The Food Conversation UK report

Findings report from deliberations ten locations across the UK in 2024

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Contents

Executive Summary

This programme of deliberation was commissioned by the [Food, Farming & Countryside Commission (FFCC)](#) as phase two of a programme of deliberation that initially began in May 2023. It was co-designed and delivered by FFCC working with [Hopkins Van Mil (HVM)](#) and [TPXImpact](#). HVM are the authors of this report.

The deliberative process for The Food Conversation was initially launched with a proof of concept phase in two locations: Birmingham and Cambridgeshire. In March 2024 this was followed by a lightning deliberation with 30 participants from around the UK.

The Food Conversation is a methodologically robust process based on the public dialogue form of deliberation. Taking place in ten locations around the UK, grouped into four dialogue waves, each wave has involved between 60 and 90 citizens who are broadly representative of their location and who were invited to take part through a civic lottery by Sortition Foundation. 345 citizens were involved in the deliberative waves of The Food Conversation by the end of 2024.

Citizens spent over twenty hours together across four online workshops and two in-person sessions. They heard from specialist presenters about food system challenges and potential solutions. They discussed and reflected on these challenges and solutions before each location produced their view of what should change, how it should change, and who is responsible for that change.

The process has enabled those involved to reflect on the policy actions already proposed by actors in the system, and through previous deliberative processes. It draws on a [chicken wrap](#) as a discussion framing device, and four key themes on which participants heard a range of specialists present:

- Justice and power
- Food, farming and land use including climate, nature and biodiversity
- Food environments, child nutrition and public procurement
- Food system policy making and governance.

This report has been created by analysing and reflecting across the findings from all four waves to create a report on what matters to people across the UK when they think seriously, deeply, and over time about the food system.

It is significant that there is a great deal of consensus across all the locations/ waves on what matters. The result of each of the deliberations was a strong call for **urgent and significant change in the food system**. Universally participants express concern that the current system is unfair, unhealthy, broken, expensive and unbalanced. Instead, they want to see policies that deliver a system that is fair, healthy, sustainable, affordable, accessible, balanced and equitable.

Messages for policy makers

Participants built up over four online workshops and two in-person sessions to creating, 'Manifestos for change in the food system'. **Five clear messages for policy makers** were identified by drawing out themes from across 40 manifestos developed by citizens in each location, and 10 priority areas collated from them (see Appendix 1). These messages demonstrate that citizens around the country are consistently calling for **urgent and co-ordinated food system change.** They

counter the previously held assumptions that the primary requirement people have for food is that it is 'cheap' and that society does not want the government to intervene in food through the 'nanny state'.

1. Collaborative governance and leadership

Improve and strengthen food governance across the UK and in each of the devolved nations. Use a holistic approach to policy making so that decisions implemented in one area do not conflict with another. Embed engagement with citizens, farmers and other food system stakeholders throughout the system and in the implementation of policies.

2. Action to transition from unhealthy to healthy foods for all

Improve access to healthy and sustainable food throughout the system and for everyone by:

* Prioritising the creation of a healthy food environments with unnecessary Ultra Processed Food (UPF) restricted and ultimately phased out
* Leading by example - improving the quality and standards of food served in public institutions
* Ensuring no one should have less access to healthy and sustainable food due to their economic circumstances.

3. Urgent delivery of strategies to protect the environment and shift to sustainable food production methods

Pivot the farming sector towards sustainable practices and protect the environment with:

* Support for the farming sector to transition to sustainable farming practices; improve animal welfare across the system; and improve the resilience of the sector to attract future generations to farming
* The creation of a fairer system which limits the power of food corporations and supermarkets, and empowers farmers
* Strong legislation, regulation and enforcement to tackle food industry harms to the environment, including action to reduce food waste and stop excessive and unnecessary food packaging.

4. Concrete measures to dramatically improve children's food and health

Embed action to enable children to learn about and experience healthy food from early infancy. Get the message out early and continue through education which supports children and their families. This will have concrete benefits for the long-term health of the nation.

