



Empowering our community to connect with locally sourced organic fruit & veg...



2019 Annual Report (reported in 2020)





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2019 Annual Report

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Empowering our community to connect with locally sourced organic fruit & veg...



2019 Annual Report

Welcome to our 2019 Annual Report!

We publish this report in 2020, by any standards an extraordinary year.

Like most other businesses, Vegbox's activity has been defined by the coronavirus pandemic and the lockdown. We saw half of our collection points close, but expanded capacity at others, and saw generous individuals and institutions step forward to provide new collection points. As a result, we saw a massive growth in membership numbers over the coronavirus lockdown period.

It would be good to say a few words about why Vegbox is for life, not just for covid!

- We **run a fair trade supply chain**. We pay decent prices for produce from small-scale farms that could not afford to supply at the punishingly low prices demanded by supermarkets. Most of our farms employ local workers all year round on fair wages, not minimum wage imported seasonal labour.
- We **reduce food waste**. Our farms harvest only what we need each week, and all produce left over is given to local partners around Kentish Town.
- We **support nature**. Organic production conserves the soil and supports biodiversity, in marked contrast to non-organic production.
- We **promote healthy diets**. Buying through a box scheme is a great way of locking yourself into a healthy, local, seasonal diet.
- We are **rooted in our local community**. We have a flat pay structure, and pay all our staff a decent wage. We are a consumer co-operative, owned by our membership in and around Kentish Town.

Ham&High

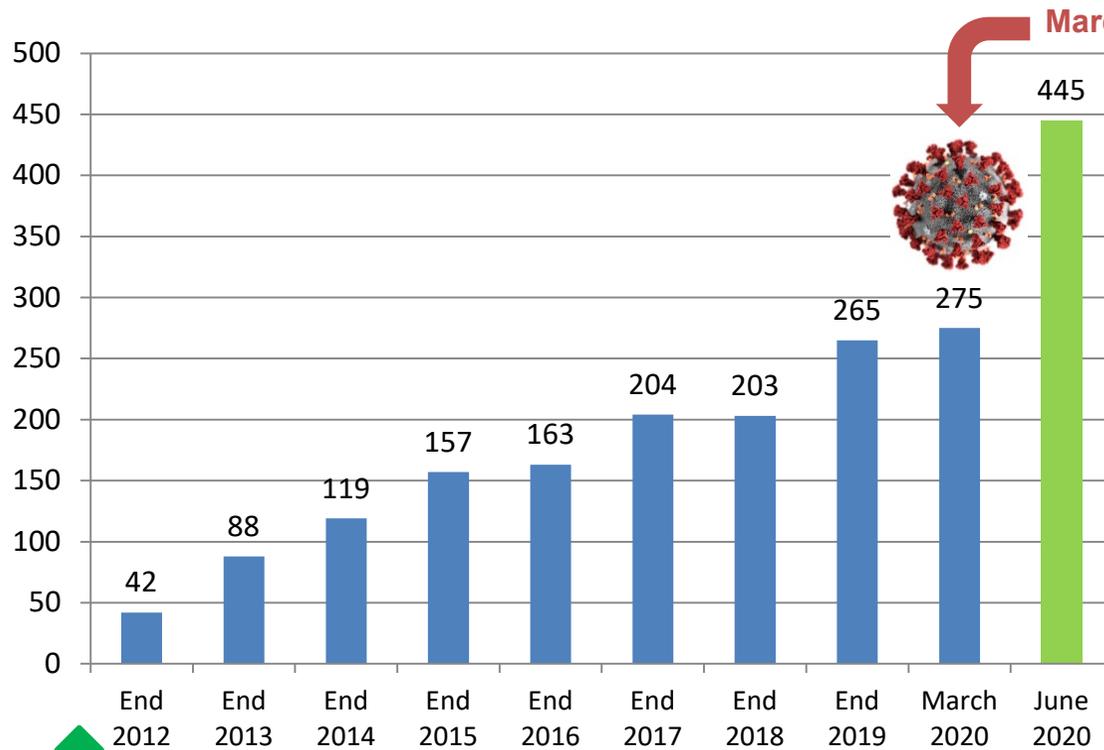


Demand soars for Kentish Town fruit and veg boxes as GP and church chip in

PUBLISHED: 12:10 09 June 2020 | UPDATED: 12:46 09 June 2020 | Lotte Lamb



Vegbox members



September 2012: Vegbox is born !

Vegbox had **265** members at the end of 2019. We had targeted to increase members to 350 by end of 2020 and were on course by March 2020 when we had **275** members.

Then coronavirus arrived and we saw our membership almost double to **445**, largely driven by people signing up due to food supply issues with supermarkets.

We worked hard during March and April 2020 to **deal with the increased demand**, in a challenging environment where most of our collection points had to close due to the crisis. We thank all those who have helped out during the crisis, including members who are hand-delivering bags to those self-isolating, and members who offered up their property to become new collection points.

We are working on a **retention strategy** to maintain the increased members numbers, as well as looking to new growth opportunities as we come out of lockdown.



