A National Conversation About Food

A public dialogue findings report

Hopkins Van Mil

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Contents

Executive Summary

This public dialogue was commissioned by the Food, Farming & Countryside Commission in April 2023. It was designed and delivered by Hopkins Van Mil working in collaboration with FFCC and TPXimpact.

This is a two-phase process. The public dialogue was conducted as a proof of concept phase in two locations: Birmingham and Cambridgeshire. It will be rolled out to the rest of UK from winter 2023.

The dialogue objectives are to:

1. Conduct a large-scale, robust, citizen engagement exercise around the UK, using food as the entry point to other connected issues
2. Inform policy makers and political parties in the run up to a general election and beyond
3. Help shift the public narrative around food by amplifying citizen voices on food systems and potential policy interventions
4. Generate a substantial suite of materials, centring citizens voices, to support ours and our partner/stakeholder work.

The dialogue design was based on policy actions already proposed by actors in the system and through previous deliberative processes. It focused on four key areas:

- Food justice and power
- Food, farming and land use
- Food, climate and nature
- Food and health.

We found a great deal of commonality between what participants said in Birmingham and Cambridgeshire. So much so that the key messages combine to create powerful key findings. Overwhelmingly participants **call for change**. Their calls for action are set out in full in chapter 2 of this report and are:

1. A call for action

Participants call for urgent action because the food system is vitally important, and it is critical to address what is currently wrong with it. This action should prioritise health and wellbeing over profit and above all it should be brave.

As such it requires government to intervene in our food system more. Participants want government not to be afraid to make change for fear being seen as too controlling, overprotective or interfering unduly with personal choice. They feel that such intervention is desperately needed given what is seen to be wrong with the food system.

2. A call for robust measures

Given the serious nature of the crisis participants call for robust strategies and measures, including legislation, rules and regulations which will create conditions for change. This includes creating a published road map setting out the route for improvement, with embedded standards and measurable, enforceable, actionable targets for change. They want to see punitive action taken against those who break the law.

3. A call for new ways of producing, selling and buying food

Participants are interested in moving towards a system more focused on localism with:

- More direct selling from farmers to consumers
- Less reliance on food imports
- A stop to procedures involving food travelling out of the UK for processing

They are hopeful that farmers will be open to work towards greener, healthier, and more sustainable food production, for which they will be supported to work in more sustainable ways. In return, participants expect there to be a fairer distribution of profits with farmers receiving a fair reward for farming sustainably.

4. A call for societal shifts to enable food system change

There is a strong sense that because food is literally essential for life we need to create a new social contract which is rooted in an understanding of how a thriving food system should work and what it should do. Above all it should demonstrate that our food system is important.

To enable the development of this agreement it really matters to participants that knowledge and awareness of the food system is raised. Participants feel that there is so much that people don't know about the harms our current food system creates, including poor nutrition and obesity and impacts on climate including biodiversity loss. Participants feel privileged to have taken part in this process and learnt so much, but feel that others should benefit from this knowledge too in order to:

- Contribute to the societal shifts that are needed
- Make informed decision about their and their families food choices
- Support the effort to pressure those in power to make substantial change.

The detailed findings from the dialogue are set out in chapters 3-7. They are summarised here:

Connections to the food system

Individual participants feel a strong connection to the food system through the aspects of it summarised below.

- **Social system**. Participants experience a strong sense of connection when preparing food for themselves, for family and friends, and for their wider communities. Others simply connect when they eat the food on their plate.
- **Economic system**. Some participants connect to the food system as end consumers when they purchase food. This connection is experienced when doing their regular supermarket shop, when selecting fresh food produce over processed, or when getting a takeaway at the end of a busy week.
- **Biological system**. Some participants feel most connected when they experience growing their own vegetables and fruit on a small scale. A few also feel a connection when they take steps to prevent food wastage, or they reflect on their own contribution to the issue as end users.
- **Farm system.** Some participants feel most connected to the food system through direct links to the farming community. This connection can come from family and friends who farm, personal farming experiences, or living and working in an agricultural area.

- **Health system**. A connection is also felt to the food system when striving to make healthy and nutritious food choices for themselves and their families.

In this section participants' reflections on the different types of policy instrument that they discussed are shared. Participants **are supportive of government intervention in the food system**. However, they do not feel that government always uses the powers they have effectively. Many participants express disappointment about the pace and extent of government intervention to tackle the issues in the food system. Concerns include that inaction impacts on the public purse, with issues related to failure to act such as a rise in obesity and harmful impacts on the environment being exacerbated.

Overwhelmingly, participants **do not equate the suggested government interventions they discussed with overstepping or 'nannying'**. Rather, where some participants did reference the idea of a 'nanny state', this was either described as something they welcomed in relation to food policy, or something they felt was being used as an excuse by government for inaction.

Reactions to different types of policy instrument

- **Taxation**: is a mechanism participants are generally supportive of, especially in relation to corporation rather than individual taxes
- **Frameworks**: participants see frameworks as a useful way of joining up policy making about food and farming, while creating enough flexibility in the system to make it work.
- **Standards**: there is very strong support for standards for food in public institutions, particularly schools and hospitals where it is important that food is nutritious
- **Information provision:** is an action raised by participants rather than provided as evidence in the dialogue. They believe it to be important in terms of food labelling, public awareness campaigns and changes to the school curriculum.
- **Regulation:** there is support for regulation in the food system because it is felt that power imbalances in the system make legal and regulatory mechanisms the most effective way of ensuring positive outcomes.
- **Subsidies:** are seen as a useful mechanism for redistributing the true costs of producing food. Of particular importance to participants is the need to invest in farmers to help them to transition to more sustainable practices.
- **Welfare system change:** is one of the more contentious government mechanisms for participants. Some believe welfare is a justice issue and should be included in the policy actions, others do not believe the welfare system is the right mechanism to effect change.
- **Machinery of government:** many participants like the idea of a co-ordinating body or department to bring together different areas of the food system, including a Minister for Food. They want government to articulate a clear vision for the future of food and put steps in place to achieve that. This should be a cross-party initiative which could come with high levels of public support.

Reactions to other cross-stakeholder actions

Participants discuss and express their support for various alternative options for restructuring the food system (outside of policy interventions). These are summarised in this section.

- Participants advocate for the introduction of an alternative economic model that brings local farm production and local communities closer together. They believe this approach will lead to fairer pay for farmers, improved accessibility to healthy and reasonably priced products, and positive environmental outcomes.
- Participants argue for not-for-profit business models, including farmers' hubs and catering companies supplying public sector institutions.
- Many participants believe that individuals should assume greater responsibility for making improved choices regarding the health and sustainability of the food they consume. They believe information and education must go hand-in-hand with assuming this responsibility. However, a few argue that the sole burden shouldn't be placed on the individual, and they emphasise the importance of other measures.
- A few participants see a role for the public in campaigning for change within the food system. They call for a social movement which has a figure head akin to Greta Thunberg driving the campaign.

Barriers to, and enablers of, implementation

Participants are drawn to a range of policy mechanisms, and they are surprised that some have not been implemented already. In the discussions it has become clear that they consider there are a number of reasons why they believe policies for the food system have not been enacted. They also articulate ways in which pressure could be brought to bear to enable implementation. These are summarised as:

- The cost of living crisis is a significant factor: overwhelmingly the most significant barrier to policy implementation expressed by participants is the price of food and the everyday trade-off people make between good, healthy, nutritious food – and affordable food
- Cost to the public purse is seen to be a deterrent for policy makers, but they feel if this is balanced with an understanding of the benefits of taking action more might be done
- An apathy on behalf of decision-makers, implying the system isn't broken enough to make efforts to fix it
- A lack of awareness across society that the food system has to change if we aren't going to see increased harms to health and the planet
- The sheer complexity of the food system, and the systems it connects to, thwarting attempts to make change
- A fear that there might be unintended or unforeseen consequences when the policy is introduced and rolled-out
- A perception that the policy will be unpopular and cause a backlash
- Commitment to a political ideology e.g., letting the market decide
- Powerful actors in the system preventing change and a profit imperative for food businesses, particularly the large multi-national corporations
- Short-termism with decisions being made in line with the next election rather than the longer term good of populations and the planet
- Issues such as bureaucracy, consumer habits and expectations and government not listening to a desire for change.

Throughout the dialogue participants are keen to emphasise that despite the barriers to policy implementation, they do see that change is possible. They focus on a number of enablers to policy implementation. These include:

- **Citizen pressure** – once people across society are more aware of the need for change they feel there are a number of ways that citizens can make it clear that they want to change, making it more important for political parties to push for this in their manifestos and political agendas
- **Proof of popularity**: participants agree that if it can be demonstrated that a policy will be a vote winner then it is more likely to be taken seriously, they argue that:
  - Citizens want and are calling for change
  - It **is** a vote winner to prioritise food, health and environment.
- **Providing more evidence** across the society of the need for change. Participants feel that this evidence must exist (and they have seen some of it during the dialogue), but they have a sense that it cannot be widely known or understood, because if it was more action would have been taken. They cite evidence from:
  - Scientific research 'serious reports'
  - Social research
  - Visible harms presented on the news and social media
  - Citizen deliberative processes such as the People's Plan for Nature and the National Food Strategy public dialogue
- As such they call for **greater transparency** in food policy decision making.

Trade-offs

In their deliberations participants reference trade-offs that need to be made to achieve policy change. Overwhelmingly **food price** is the most significant trade-off participants raise. Participants concerns are focused on meeting the needs of those on lower incomes; and on what price increase might be tolerated to achieve improved outcomes for health and the environment. **Many participants say that they would accept higher food prices for an increase in benefits to people and the planet from a new approach to food policy.** They are concerned that this may not be possible or acceptable to the wider population. They want to make sure that any changes in food pricing policies do not exacerbate inequalities in society.

Other significant trade-offs for participants include:

- Becoming **less reliant on food imports and creating conditions for more of the food we eat to come from UK sources**, including changing the system of which food is processed in other countries
- **Food choice** is something participants could happily restrict to achieve a fairer, more sustainable food system this includes **less access to imported out of season fruit and vegetables, less intensively farmed meat and poultry,** and **less Ultra Processed Foods (UPFs)**
- Participants **call for dietary change**, focused on less food choice, and to 'fix UPFs'
- They want action to **change the food environment away from ubiquitous fast and convenience food outlets** and a shift towards ensuring what is available for convenience is predominantly healthy.

The report ends with the reflection that being part of this dialogue, and indeed the food system brings a sense of togetherness and mutuality which participants want to see continue.

1. Introduction

1.1 Background

This public dialogue was commissioned by the [Food, Farming and Countryside Commission (FFCC)](#) in May 2023. It was designed, facilitated and reported on by [Hopkins Van Mil (HVM)](#). [TPXimpact](#) worked in close collaboration with FFCC and HVM to support the design of the process and to produce stories to advocate for system change based on participant views.

1.2 Programme objectives

Food system change is essential for making progress on human and planetary health, but progress has been slowed by prevailing narratives and assumptions about food which seek to maintain the status quo. These are often deployed by businesses and politicians with vested interests. We need to move away from assumptions like 'people want cheap food', 'no-one wants a nanny state' and 'it's up to consumers to change their buying habits' to unlock new possibilities. Yet citizens are increasingly aware of the problems in the food system and understand that if we fix food, we can improve the nation's health and save the planet. The programme objectives established by FFCC and its partners are to:

1. Conduct a large-scale, robust, citizen engagement exercise around the UK, using food as the entry point to other connected issues
2. Inform policy makers and political parties in the run up to a general election and beyond
3. Help shift the public narrative around food by amplifying citizen voices on food systems and potential policy interventions
4. Generate a substantial suite of materials, centring citizens voices, to support ours and our partner/stakeholder work.

The programme is in two phases. This is a proof of concept phase run in two locations, Birmingham and Cambridgeshire. The intention is to roll out a UK-wide public dialogue from winter 2023, having tested the process in these two locations. This report therefore shares the findings from the beginning of the [National Conversation About Food](#) convened by FFCC.

1.3 What is a public dialogue?

Public dialogue is a process during which members of the public interact with evidence from academics, scientists, stakeholders and policy makers to deliberate on issues relevant to future decisions.

Public dialogue enables constructive conversations amongst diverse citizens on topics which are often complex or controversial. Not only does it provide an in-depth insight into public opinion, it also offers a window into understanding people's reasoning. HVM works within and promotes Sciencewise principles and quality

framework[1]. The HVM team has extensive experience in designing, delivering public dialogue and reporting on the outcomes.

Public dialogue was chosen as the format to ensure that participants are given time and a level playing field to discuss the policy actions and issues that matter to individuals, to communities and to society. Public dialogue is:

Informed: evidence is provided on the topic shared by experts in the field
Two-way: participants, policy makers and experts all give something to and take something away from the process
Facilitated: the process is carefully structured to ensure that participants receive the right amount and detail of information, a diverse range of views are heard and taken into account and the discussion is not dominated by particular individuals or issues
Deliberative: participants develop their views on an issue through conversation with other participants, policy makers and experts.

1.4 Recruitment

Participants were recruited to the dialogue using sortition. A stratified sampling method which enables the formation of a 'mini-public' representative of the community in which the dialogue is based. The process was managed by the Sortition Foundation[2] working to a recruitment specification (see Appendix 2) devised by the dialogue partners. The process had three stages:

Stage 1
The Sortition Foundation randomly selected 12000 addresses from across Cambridgeshire and 12000 from across Birmingham (Just under 300 addresses for every one of the needed 80 conversation members). Each of these addresses received a letter in the post inviting residents to register their interest in taking part in the conversation. Previous experience indicated that people who live in more deprived areas[3] tend to be less likely to respond to invitations of this kind, hence the random selection was weighted as follows: 80% of the addresses were chosen from the whole of each of the areas and 20% of the addresses were chosen specifically from more deprived areas (Indices of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) 1-3).

Stage 2
As part of the sign-up procedure, all potential participants were required to share some basic information about themselves including address, date of birth, gender, ethnicity and information about their educational attainment. We also asked if they describe themselves as having a disability, if the household contains children, and how they would vote if there was a general election tomorrow.

Stage 3
This information was then used as input into a "sortition algorithm"; this is a process of randomly selecting our 80 National Conversation about Food members from the pool of 478 people who registered in such a way to create a representative sample (e.g., the age profile of Conversation members is broadly similar to the age profile of the population of the areas as a whole). In this case the Sortition Foundation did this

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[1] www.sciencewise.org
[2] https://www.sortitionfoundation.org/
[3] Using the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government Indices of Deprivation (2019)

twice - once for each area. Details of the specific algorithm we use, including information about the fairness of the algorithm, can be found [here](#).

In addition to the information about gender, age, ethnicity, disability, household composition and political leaning mentioned above, we also used the address of each respondent to hit two further targets:

- **Urban/ rural**: we used government statistics to classify all addresses as lying in an urban or rural area and our sortition algorithm ensured that we had representative numbers from each in the assembly.
- **IMD**: we use a postcode IMD lookup to show what IMD score each address given by registrants falls into so that we can make sure that each is proportionally represented.

At the end of the process the Sortition Foundation contacted each of the selected participants to make sure they were still interested in taking part, replaced any who have changed their mind or had something come up (using the algorithm) and then handed over the final confirmed 80 people to HVM.

1.5 Methodology

HVM conducted a rapid topic review, based on work done by FFCC, to map the landscape of existing public attitudes and dialogue research on food systems. The results of the topic review were discussed in a design workshop. As a result, the dialogue was designed around four main topic areas enabling the dialogue design to be framed around understanding of what participants in previous deliberative process had called for. The topic areas were food:

- Justice and power
- Farming and land use
- Climate and nature
- Health

Within those topics, case studies (see Appendix 3 for the case study presentations) were developed to give participants a sample of the types of policy actions that have already been proposed. The case study topics are set out in table 1.

Workshop topic	Case study
Food justice and power	• A fair deal for citizens and for food producers
Food, farming and land use/ climate and nature	• A just agricultural transition • Chicken farming • Industrial farming
Food and health	• Changing food environments • Institutional eating • Ultra-processed foods

The dialogue was therefore framed in such a way as to encourage participants to review policy actions already proposed, consider what they found interesting or

appealing about these actions and what they found difficult or challenging. Each workshop explored what participants think about government intervention, about where power lies in the system and the principles that underlie thinking on the food system and the need for change.

Dialogue process

The dialogue was designed around four workshops. Three workshops held online for three hours on week-day evenings about one week apart. The final workshop was held in person on July 8th in Birmingham and Cambridge. Each online workshop was designed around the case study topics set out above. The final workshop was a culminating process in which participants focused on their visions of the future and manifestos for change based on reviewing the policy actions reviewed during the online workshops.

Each workshop was facilitated by one lead and five small group facilitators. Participants were supported throughout with a participant handbook, a tech support session, and other support to ensure they could take part in the dialogue. Participants that needed them were loaned tablets, web cams, headphones or Wifi hot spots to ensure they were not excluded from the process due to a lack of equipment.

Interpreting and extrapolating findings

Public dialogues are a well-respected, robust approach for engaging the public with complex policy issues in a meaningful and informed way. As with any research method, it is important to consider what the approach means for interpreting or extrapolating findings.

Findings are reported thematically, following the key themes that emerged through the analysis process. Key findings and conclusions developed through the analysis and reporting process are articulated the final chapter where we set out what participants consider important when thinking about environmental science.

Public dialogue is a qualitative methodology. We have used qualitative research methods to review what participants told us, specifically grounded theory where the findings come from a thorough reading of the transcripts. Transcripts were created from each of the deliberative methods used. We collated what was said into key themes and used those themes to draw out meaning from the discussions. We chose this approach to ensure the findings are rooted in what participants said, rather than looking for confirmation of preconceived ideas. The transcripts used were anonymised so that no one can be traced back to the comments that are included in this report.

Qualitative research reports, including this one, do not report on the number of times something was said, but rather the strength of feeling expressed. As such HVM uses the following quantifiers in the report:

'Many' or 'most' when it is clear that all or almost all participants share a similar view
'Some' when a less participants shared a similar view
'A few' when a small number of participants shared a similar view

Bullet points are used to summarise key points made. These mostly reflect areas of agreement and where points were made by many participants across many of the s

Anonymised quotations are used to highlight points made by a number of participants and to underline points made by a range of people. They also highlight points of particular significance to participants.

Reading this report

When reading this report you will find:

Images shared by participants to illustrate the question 'What connects you to the food system?'. The images in Chapter 2 are from the drawings created by participants and flip charts by facilitators to illustrate participants' visions of the future and manifestos for change.

> *"**Quotes** set out like this. Quotes are used throughout the report to illustrate points, not replace narrative. These are provided verbatim in participants' own words, we remove filler words, but do not make changes to spelling or grammar so as not to distort the participants' meaning".* **Participant, Cambridgeshire, workshop 1**

Summary findings

Presented at the beginning of each chapter in text boxes with a coloured frame like this one. They set out the main findings to be discovered in the chapter.

Stories highlighting a particular experience or theme

Are put in a box like this to highlight a participant experience which tell a particular story about the chapter theme, or an over-arching theme such as the balance of power in the system.

2. Calls for Change

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Summary findings

This report begins with participants' visions of the future and manifestos calling for change. These are a springboard for summarising what matters to people when they draw together their reflections from across the dialogue. The detail of what is summarised in this chapter, is reflected in the subsequent chapters in this report.

What matters most, as expressed in visions for the future and manifestos for change includes:

- Urgency of action
- Care for the planet, nature and animals
- Accountability
- Long term thinking

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2.1 Visions of the future and manifestos for change

Participants strongly argue for change, for the implementation of many of the policy actions that have been proposed to create a vision of the future in which health and environmental benefits are prioritised within the food system.

Visions were devised by participants at the beginning of the final workshop. Participants were asked to write a postcard from 2030 describing what life is like when food policy actions have been implemented successfully. These small group cards were then collated into a collective vision for their location.

The vision from the Cambridgeshire group focuses on sustainably, health and affordability, with fairness at the heart of the vision. They call for policy action which is brave, and which distributes power across the system.

In Birmingham participants also focused on these elements. They put an emphasis on the environment and localism arguing that effective policy actions will prioritise locally sourced food and de-prioritise imported food.

Figure 1: The vision from Cambridgeshire

Figure 2: The vision from Birmingham

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In Birmingham participants' vision of the future is about involving people in food decision-making. It is a fair future with power and money being distributed more equitably within the system. Farmers are subsidised. Healthy food is accessible and affordable, unhealthy food is restricted through price.

By the end of the workshop participants in their small groups had developed 'manifestos for change.' These manifestos highlight the key issues that participants prioritise, the issues they consider most urgent in terms of policy change and the areas where they feel they voices should be heard, loudly and clearly. They focus on participants' calls for action and where they believe regulation is most needed. They make recommendations for new ways of producing, buying and selling food which bring benefits to health and the environment and minimise the harms of the current food system. The full transcript of manifesto points from both locations is available at Appendix 1.

1. A call for action

Participants call for urgent action because the food system is vitally important, and it is critical to address what is currently wrong with it.

> *"This is an emergency as serious as the climate emergency"* **Small group manifesto, Birmingham**

This action should prioritise health and wellbeing over profit and above all it should be brave.

> *"We want government to make brave decisions (that might be unpopular at first but will show through results that they're the right decisions) including taxes for what we don't want and subsidies for what we do."* **Small group manifesto, Cambridgeshire**

As such it requires government to intervene in our food system more. Participants want government not to be afraid of being too controlling, overprotective or interfering unduly with personal choice. They feel that such intervention is desperately needed given what is seen to be wrong with the food system.

> *"To kick-start the transition government should act definitively. It should not be afraid of the nanny state"* **Small group manifesto, Birmingham**

> *"We want a government more, not less, involved in our food system."* **Small group manifesto, Cambridgeshire**

Such government action includes establishing a food minister with a fixed ministerial department to make and enforce change. Efforts by this department should be serious and meaningful and based on a co-ordinated approach to all the social and economic policy areas that are affected by our food system and vice-versa. Participants also want to see cross-party discussion and agreement on next steps.
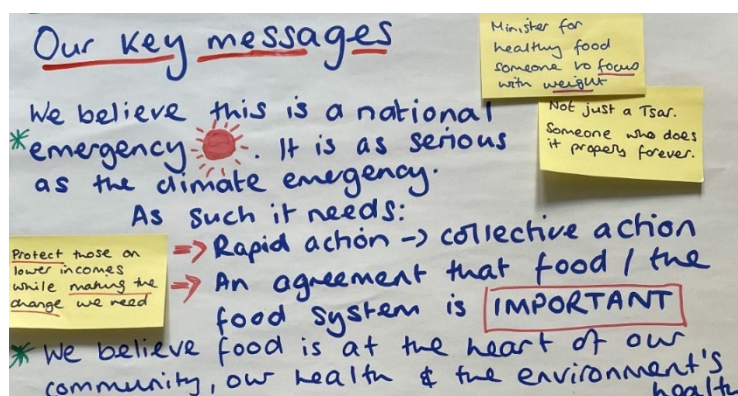

Figure 3: A small group manifesto from Birmingham

2. A call for robust measures

Given the serious nature of the crisis participants call for robust strategies and measures, including legislation, rules and regulations which will create conditions for change. This includes creating a published road map setting out the route for improvement, with embedded standards and measurable, enforceable, actionable targets for change.

