



The Food
Foundation



Election '24
Nourishing
the Nation

10 COST FREE POLICIES

for Nourishing the Nation



About The Food Foundation



The Food Foundation is an independent charity working to address challenges in the food system in the interests of the UK public. Working at the interface between academia and policymakers (parliamentarians, civil servants, local authorities, business leaders), we use a wide range of approaches to make change happen including

events, publications, media stories, social media campaigns and multistakeholder partnerships. We also work directly with citizens to ensure their lived experience is reflected in our policy proposals. We work with many partners on a range of different thematic areas, working closely with academics to generate evidence and campaigners who can drive change. We are independent of all political parties and businesses, and we are not limited by a single issue or special interest.

Visit: foodfoundation.org.uk

You can view The Food Foundation's full manifesto here:

foodfoundation.org.uk/initiatives/election-2024-nourishing-nation



Cost free policies for the first 100 days

Improving the food system requires long term strategies and investment.

As outlined in The Food Foundation's manifesto 'Nourishing the Nation' there are a range of critical actions required to create a better, more sustainable food system and improve our food environments. This includes investing in children's health, making healthier food more affordable, breaking the junk food cycle, making it easier to eat sustainably and unleashing the full potential of the UK food system. The first 100 days of a new government are an opportunity to implement new policies and also set out a long-term plan for improving food environments, committing to enhancing existing policies and developing new ones across the food system.

As well as bold commitments and ambition, there are also actions that can be taken immediately, during the first 100 days, to help nourish our nation. Building on the asks of The Food Foundation's manifesto, we have compiled 10 cost free policies which serve as a first step towards nourishing the nation. These require limited financial resource, legislation, and in most cases have been recommended by Government advisory boards or select committees, or committed to in the past. This makes them ideal for introducing in the first 100 days as a first step to nourishing the nation, reducing food insecurity and improving our citizens' health.



DEPARTMENT ACRONYMS

DHSC	Department of Health and Social Care
DfE	Department for Education
DWP	Department for Work and Pension
NHS BSA	NHS Business Service Authority
DEFRA	Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
HMT	HM Treasury
DCMS	Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport
FSA	Food Standards Agency
FCDO	Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office
OHID	Office for Health Improvements and Disparities

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1

STOP THE JUNK FOOD CYCLE

Implement existing legislation on junk food advertising and volume promotions



THE IMMEDIATE ASK

Bring forward the delayed legislation for advertising restrictions on foods which are high in fat, sugar and salt (HFSS). This is a first step towards further strengthening the advertising regulations.

Why it matters

- **Childhood overweight and obesity remains high**, with more than a third (36.6%)¹ of year 6 children affected. This is an increase from pre-pandemic levels. In addition, the gap between children from the most and least deprived households is widening, with children from low-income households twice as likely to be affected by obesity.
- **Children in the UK are the shortest² among all** high income western countries, with only girls from Belgium coming out lower. Whether children reach their full height potential is an indicator of nutritional status and the environment in which they grow up.
- **1 in 4 (23%) children under 5 in England have dental decay³**. In Wales it is 36% and in Scotland 27%. Dental decay is caused by consuming sugary foods and drinks. Tooth decay is now the top reason for hospital admissions among young children.
- **Two thirds⁴ (66%) of children eat more salt than they should and 95% of them exceed sugar recommendations**. All forms of marketing, including advertising and multibuy, consistently influence food preference, choice and purchasing behaviours in children and adults. This highlights how the current food system is failing the next generation, and how action is needed to help children access healthier, more affordable food.
- **In the UK, children are exposed to 15 billion⁵ junk food adverts/year online and 3.6 billion⁶ adverts on TV/year. 50% of the TV advertisement⁷ that children (aged 4-15 years) are exposed to are on HFSS/junk food or restaurants/bars, while 70% of the television advertising that children saw for food that are HFSS, was before 9 pm watershed.**
- **In Britain, exposure to HFSS/ junk food advertisements on TV has demonstrated a negative impact⁸ on children**. This influence was evidenced by an observed increase in their consumption

of sugar and calories after being exposed to this type of advertising.

