

Debate Pack
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Debate on supporting local food infrastructure

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Summary

A debate has been scheduled in Westminster Hall at 1.50pm on Thursday 8 September 2022 on supporting local food infrastructure. The subject for this debate has been chosen by the Backbench Business Committee and the debate will be opened by Peter Aldous MP.

Complex food supply chains

There are many stages in getting the UK's food from farm to fork, and many of these are interlinked in a complex network at a national or even international scale. The UK currently produces about 60% of its domestic food consumption by economic value, part of which is exported. This means just under half of the actual food on plates is produced in the UK, including the majority of grains, meat, dairy, and eggs.

The Government's [UK Food Security Report 2021](#) describes the UK's food supply chain as a "highly complex system". Government strategies, including the 2021 [UK Food Security Report](#) and the 2022 [national Food Strategy](#), aim to ensure the resilience of the food supply system so that UK consumers have choice in accessing healthy and affordable food. The Food Strategy also emphasises the need to account for climate change and to tackle environmental challenges.

Benefits of local food systems

Part of the framework for sustainable food systems is the local production, processing and retailing of products. While [some academics question the overall environmental benefits](#) of relying too heavily on local production, [local food movements](#) emphasise the benefits to be gained from local supply chains. They highlight the role of local food producers, processors and retailers in supplying UK consumers in a socially and environmentally sustainable manner. Studies also report benefits to local economies from local food systems. For example, the

[Campaign for Rural England](#) reported that, pound for pound, spending in smaller independent local food outlets supports three times the number of jobs than spending at national grocery chains.

There are a large number of local policy levers to support local food infrastructure, from planning policies to funding for infrastructure investment. Local authorities have a wide range of tools at their disposal to encourage and support local food infrastructure. Community-led initiatives to support local food production systems include food hubs, allotment societies, and city farms.

A key policy lever to encourage local food infrastructure is public sector procurement. The Government is consulting on a target for certain public sector organisations to spend at least 50% of food procurement budgets on locally produced food or food certified to higher environmental production standards. If adopted, progress towards this target would be reported on annually.

Food price challenges

Even when food is readily available and cheap, some households cannot access food because their incomes are too low.

In 2020/21, [4.2 million people in the UK \(6%\) were in food insecure households](#) in the UK, and in 2021/22, the [Trussell Trust supplied 2.2 million three-day emergency food parcels](#) to food bank users.

Increasing food prices and the rising cost of living means more people are experiencing food insecurity and visiting food banks. A YouGov survey by the [Food Foundation found that 12.8% of people in the UK had eaten less or skipped meals](#), 8.8% had not eaten when they were hungry, and 4.6% had gone a whole day without eating in the month to April 2022. The [Trussell Trust saw a 22% increase in demand for food parcels](#) in January to February 2022 compared to the same period in 2020.

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Food infrastructure in the UK

There are many stages in getting the UK's food from farm to fork, and many of these are interlinked in complex national or even international systems.

The Government's [UK Food Security Report 2021](#) described the UK's food supply chain as a "highly complex system" that encompasses:

- primary producers (for example, farming, fishing);
- food manufacturing (for example, factories, process plants, mills, refineries, production plants);
- logistics (for example, storage, distribution centres, transportation, ports);
- wholesale and retail (for example, wholesalers, supermarkets, local businesses);
- food services (for example, restaurants, cafes and caterers).

The Government's Food Security Report also explained the UK's reliance on international trade for food supply:

The UK currently produces about 60% of its domestic food consumption by economic value, part of which is exported. This means just under half of the actual food on plates is produced in the UK, including the majority of grains, meat, dairy, and eggs.¹

¹ Defra, [United Kingdom Food Security Report 2021: Theme 2: UK food supply sources](#), 22 December 2021

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Benefits of local food systems

Shortening supply chains and bringing food marketing closer to the point of production is seen by [local food movements](#) as a positive step for the environment and local communities. These groups emphasise the role of local food producers, processors and retailers in supplying UK consumers' needs in an environmentally and socially sustainable manner.² [Environmental benefits cited include](#) reduced carbon emissions from transporting products shorter distances and reducing water use by encouraging seasonal product consumption.³ Some [academic studies however pose questions about the environmental benefits](#) of a reliance on local food production, concluding that their results do not support "claims that local food is universally superior to non-local food in terms of its impact on the climate or the health of consumers".⁴

A [Campaign for the Protection of Rural England \(CPRE\) report, From Field to Fork](#) [pdf], published in 2012, concluded that there were significant economic benefits for local economies from local food sales. For example, pound for pound, spending in smaller independent local food outlets supports three times the number of jobs than at national grocery chains. Nationally, based on extrapolations from data from all the studied locations, the report broadly estimated that at that time local food sales through independent outlets could be worth £2.7 billion a year, supporting over 103,000 full and part-time jobs. It noted that money spent in local food networks would be re-circulated in the local economy for longer, possibly contributing £6.75 of total value to local economies.

The report also noted other economic benefits of local supply chains:

- distinctive, fresh local produce gives outlets a strong selling point;
- outlets contribute to the character of market and other towns, drawing visitors and food tourists;
- networks of local outlets reduce risk for producers of relying on fewer larger contracts;
- they offer markets for smaller producers (69% were microbusinesses and 28% small businesses);

² Sustainable Food Places, [Good Food Movement webpages](#) (accessed 23 August 2022)

³ Cambridge Food Hub, [Sustainable Food Policy](#) (accessed 23 August 2022)

⁴ Gareth Edwards-Jones, National Library of Medicine, [Does eating local food reduce the environmental impact of food production and enhance consumer health?](#) November 2010

- local food webs are vital seed beds for innovation and new enterprises trialling products.⁵

A [report published by sustainable food and farming charity, Sustain, on the Case for Local Food in July 2021](#) noted that local food systems allow for a larger proportion of revenues to be retained in the local economy:

every £10 spent with the [local food] box scheme results in total spending of £25 in the local area, compared with just £14 when the same amount is spent in a supermarket. A shift to more localised food systems would help level up the country, with every part of the UK having the potential to benefit.⁶

⁵ CPRE, [From field to Fork: The Value of England's Local Food Webs](#), July 2021 [pdf]

⁶ Sustain, [The Case for Local Food](#), July 2021

3 Local food infrastructure

3.1 Local food production

Much of the UK's food production comes from larger farms and holdings. The [Agriculture in the United Kingdom 2021](#) report, published by the Department of the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) states that in 2021 there were 216,000 agricultural holdings. Some 13 million hectares out a total of around 17.5 million hectares of land in the UK used for farm holdings were on holdings larger than 100 hectares. Only 713,000 hectares were on holdings under 20 hectares in size.⁷

There are a number of initiatives to support local, small scale food production. The community-supported agriculture model started in Japan in the 1960s where it is known as 'teikei' or 'food with the farmer's face on it'. The Soil Association defines CSA as a partnership between farmers and the local community, in which the responsibilities, risks and rewards of farming are shared. This can be through ownership, investment, sharing production costs, or providing labour.⁸ The [Soil Association](#) supports the Sustainable Food Places Network (previously Sustainable Food Cities) which brings together local food partnerships from across the UK. It states that:

In towns, cities, boroughs, districts and counties, these partnerships are driving innovation and best practice on all aspects of healthy and sustainable food.

