

## Debate Pack

Number CDP 2021/0213  
By Xameerah Malik,  
Agnieszka Suchenia  
14 December 2021

# National Food Strategy and public health

<b>Summary</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>National Food Strategy</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Public health recommendations</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Responses and reactions</b>	<b>5</b>
Sugar and salt tax	6
Free school meals	7
Holiday Activities and Food clubs	8
Healthy Start Scheme	8
Public procurement	9
<b>Parliamentary material</b>	<b>11</b>
1.1 Debates	11
1.2 PQs	11
<b>Further reading material</b>	<b>19</b>
1.3 News items	19
1.4 Press releases	21

## Summary

A Westminster Hall debate on the National Food Strategy and public health is due to take place on Wednesday 15 December 2021 at 9.30 am. The debate will be led by Jo Gideon MP.

## National Food Strategy

In June 2019, the Rt Hon Michael Gove MP, then Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, commissioned Henry Dimbleby to conduct an independent review to help the government create its first National Food Strategy for 75 years. The purpose of the review was “to address the environmental and health problems caused by our food system, to ensure the security of our food supply, and to maximise the benefits of the coming revolution in agricultural technology”.<sup>1</sup>

The National Food Strategy was expected to examine activity across Government departments, building on the Agriculture, Environment and Fisheries Bills (which have since received Royal Assent), the [Industrial Strategy](#) and the [Childhood Obesity Plan](#).<sup>2</sup> It was intended to be an overarching strategy for government, designed to ensure that the food system:

- delivers safe, healthy, affordable food, regardless of where people live or how much they earn;
- is robust in the face of future shocks;
- restores and enhances the natural environment for the next generation in this country;
- is built upon a resilient, sustainable and humane agriculture sector;
- is a thriving contributor to our urban and rural economies, delivering well paid jobs and supporting innovative producers and manufacturers across the country; and
- delivers all this in an efficient and cost-effective way.<sup>3</sup>

The scope of the National Food Strategy is England, but the terms of reference stated that the strategy “will consider our relationships with the devolved administrations, the European Union and our other trading partners”.<sup>4</sup>

[Part One](#) of the National Food Strategy was published in July 2020. [Part Two](#) was published in July 2021.

Henry Dimbleby’s original intention was for Part One to be “a broad analysis of the strengths and flaws of the entire food system from farm to fork, with Part Two following on behind with recommendations”. However, “COVID-19 intervened, and Part One became instead an urgent response to the issues of

---

<sup>1</sup> DEFRA, [National Food Strategy: Call for Evidence](#), 17 August 2019

<sup>2</sup> DEFRA, [National Food Strategy: Call for Evidence](#), 17 August 2019

<sup>3</sup> DEFRA, [National Food Strategy: Call for Evidence](#), 17 August 2019

<sup>4</sup> DEFRA, [Developing a national food strategy: independent review 2019 – terms of reference](#), 29 July 2020

hunger and ill health raised by the pandemic, as well as the trade and food standards issues created by the end of the EU Exit transition period”.<sup>5</sup>

Henry Dimbleby led the independent review supported by an advisory panel and Defra officials. Henry Dimbleby is co-founder of Leon restaurants, the lead non-executive director at Defra and co-author of The School Food Plan.<sup>6</sup>

The Government has promised to respond formally with a Food Strategy in the form of a White Paper within 6 months of publication of the National Food Strategy.<sup>7</sup>

## Public health recommendations

The National Food Strategy highlights that “diet related disease is putting an intolerable strain on our nation’s health and finances – and COVID-19 has only increased the pressure”.<sup>8</sup> Many of the strategy’s recommendations have an implication for public health. Some key recommendations are included here.

Chapter 4 of Part Two of the National Food Strategy focused on “Escaping the junk food cycle”. It found obesity had increased in the UK, that healthy food tended to cost more per calorie and that most marketing money was spent on promoting unhealthy food products.<sup>9</sup> Recommendations included:

- Recommendation 1: Introduce a Sugar and Salt Reformulation Tax. Use some of the revenue to help get fresh fruit and vegetables to low-income families.
- Recommendation 2: Introduce mandatory reporting for large food companies.
- Recommendation 3: Launch a new “Eat and Learn” initiative for schools.