Vegbox member profile and survey sample

Collection point breakdown

St Georges Church (Tufnell Park)	24%
The Thanet, Herbert Street	13%
36 Primrose Gardens (Belsize Park)	11%
Think and Do (Kentish Town)	10%
62 St Albans Road (nr Highgate Road)	9%
Caversham Group Practice (Kentish Town)	6%
51 Lady Margaret Road (Kentish Town)	5%
Story Garden (Kings Cross)	5%
The Fields Beneath (Kentish Town)	4%
Camden Market	4%
22 Marsden Street (Kentish Town)	3%
Calthorpe Project (Clerkenwell)	3%
Kentish Town Health Centre	2%
70 Tollington Road (Holloway)	1%

Bag type breakdown

	Member profile	
Small (Yellow)	13%	31%
Small+Fruit (Orange)	18%	
Standard (Brown)	14%	47%
Standard+Fruit (Green)	32%	
Family (Blue)	6%	22%
Family+Fruit (Purple)	16%	
	100%	100%
All bags with Fruit	67%	

Length of membership breakdown

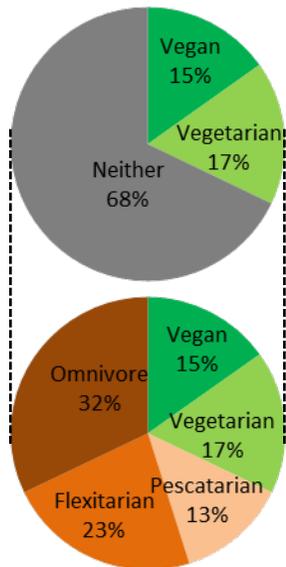
		Member profile
Length of membership	Less than 3 months	47%
	3 months to 1 year	26%
	1-4 years	20%
	More than 4 years	7%
		100%

- Our members, at the time of the 2020 members survey, were spread across **14 different collection points**, with St Georges Church being the biggest collection point, hosting over 100 members. The Think & Do collection point closed in April 2020, but we hope to open a similar collection point on Highgate Road in the near future.
- In terms of **bag types**, around a half of all our members take the Standard sized bag, and two-thirds of all our members take the Fruit supplement. Vegbox introduced a 'Megabag' extra-large sized bag on 20 May 2020 in response to requests from some members who take the Family sized bag but wanted even more quantities of produce every week. On 1 June 2020 we had 18 people receiving Megabags.
- In terms of **length of membership**, half of all Vegbox members, as of June 2020, were new-joiners, having joined after the coronavirus crisis and within the last 3 months. A quarter of members have been with the scheme for between 3 months and 1 year, and a fifth have been with the scheme for 1-4 years.
- A total of **255 members** responded to our **2020 members survey** – a **57% response rate**. The sample was broadly representative of the whole membership in terms of length of membership, collection point and bag type.

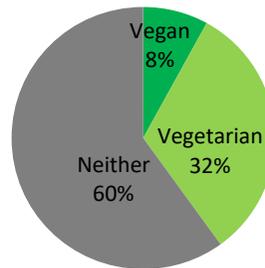
Vegbox member survey – dietary preferences

We have a growing number of vegan members. Our members are also more likely to be vegan or vegetarian than the national average.

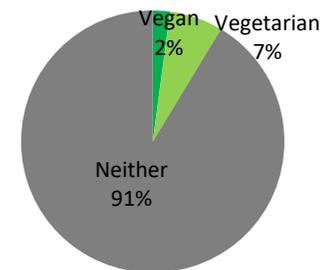
Vegbox members surveyed 2020



Vegbox members surveyed 2018



UK population surveyed (end 2019)



Source: Onepoll research commissioned by Finder.com research (Dec 2019), in a nationally representative survey of adults aged 18+. 2,000 people were questioned throughout Great Britain, with representative quotas for gender, age and region.

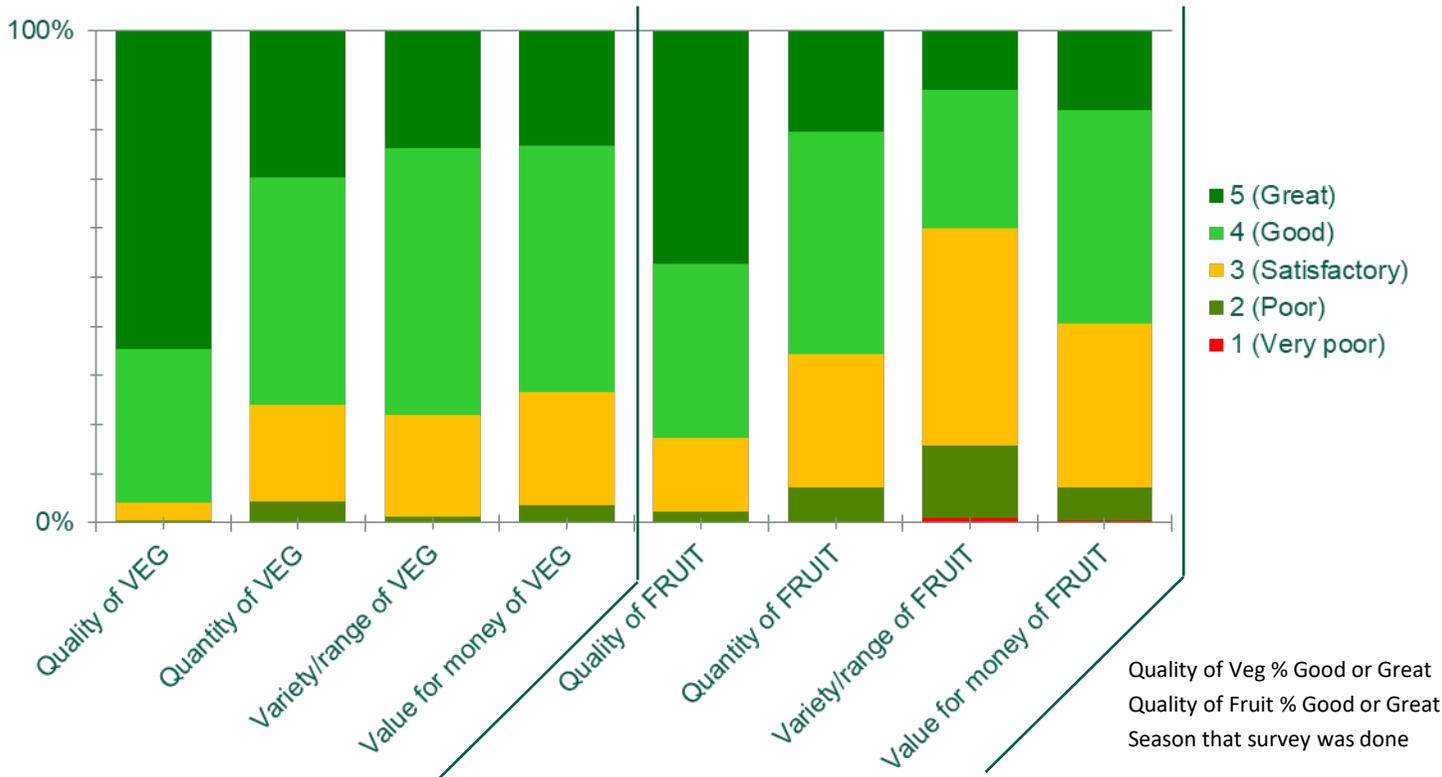
- A total of **15%** of Vegbox respondents in 2020 said they are **vegan**, and **17%** are **vegetarian**.
- A significant chunk of people (**23%**) said they were '**flexitarian**', defined here as someone mostly eating plant-based food.
- Veganism seems to be growing amongst our members (2020 compared to 2018)
- The most recent survey of UK adults (December 2019) suggests a UK average of 2% following vegan diets and 7% following vegetarian diets
- These results will help Vegbox to get the balance of recipes in the weekly newsletters right.
- Some specific quotes we received include:

"I like the recipes - good variety. I've tried new recipes since joining Vegbox." / "I'm very happy for recipes to be vegetarian" / "I'd like to have option to make it vegan!" / "No need for meaty recipes as far as I'm concerned, prefer to focus on the week's veg as the main event - we often use the recipes though, as it's almost like one of the Hello Fresh / Gusto schemes to be advised what to cook with what's arrived - no need to think too hard!" / "Very happy to have vegan/vegetarian recipes; I don't need tips or encouragement for animal protein, I'm trying to cut back as much as I can."

Vegbox member survey – aspect ratings

The quality of the veg and fruit has been rated very high; Fruit suffers from being rated poor on many aspects – partly due to the season at this time

Vegbox members' views on the quality, quantity, variety and Value for Money of veg and fruit, 2020



Historic trends in quality

	2015	2016	2018	2020
Quality of Veg % Good or Great	92%	90%	91%	96%
Quality of Fruit % Good or Great	95%	85%	90%	83%
Season that survey was done	Summer	Autumn	Summer	Spring

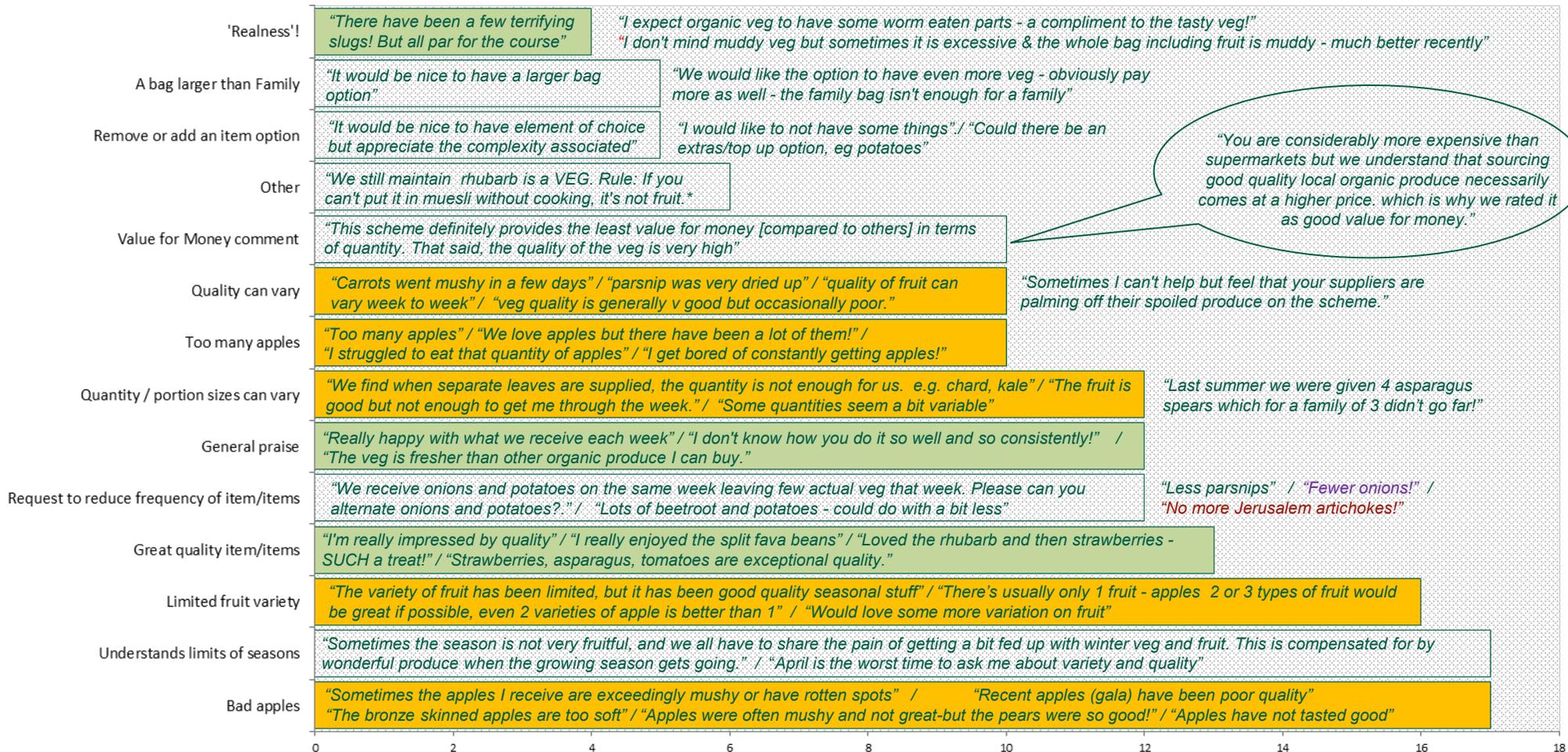
Note (1): We have been asking questions about quantity and quality for several years, but the 2020 survey was the first one to explore variety/range and value for money using this scoring system. The results will be a good benchmark for future surveys.