Sustainable Food Places provide grants, advice and support to enable local food partnerships to drive changes to local policy and practice and to undertake campaigns, practical projects and public engagement initiatives.⁹

As a further example, [city farms](#) provide a local focus for food production and for connecting local communities with farming and the natural environment. Allotments are another valued element of local community land use. An allotment is an area of land, leased either from a private or local authority landlord, for the use of growing fruit and vegetables. In some cases this land will also be used for the growing of ornamental plants, and the keeping of hens, rabbits and bees. An allotment is traditionally measured in rods (perches or poles), an old measurement dating back to Anglo-Saxon times. 10 poles is the accepted size of an

⁷ Defra, [Agriculture in the United Kingdom 2021](#), July 2022, Chapter 2, table 2.3

⁸ CPRE, [From field to Fork: The Value of England's Local Food Webs](#), July 2021 [pdf]

⁹ Soil Association, [Sustainable Food Places webpages - SoilAssociation.org](#) (accessed 23 August 2022)

allotment, the equivalent of 250 square metres or about the size of a doubles tennis court.

If an allotment is on land owned by the local authority then it will either be classed a statutory or temporary site. Statutory sites are protected by the Allotments Acts. For example, if a local authority wishes to dispose of an allotment site then it must offer alternative local provision. [Allotment disposal guidance: safeguards and alternatives - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/61442/allotment_disposal_guidance_safeguards_and_alternatives.pdf)

For further information on allotments see webpages by the National Society of Allotments and Leisure Gardeners:

[Allotment Info – The National Allotment Society – National Society of Allotment and Leisure Gardeners Ltd \(nsalg.org.uk\)](https://www.nsalg.org.uk/allotment-info)

3.2 Local processing: Abattoirs

A challenge for local food processing has been the consolidation in the geographical spread of abattoirs in recent years. A number of local abattoirs have closed meaning that animals must travel further distances to slaughter, raising animal welfare issues as well as increasing costs for farmers. This issue was the subject of a report by an All Party Parliamentary Group local abattoirs, the [Future for Small Abattoirs in the UK \[pdf\]](#).¹⁰ The report noted that “small abattoirs face large overheads with very low profit margins”. There had been a large rate of closures for smaller abattoirs, often known as micro-abattoirs. The APPG considered that:

Without emergency interim support further small abattoir closures are unavoidable. [...] Current rural business grants and opportunities come with entry criteria which are difficult to fulfil for small abattoirs.

Providing slaughter options that enable shorter journey times from point of rearing to point of slaughter and which enable ‘private kill’ - thus the potential to process and add value close to the source of production – have clear benefits for animal welfare, the environment and the rural economy.

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The APPG report also concluded that the Government’s criteria for capital payments under environmental schemes was limited to paying farmers for activities that delivered ‘public good’ without taking into account “the wider network of businesses involved in delivering the end product which includes small abattoirs”.¹² It recommended that a short-term emergency fund for small abattoirs should be put in place, administrated

¹⁰ All Party Parliamentary Group on Animal Welfare, [The Future For Small Abattoirs In The UK: Report on an inquiry into small red meat abattoir provision](#) [pdf] (accessed 22 August 2022)

¹¹ As above, paras 2.12 & 2.13

¹² As above, para 2.15

by the relevant Government body.¹³ It further recommended that small abattoirs “contributing to the public goods of animal welfare and environmental benefits should be recognised and eligible for capital payments in any future agricultural support framework”.¹⁴ The APPG report further noted that:

There are opportunities to explore integrated solutions with very short supply chains which could provide means to better exploit the 5th quarter e.g. a small tannery integrated with an abattoir to serve a number of farms in a given area. There have been some limited examples of large retailers supporting the small producer network which have been successful and there could be scope for them to look at opportunities to support small abattoirs within their procurement models focusing on the more specialist products.

[..]There are also opportunities for more support from local government for their local rural economy through their procurement policies, which in turn could support small abattoirs and through economic partnerships or forums seeing small abattoirs as essential infrastructure supporting the rural economy.¹⁵

A [report on mobile abattoirs in Scotland](#) noted that “with the closure of abattoir facilities in rural areas in Scotland many animals are now having to travel further to be slaughtered and returned for processing in local businesses (butchers) than before”. The study considered various options to improve local access to abattoirs and concluded that the preferred option was a ‘hub/docking’ approach, where local farmers would transport animals a short distance to be slaughtered. Potential sites included farms, marts, animal processors. Key stakeholders were reported to support local slaughter facilities, whether mobile or not. The report concluded that private finance would likely be needed to establish new facilities.¹⁶

Recent press reports indicate that the problem of limited access to local abattoirs continue. The [Scottish Farmer reported in July 2022](#) that labour supply constraints meant that “farmers are met with long waiting lists as abattoirs struggle to cope with higher demand for meat, forcing them to travel further afield to slaughter their stock”.¹⁷

¹³ As above, para 2.17

¹⁴ All Party Parliamentary Group on Animal Welfare, [The Future For Small Abattoirs In The UK: Report on an inquiry into small red meat abattoir provision](#) [pdf], para 2.18, (accessed 22 August 2022)

¹⁵ As above, paras 2.25 & 2.56

¹⁶ Scottish Government, [Abattoir Infrastructure In Scotland - Mobile abattoirs - viability and sustainability](#), 12 March 2020

¹⁷ Scottish Farmer, [Urgent Government action needed on abattoirs](#), 10 July 2021

3.3 Local food retailing

National supermarkets dominate the food retailing sector. In 2020, the total market value of UK grocery retailing came to approximately £205 billion. Of the five major sales channels (hypermarkets, supermarkets, convenience stores, discount outlets and online suppliers), supermarkets had the largest share of the market value with £90.2. Supermarkets had more than twice as big a market value as the convenience channel, the second largest channel.¹⁸ There were approximately 7,590 micro, [Small and Medium Enterprises](#) in the food and drink sector with turnover of around £21 billion and 134,000 employees in 2020. In the food sector (excluding beverages) SMEs accounted for 78% of businesses, 26% of employment and 17% of turnover. Around a third of the SMEs are manufacturers of bakery products.¹⁹ By 2026, the value of grocery retailing is expected to increase to over £229 billion.²⁰

Surveys indicate that the price of buying food at local convenience stores is higher than at larger supermarkets, even for the local versions of main supermarkets such as Tesco and Sainsburys. The consumer organisation, Which? reported that local stores face higher costs because:

- Smaller stores usually have higher running costs than their larger counterparts, including steeper rents for premium urban locations.
- Delivery costs are also higher than for supermarkets, with smaller batches of goods delivered more frequently - and, thanks to city-centre traffic, taking longer to get there.
- Another factor that often makes convenience stores pricier to run is their opening hours, with many opening later than larger supermarkets and operating extended Sunday trading hours too.¹⁸

However, despite convenience stores being frequently less competitive on price, consumer surveys show that people value having the choice of shopping for food locally. This was particularly true during the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020 when a survey reported by the Convenience Store website found that three quarters of those surveyed had visited a convenience store in the previous six weeks.¹⁹ Statistics from 2020 indicate that the [revenue of local shops](#) in the UK has increased over 30% in the past ten years and was valued at over £3 billion. The share of consumers planning to buy from local shops was also shown to have

¹⁸ Which? online article, [The cost of convenience: how much extra will you pay at Sainsbury's Local and Tesco Express?](#) 5 February 2021

¹⁹ Convenience Store online article, [Consumer survey shows importance of local convenience store](#), 1 June 2020

been increasing, with 60% of consumers planning to [purchase more products locally](#) in 2020.²⁰

3.4 Local food supply chains

Beyond simply buying food locally, there is a wider movement towards sourcing food locally. The local food movement is focused on consuming products that were grown or produced within a short distance from where they are being sold. Local food offers an alternative to globally produced food that is shipped long distances.

