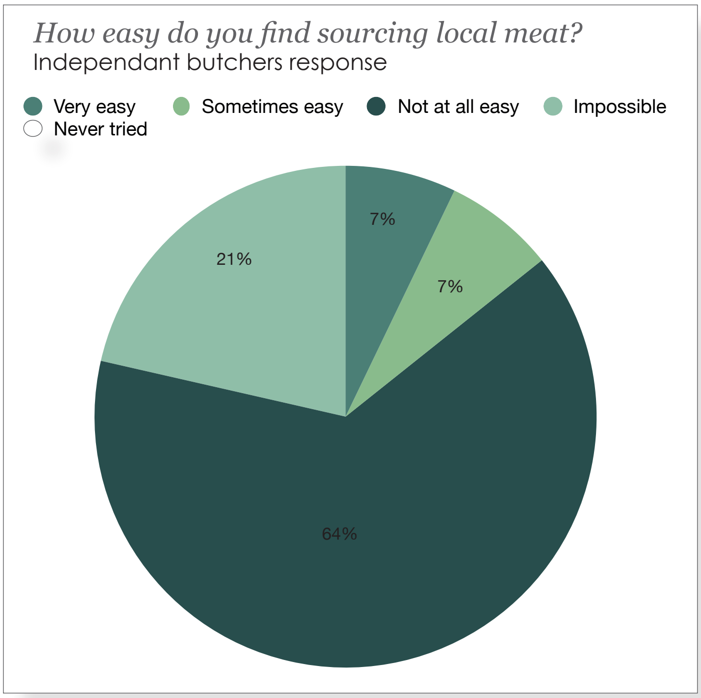
Customer Priorities
We asked butchers, "What do you feel is your customers' main reason for shopping with you?" and had them rank the following factors in order of priority:

1. **Good quality meat** (#2.17 average)
2. **Personal service** (#2.5 average)
3. **Great tasting products** (#3.5 average)
4. **Local produce** (#5 average)
5. **Choice of produce** (#6 average)
6. **Unique specials** (products unavailable elsewhere) (#6.33 average)
7. **Seasonal produce** (#6.5 average)
8. **Affordability** (#7.33 average)
9. **Range of produce** (#8.33 average)
10. **Consistent supply** (#9.33 average)
11. **Other** (please specify)

The top two factors - quality meat and personal service - were overwhelmingly the most valued.

All butchers expressed a strong desire to stock more local produce, but many noted that supply consistency remains a major challenge.

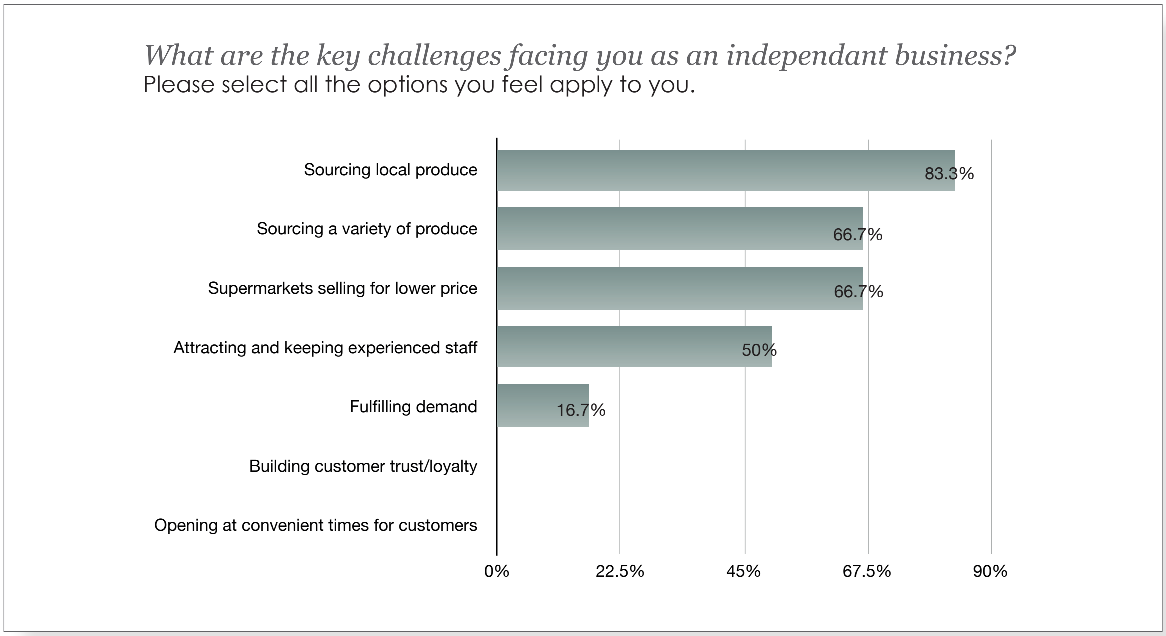




General Challenges Facing Independent Butchers

We asked independent butchers (not just those offering private services) about their biggest challenges, and several key themes emerged:

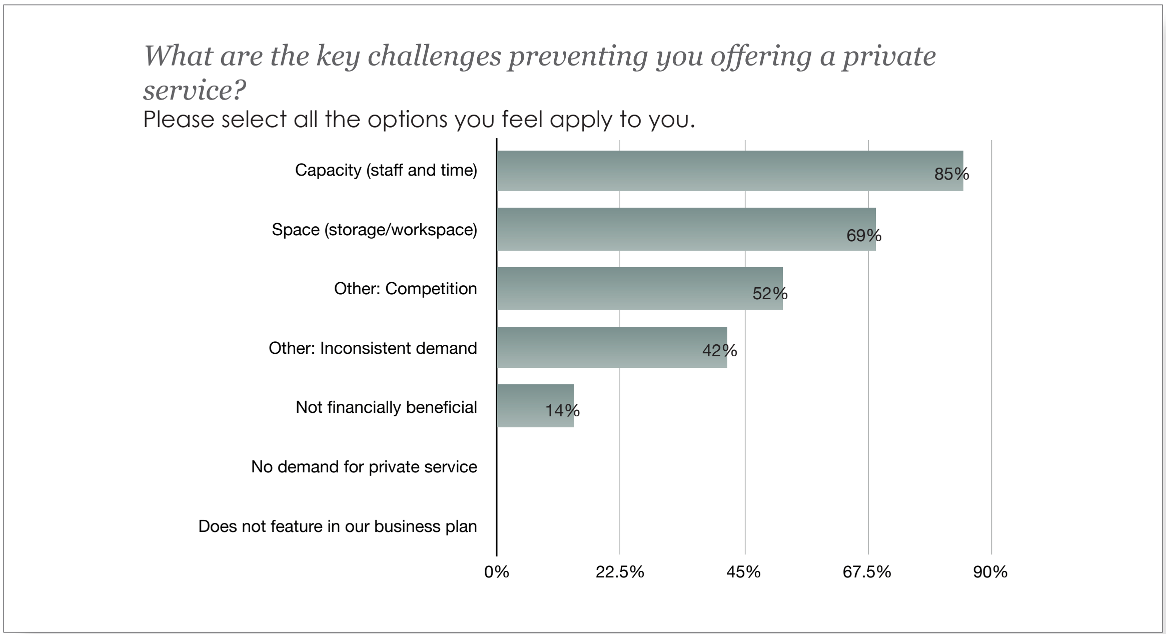
- **Sourcing Local Produce** – Every butcher expressed difficulty in sourcing a consistent and diverse range of local meat. While all would prefer to work with regional producers, many found it almost impossible unless they were directly linked to their own farm.
- **Supermarket Competition** – Supermarkets undercutting prices was a major concern, forcing independent butchers to constantly market and promote their own produce to compete.
- **Staffing Issues** – 50% of butchers reported struggles in finding qualified staff, and many lacked the capacity to properly train and mentor young apprentices to the necessary skill level.