Note (2): Newer members (less than 3 months) were actually more likely to rate most of these aspects more highly than established members. Ewer members rated the following aspects more highly than established members: Variety/range of veg, and ALL aspects (Qual/Quant/Range/VFM) of Fruit.

Vegbox member survey – views on produce

Vegbox members gave mixed views of Vegbox produce, some useful feedback was given to help monitor and improve

Thematic analysis of Vegbox members' views on the quantity, quality, range and Value for Money



Note: Orange shows negative themes, green shows positive themes and white are neutral or mixed themes.

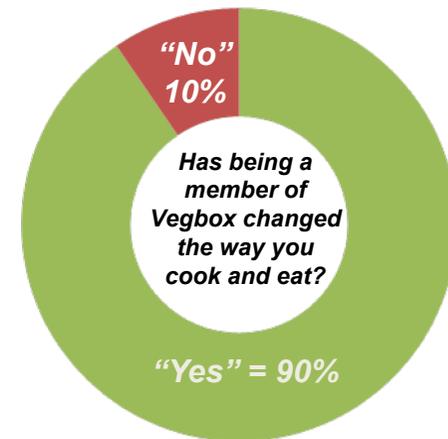
*Another noteworthy 'Other' comment: "Can we stop having cut squash/swede? Often the recipes require a greater quantity - I can't go and buy another half squash"

Vegbox member survey – influence on cooking and eating

Vegbox has positively influenced how 90% of its members cook

Thematic analysis of ways in which being a member of Vegbox has changed the way members cook and eat

#	Theme	%
1	Diversified and more varied diet / became more flexible	24%
2	Learning about new veg recipes and ways to cook	17%
3	Increased creativity / more experimental / sense of challenge	15%
4	Eat more seasonally / more aware of seasons and local produce	15%
5	Became vegetarian/vegan or moved towards a more veg diet	13%
6	Reducing food waste	7%
7	Planning ahead more	5%
8	Eating more healthily	4%
9	Shopping in supermarkets less	2%
10	Saving money on shopping	1%
11	Making things easier	1%



1. “Definitely increased the variety of vegetables I cook with, and I’ve really enjoyed trying out new ways of preparing vegetables I’m not so familiar with”

2. “We have learned about new vegetables and new ways to prepare food out of them. It is exciting and beneficial the same time.”

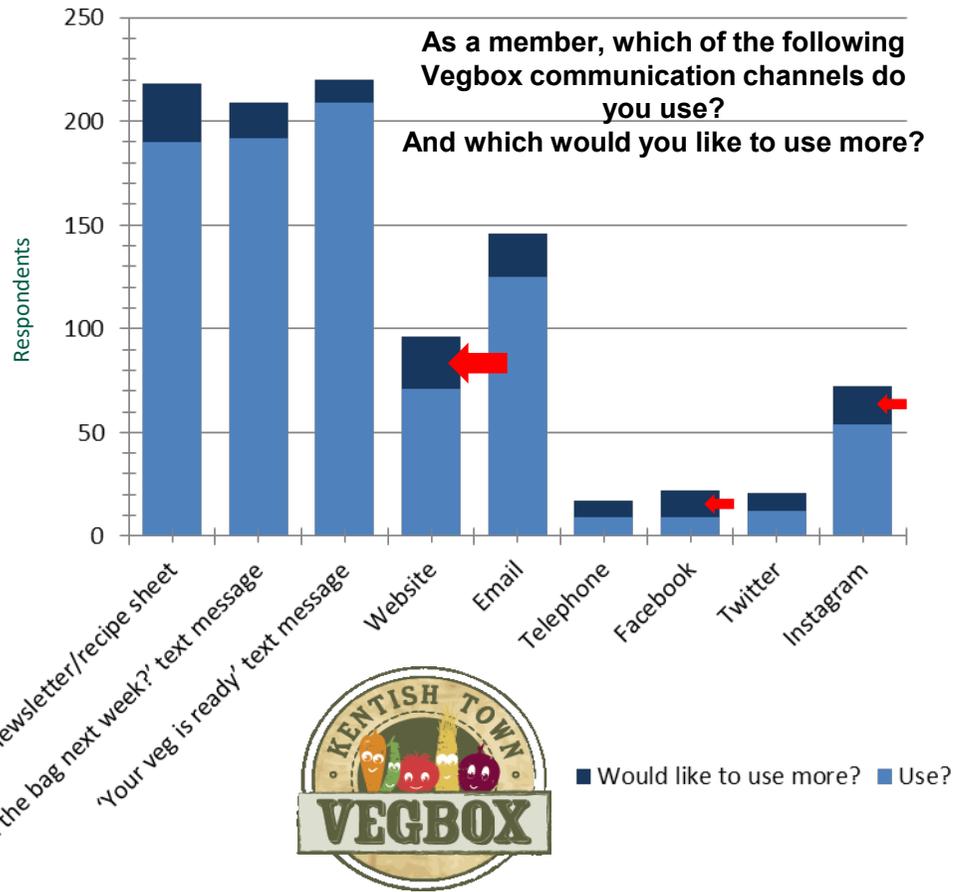
3. “Adapting what we cook to what arrives has been great fun and had made us a bit more adventurous”

4. “It’s really changed the way we eat, knowing what’s in season and inspired by the content and the recipes each week. Super easy!”