- **Over a quarter⁹ of multibuy deals (volume promotions) are on foods high in fat, sugar and salt**, compared to 4.5% being on fruit and vegetables. Junk food multi-buys are well-known to encourage impulse purchases – The Government's own figures¹⁰ show they increase the amount of food purchased by 20%. A number of **retailers are supportive¹²** of banning multi-buys on junk food and have opted to apply these restrictions. Regulation to ensure a level playing field is, however, necessary.

Existing policy framework or process

- Restrictions on the advertising of foods high in fat sugar and salt to children were first introduced in 2007. New primary legislation, which included a 9pm advertising watershed, was introduced in 2022 as part of the **Health and Care Act 2022¹³**, and was due to come into force in January 2023. This has now been delayed until 2025.
- **Volume promotion restrictions¹⁴** were signed into law in 2021, alongside restrictions on the location of in store promotions. While the location-based promotions came into force in October 2022, the volume promotion restrictions have been delayed until 2025.

Quick win

Both the 9pm watershed and volume promotions restrictions have the necessary legislation in place, and yet they have been delayed until 2025. These policies are a critical step to protecting the current and future health of our children.

Who is responsible?

DHSC and DCMS

2

STOP THE JUNK FOOD CYCLE

Introduce guidance on sugar and salt content of baby and toddler foods


THE IMMEDIATE ASK

Introduce new guidance to industry to support the reduction of sugar and salt content of baby and toddler foods, as a first step towards mandatory guidance.

Why it matters

- The Government have a responsibility to ensure that industry are not permitted to sell products that are damaging to the health of babies and infants.
- The introduction of solids in the first year of life is pivotal in shaping a baby's relationship with food, affecting long term taste preferences and eating habits. High sugar and salt foods at this age can therefore have a negative impact on dietary patterns throughout life.
- **Sugar intake within the age group of children (1.5 to 3 years) is over double¹⁵ the recommended intake.** This is contributing to increasing levels of overweight and obesity, and high levels of tooth decay amongst children under 5.
- **Almost all (97%) of prepackaged food¹⁶ in the baby aisle, specifically marketed for babies and toddlers, have a nutritional or health claim on the front of pack.** A quarter (26%) of these snack foods would provide half of the maximum recommended sugar intake for a 2-year-old in a single portion, and many are marketed as being suitable for children even younger than 2 years old.
- **There are currently no limits on how much salt or sugar can be in foods marketed as appropriate for babies and infants.** This is despite evidence¹⁷ that salt and sugar can be particularly harmful to the health of this age group; recommendations that **energy dense foods¹⁸** should be limited for this age group; and manufactured food and drinks targeted at this age group not being necessary.

Existing policy framework or process

- The Government had a **voluntary sugar reduction programme¹⁹** running from 2016 to 2020, and has previously set targets for salt reduction. However, baby and infant foods were not included.
- The **Prevention Green Paper²⁰** in 2019 committed to challenge businesses to improve the nutritional content of commercially available baby food. It said progress would be monitored and, if found to be insufficient, government would consider other levers.
- A consultation was held on draft commercial food and drink guidelines in 2020. The **Major Conditions Strategy in 2023²¹** reiterated that government would be working with stakeholders and industry to reduce sugar, salt and calories in food including for baby food and drinks.

Quick win

The UK has a track record for programmes that reduce the salt and sugar content of food, we are leading the world via WHO. However, to date these actions have largely excluded food for babies and infants. It is time to close the baby gap!

Who is responsible?

OHID and DHSC

3

MAKE IT EASIER TO EAT SUSTAINABLY

Update government procurement standards to apply to all public settings



THE IMMEDIATE ASK

Expand Government Buying Standards (GBS) across the wider public sector including in schools, local authorities and residential care settings.

