



# PLATING UP PROGRESS 2021

Recommendations for policy makers, food businesses and investors



## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## Executive summary



### ABOUT PLATING UP PROGRESS

This report is an output of Plating Up Progress, a Food Foundation project. The project has two aims. First, to forge a consensus on metrics and reporting mechanisms that allow assessment of food industry progress in transitioning to sustainable and healthy diets. Second, to engage stakeholders to advance the uptake of these metrics and track progress in the industry.



### WHO SHOULD READ THIS?

Anyone interested in gaining an overview of how different UK food companies are performing in terms of setting targets and reporting on health, environmental and social inclusion issues, and what our analysis means for policy makers, businesses themselves and investors.



### WHERE CAN YOU FIND OUT MORE?

See **Section 1** of this report for more detail and analysis of the progress made by the food sectors assessed by Plating Up Progress.

See **Sections 2a, 2b and 2c** for more detail on our recommendations for policy makers, food businesses and investors respectively.

Explore our full analysis of food businesses on the Plating Up Progress (PUP) dashboard [HERE](#).

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# ANALYSIS OF SUPERMARKETS, RESTAURANTS, CATERERS AND WHOLESALERS

This year's analysis shows a more widespread move by supermarkets to setting targets for, and disclosing, sales-based data for healthy vs. unhealthy food, fruit and vegetables, and different protein sources (animal and plant-based). This trend is not yet mainstream across the sector, however, and the reporting methodologies used are inconsistent. Restaurants, caterers and wholesalers remain slower to begin reporting on these and several other issues, although we have seen progress on climate change commitments and some more isolated cases where sales-based and product-based targets are being set. It is likely, as has been anecdotally reported, that Covid-19 has led to a slowing down of progress within the restaurant and catering sectors compared to the supermarkets.

While all sectors appear to recognise the impacts the food industry has on people and health, their work on issues relating to nature and the environment is more mature than that relating to health, nutrition and social justice issues.

## Food industry progress

Five out of eleven supermarkets now have targets for sales of healthy or healthier food, compared to two this time last year.

Two supermarkets now report on the percentage of their protein sales that come from plant-based products, compared to no supermarkets last year, with one also having a target to increase sales of plant-based alternatives by 300% by 2025.

One supermarket now has a public target to increase sales of fruit and vegetables, with another having a public target to increase the proportion of total sales tonnage that comes from vegetables, compared to no supermarkets last year.

Four out of eighteen restaurants, caterers and wholesalers have a commitment to increase sales of vegetables, although these commitments were already in place in 2020.

All supermarkets, and thirteen out of eighteen restaurants, caterers and wholesalers, now either have net zero climate change targets that include scope 3 greenhouse gas emissions or have started (or committed to start) measuring their scope 3 greenhouse gas emissions.







## PUP RECOMMENDATIONS FOR POLICY MAKERS

The recommendations made by the National Food Strategy in July are broadly in line with those made in our own policy briefing in April this year, with the National Food Strategy focusing on the introduction of mandatory food business reporting for sales of healthy and sustainable food, and mandatory reporting on food waste.

Our analysis shows that reporting on these issues is feasible, and in fact is already being adopted by supermarkets and by a small number of businesses from the out of home sector. We therefore strongly urge the government to adopt the National Food Strategy recommendations.

Successful implementation of these recommendations will require government to consult with the food industry and NGOs to:

- › Establish a consistent methodology for reporting on sales of healthy vs. unhealthy food.
- › Define the parameters for reporting on sales of fruit and vegetables.
- › Define the parameters for reporting on sales of different protein sources.
- › Develop and refine how different production practices are reported for the protein metric.
- › Maximise alignment with other data reporting initiatives to avoid create an unnecessary burden on businesses.

It should be noted, however, that mandatory reporting provides an insight for the government at a certain point in time but does not itself create change in the industry. We further recommend that the government sees mandatory reporting as only the starting point, and that food businesses should in the future be expected to set sales-based or procurement-based targets. These targets should be to increase their proportional sales (or procurement) of healthy food,

fruit and vegetables, and plant-based proteins; to reduce sales (or procurement) of animal proteins; and to ensure that animal proteins are being produced in a sustainable way.

We also recommend that the government facilitates the development of a shared database for relevant food data so that food businesses can access consistent and reliable environmental metrics. These will be essential to improve reporting on other vital issues such as scope 3 greenhouse gas emissions and biodiversity impacts.

As per our  **POLICY BRIEFING** earlier in 2021, we recommend that the government should also do the following:

- › Within the next two years, make the reporting of scope 3 greenhouse gas emissions mandatory (and work with stakeholders to develop a consistent protocol for measuring and reporting on this).
- › Strengthen deforestation reporting requirements to include legal (not just illegal) deforestation in businesses' supply chains.
- › Consult on supply chain reporting requirements for sustainable food production and sustainable water management.
- › Make submissions of modern slavery statements to the government mandatory and consider making businesses legally responsible for human rights in their supply chains.

As proposed by the National Food Strategy, an independent body such as the Food Standards Agency should be given the responsibility for managing the reporting process for businesses and ensuring that data standards and quality needs are met.





## PUP RECOMMENDATIONS FOR BUSINESSES

Support for the National Food Strategy recommendation on mandatory reporting has already been shown by food industry leaders, and we urge all food businesses to constructively engage with the government to support its adoption. Consultation between the food industry, NGOs, investors, and the government will be essential to fine tune the definitions and parameters within the mandatory reporting recommendation.

Expectations are growing that food businesses should report on, and set targets for, sales of healthy and sustainable food to complement existing supply chain commitments. We also expect to see greater expectations on businesses to report on sales beyond their own-brand food (especially supermarkets) and to ensure they are reporting on their impacts both on people's health and wellbeing and on the environment.

We recommend that businesses positively engage with the government to ensure that mandatory reporting is designed to be appropriate for their sector. Businesses should begin working out how to report on sales-based data in preparation for this. We recommend that food businesses participate fully in the existing collaborative industry initiatives such as WRAP's work on food waste, plastics, greenhouse gas emissions and water in order to accelerate progress and to ensure they are using the emerging standards and protocols.

**“Expectations are growing that food businesses should report on, and set targets for, sales of healthy and sustainable food to complement existing supply chain commitments.”**





## PUP RECOMMENDATIONS FOR INVESTORS



We have already seen support from investors for the National Food Strategy recommendation for mandatory reporting, as evidenced by the **INVESTORS' LETTER** (representing £2.8 trillion in assets under management or under advice) to the government backing that specific recommendation and calling for the government to use the full suite of regulatory tools at its disposal to bring about change in the industry.

In recent years there has been an improvement in the alignment and extent of data being made available to investors through different benchmarks and indexes. This has opened up much greater opportunity for investors to ask the right questions of businesses, and we provide a set of questions to ask food businesses.

2021 has also seen investor coalition successes in engaging with businesses, influencing significant changes in how and what supermarkets report on for sales of healthy food. We see the combination of both business engagement and developing a stronger voice with government on food issues as being important areas for investors in the forthcoming years.

We recommend that investors take advantage of the improved data that is available to them and that they extend their collective voice to engage not only with businesses, but also with governments on food issues.

**“The combination of business engagement and developing a stronger voice with government are important areas for investors in the forthcoming years”**



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