Private Butchery Services

Out of the butchers surveyed, four offer butchery and packing services for private meat producers (farmers).

- None of these facilities are currently certified organic.
- Two butchers would consider organic certification if there was sufficient demand and support for managing the additional administrative burden.
- Two felt that their existing accreditation (e.g., QMS Scotch Butchers Club) was stringent enough to satisfy customer expectations.



Challenges for Private Butchery Services

Several barriers prevent more butchers from offering private butchery services:

- **Staffing Constraints** – Most butchers are already operating at full capacity. Hiring additional staff would require significant financial investment, which is difficult given rising costs, including National Insurance and general operational expenses. Finding and training skilled staff is also a challenge.
- **Storage & Workspace Limitations** – Private butchery requires dedicated space for hanging, butchering, and storing meat, which is often unavailable in already limited workspaces.
- **Competition Concerns** – Some butchers are hesitant to process meat for private producers, as these businesses could become direct competitors.
- **Inconsistent Demand** – The demand for private butchery services is sporadic, making it difficult to justify investment in additional capacity.
- **Lower Financial Returns** – Private jobs are often more time-consuming and provide lower financial rewards compared to supplying their own retail customers.

Organic Butchery in Dumfries and Galloway
The region has one dedicated organic farm shop with an in-house butchery. However, this facility does not have the capacity to take on external work. The shop frequently struggles to keep up with demand for its own products, highlighting the strong market for local, ethical, and sustainably sourced food.

Summary

Our research reveals several key takeaways:

- **Customers prioritise high-quality meat and personal service** when shopping with independent butchers.
- **Butchers want to stock more local produce** but struggle with supply consistency.
- **Supermarket competition*, staffing shortages, and marketing demands*** pose significant challenges to the sector.
- **Only four butchers offer private butchery services,** and none are certified organic.
- **The region lacks a dedicated organic butchery facility**, and demand far exceeds supply.

Despite these challenges, there is clear potential for a small-scale organic butchery in Dumfries and Galloway, provided that supply chain issues, staffing concerns, and financial feasibility are addressed. By tackling these barriers, the region could strengthen its local food economy and enhance access to high-quality, ethically produced meat.

Key findings

Customer experiences

We engaged with over 40 customers who were shopping at different location (supermarket, highstreet, farm shop, online) who live and shop for food in Dumfries and Galloway, asking them about their key considerations when purchasing meat. Customers were asked to rank the following factors in order of priority:

1. **Ethics** – Knowing the animal was raised in a high-welfare environment
2. **Convenience** – Being able to shop at a time that suits them
3. **Locality** – Eating food produced within their region
4. **Value** – Getting the largest volume for the lowest price
5. **Availability** – Being able to buy what they want when they want it

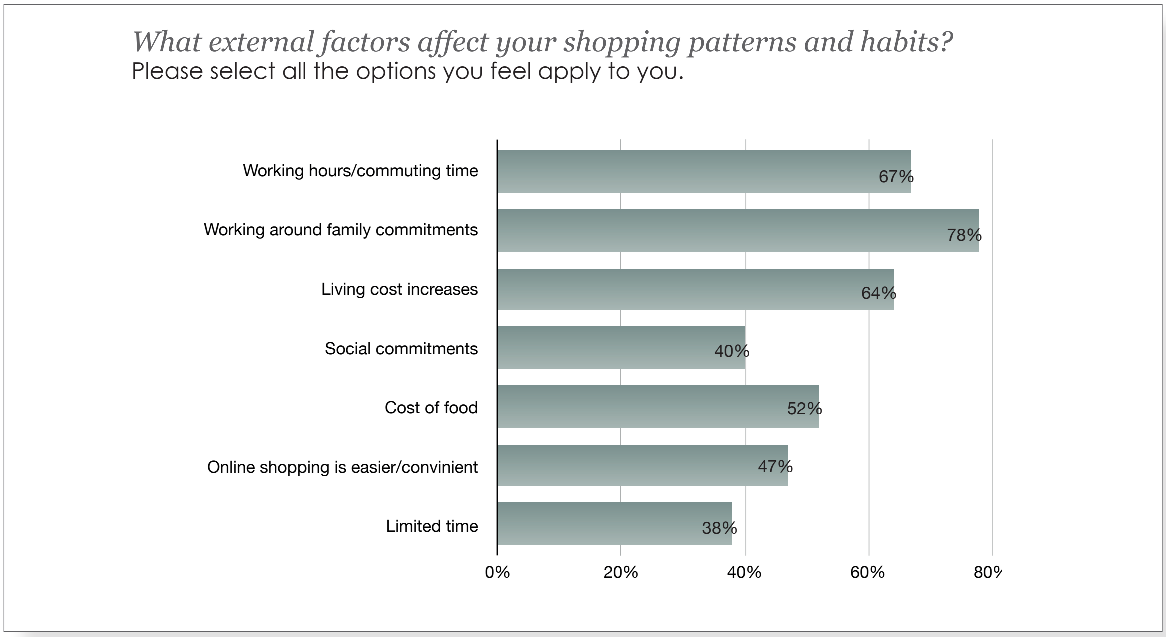
Ethics and convenience ranked highest, with many customers emphasising the importance of animal welfare while also acknowledging that busy lifestyles meant food shopping had to fit around work and family commitments. Locality was the third-highest priority, with many expressing a desire to buy local meat but stating that options were limited - if more were available, they would make an effort to purchase them.

Customers value the story behind local meat
Customers consistently expressed that they place a higher value on meat when they understand the story behind it. When given the opportunity to meet the farmer, visit the farm, and see where and how the animals were raised, they felt a stronger emotional connection to the food they were buying. Many stated that transparency around farming practices reassured them about animal welfare and environmental impact, making them more willing to pay a premium.

Farmers' markets, farm visits, and open days play a crucial role in this education process. Customers who had attended such events were more likely to buy directly from farmers and reported higher trust in local producers. Additionally, online storytelling - through social media, websites, and newsletters - was cited as a key influence in purchasing decisions, helping customers feel more engaged with the origins of their food.

