



Department
for Environment,
Food & Rural Affairs

Policy paper

A UK government food strategy for England, considering the wider UK food system

Published 15 July 2025

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Ministerial foreword

Food is a big part of life in the United Kingdom. It gives us energy, brings us joy, and helps us feel connected to our communities. It's also part of what makes us proud to be British - whether it's fish and chips, Sunday roasts, chicken tikka masala or dishes from all over the UK. Our food is amongst the best in the world and it's time we proudly told that story. Britain is what it eats: a proud, diverse, and resilient nation. It nourishes our country, brings communities together, and sustains the livelihoods of millions.

The UK's food sector is the beating heart of our economy - employing over 4.2 million people across every region and nation. It is our largest manufacturing sector, powered by the dedication of our farmers, fishers, producers, and workers who are the custodians of our countryside, coastlines, and culinary heritage. Their work is not only vital to our economy - it is a patriotic service to the nation.

Investing in British food is investing in Britain. We have a rich food culture, a dynamic and innovative industry, and a global reputation for quality and integrity. With the right leadership, we can become a world leader in sustainable, healthy food production - tackling climate change, boosting resilience, and securing our food future.

This is why this government is bringing together the entire food system to build a future where good food is accessible to everyone, not just a privileged few. A future where every child, every family, and every community can access healthy, affordable, and proudly British food.

We are proud of what our food system already delivers: feeding a growing population, offering variety and convenience, and upholding some of the highest food standards in the world. But we must also confront the challenges. Rising obesity, food insecurity, and environmental degradation are not inevitable - they are the result of political choices. This government chooses to act.

Too many working families are struggling to put healthy food on the table. The cost-of-living crisis has hit the most vulnerable hardest. That is why we are committed to transforming the food system - making nutritious, locally grown British food more accessible and affordable for all. This is not just a health issue - it is a matter of fairness, dignity, and national strength.

Since announcing our strategy, this government has taken bold steps: securing a hat trick of trade deals that protect our farmers, opening new markets for exporters, and beginning negotiations to cut red tape with our closest trading partners. We've launched major initiatives to tackle obesity, improve children's life chances, and reduce child poverty—because no child should go hungry in a country as rich in resources and compassion as ours.

This vision has been shaped by over 400 voices from across the food system - farmers, businesses, citizens, and experts. It sets out 10 priority outcomes to build a food system that grows the economy, protects the environment, and celebrates the best of British food and culture.

The transformation ahead will be led by the people who know the system best - our world-class farmers, fishers, producers, and workers. We will continue to listen, learn and act through the Citizen Advisory Council, the Food Strategy Advisory Board, and our work with UK Hospitality, National Farmers Union, British Retail Consortium, and Food and Drink Federation, reflecting our deep engagement across the sector.

This is the start of a proudly patriotic campaign. We want everyone to enjoy healthy, delicious British food. We want to support our food workers, grow the economy, and build a fairer future. By creating a better food system, we can make sure everyone benefits from and celebrates the best of British food.

Introduction

This government is ambitious for our food system^{[footnote 1](#)}. We are determined to drive a generational change in our relationship to food and the impact that the food system has on our environment, economy and society. The food strategy will set out how we will create a healthier, more affordable, sustainable, resilient food system that restores pride in our British food culture and heritage and supports delivery of our Plan for Change and our national missions.

This document sets out:

- the context and key challenges facing the food system
- our high-level vision of what the UK food system of the future looks like and our new approach to working with the food system on a patriotic campaign to realise that vision
- the priority outcomes that will make the vision a reality (with additional detail in the Annexes)
- next steps on delivery of the outcomes

The strategy considers the food system of the UK as a whole. It recognises that the UK food system is made up of smaller regional and local food systems and is embedded in the wider European and global food systems, all of which interact in complex ways. The strategy is aligned with and supports the devolved governments approach to food policy, as set out in [Northern Ireland Food Strategy Framework \(https://www.daera-](https://www.daera-)

[ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/daera/NI%20Food%20Strategy%20Framework.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/daera/NI%20Food%20Strategy%20Framework.pdf)), [Scotland National Good Food Nation Plan](https://www.gov.scot/publications/national-good-food-nation-plan/pages/2/) (<https://www.gov.scot/publications/national-good-food-nation-plan/pages/2/>), [Food Matters: Wales](https://www.gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2024-07/food-matters-wales.pdf) (<https://www.gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2024-07/food-matters-wales.pdf>) and [A Vision for the Food and Drink Industry](https://businesswales.gov.wales/foodanddrink/sites/foodanddrink/files/documents/21124%20F%26D%20Action%20Plan_ENG.pdf) (https://businesswales.gov.wales/foodanddrink/sites/foodanddrink/files/documents/21124%20F%26D%20Action%20Plan_ENG.pdf). Significant areas of policy related to food are devolved. Unless otherwise stated, the priority outcomes and policies in this document relate to England only.

What is a food strategy?

The food strategy is the process by which we move from the food system we have now, to the food system we want to see in the future. This document is a milestone in a patriotic campaign that will deliver that systems change.

The food system is vast and highly complex. It touches every household and individual in the UK, interacts with many natural and economic systems and industries, and is directly relevant to all 5 national missions and the Plan for Change milestones. Most of the actors, interactions and structures are outside of government. The food system is impacted by policies directly related to food and many ancillary policy issues including trade, health, poverty reduction, wider business and tax policies, and energy, water and environmental policies. A key objective of the food strategy is to deliver a more coordinated and coherent approach to food issues across government in support of the national missions and Plan for Change. This strategy therefore reflects and aligns with a wide range of related government and devolved government strategy and policy documents.

Context and challenges

Like any complex system, the food system is constantly changing and evolving. That evolution, driven by innovation, has enabled the food system to deliver a huge amount. It has fed a growing population, literally fuelling economic growth, while maintaining some of the highest standards of food quality and safety in the world. At the same time it has delivered unprecedented variety, increased availability, enhanced convenience. It has done this by innovating and evolving, and by becoming increasingly industrialised, consolidated and internationally interconnected.

But a quarter of the way through the 21st century, the food system is still responding to drivers, incentives and feedback loops established early in the 20th century. It has become increasingly apparent that the food system is driving negative impacts on our health, environment, and resilience that undermine our food security^[footnote 2]. In recent years, we have seen exceptionally high levels of food price inflation, impacting household food security, particularly for the most vulnerable. These negative impacts are well documented and are largely well understood. The [2021 National Food Strategy for England](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-food-strategy-for-england) (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-food-strategy-for-england>) authored by Henry Dimbleby identified the “junk food cycle” and, drawing from the [2021 Dasgupta Review on the Economics of Biodiversity](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/final-report-the-economics-of-biodiversity-the-dasgupta-review) (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/final-report-the-economics-of-biodiversity-the-dasgupta-review>), the “invisibility of nature”. The Government’s [UK Food Security Report 2024](https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/united-kingdom-food-security-report-2024) (<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/united-kingdom-food-security-report-2024>) documents vulnerabilities in resilience and persistent stresses on the food system at multiple levels.

The challenges facing the food system are not unique to the UK. Across the globe, policymakers are seeking to retain and enhance the positive outcomes of their food systems while mitigating negative impacts relating to health, environmental sustainability, resilience and food security, and adapting to a changing climate and increasingly volatile geopolitical context. The prize is to do that in a way that supports stability, enables economic growth and protects the most vulnerable. Given the interconnected nature of the global food system, how policymakers in other countries approach those challenges can directly impact the food system in the UK. As our largest agrifood trade partner, how the EU approaches these challenges is particularly relevant. Negotiating and implementing a Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) Agreement with the EU will make agrifood trade with our biggest market cheaper and easier, cutting costs and red tape for British producers and retailers.

Building on an extensive body of work from government, civil society, industry and academia, we have a solid understanding of the problems, a bank of policy ideas on how to address them, and a growing public desire for action. Coupled with support from across the food system, complementary food strategies across the 4 nations, and groundbreaking research and food innovations, this creates a once in a generation opportunity for change.