Why it matters

- **Current procurement standards are only mandatory for central government, prisons, NHS hospitals and armed forces.** While wider public sector is encouraged to comply, important sectors like schools, local authority catering services and residential care settings which represent a significant portion of public sector catering, are not mandated to follow the procurement standards (though separate school standards focused on quality do exist).
- **Better procurement standards across all public settings would have numerous benefits** including in health, environmental sustainability, support for local economies, the creation of new markets for health and sustainable foods, enhanced transparency and accountability for caterers and providing a boost to UK agriculture and farmers.
- **Standards could be updated to better align with the Government's Eatwell Guide**, by including a requirement for two portions of veg and/or pulses to be included in every meal, plus a portion of fruit if a dessert is offered and focusing on serving less but better meat.
- **At the moment there is inadequate support for local and sustainable food systems:** Existing practices do not sufficiently prioritise the procurement of seasonal, locally produced or environmentally certified food. This leads to missed opportunities in supporting local economies, enhancing food supply resilience, and promoting sustainable agricultural practices.
- **A number of other countries have succeeded in implementing local procurement standards.** For instance, **Brazil²²** mandated that 30% of the food procured for school meals must come from local family farms, achieving 25% by 2017. This approach increased the variety and quantity of healthy foods in schools and stimulated the local economy.

Existing policy framework or process

- The Government Buying Standards for Food and Catering Services (GBS) were first introduced in 2012 and set out standards for public sector procurement. A **consultation²³** on to updated these was held in 2022, with updates standards expected in late 2023.
- The new proposed policy includes data reporting requirements, additional new standards on soy, local economies and the ambitious target that 50% food spend is on food produced locally or certified to higher environmental standards and making standards mandatory across the entire public sector.
- In August 2023 the UK Government published details of its buying "higher quality food" **public sector agreement²⁴**, with the aim of supporting sustainability, nutrition and welfare standards set by GBS. All suppliers accessing public sector contracts through the agreement will have to adhere to the updated GBS for Food and thus help embed GBS across public sector catering.

Quick win

Updated government buying standards have already been consulted on, and existing standards can be updated to include better procurement standards. Expanding the mandatory remit beyond central government has the potential to benefit a lot more people, and align different standards that are already in place.

Who is responsible?
DEFRA and DHSC

4

MAKE IT EASIER TO EAT SUSTAINABLY

Update the School Food Standards and introduce monitoring of compliance



THE IMMEDIATE ASK

Update the School Food Standards and introduce compliance monitoring. This should include an update to the current standards to reflect the latest evidence based dietary guidelines on sugar and fibre, and to include removal of the requirement to offer meat and a dessert at every meal, a requirement for meals to include at least two portions of vegetables, and include support for water only schools.

Why it matters

- Quality food in schools plays a critical role in providing children with the nourishment they need to grow, learn and thrive, with pupils spending 190 days in school each year. There is strong evidence to show that, when done well, school meals can significantly improve health and educational outcomes. Food at school is particularly important for children who are eligible for Free School Meals.
- The School Standards have not been updated to reflect more recent diet and environmental recommendations. Since the Standards were first published, new government guidance on recommended levels of sugar and fibre have been published. Currently the Standards include a requirement to serve meat every day, even though children can eat protein from pulses and other plant-based sources with a much lower environmental impact. **While there are many examples of nutritious, tasty school food, in many schools the Standards are not being met.** There is a need for comprehensive monitoring across the country to ensure children are being served nutritious food at school in line with the Standards.

Existing policy framework or process

- Updating the Standards has already been acknowledged as necessary by the Government in their **Childhood Obesity Strategy**²⁵.
- The School Food Standards are nutritional standards for school meals in England aimed at promoting good health and eating behaviour. The latest version of **The Requirements for School Food Regulations 2014 (legislation.gov.uk)**²⁶ were updated in 2014 and were under review in 2023. While the standards are mandatory, schools are not routinely monitored to assess compliance and there is evidence for lack of compliance, particularly in secondary schools.
- The Food Standards Agency and Department for Education, supported by Office for Health Improvement and Disparities, conducted a **School Food Standards Compliance pilot**²⁷ across 18 participating local authorities in England in 2022-23 which demonstrated the potential for better monitoring.

Quick win

Comprehensive school food standards, as well as regular monitoring of adherence to those standards, is vital for ensuring our children have high quality food during the school day, which is both healthy and sustainable. This is particularly important for those children in receipt of Free School Meals.

Who is responsible?

DfE and FSA



5

MAKE IT EASIER TO EAT SUSTAINABLY

Introduce a horticulture strategy to boost fruit and vegetable production and consumption



THE IMMEDIATE ASK

Introduce a horticulture strategy which supports British farmers to develop a thriving horticulture sector and increases British fruit and vegetable production and consumption.