Chapter 5 focused on inequality. It highlighted that people on low incomes are more likely to suffer, and die from, diet-related conditions and that there is a strong correlation between income, educational attainment, and fruit and vegetable consumption. It also found that the most deprived areas tended to have more fast food outlets.<sup>10</sup> Recommendations included:

- Recommendation 4: Extend eligibility for free school meals.
- Recommendation 5: Fund the Holiday Activities and Food programme for the next three years.
- Recommendation 6: Expand the Healthy Start scheme.

---

<sup>5</sup> [The National Food Strategy: The Plan – July 2021](#)

<sup>6</sup> Gov.uk, [National Food Strategy for England](#), July 2021

<sup>7</sup> Gov.uk, [National Food Strategy for England](#), July 2021

<sup>8</sup> [The National Food Strategy: The Plan – July 2021](#)

<sup>9</sup> [The National Food Strategy: The Plan – July 2021](#)

<sup>10</sup> [The National Food Strategy: The Plan – July 2021](#)

- Recommendation 7: Trial a “Community Eatwell” programme, supporting those on low incomes to improve their diets.

In addition, to “create a long-term shift in our food culture”, the strategy included:

- Recommendation 13. Strengthen government procurement rules to ensure that taxpayer money is spent on healthy and sustainable food.<sup>11</sup>

The Government has committed to a range of work on reducing obesity prevalence through its obesity strategy. This includes the soft drinks industry levy, which has funded sports, activities, and breakfast clubs in schools. The Government has also introduced measures to restrict advertising of foods which are high in fat, salt and sugar, and set proposals on reformulation to reduce sugar, salt and calorie content. See our Library briefings on [obesity](#) and [obesity statistics](#) for further information.

## Responses and reactions

The Food Foundation considered that the National Food Strategy was a “bold and exciting plan for the UK food system” and “makes a crystal-clear case for the need for Government intervention, explaining why it would be near-impossible for citizens to make the necessary changes to their diets on their own”.<sup>12</sup>

School Food Matters “wholeheartedly support this bold and ambitious strategy, particularly the recommendations to extend free school meals, to commit to at least three years funding for the Holiday Food and Activities programme and to reframe food education as subject worthy of the same attention as English and Maths”.<sup>13</sup>

In contrast, industry body the Food and Drink Federation welcomed the intent of the strategy but opposed proposals for a sugar and salt tax<sup>14</sup>. This is covered below.

Politico reported that after the strategy’s publication in 2021, “top line recommendations would be rejected and were considered completely unworkable by ministers”.<sup>15</sup> According to the Guardian, the Prime Minister stated:

---

<sup>11</sup> National Food Strategy, [Recommendations in full](#), July 2021

<sup>12</sup> Food Foundation, [Food Foundation welcomes bold and exciting National Food Strategy](#), July 2021

<sup>13</sup> School Food Matters, [National Food Strategy Part Two is here!](#), 15 July 2021

<sup>14</sup> FDF, [National Food Strategy](#), accessed 13 December 2021

<sup>15</sup> Politico, [London Playbook](#), 15 July 2021

*It's an independent report. I think there are doubtless some good ideas in it. [...] we believe in tackling obesity, trying to help people to lose weight, promoting exercise and tackling junk food advertising and so on.*<sup>16</sup>

The Government has said that it will “consider the evidence of Henry Dimbleby’s independent review throughout the development of the Food Strategy”.<sup>17</sup>

## Sugar and salt tax

The National Food Strategy proposed the introduction of a sugar and salt reformulation tax. It recommended that:

*The Government should introduce a £3/kg tax on sugar and a £6/kg tax on salt sold for use in processed foods or in restaurants and catering businesses. This would create an incentive for manufacturers to reduce the levels of sugar and salt in their products, by reformulating their recipes or reducing their portion sizes.*

*The CEOs of major food companies have told us privately that they cannot make these changes without Government intervention. They need a level playing field if they are to start making their products healthier, otherwise the competition will simply move in and undercut them.*<sup>18</sup>

The Food and Drink Federation (FDF), representing over 800 businesses, welcomed the National Food Strategy’s “intent to bring forward measures which will help to increase access and affordability of food and drink for children and families on lower incomes”. However, the FDF firmly opposed the proposals for a sugar and salt tax, which it considered “will not help to reduce obesity, and will only increase the cost of food for families – particularly those on lower incomes”.<sup>19</sup>