If we get this right, we can create a ‘good food cycle’ where businesses have the confidence to invest in healthier, more sustainable and more resilient production and supply that makes good British food more affordable and accessible to everyone in society. That investment will deliver improved health, environment and resilience outcomes, strengthen food security and the foundations of the economy and enable food sector and wider economic growth. Stronger economic foundations and new and growing markets for healthier and more sustainable food will in turn enable

further investment. Providing an environment in which our diverse, dynamic and innovative food businesses can thrive and build stronger connections with their communities will strengthen our vibrant food cultures and build pride in our UK food heritage.

To support delivery of the national missions and plan for change, we need to shift to a food system fit for the 21st century that:

- strengthens the foundations of the economy and enables the food sector to reach its growth potential
- supports more affordable, healthier and more balanced diets for all, higher in fruit, vegetables and wholegrains and lower in calories, saturated fat, sugar and salt
- ends mass dependence on emergency food parcels
- has a smaller environmental footprint, supports our net zero commitments, and is more resilient to short term shocks and better adapted to the long term challenges of climate change and biodiversity loss
- celebrates and strengthens our unique national, local and regional food heritage and cultures

Vision

A healthier, more affordable, sustainable and resilient 21st century UK food system that grows the economy, feeds the nation, nourishes people, and protects the environment and climate, now and in the future.

A healthier, more affordable, sustainable and resilient 21st century food system will deliver:

- a thriving UK food sector that feeds a healthier and more productive UK population and enables economic growth
- a healthier population with reduced diet related ill-health, especially for children and vulnerable people
- better environmental outcomes on land and sea, enhancing nature and ecosystem services while reducing pollution, waste and greenhouse gas emissions
- improved resilience of the supply chain, with reduced impact of shocks and chronic risks on access to healthy and sustainable food

A new approach

To realise a transformation of the food system, we need to restore pride in and build on our unique food heritage and cultures. We need to work across the whole of government and leverage the expertise, experience and reach of the wider food system. As we develop this strategy, we are bringing together and taking inputs from those who work within the system, and those who study it, those who advocate for it to be better, and those whose lived experience of it we aim to improve. Recognising the interconnectedness and interdependence of food systems across the UK, we are working closely with the devolved governments, to ensure alignment with their own food strategies. Discussion with citizens, civil society, academics, and food industry representatives will continue to inform and enrich our approach.

Our approach is centred on people. It is people who eat food, and who take joy in food and pride in our food cultures and heritage. It is people who work hard around the country and around the clock, to grow and rear our food and keep the supply chain flowing.

Our approach also needs to be grounded in place. The UK food system is made up of many smaller food systems at a national, regional, community and household level. Food is often at the heart of communities. Many are shaped by the productive food industries that give people a livelihood and a way of life and are enriched by their local food cultures and the prominence of food in celebrations and local identity. One size does not fit all. We need to unlock expertise, energy and experience at a local level to deliver improved outcomes where they are most needed.

Transforming the food system is a major change that will require a long-term programme of work to deliver changes that will, over time, transform the system. We cannot deliver everything at once. We will be honest about the constraints and complexities we face. And in delivering this food strategy we will take difficult decisions about what to prioritise to shift the system onto a better long-term trajectory.

The next key milestone will be development of metrics, indicators and implementation plans for the food strategy outcomes. As we do this, we will continue to listen to and engage stakeholders across the food system.

Priority outcomes

Problem analysis

The evidence that [the food system is not delivering the outcomes we need](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-food-strategy-for-england) (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-food-strategy-for-england>) with respect to health, environmental sustainability, resilience and [food security](https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/united-kingdom-food-security-report-2024/united-kingdom-food-security-report-2024-introduction) (<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/united-kingdom-food-security-report-2024/united-kingdom-food-security-report-2024-introduction>) is strong.

Health:

- As a leading cause of multiple long-term conditions, [obesity-related ill health is estimated to cost the NHS over £11.4 billion every year](https://institute.global/insights/public-services/unhealthy-numbers-the-rising-cost-of-obesity-in-the-uk) (<https://institute.global/insights/public-services/unhealthy-numbers-the-rising-cost-of-obesity-in-the-uk>), with wider societal costs estimated at £74.3 billion annually due to ill health (2023 estimates).
- Adult obesity has doubled since the 1990s. In 2022, [64% of adults in England were overweight or living with obesity](https://digital.nhs.uk/data-and-information/publications/statistical/health-survey-for-england/2022-part-2) (<https://digital.nhs.uk/data-and-information/publications/statistical/health-survey-for-england/2022-part-2>).
- In 2023/24, [9.6% of Reception aged children \(aged 4-5\) were living with obesity in England](https://digital.nhs.uk/data-and-information/publications/statistical/national-child-measurement-programme/2023-24-school-year) (<https://digital.nhs.uk/data-and-information/publications/statistical/national-child-measurement-programme/2023-24-school-year>).⁷ In 2023 to 2024 children living in the most deprived areas in England were more than twice as likely to be living with obesity compared to those living in the least deprived areas.
- Death and disability from dietary risks such as eating too little fruit, vegetables and fibre, and too much food high in fat, sugar and salt has [risen by 46%](https://foodfoundation.org.uk/sites/default/files/2024-09/Eating%20away%20at%20productivity.pdf) (<https://foodfoundation.org.uk/sites/default/files/2024-09/Eating%20away%20at%20productivity.pdf>) in the last decade (including years affected by COVID).

Environmental sustainability:

- Agriculture accounts for 69% of land use in the UK. Our food production relies on ecosystem services linked to the land and nature, including healthy soils, nutrient cycling, pollination and water regulation. In 2022, the ONS estimated the value of the annual flow of ecosystem services to be more than £37bn, with an asset value of £1.3tn.^[footnote 3] However, agriculture and fisheries (especially in their most intensive form) are some of the leading drivers of nature and biodiversity loss. [40% of our inland water bodies](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/state-of-the-water-environment-indicator-b3-supporting-evidence/state-of-the-water-environment-indicator-b3-supporting-evidence) (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/state-of-the-water-environment-indicator-b3-supporting-evidence/state-of-the-water-environment-indicator-b3-supporting-evidence>) are impacted by pollution from agriculture and rural areas.

- Greenhouse gas (GHG) [emissions from the UK food system](https://www.wrap.ngo/sites/default/files/2025-01/GHG-Emissions-Update-Technical-Report-2024-v0_5.pdf) (https://www.wrap.ngo/sites/default/files/2025-01/GHG-Emissions-Update-Technical-Report-2024-v0_5.pdf) (including food imports) are equivalent to 38% of UK GHG emissions (https://uk-air.defra.gov.uk/library/reports?report_id=1136). Agriculture accounts for [11.7% of total UK greenhouse gas emissions](https://www.ons.gov.uk/economy/environmentalaccounts/methodologies/measuringukgreenhousegasemissions) (<https://www.ons.gov.uk/economy/environmentalaccounts/methodologies/measuringukgreenhousegasemissions>). By 2040, we expect agriculture and aviation to be the dominant sources of UK emissions.
- In addition to emissions, our food system also has wider environmental impacts overseas via the [35% of our food that we import](https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/agriculture-in-the-united-kingdom-2024/chapter-14-the-food-chain#food-production-to-supply-ratio) (<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/agriculture-in-the-united-kingdom-2024/chapter-14-the-food-chain#food-production-to-supply-ratio>).