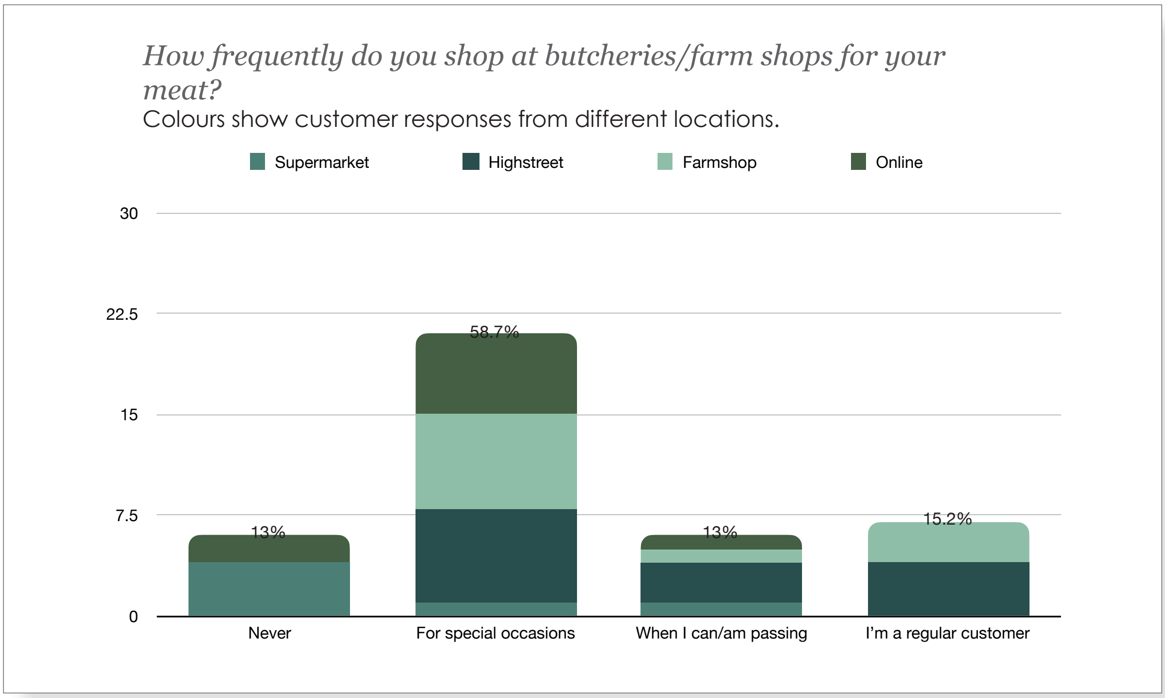
Challenges Faced by Shoppers

Rising living costs, long work commutes, busy family schedules, and social commitments all impact shopping habits. Many customers noted that budgets are tighter, and compromises must be made at the point of purchase. Time for food shopping is limited, and many prefer online services or home delivery options to fit their schedules. The rising cost of food means that tough decisions are being made between price and quality.



Shopping at Local Butchers

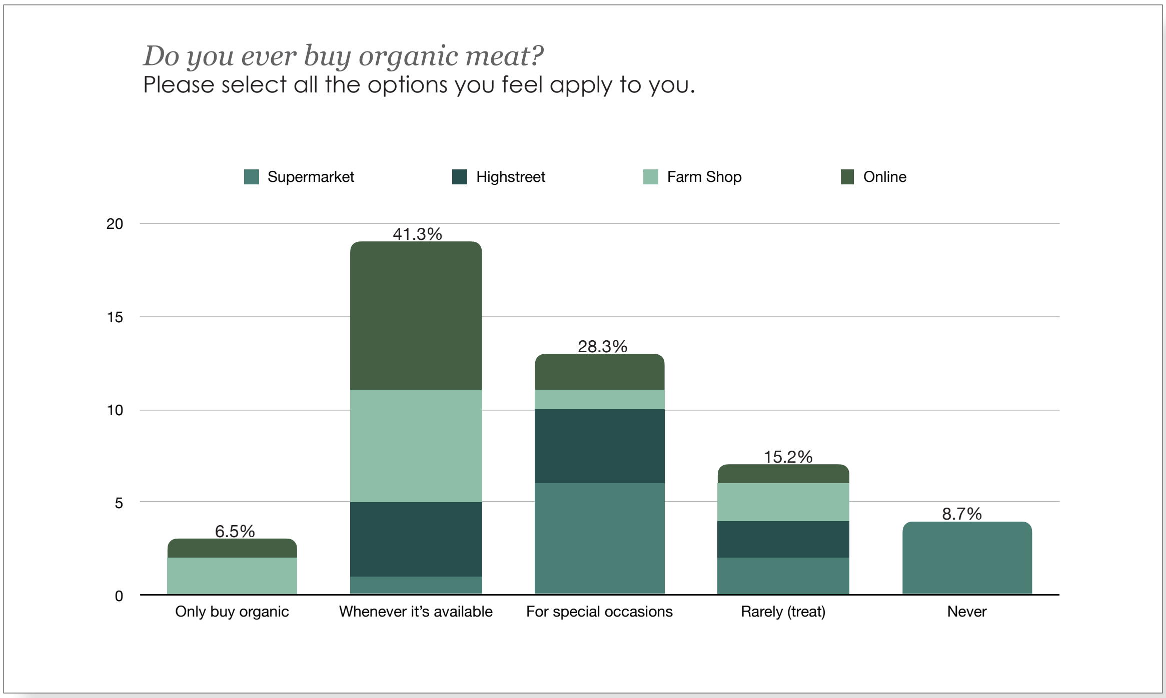
Only 15% of customers regularly shop at local butchers/ farm shops. The main barriers include convenience - having to make a separate trip for meat instead of including it in a weekly supermarket shop. Some customers felt unsure about how to shop at a butcher or what to ask for, and others found that butcher shop prices were often higher than supermarket alternatives. Despite this, 58% of customers say they visit a butcher for special occasions such as Christmas, as they perceive the meat to be of better quality. Butchers were also highly regarded for their personal service and ability to provide advice on cuts of meat and cooking.

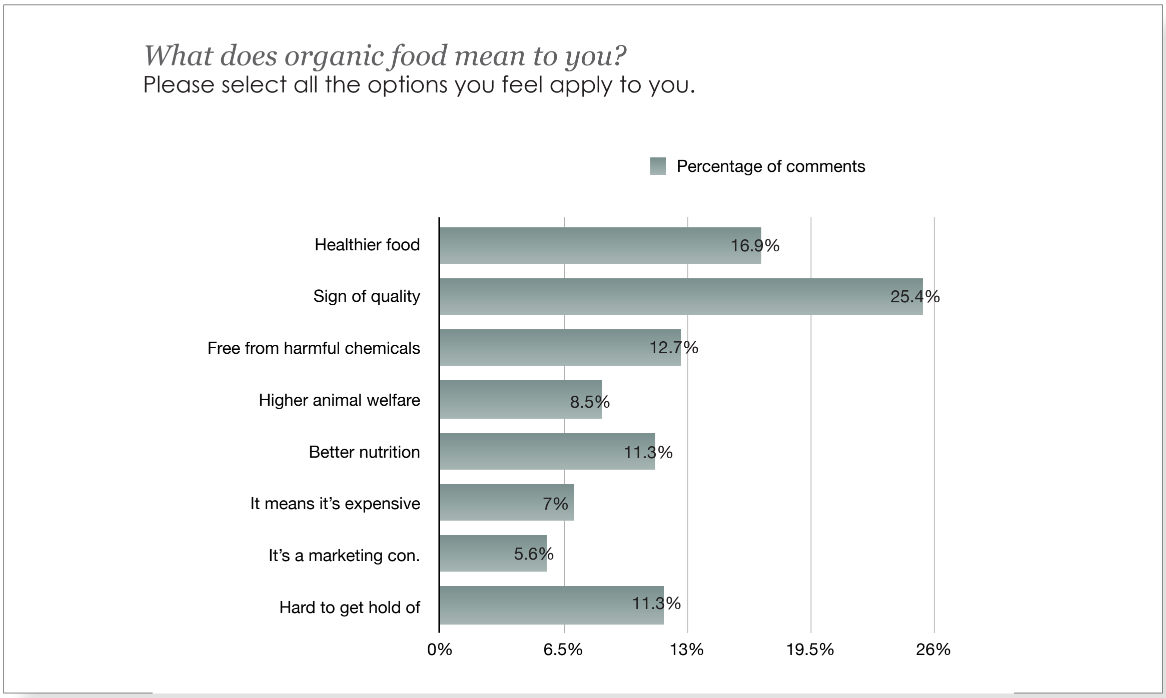


Customer Views on Organic Produce

Most customers agreed that the organic label is a trusted sign of quality. The general perception is that organic food is healthier, uses fewer harmful chemicals, has better animal welfare standards, and is more nutritious. However, concerns over price and availability limit how often customers choose organic meat.