5. “I’m eating a lot more veg! The weekly bag and my loathing of food waste encourages me to think about veg as more central to my meals”

Vegbox member survey – comms channels

The newsletter and texts are Vegbox’s most valued comms channel; the main opportunities for growth are with website Facebook and Instagram. Overall (direct) comms seem to be judged ‘about right’ by many



- Of those who provided a response, 39% of members surveyed said that Vegbox’s comms are “about right”:

Vegbox comms - comment themes	%
All good as it is	39%
Comms in different formats	13%
Notifications	8%
Engagement via recipes	6%
Go fully digital	4%
Information about the farmers/farms	4%
Pleased with the text messages	3%
Reduce paper	3%
Support for the events	3%
Praise for the recipes/newsletter	3%
Messaging	2%
Links to other organisations	2%
Referrals & promoting Vegbox	2%
More info about what's in season	2%
More info about varieties	1%
Fewer texts	1%
Communicating need for volunteers	1%
Member contribution to newsletter	1%
Constructive feedback on recipes	1%
	100%



■ Would like to use more? ■ Use?

Note: A small number of respondents suggested stopping all paper comms/going fully digital. However there were many more people supporting the paper newsletter/.recipe sheet, as well as 14 people specifically supporting a 'multi-channel' approach to comms. Some members wanted more early notifications, such as notifying if bags are going to be early or late, earlier notification of the recipes so that they can plan shopping.

Vegbox member survey – member engagement

80%

Of Vegbox members were aware that Vegbox is a member-led cooperative and that you are automatically a member by receiving your veg bags

Top 2 suggestions for more member engagement:

1. Farm visits or more information about the farms
2. Engagement via recipes and cooking

- We asked members “What would you like to see us do more of in terms of engagement with our members?”
- The most common response, cited by 17 people, was that they felt the member engagement was “all good as it is” (or words to that effect)
- Others had useful suggestions which were elaborated on in a subsequent question in the survey about events and motivation to attend events
- Farm visits and more information about the farms (eg ‘meet the farmer’-type events) combined were the most popular suggestions
- There was notable interest in engagement via recipes and cooking, such as cookalongs, recipe swapping, ability to comment on recipes or submit their own

- A few members were happy that the events and member engagement side of Vegbox exists, but were content with getting their veg:

“It's really important you're doing this and we're wholly supportive but we're hermits... can we just cheer from the sidelines?”



Vegbox member survey – member events

Motivations for attending member events are many and varied; home-based activities (eg cooking, gardening, etc) seem to be most popular at the moment – as are farm visits/talks. At our AGM some members also suggested asking the farmers to send us short videos of the farms to give us an insight into what's going on at the farms.

What type of events Vegbox members would be motivated to attend, 2020

Vegbox events - comment analysis	#
Offer of help	18
Limitations	18
Cooking classes, etc*	15
Dinners/suppers/daytime meals	14
Farm visits	14
Educational events	12
Gardening/growing classes	7
Talks with farmers/meet the growers	7
Social events	6
Quiz nights	5
Events for the community	5
Family events	4
Creative events	4
Bring and share	4
Environmental events	3
Linking with other organisations' events	3
Film viewings	2
Community growing projects	2
Help with harvest	2
Walks	2
Singles evening	1
'Pick your own' trip	1
Education events	1
Volunteering	1
Better communication of events	1
Intro to directors and how the scheme works	1
Careers in food event	1
Fundraising/charity events	1
Voting on AGM matters	1
Growing opportunities	1
Bike rides	1
Workshops on food waste	1
Mindfulness	1
Total	160

- We received as many offers of help as we had comments about limitations to help (eg “I would love to help out but life is too hectic right now”, or comments about health status) which suggests some interested members are really keen to get more involved, whereas others are interested but don't have the time or capacity to help

- Cooking classes of various kinds were cited by 15 members:

“Cookery sessions and tasting sessions would be fun”



- Meals with other members were also popular:

“I love the idea of the community meals”



- As were farm visits:

“Visits to the farms to see how they work with the soil, seasons, etc.”

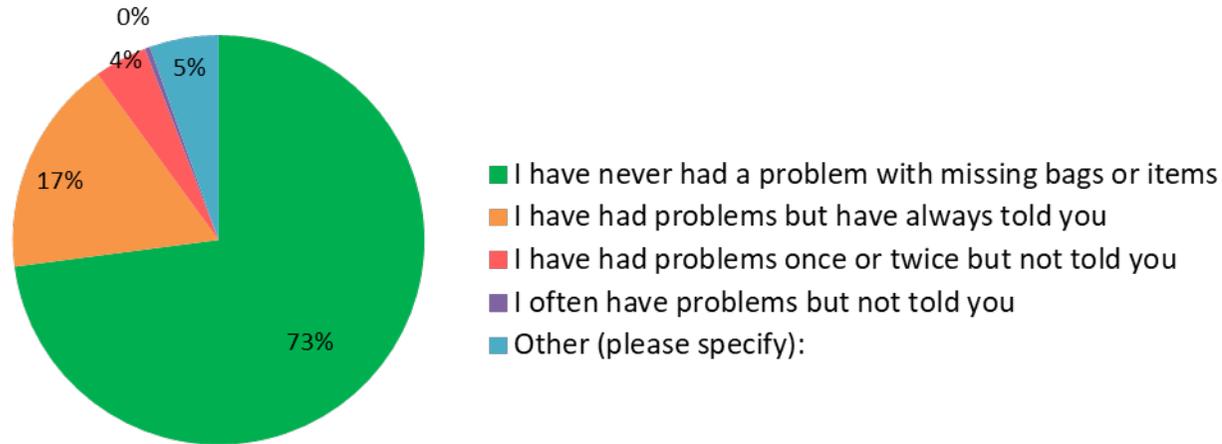


* Cooking, baking, preserving, cheesemaking, etc

Vegbox member survey – missing bags or items

73% of members have not had a problem with missing items and any complaints are dealt with effectively