Why it matters

- **We are not eating enough²⁸ fruit and vegetables:** Only 33% of adults and just 12% of 11–18-year-olds are currently achieving the five-portion target. **Household purchases²⁹** of vegetables reduced by 14% in 2021/22 compared to 2019/20.
- **We are not producing enough³⁰ fruit and vegetables:** The UK is currently producing just 35% of our total fruit and vegetable supply and importing 65%. Total supply would need to increase by 89% to achieve dietary recommendations.
- **Our domestic horticulture sector is contracting** due to labour shortages, punitive supermarket contracts and unprecedented inflation. Growers are choosing to plant fewer crops or leave the sector altogether due to lack of support.
- **Fruit & vegetable supply chains are highly vulnerable to climate shocks;** recent fresh produce shortages have illustrated this fragility.
- **The UK horticulture industry is worth over £5 billion each year³¹,** and the industry employs over 50,000 people.
- **Other countries have a clear strategic plan for horticulture.** An example is the Netherlands, who have pulled far ahead of the UK in this sector due to a strategic commitments and investment.

Who is responsible?

DEFRA (in collaboration with other departments)

Existing policy framework or process

- The 2022 Government Food Strategy committed to a world-leading **Horticulture Strategy for England³²**. However, in May 2023 the farming minister announced that it would not go ahead but effort would be focused instead on a Horticulture Sector Review as well as the replacement/expansion of Fruit & Vegetables Aid Scheme for England from 2026 which will look to support smaller, agroecological producers.
- The House of Lords Horticultural Sector Committee's November **report³³** recommended the government publish a Horticulture Strategy as a matter of highest urgency, as well as appoint a Minister with specific horticultural responsibilities to provide direction and accountability for the sector.

Quick win

A robust, long-term horticulture strategy can support the production and increased consumption of fruit and vegetables, and ensure the UK is not unsustainably reliant on imports. There are opportunities for policy wins, bringing benefits to our health, the environment, the economy, employment opportunities, and our future food security.



6

IMPROVE CHILDREN'S DIETS

Auto-enrol eligible children to the Healthy Start scheme



THE IMMEDIATE ASK

Government should auto-enrol families eligible for Healthy Start to ensure all those eligible can benefit. This is a first step towards improving the uptake and extending the eligibility criteria of the scheme.

Why it matters

- Food insecurity in the UK has doubled in the last 2 years³⁴, with 1 in 4 households with children reporting to be food insecure in June 2023.
- Approximately a third of children³⁵ and pregnant women who are eligible for Healthy Start are not registered. It is a statutory scheme which provides a vital nutritional safety net for low income families to help increase the affordability and accessibility of healthy food for children, and should be based on an opt-out not opt-in basis.
- Currently, families with eligible children must apply for the scheme to receive payments, however due to various factors such as lack of awareness of the scheme, not knowing if they are eligible and the administrative burden of applying, many people who are eligible are not benefiting from the scheme. An opt-out rather than opt-in approach would ensure that all families who want access to the scheme are able to.

Existing policy framework or process

- The Healthy Start scheme³⁶ provides payments worth £4.25 per week for low income families with children under 4 and pregnant women that can be spent on fruit, veg, formula and milk (£8.50 for families with children under 1), providing a vital nutritional safety net that helps to reduce the financial burden on the lowest income families, many of whom are struggling with food insecurity. As a statutory scheme, funding for all those eligible should be available.
- Auto-enrolment requires data-sharing between the Department for Work and Pensions (who hold data that identifies children who are eligible for this scheme), Department of Health and Social Care and NHS Business Service Authority. However administrative challenges have been blamed for this not being in place. In a **October 2023 letter**³⁷ to Emma Lewell-Buck MP, Mastercard and All Pay (the providers of the Healthy Start card) have confirmed that autoenrollment is possible from their side, they just require the data of eligible people to be shared.

Quick win

Receiving statutory benefits should be easy and straightforward for people who are eligible. Administrative challenges related to data sharing are not an acceptable reason for failing to give families an essential nutritional safety net.

Who is responsible?

DWP, DHSC and NHS BSA

Healthy Start



Get help to buy healthy food



7

IMPROVE CHILDREN'S DIETS

Auto-enrol eligible children onto Free School Meals



THE IMMEDIATE ASK

Government should auto-enrol children eligible for Free School Meals (FSM) to ensure those all those eligible can benefit. This is a first step to increasing uptake and extending eligibility.