6% of customers felt organic certification was just a marketing tool for retailers to charge more. Most customers who bought organic when it was available said they compromise on meat quantity to afford higher quality - meaning they eat less but buy better.





Local Food Shopping Options
If customers want to buy locally sourced food, they have a few options within Dumfries and Galloway.
There are 13 farmers' markets across Dumfries and Galloway,11 are monthly and 10 do not operate in winter, making them unreliable for regular shopping.

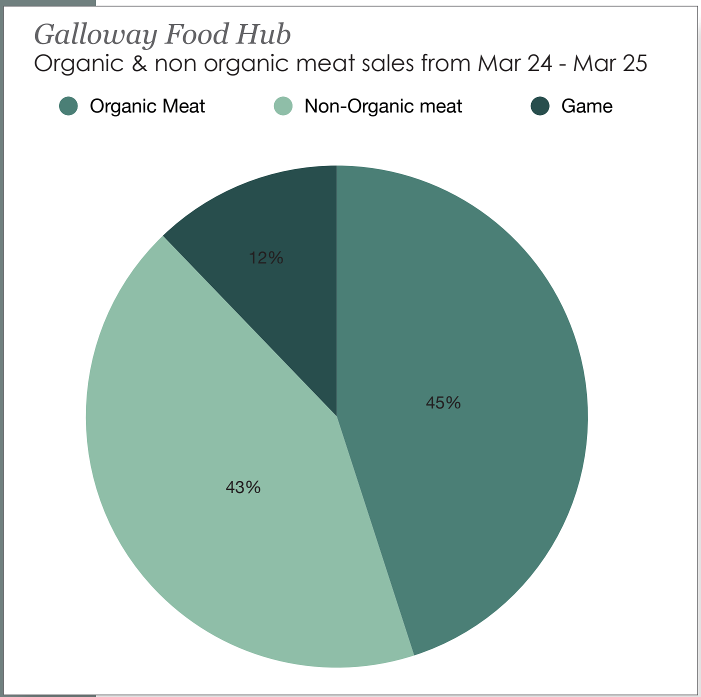
There are three farm shops in the region, with one being seasonal and one organic. All are linked to cafés, and a range of crafts gifts and store cuboard food stuffs making them destinations as well as retail outlets.

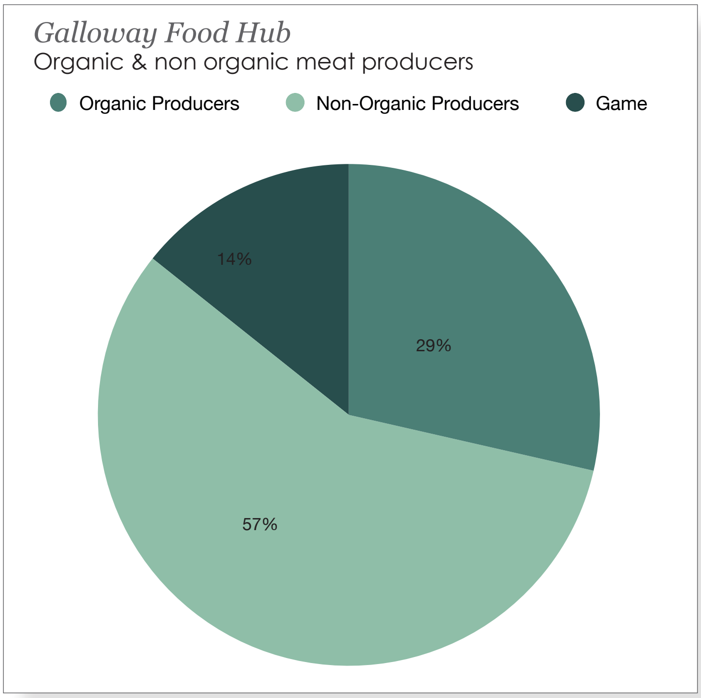
Some local farmers sell directly to consumers, either independently or through the Galloway Food Hub.

The Galloway Food Hub
The Galloway Food Hub is a not-for-profit organisation connecting local producers with local consumers. It offers sustainably produced food delivered to collection points across the region, to participate local producers must be able to prove they are working sustainably, and producing food within Dumfries and Galloway.

Organic meat sales over the last 12 months show that organic meat outperforms non-organic, accounting for 45% of overall meat sales, despite fewer organic producers *(and organic producers losing certification during butchery - more on this in the next section)*. Exhibiting a clear demand for organic produce from customers who value local and sustainable food.

The hub operates fortnightly, meaning customers must plan and order in advance, which requires some organisation. Demand regularly exceeds supply, even though prices are often higher than the market average.





Key Challenges
Customers prioritise animal welfare and locally produced meat, but availability and price remain significant obstacles. Many are willing to pay more for better quality, yet local options are often inconsistent or sell out quickly.

Those who can afford and find local meat options struggle with supply issues, while others rely on supermarkets for convenience and affordability. There is clear consumer demand for better access to local, high-quality meat, but logistical barriers continue to impact purchasing decisions.

Summary

Our research highlights a strong consumer interest in high-quality, ethically sourced, and local meat. However, key challenges remain.

- **Convenience is crucial** - many shoppers prioritise ease of access over locality, making supermarkets the default choice.
- **Price and availability impact decisions** - while customers value ethics and quality, they often compromise based on budget and what is available at the time.
- **Local butchers are not a regular shopping destination** - most people visit them only for special occasions, citing convenience and cost as barriers.
  Organic meat has strong demand - sales figures from the Galloway Food Hub show organic meat sells better than non-organic options, despite limited supply and higher prices.
- **Local supply chains need improvement** - farmers' markets and farm shops attract engaged customers but lack regularity and scalability for consistent shopping experiences for cutomers and support for local producers.

This data suggests an opportunity for improved access to local, organic, and high-welfare meat - particularly through better supply chain coordination and alternative shopping models such as expanded food hubs, subscription services, or online platforms would allow the community better access to the local food it desires.

Key findings

Local farmer producers

We held open discussions with six local farmers in Dumfries and Galloway who currently sell their meat directly to customers. Our aim was to understand their core values, key challenges, and whether they believe an organic facility in the region would benefit their businesses.

Producing Local Food
Producing and selling meat locally is a complex and time-consuming process. Farmers must handle everything from livestock movement forms, transport, abattoir selection, and liaising with butchers, to packaging, labelling, storage, and marketing. All producers agreed that this process can feel overwhelming, and a dedicated facility designed to support small-scale producers would relieve much of this pressure.

Around 60% of the total production cost of meat is incurred as soon as the animal leaves the farm *(based on figures provided by two producers)*. Transport, slaughter, butchery, packaging, and storage all add significant expense, and while customers are willing to pay more for locally produced meat, there is a limit to how much they can afford. Price sensitivity remains a major concern.