Missing items



- Vegbox works hard to try to avoid mistakes in packing and delivery that lead to items or bags being missing.
- 73% of members responded to a question about missing items or bags to say they have never had problems
- Remember that if members have a missing bag or item they can let us know straight away (email us info@vegbox.org.uk or call 07815 771 939) so that we can either sort this out or give you a refund. This is not complaining, we need to know what's going on and will work to rectify the situation.
- Mistakes in packing need to be avoided; several checks by the packing staff at all stages are important.

Complaints

If you have made a complaint, how satisfied have you been with how we dealt with it?

97%
3%

Very satisfied*

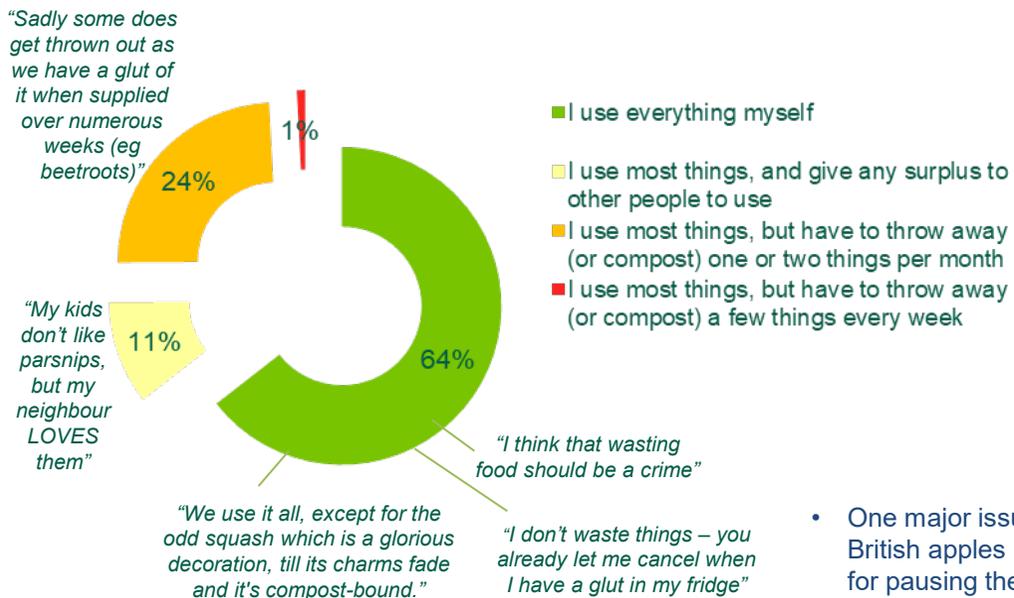
Satisfied*

*From 31 responses received

Vegbox member survey – avoiding food waste

We know that being part of a scheme where the veg and fruit are chosen for you can be challenging. Unfortunately, Vegbox is a very small scheme and we do not have the logistical capability to offer the choice of opting in or out of specific items. From our survey, we found that 24% of members have to throw away (or compost) some veg every month. Ideas for avoiding food waste are being pursued – and we continue to donate excess veg to charity.

What happens to your veg (and fruit if you get it) in a typical month?



“We just want to say a massive thank you to you all for donating your surplus veg which is contributing to keeping our staff fed and spirits up during difficult times. We’ve got the best staffed primary care team in north London and have been able to take meals to particularly vulnerable patients who we discover have been without food.”
-Caversham Group GP Practice