The National Food Strategy referred to the [Soft Drinks Industry Levy \(SDIL\)](#) as a “clear and effective precedent”, which “is estimated to have already resulted in 36,000 fewer cases of obesity in children and teenagers in England, and 6,200 fewer decayed and missing teeth”.<sup>20</sup> The Food and Drink Sector Council (FDSC), which brings together representatives from across the agri-food chain, highlighted that “while soft drinks subject to the Soft Drinks Industry Levy have seen successful reformulation, we have seen comparative progress in milk-based drinks with no such levy applied”. The FDSC concluded that “the case has not yet been made that a widespread use of levies and

---

<sup>16</sup> The Guardian, [Boris Johnson appears to rule out sugar and salt tax to tackle junk food reliance](#), 15 July 2021

<sup>17</sup> [HC Deb 03 Dec 2021](#)

<sup>18</sup> National Food Strategy, [Recommendations in full](#), July 2021

<sup>19</sup> FDF, [National Food Strategy](#), accessed 13 December 2021

<sup>20</sup> National Food Strategy, [Recommendations in full](#), July 2021

taxes would lead to reformulation, rather than higher prices, often for those least able to afford them”.<sup>21</sup>

The strategy been broadly welcomed by nutritionists, doctors and environmental campaigners”.<sup>22</sup> Action on Sugar described the sugar tax as vital and added that it would “fix the current issues seen with the voluntary sugar reduction programme. Action on Salt considered that “not only will the tax incentivise further innovation and reformulation, such as the use of potassium chloride – which is less harmful to health than conventional salt, it will build a better food system for a healthier nation”.<sup>23</sup>

When asked about the proposal in July 2021, the Prime Minister responded: “I’m not, I must say, attracted to the idea of extra taxes on hardworking people. Let me just signal that. I shall study the report with interest”.<sup>24</sup>

For further information about the SDIL, see our Library briefings on [obesity](#).

## Free school meals

The National Food Strategy explained that:

*In Key Stage 1 (Reception to Year 2), all children receive free school meals (FSM). After that, the eligibility threshold is set at an annual household income of less than £7,400 before benefits. In other words, you have to be extremely poor to qualify. This means there are some children from low-income households going hungry.*<sup>25</sup>

The strategy found that “increasing the earnings threshold to £20,000 before benefits would ensure that 82% of children in households with “very low food security” (as defined by the Government) would be eligible for free school meals, as well as 70% of those facing ‘low food security’”. Increasing the earnings threshold and extending Free School Meals to households with No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF), would cost the Government £544 million annually on average, and would mean “a total of 1.1 million additional children getting a freshly cooked, free lunch every day”.<sup>26</sup>

The Government has not implemented this recommendation.<sup>27</sup>

---

<sup>21</sup> Food and Drink Sector Council, [Feeding the Future: Working together to build the National Food Strategy](#), 8 October 2021

<sup>22</sup> FT, [Boris Johnson rejects proposal to tax sugar and salt in food](#), 15 July 2021

<sup>23</sup> Action on Salt, [National Food Strategy](#), 15 July 2021

<sup>24</sup> The Guardian, [Boris Johnson appears to rule out sugar and salt tax to tackle junk food reliance](#), 15 July 2021

<sup>25</sup> [The National Food Strategy: The Plan – July 2021](#)

<sup>26</sup> [The National Food Strategy: The Plan – July 2021](#)

<sup>27</sup> [The National Food Strategy: The Plan – July 2021](#)

## Holiday Activities and Food clubs

In response to recommendations in Part One of the National Food Strategy, published in 2020, the Government made Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) clubs available to all children on free school meals for the duration of 2021. These holiday clubs will run four days a week for four weeks over the summer and Christmas. They provide hot food, cooking lessons, sports and fun activities for children, as well as advice for families and carers on nutrition. The majority of local authorities are also making these clubs available to children who aren't eligible for FSM, for a small fee.<sup>28</sup>

These programmes are funded until the end of 2021. The National Food Strategy recommended “that the Government extend them for at least the next three years, or until the next Spending Review” and that they “should include children in households on qualifying benefits earning less than £20,000”.<sup>29</sup>

## Healthy Start Scheme

Healthy start vouchers are available in England, Wales and Northern Ireland to help those who are more than 10 weeks pregnant or have a child under four years old to buy healthy food and milk. Certain conditions may apply, such as receipt of benefits.<sup>30</sup>

