

Briefing Paper:

Towards a Good Food Cycle: a UK government food strategy for England

Full policy paper [here](#)

Defra press release [here](#)

Context

In December 2024, Steve Reed, Secretary of State at Defra, announced the government would be developing a food strategy. Following the appointment of a [Food Strategy Advisory Board](#), formation of an Interministerial Group on Food Strategy (including representation from Defra, DHSC, DBT, DfE and MHCLG) and wide consultation with stakeholders (though no formal public consultation), the Good Food Cycle was announced on 15 July 2025.

The paper sets out a high-level vision, seeking to make healthy, affordable, British food accessible to all while supporting the environment and the economy. It outlines ten priority outcomes but does not contain any new policy announcements, targets or implementation plans, which will be developed over coming months.

Summary of Good Food Cycle plan

Context and Challenges

- Current system drives **diet-related ill health, environmental damage, and vulnerability to shocks**.
- Food inflation, supply issues, and rising **obesity** highlight urgent need for change.
- UK self-sufficiency is **low in fruit (15%) and veg (53%)**, which are critical for healthy diets.
- Identifies **three systemic failures**:
 - **Junk food cycle**: promotes cheap, unhealthy, highly processed foods.
 - **Invisibility of nature**: environmental costs not reflected in prices.
 - **Resilience gap**: system vulnerable to climate, political, and economic shocks.

Vision

A healthier, more affordable, sustainable and resilient food system that:

- Improves public health
- Grows the UK food sector
- Reduces environmental impact
- Increases food system resilience

A New Approach

- Centred on **people and place** – localised strategies that respect cultural identity.
- **Collaborative delivery** involving government, industry, civil society, and consumers.
- **Local food systems** and community-led initiatives will play a key role.
- Commitment to ongoing **stakeholder engagement** (e.g. Citizens Advisory Council and FSAB).

Ten Priority Outcomes

1. Healthier and More Affordable Food

Shift diets towards more **fruit, veg, wholegrains** and **less fat, sugar, salt and calories**; promote healthier food environments (e.g. retail, schools, communities) and make healthy food **appealing, affordable, and accessible** for all.

2. Good Growth

Create fair, transparent food supply chains; support **innovation**, attract investment and develop a **skilled workforce**. The food sector is the **UK's largest manufacturing sector** (13% of employment). There is an opportunity to grow the market for **healthier food**, including **alternative proteins** and **precision breeding** technologies. The Government supports R&D and aims to **reduce regulatory burdens** while maintaining safety and standards.

3–6. Sustainable and Resilient Supply

Domestically, support for **sustainable farming and fishing** and **secure domestic production of healthy food**, with high animal welfare and reduced waste. **Promote trade** aligning with the strategy's goals and prepare for **climate change, supply shocks**, and geopolitical instability.

7–10. Vibrant Food Cultures

Celebrate **UK's diverse food heritage**, encourage **stronger local food systems** and help people reconnect with food through **education, skills, and cooking confidence**.

Timetable and Process

- The Food Strategy is a **long-term, complex transformation plan**.
- The next key milestone will be **development of metrics, indicators and implementation plans for the food strategy outcomes**
- The food strategy is closely linked to the Land Use Framework, Environment Improvement Plan, Food and Farming Decarbonisation Plan and the forthcoming Carbon Budget.

Vegan Society Analysis

The Good Food Cycle provides a framework in which a transformative approach could occur, including significantly more support for domestic production and consumption of plant-based foods, which would advance progress towards its goals. There aren't yet clear signs the government has the will for radical change, however, and there is a risk economic growth may be seen to trump other objectives, especially in regard to sustainability.

More information on policies to promote the transition to plant-based food system in [the Vegan Society manifesto](#).

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