There are multiple UK examples of [local food networks](#) and [food hubs](#) supporting local food distribution. Broadly speaking, food hubs are entities that sit between people who produce food and people who eat it, gathering food from growers and distributing it either to commercial customers or directly to consumers. They can fill gaps in local food infrastructure, help consumers find locally sourced produce, support new forms of food retail, incubate food enterprises, or create a space for community education and action.²¹

Alternatives to larger scale retailers are gaining strength. Farm shops are growing in numbers as trends of car ownership, self-service and bulk-buying have weakened traditional town centre stores. Farm shops are one of several forms of direct selling, including farmers' markets, pick-your-own and roadside stands, which offer producers a much greater share of the food pound –reported to be typically 80-90% compared to 8-10% through normal channels to markets.²² [Research by Harper Adams University with FARMA \(the Farm Retail Association\)](#) concluded that British farm shops generate some £1.4 billion in sales nationally, and employ some 25,000 workers. The study found that there are an estimated 1,581 farm retailers nationally, with a third of all farm shops have opened in the last 10 years.²³

Farmers' markets are also a growing sector. Farmers have traded their produce on markets for millennia but the idea of markets where only local producers sell their own produce is a more recent one hailing from the US. In the UK the first farmers' market opened in Bath in 1997 followed in 1998 by Bristol, Holmfirth, Lewes and Lostwithiel.²⁴

²⁰ [Fresh and local food market in the UK - statistics & facts | Statista](#) (accessed 22 August 2022)

²¹ [Food Hubs in the UK: Where are we and what next? - Food Research Collaboration](#)

²² CPRE, [From field to Fork: The Value of England's Local Food Webs](#), July 2021 [pdf]

²³ Farm Retail Association news release, [Farm retail industry generates £1.4 billion](#) (accessed 23 August 2022)

²⁴ CPRE, [From field to Fork: The Value of England's Local Food Webs](#), July 2021 [pdf]

Sustain, the environmental charity notes in its report [The Case for Local Food](#) that local food systems allow for a larger proportion of revenues to be retained in the local economy:

every £10 spent with the box scheme results in total spending of £25 in the local area, compared with just £14 when the same amount is spent in a supermarket. A shift to more localised food systems would help level up the country, with every part of the UK having the potential to benefit.

In order to realise these benefits it calls for the creation of a Local Food Investment Fund to “provide strategic support for sustainable local food systems”; a growth plan to deliver a 10% retail market share for non-multiples by 2030; and that “every local authority area in the UK is served by a food partnership by 2025”.²⁵

²⁵ Sustain, [The Case for Local Food](#), July 2021

4 Policy levers to support local food infrastructure

The [UK Food Security Report](#) published by the government in December 2021, stated that “in the UK the underlying infrastructure of the supply chain is owned and operated by private industry” and that “the role of government is an indirect one; to plan for and coordinate responses and intervene only where necessary to ensure the continuity of supply”. Food supply policy including risks relating to resilience and security is devolved.²⁶ There are however many policy levers at local level to support local food systems, including those set out below.

4.1 Local food plans

[Sustainable Food Places](#) is a partnership programme led by the Soil Association, Food Matters and Sustain: the alliance for better food and farming. In August 2022, Sustainable Food Places published a [Good Policy for Good Food guide](#) which outlined “the wide range of policy levers that local authorities have at their disposal to support local food systems and embed that change for the long term”. It set out 29 policy levers and examples of their use, including local food poverty action plans, public sector food procurement, school food policy, ways to use planning policy to support food growing and investment in local infrastructure.²⁷

Several cities and local authorities have developed strategies and plans around local food. Some examples include:

- [The London Food Strategy 2018](#)
- [Birmingham food system strategy 2022 to 2030](#)
- [Bath and North East Somerset Local Food strategy 2014-2017](#)
- [Brighton and Hove Food strategy action plan 2018-2023](#)
- [Cardiff Good Food strategy 2021-2024](#)
- [Liverpool Good Food Plan](#)

²⁶ Defra, [United Kingdom Food Security Report 2021: Theme 3: Food Supply Chain Resilience](#), 22 December 2021

²⁷ Sustainable Food Places, [Good Policy for Good Food: Scaling-up local food policy in England](#), August 2022

Under the Community Empowerment Act 2015, all Scottish local authorities are required to produce a Food Growing Strategy. There are [32 Scottish local authorities and](#) key examples are [Edinburgh](#), [Glasgow](#), and [Aberdeen](#). The Scottish Government held a consultation which closed in December 2021 on a [local food strategy](#) . to “make high quality food accessible to all and promote the benefits of locally produced food and drink”. The consultation states that:

One of the Scottish Government’s 100 days’ commitments, the consultation covers a range of issues including promoting local produce, encouraging people to grow their own food and making quality local food and drink available to all.

It seeks views on the three pillars of the strategy, namely connecting people with food, connecting producers with buyers and harnessing the buying power of public sector procurement.²⁸

4.2 Funding for local infrastructure

There are several potential routes for local communities to secure funding to improve local food infrastructure.

UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF)

The [UKSPF](#) was launched in April 2022 and is worth £2.6 billion over the period April 2022 – March 2025. It is designed to replace funding from the European Structural Funds.

In England, funding will be awarded via local authorities - the [UKSPF published list of delivery geographies](#) includes Mayoral Combined Authorities, the Greater London Authority, and lower-tier or unitary authorities. Funding awards will be allocated to areas via a formula, rather than a competitive bidding process. Funding levels are set based on the amount that individual local enterprise partnerships (LEP) areas received in EU funding from 2014-20. The [Government has set out a list of the total allocations for local authorities](#) (as at 1 August 2022)

Funding awards are conditional on areas producing an investment plan, which had to be submitted by 1 August 2022 for government approval, with the first payments to local authorities being made from October onwards.

[Government guidance on completing investment plans](#) states investment plans should address three questions:

²⁸ Scottish Government, [Local food strategy consultation](#), 20 August 2021.

- **Local context:** an opportunity for places to set out their local evidence of opportunities and challenges through the lens of the three investment priorities for UKSPF;
- **Selection of outcomes and interventions:** where places will identify the outcomes they wish to target based on local context, and the interventions they wish to prioritise, under each investment priority, from the menu of options. These should be clearly linked to local opportunities and challenges;
- **Delivery:** this will represent the most detailed stage of the investment plans.

The Government has listed three investment priorities for the UKSPF – these are:

- **Communities and place:** this is mostly aimed at improving community infrastructure and investing in neighbourhoods, for example by improving town centres and reducing crime;
- **Local businesses:** improving both the numbers of jobs and the productivity of existing businesses, for example by providing investment in small businesses, creating opportunities for networking and collaboration, or helping to upgrade to energy-efficient technologies;
- **People and skills,** the largest part of which is the Multiply programme to promote adult numeracy. Other aspects could include employment support programmes, adult learning, or other skills provision

Food and supporting local food infrastructure are not mentioned explicitly in any of the guidance, although it is at the discretion of local authorities what projects they include in their investment plans, within the parameters of the three investment criteria. [Government guidance on completing investment plans](#) states that “each place will have flexibility to invest across a range of activities that represent the right solutions to improve local pride in place, increase life chances, to help spread and create opportunity, and a sense of community and belonging”.