Part One of the National Food Strategy recommended that Healthy Start vouchers should be increased to £4.25 a week, and expanded to include every pregnant woman and to all households with children under four where a parent or guardian is in receipt of Universal Credit or equivalent benefits.<sup>31</sup>

In response, the Government has increased the value of Healthy Start vouchers from £3.10 to £4.25 per week. Parents or carers of babies under 12 months now receive two Healthy Start vouchers per week. Several national supermarket chains are also supplementing the value of the vouchers.<sup>32</sup>

---

<sup>28</sup> [The National Food Strategy: The Plan – July 2021](#); Department for Education, [Holiday activities and food programme 2021](#), updated 14 July 2021

<sup>29</sup> [The National Food Strategy: The Plan – July 2021](#)

<sup>30</sup> NHS, [Get help to buy food and milk](#), accessed 14 December 2021; for Scotland, there are the [Best Start Grant and Best Start Foods](#)

<sup>31</sup> [The National Food Strategy: Part One – July 2020](#)

<sup>32</sup> [The National Food Strategy: The Plan – July 2021](#)



## Public procurement

The National Food strategy recommended that government procurement rules should be strengthened to ensure that taxpayer money is spent on healthy and sustainable food.<sup>33</sup>

The Government Buying Standards for Food and Catering Services (GBSF) include mandatory nutrition standards. They also include voluntary best practice nutrition standards. All central government departments in England and their agencies are required to comply with the GBSF, as are prisons, the armed forces and the NHS. Schools must follow the school food standards legislation but may also choose to use the GBSF. The wider public sector is encouraged to apply these standards, including to food and drink offered in vending machines (for example, in leisure centres).<sup>34</sup>

The Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee published a report on Public sector procurement of food in April 2021.<sup>35</sup> In response, the Government stated:

*We agree the GBSF requires updating and should evolve to reflect government priorities and latest evidence. [...] We have therefore committed to a substantial update of the GBSF, with a consultation launching this summer. [...]*

*On nutrition specifically, we committed to updating the GBSF chapter on nutritional standards following the Childhood Obesity Plan Chapter 2, published in June 2018. The new nutritional standards bring the GBSF in line with the most up to date guidance from the Scientific Advisory Committee on Nutrition. The GBSF consultation will review further changes concerning sustainable, healthy diets.<sup>36</sup>*

In August 2021, the Government published the outcome of its consultation on updating the nutrition standards in the GBSF. The Government has decided to:

- update the reducing salt mandatory and voluntary nutrition standards to reflect government's 2017 salt targets as referenced in the consultation document, and any subsequent revisions as set out in the recently published 2024 targets;

---

<sup>33</sup> National Food Strategy, [Recommendations in full](#), July 2021

<sup>34</sup> Gov.uk, [The government buying standards for food and catering services \(GBSF\) – updating the nutrition standards: response to consultation](#), 9 August 2021

<sup>35</sup> Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee, [Public sector procurement of Food](#), 21 April 2021, HC 469

<sup>36</sup> Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee, [Public Sector Procurement of Food: Government Response to the Committee's Sixth Report of Session 2019–21](#), HC 499

- update the meal deals mandatory nutrition standard to ensure food and drinks used within meal deals meet the healthier options in the GBSF standards;
- update the reducing saturated fat mandatory nutrition standard to include pre-packed sandwiches and other pre-packed meals;
- update the increasing fibre voluntary best practice nutrition standard, to ensure main meals containing beans or pulses (or both) as a main source of protein are made available at least once a week; and
- retain the best practice nutrition standard requirement for menus (for food and beverages).<sup>37</sup>

---

<sup>37</sup> Gov.uk, [The government buying standards for food and catering services \(GBSE\) – updating the nutrition standards: response to consultation](#), 9 August 2021

# Parliamentary material

## 1.1

### Debates

#### [National Food Strategy Report](#)

HL Deb 17 November 2021 | Vol 816 c282-

#### [National Food Strategy: Government Response](#)

HC Deb 28 October 2021 | Vol 702 c372-

#### [National Food Strategy: Small-scale Family Farms](#)

HC Deb 22 July 2021 | Vol 699 c1110-

#### [National Food Strategy Independent Review](#)

HL Deb 20 July 2021 | Vol 814 c131-

## 1.2

### PQs

#### [Food](#)

Asked by: **Bradley, Ben**

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if the Government's response to the National Food Strategy will consider the significant pressures that the food and logistics sectors are under and deliver strategies to tackle those pressures.