Resilience and food security

- Between January 2021 and April 2025, [UK food prices increased by 36%](https://www.ons.gov.uk/economy/inflationandpriceindices/bulletins/onshouseholdexpendedatainsightsintotheeffectsofcostsoflivingpressures/4december2023) (<https://www.ons.gov.uk/economy/inflationandpriceindices/bulletins/onshouseholdexpendedatainsightsintotheeffectsofcostsoflivingpressures/4december2023>), which is over 3 times more than in the preceding decade (January 2011 to January 2021) at 9.5%. In 2023, food price inflation reached its highest point in 45 years at 19.2% following shocks to energy prices from Russia's invasion of Ukraine.
- The [proportion of food secure households declined from 92% in 2019/2020 to 90% in 2023/2024](https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/family-resources-survey--2) (<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/family-resources-survey--2>), with vulnerable groups including those on low-income and households including a disabled person at a disproportionately high risk of household food insecurity and its potential negative impacts.
- In 2024, [4.2% of individuals lived in a household that had accessed a food bank](https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/households-below-average-income-for-financial-years-ending-1995-to-2024/households-below-average-income-an-analysis-of-the-uk-income-distribution-fye-1995-to-fye-2024#food-bank-usage) (<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/households-below-average-income-for-financial-years-ending-1995-to-2024/households-below-average-income-an-analysis-of-the-uk-income-distribution-fye-1995-to-fye-2024#food-bank-usage>) over the last year.
- Levels of [household food security](https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/family-resources-survey-financial-year-2023-to-2024/family-resources-survey-financial-year-2023-to-2024#household-food-security-1) (<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/family-resources-survey-financial-year-2023-to-2024/family-resources-survey-financial-year-2023-to-2024#household-food-security-1>) vary across the UK. Regionally, the lowest rate of household food security was in North West England and London, where 87% were food secure and highest in South West England, where 93% of households were food secure.
- In 2024, the UK was [65% self-sufficient for all food and 77% self-sufficient for indigenous type food](https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/agriculture-in-the-united-kingdom-2024/chapter-14-the-food-chain#contribution-of-the-agri-food-sector-to-the-national-economy) (<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/agriculture-in-the-united-kingdom-2024/chapter-14-the-food-chain#contribution-of-the-agri-food-sector-to-the-national-economy>) (things we can grow here). However, self-sufficiency is

significantly lower in some sectors critical for healthy diets, including [fresh vegetables \(53%\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/latest-horticulture-statistics/horticulture-statistics-2024#section-1--vegetables) (<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/latest-horticulture-statistics/horticulture-statistics-2024#section-1--vegetables>) and [fresh fruit \(15%\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/latest-horticulture-statistics/horticulture-statistics-2024#section-2--fruit) (<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/latest-horticulture-statistics/horticulture-statistics-2024#section-2--fruit>).

- Climate change, biodiversity loss and environmental degradation are systemic and chronic risks to our food security. Climate change is increasingly having an impact on the ability to grow certain types of food and on fish stocks, potentially weakening the resilience of supply chains in the UK and overseas.

Underlying each of these issues is a combination of dynamics, feedback loops and market failures that drive and perpetuate these negative outcomes.

In the [2021 National Food Strategy for England](https://www.nationalfoodstrategy.org/) (<https://www.nationalfoodstrategy.org/>), Henry Dimbleby identified the “junk food cycle”, a series of feedback loops driving diet related ill-health. He also identified a “vicious cycle” within modern agriculture, where the way we produce much of our food is contributing to climate change, which in turn threatens our food supply. The “invisibility of nature” reduces the effectiveness of balancing feedback loops to limit the negative impacts of the food system on the natural environment. We have extended this analysis to include the emerging risks to food resilience, as highlighted by [Professor Tim Lang’s 2025 report on Food Resilience](https://nationalpreparednesscommission.uk/publications/just-in-case-7-steps-to-narrow-the-uk-civil-food-resilience-gap/) (<https://nationalpreparednesscommission.uk/publications/just-in-case-7-steps-to-narrow-the-uk-civil-food-resilience-gap/>) for the National Preparedness Commission.

This gives us 3 interlocking sets of system dynamics, feedback loops and market failures that we need to address to transform the system:

The junk food cycle

The “junk food cycle” describes how interactions between our evolved appetite and commercial incentives have shaped our food environment, driving obesity and other diet-related health impacts.^{[\[footnote 4\]](#)} Our appetite for energy dense foods high in sugar and fat creates strong commercial incentives to produce this type of food. Innovation which enables production of foods high in fat, sugar and salt and low in fibre, with long shelf lives, at scale, from commodity ingredients means that these foods can often be produced at lower cost per calorie than healthier and fresh food. Marketing and advertising drives demand and reinforces eating habits, creating stronger commercial incentives to produce more.

The invisibility of nature

The “invisibility of nature”: Because the costs of environmental damage are

not properly attributed, environmentally damaging production methods (such as excessive use of fertilizers and crop protection, environmentally harmful intensive animal agriculture) can provide a competitive advantage (at least in the short to medium term). As the market does not adequately reward more environmentally friendly production, producers (often farmers) face significant economic pressure to adopt environmentally damaging practices to support profitability and competitiveness. As environmentally damaging production expands it generates economies of scale, increasing the economic advantage.