Why it matters

- Food insecurity in the UK remains high³⁸, with 1 in 4 households with children reporting to be food insecure in June 2023.
- Each year over 2 million children in England benefit from Free School Meals, a scheme which provides a vital nutritional safety net for low income families to help increase the affordability and accessibility of healthy food for children.
- Based on figures from 2013, approximately 1 in 10 children who are eligible for Free School Meals are not registered. This means around 200,000-250,000 children from very low-income families are missing out on a hot, nutritious meal that they are eligible for. This is on top of the 900,000 children in England who are living in poverty and not eligible for Free School Meals.
- Currently, the application process is onerous, requiring families with eligible children to apply, however due to various factors such as lack of awareness of the scheme, not knowing if they are eligible and the administrative burden of applying, many people who are eligible are not benefiting from the scheme. An opt-out rather than opt-in approach would ensure that all families who want access to scheme are able to.

Existing policy framework or process

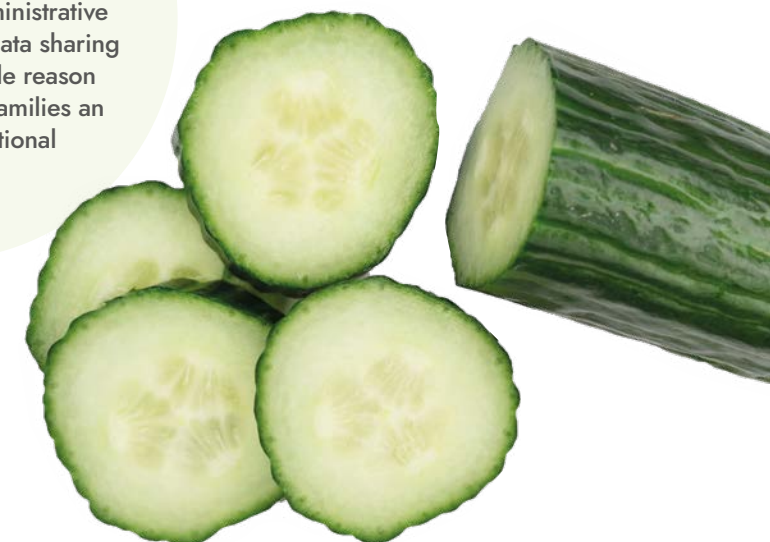
- The provision of Free School Meals is a statutory scheme available to all children in households in England earning less than £7,400 per year after taxes and excluding benefits. As a statutory scheme, funding for all those eligible should be available.
- Auto-enrolment is possible, as demonstrated by a number of local authorities who have successfully introduced it. While this has been successful at increasing uptake, particularly amongst minority groups, the local work around still does not capture all eligible children and incurs onerous governance and administration at council and school level.
- Auto-enrolment requires data-sharing between the Department for Work and Pensions (who hold data that identifies children who are eligible for these schemes) and the Department of Education (who administer the scheme).

Quick win

Receiving statutory benefits should be easy and straightforward for people who are eligible. Administrative challenges related to data sharing are not an acceptable reason for failing to give families an essential nutritional safety net.

Who is responsible?

DfE and DWP



8

UNLEASH THE FULL POTENTIAL OF THE FOOD SYSTEM

Introduce mandatory reporting for food businesses on health and sustainability metrics



THE IMMEDIATE ASK

Introduce mandatory reporting by food and beverage companies on nutrition, health and sustainability metrics as part of the Food Data Transparency Partnership (FDTP) process.