5. Community and cultural connections to the food system to be enhanced and celebrated

Run national awareness raising campaigns to support food culture change and better food choices. This includes strengthening the local food system which connects communities to local food production and improves access to fresh local produce in rural and urban settings.

Visions for the future

En route to the development of these manifestos, participants reflected on their visions for the future of food. They did this by transporting themselves to a near future, 2030, where the food system is better because it:

- Focuses on local food, and connects farming with communities
- Embeds fairness and equity throughout the system
- Prioritises healthy food (no UPFs)
- Regenerates nature and addresses the impacts of climate change
- Creates a virtuous circle for the future of food emanating from effective leadership and good governance.

Key policy actions

A range of measures sit beneath the manifestos participants created together. Throughout their deliberations, participants reviewed policy solutions that others have previously proposed– from sources such as the National Food Strategy, the United Nations, UKRI funded research, and other charities and NGOs. In general, support for concrete policy interventions in the food system is high, and there is a strong mandate from participants for policy interventions to help achieve the visions they set out.

In their rankings of existing policy solutions (see Appendix 2), there is an average 'Do It' agreement of 57% across all the proposals and an average 'Don't Do It' agreement of just 7.2% of participants. Proposals ranged from 28.2% saying 'Do It' at the lowest, to 86.6% for the highest supported proposals.

In general, participants in Wales and Northern Ireland were less likely than those in England to say 'Don't Do It' for policies, and so in these waves there were 9 and 15 policies, respectively, which received no 'Don't Do It' votes at all, including ones which had less 'Do It' support (i.e. participants wanted to see them debated).

Participants also came up with their own solutions, or had adjustments or conditions associated with ones they were shown. They also had ambitions at a higher level which drew together a range of proposals (such as food culture change or collaboration and better food governance). These include interventions which tie all the policies and actions together by **transforming food system governance and leadership** to improve and strengthen food governance across the UK and in each devolved nation, for better policy making and urgent action. The actions they focus on to achieve this are:

Box 1: Actions to tie the interventions together

National food plans (long term, and addressing all aspects of the food system); dedicated food departments; cabinet ministers focused on food; independent regulatory bodies; co-ordination and a holistic approach across the UK, devolved nations, and regionally, so that decisions implemented in one area do not conflict with another; decision-making at appropriate levels, taking account of local context; restrictions on lobbying by food companies; fund independent research.

They also see The Food Conversation as the beginning of a process of participation, involvement, engagement and awareness raising across society for the food system. As such they propose that **listening and collaboration** is an essential part of food system change, embedding meaningful and significant engagement with citizens, farmers and other food system stakeholders throughout the system and in the implementation of policies.

> **Box 2: Actions to enable listening and collaboration**
>
> Citizens assemblies, collaborative forums bringing food system stakeholders together, and a communications and engagement strategy.

Additionally, participants acknowledged a disconnect between people and the food system and a lack of knowledge. As such, citizens want to see investment in the cultivation of greater **community and cultural connections to the food system** which build resilience. They want to embed holistic food system education and awareness raising into every stage of life, prioritising children and starting at pre-school, to support food culture change and better food choices.

> **Box 3: Actions to build knowledge, education, and food culture**
>
> Integrate food education into the curriculum at all stages; experiential learning, prioritising children - growing, sourcing, cooking and sharing nutritional food; information about nutrition, UPFs, and health; community learning opportunities for adults and families; gap years and apprenticeships for young adults to gain experience; national awareness raising campaigns, with high profile media attention; festivals and events that bring communities together to celebrate food cultures, traditions and local food production; introduce a simple, clear, compulsory UK labelling scheme that helps consumers to make informed choices on environmental and health impacts of different foods.

We see that **strengthening local food systems** is a consistent theme in the deliberations across all the waves. This is important to participants to connect communities with local food production and improve access to fresh, local produce in rural and urban settings.

> **Box 4: Actions to strengthen local food systems**
>
> Introduce not-for-profit local food hubs, ensuring they are in accessible locations and effectively supported and promoted; support community growing projects, including city projects, and engage children and young people; allocate land for community food production; develop local food plans/ frameworks to revitalise high streets (e.g. utilise empty shops), support local businesses, engage local people and create healthy food environments; encourage supermarkets to stock more local, sustainable produce.