Challenges in Processing Meat
Farmers shared their frustrations about processing meat locally, highlighting these key challenges:

1. **Limited availability** – Long wait times for facilities, particularly around busy periods like Christmas, disrupt production.
2. **Inadequate carcass hanging times** – Many butchers do not hang carcasses long enough for proper curing, which is especially important for rare and traditional breeds to improve quality and taste.
3. **Inconsistent butchering quality** – When selling at a premium price, precision and consistency are essential.
4. **Packaging limitations** – Many farmers want to explore eco-friendly packaging but are restricted by butchers' capabilities.
5. **Inconsistent portioning** – Weight and pack sizes vary, making pricing difficult and causing frustration for customers.
6. **Branding restrictions** – Farmers often cannot add their own branding or

labelling, reducing their ability to market their produce effectively.

7. **Specialist processing** – Many want to produce nitrate-free, gluten-free, or additive-free products but struggle to find butchers willing or able to accommodate this without significant effort from producers.
8. **Value-added products** – There is a demand for turning lower-value cuts into pies or ready meals, but producers lack time and facilities to do this themselves.
9. **Delivery costs** – The expense of delivering directly to customers adds to the financial strain.

Two producers have managed to create "free-from" products by sourcing and mixing seasonings themselves, adding extra workload. One farmer has even built an onsite facility to bake food, which has been successful but is becoming increasingly difficult to manage alongside farming responsibilities.

Constant Compromise
Four out of six producers transport their animals outside Dumfries and Galloway for slaughter, as they have built trust with specific butchers who can guarantee quality. However, this means longer journeys, higher costs, and additional stress on the animals - something they are deeply unhappy about.

> *"We're constantly having to find workarounds and make compromises just to sell our own produce. It's really tough, and it feels like it's always the animals who suffer."*

Organic Producers
Two of the six farmers are certified organic, but due to a lack of organic butchery facilities, they cannot sell their final product as organic. The organic status is lost at the point of butchery, despite the animals being raised to certified standards and slaughtered organically. While these farmers can explain the situation to customers, they feel frustrated and let down by the local food infrastructure.

"We put all the hard work in, and we either compromise on animal welfare by sending animals on long journeys to slaughter - which goes against everything our accreditation stands for - or we lose our certification. It's the ultimate sign of a broken food system."

The other four farmers work to organic or regenerative standards but do not pursue certification because there is no financial benefit without organic facilities to provide an certified end product. They also feel that the costs and administration involved are too high for small-scale, seasonal producers.

For those who are certified, organic is more than just a label - it is a commitment to environmental sustainability, animal welfare, and producing healthier food. Their customers share these values, with many prioritising transparency and traceability in their food choices.

> *"We produce the food we want to feed our families - healthy, delicious, and something to be proud of."*

Routes to Market
Local producers use four main sales channels:

1. **Farmers' markets** – Expensive, time-consuming, and require weekend commitments, limiting family time.
2. **Online sales with collection or home delivery** – Most profitable but requires constant marketing and customer engagement.
3. **The Galloway Food Hub** – A non-profit selling local produce from small producers with a small sales commission; operates fortnightly and takes care of marketing and customer liason.
4. **Local shops** – Requires consistent supply, wholesale pricing lowers profit margins.

All producers expressed deep appreciation for the services provided by the Galloway Food Hub. It remains the only platform that upholds their ethical standards while reducing their workload. There is a fee involved, but it is based on a portion of sales and is lower than many wholesaler cost or fees for similar services. Beyond its practical benefits, the Hub fosters a sense of community, allowing producers to connect, share solutions, and build valuable networks - making it an indispensable resource for the local food industry.

Key Challenges
Farmers put enormous trust in butchers, as poor handling or substandard butchery can ruin months or even years of hard work in raising animals to a high standard. Every farmer we spoke to has had a bad experience at some point, with costly mistakes that impact both their business and morale.

"Good meat takes time and effort to produce - it's not something that can be quickly replaced."

Building customer trust is crucial, as repeat buyers sustain local businesses. However, inconsistent butchery, pricing challenges, and lack of branding opportunities make this difficult.

Time is also a major constraint. Farming is a full-time job, and processing and selling meat is another full-time job in itself. Balancing both is a constant struggle, and many farmers believe a dedicated facility could help lighten the workload.

Finally, producers highlighted concerns over the butchery workforce. With butchers retiring or moving on, finding skilled professionals is becoming increasingly difficult, leading to constant changes in service quality and availability.

Summary

Local farmers and producers in Dumfries and Galloway are passionate about producing high-quality meat for their communities but **face significant challenges in processing and selling** their products. The lack of a dedicated local butchery facility creates logistical and financial difficulties, forcing many to send animals out of the region for slaughter, increasing costs and reducing animal welfare.

There is a strong demand for a local butchery service that caters to small-scale producers, offers organic certification, and provides high-quality, consistent processing. **Many farmers are eager to explore new opportunities**, such as value-added products and eco-friendly packaging, but are limited by the capabilities of existing butchers.

Farmers who work to organic or regenerative standards feel let down by the lack of infrastructure, with certified organic producers unable to maintain their accreditation through the butchery process.

A dedicated facility could address these issues, providing much-needed support, reducing compromises, and helping farmers build stronger, more sustainable local food systems.

Key findings

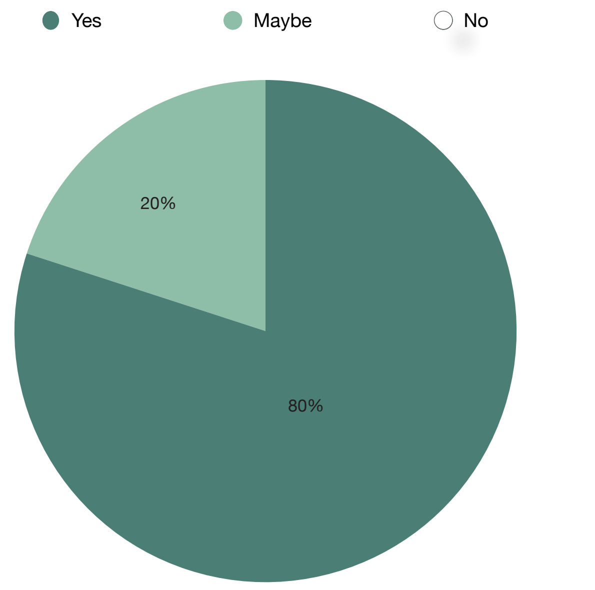
The wider farming community

We received responses from over 25 farmers actively farming in Dumfries and Galloway who do not currently sell meat themselves, instead opting for commercial routes such as livestock markets or selling animals to other farms for finishing.

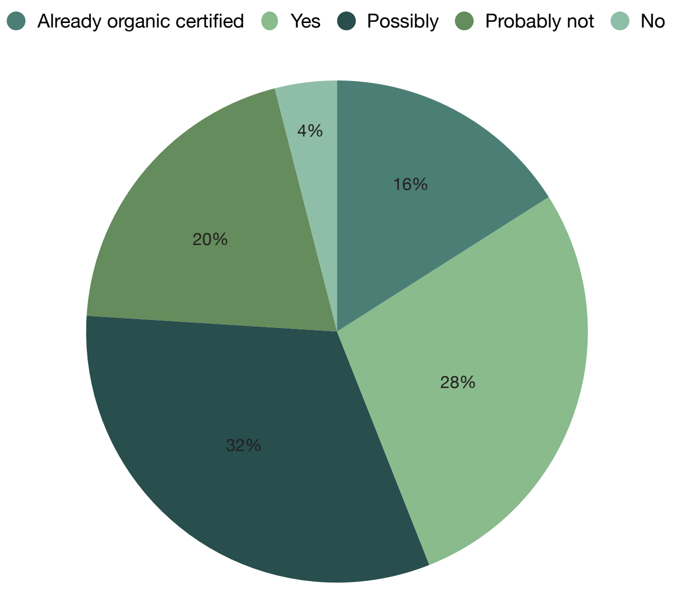
All but one farmer reported that they eat their own meat produced on-farm, with some stating they would like to do so more often but prioritise sales over personal consumption.