The resilience gap

The “resilience gap”: While the UK food system has to a large extent demonstrated resilience to recent shocks (for example, in its response to COVID, and the Russian invasion of Ukraine), exposure and vulnerability to multiple risks are increasing. The [UK Food Security Report \(https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/united-kingdom-food-security-report-2024\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/united-kingdom-food-security-report-2024) highlights the increasing risk from the intensifying impacts of climate change and interactions with heightened geopolitical tensions. While there are incentives for businesses to build their own resilience, and many are, the incentives to take coordinated action to manage risks and strengthen resilience across the system, particularly for the poorest in society, are weaker.

Each of these sets of issues involve a complex web of dynamics and interactions across the food system. Addressing them will require coordinated action across the food system including by government, industry, civil society and individuals. Some issues, for example strengthening the resilience of some supply chains, may be more straightforward to resolve than others as system actors respond to changing incentives and drivers. In each case, making the wider systemic changes required will need ongoing investment in research, infrastructure, and knowledge and skills to enable the system to continually adapt. Government has an important role to play in supporting and creating the right environment for investment, but the majority of investment will come from the private sector. Only a thriving, dynamic and innovative food sector will be able to make the necessary investments on an ongoing basis to resolve these issues.

Economic opportunity

Food is a foundational sector for the economy. It literally sustains the wider economy by feeding the population and, through our farming and fisheries industries, stewarding the environmental health of the countryside and marine environment. Healthier diets can reduce the burden on the NHS of

treating obesity and have a net positive impact on growth by increasing healthy life expectancy and improving productivity by reducing sickness absence.^{[\[footnote 5\]](#)}

Food and drink is our largest manufacturing sector, greater than automobiles and aerospace combined. The food sector as a whole generated [£153bn in Gross Value Added in 2023](#) (<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/agriculture-in-the-united-kingdom-2024/chapter-14-the-food-chain>) and employed almost 4.2m people across the UK, 13% of all employees. Food businesses are spread through all regions and localities and can play a role in spreading growth and opportunities around the country.

In 2024, [the UK exported £24.6 billion worth of food, feed and drink](#) (<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/agriculture-in-the-united-kingdom-2024/chapter-13-overseas-trade>). The sector is diverse, with pockets of high economic growth potential, especially in manufacturing and agri-tech. A thriving UK food sector that supports access to and sales of healthier food and more sustainable and resilient production and supply is therefore at the heart of the food system we want.

The [2024 Newton Future Factory Report](#) (<https://www.fdf.org.uk/fdf/resources/publications/reports/future-factory-supercharging-digital-innovation-in-food-and-drink-manufacturing/>) identified a £14bn productivity gap in UK food and drink manufacturing which could be plugged through further digitalisation, tech adoption and innovation. Our strong research and development and advanced manufacturing base mean the UK is well placed to develop new products and markets, including for healthier products and in alternative proteins and precision breeding. Agri-Tech is identified as an advanced manufacturing 'Frontier Industry' in the [Industrial Strategy](#) (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/industrial-strategy>). The UK has a significant pipeline of agri-tech businesses, including precision agri-innovation, which will support productivity and growth as the sector matures over the next 5 to 10 years.

The government actively supports research and development to help transform the food system, and is [committed to ensuring that regulation promotes innovation and drives economic growth](#) (<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/regulation-for-growth>). Proportionate and predictable regulation is essential to underpin confidence in the food system, public health and therefore growth (including supporting exports).

Increased volatility in the food system due to climate change, biodiversity loss and geopolitics has potential to impact investment and growth in particular sectors, but also provides opportunities and incentives for innovation. Skills and labour shortages across the supply chain and low profitability and high income volatility from farming and fishing are chronic issues that require a coordinated approach.

Creating a good food cycle

To create an abundant food system that enables economic growth, supports healthier people, an improved natural environment and enhanced resilience and food security, we need to address the dynamics, feedback loops and market failures that maintain negative outcomes. Our approach is to support development of a “good food cycle”.

In a good food cycle, a transparent, stable and predictable policy environment supports investment in the development, production and marketing of healthier and more environmentally sustainable great British food for everyone.