> *"We need some sort of road map, which sets out what change is needed, why its urgent and which has specific commitments for legislation and regulations in it."* **Participant, Birmingham group, workshop 4**

> *"We think we need targets for all these measures. The targets should be really clear so that everyone can get behind them. Like the like net zero by 2050 target, but for food."* **Participant, Birmingham group workshop 4**

Specific targets, regulation and legislation which participants highlight in their manifestos are:

- Action and legislation to '*Fix UPFs*', including:
    - Transparency on the ingredients within UPFs
    - More information for citizens on the harms of consumption
    - Set targets setting out what will be done to substantially reduce UPFs in diets within the next few years
- Substantial punishments for those who break the law, for example, food industry action which destroys ecosystems
- Use taxation, particularly taxes on businesses, to control the elements of our food system that cause harm, and reinvest the funds raised from that taxation to pivot our food system towards healthy and sustainable food.

Figure 3: A small group manifesto, Cambridgeshire

Figure 4: A small group vision for the future, Birmingham

Participants firmly say they want action to support those on lower incomes to ensure they can live well, even if food prices increase.

> *"We will accept higher prices for food and fewer choices, but we want to make sure all people in society are supported and educated to cope with the change."* **Small group manifesto, Cambridgeshire**

3. A call for new ways of producing, selling and buying food

Participants are interested in moving towards a system more focused on localism with:

- More direct selling from farmers to consumers
- Less reliance on food imports
- A stop to procedures involving food travelling out of the UK for processing

. As a result they want:

- Fewer, what they describe as '*middle-men*', large corporations with a profit motive and a greater focus on local food production

> *"There must be alternatives to the farming and food crisis. It requires new thinking, thinking outside the box. I feel there are too many middle men or stakeholders, apparently offering their service and taking their cut."*
> **Participant, Recollective**

- Farmers to be open to being, to greener, healthier, and more sustainable food production, and supported to work in more sustainable ways
- In return, there should be a fairer distribution of profits with farmers receiving a fair reward for farming sustainably

Figure 5: A small group manifesto, Cambridgeshire

Figure 6: An extract from the vision of the future, Birmingham

4. A call societal shifts to enable food system change

There is a strong sense that because food is literally essential for life we need to create a new social contract which is rooted in an understanding of how a thriving food system should work and what it should do. Above all it should demonstrate that our food system is important.
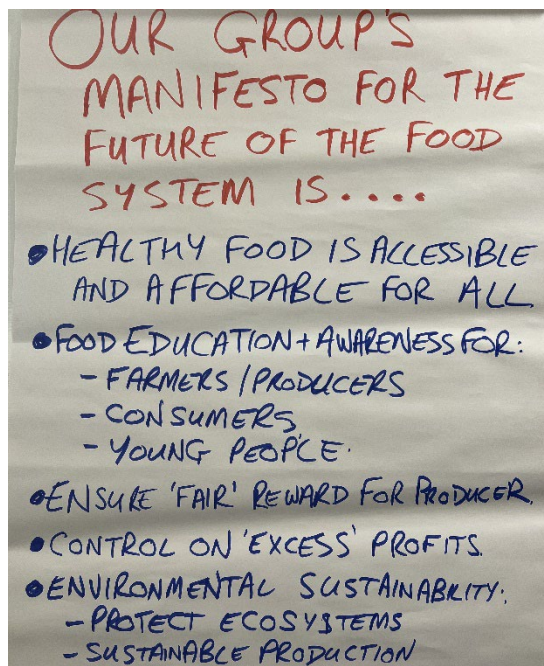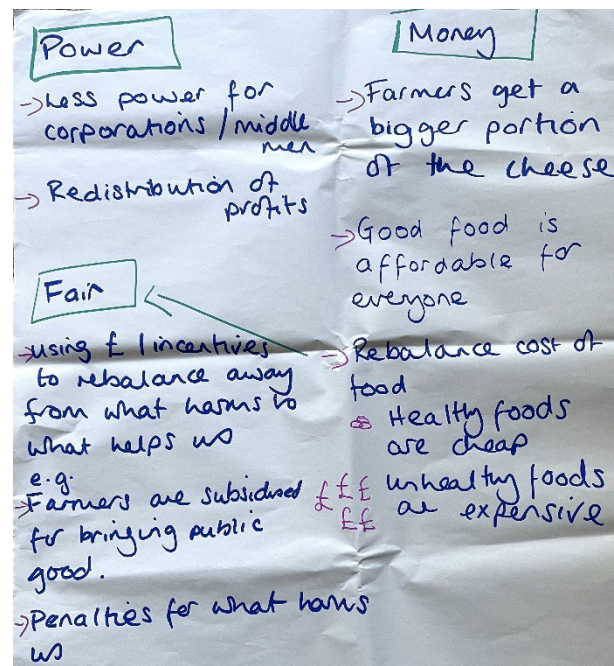
> *"We need to negotiate a contract with everyone, individuals, farmers, businesses, corporations, communities to create a foundation of understanding and a willingness to change."* **Participant, Recollective**

> *"We need an agreement that our food and our food system matters, that it is really important."* **Small group manifesto, Birmingham**

To enable the development of this agreement it really matters to participants that knowledge and awareness of the food system is raised. Participants feel that there is so much that people don't know about the harms our current food system creates, including poor nutrition and obesity and impacts on climate including biodiversity loss. Participants feel privileged to have taken part in this process and learnt so much, but feel that others should benefit from this knowledge too in order to:

- Contribute to the societal shifts that are needed
- Make informed decision about their and their families food choices
- Support the effort to pressure those in power to make substantial change.

> *"I think, you know, a lot of people don't know where the food comes from, about anything about food miles, like you know, seasonal fruit and vegetables stuff like that. I'm living in dreamland here but we all need to learn how food is grown, where it's grown and what goes into it when it's available. At the right time of year you know, strawberry season you can get strawberries all year round in the supermarket nobody knows what goes into it seems a bit like magic you know?"* **Participant, Birmingham, workshop 4**

> *"If you just tell someone to stop doing something without explaining the real consequences to if they continue that way, again, linking back to education for the consumer. I think that's a way of buying them in. But if you just purely just make if you just expect a consumer to just stop their natural behaviour, I think it will be a much more harder buy in."* **Participant, Cambridgeshire, workshop 4**

The process of raising awareness would, for participants, include bringing together all stakeholders, including individuals and communities, to monitor action against agreed targets. They also expect scientific evidence on the need for change to be published in accessible formats and made available widely so that people can buy into the change needed. As a result there is:

- A willing acceptance that less choice is necessary
- Acceptance that food prices may need to rise
- A desire for a shift in the culture of food to support citizens, farmers and industry to make choices which are better for health and the planet.

> *"Incentivise farmers in the UK with immediate effect to move to less intensive higher welfare chicken production systems I think. Explain to people what the impact eating lots of chicken has. If we do these two things, get those done*

then market forces work. If there's less demand than naturally there will be less produced." **Participant, Cambridgeshire, workshop 4**

2.2 What matters to people

During this dialogue participants have explored what matters to them as they think about a newly focused food system prioritising affordable good quality food, health, the environment and people's wellbeing. We see from the visions and the manifesto some clear indicators of what matters to people, we supplement that here with views that have emerged throughout the dialogue process.

Participants are clear that it matters to them not only that **action is taken, but that it is done with a sense of urgency.** Throughout the dialogue participants call for speed, action now, urgency.

> *"We don't want tweaks We want draconian change, dialling up the levels, we want action, we want to do all of these things, and do them right now."* **Participant, Birmingham workshop 4**

> *"If we need to change now, which it seems that we do need change quicker. You know, that's probably a good way to go and targeting the people who have the most power. The companies that have the most power"* **Participant, Cambridgeshire workshop 2**

The environment, biodiversity and action against climate change are areas of key importance to participants. They prioritise farming, animal husbandry, food production, food transport and distribution which puts the environment first.

> *"Healthy affordable food, farming in harmony with nature and increasing biodiversity and high animal welfare. Well, not just an increase, really, it's got to be a radical resetting of biodiversity, because everyone talking about increasing biodiversity and they put a hanging basket outside their house, but it's got to be something drastic, hasn't it? You're talking about nature as being in isolation, but you need to make landscape-wide changes, rather than just individual pockets of land here, there and everywhere."* **Participant, Cambridgeshire, workshop 4**

Whilst participants want urgent action, they also want **long-term strategic thinking**. They are concerned that the democratic process of four-yearly elections harms this ambition. They would nevertheless like to know that the plans being discussed today can be implemented with a view to longer-term sustainable outcomes. They are concerned that governments and business focus on short-term fixes, 'sticking plasters' which do not support the significant change needed.

> *"I think the recommendations would only work if we have a stable government and long-term planning. I don't see a long-term plan being implemented. That's the biggest heart of the problem. We know what the recommendations are, and they could work in principle. But the reality of actually applying them is a bit kind of up in the air."* **Participant, Birmingham, workshop 2**

As we see in chapter 4, in which we describe participants thinking when discussing them, participants are particularly drawn to the policy actions which hold **government, business and farming to account**. They specifically prioritise and urge action on the following:

- Take urgent action to **bring transparency and restrictions to UPFs**, including clearer labelling and packaging showing the health impacts and taxation to enforce change
- **Use well thought-through taxation strategies** with loopholes or unintended effects prevented, and mitigations put in place to protect those on low incomes. This might include subsidies for buying healthy food (either as part of existing or new voucher schemes, or through welfare system), subsidies for small scale farmers; caps or standards on imported foods
- Ban all **junk food and UPF advertising** on all media and social media outlets, not just before 9pm and not only on terrestrial television as these measures are not seen as effective or robust enough
- Catering for **public institutions being held to high nationally agreed high standards for health and environment**, with action taken against those who don't meet the standards
- Adopt the **polluter pays** principle ensuring punitive action is taken against those who break the law, including prison

In addition, to make sure those changes take place they advocate for:

- As a result, they call for **more citizen pressure to push for change,** as participants strongly feel that, even if they don't always seem to have power within the system, if enough people across society call for change, it is more likely to be taken seriously
- **Ongoing public dialogue** to monitor the change, make proposals for new directions and ensure citizens' voices are heard in the changes proposed
- An **independent ombudsman** for food, holding the government to account

"An increase in dialogue with consumers and the public debating the issues about the evidence of the food, and how it impacts people's health. Increased dialogue in this would be able to perhaps push this into the government to discuss and take action." **Participant, Birmingham, workshop 3**

"The collective optimistic vision would be that the companies that are doing the damage are paying for it." **Participant, Cambridgeshire, workshop 4**

"I think it needs to be heavy monitoring and policing of any policies that are put in place, because I feel like it's easy to have something that comes out, but then nobody looks into it, nobody monitors it." **Participant, Cambridgeshire, workshop 4**

3. Connections to the food system

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Summary findings

Individual participants feel a strong connection to the food system through the aspects of it summarised below.

- **Social system**. Participants experience a strong sense of connection when preparing food for themselves, for family and friends, and for their wider communities. Others simply connect when they eat the food on their plate.
- **Economic system**. Some participants connect to the food system as end consumers when they purchase food. This connection is experienced when doing their regular supermarket shop, when selecting fresh food produce over processed, or when getting a takeaway at the end of a busy week.
- **Biological system**. Some participants feel most connected when they experience growing their own vegetables and fruit on a small scale. A few also feel a connection when they take steps to prevent food wastage, or they reflect on their own contribution to the issue as end users.
- **Farm system.** Some participants feel most connected to the food system through direct links to the farming community. This connection can come from family and friends who farm, personal farming experiences, or living and working in an agricultural area.
- **Health system**. A connection is also felt to the food system when striving to make healthy and nutritious food choices for themselves and their families.

While participants don't explicitly mention a primary connection to the food system through the political system, they do reflect on its importance when considering the whole food system diagram.

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Prior to the first workshop, participants were asked to review the Nourish Food System Map[4] and upload an image of where they feel most connected to the food system in relation to it. They went on to discuss their images at the first workshop. In this section, we share some of those images and explore their discussions.

3.2 Through the social system (cooking, eating and sharing food)

Many participants feel most connected to the food system when preparing and eating food, whether in their homes or with their wider communities. As such they think they are most connected to the food system through the food they have on their plate.

> *"I think I am connected to the food system through my dinner plate".*
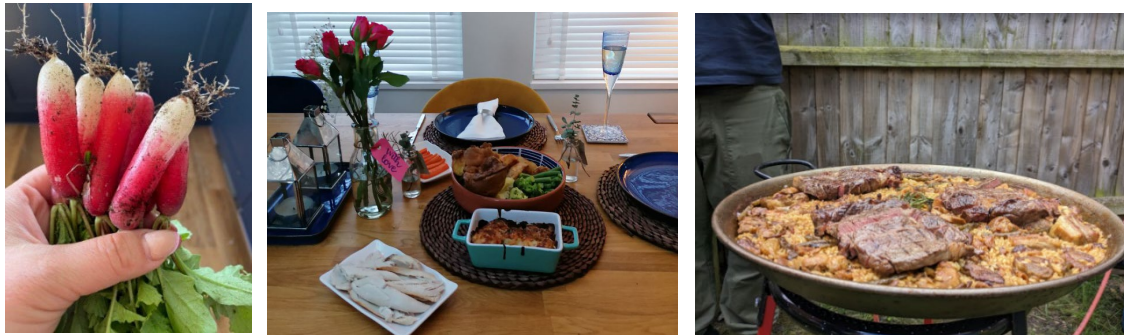> **Recollective**

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[4] www.nourishlife.org Nourish Food System Map: What's your relationship to food? Look closer, 2020

For others preparing food is when they feel strongly connected to the food system, when they are in the kitchen cooking. Many people shared that they gain immense pleasure from planning recipes, preparing food, and then enjoying the meal that they have created. For some, this includes reflecting on the provenance of the different produce they are cooking with.

> *"I picked a photo that represents the space I enjoy the most within the food system - once it's reached my kitchen, and I'm able to create, cook and then consume."* **Recollective**

For some connections to the food system are about preparing meals from scratch using fresh ingredients.

> *"… mostly I'm connected with the food when we are cooking. We very rarely use take away or anything like that. And we like to cook from scratch from fresh ingredients."* **Participant, Cambridgeshire, workshop 1**

For some, strong connections to the food system come when they prepare a meal for family or friends.

> *"I selected this image because I feel most connected to food when I'm cooking it for my friends and family."* **Recollective**

This can be about cooking for special occasions, but also for everyday meals.

A few participants feel a connection through wider community and cultural traditions. For example, one participant speaks of the Sikh tradition of Langar, which they explain dates back over 500 years, and is food prepared in a community kitchen and served free of charge to all those in need, whatever their religion or background.

3.3 The economic system (buying food)

Many participants feel most connected to the food system when they are buying food. They describe themselves as consumers and the end user of the system.

Some participants do most of their shopping at supermarkets, which they describe as their main connection with the system. They express a stronger connection to the food system when they are purchasing unprocessed food, such as fresh fruit and vegetables. Others explain that they feel more connected to the food system whey buying produce from a market where the food "tastes like it should do" than in a supermarket which they argue is more focused on mass production. They reflect that this is the stage when they think about the provenance of the food they will later be cooking, which links to a desire that is does not negatively impact the environment.

Some participants reflect on being the end consumer in a long chain of events. This makes some feel connected to all aspects of the food chain, while for others it makes them feel disconnected from where food comes from and how it is produced.

> *"I think food is produced for us. Our connection with food is basically going to buy it, most often. We don't actually go and pick it so often…it's there on a shelf. We don't really have that connection to where it actually comes from and how it's been produced."* **Participant, Cambridgeshire, workshop 1**

A few participants comment that they eat takeaways and fast food, because it works a quick option within busy lives. They also argue that healthy food is expensive and can take a long time to prepare.

> *"I have chosen this (take away company logo) because I am someone who consumes a lot of takeaways. It's a quick and easy option as I live a busy life and with the cost of living, healthy food is just as expensive, and cooking can be time consuming after a 12-hour shift"* **Recollective**.

Many participants worry about the struggles that some families are having with the cost-of-living crisis and are concerned that people are relying on food banks. They argue that it is very hard for people in this situation to connect meaningfully with the food system, other than as a cause for concern.

3.4 Through farming (connecting with farmers)

Another way many participants feel deeply connected to the food system is through farming, which one person describes as "where the food all starts". Relating to farming, for some participants, stems from a personal connection, whether they have friends or family involved in farming, farm themselves, or they live and work in an agricultural area.

This person explains how their direct experience of working with farmers, and having a small farm themselves, means they see food grow and appreciate its importance.

"I sent a picture of some lambs, because I work with farmers and I have a very small farm myself. And I feel that seeing the food growing and how we grow it and which is so important for so much, is where I feel really connected." **Participant, Cambridgeshire, workshop 1**

Another participant talks of their son's excitement about learning to become a farmer and shares a picture of him wearing a T-shirt with a slogan advocating for the central role farmers play in the food system.

"It's my son wearing his Grassman T-shirt. He's very passionate about farming and wants to go to agricultural college, he's nearly 14. For me, it's all about where the food all starts. And that statement on the back of his T shirt is very, very true… He's got a passion to become a farmer." **Participant**, **Cambridgeshire, workshop 1**

When talking about the food system, some participants express their appreciation for the hard work farmers put into putting food on our table.

> *"Farmers doing hard work to we can have our blessing food in our table."* **Recollective**

One participant is a doctor who has patients who are farmers, They worry that they are not paid enough given the "long hours, hard hours" that they work.

One participant explains how visiting a friend's dairy farm helped them to connect with the food system. The experience brought them closer to the milk they drink in a way they never had before.

> *"It's not very often that you'll drink milk that you've milked from a cow…"* **Participant, Birmingham, workshop 1**

They explain how they learned about automated milking systems, and shared what a day in the life of a farmer is actually like.

> *"… it's just a good experience to see how a farmer lives to the day and also see a bit more behind the actual dairy industry."* **Participant, Birmingham, workshop 1**

A few participants refer to their subscriptions to veg boxes which they feel most connects them to the food system. They see it as bridging the gap between them as consumers and the process of farm production.

Some participants believe there is a strong connection between farming and other parts of the food system. They argue that farming is integral to having a healthy environment and healthy food.

3.5 Through the biological system (growing produce, addressing food waste)

Another powerful way which participants feel connected to the food system is through **growing their own vegetables and fruit**.

> *"I feel most connected to the food system when growing my own food, like the runner beans in my veg patch shown in the picture."* **Recollective**

They share experiences of cultivating their own produce on a relatively small scale, including vegetable patches, greenhouses, and fruit trees in the garden.

Participants describe the feeling of being "hands on" when growing their own produce. One person describes how growing their own vegetables has helped them to appreciate what is involved in feeding people for a whole year.

"It was just it was just a snapshot of a few vegetable plants we've got in the back garden… it just makes me realize and which is involved in feeding us for a whole year." **Participant, Birmingham, workshop 1**

Another participant describes feeling connected to the food system when **foraging for mushrooms**, a connection they associate with both the biological element of the food system and food literacy, given the importance of understanding what is edible.

Another broader way that people feel connected to the food system is through **seeing food being produced in harmony with the natural environment** rather than at the expense of it. They advocate for agricultural and farming practices which are sustainable and work with ecosystems, and promote and enhance biodiversity and wildlife, rather than causing their destruction.

A few participants bring up the issue of **food waste** when discussing they connection with the food system. One participant, who primarily identifies as a consumer, acknowledges their role in contributing to food waste. In contrast to this, others explain their strongest connection to the food system arises through their endeavours to minimise waste and ensure that surplus food reaches people who need it. For example, they describe using food apps and social media to share food which would otherwise be wasted.

A story of redistribution

One person describes how they are actively involved in redistributing edible food which would otherwise be wasted. They make it available to their friends, family and local community.

"We collect and distribute food waste collections to our family, friends and local community. This is all perfectly good food that would otherwise get thrown in the bin. One shop, one day. Multiply that by a nation." Recollective

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3.6 Through the health system (eating healthy food)

Thinking about healthy food, adopting healthy eating habits, and considering the nutrients that different food products contain is what connects some participants to the food system.

> *"I feel connected to the food system at the consumer end of the food system through healthy food."* **Recollective**

Participants reflect on the significant impacts on health from the quality of the food eaten. Participants describe:

- Food as 'vital' for the health and wellbeing of families
- The benefits of a particular diet, for example, an Italian diet with fresh, good quality vegetables and olive oil
- Good quality food providing the nutrients needed for a long and health life.

"Because our basis of human nutrition and to allow an excellent supply for essential nutrients for the health of all of us humans." **Participant *Birmingham, workshop 1.***

One participant shared an image of a food label displaying the contents of a jar of peanut butter. They describe the label as the most immediate connection with the food system, providing information about the product's nutritional content, which they feel is particularly important with processed foods. However, they also argue that what is missing from the label is information about the sustainability of the product.

Some participants place significant emphasis on the importance of understanding the nutritional content of the food they consumer, particularly when they or a family member have a condition such as diabetes or have a food allergy. It is this awareness and focus on the health of their family that fosters their connection with the food system.

3.7 Connections through public policy

Some participants shared pictures and raise issues which connects their food with public policy. A few participants discuss the accessibility of fast-food outlets when asked about what connects them to the food system. They see their connection to fast food as a challenge seeing this food as 'not the best food to get'. They note that fast food outlets are everywhere, on every high street and the most immediate source of food for many people.

> *"Fast Food - Its everywhere and always new fast food shops popping up. Its easily accessible but not where I would like to be."* **Recollective***.*

Participants comment explicitly on the political dimension of the food system, when reviewing the Nourish Food System Map. Some comment in the initial stages of the dialogue that they do not understand the political side of the food system, such as the subsidies that farmers receive. They describe it as the element of the system that feels most distant from them. Others comment that politics has an impact on everything people buy in the shops and in the farms, and that it connects with all the other aspects of the food system. They refer to food trade and the implications of Brexit on food security in the UK.

3.8 Reflections on the food system

In the discussions in the first dialogue workshop participants make a number of comments in relation to the Nourish Food System Map. They reflect on the integrated nature of the food system and the importance of fairness.

> *"The food system is an integrated system, according to my understanding of the illustration, starting from nature and animal wealth, and it has an impact*

on the economic, life and health returns on societies. Therefore, we must be careful to consume it in a fair way, regulate the method of its distribution and consumption, and limit waste and wrong consumption of it until it benefits."
Participant, Cambridgeshire, workshop 1

When talking about elements of the food system diagram, participants share the following reflections on the connections within the system:

- There are many elements to the food system: the map is a reminder that everything is connected a change in one area affects everything else
- Climate change should feature in all aspects of the system not just the biological system
- What farmers produce will be dictated by demand, if they produce something that they can't sell, they are not going to be able to produce it anymore
- Land plays an important role in the food system. There is potential for land use conflict given land is used for many things in addition to farming, such as housing developments and transport systems
- There will always be some level of disconnect between the biological systems that produce our food and the economic system that grows the food.

4. Reactions to different types of policy instrument

Summary findings

In this section participants' reflections on the different types of policy instrument that they discussed are shared. Participants **are supportive of government intervention in the food system**. However, they do not feel that government always uses the powers they have effectively. Many participants express disappointment about the pace and extent of government intervention to tackle the issues in the food system. Concerns include that inaction impacts on the public purse, with issues related to failure to act such as a rise in obesity and harmful impacts on the environment being exacerbated.

Overwhelmingly, participants **do not equate the suggested government interventions they discussed with overstepping or 'nannying'**. Rather, where some participants did reference the idea of a 'nanny state', this was either described as something they welcomed in relation to food policy, or something they felt was being used as an excuse by government for inaction.

Participant reactions to the following policy actions is described in the chapter.

