

Meet Furrow, the company who want to fix our broken food system

As part of our quickfire questions series – or QFQs – we spoke to James Lamming, founder of Furrow, about our broken food system, online farmers markets, and fighting over baked beans

What was the catalyst for launching Furrow?

At the start of the pandemic, I flew home from the US to pandemonium in the supermarkets (We all remember the empty shelves and people fighting over the last can of baked beans!). But at the same time, farmers were pouring milk down drains and food was rotting in fields. I looked at these two contrasting images and realised something needed to be done. I started to do more digging and discovered how broken our food system is – statistics like only 8% of retail price goes back to the farmer really stuck in my mind – and realised that there was an opportunity to create a fairer, healthier, and more sustainable supply chain.

Tell me about the business – what it is, what it aims to achieve, who you work with, how you reach customers and so on?

Furrow is an online farmers market. We're building out the technology, logistics, and infrastructure to enable anyone to buy direct from any farm with 100% transparency as to where their food comes from whilst enjoying delivery within 36 hours of harvest.

Farmers from across the UK can sell on our marketplace and we provide complete delivery logistics so that farmers can stay on their farm. We deliver to customers across South West London as we have a hyper-local and sustainable delivery model, delivering everything on electric bikes. The aim is to roll Furrow deliveries out across London and beyond as we grow.

How are you funded?

We raised a pre-seed round at the end of last year, led by Sustainable Ventures, alongside several other funds and angels. It's been great having a wide breadth of investor experience as there's always someone who's an expert with an answer to the questions I have.

What has been your biggest challenge so far and how have you overcome this?

Being a solo founder has been incredibly challenging at times. When you're on your own, there's no-one to share the ups and down with or to pick you up when you've had a bad day. I've been incredibly lucky to have a network of other founders around me who can share in the journey. Together, we share our problems and help each other out – it's a real community.

How does Furrow answer an unmet

need?

95% of farmers don't want to sell to supermarkets but they're left with no easy alternative. Selling direct to consumers themselves is incredibly costly and time consuming, but by selling on our marketplace, where we provide the logistics and the marketing, it is easy and convenient for them. We aim to provide farmers with wholesale volumes and convenience at retail prices.

On the consumer side, there's a growing demand to know where our food comes from and how it's been grown. By buying direct from the farm on Furrow, we provide consumers with the transparency they need.

What's in store for the future?

Over the next year, we'll be refining our logistics and marketing playbooks in our trial delivery area of South West London. We'll be expanding the number of days we deliver and the range of items available as we bring more farms onto the market, before rolling out delivery across London and the rest of the UK.

What one piece of advice would you give other founders or future founders?

Don't be afraid to ask for help. There is a wealth of experience and expertise out there if you look for it. The startup community has a huge pay-it-forward mentality and everyone is willing to provide help and advice.

Article by JAMES LAMMING