



Eating more veg (working title!) Addressing the supply side barriers to vegetable consumption in the UK

Introduction

The Food Foundation's first report demonstrated that typical family diets in Britain include too much sugar, salt, red and processed meat and saturated fat, and too little fibre, fruit and veg and oily fish.

It also showed that vegetable consumption has been in long-term decline. If we ate more vegetables our fibre intakes will increase and in turn our red and processed meat consumption could go down, along with HFSS foods.

This project will explore the levers along the supply chain which have the potential to increase vegetable consumption in a sustainable manner. We will not focus on traditional nutrition education messaging as a lever for change but instead consider the wealth of opportunities for improving vegetable intake by addressing the availability, acceptability (including convenience), affordability, and quality of the vegetable offer in shops, schools, fast-food restaurants and beyond.

There is growing recognition among policymakers that educating individuals about how to make healthy choices in the supermarket or takeaway restaurant will not move the needle enough to curb diet-related disease and bring down the burgeoning healthcare bill associated with obesity. While nutrition education and measures to encourage behaviour change are important, we need to look to the food environment and food system to find ways to tackle unhealthy diets. Evidence shows that this is likely to deliver a much greater impact than focusing on individual behavior (Swinburn et al. 2011).

While vegetable consumption needs to increase within all socio-economic groups, certain groups – such as low-income households – have particularly low vegetable consumption and particularly high associated health risks. The project will include specific focus on these groups. Evidence also shows that systems-based approaches also offer greater opportunities for tackling these health inequalities (McGill et al. 2015) than interventions which rely on individual agency.

The objective:

To secure commitments from industry and government to improve the availability, acceptability (including convenience), affordability, and quality of the vegetable offer in shops, schools, fast food restaurants and beyond, and in



turn stimulate increased vegetable consumption among the UK public, particularly children and those on a low income.

The project will be divided into 5 phases.

Phase 1: Scoping and building support (Feb-May 2016)

During this phase we aim to speak to a wide range of actors who are working at various points along the vegetable supply chain: farmers (and NFU), processors, retailers (large, small and social enterprises) and food service, to seek their advice on the project, to identify some of the priority levers for change and to solicit support.

In addition, during this phase we will develop a detailed TOR for Phase 2 and agree the methods for Phase 3.

Phase 2: Underpinning research and agreeing governance arrangements (April-September 2016)

Research: This will involve pulling together a Fact File on the veg sector to inform the subsequent phases of the project. Two versions of the Fact File will be produced: a shorter, public-facing version, and a longer background report with more detailed evidence, data and literature reviews. A draft of the short version will be ready in time for the retreat mid-October, and will be published and officially launched immediately following the retreat.

Governance arrangements: This will involve making decisions about how the project will be run and the core partners. We anticipate having a small group of core partners who can help drive the work forward and provide the engine for the project (the Board). We would aim to have core partners which have a diverse geographical focus within the UK as well as willing to contribute resources to the project (whether financial or in kind). We would aim to have a very transparent process. Financial contributions to the project must avoid any real or perceived conflict of interest, with potential contributions scrutinized using [established Food Foundation procedures](#).

Summit arrangements: During this phase we will agree and book the location and timing of the summit and ensure that we have the date reserved for key celebrities. We will also develop a fundraising plan for the summit.

Progress report:

The confirmed project partners are Food Foundation, Nourish Scotland, WWF and Amber Wheeler in Wales.



The summit will take place on June 7th in Central London. Follow-up events will be held during the Highland Show in Scotland and the Royal Welsh Show.

Phase 3: Agreeing the priority challenges, surfacing innovation, agreeing solutions (September 2016-January 2017)

This phase will be split into five elements.

- a) A high-level retreat, conducted under Chatham House Rules in Birmingham on 19-21 October 2016. Twenty high-level participants from multiple sectors and sub-sectors within the food industry (identified through phase 2 of the project), creative industries and digital industries will be invited to attend the retreat.