- **Taxation**: is a mechanism participants are generally supportive of, especially in relation to corporation rather than individual taxes
- **Frameworks**: participants see frameworks as a useful way of joining up policy making about food and farming, while creating enough flexibility in the system to make it work.
- **Standards**: there is very strong support for standards for food in public institutions, particularly schools and hospitals where it is important that food is nutritious
- **Information provision:** is an action raised by participants rather than provided as evidence in the dialogue. They believe it to be important in terms of food labelling, public awareness campaigns and changes to the school curriculum.
- **Regulation:** there is support for regulation in the food system because it is felt that power imbalances in the system make legal and regulatory mechanisms the most effective way of ensuring positive outcomes.
- **Subsidies:** are seen as a useful mechanism for redistributing the true costs of producing food. Of particular importance to participants is the need to invest in farmers to help them to transition to more sustainable practices.
- **Welfare system change:** is one of the more contentious government mechanisms for participants. Some believe welfare is a justice issue and should be included in the policy actions, others do not believe the welfare system is the right mechanism to effect change.
- **Machinery of government:** many participants like the idea of a co-ordinating body or department to bring together different areas of the food system, including a Minister for Food. They want government to articulate a clear vision for the future of food and put steps in place to achieve that. This should be a cross-party initiative which could come with high levels of public support.

4.1 Government intervention in general

Participants are generally supportive of government intervention in the food system. This is because participants feel that the damage caused to public health and the environment by food production and consumption are urgent and important issues.

They also feel that when it comes to businesses, governments are the only actors who are able to regulate business actions, by changing their rewards and disincentives. Participants recognise that governments set budgets and make laws and are therefore felt to hold a lot of potential power through these instruments.

A story of power

"And the bigger the corporations we are dealing with, who are able to sell these products which are either bad for the environment, or producing food which are bad for our health, then the bigger the power. We need to stand up to them. And the only way we can deal in such a way with such power is with law. […] We don't have enough power, these little fish who are trying to do their best to change things. We don't have that power. We need laws to stop them." **Participant, Cambridgeshire workshop 3**

"So the responsibility to my mind probably lies with the government. It doesn't lie with those big corporations. They're doing what they're allowed to do under the current regime and regulations. So perhaps the responsibility to tackle it is with the government to change those regulations and, and force people's hands." **Participant, Birmingham, workshop 2**

Participants do not feel that government always uses the powers they have effectively. Many participants express disappointment about the pace and extent of government intervention to tackle the issues in the food system. There is an expectation from participants that the government should step in, especially because it is felt to have all the information about the damage being caused by the current system. There is particular consternation about government failing to implement policies which their party had previously committed to.

"I think governments can act, but I think oftentimes they don't. And most of the time, it's because I think that people think they're getting what they want, which is cheap food, but at what expense because people aren't really being educated about the effects." **Participant, Birmingham, workshop 1**

"I'm interested [in] what the public support is for some of these things like the sugar tax, that's it was much higher than I expected. And the ban on advertising, etc. And also the fact that the, you know, the recent policies which the government came up with […] they just seem to have petered out. Because I think, though, there was some quite interesting ideas. I think it's quite right that a focus on individual action is never really going to work." **Participant, Cambridgeshire, workshop 3**

The dialogue included participants from a range of voting intentions (see Appendix 2 for more detail on recruitment). This meant that participants have a range of

ideological stances on government intervention, which were apparent in deliberations. However, even those who are less supportive of government intervention generally feel that it is warranted in the food system. In particular, this is because the damage is costing the public purse through spillover effects, for example through cost to the health system. In addition, some of these participants felt there was a need to correct market failures which have arisen in the system, such as the presence of monopolies, negative externalities and inequality.

> *"I don't like the idea of government becoming involved in every aspect of our lives, but where food production is damaging people's health and the tax payer is funding the health service, then I think government should step in."* **Participant, Recollective online platform**

> *"I don't think that governments should generally intervene in the market. But as far as our conversation with food systems, I think that they're […] letting the majority down in terms of, they're aware of the broader issues […] with regards to farming methods, the environmental impact. And I don't feel like they are doing enough to bring a change and work, you know, in the favour of farmers and consumers […] the government needs to step in and have a clear framework."* **Participant, Cambridgeshire, workshop 2**

Overwhelmingly, participants do not equate the suggested government interventions they discussed with overstepping or 'nannying'. Rather, where some participants did reference the idea of a 'nanny state', this was either described in a positive light, or something they felt was being used as an excuse by government for inaction.

> *"Don't be scared to regulate and mandate […] The government [is] scared to be seen as a nanny state. I think that's a cop out. They need to regulate, and under that can be education standards. All that but yeah, first and foremost, there needs to be policy."* **Participant, Birmingham, workshop 4**

> *"People sometimes talk about the nanny state and how it's, you know, such a terrible thing. But you know, I would love the nanny state, I want more of a nanny state because we need taking care of and our children to be taken care of […] it comes down to the timidity of governments in terms of trying to put much more control on what is allowed and what isn't allowed."* **Participant, Cambridgeshire, workshop 3**

> *"I think the government wanting to avoid a 'nanny state' is them absolving themselves of responsibility. Change comes from government policies."* **Participant, Recollective online platform**

4.2 Taxation

Participants are generally supportive of the use of taxes as an instrument in principle, especially when the taxes being discussed are those imposed on businesses rather than individual income tax. Many participants feel that taxes are a good way to redistribute income in the system.

> *"When there is a tax, there's kind of like a […] sanction or there's […] something which will make people think differently about the way they're doing things. If I'm taxed on something [then] I might think of a better way to do something."* **Participant, Birmingham, workshop 2**

There is widespread concern that taxes could be passed on to individuals, leading to higher prices in shops with the same companies continuing to make the same profits. This is felt to hurt those on low incomes the most.

> ### A story of fairness
>
> *"Tax Shell and [agri-]tech, so those that are, you know, making huge profits on things that pollutes the planet so much, […] while we are asking the farmers, [who] already have a very small margin, to [bear the] cost […], to invest in sustainability, while the others are completely raking it in. It doesn't make any sense."* **Participant, Cambridgeshire workshop 2**
>
> *"I think the government should be redistributing the profits in order to help with this transition […] perhaps redistributing the huge profits made by those large companies, the food companies or the supermarket chains in order to like, kind of fund this transition […] I have nothing against using tax money. But while there are supermarkets and firms making like, billions of pounds of profits, they should be taxed accordingly, I think."* **Participant, Birmingham workshop 2**

> *"The problem with taxing these types of foods is that this is going to make the cost increase, and the people are ultimately gonna pay for that. And this is the cheapest food that a lot of people rely on […] It's a different thing to tax tobacco or alcohol, because those are seen as like, non-essential things […] But this is food that people need to survive, so it will be extremely unpopular. To directly tax them. I think."* **Participant, Cambridgeshire, workshop 3**

In addition, participants worry that some taxes could result in higher prices for farmers (for example, a tax on nitrogen fertilisers) or that the result could be to make imported food more competitive, resulting in UK farmers being priced out or food produced in damaging ways (for health, nature or the environment) around the world being on UK shelves.

> *"There's a danger in taxing the large industrial producers of artificial nitrogen fertilizers. And as much as with the experience of other major industries, and increasing taxes on them, may just have a knock on effect on them increasing their prices to who they're supplying, and that would then have a disbenefit to the farmers yet again."* **Participant, Birmingham workshop 2**
>
> *"In principle, it seems attractive, but I just worry that it'll make imported food that much more competitive in price terms, and it will have the opposite effect from what we're trying to achieve. Yeah, these tax strategies are potentially dangerous."* **Participant, Birmingham workshop 2**
>
> *"So it's an international issue, as well as being a national one in terms of how do you even the playing field unless you tax all of the food that comes in, that may be produced at a lower environmental threshold, so that it costs more to import?"* **Participant, Cambridgeshire workshop 2**

Some participants also feel that taxes will not solve the root cause of the problem, but merely require polluters to pay for the damage they are still causing. The level of

tax was seen to be important for this reason, to ensure it was a large enough disincentive to polluting practices.

> *"You kind of need to make sustainable farming somehow more enticing to [industrial farming businesses] […] The profit tax probably doesn't stop them doing what they're doing, it just means they'll make less profit. Which is why you need to make the alternative more profitable."* **Participant, Cambridgeshire, workshop 4**

In the case of the sugar and salt reformulation tax suggested in the National Food Strategy[5], concern is raised about the potential unintended effects which could arise from taxes. Participants worry that making sugar and salt more expensive ingredients for food manufacturers would incentivise them to reformulate their products in such a way as to make them more ultra-processed.

> *"All the loopholes especially [with the] taxing issue because like we've seen with fizzy drinks, it's very easy for them to just get around it and introduce another sweetener instead of sugar and then the ultra-processed option is still there, it's still cheap."* **Participant, Cambridgeshire, workshop 4**

In combination with exploring ultra-processed foods as a case study, participants therefore feel taxes like that proposed in the National Food Strategy could ultimately be counterproductive to good public health. Some participants therefore called for taxes to be focused on the level of processing of foods rather than on specific ingredients.

> *"I think it would be a fairer trade-off if there was a slight tax on ultra-processed food that was then used to subsidise the healthier food."* **Participant, Cambridgeshire, workshop 4**

Participants are therefore keen to see taxes well thought-through, loopholes or unintended effects prevented, and mitigations put in place to protect those on low incomes. This might include subsidies for buying healthy food (either as part of existing or new voucher schemes, or through welfare system) in the case of higher prices, subsidies for small scale farmers or caps/standards on imported foods

> *"If governments put a cap on how much profit the supermarkets could earn, the extra money that the supermarkets to earn would go to the government [via a windfall tax] and then the supermarkets won't feel inclined to charge at prices because they wouldn't be getting extra profit."* **Participant, Birmingham workshop 1**

In addition, participants care very much about how the revenue from any new taxes is to be used. As a mitigation for accepting new taxes, many participants suggest that the revenue should be ringfenced and used for incentivising best practice, or redistributive actions to support those on low incomes.

> *"If you can tax the companies upstream somehow, you know, without it being passed on, and then use that money for positive good, then that's a good thing. But I don't know whether that's structurally possible to do."* **Participant, Birmingham workshop 1**

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[5] National Food Strategy – the Plan, 2021

"I'd be very interested in having a tax on the producers of artificial nitrogen fertilizers, and with that tax encouraging more farmers to keep their soil healthier, or to produce more organic vegetables. I think a lot of those propositions are very interesting." **Participant, Cambridgeshire workshop 2**

"If you sell fast foods, then you put a tax that goes into the health system, or you know, it goes into investing in biodiversity. Because [those] costs exist, they're just being diverted." **Participant, Cambridgeshire workshop 3**

"There should be the UPF tax that's paying for that, paying for support to reduce meat intake and education schemes to help farmers move across to other methods. That money should be ring fenced for the same area, so tax UPF and use the money for better food." **Participant, Birmingham, workshop 4**

4.3 Standards and frameworks

Participants see frameworks as a useful way to join up policymaking about food and farming, without necessarily creating something inflexible. In the case of a land use framework, participants want to see producers involved in creating it, and supported to transition through advice and subsidies.

"A framework is good because it's saying this is what you should do, this is what good could look like. It's not saying everyone has to follow that, I guess, to the letter." ***Participant, Cambridgeshire, workshop 4***

"All working together to create the land use framework to help manage decisions, deciding how the land is used, and where agriculture is located across the country. As I said, my point before, you know, making it at a local level. Because we probably don't use the land to its best, the right people aren't deciding. Working together, farmers, people in the community we can decide what's best for our local land. Not pushing farmers to do what's decided nationally." **Participant, Birmingham, workshop 2**

Participants are very supportive of setting standards for food in public institutions. They feel that places like schools and hospitals are particularly important locations for food to be nutritious. This is because good nutrition can help children to learn and to develop healthy eating behaviours that last through their whole life, or to help those who are ill in hospital to recover alongside their medical treatment. They were shocked to hear that there weren't mandatory, strong hospital procurement standards around health and sustainability. Public procurement is seen as a mechanism through which government can have a large effect on diet and nutrition, because of its scale and therefore its power as a buyer. Without standards on public procurement, some participants felt that providers would be incentivised to reduce the quality of food and ingredients to cut costs.

"I mean, there's a responsibility amongst all those institutions to be part of the conversation and to uphold the standards. But at the end of the day, it's the government that really needs to step in, because they're the ones that are doing the vast majority of procurement. And they're the ones that have a broader sense of the issues in terms of [...] serving poor quality food when you start looking at health issues, and costs and other things. So, they need

to be the ones that are the main holders of this." **Participant, Cambridgeshire workshop 3**

"In hospital, we go for a short stay. But at school, it's day in day out, then it's also the beginning of their lives, when they learn what to eat and what is good and what is not so good. I think the school diet really matters." **Participant, Cambridgeshire workshop 3**

"I think the government needs to put in place better control of what goes into schools, and what goes into the [public] sector. But if like any business, if there's no rules, they'll do whatever they want to get the cost down to get the contracts." **Participant, Birmingham workshop 3**

Procurement standards are seen as essential for creating a level playing field, but only if the necessary skills and budgets are in place for all institutions to be able to meet the standards. This meant there was also support for training and accreditation schemes alongside changes to procurement standards. Like for frameworks, some participants feel that involving those who will be implementing the standards in their creation, is the most effective way to ensure success.

*"It's a government thing but it has to be driven by advice from a lot of other areas […] It would be a question of what could be provided […] what the people working in hospital and patrons do with what they've got […] It's all very well the government saying you've now got to make food with this much nutritional value and the people in the hospital can't get that food and don't have the [budget] to make that food." **Participant, Cambridgeshire workshop 4***

There is some concern that introducing new standards or amending existing standards in public procurement will reduce the number of providers who can reach them, resulting in further consolidation of the catering market. Participants are keen that changes lead to more competition in the market, and more local providers. As such some participants are keen to include a local production element into public procurement standards. In order to achieve this, some feel that setting standards needs to go hand in hand with increasing local supply, particularly of vegetables, to ensure local providers are able to meet the increased demand.

"I think procurement standards is a good idea. I think the danger is having obligatory procurement of whatever sort means that, like councils will just lump it all. And so to meet this, we all have to go with this one provider, and then they're overwhelmed […] I think I think the procurement standards need to be flexible enough that you can, you can choose your provider and […] work with local providers and work with local suppliers. And having that involved in the procurement standard would benefit everybody." **Participant, Cambridgeshire workshop 3**

"Like supporting procuring local food? If you have more locally sourced food as part of the catering offer if we grew our food around Birmingham, there'd be much closer contact between the farmers and the people and the caterers and things like that. And that appreciation of each other might even help each other. And we could get rid of this long chain of people in between the food and the people." **Participant, Birmingham, workshop 3**

"I think the point that was raised before about these being a great link between the public procurement money and like, local, small farmers, that's

such an obvious thing […] it gives small farmers who are maybe struggling, like another source of revenue." **Participant, Cambridgeshire workshop 3**

In addition, some participants feel that there are unclear definitions about what words like 'healthy' or 'sustainable' mean. They want to ensure standards are clearly defined including what happens in cases where 'healthy' and 'environmentally sustainable' and 'local' are not in alignment with each other.

> *"We assume that if we buy fresh, local vegetables that they're going to be sustainable. Actually, we have no idea."* **Participant, Cambridgeshire workshop 4**

4.4 Information provision

Participants didn't explicitly explore policy recommendations about information provision as a case study – as the focus of this dialogue was on food system policy change, rather than individual behaviour change – but participants feel that information provision is important, in terms of labelling schemes, public awareness campaigns and changes to curriculum (particularly in schools).

This is because participants feel that there isn't a great deal of information provided about how food is grown and the impact it has, at point of sale. In terms of health, they feel there is little clear information about the processing level of different foods available. Having gone through this deliberative process in which they have been provided with lots of information about the effect of producing and consuming food, and learning a lot, participants feel that if others have the same information they could make more informed choices. Many participants feel strongly that having this information would change behaviour. These types of government intervention are uncontentious, and some participants feel them to be essential.

> *"There's a lack of transparency in terms of knowing and getting information on where the food we get comes from. At the end of the day, when you go to the supermarket and you buy a vegetable or meat or whatever there isn't a lot of information you can get from what this is actually coming from and how this has been grown."* **Participant, Cambridgeshire, workshop 2**

> *"It's a bit like smoking and that it became unacceptable and to advertise cigarettes without making it clear what their health effects were. And maybe we need to do the same thing on junk food if there is sufficient evidence to support that."* **Participant, Birmingham, workshop 3**

> *"It's not only that containing sugar or fat will classify the food as unhealthy, but it should be like proper information that this is processed food and you should reduce consumption."* **Participant, Cambridgeshire, workshop 4**

However, some participants are more sceptical about the value and effectiveness of information provision, because it is not felt to lead to a rapid change or to combat the structural issues of access and affordability which force some into the choices they make.

> *"How many labels is one product going to have before they become totally inert because no-one reads any of the labels?"* **Participant, Cambridgeshire, workshop 4**

> *"I think that just has to be more information, more labelling, more warning. But it's a difficult one, really, because if you start putting red stickers on ultra-processed foods, because they're so bad for you, then it does stigmatize people who buy them who maybe can only afford that sort of food. I don't really know how to go about unprocessed foods except through information."* **Participant, Cambridgeshire, workshop 3**

These views tend to be in the minority, with more participants feeling that information provision would be effective at changing behaviour (often framed in terms of other people's behaviour, not their own).

> *"So when they go into supermarkets and they look for the cheapest chickens, because that's what they're, you know, willing to pay. You know, do they understand what's led to that cost being so low in terms of farming? […] if people were educated, that could lead to significant change in their decision making process."* **Participant, Cambridgeshire, workshop 2**

> *"These something missing here. These proposals meet different needs, there's nothing in here about information. There's nothing explaining, or there's no proposal to tell people about food and how they should eat, what they should eat and things like that."* **Participant, Birmingham, workshop 1**

Participants tend to agree that information provision is an essential companion to changing regulation, to ensure that there is information available about the need for change, and government-set targets are more likely to be met because there is greater awareness about what needed to change to reach them. Whilst many participants feel that information provision and education is an effective way of reconnecting people to the food system and changing behaviour through people purchasing power, others accept that information provision is not enough by itself. These participants therefore feel that government-led awareness campaigns should be run alongside changes to taxation and regulations. They suggest the success of information provision relies on information being accessible and highly visible in the public and digital realms (e.g. on social media, on television, on billboards and buses).

Participants are also highly supportive of information being provided to farmers to help them transition to sustainable practices. Some participants identify a lack of information about new agricultural policy as a barrier for farmers.

> *"I think the government should […] hire some consultants to […] go to the farmers and give out some free advice to people that need it and consult with them, with the problems that they have. And see which way they can go forward"* **Participant, Birmingham workshop 2**

> *"[Farmers are] not getting a big enough share of the pie but also, they're the ones with responsibilities to meet all the standards, do everything. They need more help on education and mentors."* **Participant, Cambridgeshire, workshop 4**

4.5 Regulation

There is support for more regulation in the food system. This is because participants feel that power imbalances in the system make legal and regulatory mechanisms the most effective way of ensuring positive outcomes.

"So the government needs to lead […] because […] these big monopolies, they've got enough money, they make so much profit, even if they do get fined, they can pay the fines, it's like a drop in the ocean in terms of their profit […] So the only person that can go against big companies is the government in terms of changing policies, which hit them in the pocket or which effectively will change things." **Participant, Birmingham, workshop 2**

A story of power in the food system

"The local planning authorities haven't got to sort of dance to [big companies'] tune really, they've got to sort of set their own rigid agenda that if they really don't want these places, if they really are unhealthy […] they've got to stop them. […] That's getting very prescriptive, isn't it? Which goes against sort of free trade […] but perhaps […] if it really is the wild west out there, and the strongest, or only the strongest will survive, you probably do have to do something to help the people who've got less firepower." **Participant, Cambridgeshire, workshop 3**

Participants are particularly enthusiastic about regulation when it comes to preventing activities they see as polluting (such as the escape of phosphates from chicken waste into rivers given in the chicken farming case study) or damaging to public health.

I think there should be something which said, you know, you can't have an intensive poultry unit within a certain a distance of a river or whether there is connection to the river, I can't see why that wouldn't be." ***Participant, Cambridgeshire, workshop 2***

Participants are extremely supportive of a ban on fast food advertising before the 9pm watershed. For many though, the point of the 9pm watershed is very much diminished by the fact that many people do not watch television, they live-stream or use social media. As a result, they want restrictions to go further with a ban on fast food advertising across a range of other platforms (such as social media), or to ban fast food advertising entirely.

"Banning junk food advertising after 9pm is pointless if it's just completely on television. Because young people are not watching television, they are on streaming services or social media. So, this kind of measure will only work if it's a ban on advertising on all these outlets. **Participant, Birmingham, workshop 4**

In justifying this, some made comparisons to the way in which advertising for cigarettes is banned, feeling that fast food is having a similarly damaging effect on public health.

"I mean, if banning adverts about cigarette smoking is acceptable, then the obesity and diabetes crisis in the health system is surely just as much of an effect as giving up smoking." **Participant, Birmingham, workshop 3**

Participants feel that regulations are only as effective as their enforcement. Some therefore call for independent oversight bodies and/or sufficient budget be put into enforcement action and dealing with potential legal challenges. Some participants

are keen to ensure that there are stronger deterrents and stricter accountability for those who act outside of regulations.

> *"It has to be sort of higher, higher than fines to be effective. And also, there needs to be the capacity within the regulator to be able to monitor it, maybe remove licenses and things."* **Participant, Cambridgeshire, workshop 2**

> *"I want to see some more regarding enforcement. Because I feel like that's what's lacking. Like, there are already some standards, especially on food, like food and schools and stuff, but it's just not enforced. And I think that's why there are just so many loopholes around it."* **Participant, Birmingham, workshop 3**

4.6 Subsidies

When it comes to agricultural subsidies, participants see these as investing in farmers and essential to helping them to transition to more sustainable practices. Participants specifically reference subsidising organic food production, agro-forestry[6] or more mixed farming systems – and also subsidising the cost of education and training for farming.

> *"Perhaps a special fund could be set up by the government or money available for […] farmers to make this change into this agro-forestry."* **Participant, Cambridgeshire, workshop 2**

> *"If organic is supporting biodiversity, then it should be actually subsidized and that should be the way forward."* **Participant, Cambridgeshire, workshop 3**

Power

> "Farmers also have […] the power to choose how they farm, or they can make changes to how they farm which could be incentivized by government in certain ways […] they could farm their land in a way that better supports nature and biodiversity. And that could be supported by the government. I don't know if that power lies with the farmers or with the government or kind of with both, because you need the government to incentivize the farmers to the right way, or in the best way for supporting nature and biodiversity." **Participant, Cambridgeshire workshop 1**

Subsidies are also seen by many participants as essential to allow access to healthy food for those on low incomes. Some participants see possible synergies between subsidies for farmers and citizens and are keen to join these up for mutually beneficial outcomes. For example, subsidising farmers to switch to more sustainable farming methods and subsiding citizens to be able to afford the food that is produced.

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[6] Participants viewed a video on the Recollective online platform of a Cambridgeshire farmer explaining the reasons he had decided to implement agro-forestry on his farm.

"Can you sort of join the right side […] and the left side together […] rather than just giving people money, ensure that the money that's given to people to avoid food poverty, you know, can be spent in food producers […] who have been helped to, you know, to produce and distribute food, you know, cutting out all of those profit makers in the middle of it." **Participant, Birmingham, workshop 1**

"For real change to occur producers need some kind of financial assistance to make sure of their viability and consumers need a way of being able to afford these healthier options." **Participant, Recollective**

There is some concern about over-reliance on subsidies for long-term use. Participants tend to be more supportive about using subsidies as transitional mechanisms, whilst further action is taken to address the root causes of issues in the food system.