Answering member: **Victoria Prentis | Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs**

The UK has a highly resilient food supply chain, as demonstrated throughout the Covid-19 response. There are well-established ways of industry and

government working together to respond to risks that arise, including the recent challenges to our supply chains brought on by global pressures. The forthcoming UK Food Resilience Report will set out the detailed evidence around the resilience of our food supply chains.

The Government Food Strategy will build on the UK Food Resilience Report, and identify new opportunities to drive long-term change to make the food system healthier, more sustainable, more resilient, and more accessible for those across the UK. This will include consideration of the immediate pressures facing the sector.

**HC Deb 06 Dec 2021 | PQ 82371**

### [Food](#)

Asked by: **Gideon, Jo**

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, when he will publish the Government's response to recommendations of the National Food Strategy.

Answering member: **Victoria Prentis | Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs**

The Government will publish a Food Strategy in early 2022. This will consider the evidence of Henry Dimbleby's review of the food system and build on existing work across Government to identify new opportunities to make the food system healthier, more sustainable, more resilient, and more accessible for those across the UK.

**HC Deb 03 Dec 2021 | PQ 84496**

### [Food](#)

Asked by: **Carden, Dan**

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what recent discussions he has had with Ministers in (a) the Department of Health and Social Care, (b) Cabinet Office, (c) Department for International Trade, (d) Department for Education and (e) other Government departments on the (i) recommendations of the National Food Strategy and (ii) development of the Government Food Strategy.

Answering member: **Victoria Prentis | Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs**

The forthcoming Government Food Strategy is a once in a generation opportunity to create a food system that feeds our nation today and protects it for tomorrow. It will cover the entire food system from farm to fork, building

on work already underway in the Agriculture Act, Fisheries Act, and Environment Bill as well as docking into wider Government priorities, including Net Zero, 25 Year Environment Plan, and Build Back Greener. It will also consider the evidence of Henry Dimbleby's independent review of the food system.

Defra is therefore working very closely with all other relevant Departments on the Food Strategy – at official and Ministerial levels - to identify new opportunities to make the food system healthier, more sustainable, more resilient, and more accessible for those across the UK.

**HC Deb 03 Dec 2021 | PQ 84455**

### [Food](#)

Asked by: **Bradley, Ben**

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, when the Government plans to publish its response to the National Food Strategy.

Answering member: **Victoria Prentis | Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs**

The forthcoming Government Food Strategy is a once in a generation opportunity to create a food system that feeds our nation today and protects it for tomorrow. It will build on existing work across Government and identify new opportunities to make the food system healthier, more sustainable, more resilient, and more accessible for those across the UK. We will also look to drive growth and innovation across the agri-food chain and set a direction for key players within the food system.

The Government will consider the evidence of Henry Dimbleby's independent review throughout the development of the Food Strategy.

The Food Strategy will be published in early 2022.

**HC Deb 03 Dec 2021 | PQ 82063**

### [National Food Strategy Report](#)

Asked by: **Baroness Boycott (CB)**

My Lords, today there is another depressing result from the national child measurement programme, which pointed out that there was a 4.5% increase during the pandemic in the proportion of children aged four to five who are obese. Obviously, the existing government obesity strategy is really not working, which is why we need the food plan to be implemented. Assuming that we publish a White Paper in response to the strategy, will that lead to a food Bill? That is what we urgently need.

Answered by: **Lord Benyon (Con)**

The food strategy will be in the form of a White Paper, which is usually the precursor to legislation, and this House will be kept fully informed about this. The obesity strategy has been developed through a huge amount of work, not least by outside bodies such as the Centre for Social Justice. It is there to help people already living with obesity, including funding weight management services, but also to create a food environment and culture that makes it easy for everyone, regardless of their circumstances, to live a healthier life.

**HL Deb 17 Nov 2021 | Oral questions - Supplementary | Vol 816 c283**

### Food

Asked by: **Baroness Jones of Whitchurch**

To ask Her Majesty's Government when they will publish their response to the National Food Strategy: Part One report, published on 29 July.