[Sustain](#), the environmental charity, has called on the Government to create a “Local Food Investment Fund to provide “strategic support for local sustainable food systems, as part of the planned Government funding for local areas, such as the UK Shared Prosperity Fund”. It says that:

Given one in seven workers is employed in the agri-food sector, investing in sustainable local food infrastructure and skills should form a strategic objective to “level up” regions in the UK and one in seven pounds of this Government investment should help deliver this. This should be closely

co-ordinated with devolved governments and could be enhanced by leveraging matched local funding.²⁹

Local Enterprise Partnerships

Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) are locally owned strategic partnerships of local business and civic leaders. They are designed to determine specific local economic priorities and promote growth, productivity, employment and infrastructure development. LEPs are non-statutory bodies.

LEP were established as one strand of regional development policy that began under the Coalition Government, based on the agenda of “localism.”

To date, the main form of funding LEPs have received has been in the form of Growth Deals.

The June 2013 Spending Review saw the Government ask LEPs to develop multi-year local Strategic Economic Plans, which would then be used for negotiations on [Growth Deals](#) with the Government, with LEPs awarded funding to deliver locally determined priorities for growth. As of October 2018, £9.1 billion worth of growth deal funding has been allocated to LEPs. Growth Deals funding allocates funding previously managed by central government departments.³⁰ More information on growth deals is available in [the Commons Library briefing on the subject](#).

LEPs do not seem to have had any significant role to date in supporting local food infrastructure. In 2020, Sustain: The alliance for better food and farming published the report [How can Local Enterprise Partnerships put better food and farming at the heart of the economic recovery?](#), arguing food, farming and fishing should have greater recognition within LEPs' priorities through “targeting investment to drive a resilient, fair, sustainable system”

²⁹ Sustain, [The Case for Local Food](#), 2021

³⁰ National Audit Office, [Local Enterprise Partnerships](#), HC 887, March 2016, pg. 20

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Food strategy for England

The Government [published a food strategy for England](#) on 13 June 2022.³¹ This followed on from a Government-commissioned independent review into the food system, consisting of reports published in 2020 and 2021 on the [National Food Strategy](#). The reports considered a wide variety of issues in the food sector, including food security. The review was led by Henry Dimbleby, the co-founder of Leon restaurants, and the lead non-executive director at DEFRA.

The independent review published two reports. The first report, “[Part one of the National Food Strategy](#)” (published in July 2020) considered how the Government should prepare for the end of EU Exit and respond to the disruption caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. A second, more detailed report, known as [The Plan](#) (henceforth NFS Plan) made a series of recommendations in 2021 targeting many aspects of the food system.

The NFS Plan included recommendations for increased local involvement in provision of healthy food locally and strengthened local infrastructure to do so:

All Local authorities should be required to put in place a food strategy, developed with reference to the goals and metrics set out above, and in partnership with the communities they serve.³²

Chapter 14 of the NFS Plan considered UK food security and provided a history of UK food sources and levels of self-sufficiency (although the NFS Plan points out that greater self-sufficiency does not equate to increased food security, as it makes a country much more susceptible to internal harvest failures or other local crises).³³

The NFS Plan acknowledged how governments and the private sector across the world were able to adapt to supply chain challenges caused by the coronavirus pandemic. However, the authors warned that since these disruptions were caused by national lockdowns, the effects were more predictable and manageable. The NFS Plan suggested that the next “big shock” to food systems may well be harder to mitigate.³⁴

The Government [food strategy for England responded to](#) the Dimbleby reviews. It emphasised the importance to local communities of the food production and manufacturing sector and highlighted the value of local specialities:

The agri-food sector is in every region of the nation, creating wealth and employment. Whether it's Scotch Whisky, the Cumberland sausage,

³¹ [Defra, Food Strategy for England](#), 13 June 2022,

³² National Food Strategy: Independent Review, [The Plan](#), July 2021, p162

³³ National Food Strategy: Independent Review, [The Plan](#), July 2021, p130

³⁴ National Food Strategy: Independent Review, [The Plan](#), July 2021, p132

Fenland Celery, Worcestershire sauce, the Melton Mowbray Pork Pie, Yorkshire Forced Rhubarb, countless cheeses, or Cornish Clotted Cream, every part of Britain has its local specialities and recipes which contribute to local identity and pride in place. Throughout history, the food and drink industry has invested in people and communities up and down the country.³⁵

The strategy also emphasised local food approaches with communities working in partnership with local authorities:

Local Food Partnerships have already brought together councils and partners from the public sector, voluntary and community groups, and businesses to reduce diet-related ill health and inequality, while supporting a prosperous local food economy. We will learn from their approaches and work to understand and identify best practice in addressing food affordability and accessibility to healthy food. As part of our levelling up mission to narrow the gap in healthy life expectancy, government will identify the areas most in need of this insight, and Defra will work with local authorities and food charities in these priority areas.³⁶

At the moment, although there is now a food strategy for England, there is no overall UK Government food security strategy.

³⁵ [Defra, Food Strategy for England](#), 13 June 2022, Introduction

³⁶ As above, para 2.2.3

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Public procurement

Defra's 2014 report [A Plan for Public Procurement](#) sets out the amount that the public sector spends per annum on procuring food and what this money is spent on:

The public sector spends about £2.4bn per annum procuring food and catering services, which represents approximately 5.5% of UK food service sector sales. This money is spent feeding people in our schools, hospitals, armed forces, central and local government, government agencies, prisons and courts, and significantly affects their health, wellbeing, and habits.

In addition, it provides substantial revenue to the UK food and farming sector, which together employ around 3 million people in the UK's largest manufacturing sector, making an important contribution to the financial success and health of the rural economy. The public sector is estimated to spend about £0.6bn on imported produce.

The current [Government Buying Standards for Food and Catering Services](#) (GBSF) set out a range of mandatory and best practice standards for public sector organisations to apply when procuring food and catering services. These standards relate to food production, processing and distribution; nutrition; resource efficiency; and socio-economic considerations, although they do not reference local supplies in particular.

Defra is responsible for updating the public sector food procurement standards and ensuring any risk of food supply disruption is mitigated. The Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) is responsible for the nutrition standards in the GBSF.³⁷

According to the Government's [Procurement Policy Note \(PPN\) 10/14](#) published in November 2014, the GBSF is only mandatory within central Government Departments (e.g. catering in government buildings), the NHS (patient, staff and visitor catering in hospitals), the armed forces and prisons.

In April 2021, the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (EFRA) Committee published a report on [Public sector procurement of food](#). It explained that:

The GBSF includes both mandatory and "best practice" standards on: production, processing and distribution; animal welfare; environment; variety and seasonality; nutrition; resource efficiency; and social-economic considerations. They cover for example, use of sustainable palm oil, reduction of food waste and the inclusion of small and medium

³⁷ Defra, [United Kingdom Food Security Report 2021: Case Study 4.2 Public Sector Food Procurement in England](#), December 2021

enterprises (SMEs). These standards should be included by procurers in “tender specifications and contract performance conditions”.³⁸

In addition to the GBSF, other standards can be required by procuring organisations. For example, the Food for Life Served Here (FFLSH) award, run by the Soil Association, encompasses a wide range of product assurance schemes including Red Tractor and other farm assurance schemes, Fairtrade, LEAF Marque, Marine Stewardship Council, Freedom Food and Organic. The EFRA Committee reported that “over 2 million meals are served each day to Food for Life standards, including in roughly 50% of English primary schools, over 50 NHS hospitals and over 50 universities”.³⁹

The [Requirements for School Food Regulations 2014](#) came into force on 1 January 2015 and set out [School Food Standards](#). [Government advice for schools in England on the regulations](#) was last updated in August 2021 and explains where exemptions apply.