Improved food environments and access to healthier and more environmentally sustainable options, combined with the right knowledge and skills, support consumer behaviour change towards healthier and more sustainable diets. This creates new and growing markets for healthier and more affordable products, produced in the UK and accessible to all, generating further opportunities for growth.

Healthier diets result in a healthier and more productive population, with improved wellbeing, reduced burden on the NHS and a stronger foundation for growth across the economy.

More environmentally sustainable production methods reduce negative impacts on climate and nature, and by conserving biodiversity and improving soil health and water and air quality, conserve the productive capacity of the land and seas for future generations.

Improved resilience to shocks reduces volatility in food availability and prices, strengthening the foundations for economic growth and increasing food security, particularly for the most vulnerable. Together, this process will maintain and enhance food security, as defined in the [UK Food Security Report \(https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/united-kingdom-food-security-report-2024/united-kingdom-food-security-report-2024-introduction#defining-food-security\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/united-kingdom-food-security-report-2024/united-kingdom-food-security-report-2024-introduction#defining-food-security).

To deliver the good food cycle we need to strengthen foundations for food sector and wider economic growth, improve access to and sales of healthier food for all, and ensure the sustainability and resilience of food supply. To ensure positive changes in the food system reach everyone in society, our approach needs to be centred on people as citizens and individuals. It also needs to be grounded in place, working with, strengthening and celebrating local, regional and UK food cultures and supporting work at local and regional level delivered by local councils, strategic authorities, local food partnerships, civil society and citizen groups).

Clear goals

We have identified 10 priority outcomes that are needed to deliver and fully realise the benefits of a healthier, more affordable, sustainable and resilient food system. A food system that celebrates and strengthens our unique food heritage and cultures and supports delivery of the national missions and the Plan for Change. The outcomes are not independent of each other, and there are many interdependencies, synergies and trade-offs between them.

The outcomes relate primarily to England, although they have been designed to align with and support outcomes identified by the devolved governments in their respective food strategies. Further detail on each outcome, including how the outcomes interact with each other, is included in Annex A. Annex B provides an overview of the key current England and UK government policy areas that contribute to the delivery of each outcome.

Healthier and more affordable food

1. An improved food environment that supports healthier and more environmentally sustainable food sales
2. Access for all to safe, affordable, healthy, convenient and appealing food options

Good growth

1. Conditions for the food sector to thrive and grow sustainably, including investment in innovation and productivity, and fairer more transparent supply chains
2. Food sector attracts talent and develops skilled workforce in every region

Sustainable and resilient supply

1. Food supply is environmentally sustainable with high animal welfare standards, and waste is reduced
2. Trade supports environmentally sustainable growth, upholds British standards and expands export opportunities
3. Resilient domestic production for a secure supply of healthier food
4. Greater preparedness for supply chain shocks, disruption, and impacts of chronic risks

Vibrant food cultures

1. Celebrated and valued UK, regional and local food cultures
2. People are more connected to their local food systems, and have the confidence, knowledge and skills to cook and eat healthily

Next steps

Transforming the food system is a long-term project. It will require changes from government, industry, civil society and individuals to deliver a cultural shift in how we value our proud food heritage. Many of the changes will take time to be delivered at scale. Sequencing matters. For example, there is strong evidence that to support healthier and more environmentally sustainable diets, the local food environment needs to improve. Improving the food environment requires businesses to make changes to the products they produce and how they promote and market them, alongside wider changes to our food culture. Businesses need time to prepare and plan for those changes. So government needs to set a clear direction and stick to it. We will continue to engage stakeholders from across the food system as we develop that plan.

Given the breadth and complexity of the food system, delivering the priority outcomes will require a whole of government approach to ensure that the drivers, incentives and feedback loops are aligned to move the system in the right direction. It will require a more coordinated and joined up approach to the broad range of policy areas that impact on food within UK government, between UK and devolved governments, and between UK and local governments.

Many of the delivery mechanisms sit outside of government completely, and most of the outcomes will require action by industry, civil society, and individuals. We have established the Citizens Advisory Council and Food Strategy Advisory Board and will continue to undertake extensive stakeholder engagement to ensure that diverse voices from across the wider food system are heard as we develop implementation plans.