Answering member: **Lord Benyon | Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs**

Part One of Henry Dimbleby's independent review of the food system was published on 29 July 2020 and contained recommendations on trade and food security in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Government has already acted on these recommendations, with the announcement of the Covid Winter Support package on 8 November 2020 that ensured vulnerable households would not go hungry, and with announcements on trade last year, which included putting the Trade and Agriculture Commission onto a statutory footing.

The second and final report from the independent review of the food system was published on 15 July 2021. We would like to thank Henry Dimbleby and his team for their work over the last year examining our food system and the vital role it plays in all our lives.

We are considering the evidence Henry Dimbleby set out in both parts of his independent review, which will inform the Government's Food Strategy that will be published in early 2022.

The forthcoming Government Food Strategy is a once in a generation opportunity to create a food system that feeds our nation today and protects it for tomorrow. It will build on existing work across Government and identify new opportunities to make the food system healthier, more sustainable, more resilient, and more accessible for those across the UK. We will also look to drive growth and innovation across the agri-food chain and set a direction for key players within the food system.

**HL Deb 04 Nov 2021 | PQ 3291**

## [Food](#)

Asked by: **Thewliss, Alison**

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he is taking to ensure that consideration of the food and nutrition needs of infants and young children, and associated challenges facing young families, is included in the forthcoming White Paper on the National Food Strategy.

Answering member: **Victoria Prentis | Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs**

The forthcoming Government Food Strategy is a once-in-a-generation opportunity to create a food system that feeds our nation today and protects it for tomorrow. It will build upon work already underway in the Agriculture Act, Fisheries Act, and Environment Bill as well as docking into wider Government priorities, such as the obesity strategy.

The Government is wholly committed to supporting people on lower incomes, for example through increasing the living wage and spending over £111 billion on welfare support for people of working age in 2021/22.

It is also supporting the health and nutrition of young families through initiatives like the School Fruit and Vegetable Scheme and this year's increase to The Healthy Start voucher value. The School Fruit and Vegetable Scheme provides a free piece of fruit or vegetable to every child in Key Stage 1 at state-funded primary schools on every school day, while the Healthy Start vouchers encourage a healthy diet for pregnant women, babies and young children from low-income households, and increased in value from £3.10 to £4.25 from April 2021.

Defra will continue to work closely with all other relevant Departments across Whitehall to develop a plan to ensure the food system is sustainable and affordable, supporting people and families to live healthy lives, and incorporate within our Food Strategy

**HC Deb 03 Nov 2021 | PQ 58422**

## [Food](#)

Asked by: **Lewer, Andrew**

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, with reference to the National Food Strategy, published in July 2021, what plans he has to consult UK-based food and drinks manufacturers on the recommendation that that he should bring forward a Good Food Bill before Parliament in the fourth session of the 2019–2024.

Answering member: **Victoria Prentis | Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs**

The forthcoming Government Food Strategy White Paper is a once in a generation opportunity to create a food system that feeds our nation today and protects it for tomorrow. The Government will consider the contents of Henry Dimbleby's independent review when developing the Food Strategy White Paper including the recommendation for legislative measures.

We are committed to listening to opinions from stakeholders across the entirety of the food system and will encourage dialogue with a wide range of external and internal stakeholders to identify any policy gaps or potential options to transform the food system.

The Food Strategy White Paper will build upon work already underway in the Agriculture Act, Fisheries Act, and Environment Bill as well as docking into wider Government priorities, including Net Zero, 25 Year Environment Plan, and Build Back Greener. We will consider the need for mandatory or voluntary policy interventions as part of the White Paper and evaluate the need for additional primary and secondary legislation throughout its development.

**HC Deb 22 Sep 2021 | PQ 49254**

#### [Schools: Food](#)

Asked by: **McCarthy, Kerry**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what discussions he has had with departmental colleagues on the introduction of an updated Reference Diet as set out in recommendation 14 of the National Food Strategy.

Answering member: **Vicky Ford | Department for Education**

The School Food Standards provide the legislative framework to ensure schools provide children with healthy food and drink options, and to make sure that children get the energy and nutrition they need across the school day. The School Food Standards are in line with current government advice on red and processed meat, encouraging schools to serve it in moderation as a good source of nutrients, including iron, zinc and vitamin B12.

