

Citizen Manifesto to Fix Food

The manifesto reflects what we want from the food system: healthy food available to all that promotes fairness and sustainability. The manifesto is a plea for joined up thinking and collaboration to address food inequalities, food poverty and food waste, creating a better system for all – from school children eating well, to families being able to afford nutritious food, to farmers being fairly supported.

1. Joined up food leadership

Decisions on food need coordinated leadership at the highest level, with cooperation across the UK's nations.

- Create national food strategies with strong leadership to bring together farming, health, environment and the economy
- Strengthen collaboration between governments across the UK, sharing best practice and expanding policies that work
- Set up citizens' assemblies and other forums to give people a voice in shaping policies that affect them
- Put limits on corporate influence so that decisions prioritise what is good for all, not just food industry profits

2. Real choice for everyone

Everyone deserves real food choices, not just what is cheapest, the most convenient or will generate the most profit. Children should grow up protected from all unhealthy food marketing, with nutritious meals available regardless of income.

- Regulate ultra-processed food, phasing out the worst offenders and introducing clear warning labels
- Build on upcoming advertising restrictions by shifting all marketing towards fresh, nutritious and sustainably produced food, especially for children
- Cap the cost of healthy foods so that price isn't a barrier to good food
- Coordinate UK-wide food-affordability measures, ensuring that solutions like food vouchers and school meals benefit the most people

3. Better food, less waste

Our schools, hospitals and public institutions should set the example with high-quality, nutritious food while reducing waste and excessive packaging.

- Apply high standards for school and hospital meals, ensuring high-quality, nutritious food is the norm
- Tackle food waste from farm to fork, with clear UK-wide targets and actions
- Cut down on excessive plastic packaging, with recyclable and reusable alternatives promoted instead.

4. A fairer deal for farmers

Farmers deserve fair prices for their produce and support to adapt to sustainable methods.

- Develop fair pricing rules that prevent supermarkets and big food companies from pushing out farmers and small producers
- Support farmers to adopt sustainable practices through financial backing and independent advice
- Regulate food businesses properly, preventing a handful of corporations from dominating supply chains and pricing

5. Flourishing local food

Local food networks bring communities together, make fresh food accessible, and reconnect people with the land and the source of their food.

- Invest in local food hubs, enabling more farmers to sell locally and local businesses to thrive – making it easier for people to buy fresh food and keeping more value in communities
- Make more land available for community food growing, helping cities, towns and villages become more food resilient
- Integrate food growing, cooking and sharing into school curriculums and community programmes to strengthen food culture and reconnect people to where their food comes from

● Do it ● Test it ● Debate it ● Don't do it

STANDARDS IN EARLY YEARS SETTINGS Set requirements for nutritious food and drinks in early years settings, such as nurseries.



FAIR DEALING REGULATIONS Introduce a regulatory framework that ensures fair dealing between retailers and suppliers/intermediaries and farmers.



PUBLIC PROCUREMENT WITH LOCAL INPUT Increase the participation of smaller and local suppliers in public food procurement for schools, hospitals and prisons.



INCENTIVES FOR FARMERS Incentivise farmers to change to sustainable farming methods.



CRIMINALISE ENVIRONMENTAL DESTRUCTION Make it a crime to severely damage or destroy ecosystems.



UPF TARGET The government should set a target to reduce how much UPF the UK eats.



RESTRICT ADVERTISING Enact the government's proposed plan to restrict junk food advertising on TV until after 9pm.



IMPACT ASSESSMENTS Require climate and environmental impact assessments to get permission to develop new industrial livestock units.



POLLUTER PAYS Tax the businesses that profit from polluting, such as companies that make pesticides and fertilisers or encourage intensive meat production.



NATIONAL GUIDANCE Add information on reducing UPF to official nutrition guidance.



Overcoming the barriers and using the levers for change

Over decades (and many inquiries) we've learned a lot about what undermines best intentions in policy delivery. The blocks to food systems change are just the same barriers that trip up many ambitious policy agendas.

Politicians have proceeded with caution and avoided intervention. They have been scared off by insidious narratives – like 'nanny state' accusations from vested interests, in Westminster and across media outlets – despite clear and repeated public support for action.

The food system's sprawling complexity across different government departments makes reform seem too complex to address. Short term economic metrics override longer-term public health considerations. Powerful food companies shape both what's on supermarket shelves and the food policies that get discussed and adopted.

The Food Conversation shows that citizens understand these obstacles. So, they focus on solutions. Citizens want strong food leadership, fair rules that protect farmers and families alike, and community solutions that reconnect people with good healthy food.

The manifesto sets out what needs to be done; these are the levers to do it:

- 1. Provide clear, consistent, courageous leadership, able to work across departments and levels, inspiring collective action.**
- 2. When you've got a political mandate, use it – move fast and fix things!**
- 3. Make fixing food a mission for this government – with a relentless focus on public value and a balanced scorecard of metrics for long-term improvements.**
- 4. Build a coalition for a good food mission across the whole system – public health, farmers and growers, progressive businesses, civil society organisations and more.**
- 5. Protect the public interest from vested interests.**
- 6. Much can be done locally – devolve power, resources and agency to communities who want to help.**
- 7. Acknowledge we can't do everything at once – but get started now, and plan to test, learn, adapt and spread what works.**
- 8. Show and tell the stories of change. People are already doing things all around the country. These everyday stories inspire others and add up to an unstoppable movement for change.**

When The Food Conversation began, many participants felt powerless about food issues. Through deliberation, this shifted dramatically. Exploring evidence and sharing experiences, they developed a deeper understanding of how the food system works and the potential to shape it.

Many participants now shop differently, talk to their MPs, host community discussions and advocate for better local food options.

Food connects people, across political and geographic divides. The Food Conversation shows how, given time and information, citizens become partners in solving difficult problems, turning frustrations about a dysfunctional system into practical ideas, to make food and farming work better for everyone.