



Briefing

July 2026

KEY FINDINGS:

Fewer than 1 in 10 people think the food system works well and should be left as it is

4 in 5 (80%) see investment in healthy eating for children as a way to prevent illness and cut long-term costs

9 in 10 (90%) say farmers deserve a fair price covering the real cost of production; more than 9 in 10 (93%) say fair pay for farmers matters to Britain's food system

9 in 10 (92%) of people say it's important that everyone has enough affordable healthy food (a view held across all parties and all parts of UK)

2 in 3 (65%) refuse to accept eating healthily should depend on income saying government should ensure people are able to eat to healthy foods, regardless of their income

3 in 4 (71%) would feel more positively about a politician they heard talking about food grown in their area

The Food Foundation and FFCC commissioned More in Common to poll 2,236 people, representative of GB adults between 12-15 June 2026. More in Common is a member of the British Polling Council and abides by their rules.

Across parties and postcodes:

Citizens are concerned, they care and they want government action on food

Over the last 18 months, the government has involved the public at the heart of strategy development on food. The Citizen Advisory Council (CAC) was established in May 2025 to work with Defra to shape the Good Food Cycle. A new report, *From the Ground Up*, builds on their work talking to businesses, farmers, and communities across England. It illustrates the way that imaginative and ambitious food policy can be a lever to drive regional economic growth, improve health outcomes and make Britain a fairer place to live.

Following the publication of the report, The Food Foundation and FFCC have released new polling, timed to coincide with the one-year anniversary of the launch of the government's food strategy. The results provide strong evidence that the public aligns with the CAC's recommendations that the food strategy should

- devolve power and money to build resilient local food infrastructure
- support farmers to be paid fairly for the work they do
- reform procurement so schools and hospitals prioritise local, healthy food
- introduce a clearer law that sets a clear direction for travel for the future food system.

The political consensus – across postcodes and political divides – around food is striking. **Fewer than 1 in 10 people think the food system works well and should be left as it is.** More than 9 in 10 (92%) say it's important that everyone has enough healthy and affordable food.

More than 2 in 3 (69%) say the government should do more to make sure food is healthy – including 59% of Reform voters, 80% of Labour voters and 88% of Green voters. In the North East 71% want the government to do more, in the South West 79%. People are also unhappy with devolved governments on this issue (with 61% in Scotland and 66% in Wales saying the government is doing too little).



FFCC

Established in 2017 as an independent commission, the Food, Farming and Countryside Commission was set up to help shape the future of food, farming, and the countryside.

We are a fiercely independent commission: we gather evidence on under-examined topics, and we convene seldom-heard voices, connecting people and ideas that do not usually meet — farmers and economists, ministers and citizens. We have built the UK's most substantial body of deliberative public engagement on food expressly to counter lobbyists' claims to know what the consumer wants. When we speak, we can say with confidence not just what the evidence shows, but what the public, given time and good information, actually wants.

It's clear that the public perceive food as a critical part of building resilience against climate and global shocks (with 88% identifying being resilient to global conflict or extreme weather as vital). More than two in three people (68%), including 65% of Reform voters, want food produced without damaging the environment, even if it costs slightly more.

The message from the public is unambiguous: they want to see government taking the risks seriously and moreover being more ambitious about how healthy food, sustainably produced, transforms lives, strengthens communities and shapes a fairer and more resilient economy.

They want to see food a top priority for government – placing it above transport, water and housing as something the government should prioritise (with 45% saying food should be a top priority for government and only 38% saying housing).

How can Government respond to citizens' concerns?

There is one overarching insight from this poll and from the cumulative weight of evidence of FFCC's citizen engagement: successive governments have failed to give enough political attention and energy to reforming the food system. They have missed a golden opportunity. Food connects powerfully to peoples' everyday lives and other priorities, such as living standards, health, nature and climate. There is no shortage of well evidenced policy recommendations from FFCC and others. But action starts with listening to what citizens are saying loud and clear: the new Labour leadership has the chance to place food at the heart of its agenda. This would involve:

First, **placing better food at the centre of the government's ambition**, explicitly connecting it to other ambitions around growth, health, nature and climate. Key elements are in place: the farming road map and land use framework. The food strategy is already using citizen engagement to inform policy development. Now is the time to promote this to being a core plank of the new Prime Minister's agenda, and for No 10 to take co-ownership of delivery.

Second, **recognising food policy as economic policy**. The government's reindustrialisation agenda should include **rebuilding regional food economies** stretching from the countryside and coast,



through market towns, and into the cities. Devolution of control of public procurement is a key lever for positive change. Regulation and incentives that at least level the playing field and actively promote the growth of UK's smaller businesses within food value networks, would enable for production, manufacturing, and retail to bring good growth and good jobs to every region.

Finally, we need to **recognise food as both a cause and, with the right policy architecture, the remedy for the nation's health crises**, especially among children, whose life chances are profoundly compromised by poor nutrition. With FFCC's research estimating the true cost of the UK's poor diet at £268 billion the question is not whether Government can afford to act, but whether it can afford not to.

Selected FFCC research:

[From the Ground Up](#) (June 2026) – our most recent citizen-led enquiries identified successful initiatives at local level that are ready to replicate across the UK.

[Paying the Price](#) (2025) and [The False Economy of Big Food](#) (2024) set out the massive costs to health and social services, productivity and human wellbeing of diet-related ill health and identify how the over-concentration of economic power in the food industry has undermined both farmer profitability and food quality.

[Farming for Change](#) (2021) set out how a transition to agroecology would feed the UK, produce healthier and more sustainable food, while meet our nature and climate goals, while [Farming Smarter](#) (2020) and [Land and Nature Skills Service](#) demonstrate the economic opportunities of a more nature and people-centric approach to food, farming and the countryside.

All of these reports can be found at ffcc.co.uk/publications