"But I do feel like you'd have to have some sort of step system which allows for the government to provide some sort of funding and subsidies whilst slowly but surely, bringing in some of these policies for change. So you get to a certain point where there's an equilibrium where […] the policy starts to force change and there isn't so much reliance on subsidies." ***Participant, Cambridgeshire, workshop 2***

"Subsidies have got us into […] the environmental mess we're in at the moment because it was all subsidies was what led farmers to grub up all the hedgerows and the marshlands and everything else because it was all about subsidies based on the amount they produce […] they've got to stand on their own two feet to some extent, you know, their business model has to stack up. The government, you know, governments can't be constantly giving money to farmers as they have done up until now." **Participant, Cambridgeshire, workshop 3**

"Again, I think [fruit & veg vouchers] doesn't really fix the problem […] that's a plaster basically. It'll work in the short term, yeah, it'll help people get fed. But it doesn't actually fix the problem. And at some point, the government will take that rug from underneath us again and say, 'OK, no more vouchers […] you're gonna have to deal with it yourself.' So it's a short term plaster, but it's not a long term solution as such." **Participant, Birmingham, workshop 1**

4.7 Welfare system change

Welfare system change is one of the most contentious government mechanisms for addressing problems in the food system for participants. Changes to welfare (for example pegging the value of Universal Credit to the cost of essentials, or introducing Universal Basic Income) is a policy area on which a polarity of views can be seen. For some, welfare is a justice issue and for these participants household food insecurity is a symptom of a wider societal problem of poverty, which needs to be tackled through the welfare system.

"I guess I wouldn't say all of the responsibility lies with the government, but a lot of it does. There are also other players in the system who have roles to play. But ultimately, if it comes down to the fact that it's a poverty issue and an inequality issue, then a lot of that does have to be tackled by the government,

and the way they provide benefits and things like that. And, you know, make sure that people can afford things.” **Participant, Cambridgeshire workshop 1**

“I don't see this as an issue. That's easy, that makes sure that Universal Credit covers a basket of essentials including food and household bills. At the moment Universal Credit seem to fail people it doesn't cover their basic needs, surely we should change that.” **Participant, Birmingham workshop 4**

For others, the welfare system is seen as indicative of personal failings of claimants and a drain on government resources. As a result, these participants do not tend to trust that increasing welfare payments will lead to the desired outcomes (particularly framed in terms of a healthier population). This means that these participants feel strongly that restricted mechanisms like vouchers (to be spent on fruit & veg) are preferable to changes to welfare payments.

“I wouldn't be in favour of people across the board just being given money once a month. Because there's no guarantee of what they'd spend it on. But if people were given vouchers to spend in certain places on certain things, or given a, you know, a box of fruit once a week or whatever, then that would certainly help those on lower incomes to get access to fresh whole foods.” **Participant, Birmingham workshop 3**

“My thinking is that someone can be given money by the government for their welfare to keep them up because they, for whatever reason, haven't got their own means of getting money. It should definitely be limited to what they can spend it on. Like, people who go out and earn their own money have the free will to spend it on what they want but if they're being given money, they should definitely be limited to what they can buy.” **Participant, Cambridgeshire workshop 4**

4.8 Machinery of government

Participants are struck by the complexity of the food system and the existing oversight of food policy, with responsibilities split across multiple different government departments[7].

Although participants did not explore any existing recommendations about changes to government structure and oversight of the food system, many independently suggested a coordinating department, body or individual role as being a necessary way to bring together the different areas of the food system. They believe that existing government departments have priorities which are sometimes in conflict with each other when it comes to food, having centralised oversight would help to reconcile these. They also feel that so many policies are on the table across so many different government departments that it creates a 'rabbit in headlights effect' and nothing is achieved

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[7] Participants saw speaker presentations in which Kelly Parsons' diagram 'Who makes food policy in England?' was shown, outlining how responsibilities for the food system are split across sixteen different government departments.

"Here we just talk about policy. Right. But the whole process of the whole food system itself, there is no central policies around that." **Participant, Birmingham workshop 4**

"There are something like 16 different departments. Could there not be a possibility of a Ministry for Food or minister for food to coordinate it altogether? The right arm seems to kick the left arm and the right leg seems to kick the left leg." **Participant, Cambridgeshire workshop 4**

"Politically, why don't we have a minister for healthy foods whatever you want to call it, for somebody to focus with a bit of weight politically to deal with some of these issues, rather than passing it around different departments because there's so many departments involved." **Participant, Birmingham workshop 4**

Participants also argue that a long-term strategy, with clear targets, a plan of how to get there and investment to support for the transition is a necessary part of creating change. Participants sometimes disagree on the effectiveness of target setting. Some argue that given what they perceive as repeated failures to meet environmental and health targets set by successive governments, it is unlikely that targets will be met. Others are strongly in favour of target setting to hold government to account. As such targets need to be visible and clearly articulated to society as a governmental commitment.

"We want measurable enforceable, and available targets. These targets will be something that we can all understand and something that we can buy into. Then it's not just a wish list is something that's kind of legislative as well." *Participant, Birmingham, workshop 4*

However, participants are generally positive about the government articulating a clear vision and putting in place steps to reach that. Most participants had not heard of the 2021 National Food Strategy for England, but upon seeing some recommendations drawn from it, are perplexed and frustrated as to why they have not been implemented. Some participants feel that a long-term and transparent plan would also contribute to a sense of mutuality and encourage working together towards a collective vision across the system.

"We need a cross party committee with a plan for at least the next ten years, I think five years is nothing. And if they get together, and they come to a plan, […] they might actually do something. But it is long term, what we are talking about is very much long term." **Participant, Cambridgeshire, workshop 3**

"Why has the National Food Strategy not been implemented?" **Participant, Recollective**

"Yeah, you need a plan of action. You can't just say let's just aim for it and hope we get there. I think I like things that have a little bit more actual policy or plan to it." **Participant, Cambridgeshire, workshop 3**

5. Reactions to other cross-stakeholder actions

Summary findings

Participants discuss and express their support for various additional actions for restructuring the food system (not specifically led by government). These are summarised in this section.

- Participants advocate for the introduction of an alternative economic model that brings local farm production and local communities closer together. They believe this approach will lead to fairer pay for farmers, improved accessibility to healthy and reasonably priced products, and positive environmental outcomes.
- Participants argue for not-for-profit business models, including farmers' hubs and catering companies supplying public sector institutions.
- Some participants believe that individuals should assume greater responsibility than they already do for making improved choices regarding the health and sustainability of the food they consume. They believe information and education must go hand-in-hand with assuming this responsibility. However, many argue that the sole burden shouldn't be placed on the individual, and they emphasise the importance of other measures, such as policy actions discussed in the previous chapter.
- A few participants see a role for the public in campaigning for change within the food system. They call for a social movement which has a figure head akin to Greta Thunberg driving the campaign.

5.1 Alternative economic models

Local food production

Many participants strongly advocate for alternative economic models that facilitate localisation of the food system and bridge the gap between local food producers and the local community and its businesses. The concept of non-for-profit food hubs that offer fair prices to local farmers and growers resonates with participants.

> *"Farm-to-fork strategies feel like great tools to address fair payment gaps in the food chain, allowing farmers to get more return over their production and invest into better farming practices."* **Participant, Recollective**

> *"I will say the local foods, I think we've kind of established that whatever changes government are going to make it's not going to be something straight away. However, if they can do something that supports, you know, just local suppliers within your area, then that helps."* **Participant, Birmingham, workshop 2**

Participants see numerous benefits in supporting local food production for:

- Building understanding and mutual respect between farmers, local people, and local businesses such as restaurants

- Reducing the power of large businesses, supermarkets, and other intermediaries, which they argue will give farmers greater independence and control
- Promoting fairer returns for farmers, which, in turn, will enhance farmer welfare and enable improved farming practices
- Facilitating the provision of nutritious and affordable food. By establishing a closer relationship between producers and consumers, local people should find it easier to access nutritious and affordable food
- Reducing carbon emissions and food waste, which participants feel would arise from shorter supply chains.

> *"Focus on local growing, here in Birmingham. There are too many middle-men, too many people involved in getting our food to our plates. We could have a system which is more efficient and thinks more about shorter supply chains which will help the climate as well as the quality of the food."*
> **Participant, Birmingham, workshop 2**

> *"Systems that allow consumers to go directly to farmer could reduce food waste by allowing production to match demand more closely, making food more affordable (reducing the reliance on supermarket distribution)."*
> **Participant, Recollective**

Participants build on the local food system model by proposing the inclusion of **community level farming**. Their vision involves allocating land for community farm projects, such as Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) partnerships, which actively involve residents in farming activities. However, they acknowledge that community farming won't be enough on its own; instead, they see it as valuable for education within the broader context of a local farming system.

Not-for-profit and a shift in values

A few participants discuss the need for new ideas and alternative underlying values to govern the economics of the food system. Suggestions include a shift away from economic liberalism and a system that prioritises people before economics.

> *"Yeah, just thinking it's the economic system that you know, all that liberalism that was defended that if each person just thinks about their own success, and strives for their own success, everything will be alright, but it will not right? so we kind of came to the conclusion […] it needs to be a big plan."*
> **Participant, Cambridgeshire workshop 3**

> *"I think as a society we are stuck in a process that always seems to have prevailed, stuck with tunnel vision where the economics takes priority over people and where the only apparent means of change is tweaking the only known levers available."* **Participant, Recollective**

Some participants argue that catering businesses that supply the public sector should operate as not-for-profit organisations. They express concern about the dominance of a few large companies supplying the public sector, which they believe are likely to prioritise profit over other considerations. This is a particular concern regarding companies that have shareholders who expect dividends. They argue that regardless of the business model, such catering businesses should reinvest any surplus to improving food standards.

"The other thing that sort of bothers me is that it says there are […] a small number of large catering providers, I mean, presumably, those catering providers are owned by someone and they're looking to make profits, etc. Out of this. And I just wondered whether they should be not-for-profit, or even have the charitable status." **Participant, Cambridgeshire, workshop 3**

5.2 Public campaigning and consumer behaviour

Citizens campaigning for change.

Some participants see a role for citizens in initiating a campaign for change in the food system. They want to see a social / cultural movement led by citizens, and perhaps spear-headed by prominent activists (for example some make the comparison with Greta Thunberg campaigns on climate change). In part this is about raising awareness of the issues in the food system (among the wider public) and demanding more information from National Government about what they are doing to address the problem.

"If Britain and its food crisis were a business, there would be a mission statement, policies, forecasts and risk assessments in place. Does Government have one? We should all want to see and know what this is." **Participant, Recollective**

Harnessing market forces

Participants are generally very positive about government action to create change in the food system, but also see a role for themselves. For some, this is linked to views they hold about personal responsibility. These views tended to be expressed more in earlier workshops, and less in later workshops as participants discussed more about the barriers to individual level change.

"I think a big part of that responsibility is on us on every single human being, we make the choices, … we choose the way how we [live], and I believe a big part of that responsibility is on us." **Participant, Cambridgeshire, workshop 1**

Some participants continued to grapple throughout the dialogue with a tension between their views on individuals taking personal responsibility, and not placing the burden solely on individuals (who they acknowledge face various external pressures, including family responsibilities, time pressures, low incomes, powerful influence from advertising and the addictive nature of ultra-processed foods). This meant that they often questioned peoples' capacity to opt for healthier options even when they are provided with the relevant information – but continued to call for information to be more transparent and available nevertheless.

Some also argue for harnessing the power of demand-side rather than supply-side actions, such as direct action from people to boycott companies or change their purchasing patterns, which they feel will enable their voices to be heard and force change. They see this as a way of ensuring that market forces are directed to support business working for positive change in the food system. They feel this should be underpinned by people having access to the right information about sustainable and health impacts, to avoid unintended effects of supply-side action.

"What we're saying now is the market doesn't want what they are offering given how it was produced and the harms to health and environment. So that would be a real incentive to change. If we don't buy their products we are saying, 'Change before you're forced to change, or change, because it could give you a competitive advantage'. That's the power we have as citizens."
Participant, Birmingham, workshop 4

"As customers, we need to kind of accepted that it's our demand that causes this much intensive farming. Like, we can't just blame the government, because, you know, if people are demanding, let's say, millions or billions of chickens a year… there's no point of the government trying to, like, decrease the amount of, you know, chicken produce or poultry, because then… there wouldn't be enough for the demand out there." **Participant, Birmingham, workshop 2**

Whilst a handful of participants felt aggrieved by policy suggestions which they felt reduced their freedom to choose when it came to the food they bought and ate, this was generally something about which views changed over time throughout the dialogue. Some participants reflected that their views had shifted towards feeling a need for government intervention, even if that affected what they were able to do.

"To be honest when I started these workshops, I remember saying that it was important that if I wanted to go to a garage at two in the morning and buy a bottle of wine and some chocolate, then that was entirely up to me. But now I've changed my mind. From everything we've heard, I think there should be more restriction on what can be bought, what's available to people." **Participant, Birmingham, workshop 4**

5.3 Business and investor actions

Many participants argue that businesses have a central role to play in addressing problems in the food system, in particular supermarkets and large food producers.

Supermarkets

Many participants see a role for supermarkets to take proactive steps to address issues in the food system, including around:

- **Food pricing.** Some participants are concerned about the cost of food products. They argue that supermarkets should provide certain basic produce at a more reasonable price.
- **Advertising.** Some participants welcome the fact that some supermarkets are advertising healthy products in their stores and want to see more of this. Similarly, they also express concern about marketing that is used to manipulate people into purchasing less healthy options.
- **Data.** Participants discussed the use of data by supermarkets as a result of a filmed presentation in workshop 3[8]. Some are cautious about the use of peoples' personal data, particularly as companies are profit driven. However, others are more optimistic about the potential for data to be used in positive

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[8] Judith Batchelar, FFCC Commission and formerly of Sainsbury's shared her thoughts on food retailers sharing data to inform policy

ways, having learnt about how supermarkets used data to identify and support vulnerable people during the pandemic.

Food producers and manufacturers

Many participants argue that food producers should be proactive in reducing their impact on the environment. While they are supportive of government regulation to level the playing field for business, they also want companies to look after the environment because it is the right thing to do, rather than waiting for the government to pressure them into action.

Participants were particularly concerned by exploring a case study during the dialogue about the concentration of high intensity chicken units in the Wye Valley and their impact on water quality[9].

> *"They shouldn't just be allowing this stuff to get into the into the water table and into the rivers. There's a there's an element of policing by consent. It shouldn't just be the government forcing people to not do something, people should be not doing something because it's the right thing to do."* **Participant, Birmingham, workshop 2**

Similarly, participants called for manufacturers of ultra-processed foods to proactively take steps to reduce harmful ingredients in their products, that can cause cravings and food addictions.

Investors

Participants see investors as part of the solution. They argue that it is important that investors put money into sustainable food businesses, and comment that they are supportive about where they have seen a growth in investment in ESG (Environment, Social and Governance) conscious companies.

5.4 Additional participant proposed solutions

Throughout the dialogue process, participants were asked to explore the policy ideas and solutions that have already been proposed by researchers, charities and through previous public engagement activities. However, participants also made their own suggestions for action that they feel will help to address issues in the food system. These are listed in Table 1 below.

Table 1 – Participant proposed solutions	
Topic area	Participants' ideas for addressing issues in the food system
Public engagement and education	• A larger scale national conversation about food should be commissioned, covering many more parts of the country than

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[9] This included viewing the following Channel 4 News video, Living by a 'dying river' - how pollution has put the Wye into decline

	Birmingham and Cambridgeshire, which was seen as a valuable starting place for further UK-wide deliberation[10] • Supermarkets should sponsor an educational programme, working in partnership with universities, which is delivered to citizens in every "nook and corner of the country" • Make learning about the food system engaging, include opportunities for people to interact directly in food cultivation, for example through community gardens • Promote the importance of eating healthy sustainable food, using a variety of community channels, such as advertising on social media channels, and involve celebrities/ influencers who are looked up to by younger people • Introduce a national healthy eating day, which includes incentives to encourage changes in eating habits.
Community level solutions	• Encourage, support and sustain community allotments and gardens, as a resource for the environment and where people are encouraged to grow their own produce • Introduce food champions in the local community, integrating them into existing local networks • Lobby schools, and school governors, to encourage healthy eating in schools • Create more farmers markets that showcase regional produce, not as a specialist luxury, but as everyday food accessible to people across society • Hold local MPs accountable for achieving positive changes in the local food system, such as increasing the percentage of healthy food options within their constituencies • Introduce community level committees tasked with regulating prices in a manner that is equitable for local communities and producers, instead of the government imposing a national level solution.
Food producers and manufacturers	• 'Fix UPFs' – have transparent ingredient lists, share information widely on the harms of UPFs and label/ package UPF products so that people are clear what they are buying • Learn from new systems and technologies that are being trialled in the UK so that those that are most effective can be adopted by UK food producers, e.g., the dairy industry • Develop an effective waste management system to treat the waste from poultry farming • Introduce rules which restrict the proportion of a product which is made up of unhealthy ingredients • Make supporting regenerative agriculture the focus of farming policies.

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[10] This is what FFCC intend to do in the second phase of commissioning for this project.

Town and city planning and land use	• Create rules to ensure new housing developments are within proximity of local shops supplying good quality food • Do not allow housing developments on high quality agriculture land (grade one and two) • Consideration should be given to creating areas of land where farmers can work together.
Supermarkets and convenience stores	• Give local authorities more control over high street planning, make it impossible for high streets to be dominated by fast food outlets • Supermarkets and convenience stores should be forced to stock a certain amount of healthy and locally sourced food produce, and to display this food more prominently • Introduce a system that encourages large companies to sell healthier food products at a cheaper price • Supermarkets should actively support local food producers, such as sponsoring local community farms to produce food for people on low incomes.
Health and labelling	• There should be a system where people can report the side effects of food products, in the same way that there is a system for reporting the side effects of drugs • There should be labelling on products that discourages people from eating unhealthy food, in the same way that cigarettes are labelled. For example, there could be a traffic light system for ultra-processed foods • There should be a star system for grading the quality of meals in public institutions, such as hospitals, schools, and prisons.

6. Barriers to, and enablers of, implementation

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Summary findings

Participants are drawn to a range of policy mechanisms, and they are surprised that some have not been implemented already. In the discussions it has become clear that they consider there are a number of reasons why they believe policies for the food system have not been enacted. These include:

- Overwhelmingly participants in both locations are concerned about the cost of implementation and the implications of that in a cost-of-living crisis
- An apathy on behalf of decision-makers, implying the system isn't broken enough to make efforts to fix it, addressed through citizen pressure pushing for change
- A lack of awareness across society that the food system has to change if we aren't going to see increased harms to health and the planet. As a result participants strongly and vociferously propose citizen power and citizen pressure to push for change
- The sheer complexity of the food system, and the systems it connects to, thwarting attempts to make change, requiring a focal point for change such as a Minister for Food
- A fear that there might be unintended or unforeseen consequences when the policy is introduced and rolled-out
- A perception that the policy will be unpopular and cause a backlash
- Commitment to a political ideology e.g., letting the market decide
- Powerful actors in the system preventing change
- A profit imperative for food businesses, particularly the large multi-national corporations
- Short-termism with decisions being made in line with the next election rather than the longer term good of populations and the planet

These barriers to policy implementation are explored in this chapter, alongside participant solutions. It is intended to overturn assumptions on which lack of action has so far been based.

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6.1 The cost implications of system change

Cost-of-living crisis

Overwhelmingly, the most significant barrier to policy implementation expressed by participants is the price of food and the everyday trade-off they believe those on lower incomes are making between good, healthy nutritious food and affordable food.

> *"Chicken nuggets from the freezer, or whatever, it's probably cheaper to buy it that way but you're still not getting health benefits."* **Participant, Birmingham, workshop 3**

In a cost-of-living crisis they wonder if for many in society the priority is reducing the price of food. They are concerned that policy changes could push people who are already on the edge of poverty into an even worse situation.

"But then you'll be then pushing more of a cost on to other people as well. Who may not be in poverty yet but are on that cusp of poverty." **Participant, Birmingham, workshop 1**

However, for many participants, this clearly links to other societal challenges, including poverty.

"People who can't afford the food. You know, that is solely because of lack of income. It's not anything really to do with the food. So that we're not talking about a shortage of food or the food being too expensive. It's just they haven't gotten enough money. And that's, you know, that is a big and separate problem." **Participant, Cambridgeshire, workshop 1**

These societal challenges include those affecting schools and other public sector institutions. The price of food is seen as an issue in all these settings as well as for individuals and families. As such it is seen by many as an implication with wider consequences and potentially presents a significant barrier to policy change.

"I feel it's a bit aspirational to expect schools to fund two portions of veg with every meal. With the current cost-of-living crisis, and the price of everything going up, and everything else that's going on. Because there is no financial backup, or there's no financial kind of support to the schools from government or at the local government level, which would make a bit easier, is there?" **Participant, Birmingham, workshop 3**

For some participants reflecting on the cost-of-living crisis during the dialogue caused them to shift their thinking about food system change as they took part in more workshops. Some began the dialogue with the perception that personal choice is the principal factor in whether people eat healthy food or not.

"It's up to me, isn't it? If I choose to eat the garage meal deal that I can pick up on my way home from work, rather than cooking a healthy meal from scratch, then I can. If I want to have a bag of chocolate as a snack rather than a piece of fruit, that's up to me." **Participant, Birmingham, workshop 1**

As the dialogue progressed, they shared that they had change their minds, and now feel that choice is not involved at all if people are living in poverty.

"I began the dialogue clear that we could all make choices about the food we eat. But I hadn't really considered those people who are making choices between eating and paying the bills. For them the only choice really is not what's available, but what's available that they can afford." **Participant, Cambridgeshire, Workshop 4**

They saw lack of choice as affecting more and more people as the cost-of-living crisis continues, and they want to see support for those who could face even greater challenges if the price of food increases.

Concerns are focused on the impacts on individuals and families, who are currently using fast food outlets, buying cheap ultra-processed foods, and access their food in school, care homes, hospitals and other public sector catering services. They consider these outlets are providing food which is too cheap to be either healthy or nutritious.

This also links to food waste, with people buying multi-packs of food because they appear to be cheaper, and then actually can't eat the quantity of food that is in the

pack. This is clearly a false economy for participants who are concerned about the trade-off that is made when food becomes lower and lower in price.

> *"It might be someone that buys a massive pack of skinless chicken breasts from the supermarket, it's like a tenner or something. And you get seven chicken breasts in there. And it's really cheap. So people buy the big pack and throw two of those away. Doesn't it make sense that we buy five high quality ones for the same price? If we throw it away less, because we will buy the big packs?"* **Participant, Birmingham, workshop 4**

Participants powerfully voice the need for better arguments to be made for quality and healthy food being available at affordable prices, but those arguments, they believe, will only work if steps are taken across the board. For example, if it costs more in energy to cook a meal from scratch, people will reach for the microwaveable alternative, or fast food which they haven't had to cook and is cheap.

> *"What if I can't afford to turn on my lights? I'm not going to be able to cook a healthy meal from scratch. I'll get a bag of chips or put something in the microwave."* **Participant, Birmingham, workshop 1**

This is where their views on the welfare state as a solution, tie into their concern about the trade-off between food price and nutritional value. For some it leads to the conclusion that the welfare state is a solution, with some favouring a voucher system for healthy foods so that they know the food is being bought.

For some the price of different foods is bewildering and incomprehensible. Why should a fresh fruit cost more than a processed snack?