Work to update the standards was paused during the COVID-19 outbreak. We do however keep this position under review, and are working with the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs to carefully consider the National Food Strategy's recommendations and will respond in full with a White Paper in due course.

**HC Deb 13 Sep 2021 | PQ 45060**

#### [National Food Strategy: Small-scale Family Farms](#)

Asked by: **Neil Parish**



The National Food Strategy has recommended that the Government must define the minimum standards we will accept in future free trade deals and a “mechanism for protecting them”. The report says that without that there is “serious peril” that tariff-free deals could not only “compromise” our own attempts to drive up these standards, but allow cheap imports, which would “undercut” our farmers. Given that the Trade and Agriculture Commission already made exactly that recommendation in its March report, almost five months ago, can the Secretary of State tell me when these core standards will be set out and whether that mechanism for defending them will be in place before the Australia deal is signed?

Answered by: **George Eustice | Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs**

The Government are working on a sanitary and phytosanitary policy statement that will set out the UK’s farm-to-fork approach on these matters, the science of good farm husbandry and how that improves food safety standards. We also have some key things in our legislation, such as bans on the use of hormones in beef and of chlorinated washes. Those are in our legislation and will not change.

**HC Deb 22 Jul 2021 | Oral questions - Supplementary | Vol 699 c1109**

### [Meat: Consumption](#)

Asked by: **Whitehead, Dr Alan**

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, with reference to recommendation in the report published in July 2021 by the National Food Strategy that meat consumption in the UK should be reduced by 30 per cent by 2030 to protect people's health, the environment and the planet, whether his Department plans to take steps to (a) incentivise investment in alternatives to animal-based foods and (b) support business innovation in the plant-based protein sector.

Answering member: **Victoria Prentis | Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs**

We are grateful to Henry Dimbleby and his team for their work on this independent review examining our food system and the vital role it plays in all our lives. We are committed carefully to consider the Independent Review and its recommendations and will be responding in full with a White Paper in the next six months. The White Paper will set out the Government’s ambition and priorities for a food system that will deliver for people, nature and climate, and support our farmers to produce the high-quality, high-welfare produce for which they are renowned.

**HC Deb 06 Sep 2021 | PQ 40571**

[National Food Strategy Independent Review](#)

Asked by: **Lord Bourne of Aberystwyth**

My Lords, the national food strategy is clearly important and timely. It should help us as a country combat carbon emissions and deal with the obesity crisis, so graphically underlined by the pandemic. Like others, I encourage the Minister to bear in mind the great success of the soft drinks industry with the 28% reduction of sugar, inducing change in producer behaviour. I also ask my noble friend to ensure that there is concerted action in this important area across the devolved Administrations.

Answered by: **Lord Benyon**

My Lords, Henry Dimbleby's report was focused on England, but he worked very closely with the devolved Administrations as well. Our food network and supply chains are interwoven, as they are with the European Union and beyond, so we absolutely will.

**HL Deb 20 Jul 2021 | Oral questions - Supplementary | Vol 814 c132**

[National Food Strategy: Small-scale Family Farms](#)

Asked by: **Mr Philip Hollobone**

What steps he is taking to help ensure the National Food Strategy provides a sustainable future for small-scale family farms.

Answered by: **The Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (George Eustice)**

The Government thank Henry Dimbleby and his team for their work on the independent review of the food system. We are committed to carefully considering the review and its recommendations, and responding in full with a White Paper in the next six months. That will set out our ambition and priorities for the food system to support farms of all sizes and our exceptional food and drink producers.

**HC Deb 22 Jul 2021 | Oral questions I Vol 699 cc1109-1110**

[Developing a National Food Strategy Independent Review](#)

Asked by: **Baroness Mone**

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to reports of a link between COVID-19 mortality and obesity, what plans they have to accelerate work on the National Food Strategy.

Answering member: **Lord Gardiner of Kimble | Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs**

In 2019, the Government asked Henry Dimbleby to carry out an independent review of the entire food sector. Part One of that review was published in July 2020 with a chapter on health highlighting the link between obesity and Covid-19 mortality. Part Two of the independent review will be published in 2021 and will continue to address the challenges associated with supporting people to eat a healthy diet. The Government has committed to responding to the review and its recommendations in the form of a Food Strategy White Paper within six months of the release of the second and final report.

