



Department
for Environment,
Food & Rural Affairs

Food Strategy

The Good Food Cycle

October 2025



New Ministers at Defra



Emma Reynolds MP

MP for Wycombe

Secretary of State for
Environment Food and
Rural Affairs

Previously Economic
Secretary to the Treasury

Dame Angela Eagle DBE MP

MP for Wallasey

Minister of State for
Food Security and Rural Affairs

Previously Home Office, Border
Security and Asylum



Other Defra Ministers remain the same:

Emma Hardy MP, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State (Minister for Water and Flooding)

Mary Creagh CBE MP, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State (Minister for Nature)

Baroness Hayman of Ullock, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State (Lords Minister)

Food Strategy Vision

A healthier, more sustainable and more resilient 21st century food system that grows the economy, feeds the nation, nourishes people, and protects the planet, now and in the future

What is the Food Strategy?

A new **strategic framework** for transforming the food system.

A food system that:

- Is **healthier, more affordable, sustainable, and resilient**
- Supports **economic growth, environmental goals, and public health** outcomes.

What is the Food Strategy?

Key concepts:

- **Whole-of-government approach:** Ministerial Food Strategy Group, Devolved Food Leadership Group, Inter-Ministerial Group.
- **Stakeholder Insights:** Trade bodies (inc Seafish), Food Strategy Advisory Board (FSAB) and the Citizens Advisory Council. Meetings with over 400 stakeholders across business, academia, and civil society.
- **Systems thinking:** Tackling interconnected challenges like obesity, food insecurity, and environment.
- **People and place-centered:** Grounded in local food cultures and community resilience.
- **A long-term approach.** A programme for major change

How did we get here?

Analysis identified 3 systemic challenges:

1. The **Junk Food Cycle**

- Obesity-related ill health costs the NHS over **£11.4 billion** every year

2. The **Invisibility of Nature**.

- Biodiversity loss and environmental degradation = systemic, chronic risks.
- UK food system (inc imports) accounts for 38% of all UK GHG emissions.

3. The **Resilience Gap**

- UK Food self-sufficiency is 77% for food we can grow, 65% all food.
- BUT lower in sectors critical for healthy diets: fresh vegetables 53% and fresh fruit (15%).
- Household food insecurity is increasing, especially for vulnerable groups

What are the business issues?

The food system faces **chronic issues** that require a coordinated approach:

1. **Costs increasing** e.g. labour and energy
2. **Profit margins remain tight** difficult operating conditions
3. **Skills and labour** shortages across. Sector attraction, recruitment and retention.
4. **Increased volatility** in the food system impacts on impact investment.

In a good food cycle, a **transparent, stable and predictable** policy environment is vital.

What are the business opportunities?

1. Economy: Food is a foundational sector. The food system generated £153bn in Gross Value Added in 2023.
2. Health: Healthier diets can improve productivity and have a net positive impact on growth as well as reducing the burden on the NHS.
3. Jobs: The UK food system employs approximately 4.2 million people.
4. Productivity: The 2024 Newton Future Factory Report identified a £14bn productivity gap in UK food and drink manufacturing.
5. Innovation e.g. product reformulation, labelling and consumer data, AI and automated packaging systems, energy use, packaging design and re-use, etc.
6. Resilience investment in food system infrastructure – national and community
7. Culture re-connecting people to local food producers and businesses.

What are the outcomes?

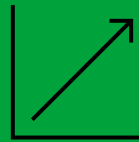
10 Strategic Outcomes (4 themes) for the food system

1. Healthier & More Affordable Food



Improved food environments.
Universal access to healthy, affordable, convenient and appealing food.

2. Good Growth



Sustainable growth and innovation in the food sector.
Skilled workforce development across regions.

3. Sustainable & Resilient Supply



Environmentally sustainable production.
Resilient domestic supply and preparedness for shocks.

4. Vibrant Food Cultures



Celebrated local and national food identities.
Increased food literacy and community engagement.

What are the outcomes?

Junk Food Cycle

Economic incentives drive **unhealthy diets** and **environmental damage**

Leads to **food insecurity** and **systemic weakness**



Good Food Cycle

Health, economic, environmental and resilience outcomes **reinforce** each other

Leads to **food security** and **systemic strength**

Outcomes set the **direction** for:

- Government
- Industry
- Civil Society
- Citizens

They **guide policy** and **metrics** for positive change.

Food Strategy Phase 2: Initial Priorities

1. Good Growth for Food Businesses

2. Food Price and Affordability

3. Food System Resilience

Related definitions, metrics and measures.

Implementation Plan in early 2026.



Phase 2 Maintaining On-going Dialogue

Vital to keep the flow of insights and views via:

- Trade bodies (including fisheries) and sector forums
- Food Strategy Advisory Board
- Citizens Advisory Council
- **Alignment with other strategies** across Government: e.g. Devolved Government Strategies, Trade Strategy, The NHS 10-Year Plan, Child Poverty Strategy, Circular Economy Taskforce and Industrial Strategy.