> *"I never understood why, quite often, a pork pie would be cheaper than an apple. Or whether I can understand possibly why that is. But why that should be allowed to be as well?"* **Participant, Cambridgeshire, workshop 1**

A story of a cheap food

"That's the reason why we've got so many cheap shops offering you know, really bad food. Any kind of wasteland you've got is probably a new McDonald's or, you know, some kind of fast food and loads of supermarkets. But if you think of all the things that we used to have locally in an area, has just basically disappeared. It's linked up with inflation, it's forcing people who can't afford to buy healthy food to choose junk. They can't afford it if they've got big families, they can't afford to buy healthy food for themselves and their children. They end up going to the supermarket and buying processed food or cheap food to survive. Yeah. And again, not everybody, especially this generation that hadn't come from knowing about home cooked food. You know, not a lot of people actually make food from scratch. So obviously, they're highly dependent on junk food or processed food."
Participant, Birmingham, workshop 2

A concern is expressed by many participants that this issue is not going to improve because they understand that it will cost farmers more to produce good quality food sustainably and food businesses will continue to make a profit. That doesn't equate to a lowering of food prices according to participants.

> *"One of the videos we watched was from a farmer who was talking about how in the 50s farms went towards producing volumes of food by intensive farming, which we've heard about this evening as well. And he ended by saying how he would love to produce food that is nutritious, good for the soil, good for people good for the environment, but he said, but this will cost more to produce."* **Participant, Cambridgeshire, workshop 3**

> *"When we were trying to ban tobacco. That was easy in many ways. Not only is it unhealthy, but if you didn't smoke, you saved a lot of money. But with food, it's completely the opposite. A lot of food, which we are not seeing sold in supermarkets is cheap. But if we ban that cheap food, then for a lot of people, it's more money, and a lot of people don't have more money."*
> **Participant, Cambridgeshire, workshop 2**

As a result of these discussions many participants agree that they would accept higher prices for food, which is good quality, locally and sustainably sourced, and brings health benefits. Participants believe that people across society would also support this trade-off, if, importantly, there are assurances that those who would suffer from higher food prices are supported.

> *"It always affects low-income families the more expensive food becomes."*
> **Participant, Cambridgeshire, workshop 4**

> *"It's all very well for me to say I'd pay more for healthy food, but we've got to make sure that this doesn't put those with no way of paying more for their food at risk. They need help, as a minimum what you can do to eat healthily on a budget, but I suspect more than that, real money through the state to make sure they can afford fresh fruit and veg, and a proper balanced diet. As well as knowing how to cook them."* **Participant, Birmingham, workshop 4**

> *Do we as consumers care where our food comes from and how it is produced? We should because as we are beginning to discover, food that is badly produced - grown with too many chemicals, generally "mucked about with" and having many unnecessary additives and unhealthy ingredients added or manufactured in such a way as destroys the goodness in food is causing us to suffer ill health and obesity. As consumers we need to radically rethink what we are eating and what food is necessary and what isn't. In a time of economic hardship when many people do not have sufficient money to buy food, we need to be educating ourselves on how to eat well with less.*
> **Participant, Recollective**

Preventing a further squeeze on farming

Participants also agree that a fair price for farmers is an important trade-off for an increase in food prices. They see that another barrier to change relates to what participants learned about the very small profits farmers make from what they produce[11]. They are concerned that policy changes related to, for example, how much can be charged for specific basic foods would mean that retailers keep prices stable for consumers, but further reduce the percentage allocated to farmers. Some

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[11] Sustain, Unpicking food prices: where does your food pound go, and why do farmers get so little?, December 2022

participants feel the direct consequences of this, such as farmers leaving the profession or losing their farms are too great.

> *"Farmers will probably get squeezed from both sides of it, they're looking for a great price from the supermarket or the, you know, their supplier who they're selling to, but they are also getting squeezed. They're probably really struggling to make margins and risk losing their farm."* **Participant, Cambridgeshire, workshop 1**

Changing how farms are run, to refocus on sustainable practices, is also seen as something that could be challenging for smaller farms in terms of cost.

> *"It's a lot different for smaller farmers who haven't who just getting by and scraping by without a lot of a lot of money, it's harder for them to change, because change inevitably will involve spending a lot of spending of capital to get the new pieces of equipment, new technology, or whatever it is that they need to do differently."* **Participant, Cambridgeshire, workshop 1**

Participants see the transition to sustainable practices in farming as an important enabler for policy change. If farming changes, other change will necessarily follow. They propose the following enablers would support this process of transition:

- Creating a powerful lobby of small-scale farmers advocating for change, for example working as a co-operative
- Encouraging innovation in farming, for example, developing understanding of what are the alternatives to nitrogen fertilizers are that work for food production and the environment?
- Developing mechanisms to incentivise younger people to join the farming profession and adopt sustainable practices
- Local small farm investment initiatives
- A high-profile campaign to demonstrate societal support for the farming industry, to demonstrate that it is valued and wants to help farmers transition to sustainable practices.

> *We should have more public recognition for the fantastically important role farmers have to play, producing food, protecting biodiversity, sequestering carbon. All we do now is show how little they are valued."* **Participant, Cambridgeshire, workshop 2**

Cost to the public purse

Participants also fear that the costs related to policy implementation could be a strong deterrent for government. It will require investment in, for example, training for farmers, in awareness raising for the public, and a shift to a market focused on local food production, all of which would require government investment.

> *"It may require investments in training and marketing, which could be perceived as cost being costly, and also it might have potential impacts on trade and international competitiveness if policies prioritize well production over imported goods for example."* **Participant, Birmingham, workshop 2**

Cost benefit analysis

Participants feel there are significant benefits in refocusing the food system to a locally driven market. These benefits may not be immediate but will accrue from, for example:

- Shortening supply chains – with benefits to local producers, reducing transport costs and impacts on the environment
- Improving the quality of food – which doesn't have to be preserved in order to reach the local consumers
- Raising awareness of where food comes from
- Bringing health benefits.

As such many participants believe one of the main barriers to policy development and implementation is the cost. They feel if the benefits in relation to cost were better understood more action might have been taken.

> *Given there seems to be more benefits for going down the local procurement than anything else. It's just a case of money, isn't it? So obviously cheaper to get it from the big boys elsewhere. But it would keep the lorries off the road, the food miles would be shorter. You're encouraging local businesses, people could end up healthier. It's, it seems the benefits are endless. It's obviously got to do with funding money, hasn't it?* **Participant, Birmingham, workshop 4**

6.2 'Citizen power' to address policy apathy

Participants feel that there is some kind of apathy or lethargy around fixing the food system on behalf of policy makers. They believe that citizens do not know enough about how connected the various aspects of the food system are. They feel there is a lack of understanding of the negative impacts of a broken system on people's lives and the health of the planet. Participants argue that without such knowledge, citizens are not putting any pressure on policy and decision makers to make change. As a result, government has no reason or incentive to implement policies to improve the food system.

> *"Government won't change policies because individuals won't fight for change. Government has no incentive to change."* **Participant, Cambridgeshire, Workshop 4**

There is a widely held view that a significant responsibility for change falls on government, but unless politicians hear from people across society that they want change and would support it, they do not feel it will get on the agendas of current or incoming governments.

> *"I think that responsibility does lie within the government, but I think they need to know from us that that's what we want, because otherwise it will not hit their agenda." Participant, Cambridgeshire workshop 2*

Participants describe a vicious cycle where:

- Citizens do not understand the seriousness of the situation
- Government does not act because there is not enough pressure from citizens to push food system change higher up the political agenda.

As a result, they call for more citizen pressure to push for change. Participants feel strongly that, even if they don't always feel they have power within the system, if enough people across society call for change, it is more likely to be taken seriously. This view was raised repeatedly throughout the dialogue in both locations.

Areas where citizen pressure could make a difference include:

- Parents protesting about the quality of school food, or demonstrating their interest in local food being at the heart of the school meal offer – they cite Marcus Rashford's campaign, drawing on his own school experience, as highly successful because it was backed by citizens

  "We look at things like what happened with Marcus Rashford, who has a platform, and with what happened in, you know, schools, and then the government got behind because the public generally felt that what Marcus Rashford was standing for was great." **Participant, Cambridgeshire, workshop 3**

- Young people using social media to call for their 'food rights'

  "You start to get people fighting back in terms of, 'that's my right'. And obviously, social media has given people a platform, right and wrong reasons to voice their opinions where now you'll get the younger generation are fighting for their rights a bit more." **Participant, Birmingham, workshop 1**

- Citizens showing that they can help government to create the conditions for change
- Sharing pride and admiration in the deliberative processes that have already taken place, and wanting to build on what those citizens called for – these two quotations are from participants commenting on the work of the People's Plan for Nature[12]

  How uplifting to see that 100 people can make the Government sit up and take notice. They should be proud as should the organisation that allowed them to make these changes. Let's hope we can do and see changes of the same or better magnitude towards food, as the people made towards nature. **Participant, Recollective**

  The way in which people of wholly different backgrounds were brought together and listened to expert opinion, from all sides was really important, it can remove bias and prejudgement and the effect that it had on these people, when plans and announcements were being made showed the vast impact and buy in they had gained from it. **Participant, Recollective**

- Individuals making a commitment to change, which when replicated across many individuals, many communities, and society, will create a difference, for example, in choosing only to buy local, reject ultra-processed foods, reduce intake of meat and dairy and make changes to how where they buy and how they cook food.

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[12] https://peoplesplanfornature.org/peoples-plan-nature

"This makes me think I should be much more proactive in lobbying politicians about chemicals used, worker welfare, fairer deals for farmers." **Participant, Recollective,**

"The fines and such like for the de forestation? The Amazon. They mean, if people stopped buying the food from there, they will stop knocking over the trees. I hope we hope but I mean, it's, it's all to do with wealth poverty over there, isn't it? I mean, very, very poor. And they're clearing these forests, which are vital for the ecosystem of the world, not just Brazil. So, I mean, if we stopped buying, if we stopped buying the cereals, and stop buying the grains, maybe just maybe the Brazilian people might stop chopping down these trees." **Participant, Cambridgeshire, workshop 2**

- Citizens' protests, which some participants feel is now the only answer to change given that the policy proposals they discussed in the dialogue have not been implemented. Some participants admire a 'general strike' approach and speak about the gilet jaune protests in France.

"I think what I think the will to solve is really, really lacking. So what we need, in my opinion is serious, general rebellion." **Participant, Birmingham, workshop 2**

"That's what I love about the French actually…as they actually go out and protest. We don't do that. We do have to put the blame on ourselves as well for a little bit. We need to do better and get out there." **Participant, Birmingham, workshop 2**

- Citizens vocally and financially supporting charities and grassroots organisations that are advocating for food system change
- Citizens insisting on their democratic right to be heard, working with the system we have better by lobbying local councils and MPs, and insisting through the election process that food system change is needed.

"If (we) put pressure on the government at the general election and ask them, 'This is what we've got. If you implement this, we'll vote for you.' That's what we need." **Participant, Cambridgeshire, workshop 4**

The following quotations share the strength of feeling participants have about using the citizen voice to create the conditions for change.

"Without the people power, nothing's going to change." **Participant, Cambridgeshire, workshop 4**

"Government will only really respond to the kind of pressures the where large numbers of people are, are pushing for something. So media campaigns, newspaper campaigns, social media, campaigns, even petitions, all sorts." **Participant, Birmingham, workshop 3**

We all want change. And that's just a small number of us here in these workshops. You could perhaps magnify that to the population in general, if we're like everyone else, then it's likely they'll want change too. Once they know they were sleep walking into something they could have changed. **Participant, Birmingham, workshop 4**

"We want action on simple things everyone can get behind. (That's) important because it's hard for citizens to influence the details of all the machinations of

our social systems. But we can be demanding. What we want to stop or what we want to start? Let's shout about it. That's a very strong message if everyone (buys into it)." **Participant, Birmingham, workshop 4**

Participant 1: *"We say, 'Do it, do it, do it, do it, do it.' They're automatically going to start going, 'Well, we can't do everything.'*

Participant 1: *"It has to be a strong reaction. Even though governments are pathetic about implementing and hiding behind their interests. Because otherwise very little will change, and as you said, governments change every 5 years or sooner. (We've) got to (have) another way through this.*

Participant 2: *"I think we need to demand a lot to get a little."* **Participants, Cambridgeshire, workshop 4**

In addition, there is also a strong perception that the government does not listen to public views or take time to understand that its assumptions about public views are incorrect. They therefore propose that citizen pressure should be expressed in the strongest terms, to make it clear how seriously citizens take the issue and should be listened to.

"Listen to us when we say, our current food system is broken, not sustainable and is causing a lot of harm. It will kill people!" **Participant, Cambridgeshire, Mentimeter workshop 4**

"Some fairly strong words from me, but strong words might be heard by government. It seems they aren't listening. we want to say that we don't want the food system to be killing our environment and killing our children. Stop poisoning our children. Stop poisoning our environment." ***Participant, Birmingham, workshop 4***

Some participants also feel a powerful enabler is community action, dealing with an issue on a small-scale, without fuss or bureaucracy, which demonstrates that change is possible. The story below is one such example raised by participants.

A story of community action

"I was talking to one of the guys that runs the community larder the other day, and one of the examples he had was, a crate of bottles of drink, and the crate had been dropped and one of the bottles have broken. And because of the health and safety risks of handling that crate, (the shop) were just going to throw it in the bin. They couldn't resell it. They couldn't accept the risk of being sued by someone who cut their finger. But the community larder was able to accept that risk. And make sure that any broken glass was removed and disposed of correctly, and they were able to sell the other 11 bottles at a very, very cheap price. That a step in the right direction, I think to reduce waste and therefore cost." **Participant, Cambridgeshire, workshop 3**

6.3 Proof of popularity

Linked to citizen pressure, participants agree that if it can be demonstrated that a policy will be a vote winner, then it will be taken seriously by politicians seeking re-election. They believe there are initiatives which if shown to be popular would more swiftly get on to the statute books. A fear in government that a policy change will be

unpopular, and lose the governing party votes, is seen as a barrier to change by participants.

> *"Because they're doing it for votes, they don't do it for the right thing."*
> **Participant, Cambridgeshire, workshop 4**

They argue that reports from the deliberative processes that have happened so far including the People's Plan for Nature, the National Food Strategy public dialogue, as well as this current initiative, should be used to show that:

- Citizens want and are calling for change
- They are prepared to trade-off convenience and food prices, to achieve improved societal and planetary health
- It is a vote winner to put food, health and the environment on the political agenda.

> *"We should all use the power of grassroots level constituencies. We should all play some role in putting immense pressure on our MPs to take forward the programmes or the programmes and initiatives that we've discussed here."*
> **Participant, Cambridgeshire, workshop 3**

> *"If we all stood, stood together, we all stood together and made our voices heard by voting for change. I read somewhere that something like 45% of the population are in agreement, it triggers a parliamentary debate. Let's do something like that."* **Participant, Birmingham, workshop 4**

6.4 A complex system needs simplification and focused evidence

Having considered the food system over several weeks, participants frequently refer to it as 'complex'. They characterise this complexity in several ways:

The **number and variety of the different actors in the system**, with a range of roles and responsibilities. For example, in just looking at food retailers, participants see that all of the following are involved:

- Convenience stores
- Local independent food shops
- Supermarkets
- Fast-food outlets
- Markets
- Restaurants and pubs.

> *"Just thinking about (food) retailers, just the local shops that supply the children when they come out of school. A lot of their sales are probably through things like bags of crisps and chocolate bars, similar things. How do you tackle this challenge along with all the other food operators there are? They entitled to be there, and they're in there to make money. And if you vastly change the things that people want to buy, or that don't sell them, they're not going to be making that money. This is a complicated situation."*
> **Participant, Birmingham, workshop 2**

Food system change appears to some to be more complex than other policy areas, for example climate change.

> *"Actually, if you compare this with climate change, climate change goals seem reasonably straightforward if you're gonna make a net zero by 2030, or whatever it is. Whereas here, we're talking about trying to change outcomes for lots of different people, you know, people who are in poverty, people who are, you know, eating poorly, farmers who aren't getting a fair share. And then environmental impacts, if you want."* **Participant, Birmingham, workshop 1**

Town and city planning is complex with a lack of clarity for citizens (and therefore a lack of pressure for change) on who is responsible for what locally and nationally

Turning around the entire post-war system of industrialised farming: which fertilizers are used, field size, how hedgerows and biodiversity are managed; mechanised systems which have impacts on the environment; and how livestock are fed. These are all challenges now entrenched in modern large-scale farming and will be hard to unpick and resolve.

The food system cannot be considered in isolation, as complex as it is, it needs to intersect with policies for other complex systems such as housing, environment, energy, climate change, poverty and social justice.

> *"There are deeper issues here. The energy part of the equation needs to be looked at, and why rents are so high in the first place, social housing all of that stuff, cost of living, tackling climate change. It's almost like they're doing what they want, but the state can only provide a sticking plaster can't it? There's a whole load of systemic issues which need to be resolved first."* **Participant, Birmingham, workshop 3**

Any **single food system issue is seen as complex**. For example, participants cite ultra-processed foods as a single issue which has endless factors from ingredients to transparency of process, to how and where they are sold.

Participants believe that any shift in policy for the food system is complex, and as a result will be challenging to achieve.

However, they see two enablers for implementation which would support change. Firstly, they see that part of the change process should be to simplify the whole system so that future improvements are more achievable.

> *"The food system is getting more complex over time, when it needs to be simplified to make policy changes work."* **Participant, Cambridgeshire, Mentimeter, workshop 1**

Secondly, participants strongly argue for the available evidence (social, economic, scientific and international) to be shared more effectively so that policy and decision makers can root their arguments in fact to gain more support for policy implementation. There is a sense amongst participants that this evidence is available, but if it was being used well and understood properly then action would certainly have been taken by now to introduce the policies that have already been proposed.

> *"Until there is data, which kind of highlights how bad the government are doing. Or, you know, and unless these things are kind of, obvious so that government has to take note of the numbers. That's the only time when there is change. But effectively, it's in little pockets like this, where we discuss it. But where does the information go? Does it go to the right people? Is it something out there that everyone can see? No."* ***Participant, Birmingham, workshop 2***

I think more data on how it's affecting the UK. Its population, its climate, its agriculture. I think that's something when they have those hard facts. I'm sure they do, but to the full extent, would probably encourage them to a certain extent. **Participant, Birmingham, workshop 2**

They also call for more evidence, particularly on the:

- Negative impacts of policies not being implemented
- Economic benefits of taking action, for example to reduce obesity rates, to show the business case for policy implementation,

"There should be (evidence on) the negative impact of, you know, like, unhealthy institutional food and stuff and links to say child obesity rates. If it was more publicised. If there was a really striking like, report on it…I feel like the government would have to act. A lot of people might say, oh, you know, (obesity) is because of the unhealthy eating at home, but we can show that (report) that its actually because of poor publicly provided food." **Participant, Birmingham, workshop 3**

"If (government) can see the benefit of this, if they can see the money they're wasting on failing to tackle obesity for example, or the money they're having to pay for medical concerns related to eating bad food, anything that where they can see a benefit and will save them money. Surely is the reason for them to pursue if their prime motivator and so along with votes. **Participant, Birmingham, workshop 2**

Showing, from a cost benefit analysis, that although the initial investment may be a challenge, the benefits accrued from the policy change far outweigh these costs.

"A cost analysis would be able to demonstrate to government, and not just government, other players, that the plan, that the policies are economically sustainable." **Participant, Cambridgeshire, workshop 4**

As well as the importance of governments, policy makers and decision makers having a handle on the data, it is essential for participants that people across the society have access to the evidence. They believe if they do it will give them a chance to inform their food decisions, and push for change on an informed basis. A call was made throughout the dialogue for more transparency on food policy and public awareness of what the impact of no change would be for society. This goes beyond the information provision discussed in chapter 3. It centres on the belief that citizens will exert pressure for change and show that they care passionately about these issues through protest and the ballot box if only they knew the full picture.

"If the public show the government that they actually care about that, and I feel like the public has the potential to care, like, but they can only do that only if they are exposed to like, the statistics and the information" **Participant, Birmingham, workshop 3**

"I don't think people fully understand the, like how choosing intensive farmed meat really affects the environment. And I feel like if there was more public attention on these kinds of issues, about how it affects rivers, for example, then I think people would be much more careful and they'd call for action." **Participant, Cambridgeshire, workshop 2**

The sources of evidence that participants feel it is essential to draw on include:

- Social science research on public opinion and human behaviour
- Scientific research in many fields including health (cancer and obesity) and environmental science (biodiversity, crops and soil)
- Research which cut across scientific disciplines
- Economic data analysis
- Some participants also refer to international examples, drawing on case studies of what has worked and not worked in other countries as an enabler.

Some participants in both locations, as we have seen in chapter 3, believe having a Minster of Food is an important enabler for policy implementation. They see this as important because evidence, instead of being dispersed and diluted across many government departments, would be collated and distributed from one central source, making it more powerful as a policy enablement tool.

> *"Introduce a Minster of Food, with a mandate to bring this altogether, to use the evidence and make the case for change. Not just a Tsar but someone who does it properly forever."* **Participant, Birmingham, workshop 4**

Knowledge is also important for consumers who have become used fruit and vegetables out of season such as strawberries in December. There is a concern that some may not be open to change without more knowledge about the change why that change is important.

> *"We've got people who want to buy imported strawberries from Spain or Kenya or wherever they come from, or avocados from, from South America. But if we could stop those imports, then perhaps they should be stopped. But no, but it'd be very brave government to put that in their policy that they were going to ban the import of exotic fruits all months of the year, because people are now used to them, and people like them. And who's going to be brave enough to stand up and say actually, you used to eat these but now you know, you can't."* **Participant, Cambridgeshire, workshop 2**

6.5 The profit imperative

Many participants believe that change will be hard to achieve because it is not in the interests of multi-national corporations and their bottom line. If companies exist, as many participants believe they do, principally to return a profit for their shareholders, they will do all they can to achieve that, without much consideration for system change. Participants consider that profit is the only motive for many food producers including industrial farmers, food retailers and suppliers. This being the case makes a strong barrier to structural change to the food system.

> *"You know, they're going to do everything they can to drive their own profit margins, right. We all know how, you know, how large corporations are."* **Participant, Cambridgeshire, workshop 1**

> *"But the thing is that that's the problem with businesses, their aim is profit, profit, they just want to aim for the highest amount of profit, and they don't really give a damn about anything else."* **Participant, Cambridgeshire, workshop 3**

Participants argue strongly that large corporations and industrial farming businesses are in a powerful position to prevent change which could impact these profits. They believe they have the ear of government and lobby to retain this position.

> *"I think that the one thing that stands between like government actually taking action, you know, and taking action on those huge companies, I think it is lobbying. Because those lobbyists do have huge power. And I think this probably goes into something that stops the government from taking action."* **Participant, Birmingham, workshop 1**

> *"We voted for the government to feed us and protect us. But from my reading of political affairs, it is quite evident that once the political party enters government, they are then inundated/lobbied by all the private stakeholders ensuring that their businesses will not be hindered, compromised or penalised due to any adverse legislation, that their profits should be maximised."* **Participant, Recollective**

6.6 The political imperative

Participants feel that political ideologies are a barrier to change. Because of the complexity of the system (see 5.3) and that participants do not think the current government is really concerned about food and the environment, many feel policies to improve the food system are not high on the political agenda. Tied to the apathy previously mentioned, participants feel that politicians don't care enough about this issue,

> *"I'm afraid, and whether it's down to the fact that we've come out of a pandemic COVID, and where we've got other things that are more important on agenda, there's no political motivation for change. This is very, very important. This is the future of our country. And unfortunately, I might have a very pessimistic view. But it's my view, a realistic view to what I see day to day, that politicians just don't care. And I don't know what would convince them that this is important"* **Participant, Birmingham, workshop 2**

Many participants feel that the current government's approach in general is not interventionist. They believe the government's view is that the market should be allowed to follow its own path. As such they argue that the kind of policy interventions discussed in the dialogue will not fit with the government's current political agenda.