In 2014, hospital food standards became mandatory in the NHS in England.⁴⁰ A [Report of the independent review of NHS hospital food](#) was published in October 2020. Government target for local food procurement

The Government’s [food strategy for England](#), published in June 2022 (and discussed earlier), included a commitment to consult on the GBSF and public procurement. It promised a consultation on, “introducing an aspirational target that at least 50% of food spend must be on food produced locally or certified to higher environmental production standards”:

We will consult on Government Buying Standards for Food and Catering Services (GBSF). This consultation will include whether to widen the scope of GBSF mandatory organisations to cover the whole public sector and introducing an aspirational target that at least 50% of food spend must be on food produced locally or certified to higher environmental production standards, while maintaining value for money for taxpayers.⁴¹

At the same time as publishing the food strategy for England, the Government launched a consultation on “possible changes to public sector food and catering policy”, closing on 4 September 2022. On local food sourcing, the consultation document proposed that:

Wherever possible, food sourcing should prioritise locally produced food and food produced to higher environmental production standards. Contracting authorities and/or tier 1 suppliers should aim for at least 50%

³⁸ Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee, [Public sector procurement of food](#), 21 April 2021, para 6

³⁹ Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee, [Public sector procurement of food](#), 21 April 2021, paras 8-9

⁴⁰ DHSC, [Compliance with hospital food standards in the NHS: Two years on: a review of progress since the Hospital Food Standards Panel report in 2014](#), January 2017, p1

⁴¹ Defra, [Government food strategy](#), 13 June 2022

of food spend to be on locally produced food or food certified to higher environmental production standards, [...]. Progress towards this target must be reported on annually.⁴²

Locally produced food was here defined as:

Ingredients produced/grown/caught within the same region as it is consumed, or a neighbouring county (for counties at regional boundaries – this may include counties in Scotland and Wales). Multi-ingredient foods may qualify as ‘locally produced’ if at least 50% quantity (Kg or L) of their ingredients are produced/grown/caught in the local region.⁴³

A [supporting consultation document](#) included three maps of regional boundaries and asked for views on how regions should be defined for the purposes above (see page 18).

The Government published a [summary of costs identified in the De Minimis Assessment](#), which highlighted the potential costs associated with local food procurement:

We have also identified costs associated with procuring food locally or to a higher environmental standard, though we expect these costs to be passed onto the exchequer and/or consumers. This relates to higher price premium across the affected food types including: meat and meat products at 10%; fruits and vegetables at 20%; eggs produced in a barn system at 7% and free-range at 14%; and fair-trade cocoa, banana, tea and coffee at 15%. However, we do not have evidence on the price premia associated with sustainably sourced soy products and palm oil or the make-up of these costs and invite responses in the consultation to improve our evidence base.⁴⁴

6.1 Local food procurement

The Government-commissioned [National Food Strategy](#) (June 2021 PDF) highlighted that “at present, public food procurement is dominated by a small number of larger suppliers. This quasi-monopoly means there is little incentive for innovation and improvement”.⁴⁵

The April 2021 [EFRA Committee report on public sector procurement of food](#) identified challenges for small and medium enterprises (SMEs) and local suppliers. In outline the Committee identified the following challenges

- **Outsourcing:** the public sector increasingly outsourced catering services, which reduced the influence of the public sector buyer

⁴² Defra, [Consultation on possible changes to public sector food and catering policy](#), 13 June 2022, p 13

⁴³ As above

⁴⁴ Defra, [Summary of costs identified in the De Minimis Assessment](#), 13 June 2022

⁴⁵ [Defra, Food Strategy for England](#), 13 June 2022,

regarding environmental outcomes, encouraging healthy eating and supporting local suppliers, including SMEs.

- **An emphasis on price:** for example, catering services companies will tend to emphasise cost and price. Weighting price at 60% or more of the scoring meant that procurement favoured national suppliers, making the market less competitive for local suppliers and SMEs.
- **Contracts are unwieldy and complicated:** smaller businesses do not have the capacity to spend time on filling out the applications.
- **Cash flow:** 60 day payment terms by big institutions are common, and not practical or possible for many SMEs to underwrite.
- **Assurance accreditations:** smaller suppliers are not winning enough business to make the required investment or are ruled out in the first place as they do not have access to funds to gain assurance accreditations. Ambiguous procurement standards can exacerbate this issue.

Future Food Framework pilot

Dynamic purchasing systems, or dynamic procurement systems (DPS), allow large Government contracts to be broken down into smaller and shorter-term chunks for which local food producers are then able to bid, via an online platform.⁴⁶

The Dynamic Food Procurement National Advisory Board (DFP NAB) is the independent oversight group for a network of policy makers, practitioners and producers. It has set out [how DPS differ from conventional approaches](#) [pdf]⁴⁷, with the following benefits for food producers and suppliers:

- A Dynamic Purchasing system (DPS) approach is open to all primary producers that meet the standards. Multiple producers per food category can supply in a transparent marketplace.
- Producers can tender at any time – not just at contract start and if unsuccessful initially, they can reapply again and again having addressed non-qualifying issues.
- Technology makes supplying simple for producers. Ordering and fulfilment process is tailored to individual producer bespoke capabilities. (e.g. Orders placed at date/time of producer's choosing,

⁴⁶ NICRE, [Working towards a better food procurement system for farmers in Gloucestershire](#), August 2021

⁴⁷ Dynamic Food Procurement Advisory Board, [Principles of Dynamic Food Procurement](#) [pdf] (Accessed 30 August 2022)

order lead times and days of fulfilment can be configured, collections can be made from producer's site).

- Approved producer invoices are paid within 14 days.
- Intransparent, retrospective fees (sometimes called listing fees or marketing fees) are not charged to producers by logistics providers. The margin earned by the logistics provider is paid by the customer at the point of purchase.

In 2016, Bath and North East Somerset (BANES) Council piloted a dynamic procurement system, for the provision of fresh meat, fruit and vegetables to primary schools.⁴⁸ The 'BANES model' allowed new suppliers to join the procurement system at any time (rather than just at the start of the contracted period) and permitted businesses to tender for parts of a larger contract so smaller businesses could tender without needing to fulfil the entire contract.⁴⁹

According to the DFP NAB, "after inflation, the contract realised 6% savings on the previous contract" and "a carbon emission reduction calculation was performed retrospectively solely on the customer delivery element of the contract - 6.01 tonnes of carbon were saved per annum".⁵⁰

[Crown Commercial Services \(CCS\)](#), an executive agency sponsored by the Cabinet Office, then chose the South West region for a scaled-up pilot, known as the Future Food Framework pilot.⁵¹ The EFRA Committee found that the pilot was due to start in late 2020/early 2021 but had been delayed for reasons including the COVID-19 pandemic. The Government told the Committee that a "national rollout" would follow the Future Food Framework pilot. The EFRA Committee called for the pilot to be prioritised.⁵² The independent National Food Strategy similarly called for an acceleration of the roll-out of the dynamic procurement scheme and for caterers to try a broader range of suppliers.⁵³

The Government response to the [EFRA Committee's](#) comments on the challenges of food procurement stated:

The [Future Food Framework] FFF supports the Government's commitments on engaging with SMEs and enabling the public sector to

⁴⁸ SPP Regions, [Food and catering: provision of school food in Bath](#), accessed 10 August 2022.