80% of farmers indicated they would use a local butchery service if it catered to their needs, with most saying they would consider expanding into direct meat sales if they were satisfied with the service. Not a single farmer expressed doubt about the value of this investment.

Would you consider using a local butchery facility, if it catered specifically to your needs?



Would you consider organic certification if there was a local facility to accomodate production?



A facility capable of handling organic-certified meat would encourage more producers to explore organic certification in the future. However, many farmers expressed concerns about the additional administration and potential business restrictions associated with certification schemes.

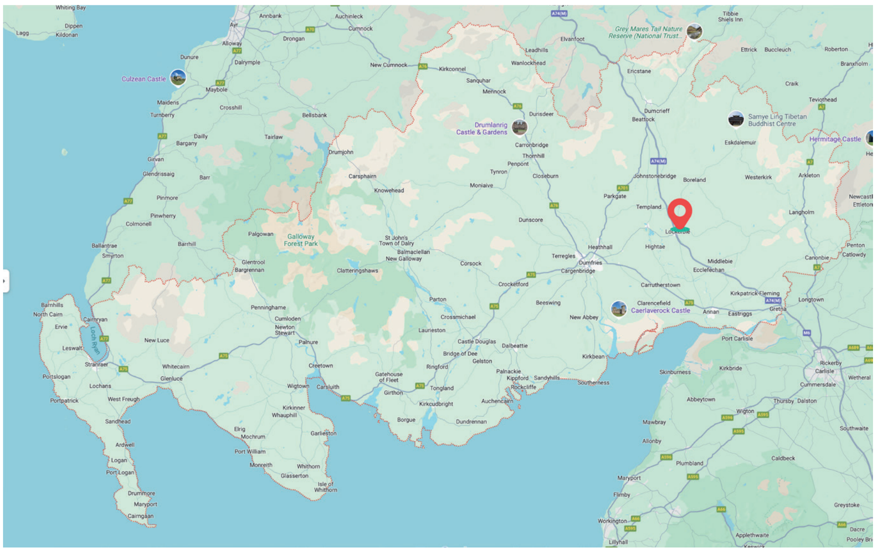
Challenges

The primary concern raised by farmers was the fragility of building a business around local supply chains, given that the entire region is reliant on a single slaughterhouse. The risks of this dependency became evident during the COVID-19 lockdowns when restrictions forced the abattoir to close to private kills, leaving local farmers with no alternative but to send their livestock outside the region for processing.

Many farmers also reported unsatisfactory experiences with the local abattoir and its associated butchery service, discouraging them from pursuing local meat production. The need to transport animals over long distances to access alternative abattoirs was cited as a significant barrier.

A commonly suggested solution was the introduction of a mobile abattoir, which would allow animals to be slaughtered on-farm. This approach would reduce animal stress, lower costs, and decrease the carbon footprint associated with transport.

There is a strong desire within the farming community to celebrate the quality and flavour of locally produced meat. Farmers are open to collaboration with other businesses to build a stronger local food network, but for this to be viable, there must be dedicated facilities and a skilled workforce to support these initiatives.



A map to show the locatioin of the only private abattoir facility servicing Dumfries and Galloway.

Summary

The farming community in Dumfries and Galloway demonstrates **a clear interest in expanding into producing their own meat** for consumption or possible direct meat sales, but practical barriers prevent many from doing so. A **lack of local processing facilities**, concerns over the reliability of the regional slaughterhouse, and the administrative burden of organic certification all play a role in limiting local production.

Despite these challenges, **80% of farmers stated they would use a dedicated butchery service** if it met their needs, with many open to transitioning into local sales. However, **improving infrastructure is key** - without reliable slaughter and butchery services, farmers remain hesitant to make the shift.

A mobile abattoir presents an attractive solution, reducing transport stress, improving animal welfare, and making local processing more accessible. Additionally, there is enthusiasm for a more collaborative local food system, but success will depend on investment in facilities and skilled professionals to support farmers in bringing their products to market.

Routes to market

The story behind food matters. Being able to produce, process, and sell meat that is 100% from Dumfries and Galloway is crucial for multiple reasons:

1. **Reduces food miles**, lowering both financial and environmental costs.
2. **Creates secure local infrastructure**, generating skilled jobs and sustaining rural employment.
3. **Improves animal welfare** by shortening supply chains and reducing unnecessary transportation.
4. **Builds a more resilient food network**, reducing reliance on external markets.
5. **Strengthens regional identity**, celebrating the area’s agricultural heritage and giving customers a compelling food story they can buy into and support.

Wholesale & Retail Opportunities
Many farmers struggle to sell into local businesses due to challenges with scale, logistics, and time constraints. A shared processing, distribution, and marketing facility could alleviate these barriers, ensuring a consistent supply to meet the demand of local businesses, butchers, farm shops, and retailers.

The Galloway Food Hub is a prime example of how local food remains in demand despite economic pressures. Its steady growth, with increasing basket spends and order volumes, highlights the willingness of consumers to pay for quality local food. However, demand often outstrips supply. A dedicated facility could help onboard more producers, increase supply, and enhance distribution - ensuring that more local food reaches local tables.

Dumfries and Galloway has three well-stocked farm shops, but these are typically supplied by the farms they are attached to, limiting their ability to stock meat from other producers. A central retail hub could act as a storefront for multiple local businesses, providing customers with a trusted source of local meat and a space to engage directly with producers. It could also serve as a collection point for online orders, improving accessibility.

The Role of Online Sales
A strong online presence is essential for both producers and customers. It allows farmers to share their story, showcase their products, and provide a convenient shopping experience. However, navigating multiple websites

to shop locally can be time-consuming for consumers. A centralised online platform linked to the facility could simplify this process, providing an easy way for customers to discover, order, and collect local meat in one place.

Summary

A dedicated local food facility could transform the **entire supply chain** -helping producers expand their markets, providing businesses with a **reliable source of high-quality meat**, and making it easier for customers to access and trust local food. By reducing logistical challenges, increasing availability, and offering a hub for direct engagement, such a facility would **strengthen the region's food economy**, ensuring Dumfries and Galloway's meat producers thrive while offering consumers a sustainable and ethical alternative to supermarket supply chains.

Financial feasability

Our research highlights that cost is a major consideration for both producers and consumers. Small-scale farmers cannot compete with supermarkets on price. Consumers - despite valuing high-welfare, local, and organic meat - are facing increasing financial constraints. Balancing affordability with sustainability is crucial to ensuring long-term success for local meat production.

This section will:

- **Assess current processing costs**, including butchery and packaging fees, based on average service charges from butchers.
- **Explore capital investment requirements** for establishing a butchery facility, using estimated costs for fitting out an existing building.
- **Model financial viability** by calculating the payback period for the facility under three scenarios:
    1. **A single small-scale producer** processing their annual stock.
    2. **A collective of producers** using the facility at the level indicated by our research.
    3. **A larger-scale operation** with increased throughput.