> *"But the UK Government doesn't tend to like sort of intervening where, you know, the markets concerned tends to tend to utilise more fiscal policy in supporting the general economy doesn't it?"* **Participant, Cambridgeshire, workshop 2**

Many suggest that this important issue should be the focus of cross-party action. They feel it should in theory be possible for political parties to work together to create sustainable change. However, they don't have the evidence that the political system can work in that way. They feel that food policy, along with many other policy areas, causes disagreement on the right approaches and when politicians fail to agree on an approach, the result tends to be complete inaction.

> *"This is the part where we all say government, but actually it's the parties fighting amongst themselves within the government, isn't it because, so what*

some person says it's alright to do. And then someone else says, 'Oh, well, I don't think we should do like that'. And they spend all their time arguing about it rather than actually doing something." **Participant, Cambridgeshire, workshop 3**

Some participants refer to the system of judging the success of a country's standard of living on its GDP as a barrier to implementation. They feel that many of the indicators of success in changing food policies will be more successfully judged with other means. However, they feel that unless these indicators are established prior to the policy change, the policy might be seen to have failed if assessed through a GDP lens.

"The government also tends to be focused on economical oriented approach for things in terms of just economic growth and GDP and not always thinks about the other factors that would drive that the benefit for the entire society. So that's one of the challenges." **Participant, Cambridgeshire, workshop 1**

6.7 Short-termism

Such an approach, not taking action until a policy is seen to be a popular vote winner, also leads to short-termism, which many participants see as a significant barrier to policy implementation.

"There's no benefit for the government to (take action). Because it's a long-term investment. And for government it's all about figures now and the people in charge now. So, what happens in 20 years-time when someone else is in charge isn't interesting." **Participant, Birmingham, workshop 3**

"In my mind is that government is also like, very, like short term oriented, like every, like four to eight years. They have their own goals and their own ambitions. And I think some of the product we're discussing here, they need like much longer-term views of like, you know, 120 years" **Participant, Cambridgeshire, workshop 1**

This short-termism is seen to also apply to business who are motivated by this year's balance sheet rather than longer-term ambitions for the environment or people's health.

6.8 Fear of unintended consequence

Some participants express the view that a further barrier to policy implementation is a fear of negative unintended or unknown consequences. These unintended consequences are summarised as:

- **Social or health harms** e.g., from
  - Increasing prejudice against people in society experiencing obesity
  - Malnutrition from reducing meat and dairy production to such an extent that people begin to lack protein and calcium in their diet
  - Alternatives to fat, salt and sugar being worse for our health than they are
- **Economic harms** e.g., from:
  - Cutting off ties to polluting organisations, or others that do harm to the environment

- o Farmers' struggling to work in more sustainable ways losing their livelihoods
- o Farmers struggling with the cost of new ways of working

"The trouble with that is that when the Ukraine war started, the price of fertilizer went sky high, it was farmers who were felt very victimised and found it very difficult to see how they would be able to continue. I think it's a good idea to hit these big companies. But then you must think of repercussions and how you could support the people who are going to be negatively impacted by it." **Participant, Cambridgeshire, workshop 2**

They also look back to what has happened previously to find examples of unintended effects of food policies. A few cite, for example, the drive to increase yields after World War 2 which they see as resulting in the industrial farming which has had such detrimental effects to biodiversity and the environment.

The story of unintended effects of post war food policy

"This rush to try and produce more food by increasing field size sizes, getting rid of hedgerows, the need to change the whole soil makeup meant that they had to start using pesticides and fertilizers, because the soil wasn't able to support the crops that they were putting in year after year after year. And they got rid of hedgerows and a lot of wildlife disappeared and there was an imbalance in terms of the ecosystem. They needed to use pesticides to get rid of the pests, which then killed other things. They were probably helpful. They changed the ecosystem to increase yield, but at the expense of the environment, which in hindsight, wasn't a very clever move." **Participant, Cambridgeshire, workshop 2**

Some participants feel drawn to the ecocide law, a policy to hold those responsible for environmental damage to account through legislation, but they are concerned that there might be unintended effects on people. The concern is that such legislation would make it possible for someone to be prosecuted for cutting back their garden hedge too far or cementing over their front garden. They fear that the legislation would not successfully target large corporations, industrial farming units or those causing global harms, because these organisations would be able to combat the legal system and avoid being caught for the harms they cause.

7. Trade-offs

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Summary findings

In their deliberations participants reference trade-offs that need to be made to achieve policy change. As we have seen in the previous chapter many participants say that they would accept higher food prices for an increase in benefits to people and the planet from a new approach to food policy. They want to make sure that any changes in food pricing policies do not exacerbate inequalities in society.

Significant trade-offs, raised by participants, in addition to food price are covered in this chapter. These are:

- Becoming **less reliant on food imports and creating conditions for more of the food we eat to come from UK sources**, including changing the system of which food is processed in other countries
- **Food choice** is something participants could happily restrict to achieve a fairer, more sustainable food system this includes **less access to imported out of season fruit and vegetables, less intensively farmed meat and poultry,** and **less UPFs**
- Participants **call for dietary change**, focused on less food choice, and to 'fix UPFs'
- They want action to **change the food environment away from ubiquitous fast and convenience food outlets** and a shift towards ensuring what is available for convenience is predominantly healthy.

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7.1 What's grown in the UK

Many participants argue that we need to grow more of our own food in the UK and be less reliant on food imports. They agree that this would bring benefits to the environment which are significant, and they willingly trade food choice (see 6.3) for locally produced food.

Some participants are completely astounded by the processes involved in some aspects of our food production, for example fish and seafood processing. They see these actions as wasteful, environmentally damaging and a poor use of the UK's resources.

> *"It blew my mind (to learn) that we export 70% of the seafood we catch and then we import 80% of the seafood we eat. And like all the wasted transportation and things. I don't understand that at all."* **Participant, Cambridgeshire, workshop 2**

Participants are concerned that:

- The UK is importing food from countries with food shortages, this is ethically challenging for many
- Food that can be grown in this country should be, why would we import potatoes or carrots from other countries?
- Land is not used productively or sustainably for food production when it could be, they are worried that land for food is being turned into land for housing.

While acknowledging there is a housing crisis, participants want to know that the UK's land has been mapped properly. They feel that as a result of this mapping the land use frameworks that exist will be able to set out what crops would work best in which areas of the country

"Management, better land management, use of flat ground in Cambridgeshire for certain things, hilly ground in Yorkshire for other things." **Participant, Cambridgeshire, workshop 4**

It's okay to do things locally but you've also got to be aware of the geography of an area. And obviously if you're looking around, Liverpool (has) the beautiful black soil you get there, they have more crops than somewhere else. There will be certain things that you can't grow in Devon and Cornwall. And maybe Cumbria is great for sheep farming but you're not going to grow crops in the fields there." **Participant, Cambridgeshire, workshop 4**

7.2 Food choice

Food choice is something many participants say they would trade-off to achieve a fairer more sustainable food system.

"If we're looking to build an ideal system, we might along the way want to make some trade-offs. I think for many of us, based on these conversations, it would be ok to accept less choice or eat less meat in order to have more sustainable farming practices." ***Participant, Birmingham, workshop 4***

Participants speak about limiting the choice of all-year round fruit and vegetables. Many are very clear, indeed adamant, that they will happily accept less choice if it means less food miles are expended and there are less environmental harms from the food production. They call for us to think of some foods as 'special occasion' or only available in certain seasons, to normalise this as an approach to our food.

One thought that crossed my mind is, can it not be mandatory for food producers to have to source locally first, and only top up. Rather than just go an import (everything)? So, if we make it mandatory for them to buy from local farmers first. For those of us that like eating avocado, say, it comes from Kenya, well that falls into the category of not available. We'd go back to eating seasonal food." **Participant, Cambridgeshire, workshop 4**

"We absolutely accept less food choice. We might accept that we can't have strawberries in December. And we've got less choice, because we want to make sure we're not shipping strawberries from (around the) world. We might accept eating less meat, if not just the meat we do have is of better quality. So it's a special occasion thing. We will accept more expensive chicken, if that means there would be less impact on the environment from chicken farmers." **Participant, Birmingham, workshop 4**

Areas where food choice should be limited according to many participants include:

- **Ultra-processed foods** – limiting their availability and making non-processed foods more available, developing people's understanding that, as participants see it, UPFs are predominantly about profit for food manufacturers and bring no benefits to society.

"Every time a new processed food appears in the supermarket the marketeers will make a profit. We do not need such a variety of foods. As a sceptic I am suspicious every new product is a means to make more money for the middle men by advertising on the box and all the other clever tricks to entice us to buy." **Participant, Recollective**

- When the food is not produced **ethically** or **sustainably** – so that food choices prioritise foods that are ethically sourced and sustainably produced

"In a democratic society, the food choice we should have is where it comes from, whether it's ethically produced. I mean, we all want cheap food. But if it's not ethically or sustainably produced, I think it's not on. That's the only choice." **Participant, Birmingham, workshop 3**

- When **chicken has been intensively farmed** with impacts on the welfare of the birds and disastrous consequences for the environment as participants saw in the example of industrial chicken farming units in the Wye Valley. Participants are eager to see food choice limited in this area and do not see the trade-off of eating less chicken as controversial.

"If the chicken would be more expensive, we would just eat it less, and we try to change our diet accordingly to availability. I mean, when people know what's at stake, they'll want to make the change." **Participant, Cambridgeshire, workshop 2**

A few participants also express a desire to become vegetarian or vegan or confirm that they are already. Some participants want to consider reducing the meat in their diet. Others are more sceptical saying that they feel culturally it will be a challenge to move from a meat-based diet.

7.3 Dietary change

For many participants it was a revelation to understand more about UPFs. They feel 'hoodwinked' that this is news to them. They strongly believe that the trade-off between dietary change and healthy foods needs to be informed with more information about the harms of UPFs.

"Fix UPFs, that's fundamental. No one knows the harms from them or what they are putting in their mouths." **Participant, Birmingham, workshop 4**

Other dietary change factors that participants consider worth trading-off to achieve a sustainable, healthy food system include:

- Reducing our intake of chicken and meat for the benefits to our health and the environment
- Changing our habits, including cultural norms, to gain from environmental and health benefits
- As we have seen in previous section, relying on diets which prioritise locally sourced, seasonally appropriate foods.

For some participants going back to a pre-war food system would be an approach that would meet all the policy initiatives that have been discussed in the dialogue.

"In our grandparents' generation, meat was more of a treat, not like the way we're eating nowadays. You only ever ate chicken at Christmas. I remember in the 50s, chicken was a luxury." **Participant, Cambridgeshire, workshop 4**

Some participants are concerned that the dietary change they feel is important is more challenging for people with certain health conditions.

"I mean, my consultant would have a fit if I went vegan because I'm anaemic. And with children, they need iron. And if you don't eat meat, you need to take supplements" **Participant, Cambridgeshire, workshop 4**

For many, however, reducing meat intake seems a valuable trade off, with less meat equating to more sustainable and environmentally focused food production. Many also suggest that meat should be more of a luxury food, brought out for feasts, festivals and special occasions, rather than as an everyday food.

"Meat maybe needs to be more expensive so that people just buy quality. And again, the idea of quality meat, well looked after meat, not the idea that meat is just a throwaway commodity. Meat needs to be, not quite caviar, but there needs to be a sort of idea that we'll always treat it with respect." **Participant, Cambridgeshire, workshop 4**

7.4 Convenience

Participants also feel that convenience food is causing a trade-off between business and the environment. It is profitable to sell fast and convenience food. This pushes a proliferation of shops and takeaway outlets in every community. They feel this is particularly so in communities experiencing social and economic deprivation, where big fast food chains seem to predominate. They fear that local authorities do not have proper controls in place for which companies should operate on the high street. Participants wonder why more action isn't taken by local government to restrict the licences given to such businesses and prioritise shops and businesses that sell healthy and sustainably produced food.

"The local planning authorities haven't got to dance to (fast food chains') tune really. They've got to sort of set their own rigid agenda that if they really don't want these places, if they really are unhealthy, they've got to stop them. And they've also got to almost discriminate against them, which is probably difficult to do legally, but discriminate against them to make it almost not viable for them to operate." **Participant, Cambridgeshire, workshop 3**

Many participants state that in the reality of their busy lives they will often prioritise convenience over health in relation to food. This is the trade-off they make when they have so many other pressures in their lives. They refer to work and looking after young children or older relatives and they question how much it is possible to think about healthy, sustainable food when so much else is at the front of people's minds.

"But how much do you really, if you've got a family and a job and all the rest, think about this? You know, what time and energy do you have to literally cook every night? Or okay, you might have done your batch baking or your batch cooking. But you know, I think humanity comes into it. And we do take the easy option when we're working. It's all very well, you know, thinking along these lines, but humanity, you know, people come into it and make decisions just because it's easier." **Participant, Cambridgeshire, workshop 1**

"I'm certainly guilty of it. if I if I go away for work for the day I should prepare the night before a lunch to take with me, made with fresh, unprocessed ingredients. But I'd say more often than not, I will think, 'Oh I'll just grab something tomorrow' and then I'll stop at the service station near where I live and top up with fuel and all they have in there is this steak slices and that sort of thing, the meal deal type stuff because it lasts on the shelf because it's full of preservatives. It's processed they're just not interested in putting on fruit and veg and salads that people have to eat with a fork and it's just all down to convenience." **Participant, Birmingham, workshop 3**

"I think I've heard it called like, decision fatigue. It's kind of a wider piece, I guess, as a young person, I can't afford to live where I work. So, I commute further. I get home late, and everything's been coming at you all day. And then you get home. And you really don't want to search for a recipe or look through your fridge and be thinking, 'What can I make out of whatever odds and sods I've got left in here'. And you just can't make a decision at that point. Having a ready meal where actually where half of your thought process is taken out of it is lovely. And, yeah, I don't eat ready meals all the time. I very rarely have takeaways, because I can't really afford them. But there is something to be said about having just half of the cooking process decisions removed when you are busy and stressed."
Participant, Cambridgeshire, workshop 1

Participants feel society is giving convenience stores and fast food chains too much power in the system because of people's means to afford the alternatives, or their busy lives. They believe they are handing over this power, and that is causing significant harms to health.

> *"All this is much more convenient, and cheaper than then doing what is maybe more ethical. We're giving these powerful people more power, because we're too poor or too busy."* **Participant, Birmingham, workshop 1**

> *"The idea about the processed food, everyone's sort of working flat out, they've got no time to shop in ten different places do their weekly shop, they've got no time to go out there to cook nutritious food. They're sacrificing their health for convenience."* **Participant, Cambridgeshire, workshop 1**

Convenience for many also means that people only have the time to shop in one place, typically the supermarket. They don't have time to also go a range of outlets to seek out healthy or sustainably produced food.

Participants strongly argue for food, and related social policies, which encourage people to prioritise healthy food in their busy lives. They feel that the convenience trade off need not be made if the offering in convenience shops is a healthy one.

> *"What you're effectively trying to do is to make non junk food relatively cheaper and convenient and divert people from the ultra-processed food into the fresh food, fresh fruit. And that's, that would provide some significant benefits."* **Participant, Birmingham, workshop 3**

8. The community of food

A dialogue focused on food is a powerful way for participants to discuss some of the biggest issues of our time. As we have seen the dialogue led to compelling participant reflections on significant themes such as health, climate change, poverty, the economy, the welfare state, industry regulation and social justice. This brings with it a sense of responsibility which participants take extremely seriously.

> *"Doing this has been really important. I hope that conversations like this one will incentivise change and help start the progress we need."* **Participant, Birmingham, workshop 4**

> *"I really hope our manifestos come true. I'd love to know we've been taken seriously."* **Participant, Cambridgeshire, workshop 4**

Having been through this dialogue participants **have a sense of togetherness and mutuality** which they want to continue. Some are also drawing on their experience of the Covid-19 pandemic to suggest this, others are committed to bringing a sense of community to our food. They feel that a sense of togetherness needs to pervade the policy actions so that everyone in society has a stake in what happens, cares about it and agrees to work together in a new social contract which prioritises food as something that matters to us all.

We end with participants' voices on their desire for everyone to make a contribution, and for society to take and accept urgent action.

> *"There's also a feeling of contribution, so that everyone's making a meaningful contribution. You know, whichever part of the chain you are, you know, you're, you're contributing to the sustainability. Remember from the pandemic, and this is gonna sound really cheesy, but you had that slogan. That was the first time in my lifetime where, you know, the right or wrong reasons, people sort of came together and sort of acted on mass to help. And just wonder whether that was obviously an emergency situation, you got to keep that sense of momentum."* **Participant, Birmingham, workshop 1**

> *"When we're discussing that vision, well when it comes to there's mention of togetherness. I believe I feel like we should actually have a session should have more citizens' advisors as well as government. Introducing community leadership as well. It's the community coming together.* **Participant, Cambridgeshire, workshop 4**

> *"What are we waiting for? Let's take action now, together, and make this work."* **Participant, Birmingham, workshop 4**

Acknowledgements

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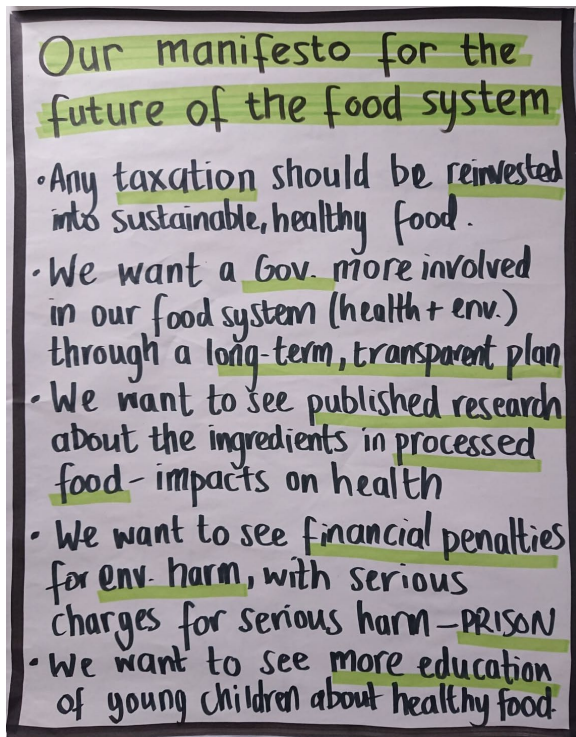
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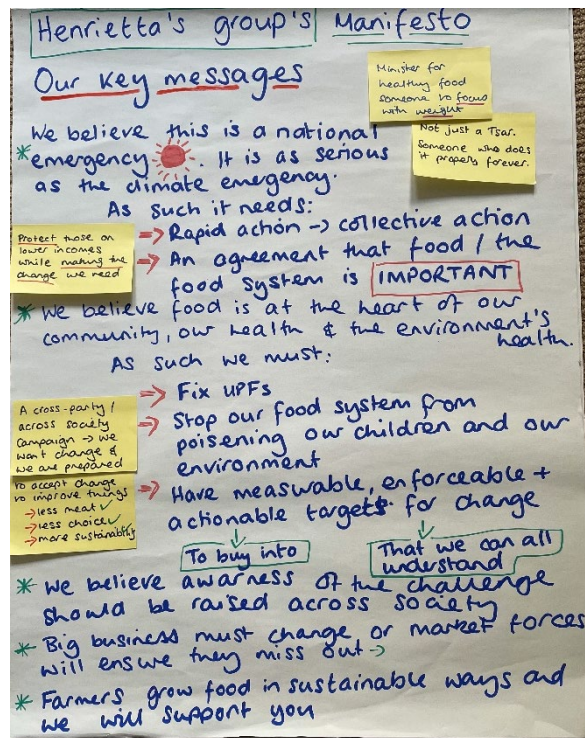
Appendix 1: Manifesto transcripts

Participants worked with each other and their facilitator to draw up a manifesto for the future of the food system. These were then shared with the wider group.

An example of a Cambridgeshire small group manifesto

An example of a Birmingham participant manifesto.

Below are transcriptions of the manifestos by location and group.

Cambridgeshire

Sophie's Group
• We want URGENT action that prioritises health and wellbeing over profit through government policies which shift where power is in the food system, to make it fairer to farmers and others across society.
• We want government to make brave decisions (that might be unpopular at first – but will show through results that they're the right decisions) – including taxes for what we don't want and subsidies for what we do.
• In return, we will accept higher prices for food and fewer choices, but we want to make sure all people in society are supported and educated to cope with the change.

Skye's Group
• Any <u>taxation</u> should be <u>reinvested</u> into sustainable, healthy food.
• We want to <u>Gov.</u> more involved in our food system (health and environment) through a <u>long-term, transparent plan</u>.

- We want to see <u>published research</u> about the ingredients in <u>processed food</u> – impacts on health.
- We want to see <u>financial penalties</u> for <u>environmental harm</u>, with serious charges for serious harm – <u>prison</u>.
- We want to see <u>more education</u> of young children about healthy food.

Anna's Group

- We want a progressive change to the food system and mindsets, through education, government policy, regulation, innovation, entrepreneurship in farming methods, and land use management. To move us towards more sustainable, ethical, local farming systems. Fairer distribution of wealth created by the food system. Health is linked into all of the above.

Louisa's Group

- Environment/Climate.
- Land and water
- Sustainability
- Working together →
- Local farming – affordability
- Government (support)
- Food 'education': Schools, universities
- Citizen's – Food education
- Reform/change – retailers, manufacturers
- Roadmap! Food System
- Facilitate
- People's choice:

Chris' Group

- Healthy food is accessible and affordable for all.
- Food education and awareness for:
  - Farmers/producers
  - Consumers
  - Young people
- Ensure 'fair' reward for producer.
- Control on 'excess' profits
- Environmental sustainability:
  - Protect ecosystems.
  - Sustainable production

Henrietta's Group

- We believe this is a national emergency. It is as serious as the climate emergency.
- As such it needs:
    - Rapid action → collective action
    - An agreement that food/the food system is important.
- We believe food is at the heart of our community, our health and the environment's health.
- As such we must:
    - Fix UPFs
    - Stop our food system from poisoning our children and our environment.
    - Have measurable, enforceable, and actionable (to buy into) targets for change (that we can all understand.
- We believe awareness of the challenge should be raised across society.
- Big business must change, or market forces will ensure they miss out →
- Farmers grow food in sustainable ways, and we will support you.
- Minister for healthy food someone to focus with weight.
    - Not just a Tsar, someone who does it properly forever.
- Protect those on lower incomes while making the change we read.
- A cross-party/across society campaign → we want change, and we are prepared to accept change to improve things.
    - Less meals
    - Less choice
    - More sustainability.
- Health
    - Less meat
    - Enough for man's need not for man's greed.
    - Taxation of UPF
    - Procurement policies
    - Healthier people
    - Healthier land
    - Less choice, better quality
    - Social prescribing
- A collective culture around food
    - Family meals
    - A whole system value change: food matters
- Power
    - Less power for corporations/middlemen
    - Redistribution of profits
- Fair
    - Using monetary incentives to rebalance away from what harms to what helps us.
    - Farmers are subsidised for bringing public good.
    - Penalties for what harms us.
- Money
    - Farmers get a bigger portion of the cheese.

- o Good food is affordable for everyone.
- o Rebalance cost of food
  - ▪ Healthy foods are cheap.
  - ▪ Unhealthy foods are expensive.