**HL Deb 23 Nov 2020 | PQ 10086**

## Further reading material

### 1.3

#### News items

The Independent

[Food strategy dismissed by Boris Johnson may still be introduced, insists PM's tsar](#)

28 August 2021

The Guardian

[National food strategy set out: banishing pollution and poverty for sustainability](#)

29 July 2021

The Conversation

[What is the National Food Strategy and how could it change the way England eats?](#)

21 July 2021

The Big Issue

[What is the national food strategy?](#)

15 July 2021

Farming UK

[UK meat consumption must be reduced by 30%, food strategy says](#)

15 July 2021

The Guardian

[School meals, cooking culture and farm tech: key points of the food strategy](#)

15 July 2021

The Times

[Call for sugar and salt tax as food tsar Henry Dimbleby rewrites British diet](#)

15 July 2021

The Times

[Free fruit and veg planned for the poor in National Food Strategy](#)

10 July 2021

Financial Times

[Food review calls for £1bn 'nutritional safety net' to fight obesity](#)

29 July 2020

BBC News Online

[Unhealthy diets are 'slow-motion disaster'](#)

29 July 2020

## 1.4 Press releases

The Food Foundation

[Food Foundation Welcomes 'Bold and Exciting' National Food Strategy](#)

15 July 2021

Food and Drink Federation

[Response to the publication of the second part of the National Food Strategy](#)

15 July 2021

Chartered Institute of Environmental Health

[National Food Strategy much needed and long overdue](#)

16 July 2021

## 1.5 Further reading

Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee

[Oral evidence: National Food Strategy](#)

HC 686 | 21 September 2021

GOV.UK

[National food strategy for England \(part one and two\)](#)

15 July 2021

Science Media Centre

[Expert reaction to the National Food Strategy](#)

15 July 2021

Global Food Security Programme

[Resilience of the UK Food System in a Global Context: key messages for stakeholders](#)

7 December 2021

Global Food Security Programme

[Resilience of the UK Food System in a Global Context: Interdisciplinary research to enhance UK food security in a changing world](#)

Select Committee on Food, Poverty, Health and the Environment

[Hungry for change: fixing the failures in food](#)

HL Paper 85 | 6 July 2020

Select Committee on Food, Poverty, Health and the Environment

[COVID-19 and food supply, First Report of Session 2019–21](#)

HC Paper 263 | 30 July 2020

[Henry Dimbleby Speech to the Oxford Farming Conference 2020](#)

8 January 2020

[National Food Strategy Advisory Panel Announced](#)

5 November 2019

The Food Foundation: <https://foodfoundation.org.uk/>

APPG on the National Food Strategy:

<https://foodfoundation.org.uk/initiatives/appg-national-food-strategy>

### Disclaimer

The Commons Library does not intend the information in our research publications and briefings to address the specific circumstances of any particular individual. We have published it to support the work of MPs. You should not rely upon it as legal or professional advice, or as a substitute for it. We do not accept any liability whatsoever for any errors, omissions or misstatements contained herein. You should consult a suitably qualified professional if you require specific advice or information. Read our briefing '[Legal help: where to go and how to pay](#)' for further information about sources of legal advice and help. This information is provided subject to the conditions of the Open Parliament Licence.

### Feedback

Every effort is made to ensure that the information contained in these publicly available briefings is correct at the time of publication. Readers should be aware however that briefings are not necessarily updated to reflect subsequent changes.

If you have any comments on our briefings please email [papers@parliament.uk](mailto:papers@parliament.uk). Please note that authors are not always able to engage in discussions with members of the public who express opinions about the content of our research, although we will carefully consider and correct any factual errors.

You can read our feedback and complaints policy and our editorial policy at [commonslibrary.parliament.uk](https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk). If you have general questions about the work of the House of Commons email [hcenquiries@parliament.uk](mailto:hcenquiries@parliament.uk).

The House of Commons Library is a research and information service based in the UK Parliament. Our impartial analysis, statistical research and resources help MPs and their staff scrutinise legislation, develop policy, and support constituents.

Our published material is available to everyone on [commonslibrary.parliament.uk](https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk).

Get our latest research delivered straight to your inbox. Subscribe at [commonslibrary.parliament.uk/subscribe](https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/subscribe) or scan the code below:



 [commonslibrary.parliament.uk](https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk)

 [@commonslibrary](https://twitter.com/commonslibrary)