By examining these financial aspects, we can determine the economic feasibility of a dedicated butchery facility and its potential to support local farmers while ensuring accessibility for consumers.

Current processing costs

Average costings based off basic pricelists provided by local butchers.

		£ Each	£ per KG		approx per £ per kg
Sheep	Cut & Pack	£ 40.00			£ 2.22
Pig	Cut & Pack	£ 80.00			£ 1.00
Cow	Cut & Pack	£ 250.00			£ 0.63
Sausage	Make & Pack		£ 5.00		
Burgers	Make & Pack	£ 1.50			£ 13.64

Anticipated butchery running expenses

	per hr	per day	Annual
Butcher (Time)	£ 15.00		
Packing materials	£ 0.44		
Ingredients	£ 0.12		
Overheads	£ 0.40	£ 12.84	£4,686.50
Operational profit	130%		

Using these figures, we can estimate the cost of butchering animals within the facility, factoring in staff wages, overheads, consumables (such as seasonings and packaging), and a sustainable profit margin.

Cost per animal to butcher in facility

	butchery time hrs	cost(time)	consumables	cost (consum)	Total exc OH	total inc OH	total in Profit
Sheep	1	£ 15.00	20	£ 8.80	£ 23.80	£ 24.20	£ 31.46
Pig	1.5	£ 22.50	50	£ 22.00	£ 44.50	£ 44.90	£ 58.37
Beef	3	£ 45.00	80	£ 35.20	£ 80.20	£ 80.60	£ 104.78
sausage	1	£ 15.00	50	£ 27.82	£ 42.82	£ 43.22	£ 56.19
burgers	1	£ 15.00	110	£ 56.81	£ 71.81	£ 72.21	£ 93.88

	Difference	%
Sheep	£ 8.54	21%
Pig	£ 21.63	27%
Beef	£ 145.22	58%
sausage	£ 2.75	55%
burgers	£ 0.65	43%

By comparing these projected costs to current local butcher pricing, our analysis suggests that producers could benefit from significant savings.

The greatest cost reductions are seen in processed meat products such as sausages and burgers, where price differences become more pronounced.

Capital investment
Establishing a butchery facility requires substantial upfront investment. Equipment must be CE-marked, reliable, and fit for purpose.

Chiller / Cold room	£ 7,500.00
Furniture & fixtures	£ 1,040.00
Building fabric / Materia	£ 5,500.00
Equipment	£ 3,250.00
Drainage and Tan k	£ 4,000.00
Others (electrics / incide	£ 4,000.00
Total	£25,290.00
Scale up	£36,040.00

There is also a critical decision regarding processing capacity - smaller-scale equipment carries a lower initial cost but may limit future expansion. We have considered this factor in our cost analysis, particularly in the 'large-scale' scenario outlined in the next section.

Costing pull out including scale up costs

Furniture	
Poly table	£ 270.00
sink	£ 550.00
table	£ 220.00
Total	£ 1,040.00

Equipment	
mincer	£ 1,500.00
burger press	£ 300.00
scales	£ 250.00
vac pack	£ 1,200.00
Total	£ 3,250.00

Scale up	
Mixer Grinder	£ 6,250.00
sausage filler	£ 3,000.00
saw	£ 1,500.00
Total	£10,750.00

Building and Materials	
SIP panels	£4,000.00
Fixtures	£1,000.00
Others	£ 500.00
Total	£5,500.00

Drainage & Tanks	
New drainc	£4,000.00
Total	£4,000.00

For the facility to be financially viable, securing investment will be essential for its establishment. In the following pages, we will explore the projected timeframe for recouping this investment.

Model financial viability

Scenario 01. Single producer model

For this scenario we have taken figures from a local producer based on their current output and future forcasts.

This gives us an indication of how feasible it would be for a producer to set up an ‘on farm’ facility to cater for their sole needs.

Average predicted accounts for a single small scale producer

	animals per week	animals per year	cost to butcher	cost if outsourced	Inc Profit	Profit	Hours per week	days per week
Sheep	2.5	130	£ 3,094.00	£ 5,200.00	£ 4,022.20	£ 928.20	2.5	0.31
Pig	0.3	15.6	£ 694.20	£ 1,248.00	£ 902.46	£ 208.26	0.45	0.06
Beef	0.06	3.12	£ 250.22	£ 780.00	£ 325.29	£ 75.07	0.18	0.02
Sausage	30	1560	£ 2,226.86	£ 3,452.67	£ 2,894.91	£ 668.06	0.03	0.00
Burger	15	780	£ 3,734.29	£ 5,343.94	£ 4,854.57	£1,120.29	0.07	0.01
Totals	47.86	2488.72	£ 9,999.57	£ 16,024.61	£ 12,999.44	£2,999.87	3.23	0.40
					Profit	£2,999.87		
					Saving	£6,025.05		
					Less Overheads @ approx 2 week per month	£3,681.80		

Estimated payback time for capitol investment.

Payback	
Cap Ex	£ 25,290.00
Saving	£ 3,681.80
Payback (years)	6.9

Due to the low volume of animals being processed, the butchery would not operate full-time. These figures estimate approximately two weeks of operation per month, reducing power and water costs. However, it’s important to note that this intermittent schedule could make employing a full-time butcher challenging.

Under this model, the butchery is projected to generate an **annual profit of £2,999.87** while also **saving £6,025.05** in outsourced butchery costs. Based on these figures, the initial capital investment required to establish the facility would be recouped over **seven years**, assuming no earnings are drawn from the business during this period.

Model financial viability
Scenario 02: Collaborative Producer Model
For this scenario, we have gathered approximate figures from a group of six small-scale local producers, using both their current output and future growth projections.

By assessing their combined needs, this model provides insight into the feasibility of establishing a dedicated facility designed to serve multiple producers. It evaluates whether a shared processing and butchery space could offer a sustainable and cost-effective solution while supporting business growth and improving local supply chains.

Average predicted accounts for a low capacity facility

	animals per week	animals per year	Value	outsourced	Inc Profit	Profit	Hours per wee	days per week
Sheep	8	416	£ 9,900.80	£ 16,640.00	£ 12,871.04	£2,970.24	8	1
Pig	3	156	£ 6,942.00	£ 12,480.00	£ 9,024.60	£2,082.60	4.5	0.5625
Beef	0.25	13	£ 1,042.60	£ 3,250.00	£ 1,355.38	£ 312.78	0.75	0.09375
Totals	11.25	585	£ 17,885.40	£ 32,370.00	£ 23,251.02	£5,365.62	**13.25**	**1.65625**
					Profit	£5,365.62		

Estimated payback time for capitol investment.

Payback	
Cap Ex	£ 25,290.00
Saving	£ 6,025.05
Profit - Butchery service	£ 5,365.62
total	£ 11,390.67
Overheads	£ 4,686.50
Profit	£ 6,704.17
Payback (years)	3.8

This scenario would not require facilities and machinery to be upscaled to accomodate increased volumes.

Under this model, the butchery is projected to generate an **annual profit of £5365.62** while also **saving £6,025.05** in outsourced butchery costs. Based on these figures, the initial capital investment required to establish the facility would be recouped over **four years**, assuming no earnings are drawn from the business during this period.

Model financial viability

Scenario 03. High capacity model

In this scenario, the facility operates at full capacity, accommodating a larger number of producers and running on a full-time basis. To support the increased throughput, additional investment would be required to scale up facilities and upgrade machinery, which has been factored into the cost projections.