Rob's Group

- Key messages
  - o Legislation on standards
  - o Targets for reducing food waste.
  - o Food education in national curriculum
- Who are they for?
  - o Policy makers
  - o Food makers
  - o Food businesses
- What might we accept in return?
  - o Less choice of foods
  - o Some increased costs
- Action on UPFs, stop single use plastic packaging.

Grace's Group

- Our key messages:
  - o More locally produced food that gives profit back to farmers
  - o Affordable, fresh, healthy food
  - o Ban all ads of UPF – not just TV – ALL!
  - o Broader education to producers (for better methods) and consumers (to be healthier)
  - o Shifting culture on food → encouraging people to make difference choices.
- Who they are for/who should do what.
  - o Policy makers more active with regulation → taxing UPFs → put into subsidising potential higher food tests → ringfenced for our 'vision'.
  - o Gov to do more public consultation on what to accept.
  - o Gov to run public health campaigns.
  - o Gov support for health eating and lifestyles
- What we might accept in return
  - o Reduced choice of food
  - o Eating less meat → will reduce cost.

Hally's Group

- It's a no brainer.
- "Take back farming" – more food sourced locally to reduce carbon footprint.
- Ethically and sustainably = increased empathy between farmers and communities.
- Bring all players across the UK food system together – regularly e.g., govt, farmers, citizens build a foundation of understanding.
- Fundamental right every person/child to understand/education.

- Good quality, healthy nourishing, and organic food available for all → to change in mindset.

Dawn's Group

- To kick-start the transition.
    - Government should act definitively. not be afraid of 'nanny state'.
    - Introduce a central organising function to get oversight/regulation of the whole food system. Joined up government.
    - Polluter pays principal is key → also those who undermine health tax harmful actions that cost society/environment.
    - Introduce/enforce minimum food standards for quality.
    - Support/incentivise those contributing positively to the change to better, healthier food.
- Key messages:
    - We want a UK where... everyone is aware of the food system, and our food system supports healthier people + planet + healthier economy.
- Who are they for? Who should do what?
    - Farmers should be open to greener, healthier food production, learns about what works and get incentives for doing what's needed to make the change.
- What might we accept in return?
    - In the short/medium term, we may pay more to make changes needed: we may have to make lifestyle changes.
        - even if we don't see the benefit, our children will.
        - During the transition, protect those on low incomes so they
        - can have good, healthy food too (e.g. social prescribing)

Appendix 2: Recruitment Summary

Background

Hopkins Van Mil worked with the FFCC and the Sortition Foundation to recruit 40 public participants per location for this dialogue. Participants were expected to attend 4 sessions (3 online and 1 in-person) on the dates and times laid out below:

1. Tues 20th June 6-9pm (online)
2. Tues 27th June 6-9pm (online)
3. Thurs 29th June 6-9pm (online)
4. Sat 8th July 10am-4pm (in person)

Upon attendance of all 4 sessions participants were paid £275 for their contributions to the project. On occasions where participants had to withdraw, Hopkins Van Mil worked with the Sortition Foundation to ensure that a like for like replacement was found.

Detailed breakdowns of participant demographics by location are in the tables below.

Cambridgeshire

Gender	Target		All respondents		Selected			
	%	#	%	#	Orig %	Orig #	Confirmed %	Confirmed #
Female	50.6	20.2	58.9	146	52.5	21	51.1	23
Male	49.4	19.8	41.1	102	47.5	19	55	22
Other		0.0	0	0	0	0	0	0
TOTALS	100	40.0	100	248	100.0	40	106.1	45

Age	Target		All respondents		Selected			
	%	#	%	#	Orig %	Orig #	Confirmed %	Confirmed #
0-17		0	0.4	1	0	0	0.0	0
18-29	19.5	7.8	19	47	17.5	7	15.6	7
30-44	25.3	10.1	25	62	25.0	10	24.4	11
45-64	31.9	12.8	40.7	101	32.5	13	35.6	16
65-99	23.3	9.3	14.9	37	25.0	10	24.4	11
100+	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
TOTALS	100	40	100	248	100	40	100.0	45

Ethnicity	Target		All respondents		Selected			
	%	#	%	#	Orig %	Orig #	Confirmed %	Confirmed #
Asian or Asian British	5.9	2.4	8.5	21	7.5	3	6.7	3
Black or African or Caribbean or Black British	1.5	2.5	3.2	8	5.0	2	6.7	3
Mixed or Multiple ethnic groups	2.9	1.2	3.2	8	2.5	1	2.2	1
White British	78	29.3	64.9	161	72.5	29	73.3	33
White Other	11.5	4.6	16.9	42	10.0	4	11.1	5
Other ethnic group	0.3	0.1	3.2	8	2.5	1	0.0	0
TOTALS	100.1	40.0	100.0	248	100.0	40	100.0	45

Disability	Target		All respondents		Selected			
	%	#	%	#	Orig %	Orig #	Confirmed %	Confirmed #
Yes	24.212	9.7	8.5	21	22.5	9	20	9
No	75.788	30.3	91.5	227	77.5	31	80	36
TOTALS	100	40.0	100.0	248	100.0	40	100	45

Education	Target		All respondents		Selected			
	%	#	%	#	Orig %	Orig #	Confirmed %	Confirmed #
No qualification/ none yet/Level 1	23.95885	9.6	3.2	8	20	8	6.7	3
Level 2	12.22163	4.9	6.9	17	20	8	20	9
Level 3	16.57027	6.6	13.7	34	17.5	7	20	9
Level 4 and above	39.80938	15.9	74.6	185	40	16	51.1	23
Apprenticeship, Other	7.439868	3.0	1.6	4	2.5	1	2.2	1
TOTALS	100	40.0	100	248	100	40	100	45

Household composition	Target		All respondents		Selected			
MC1	%	#	%	#	Orig %	Orig #	Confirmed %	Confirmed #
No	63.00538	25.2	65.7	163	65	26	64.4	29

Yes	36.99462	14.8	34.3	85	35	14	35.6	16
TOTALS	100	40	100	248	100	40	100	45

IMD	Target		Selected			
	%	#	Orig %	Orig #	Confirmed %	Confirmed #
1-3	9.68661	3.9	10	4	8.9	4
4-6	29.91453	12.0	30	12	31.1	14
7-8	26.5	10.6	27.5	11	26.7	12
9-10	33.9	13.6	32.5	13	33.3	15
TOTALS	100	40	100	40	100	45

Political Affiliation	Target		All respondents		Selected			
MC2	%	#	%	#	Orig %	Orig #	Confirmed %	Confirmed #
Conservative	23.9	9.6	7.3	18	22.5	9	17.8	8
Green	3.4	1.4	16.1	40	5	2	8.9	4
Labour	27	10.8	23.4	58	25	10	26.7	12
Liberal Democrat	6.1	2.4	10.9	27	7.5	3	6.7	3
Other	7.2	2.9	2.4	6	7.5	3	6.7	3
Not sure/Non voter	32.5	13.0	39.9	99	32.5	13	33.3	15
TOTALS	100	40	100	248	100	40	100.1	45

Rural/Urban	Target		Selected			
	%	#	Orig %	Orig #	Confirmed %	Confirmed #
Urban	47	18.8	47.5	19	51.1	23
Rural	53	21.2	52.5	21	48.9	22
TOTALS	100	40	100	40	100	45

Birmingham

Gender	Target		All respondents		Selected			
	%	#	%	#	Orig %	Orig #	Confirmed %	Confirmed #
Female	51	20.4	62.8	142	50.0	20	51	25
Male	49	19.6	36.3	82	45.0	18	55	22

Other		0	0.9	2	5	2	5	2
TOTALS	100	40	100	226	100	40	111	49

Age	Target		All respondents		Selected			
	%	#	%	#	Orig %	Orig #	Confirmed %	Confirmed #
0-17		0	0	0	0	0	0	0
18-29	24.8	9.9	28.3	64	25.0	10	28.6	14
30-44	28	11.2	32.7	74	27.5	11	28.6	14
45-64	29.6	11.8	28.3	64	30.0	12	26.5	13
65-99	17.6	7.0	10.6	24	17.5	7	16.3	8
100+	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
TOTALS	100	40	100	226	100	40	100	49

Ethnicity	Target		All respondents		Selected			
	%	#	%	#	Orig %	Orig #	Confirmed %	Confirmed #
Asian or Asian British	31	12.4	22.1	50	30	12	30.61	15
Black or African or Caribbean or Black British	11	4.4	14.6	33	10.0	4	10.2	5
Mixed or Multiple ethnic groups	4.8	1.9	6.6	15	5.0	2	6.1	3
White British	45.8	18.3	44.7	101	47.5	19	46.9	23
White Other	2.9	1.2	8.0	18	5.0	2	2.0	1
Other ethnic group	4.5	1.8	4.0	9	2.5	1	4.1	2
TOTALS	100	40	100	226	100	40	100	49

Disability	Target		All respondents		Selected			
	%	#	%	#	Orig %	Orig #	Confirmed %	Confirmed #
Yes	22.427	9.0	11.9	27	20.0	8	27.5	11
No	77.573	31.0	88.1	199	80.0	32	95.0	38
TOTALS	100	40	100	226	100	40	123	49

Rural/Urban	Target		Selected			
	%	#	Orig %	Orig #	Confirmed %	Confirmed #
Urban	96	38.4	95	38	98	48
Rural	4	1.6	5	2	2	1
	100	40	100	40	100	49

IMD	Target		Selected			
	%	#	Orig %	Orig #	Confirmed %	Confirmed #
1	41.08	16.4	40	16	44.9	22
2-4	25.93	10.4	27.5	11	26.5	13
5-10	33	13.2	32.5	13	28.6	14
TOTALS	100	40	100	40	100	49

Appendix 3: Workshop Process Plans

Workshop 1 - Tuesday 20th June 6-9pm – Food Justice/Power/Food Policy

Scope and research questions
- Introducing the food system and the power relationships within it   - What do participants already know about the food system and power?   - What do participants think about how power is currently distributed in the food system?   - Introducing how food policy is made in the UK   - What do participants think about how food policy is made in the UK?   - What barriers and opportunities do participants think exist for developing food policy to tackle challenges in the food system?   - Introducing the first topic of food & justice   - What do participants think about some of the ways others have suggested making change in the food system on this topic?   - What do participants think about government intervention on tackling justice issues in the food system, in general?

Time	Agenda	Process	Process Tools
6:00-6:15 (15 mins)	Introduction to this workshop and reminder of the overall dialogue programme	1. HVM team introduce themselves 2. Observers/ speakers present introduce themselves	
6:15-6:20 (5 mins)	Menti questions set 1	QM1: What comes to your mind when you hear the term 'food system'? QM2: How much do you feel you know about where and how food is produced and eaten? *(A lot/some/not much/very little)*	Menti.com
6:20	TS to move everyone to their pre-allocated small groups – 8 participants per group, based on a mix of demographics, 1 facilitator for each group, tech support available to all groups for immediate Zoom challenges.		

6:20-6:45 (25 mins)	Mapping your connections to the food system	**Introductions**
		1. Go round the Zoom say hello to the group.
		2. What your picture is and why you chose it
		3. Put this on the food system diagram.
		Q1: related to the food system diagram.
		Prompts
		   • What are the similarities and differences between the images that people have shared and where we've placed them on the diagram?
		   • Thinking about the food system diagram generally, was there anything that was new to you?
		   • Was there anything that you found interesting or surprising? Why?
		   • Does anyone have any other reflections on the images that have been shared by the group?
			Jamboard with group images pre-populated
			Food system diagram
			Start taking notes on Jamboard to collect key points.

6:45-7:15 (30 mins)	An introduction to the conversation topic	Speaker 1: FFCC
		   • Sue Pritchard (Birmingham)
		   • Courtney Scott (Cambridgeshire)
		Speaker 2: Food systems and power
		   • Laura Wellesley, Chatham House (Birmingham)
		   • Angelina Sanderson Bellamy, University of the West of England (Cambridgeshire)
		Q&A
			Chat used to collate questions

7:15	TS to move everyone to their pre-allocated small groups – 8 participants per group, based on a mix of demographics, 1 facilitator for each group, tech support available to all groups for immediate Zoom challenges.		
7:15-7:35 (20 mins)	Conversation on power	You've heard our speaker talk about power in the food system. We're going to explore this a bit more now until the break. There are lots of different people who are involved in the food system (including all of us!). I'm going to show you	Jamboard - photos/icons of each of the actors

		some of these people now so that we can talk about the power relationships between them.
		
		    • Present 3x power relationships between actors in the system e.g.
		          ○ Farmer and supermarket
		          ○ Government and food industry
		          ○ Food manufacturers and people in society
		Group answers the questions based on which power relationship they wish to discuss.
		    • What does having power mean to you?
		    • Who do you think has more power in this relationship? Why?
		    • What are your views on this allocation of power?
		    • Who *should* have power and why?
		    • What effects do you think it might have?
			Note taking on Jamboard

7:35-7:45	**Break**		

7:45-8:15		Speaker 3: How food policy is made
		    • Kelly Parsons, Mandala Consortium (Birmingham)
		    • Christina Vogel (City Uni, Centre for Food Policy) (Cambridgeshire)
		
		Time to add questions
		Speaker 4: Food & Justice
		    • Denise Bentley, First Love Foundation (Birmingham)
		    • Heather Buckingham, Trussell Trust (Cambridgeshire)
		Q&A
			Chat used to collate questions.

8:15	TS to move everyone to their pre-allocated small groups – 8 participants per group, based on a mix of demographics, 1 facilitator for each group, tech support available to all groups for immediate Zoom challenges.		

8:15-8:50 (35 mins)	Case studies	Read through CASE STUDY: A fair deal for citizens and producers. These are just some of the recommendations that have been made by organisations, charities and independent inquiries. **Questions for discussion:** **Q1: What are your first reflections on the issues in this case study?** **Q2: Where do you think responsibility lies for tackling these issues? Why?** **Q3: What do you think might stop the UK government taking action on taking up these recommendations?** **Q4: What do you think might encourage the UK government taking action on taking up these recommendations (or others like them)?**	Case studies on Jamboard Note taking on Jamboard
8:50-9:00 (10 mins)	Menti.com – online polling Wrap up and close	QM5: Something that you have learnt or has particularly interested you from what you've heard this evening. QM6: What do you want to remember from this session to take into our next discussion?	

In own time	Online community space activities for next time	• Activities on Recollective
		   ○ Review the presentations from W1 which you didn't see (optional)
		   ○ Watch and comment on the People's Plan for Nature film.
		   ○ Watch and comment on the videos of farmers who have changed their farming practices
			Activities on Recollective

Workshop 2 - Tuesday 27th June 6-9pm – Food, farming and land use and Food, climate & nature

Scope and research questions
• Introducing the second topic of food & farming & land use

- What do participants think about some of the ways others have suggested making change in the food system on this topic?
        - What do participants think about government intervention on tackling the issues around this topic in the food system, in general?
    - Introducing the third topic of food, climate & nature
        - What do participants think about some of the ways others have suggested making change in the food system on this topic?
        - What do participants think about government intervention on tackling the issues around this topic in the food system, in general?

Time	Agenda	Process	Process Tools
6:00-6:15 **(15 mins)**	Introduction to this workshop and reminder of the dialogue programme	1. HVM team introduce themselves 2. Observers/ speakers present introduce themselves	
6:15-6:20 **(5 mins)**	Menti questions set 1	QM1: Tell us one thing you remember from our last workshop QM2: When I say 'food, farming and land use' what comes to your mind? QM3: When I say 'food, nature and climate' what comes to your mind?	Menti.com Tech support to put menti link/ code in the Chat
6:20-6:55 **(35 mins)**	An introduction to the conversation topic	Speaker 1: Food, farming & land use - Helen Browning, Chief Exec, Soil Association (Birmingham) - Liz Bowles, Chief Exec, Farm Carbon Toolkit (Cambridgeshire) Q&A Speaker 2: Food, climate & nature - Emma Marsh, RSPB (Birmingham) - Alec Taylor, Head of Food Production Policy, WWF-UK (Cambridgeshire)	Chat used to collate questions

		Q&A	
6:55		TS to move everyone to their pre-allocated small groups – 8 participants per group, based on a mix of demographics, 1 facilitator for each group, tech support available to all groups for immediate Zoom challenges.	
6:55-7:40 **(45 mins)**	Reflections on presentations Case studies	Let's go round the Zoom and (re-)introduce ourselves. • Your name • Something you found surprising or interesting about the two presentations we just heard. 1. Read through **CASE STUDY: INDUSTRIAL FARMING** These are just some of the recommendations that have been made by organisations, charities and independent inquiries. **Questions for discussion:** **Q1: What are your first reflections on the issues in this case study?** **Q2: Where do you think responsibility lies for tackling these issues? Why?** **Q3: What do you think about the sorts of recommendations which have already been made to tackle these issues?** **Q4: What do you think might stop the UK government taking action on taking up these recommendations?** **Q5: What do you think might encourage the UK government taking action on taking up these recommendations (or others like them)?**	No visible notetaking Note taking on Jamboard - Fs to note down any questions. Note taking on Jamboard
7:40-7:50	**Break**		
7:50		TS to move everyone to their pre-allocated small groups – 8 participants per group, based on a mix of demographics, 1 facilitator for each group, tech support available to all groups for immediate Zoom challenges.	

7:50-8:50 (1 hour)	Case studies 2 and 3	**2.** Read through **CASE STUDY: A JUST AGRICULTURAL TRANSITION**	Chat used to collate questions.
30 mins per case study		These are just some of the recommendations that have been made by organisations, charities and independent inquiries. **Questions for discussion:** **Q1: What are your first reflections on the issues in this case study?** **Q2: Where do you think responsibility lies for tackling these issues? Why?** **Q3: What do you think about the sorts of recommendations which have already been made to tackle these issues?** **Q4: What do you think might stop the UK government taking action on taking up these recommendations?** **Q5: What do you think might encourage the UK government taking action on taking up these recommendations (or others like them)?** Show video: [Living by a 'dying river' - how pollution has put the Wye into decline](#) 3. Read through **CASE STUDY: CHICKEN FARMING** **Questions for discussion:** **Q1: What are your first reflections on the issues in this case study?** **Q2: Where do you think responsibility lies for tackling these issues? Why?** **Q3: What do you think about the sorts of recommendations which have already been made to tackle these issues?**	

		Q4: What do you think might stop the UK government taking action on taking up these recommendations?	
		Q5: What do you think might encourage the UK government taking action on taking up these recommendations (or others like them)?	
8:50-9:00 **(10 mins)**	Menti.com – online polling Wrap up and close	QM5: Something that you have learnt or has particularly interested you from what you've heard this evening QM6: What do you want to remember from this session to take into our next discussion?	
In own time	Online space activities for next time	• Activities on Recollective o Review the presentations from previous workshops which you didn't see (optional) o Review the case studies, what's most important in the conversations we had in the workshops?	Activities on Recollective

Workshop 3 - Thursday 29th June 2023 6-9pm – Food and health

Scope and research questions

- Introducing the third topic of food & health
  - What do participants think about some of the ways others have suggested making change in the food system on this topic?
  - What do participants think about government intervention on tackling the issues around this topic in the food system, in general?
- Start to think about some of the connections between topics we've explored so far

Time	Agenda	Process	Process Tools
6:00-6:15 (15 mins)	Introduction to this workshop and reminder of the overall	1. HVM team introduce themselves 2. Observers/ speakers present introduce themselves	

	dialogue programme		
6:15-6:20 (5 mins)	Menti questions set 1	QM1: Tell us one thing you remember from our last workshop QM2: When I say 'food and health' what comes to your mind?	Menti.com Tech support to put menti link in the Chat
6:20-6:45 (25 mins)	An introduction to the conversation topic	Speaker: Food & health ● Katharine Jenner, Obesity Health Alliance (Cambridgeshire) ● Dr Justin Varney, Director of Public Health, Birmingham City Council (Birmingham) Recorded videos: ● industry perspective video from Judith Batchelar Q&A	Chat used to collate questions
6:45	TS to move everyone to their pre-allocated small groups – 8 participants per group, based on a mix of demographics, 1 facilitator for each group, tech support available to all groups for immediate Zoom challenges.		
6:45-7:40 (55 mins)	Reflections on presentations Case studies	**CASE STUDY: INSTITUTIONAL EATING** 1. Share screen to play Food for Life video - How the Food For Life programme is making positive changes across Scotland 2mins 18secs Questions for discussion: Q1: What are your reflections on or experiences of the issues in this case study? Q2: How do you feel about the sorts of recommendations which have already been made to tackle these issues? Prompts – to use as necessary – give participants chance to select the ones they want to respond to first: Q3: Where do you think responsibility lies for tackling these issues? Why? Q4: What do you think might stop the UK government taking action on taking up these recommendations?	Note taking on Jamboard - Fs to note down any questions.

		Q5: What do you think might encourage the UK government taking action on taking up these recommendations (or others **like them)?**	
7:40-7:50	**Break**		
7:50	TS to move everyone to their pre-allocated small groups – 8 participants per group, based on a mix of demographics, 1 facilitator for each group, tech support available to all groups for immediate Zoom challenges.		
7:50-8:50 (1 hour) **30 mins per case study**	Case studies 2 and 3	**CASE STUDY: CHANGING FOOD ENVIRONMENTS** 1. FF Broken Plate teaser – stop at 1.10 https://youtu.be/ilGkNM339lw Questions for discussion: Q1: What are your reflections on or experiences of the issues in this case study? Q2: How do you feel about the sorts of recommendations which have already been made to tackle these issues? Q3: Where do you think responsibility lies for tackling these issues? Why? Q4: What do you think might stop the UK government taking action on taking up these recommendations? Q5: What do you think might encourage the UK government taking action on taking up these recommendations (or others like them)? **CASE STUDY: ULTRA PROCESSED FOODS** 1. Play Chris van Tulleken clip chapters on 'What's wrong with this' and 'Regulation' 'This is an emergency' - Chris van Tulleken on how our diet is killing us Questions for discussion: Q1: UPF is a relatively new topic, what do you feel about it? Q2: How do you feel about the sorts of recommendations which have already been made to tackle these issues? Q3: Where do you think responsibility lies for tackling these issues? Why?	Chat used to collate questions.

Time	Agenda	Process	Process Tools
		Q4: What do you think might stop the UK government taking action on taking up these recommendations? Q5: What do you think might encourage the UK government taking action on taking up these recommendations (or others like them)?	
8:50-9:00 (10 mins)	Menti.com – online polling Wrap up and close	QM5: Something that you have learnt or has particularly interested you from what you've heard this evening QM6: What questions do you still have about the food system and food system policy to help with our work on 8th July?	
In own time	Online community space activities for next time	• Activities on Recollective ○ Review the presentations from previous workshops which you didn't see (optional) ○ Review the case studies and share one thing that matters most about what was discussed in your group in the workshop?	Activities on Recollective

Workshop 4 - Saturday 8ᵗʰ July 2023 10am-4pm (in-person) – Bringing our thoughts together.

Scope and research questions

Overarching discussion, conclusions and recommendations

- What do participants think about some of the ways others have suggested making change in the food system
- What do participants think about government intervention on tackling the issues in the food system in general
- What are the barriers to change?
- Who has power to remove those barriers/ make change?
- What are the principles that underlie our thinking on the food system and the need for change?
- Who needs to hear/ act on these calls for change?