⁴⁹ Centre for Rural Policy Research, University of Exeter, [Public Procurement of Food in the South West Region: opportunities and barriers to localising food supply](#), March 2022

⁵⁰ Dynamic Food Procurement National Advisory Board, [Case study for the provision of school food in Bath and North East Somerset](#), April 2021

⁵¹ Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee, [Public sector procurement of food](#), 21 April 2021, para 49

⁵² Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee, [Public sector procurement of food](#), 21 April 2021, paras 52 and 55

⁵³ National Food Strategy, [National Food Strategy Independent Review Chapter 16](#), June 2021

buy more local food, and it is therefore an approach that we want to see succeed.

Crown Commercial Service (CCS) has conducted a review of the project plan and continues to work on tactical solutions and a longer-term strategy that may positively impact the timelines. Key procurement activities have taken place from late 2020, and current timelines for delivery of the food commercial agreements indicate a fully live capability by the end of 2022.

[...] Additional CCS resource has been brought onboard in May this year, and we hope this will expedite delivery of the commercial agreements..⁵⁴

⁵⁴ Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee, [Public Sector Procurement of Food: Government Response to the Committee's Sixth Report of Session 2019–21](#), 29 June 2021, para 6

7

Food poverty and access to food

Even when food is readily available and cheap, some households cannot access food because their incomes are too low.

7.1

Food poverty and food banks

'Low' and 'very low' food security

'Low food security' means the household reduces the quality, variety, and desirability of their diets.

'Very low food security' means household members sometimes disrupt eating patterns or reduce food intake because they lack money or other resources for food.

In 2020/21, 4.2 million people in the UK (6%) were in food insecure households in the UK, according to the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP)'s Household Below Average Income survey. This included 9% of children, 7% of working-age adults, and 1% of pensioners.⁵⁵

Library briefing [Food poverty: Households, food banks and free school meals](#) provides more information on household food insecurity.

The Trussell Trust gave out 2.2 million food parcels in 2021/22

People in households with very low food security can access food through food banks run by charities.

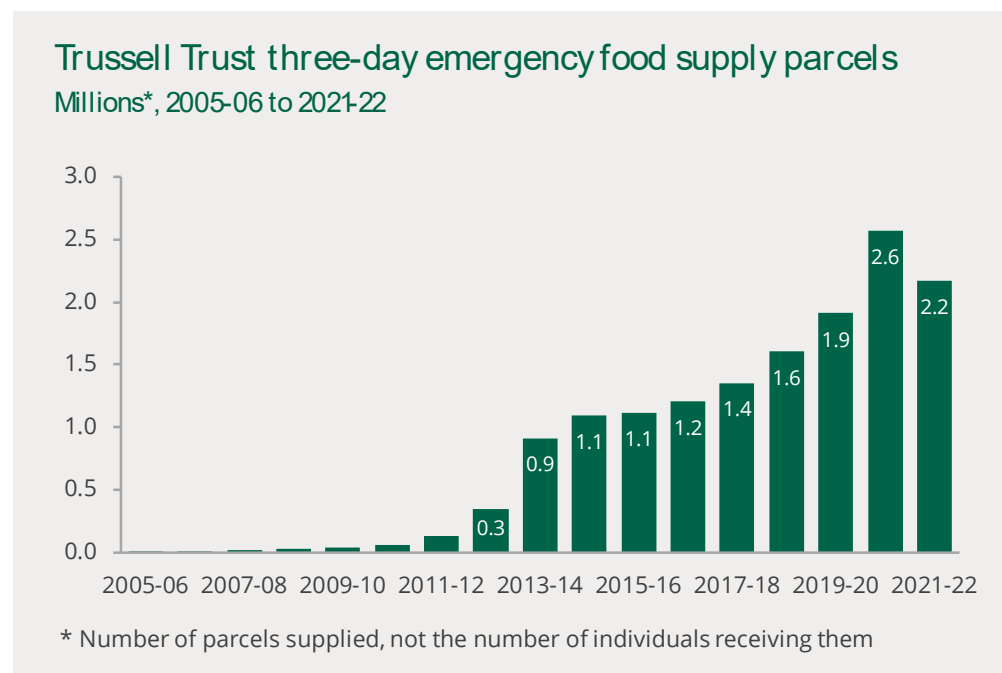
There is no official measure of how many people use food banks in the UK, but the Trussell Trust provides 'three-day emergency food parcels'.

In 2021/22, the Trussell Trust supplied 2.2 million three-day emergency food parcels.⁵⁶ This is a decrease of 15% on the previous year but an increase of 14% since the beginning of the coronavirus pandemic.

Food bank use on this measure has been increasing since 2005/06 when the Trussell Trust started.

⁵⁵ The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) announced it would add household food insecurity questions to the Family Resources Survey in 2019, and [data was first published in March 2021](#).

⁵⁶ Trussell Trust, [End of year Stats](#), 2022



Source: [Trussell Trust, End of year Stats](#), 2022

The Library briefing [Foodbanks in the UK](#) provides more detail on how the rising cost of living affects foodbanks.

7.2 The effect of rising prices on food poverty

Food prices have been rising since the second half of 2021. Food and non-alcoholic drink prices were 12.6% higher in the year to July 2022 on the official Consumer Price Index (CPI) measure of inflation.⁵⁷

This is one factor squeezing household budgets. In July 2022, 89% of adults in Great Britain reported an increase in their cost of living, according to the Office for National Statistics (ONS). Of these, 94% saw the price of their food shopping go up, and 44% had started spending less on essentials including food.⁵⁸

A YouGov survey by the Food Foundation, a food poverty charity, found that 12.8% of people in the UK had eaten less or skipped meals, 8.8% had not eaten when they were hungry, and 4.6% had gone a whole day without eating in the month to April 2022.⁵⁹