Levels of support for policy actions

From the deliberations and the online activities to consider specific policy actions, we can see that the appetite for policy implementation can be grouped into high, medium and mixed levels of support.

The policies with **high levels of support** are:

- Measures which improve children's diets
- Interventions which improve the food available in public institutions
- Interventions which reduce consumption of Ultra Processed Food (UPF)

The policies with **medium levels of support** are:

- Measures to support farmers to implement regenerative farming methods
- Action to prevent environmental damage
- Measures to redirect value to farmers.

The policies with **mixed levels of support** are:

- Welfare change as a mechanism to support people to afford healthy, sustainable food
- Measures to increase fruit and veg consumption, and reduce meat consumption
- Paying for such measures through taxing companies and manufacturers.

Participants see a strong intersection between improving children's diets, the food available in public institutions and reducing consumption of UPFs. They push for action in these areas.

Power in the food system

Participants discussed power throughout the dialogue in terms of an imbalance between those:

- Who have power and influence, but shoulder little responsibility for their actions
- With much responsibility, but little power to make change.

They are concerned about 'hidden' power throughout the system. This became a particular point of interest for participants in Cornwall and South London who were shocked at the scale of food brand ownership by large global food manufacturers. There is a belief expressed by many that the UK Government, and to a lesser extent devolved and local governments, have power as a result of the levers available to them through policy and legislation as well as tax revenues. However, they don't believe that the Government is using this power effectively.

Participants want:

- Governments to:
  - Take up their responsibilities and develop long-term, holistic strategies for food which think beyond the four-year electoral cycle
  - Protect the health and safety of current populations and future generations
  - Empower people in society to make healthy and sustainable choices
  - Empower communities to make decisions about their local food systems.
- Large food businesses and supermarkets to:

- Take responsibility for the actions they take which pollute waters, degrade soils, emit greenhouse gases, and endanger wildlife and biodiversity
- Take responsibility for actions they take which encourage the excessive purchase and consumption of unhealthy foods, especially by children.

Connections to the food system

Some participants coming into The Food Conversation described feeling no connection to the food system. They see this as a problem, with a lack of connection meaning that people have little concern for the challenges in the food system. The Food Conversation has been an 'eye-opener' for these participants, revealing to them through the process that change needs to happen and be supported.

Those that came into the process feeling more connected to the food system say that this is through producing, buying, preparing and sharing food. They focus on:

- Supporting livelihoods
- Homegrown and locally produced food
- Eating for physical and mental wellbeing
- Bonding with family, friends and the wider community.

Challenges identified by participants

As we have seen, a significant challenge in the food system is the imbalance of power in the system, with retailers and supermarkets holding the most power and farmers and citizens holding the least. Participants see this as a barrier to change, as those with power currently will have a vested interest in maintaining the status quo.

Other key challenges raises in the dialogue and described in this report are that:

- The food we eat is making us sicker, this is a concern in and of itself, and for the impacts it has on the economy and health system.
- Modern diets are increasingly dominated by UPFs, with food environments which are saturated with unhealthy foods high in salt, sugar and fat.
- Food culture has changed so that less value is placed on the importance of food than in the past or compared to other countries.
- The price of food, especially healthy food, is inaccessible to many – whilst the price farmers being paid for producing food is inadequate and unfair – creating an unequal and unsustainable situation.
- The way food is produced is harming farmers, climate, nature and (for some participants) animal welfare.
- Rural and island communities are shocked how much food produced in their areas is exported, and how little locally produced food is available to them.

In each location and across all the waves there is a shared view that the way food is governed is failing society. They are sceptical that the current way in which food system policy is made can create an effective and joined up-approach. They label this approach as 'messy'. Participants feel that party politics and election cycles hamper the long-term strategic thinking that is needed.