Ideas to tackle food waste from members

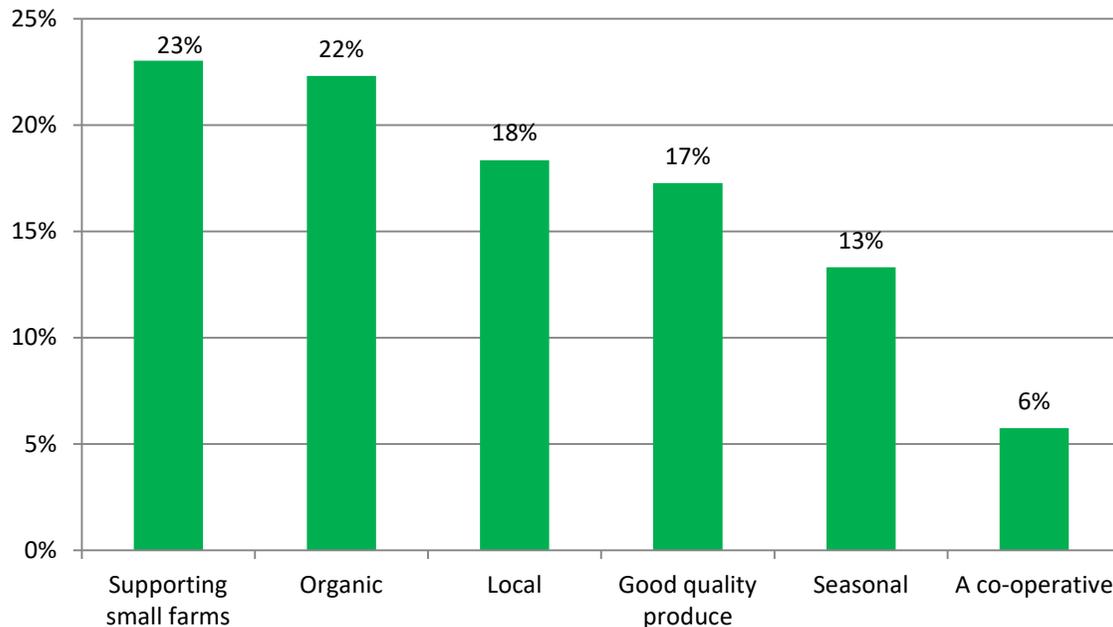


- One major issue with **items in our bags** leading to some waste is the poor quality of British apples in the spring. At the recent Vegbox member AGM there was notable support for pausing the apples when they start to become poor quality, and replace apples with a high-value veg item instead. This would only be for 2 months (March and April every year).
- Vegbox is currently working to introduce **swap boxes** at some of the collection points. We’ve had one (on and off) at the Thanet and just installed one at St Georges Church. We will do more depending on collection point and review how this is working.
- Vegbox already **donates excess food to charity** – we round up all leftover bags at the weekends, and send useable food to the Covid-19 emergency food bank at Somers Town in Euston and to the Caversham Group GP Practice in Kentish Town.
- Vegbox asked its AGM attendees for more steer on the **Information & Guidance** ideas – the top 3 ideas put forward were: a) More recipes on using up scraps or overlooked parts (eg carrot tops), b) provide advice on freezing and preserving, c) monthly online ‘creative cooking clinic’ to share ideas on using up leftovers or problematic items.

Vegbox member survey – Vegbox principles

All of the Vegbox core values are supported by its members; supporting small farms is the most popular

Extent to which members support Vegbox’s 6 core values (the founding principles) – proportion of respondents ranking each principle as the most important to them, 2020:



- When analysing which of the Vegbox core principles our members supported the most, “supporting small farms” came top of the list (23%).
- The fact that Vegbox is 100% organic was a close second place, with “local” and “good quality produce” next. In all previous Vegbox surveys members have quoted being 100% organic as the most important principle.
- However, it is clear that the core values are interlinked and 28 respondents could not or would not pick one, stating instead that they support all of the core values. Some comments included:
“This was a difficult question to answer, as I genuinely value all of those principles. And this is the combination of those principles that made me chose this scheme.” / “All of those principles are important to me and I’m delighted that Vegbox values them all”
- 5 respondents suggested adding principles:
'Community', 'Sustainability', 'Minimal packaging', 'Value for Money' and 'Variety'
- One person said that quality ought to go without saying, and someone commented on the small farm aspect:
“Size of the farm, not interesting to me. Large farms can be sustainable.”

Keeping going during a crisis

We were flattered to receive so many positive comments in our 2020 survey about how grateful our members have been that we have kept going (and expanded to meet demand) during the 2020 coronavirus crisis.



“Keep up the good work and thank you for continuing during Covid-19!”



“Thanks so much for running Vegbox during the crisis - getting my bag on Wednesday is a little highlight :-)”



“Great scheme! Amazing that it has so many members and hope this is sustainable after lockdown.”

Vegbox's top 6 farms

1. Capel Mushrooms



Vegbox's mushrooms are grown by Peter Hearne and his family in Capel St Mary, **SUFFOLK**. Peter set up the business in 1962 and of his eight children, three work on the farm, and two have run or still run mushroom farms of their own.

Damian and Patrick Hearne (two of Peter's sons) now run the Capel Mushroom business, providing us with those delicious organic **MUSHROOMS**, in three varieties; white, chestnut - and some huge portobellos!

2. Chegworth Valley



Chegworth Valley is a family owned and run fruit farm situated in the heart of the **KENT** countryside, near Maidstone.

It was established by the Deme family in 1983 and supplies many of London's farmers markets and box schemes. They also have a stall at Borough Market.

Chegworth provides Vegbox with delicious naturally grown fruit, including some exquisite **STRAWBERRIES** in the last few weeks!

3. Wild Country Organics



Wild Country Organics is a family farm run by Adrian Izzard, from Abington in **CAMBRIDGESHIRE**. His farm holds several awards from the Soil Association and Organic Food Awards.

He is passionate about organic farming, and grows interesting varieties which are selected for flavour, rejecting than the bland-tasting (but cosmetically perfect) veg that is grown in the conventional farming industry.

The recent **PARSLEY, SPINACH, SALAD LEAVES** and **CAVOLO NERO** all came from Adrian!

Vegbox's top 6 farms

4. Hughes Organics



Grahame Hughes has his own farm at Bunwell, **NORFOLK**. He also sources veg from partner farms in Norfolk and Lincolnshire.

He has been growing organically since 1982, and coordinates organic farming across a wide area.

Vegbox's recent **ONIONS**, **LEEKs** and beautifully "frilly" **BATAVIA LETTUCE** have all come from Hughes Organics.

5. Ripple Farm Organics



Martin Mackay runs a small Soil Association certified organic farm in the Stour Valley, **KENT**. Their light, chalky soils produce vegetables of great taste and quality. Martin is a thoughtful farmer who is personally very committed to sustainability.

Ripple Farm has recently been supplying Vegbox's **WILD GARLIC**, **STIR-FRY BAGS** and many varieties of **SQUASH**.

6. Sarah Green's Organics



Sarah Green's family farm is located among the fertile flat marshes of the **ESSEX** coast.

Their farm has a particularly diverse collection of wildlife. Of all the veg we buy for the box scheme, Sarah Green's veg most often has little bugs or caterpillars on it – a sure sign that the farm isn't using pesticides and is working with nature rather than against it!