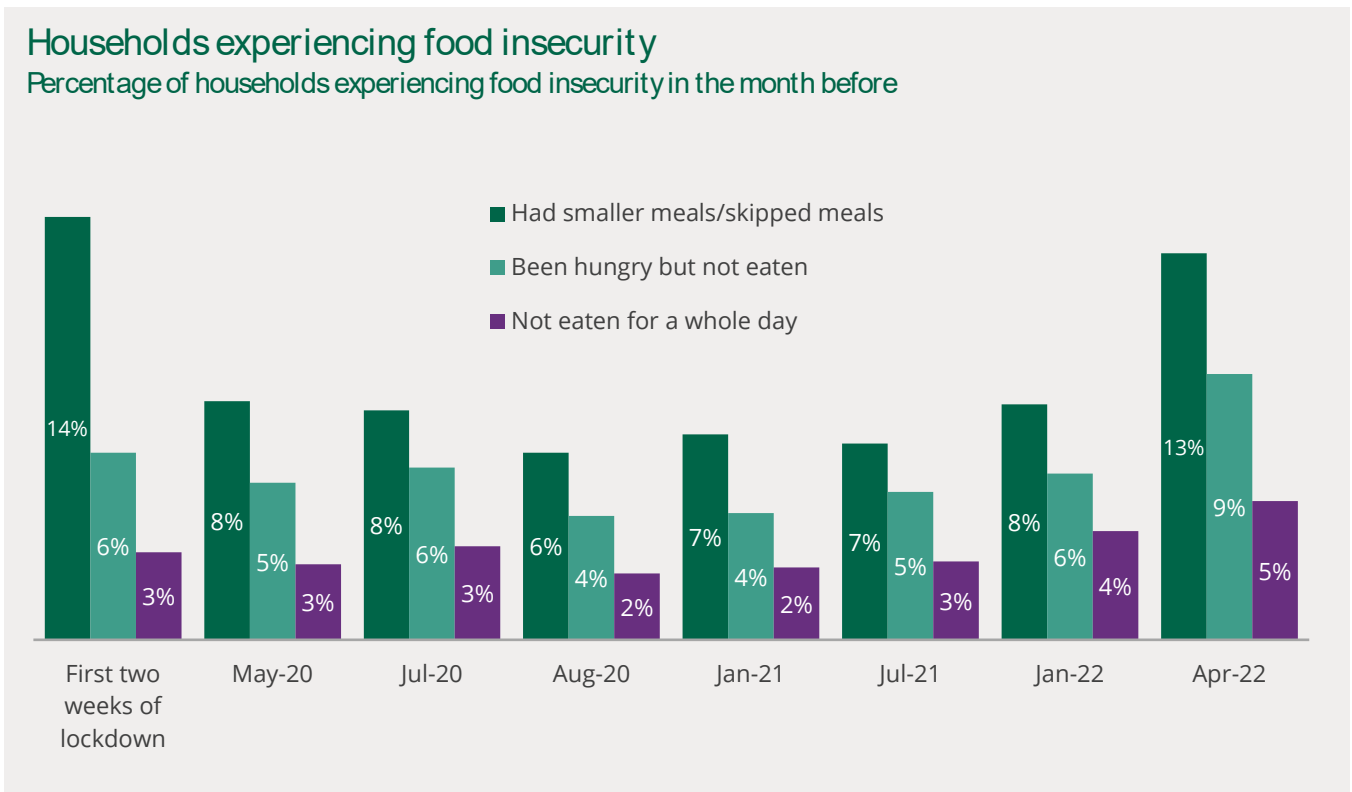
As shown in the chart below, household food insecurity has been increasing since August 2020, and the percentage of people who have not

⁵⁷ ONS, Food and non-alcoholic drink component of CPI, series [D7G8](#) [17 August 2022 update]

⁵⁸ 20-31 July 2022, compared to the previous month; ONS, [Public opinions and social trends, Great Britain: household finances](#), 5 August 2022

⁵⁹ Food Foundation, [Food insecurity Tracking](#), Round 10, [accessed 26 July 2022]

eaten when they were hungry or not eaten for an entire day was higher in April 2022 than it was in the first two weeks of the coronavirus lockdowns.



Source: Food Foundation, [Food insecurity Tracking](#), Round 10

This increase in food poverty has led to higher demand for food banks. The Trussell Trust saw a 22% increase in demand for food parcels in January to February 2022 compared to the same period in 2020.⁶⁰

More than 93% of food banks surveyed by the Independent Food Aid Network (IFAN) reported an increase in demand in May 2022, since the start of the year. The rise in the cost of living, cut to Universal Credit and inadequate wages were the main reasons given.⁶¹

YouGov ran an online survey 1,506 adults in Great Britain who are claiming Universal Credit. Research by the Trussell Trust and YouGov found that 17% of people receiving Universal Credit needed to visit a food bank between December 2021 and March 2022.⁶²

⁶⁰ Trussell Trust, [End of year stats 2022](#)

⁶¹ [Survey of members of the Independent Food Aid Network \(IFAN\) May 2022](#), IFAN, May 2022

⁶² Trussell Trust, [Two in five Brits receiving Universal Credit forced into debt this winter as payments failed to cover soaring cost of living, says the Trussell Trust](#), 17 March 2022

8 Parliamentary material

8.1 Statement

Commons statement followed by questions: [Government Food Strategy](#)

HC Deb 13 June 2022 |Vol 716 c47-

8.2 PQs

[Food: Consumption](#)

Asked by: Saville Roberts, Liz

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether he has had recent discussions with (a) Cabinet colleagues, (b) Devolved Governments and (c) Local Government on the promotion of the consumption of proximate seasonal produce.

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

This Government wants people at home and abroad to be lining up to Buy British. We will always champion our farmers and producers, supporting them to grow more of our great British food, and to provide a reliable and sustainable food supply to the British public. The recently published Government food strategy sets out our aim to broadly maintain domestic food production at current levels as we deliver our climate and environmental aims.

We work closely with industry and trade associations to engage with and support initiatives that highlight the qualities of British meat, dairy, seafood and fruit and vegetable products. During the pandemic we worked with industry to promote fish caught in UK waters, seasonal veg, and supported the Agriculture and Horticulture Development Board's campaign on milk and dairy to the British public. To support producers in promoting their products we hosted a Regional Food and Drink Summit in March 2022. The Summit brought together SMEs and regional organisations to share best practice and access support to grow their business. Building on the success of the Summit we will continue to offer specialised regional support and engagement with food and drink SMEs.

We welcome efforts from all parts of the food chain to promote and source British products. We will lead by example in the public sector, using our purchasing power to champion local, healthy, sustainable, and high-quality food. The consultation on public sector food and catering policy, launched alongside our food strategy, proposes a mandatory standard on menu cycles and seasonality. In this consultation we propose that public sector menus must vary throughout the year to reflect the natural growing or production period for the UK, such as cauliflower and butternut squash in the winter, and new potatoes, berries and lamb in the summer.

Due to the UK-wide and international nature of the food system, we have maintained regular engagement with the Devolved Administrations during the development of the food strategy. Responsibility for public sector food procurement is devolved to England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland, and the proposed changes therefore apply to England only. However, we work closely across the Devolved Administrations to share best practice and ensure public sector food policy is complimentary.

HC Deb 27 June 2022 | PQ 23362

[Food Supply: Sustainable Development](#)

Asked by: Poulter, Dr Dan

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what plans he has to promote greater food sustainability in the UK.

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

Farming in England is now going through the biggest change in a generation and government's approach to working with the farming sector is also changing. We're improving our policies and services to make them more effective, fairer, more flexible, more accessible and more workable for farmers.

We are introducing policies that work for farm businesses, food production and the environment. Food is still the primary purpose of farming, and always will be. The Food Strategy includes plans that will support farmers to boost home-grown fruit and vegetable production, and encourage people to buy more locally-sourced, high-welfare food. The Food Strategy identifies new opportunities to make the food system healthier, more sustainable, more resilient and more accessible for those across England. It sets out how we will deliver a sustainable, nature-positive food system that provides choice and access to high quality products that support healthier and sustainable diets for all. It launches

the Food Data Transparency Partnership to improve sustainability data for the food system.

Farmers also play a crucial role in protecting and enhancing the natural environment. If we want farming and food production to be resilient and sustainable over the long term, then farming and nature can and must go hand in hand.