Average predicted accounts for a higher capacity facility

	animals per week	animals per year	Value	outsourced	Inc Profit	Profit	Hours per week	days per week
Sheep	10	520	£ 12,376.00	£ 20,800.00	£ 16,088.80	£ 3,712.80	10	1.25
Pig	10	520	£ 23,140.00	£ 41,600.00	£ 30,082.00	£ 6,942.00	15	1.875
Beef	2	104	£ 8,340.80	£ 26,000.00	£ 10,843.04	£ 2,502.24	6	0.75
Totals	22	1144	£ 43,856.80	£ 88,400.00	£ 57,013.84	£ 13,157.04	**31**	**3.875**
					Profit	£ 13,157.04		

Estimated payback time for capitol investment.

Payback	
Cap Ex	£ 36,040.00
Saving	£ 6,025.05
Profit - Butchery service	£ 13,157.04
	£ 19,182.09
Overheads	£ 4,686.50
Profit	£ 14,495.59
Payback (years)	2.5

Under this model, the butchery is projected to generate an **annual profit of £13157.04** while also **saving £6,025.05** in outsourced butchery costs. Based on these figures, the initial capital investment required to establish the facility would be recouped over **two and a half years**, assuming no earnings are drawn from the business during this period.

Summary

Financial Viability of a Local Butchery Facility
Our financial analysis explores three operational models for a dedicated butchery facility, ranging from small-scale individual producer use to a high-capacity, full-time operation.

- **Scenario 1 (Single Producer)**: Modest cost savings but limited profitability, with a seven-year return on investment.
- **Scenario 2 (Small Producer Group)**: Increased volume improves financial feasibility, reducing the payback period to four years.
- **Scenario 3 (High-Capacity Model)**: The most financially viable option, generating significant profits and enabling the facility to recoup its initial investment within two and a half years.

These findings highlight the economic potential of a local butchery facility and the benefits of collaborative use among producers. While initial capital investment is substantial, a high-capacity model presents a strong business case, offering cost savings, increased revenue, and long-term sustainability for local meat producers in Dumfries and Galloway.

Barriers to local food access

Our research into the local food landscape has highlighted clear barriers that prevent consumers from accessing and valuing locally produced meat. The dominance of supermarkets has created a convenience cycle, where customers prioritise easy access and low prices over provenance and quality. Many shoppers have forgotten the true value of their food and the rich agricultural heritage of Dumfries and Galloway.

At the same time, there is a broken food system - much of the meat produced in the region leaves the area entirely, making it difficult for local businesses and consumers to source high-quality, local meat. Farmers and butchers who want to support local production often struggle to meet demand because the infrastructure does not prioritise regional supply chains.

Certification marks, such as organic and high-welfare labels, are highly trusted by customers and drive purchasing decisions. However, local food infrastructure does not consistently support these certifications, creating a gap between what consumers want and what is available.

Producers face significant time constraints and operational challenges, forcing them to make compromises. The added complexity of selling locally navigating logistics, marketing, and direct sales - often deters farmers from pursuing local supply chains altogether. Many feel the effort required outweighs the potential benefits.

This lack of support has left many producers feeling frustrated and defeated, stalling business growth and limiting the availability of local meat. Without better infrastructure and coordinated efforts, the cycle will continue, keeping local food inaccessible to those who want it most.

Proposed actions

to strengthen local meat processing & accessibility

This study has identified a critical lack of facilities to support meat producers in Dumfries and Galloway, limiting their ability to supply high-quality, local meat to consumers. Despite strong demand for ethically sourced, local meat, existing infrastructure does not adequately serve small-scale farmers or align with the Scottish Government's ambitions for organic food and the **Good Food Nation Plan**.

To address these challenges and create a resilient, sustainable local food system, we propose the following actions:

1. **Develop a Bespoke Local Meat Processing Facility** - A dedicated facility tailored to the needs of small-scale producers would ensure meat can be processed, stored, and packaged efficiently. Key features should include:
    - **Adequate storage space** to allow meat to be hung for longer periods, improving quality and flavour.
    - **Sustainable packaging solutions** to meet consumer and retailer demands.
    - **Bespoke labelling capabilities** to support individual branding and marketing.
2. **Ensure Organic & Regenerative Certification Support** - The facility should be certified organic to cater to the growing organic market but also accommodate non-organic producers. It should also support regenerative certification schemes such as Pasture for Life, helping farmers gain recognition for high-welfare, sustainable practices while maintaining financial viability.
3. **Enable Value-Added Product Development** - The facility should include the capacity for producing value-added foods such as pre-made meals, pies, and other convenience products. Consideration should also be given to 'free-from' ranges to meet dietary needs and expand market reach. This would give producers greater flexibility to diversify their offerings and increase profitability.
4. **Develop Apprenticeships & Skills Training** - Establishing a program where

experienced craft butchers train apprentices would safeguard traditional butchery skills and create a new generation of specialists familiar with working with high-quality, local meats.

5. **Support Local Sales & Marketing** - A small on-site shop or digital marketplace could promote the latest available produce, allowing customers to buy directly from the facility. Online marketing strategies should also be developed to connect local consumers with local meat.
6. **Invest in Cold Chain Logistics** - A shared-use refrigerated van for collecting carcasses and delivering meat would improve local distribution. This cost-effective service would support multiple producers by ensuring high-quality, local meat reaches customers more efficiently.

Call for Government & Policy Support

For meaningful change to occur, **government support must extend beyond farming subsidies to include food processing and supply chain infrastructure**. Small-scale producers need access to facilities that allow them to compete with larger-scale operations while preserving the integrity of local, high-welfare meat.

For detailed information on current strategies and commitments, refer to the **Scottish Government's National Good Food Nation Plan**, particularly **Part Three**, which outlines initiatives for sustainable agriculture and organic farming.

Closing summary

This study highlights both the challenges and opportunities within Dumfries and Galloway's local meat sector. While consumer demand for high-welfare, sustainably produced, and locally sourced meat is strong, barriers such as convenience, price, and lack of infrastructure continue to limit access. Producers, despite their dedication to ethical and sustainable farming, struggle with logistical and processing constraints that prevent them from fully serving their local communities.

However, the solutions are clear. By investing in a dedicated meat processing facility tailored to small-scale producers, improving supply chain logistics, and expanding marketing and retail opportunities, we can bridge the gap between local farmers and consumers. Strengthening skills training, embracing regenerative certifications, and supporting value-added product development will further enhance the viability of local meat production.

With the right infrastructure, collaboration, and policy support, Dumfries and Galloway has the potential to lead the way in sustainable, high-quality meat production - ensuring that both farmers and consumers benefit from a thriving local food system. By reconnecting people with the source of their food, we can foster a deeper appreciation for local produce, strengthen rural economies, and build a more resilient and sustainable future for food in the region.

The momentum is there - now is the time to act.

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The Galloway Food Hub
The Nature Friendly Farming Network
The Regenerative Farming Network South West Scotland
The Scotch Butchers Club

All business that participated anonymously

All of the local people and businesses who participated in our surveys

Further reading...

Scotland Good Food Nation Plan: Link to File >

Review of the environmental and socio-economic barriers and benefits to organic agriculture in Scotland: Link to File >

The next step in delivering our vision for Scotland as a leader in sustainable and regenerative farming: Link to File >

Scotland's Organic Action Plan 2016 -2020: Link to File >

Fresh Produce Journal: 'Scotland 'blazing trail' in organic farming: Link to Article >

Soil Association: Organic Market report 2025: Link to Report >