Many of the policy areas and strategies that will be essential to delivery of the food strategy outcomes are still under development, and all will continue to evolve. The delivery of the food strategy outcomes will therefore be subject to agreement of metrics and indicators to support each outcome, and finalisation of these wider strategies and plans. Delivery will need to evolve as these strategies and plans, and the food system itself, evolves and develops, and will need to be supported by appropriate regulation. We are developing mechanisms across government and between UK and devolved governments to ensure improved coordination in our approach.

This will require good coordination between areas of work that have a direct impact on the food sector such as the Land Use Framework, Environment Improvement Plan, Food and Farming Decarbonisation Plan and the forthcoming Carbon Budget and Growth Delivery Plan, Farming Roadmap and Farm Profitability Review, Circular Economy Strategy, and the

objectives of the Fisheries Act 2020 and the Joint Fisheries Statement. It will require a more joined up approach to the use of data across the food system, and our approach to research and innovation, and for government to deliver for the food sector on its commitment to cut administrative costs for businesses by 25% by the end of the parliament. Food is a central element of our SPS agreement negotiations with the EU and will also need to be considered appropriately across a wider range of government policies and strategies including the growth, health, opportunity and clean energy missions, the Industrial, Trade, SME Growth and Child Poverty Strategies, and how we support UK and global food security through our international action, Official Development Assistance and International Climate Finance.

Annexes

- [Annex A – Outcome summaries](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/a-uk-government-food-strategy-for-england/annex-a-outcome-summaries)
(<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/a-uk-government-food-strategy-for-england/annex-a-outcome-summaries>)
- [Annex B – Summary of existing or ongoing UK government policy across the outcomes](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/a-uk-government-food-strategy-for-england/annex-b-summary-of-existing-or-ongoing-uk-government-policy-across-the-outcomes)
(<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/a-uk-government-food-strategy-for-england/annex-b-summary-of-existing-or-ongoing-uk-government-policy-across-the-outcomes>)

Note that devolved food policy areas are not covered in the annexes. You should refer to relevant devolved government food strategies for further detail of devolved government policies.

Endnotes

1. We use the same definition of the ‘food system’ as the FSA’s [2023 Food System Assessment](https://www.food.gov.uk/research/food-system-strategic-assessment-introduction) (<https://www.food.gov.uk/research/food-system-strategic-assessment-introduction>) - “the sum of human activity and interactions with and within the natural and human created environment that are essential for the production, processing, trading, selling and the consumption of food.”
2. In line with the [UK Food Security Report](https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/united-kingdom-food-security-report-2024/united-kingdom-food-security-report-2024-annexes#annex-ii) (<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/united-kingdom-food-security-report-2024/united-kingdom-food-security-report-2024-annexes#annex-ii>), we use the 1996 World Food Summit definition of food security “when all people, at all times, have physical and economic access to sufficient safe and

nutritious food that meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life.”

3. [Land Use Consultation, 2025 - analytical annex](https://consult.defra.gov.uk/land-use-framework/land-use-consultation/supporting_documents/LU_analytical%20annex.pdf) (https://consult.defra.gov.uk/land-use-framework/land-use-consultation/supporting_documents/LU_analytical%20annex.pdf), figures derived from [UK natural capital accounts - Office for National Statistics](https://www.ons.gov.uk/economy/environmentalaccounts/bulletins/uknaturalcapitalaccounts/2024) (<https://www.ons.gov.uk/economy/environmentalaccounts/bulletins/uknaturalcapitalaccounts/2024>)
4. The food environment is made up of the physical, economic, political, and sociocultural surroundings as well as the opportunities and conditions that can influence an individual's food choices.
5. [Policy impact assessment, DHSC 2020](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/61095bfcd3bf7f044d7ad7f8/impact-assessment-restricting-checkout-end-of-aisle-and-store-entrance-sales-of-HFSS.pdf) (<https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/61095bfcd3bf7f044d7ad7f8/impact-assessment-restricting-checkout-end-of-aisle-and-store-entrance-sales-of-HFSS.pdf>): Food promotion restrictions have a modelled cost to retailers and manufacturers c.£6 billion, but are projected to save c.£9 billion in health and social care costs, and £7 billion in economic output (excluding welfare/tax from increased employment) over 25 years.



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