Why it matters

- **The food industry shapes our food environment and impacts our health.** The UK food system is responsible for 20% of domestic greenhouse gas emissions and what we eat has become the biggest risk factor for preventable disease, taking a toll on our health and placing an unsustainable strain on the NHS. Food companies have an economic incentive to sell foods that are cheap to produce and have the greatest profit margins for their investors, but these are the foods that are making us ill.
- **Measurements and standards can help create a level playing field,** encouraging businesses to make food environments more supportive to citizens and in turn shift the dial on diets. This includes disclosing the proportion of their sales that come from foods high in fat, sugar and salt (HFSS), the proportion of sales from fruit and vegetables and the proportion of sales by protein source (animal and plant).
- **Consistent reporting can help businesses, policymakers and investors.** It can help identify which companies are taking action to transition their sales to better health and environmental outcomes, and those that are not; help investors to align their investments in the food industry with responsible stewardship objectives and to allocate capital to businesses supporting healthier, more sustainable food environments; and help policymakers to effectively design policies to accelerate change and create a level playing field to de-risk business investment into healthier and more sustainable sales.
- **There is currently a lack of consistency and transparency** in the way that food businesses currently report on their sales and businesses practices to support equitable access to healthy, affordable and sustainable food. Just eight major UK food retailers, caterers and restaurant chains currently report publicly on sales of healthy (non-

HFSS) foods, sales of fruit and vegetables, and sales of protein type by source. Since 2022, there has been little progress in companies publicly reporting sales against these three key metrics. This is despite a number of food businesses publicly and privately calling for mandatory reporting.

- **Voluntary approaches have had limited success** with increasing transparency in the food industry and therefore meaningful action will require mandatory reporting.

Existing policy framework or process

- **The Food Data Transparency Partnership³⁹** (FDTP) was launched in 2023, off the back of the Government's response to the National Food Strategy. This includes a workstream on business reporting of health metrics, and a second workstream on sustainability (GHGEs). Initially the reporting for health and nutrition metrics was due to be mandatory but has now been made voluntary.

Quick win

Mandatory reporting could be transformative, creating a level playing field for businesses and supporting investors and policymakers with decision making. The mechanisms are already in place as part of the voluntary FDTP process and several NGO initiatives, and the next step would be to ensure that the reporting is made a mandatory requirement for all large food businesses.

Who is responsible?

DEFRA and DHSC

9

UNLEASH THE FULL POTENTIAL OF THE FOOD SYSTEM

Hold a national food summit to develop a clear plan for ending food insecurity in Britain



THE IMMEDIATE ASK

Hold a food summit soon after the election to establish a clear plan for addressing food insecurity in the next government term. This should include an invitation to the UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food to attend.

Why it matters

- The price of a basic basket of food⁴⁰ which meets nutritional requirements has risen from £43.52 to £54.63 since April 2022, peaking at £56.63 in October 2023. This is higher than average inflation over the same time period.
- Household food insecurity⁴¹ in the UK has increased as a result of the cost of living crisis. In June 2023, 1 in 5 households were food insecure, and as many as 1 in 4 households with children.
- UK national food security, and food prices are increasingly being affected by a wide range of factors, including extreme weather fuelled by climate change, conflict and Brexit.
- A national food security summit at the start of the next period of government would provide an opportunity to convene leaders in this field to develop a vision for a nation with better food security and without the need for food banks. Such a summit should focus on the recommendations in the independent National Food Strategy and cover the key elements of national food security as defined by the Agriculture Act 2020⁴² (availability, supply, resilience, expenditure and safety), as well as address the high rates of household food insecurity seen in the UK.
- The UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food has made a request to visit the UK, and inviting him to visit would provide an opportunity to discuss our national food security in the context of the UK's international obligations.

Quick win

National and household food security are both issues of high concern in the UK, with climate events, the war in Ukraine, Brexit, and cost-of-living crisis all highlighting the importance of addressing the food system with urgency. With food inflation, food prices, and food insecurity at such high levels, it is an issue that is impossible to ignore.

Who is responsible?

Cabinet Office and DEFRA

Existing policy framework or process

- In 2021 the Government commissioned National Food Strategy was published laying out a clear plan of action to ensure the food system delivers food security as well as better public health and environmental outcomes for the UK. Many of these recommendations have yet to be acted upon but there is broad support across the political spectrum for the plan.
- In May 2023, the Prime Minister and the Environment Secretary hosted a 'farm to fork' summit. Although initially branded as a food security summit, food security was not high on the agenda. The EFRA Committee⁴³ called this a missed opportunity in its 2023 report on food security, and has suggested that the Prime Minister chair a dedicated annual national food security summit.
- In addition, The UN Rapporteur made a request to visit the UK⁴⁴ which the EFRA Committee⁴⁵ has supported.