We are providing farmers with two ways of receiving payments: one-off grants and ongoing schemes. Farmers can pick and choose from a range of grants and ongoing payments to find a package that works for them.

Everything we're offering contributes to our 3 related goals: supporting viable businesses, maintaining food production at its current level, and achieving environment, climate and animal health, welfare outcomes.

Over the next three years, we will spend £2.5 billion on payments to farmers through the new Sustainable Farming Incentive, Countryside Stewardship and its successor Local Nature Recovery, and continue to fund existing Environmental Stewardship agreements.

HC Deb 23 June 2022 | PQ 16908

Food: Public Sector

Asked by: Poulter, Dr Dan

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will bring forward legislative proposals to support public sector procurement of British farmed foods.

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

We are committed to opening up public sector supply chains and supporting a diverse range of suppliers.

We launched a consultation on public sector food and catering policy alongside the Government Food Strategy on 13 June. In the consultation, we are proposing that the public sector reports on progress towards meeting an aspiration that 50% of its food expenditure is on food produced locally or to higher environmental production standards. The proposed policy also requires suppliers to meet UK production standards or equivalent, high animal welfare standards, and public sector menus must reflect seasonal, local food.??More details of the consultation can be found at <https://consult.defra.gov.uk/public-sector-food-procurement/food-and-catering-consultation/>.

Under domestic and international regulations, we cannot stipulate that food procured for the public sector must be British. Nevertheless, there is

a strong case for celebrating sustainable, high-quality produce in the public sector.

HC Deb 17 June 2022 | PQ 15233

Food: Production

Asked by: Sobel, Alex

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether his Department has taken steps to (a) provide financial assistance to farmers to enable higher quantities of food to be produced in the UK and (b) support increased food production in the UK by other means.

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

Food is the primary purpose of farming, and always will be. Farming in England is now going through the biggest change in a generation. As Government, our approach to working with the farming sector is changing too. The Common Agricultural Policy paid farmers based on land ownership. Our schemes are incentivising farmers to take care of natural assets, like soil, which in turn is good for food production and the bottom line. They are about supporting the choices that individual farmers take for their farms, and we are ensuring that all farmers, including tenants, can access funding.

In England, we are providing farmers with two ways of receiving payments: one-off grants and ongoing schemes. Farmers can pick and choose from the offer to find a package that works for them. Everything we are offering contributes to our three goals: supporting viable businesses, maintaining food production at its current level, and achieving animal health, welfare and climate outcomes.

In terms of grants, we have made available and increased the budgets of our farming innovation and farming investment programmes. For ongoing payments, we have over 900 farmers in the pilot for our sustainable farming incentive and will shortly start the roll out of that scheme paying farmers to improve their soil health.

On 13 June, we published the Government Food Strategy, setting out that we will maintain domestic production and increase it in sectors where there is the most opportunity – including horticulture. The strategy sets out further details of how farmers will be able to use grant funding to boost profitability and maintain food production, and also sets out measures to boost local food consumption.

HC Deb 16 June 2022 | PQ 1322

Food Supply

Asked by: Crosbie, Virginia

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what estimate he has made of the acres of grassland and arable land that will be required to sustainably feed the projected population of the UK over the next (a) 10, (b) 25 and (c) 50 years.

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

The UK's high degree of food security is built on supply from diverse sources, including strong domestic production as well as imports through stable trade routes. We produce 60% of all the food we need, and 74% of food which we can grow or rear in the UK for all or part of the year, and these figures have changed little over the last 20 years. In addition, the UK has nearly 100% sufficiency in poultry, carrots, and swedes.

Recognising the importance of food production, the Government made a commitment to produce an assessment of our food security at least once every three years. The first UK Food Security Report was published in December 2021. It recognised the contribution made by British farmers to our resilience, and the importance of strong domestic production to our food security. This report will serve as an evidence base for future policy work.

The Food Strategy White Paper will set out Government's ambition and priorities for the food system - to support our exceptional British food and drink producers, and to protect and enhance the nation's health and the natural environment for generations to come. The Government will consider the evidence of Henry Dimbleby's independent review throughout the development of Food Strategy. Given ongoing wider circumstances we are postponing publication of the food strategy until after the pre-election period for the local elections.

HC Deb 18 March 2022 | PQ 140588

Food: Procurement

Asked by: Hudson, Dr Neil

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether his Department plans to launch a call for evidence on the Government Buying Standards for Food and Catering prior to the introduction of the revised GBSF planned for Summer 2022.

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

We will be consulting on public sector food and catering policy following publication of the Food Strategy White Paper due to launch shortly. The consultation will seek views on ways to promote greater take-up of local, and sustainable produce and make public procurement more accessible to small and medium-sized enterprises.

The consultation will be an exciting opportunity for producers and consumers of public sector food to have their say and make suggestions to help shape future policy. We look forward to receiving input to the consultation from the sector, and more information will be released in due course once the consultation date has been confirmed.

HC Deb 02 March 2022 | PQ 127577

Food: Procurement

Asked by: Baroness Jones of Whitchurch

To ask Her Majesty's Government when the consultation on the proposed changes to public sector food procurement policy will take place.

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

We will be consulting on a set of proposed changes to public sector food procurement policy, including the Government Buying Standards for Food and Catering Services (GBSF), following the publication of the Government's Food Strategy White Paper due to launch shortly. The consultation will seek views on ways to promote local, sustainable, healthier food in the public sector, open public sector procurement to a wider range of businesses, and increase the transparency of food supply chains.

The GBSF consultation will be an exciting opportunity for producers and consumers of public sector food to have their say and make suggestions to help shape future policy. We look forward to receiving input to the consultation from the sector, and more information will be released in due course once the consultation date has been confirmed.

HL Deb 14 February 2022 | PQ HL5762

Food: Public Sector

Asked by: Evans, Dr Luke | Party: Conservative Party

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he is taking to encourage local public sector bodies to procure locally produced food.

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

We have a manifesto commitment to encourage the public sector to buy British. To help meet this commitment, we will be consulting on proposals to strengthen the Government Buying Standards for Food and Catering Services early in 2022. The consultation will seek views on ways to promote greater take-up of local produce and make public procurement more accessible to SMEs.

We are also working across Government to identify and trial innovative approaches to public food procurement. This includes a pilot in the South West, in collaboration with Crown Commercial Services, aimed at simplifying the route into the public sector for local and sustainable SME businesses. If successful, the trial could be rolled out nationally, extending opportunities to food producers from all regions and nations of the UK.

HC Deb 28 September 2021 | PQ 51875

Food

Asked by: Turley, Anna

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to encourage the development of local food plans.

Answering member: David Rutley | Department: Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs

The Government works closely with the full spectrum of food and drink businesses across the country to promote growth, jobs, productivity and exports. We engage with businesses both directly and through trade associations, Local Enterprise Partnerships, regional food groups and other business groups. We support them in their efforts to address economic challenges and mitigate regulatory and compliance issues, and prepare successfully for EU exit.

HC Deb 01 May 2019 | PQ 248052

9

Useful links

Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs consultation

[Seeking views on possible changes to public sector food and catering policy.](#)

13 June - 4 September 2021

RSPB/Sustain

[The case for local food: building better local food systems to benefit society and nature](#)

July 2021

[Sustain press release

[Government backing for local food infrastructure could create 200,000 jobs and help restore nature](#)

12 July 2021]

NFU press release

[The NFU is backing British for public sector procurement](#)

22 June 2021

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