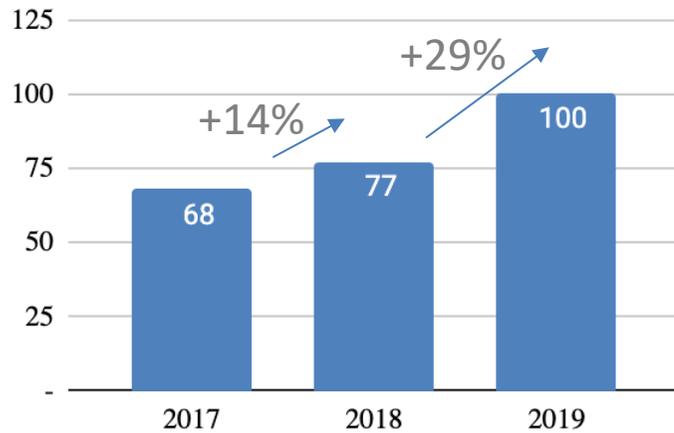
Sarah has sent to Kentish Town her wonderful **SPRING GREENS**, **KALE**, **LETTUCE** and new season **NEW POTATOES**.

Vegbox summary financials 2019

Income

Total income in 2019 = £100k

Revenue by year (£'000)

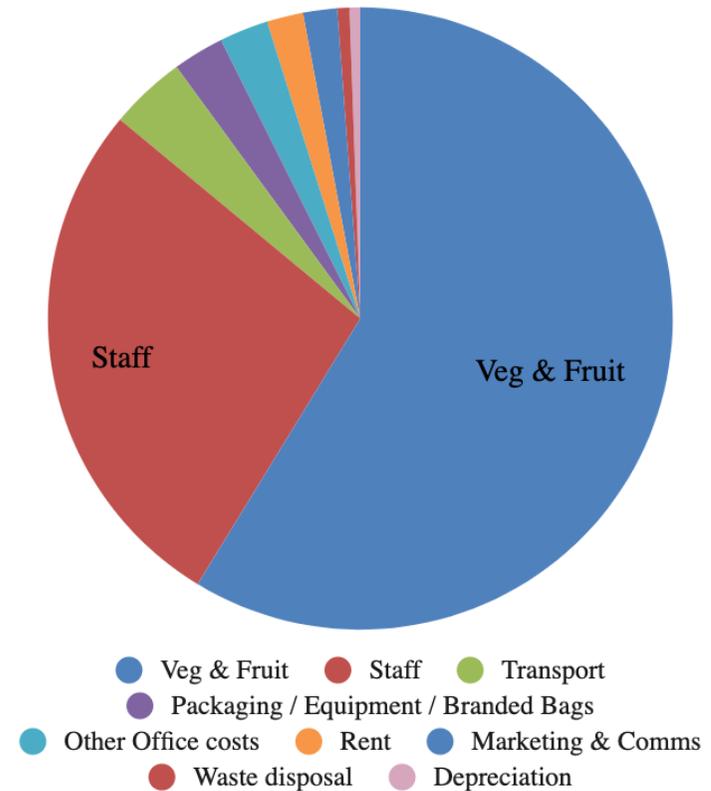


Expenditure

Total spend in 2019 = £96k

86% goes towards farmers and staff who are paid fair prices/wages

Where we spent our money in 2019



Vegbox financial statement (2019 against 2018)



Kentish Town Vegbox Ltd

An industrial and provident society (IPS), registered in the UK

Registration number 31764 R, regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority

Income and expenditure statement

Comparing calendar year 2019 to calendar year 2018

	2019		2018	
	£	%	£	%
Income				
Vegbox member income	99,590	100%	77,242	100%
Income from sales to other org's	425	0.4%	111	0.1%
Total Vegbox income	100,015	100%	77,353	100%
Expenditure				
Cost of sales				
Vegetables and fruit	56,171	59%	46,834	61%
Cost of sales				
Staff & volunteer costs	26,135	27%	20,484	27%
Administrative expenses				
Transport	3,777	4%	3,035	4%
Administrative expenses				
Rent	1,800	2%	1,800	2%
Administrative expenses				
Marketing & advertising	1,092	1%	1,165	2%
Administrative expenses				
Printing	465	0.5%	990	1%
Administrative expenses				
Accountancy	1,547	2%	557	1%
Administrative expenses				
Equipment and bags	2,537	3%	493	1%
Administrative expenses				
Recycling and waste disposal	599	1%	-	0%
Administrative expenses				
Insurance	415	0.4%	368	0.5%
Administrative expenses				
Phone and text messages	396	0.4%	342	0.4%
Administrative expenses				
Depreciation	530	0.6%	260	0.3%
Administrative expenses				
FCA (Financial Conduct Authority) fee		0%	201	0.3%
Administrative expenses				
Member events	200	0.2%	197	0.3%
Total Vegbox expenditure	95,664	100%	76,726	100%
Total Vegbox Surplus (deficit)	4,351		627	

Notes

a) There was a notable increase in total income in 2019 (up 29% to over £100,000).

b) Veg and fruit costs increased by 20%, and staff and volunteer costs rose by 28%. These two costs still represent the bulk of our annual spend.

c) Notable increases in costs in 2019 include higher spend on accountancy linked to new accounting system, exceptional equipment spend (£2k more than usual spent on nylon bags) and new costs associated with recycling and waste.

Vegbox financial position – price rise on Small bags

Vegbox has struggled to ensure the 'Small' sized bags contain acceptable quantities of produce for the budget we set for this bag. Vegbox has therefore decided to implement a price rise of 25p on the Small bag price, representing an increase of 3.3%. The price rise will be communicated to current members and will take effect in August 2020.

	Current price	New price
Small bag	£7.50	£7.75





Thank you to everyone involved
in Kentish Town Vegbox!