10

UNLEASH THE FULL POTENTIAL OF THE FOOD SYSTEM

Establish a cross-government working group on food, as a first step towards developing a new Food Bill



THE IMMEDIATE ASK

Establish a cross-government working group on food, as a first step towards introducing a new Food Bill for England

Why it matters

- **The UK's food system is incredibly complex and touches on issues affecting many different government departments.** Much of food policy is currently divided between the Department for Food, Environment and Rural Affairs, and the Department for Health and Social Care, however the lines are not always clear. Furthermore, aspects of food policy also sit with a number of departments including the Department for Education, the Department for Work and Pensions, the Department for Transport, the Treasury, the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero, the Home Office, and the Department for Science, Innovation and Technology, among others.
- **There are examples of disjointed policy making⁴⁶** which include policies that are developed in isolation of others, have unintended consequences, duplicate efforts, make accountability hard, create gaps and contradictions.
- **There are a range of policy areas⁴⁷ relevant to food which are suffering from a lack of joined up working.** This includes on Free School Meals, Healthy Start, dietary guidelines, land use, obesity and climate, to name a few. In each of these cases, multiple departments are or should be involved, but a lack of joined up working hinder success.
- **Costs to the public purse caused by a food system which does not pay for the externalities which it generates are being born in multiple ways across different departments.** Most recently, the Department of Health and Social Care has started to fund Ozempic (the 11th most expensive prescription drug) to support weight loss among people living with obesity. A full impact assessment of the costs being born should be conducted to identify policy priorities which could save money and drive greater policy alignment across government.
- **A Food Bill for England could underpin effective cross government working** by providing a governance structure for food policy and the means of delivering clear immediate

and coordinated action across the food system. It would also provide a mechanism by which to set a series of goals which capture the long-term outcomes we expect of the food system for our health, environment and economy, establish a process for monitoring progress, and ensure accountability.

Existing policy framework or process

- Multiple options have been put forward for cross-government working for food. These include a dedicated Department of Food, with an accompanying Secretary of State for Food, in the mould of the Ministry of Food that existed in the UK until 1955; a standing cross-departmental task force for food which would bring together Ministers and senior civil servants on a regular basis; or a specific food bill as suggested by the **National Food Strategy⁴⁸** or has been implemented in Scotland through the **Good Food Nation (Scotland) Bill⁴⁹** requiring Scottish Ministers and public bodies to set out what action they will take to improve the food system.
- There were also examples of cross-government working in response to the COVID-19 crisis, such as the Food and Other Essential Supplies Vulnerable Ministerial Task Force. The Task Force had representation from five government departments and the devolved administrations and was successful in achieving a number of its goals, such as freeing up online delivery slots for the elderly and securing

Quick win

There is barely a government department that does not have some involvement in the food system. Food is therefore a prime example for a policy area that would benefit from substantial cross-government working. The fact that it does not happen routinely or at scale is resulting in inaction and missed opportunities to improve our food system.

Who is responsible?

DEFRA with other departments and the Cabinet Office

a **£63 million payment to local authorities⁵⁰** to distribute emergency grants.

References Low-Cost Policies

Policy 1: Implement legislation on junk food advertising and volume promotions

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Policy 3: Update government procurement standards to apply to all public settings

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Policy 4: Update the School Food Standards and introduce monitoring of compliance

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Policy 6: Auto-enrol eligible children to the Healthy Start scheme

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Policy 7: Auto-enrol eligible children onto Free School Meals

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Policy 9: Hold a national food summit to develop a clear plan for ending food insecurity in Britain

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Policy 10: Establish a cross-government working group on food, as a first step towards developing a new Food Bill

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**You can view
The Food Foundation's
full manifesto here:**

*[foodfoundation.org.uk
/initiatives/election-
2024-nourishing-nation](https://foodfoundation.org.uk/initiatives/election-2024-nourishing-nation)*



For more information contact:

JOSS MACDONALD

Public Affairs Lead at The Food Foundation

joss.macdonald@foodfoundation.org.uk



The Food Foundation

International House, 6 Canterbury Crescent, London, SW9 7QD

foodfoundation.org.uk  [@Food_Foundation](https://twitter.com/Food_Foundation)

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