These participants will be presented with the Fact File and a Problem Tree of challenges in the vegetable supply chain. The retreat will include a one day immersion and fact-finding around the challenge in Birmingham, followed by a one day workshop to reach agreement on the prioritised supply side barriers (inc. gov policy, business practice and legislation) to vegetable consumption within and beyond the following themes:

- UK vegetable production
 - Routes to market
 - Point of sale, advertising, and formulation
 - Waste and packaging
 - Public provision
 - Innovation and R&D
- b) Launch of the project and the Factfile. This will take place in early November in London with parallel events in Scotland and Wales. We will have a press launch but also an event to launch the project and build support for its aims. At the launch we will also start to secure a caucus of organisations and companies who are committed to engage in the project going forward. As part of the preparation for the launch we will agree a project name and brand.
 - c) We will convene a series of workshops to review in more detail the barriers and identify supply chain solutions (inc. gov policy, practice and legislation). These workshops will be done in collaboration with retreat participants and other. Experts will be invited to join these workshops to provide advice and evidence on specific areas that are discussed. These workshops will be for 20-25 participants and have discussions at a pre-competitive level. Guests will be identified and invited by the volunteer



Chairs and members of the project Board. We will aim to have a diversity of perspectives in the group and draw members from a wide range of constituencies – they will aim to bring technical knowledge as well as leadership skills to the discussion. They will review the diagnoses of the problem as discussed during the retreat and modify it as necessary. They will start to share ideas on solutions. Solutions will be then prioritised according to their impact and feasibility. Specific actions may flow from these workshops such as:

- The need for further fact finding or commissioned research
- The need for members to go on a short study tour to review innovations

Phase 4: summit planning and delivery (February-June 2017)

Building support for solutions identified. Throughout this phase, the project's governance team will:

- Consolidate the recommendations coming from the working groups, ideally with an expression of what these recommendations could achieve in terms of lives saved. These will be captured in some kind of compact / manifesto / pledge which will form the basis of the work in Phase 4. The commitments could be folded into an existing initiative or could be pursued independently through an annual monitoring report or repeat meetings to review follow-up.
- Agree the mechanism which will be used for accountability for commitments made – this would need to have strong government and NGO/CSO involvement. Engage in a concerted lobbying effort of companies operating along the supply chain and relevant government bodies to commit to act, using strong digital communications to support this.
- Build parliamentary support. We aim to secure a parliamentary select committee inquiry into support for horticulture in England. This process will feed directly into thinking on new agricultural policy being developed for when the UK leaves the European Union. In Wales, we will influence through the Public Services Boards set up to deliver outcomes on the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act. The Welsh Assembly Ministers would be lobbied to set up an all-party group on how to increase consumption and production. In Scotland, we will engage directly with the consultation in 2017 of the Good Food Nation Bill.



- Build wider support for the initiative – during this phase we will seek opportunities to bring as many people as possible into the wider stakeholder group for the project.
- Enlist support from a PR agency to secure celebrity and media engagement in the summit.

All of this engagement and support will reach a climax at the summit which will take place on June 7th in London, and will be followed with events in Scotland and Wales. The summit will provide a platform for strong commitments to be made by government and business leaders, and secure engagement from media and celebrities.

Phase 5: Accountability and follow-up (July 2017- August 2019)

During this period we will consolidate the commitments made at the summit and implement the framework agreed in Phase 4. We will provide a Vegetable Observatory for those who made commitments to support implementation, including:

- Establishing a Vegetable Commission from the retreat and working group attendees who will meet every 6 months to share insights and progress on the commitments.
- Connecting and responding to enquiries from companies and public bodies in order to monitor commitments made, providing technical support and ongoing workshops to share learning and evidence.
- Providing an online repository on interesting and successful international and national vegetable case studies, covering areas such as subsidies, point of sale initiatives, etc.
- Working across potential areas for change identified in the working groups, perhaps implementing an initiative focusing on one area.
- Convening study tours to support best practice.

References:

- McGill, R. et al., 2015. Are interventions to promote healthy eating equally effective for all? Systematic review of socioeconomic inequalities in impact. *BMC public health*, 15, p.457.
- Swinburn, B.A. et al., 2011. The global obesity pandemic: shaped by global drivers and local environments. *Lancet (London, England)*, 378(9793), pp.804–14.