Time	Agenda	Process	Process Tools
10:00-10:20	Introduction to this workshop and reminder of	1. Housekeeping 2. LF intro. HVM team stand up and introduce themselves	

(20 mins)	the overall dialogue programme Menti questions	3. Any observers/ speakers present introduce themselves QM1: One thing you want to make sure we discuss today QM2: Share one concern you have about food system policies QM3: Share one hope you have about food system policies	Menti.com
10:20-10:40 (20 mins)	Setting the scene	LF to play FFCC animation (1min 30) LF to play Tim Benton intro video (11 mins) LF to play Sue Pritchard video (5 mins)	Recorded stimulus videos
10:40-10:50 (10 mins)	Ice breaker	Find someone you haven't spoken to (on another table) and discuss the question: **Q: What did you find most interesting/ surprising about the videos we've just seen?** Return to table groups	
10:40-11:30 **(50 mins)**	A postcard from the future	**Write a postcard from the future.** It's 2030. The food system is working in the way you would like, everything is going well. Work in pairs (or threes if odd number), to write a 'postcard from the future' back to yourself in 2023. Draw a picture or write some words which outlines what you want this 2030 food system looks like. What would the future food system be like if everything went right? Draw or write key elements into the postcard. Share briefly what's on the postcards with the rest of the table group. Create a collective vision for each group.	Printed postcard templates Stick the postcards on the flip. Fs note key themes/similarities and differences in order to write a combined vision on flipchart

		Q: What are the principles we are bringing to this vision of the future? • What's on your mind as we discuss that? • What's are the important things within this vision?	Fs to make a list of principles on flipchart
11:30-11:55 (25 mins)	Break – Time to film vox pops		
11:55-1:05 **70 mins**	Reminder of what we've covered so far, categorising the recommendations	Now we're going to think about how we get there. Holding the vision you have for the food system of the future in your mind, we'd like you to think about all the recommendations you've explored through the case studies so far. Which of these would help get to your vision and why? To do this let's now remind ourselves of the topics we've been discussing over our previous sessions together and the recommendations for tackling the issues of each. Just to remind you, we are not starting from scratch, lots of organisations and processes like this one with people have made recommendations about how to tackle some of the issues we've been discussing. We'll be discussing what you think about these recommendations, and we are going to categorise each recommendation using the following three categories: • DO IT – The 'quick wins', where we are agreed on it and we have the tools to do it – we just need to get going. • TEST IT – Where there is broad agreement, and we need to try things out to work out the best way to do it • DEBATE IT – Where there isn't agreement yet, the deeply contested issues, where important choices need to be exposed and which can only be resolved by inclusive and balanced debate and courageous collective leadership.	https://www.nationalfoodconversation.uk/ Carousel areas – A1 sheets with materials from: A fair deal for consumers/ producers Industrial farming Chicken farming A just agricultural transition UPF Changing food environments

		Groups are invited to review what we've seen by doing a carousel activity to remind everyone of what we've covered. Chairs around the images for those that would rather not stand.	Institutional eating
		Each facilitator goes round the room with their group. Image reminders of the presentations/ films/ recollective tasks up on the wall/ on flip stands.	Facilitator worksheet – our group thinks
		At the 9th minute of each carousel stop:	
		Setting all aside all concerns about how to fund it/ who would make it work/ what barriers there might be:	
		Q: Which of these policies are you really drawn to, do you think could really work, and why?	
1:05-2:05	**Lunch break - time for interview filming**		
2:05-3:05 **(60 mins)**	Trade offs	You've seen our collective vision on the wall during the lunch break, formed from all of the group visions we developed together. We've considered how we think we might get there, by reviewing all the recommendations we've been discussing over the past few weeks.	Case studies printed out on tables
		Given all we've discussed over our workshops, the collective vision we've devised today, what we think should be done, tested, debated we're going to create our 'manifesto':	
		Q: What do you want to say to policy makers about your hopes and ambitions for the future of the food system?	
		Q: How are we going to get there?	
		Q: What trade-offs might we accept to get there? What might we accept in return? (e.g. we will accept less choice or eating less meat/ would we accept more expensive chicken if that meant there would be less impact on the environment of chicken farming	

		Summary: **1. Our key messages - what changes/ what differences do you want to see for you/ your family/ friends/ community** **2. Who they are for/ who should do what** **3. What we might accept in return**	Summary manifesto flips
3:05-3:25 **(20 mins)**	Group sharing of key points	LF to invite each small group in turn to share their manifestos (5 groups – 4 mins each)	Summary flips in main space
3:25-3:40 **(15 mins)**	Menti.com – online polling Wrap up, next steps and close	QM4: Share one concern you have about food system policies QM5: Share one hope you have about food system policies	Menti.com
3:40-4:00	Time to film final vox pops		

Appendix 4: Case Studies

1. What are the issues?
- Other parts of the food system (like advertising, processing and retailing) gain a lot more of the final sales price of basic food goods than the farmers do
- Using cheese as an example: the farmer covers more than half the costs of production, but makes only 0.02% profit on a 480g block of cheese (see image on the right)[1]
- Despite this, many UK citizens are unable to afford essential foods and this is a worsening problem
- Just looking at recent trends, close to 3 million emergency food parcels were distributed by food banks in the Trussell Trust network from March 2022-April 2023 - the most parcels ever distributed by the network in a year[2]
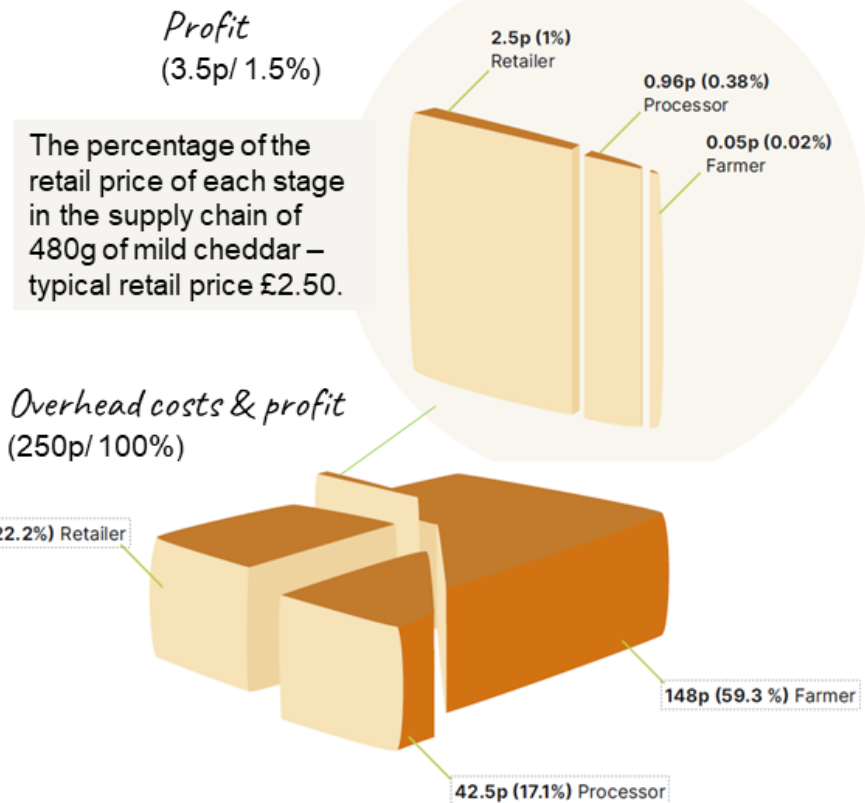
2. What are the implications?
- Farmers face going out of business, for example 7% of dairy farmers asked in July 2022 thought they would stop producing milk by 2024 due to rising costs[3]
- Almost a million adults say that they – or someone in their household – have had to go a whole day without eating in the past month because they couldn't afford or access food[4]

1. Sustain: 'Unpicking food prices'
2. The Trussell Trust end of year stats 2023
3. NFU Dairy Intentions survey 2022
4. Food Foundation Food Insecurity Tracking March 2020

Case study: A fair deal for citizens & producers

Example: Mild Cheddar

Profit
(3.5p/ 1.5%)

2.5p (1%) Retailer

0.96p (0.38%) Processor

0.05p (0.02%) Farmer

The percentage of the retail price of each stage in the supply chain of 480g of mild cheddar – typical retail price £2.50.

Overhead costs & profit
(250p/ 100%)

56p (22.2%) Retailer

148p (59.3 %) Farmer

42.5p (17.1%) Processor

3. What could be done to strike a fair deal for citizens and producers?

Proposals to meet citizens' needs	Proposals to meet producers' needs
Extend the value and eligibility for Healthy Start vouchers (vouchers used on fruit, veg, milk and infant formula) so more families who need them can access them[1]	Pay producers and those who manage land for delivering 'public goods' like space for nature, clean water and flood management[1]
Make sure that Universal Credit covers a basket of essentials including food, household bills and travel costs[2]	Make visible all the costs of producing food (including costs associated with dealing with health and environmental problems caused by food), who pays them (and who doesn't) and use this to target agricultural payments[2]
Subsidise energy and household costs through benefits, to ensure people aren't having to prioritise their rent payments above buying food[3]	Invest in systems to get food from producers to people without so many steps in between, run by not-for-profit food hubs and wholesalers to offer fairer prices to farmers & growers[3]
Pay for schemes like the above by introducing a tax on sugar and salt sold for use in processed foods or in restaurants and catering businesses[4]	Pay for schemes like the above by introducing a windfall tax for big food companies who profit the most when prices rise[4]
Introduce Universal Basic Income (UBI) to provide people with a financial safety net for essential food[5]	Introduce Universal Basic Income (UBI) to provide a safety net for new entrants into farming and encourage sustainable action[5]

1. National Food Strategy Independent Review: The Plan
2. Trussell Trust: 'Guarantee our Essentials' campaign
3. Crisis: 'Why the UK Government must increase housing benefit'
4. National Food Strategy Independent Review: 'The Plan'
5. UBI Lab - Food Campaign 2022

1. Wildlife & Countryside Link: 'A Future Sustainable Farming and Land Management Policy for England'
2. Sustainable Food Trust: 'Hidden Cost of UK Food'
3. Sustain: 'Unpicking food prices'
4. Oxfam: 'the case for windfall taxes'
5. Community Supported Agriculture: UBI4FARMERS campaign

2

Case study: A just agricultural transition

1. What are the issues?

- To tackle the climate and nature crises, farmers will have to change the unsustainable practices they use.

- Many farmers make little profit from the food they produce, relying on agricultural payments from the government. After Brexit, these payments are changing[1]

- Changing the way a farm produces food takes multiple growing years, or longer, meaning that some farmers have become 'locked in' to particular ways of growing[2]

- In order to invest in a different future, farmers need clear, consistent policies and markets, and they need access to knowledge and advice tailored to their circumstances, which can be difficult to find and to make time for

2. What are the implications?

- Farmers face going out of business, which could affect how much food we are able to produce in the UK[3]

- Farmers feel forced into use more inputs and do more damage to nature and climate as they try to earn a living

- Small-scale farmers might find it particularly difficult to make changes to their practices because of a lack of money to invest, which could mean more power being concentrated in fewer, larger farming businesses[4]

1. 'Agriculture subsidies after Brexit: Institute for Government
2. FFCC: 'Our Future in the Land'
3. Scottish Government: Agricultural Transition in Scotland consultation 2021
4. Reviving County Farms: CPRE Report, 2019 by the New Economics Foundation, Shared Assets and Who Owns England?

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3. What could be done to tackle the issues?

Education and Advice
1. Make sure every farmer can get trusted, independent advice by training peer mentors and farmer support networks[1]
2. Ensure that the curriculum in universities and colleges reflect the latest science and evidence for sustainable agriculture

Agriculture policy - Government puts a transition to fair and sustainable practices at the heart of agricultural policy. Commit to this by:
1. Setting targets for implementing practices on farms,[2] such as a target for 75% of farming to be agroecological by 2030
2. Investing in the transition by redirecting subsidies to farmers who produce food in ways that are environmentally sustainable and encourage biodiversity[2]

Support 'local' food - Government develops investment funds to support food systems which get food from producers to people without so many steps in between. These could be run by not-for-profit food hubs and wholesalers to offer fairer and more stable prices to farmers & growers so they can save and reinvest in sustainable practices[3]

1. FFCC: 'Our Future in the Land'
2. National Food Strategy Independent Review: The Plan
3. Sustain: 'Unpicking food prices'

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Case study: Chicken farming

1. What are the issues?

- Chicken is the most popular meat in the UK. Many think it is a healthier and more environmentally sustainable protein than red meat

- In the UK, 95% of chickens are raised in intensive indoor units[1]

- Just a few companies produce the majority of chicken in the UK, such as Cargill, Moy Park and Banham Poultry

- Globally 41.5% of the world's crop-based feed is used to feed chickens. This includes grain and soy which could be eaten by humans directly[2]

- Over recent years, a high number of permissions have been granted for intensive chicken units in Herefordshire, meaning that the River Wye catchment area is now home to 25% of the UK's chicken production [3]

2. What are the implications?

- Large numbers of intensive chicken units can pollute land and waterways with nitrate and ammonia.

- In 2023, the ecological status of the River Wye was downgraded. The Environment Agency is being taken to court by the charity River Action who claim it has failed to protect the river from agricultural pollution[4]

- More land is used to grow feed for chickens. In the case of soy, this puts pressure on areas vulnerable to deforestation, like the Amazon [5]

1. Eating Better 2020: 'We need to talk about chicken'
2. Eating Better 2020: 'We need to talk about chicken'
3. BBC News March 2023: 'River Wye pollution prompts High Court review'
4. BBC News March 2023: 'River Wye pollution prompts High Court review'
5. WWF-UK 2020: 'Riskier Business: The UK's Overseas Land Footprint'

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Case study: Chicken farming

Proposals involving citizens

Dietary change - Reduce meat & dairy consumption by 50% by 2023, instead eating more fruit, vegetables, beans, nuts and pulses[1]

Land Use Framework - Create a Land Use Framework to help manage decision making about how land is used and where agriculture is located across the country, including decision making at a local level[3]

Business action on deforestation - Businesses cut ties with companies selling or using animal feed from deforested land[4]

Government deforestation policy - Put in practice the deforestation commitments adopted by the government in 2020

Chicken production policy
1. Pause the construction of new intensive poultry units in the UK with immediate effect[5]
2. Incentivise farmers to move to less intensive, higher welfare chicken production systems which would produce less[6]

1, 2.   Eating Better 2020: 'We need to talk about chicken'
3.   FFCC: 'Our Future in the Land'
4.   Mighty Earth, Tesco: A basket full of problems for the Amazon & DEFRA, Government sets out world-leading new measures to protect rainforests
5,6.   Soil Association: 'Peak Poultry – briefing for policy makers'

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1. What are the issues?

- Modern farming has made more food available, more cheaply, in more places than ever before

- It has done this, in part, by farms becoming larger and using more mechanised techniques – and by using fertilisers and pesticides, which are made from fossil fuels, for example nitrogen fertilisers made from natural gas

- Food creates about a fifth of the greenhouse gas emissions we're responsible for in the UK (or 30% if you include food imports) [1]

- The food system is increasingly controlled by a small number of big corporations. For example, there are four big companies who control around two-thirds of the seeds and pesticides market. [2]

2. What are the implications?

- Pesticides and loss of habitat contribute to loss of biodiversity. Land use change is responsible for 58% of biodiversity loss in Europe [3]

- Run-off from using inorganic fertilisers on farms pollutes land and waterways

- Although food is cheap (compared to the past and to other European countries), other parts of the system pay the costs. The hidden cost of food in the UK is £40bn–£96bn per year (including health, environmental costs and resource degradation) [4]

- When there are a few large corporations, farmer incomes get squeezed, forcing some out of business [4]

1. National Food Strategy research
2. FIAN International 2021: 'The corporate capture of food systems'
3. National Food Strategy research
4. National Food Strategy Independent Review: The Plan
5. Olivier De Schutter UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food 2010: 'Addressing Concentration in Food Supply Chains'

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3. What could be done to tackle the issues?

Protect small farmers – Strengthen laws preventing monopolies and restraining businesses like supermarkets and Cargill from abusing their buying power [1]

Nitrogen reduction – A tax on the producers of artificial nitrogen fertilisers, with the income raised to compensate farmers for additional costs in transitioning to more sustainable practices[2]

Polluter pays – A tax on the agrochemical companies who are profiting from polluting, such as by producing pesticides/fertilisers or encouraging industrial meat production[3]

Ecocide law - Make it a crime to severely damage or destroy ecosystems[4]

True cost of food - Increase agricultural payments to cover the "true cost" of producing food well[5]

1. Olivier De Schutter UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food 2010: 'Addressing Concentration in Food Supply Chains'
2,5. Sustainable Food Trust's 'Hidden Cost of UK Food' (revised edition 2019)
3. What is the polluter pays principle? London School of Economics, Granthan Research Institute on Climate Change and the Environment
4. Ecocide: a crime against the planet, Law Society of Scotland

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Case study: Changing food environments

1. What are the issues?

- Where people live affects what they eat because it influences what sorts of food they have access to

- This is especially true of people on low incomes who might be limited in how far they can travel for food (because of lack of money or time or both)

- Some areas around the country have a lack of fresh fruit & vegetables in a walkable distance from people's homes, but food that is high in fat, sugar and salt is readily available

- There are more fast-food outlets in deprived areas – almost twice as high in the most deprived local authorities compared with the least deprived [1]

- Advertising strongly affects what people buy. Only 1% of food advertising is about fruit and veg – compared to 33% on confectionary, snacks, desserts and soft drinks. [2]

1. Food Foundation (2022): Levelling up on Local Food Environments
2. Food Foundation (2023): The Broken Plate
3. Burgoine, T. et al, (2014) Associations between exposure to takeaway food outlets, takeaway food consumption, and body weight in Cambridgeshire, UK: population. *British Medical Journal*
4. NHS Digital (2022) National Child Measurement Programme 21-22

2. What are the implications?

- Being surrounded by outlets that sell cheap, energy dense food, with no healthy alternatives available for the same price, is associated with higher consumption of takeaway food and being more likely to develop obesity[3]
- In England, 31.5% of Year 6 children in the most deprived areas are living with obesity. This compares to 13.5% in the least deprived areas [4]
- Childhood obesity is strongly associated with obesity later in life, and higher risk of health problems like heart disease, cancer and stroke

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3. What could be done to tackle the issues?

Advertising: Reinstate the plan to restrict junk food advertising on TV until after 9pm[1]

Planning:
Consider the impact of planning applications on access to healthy food in local planning policies[2]
Roll out programmes around schools to improve the local food offer which children are exposed to[3]

Retail: Work with small retailers e.g. convenience stores to improve the health of their food offer[4]

Strategies: Local councils to commit to promoting vegetable production and consumption in cities[5]

1. The Obesity Health Alliance Manifesto, Food Foundation Broken Plate 2023
2. Birmingham Healthy City Planning Draft Toolkit 2021
3. Mayor of London: School Superzones Programme
4. Mayor of London: Good Food Retail Plan
5. Sustainable Food Places: Veg Cities campaign

2

1. What are the issues?

- There are many public places which serve food, like schools, hospitals, prisons, canteens and care homes
- The public sector is a major buyer of food, estimated to serve 1.9 billion meals a year – over 5% of the total UK food service turnover [1]
- Much of this food is not healthy, sustainably sourced or even appetising. For example, 42% of patients in UK hospitals rated the food as either satisfactory, poor or very poor in a 2019 inpatient survey [2]
- There are a small number of large catering providers who serve most of the public sector market, whilst smaller-scale providers find it harder to supply public sector institutions
- Without additional funding to cover recent price rises on ingredients, many school caterers are cutting their costs by switching to ultra processed foods [3]

2. What are the implications?

- Poor food leads to low uptake (of school meals) and high food waste (in hospitals). For example, the annual cost of hospital food waste is 39% of its total food budget [4]

- The Government Buying Standards for food and catering businesses are out of sync with the UK's climate/nature commitments and also public perceptions (for example, free range eggs are not stipulated) [5]

1. National Food Strategy: The Plan
2. Care Quality Commission: 2019 adult inpatient survey
3. Local Authorities Caters Association member survey 2022
4. Report of the Independent Review of NHS Hospital Food 2020
5. Sustain: Good Food on the Public Plate

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3. What could be done to tackle the issues?

Public procurement:

Include at least 2 portions of veg in every meal provided in a public institution[1]

Make it obligatory for all public sector organisations that spend public money on food to do so in line with specific procurement standards, based on a healthy and sustainable reference diet[2]

Use modern digital systems to increase the participation of small and local businesses in food procurement[3]

Accreditation and training:

Introduce a mandatory accreditation scheme for caterers in schools, hospitals and prisons, to support caterers to reach baseline standards and encourage them to aim higher still[4,5]

Standards:

Set hospital food standards in law (like school food standards) to promote fresh, healthy and appetising cooking, higher animal welfare, and ethical and sustainable ingredients[5,6]

Ensure that revised school food standards meet appropriate health and environmental concerns, reducing meat and sugar, and increasing fibre consumption[7]

1. Sustainable Food Places: Veg Cities campaign
2,3,4. National Food Strategy: The Plan
5. Independent review of NHS hospital food 2020
6. Sustain: Campaign for Better Hospital Food
7. School Food Matters: Feed the Future Campaign

2

Case study: Ultra processed foods

1. What are the issues?

- 'Ultra-processed foods' (UPFs) are those which contain lots of ingredients you wouldn't find in your cupboard at home, which have often been extracted from whole foods

- Some examples of ultra-processed foods are fizzy drinks, packaged bread and breakfast cereals

- Ultra processed foods make up more than half of the calorie intake of the average UK diet [1]

- In a recent study of school lunches of 3,000 UK children, researchers found that UPFs made up almost 75% of the calories [2]

- Because of how they are made, UPFs are often less expensive, and they make up a higher proportion of the diets of people on low incomes [3]

2. What are the implications?

- A growing body of research suggests that ultra-processed foods have negative effects on our health, for example by interfering with the processes in our bodies which make us feel full, so that we eat more and gain weight. [4]

- Many researchers think this is a big part of why the UK's obesity rate has been rising.

1. Eating Better 2020: 'We need to talk about chicken'
2. Parnham et al 2022 'The Ultra-Processed Food Content of School Meals and Packed Lunches in the United Kingdom' *Nutrients*
3. Colombet et al 2022 'Social inequalities in ultra-processed food intakes in the United Kingdom' *Journal of Epidemiology & Community Health*
4. National Food Strategy Independent Review: The Plan
5. Kevin D. Hall et al 2019, 'Ultra-Processed Diets Cause Excess Calorie Intake and Weight Gain: An Inpatient Randomized Controlled Trial of Ad Libitum Food Intake' *Journal Cell Metabolism*

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3. What could be done to tackle the issues?

Adopt stronger public procurement standards which restrict the use of ultra processed foods in public settings like schools and hospitals[1]
Introduce a tax on sugar and salt sold for use in processed foods or in restaurants and catering businesses, to encourage manufacturers to reformulate their products[2]
Use social prescribing schemes to make it possible for those on low incomes to buy fresh fruit and veg regularly, while being supported with underlying challenges they face (e.g. as being trialled by Alexandra Rose Charity in two London boroughs)[3]
Introduce advice on reducing how much UPF is eaten to official UK nutritional guidance (like in Canada, Peru, Brazil, Ecuador and Uruguay) [4]
Set a target to reduce the amount of UPF in the diet by 20% (like in France and Brazil) [5]

1. Dr Chris van Tulleken and Dr Dolly Theis, Ultra Processed Food proposal to the Health and Social Care Select Committee, 2023
2,3,4 National Food Strategy Independent Review: The Plan
3. The Obesity Health Alliance Manifesto
4. First Steps Nutrition Foundation, UPF in the diets of infants and young children in the UK, 2023
5. The Soil Association, Ultra Processed Foods report/ Taking the Biscuit Campaign

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