Continue the conversation

Dialogue participants share a sense of togetherness and believe The Food Conversation has been the catalyst for important conversations across society which need to continue. They want this cohesive community to challenge now disproved assumptions that people do not want government action on the issue of food. These participants are stating loudly and clearly that change needs to happen, that government action is not only welcome but expected. They believe this action should pervade all policy actions so that everyone in society has a stake in what happens – and cares about the future of food.
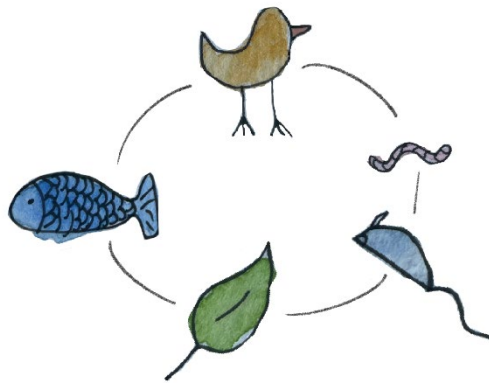
1. Introduction to the project

1.1 Informing policy discussions

The Food Conversation deliberation was commissioned by the [Food, Farming and Countryside Commission (FFCC)](#) in May 2023. It was designed and facilitated by [Hopkins Van Mil (HVM)](#) and [TPXImpact](#) working in a co-production process with FFCC. This report has been authored by HVM as the summary of the findings across all the waves and each of the locations. This report is the fifth in a series of reports which have been produced in waves to inform important policy discussions since the General Election on 4th July and the first 100 days of the new government falling within 2024.

1.2 Programme objectives

Participants were told as part of their deliberations that food system change is essential for making progress on human and planetary health, but such progress has been slowed by prevailing narratives and assumptions about food which seek to maintain the status quo. The work on The Food Conversation over the last two years has clearly demonstrated that society needs to move away from assumptions such as 'people want cheap food', 'no-one wants a nanny state' and 'it's up to consumers to change their buying habits' which have consistently been articulated in the political and social discourse on food. Citizens are increasingly aware of the problems in the food system and clearly understand that if we fix food, we can improve the nation's health and protect the planet. The programme objectives established by FFCC and its partners have been to understand public views across the UK to inform this new narrative around the food system.

The Food Conversation drew in people representative of their location to:

- Understand public views on the current challenges within the food system and opportunities for change
- Identify priority policies and actions to help improve the food system
- Explore participants' personal stories - shining a light on people's views of and connections to the food system.

This process adds depth from around the UK to early communications on the public's attitude to action on food. The programme has been run in two phases. An early proof of concept phase ran in two locations, Birmingham and Cambridgeshire in summer 2023. Phase two was launched with a Lightning Deliberation involving people from across the UK in March 2024. Then followed four waves of deliberation in ten UK locations considering the issues over time. The whole process involved 345 people representative of the demographic make-up of their locations.. The first wave ran in East Kent, Northumberland and West Yorkshire and was completed in April 2024. The second wave was held in Wales, ending in May 2024, and the third took place in South London and Cornwall ending in July 2024. The waves have concluded with deliberations in The Lothians, Caithness, Sutherland, Ross, Orkney and Shetland (which we refer to as CSROS in this report) in Scotland, and with participants in Northern Ireland.

1.3 What is a public deliberation?

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

The process enables and supports 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, but 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. Locations for all the waves of The Food Conversation are set out in Figure 1. A stratified sampling method was used 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 devised by the dialogue partners. The process had three stages:

Stage 1
The Sortition Foundation randomly selected thousands of addresses from each location. Each of these addresses received a letter in the post inviting adult members of the household 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). 1,396 potential participants expressed their interest in taking part from this mailing.

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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)

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Figure 1: Recruitment locations for all waves of The Food Conversation

Caithness, Sutherland, Ross, Orkney and Shetland
20 citizens

The Lothians
26 citizens

Northumberland
26 citizens

Northern Ireland
25 citizens

West Yorkshire
27 citizens

North Wales
27 citizens

South Wales
27 citizens

East Kent
27 citizens

Cornwall
28 citizens

South London
28 citizens
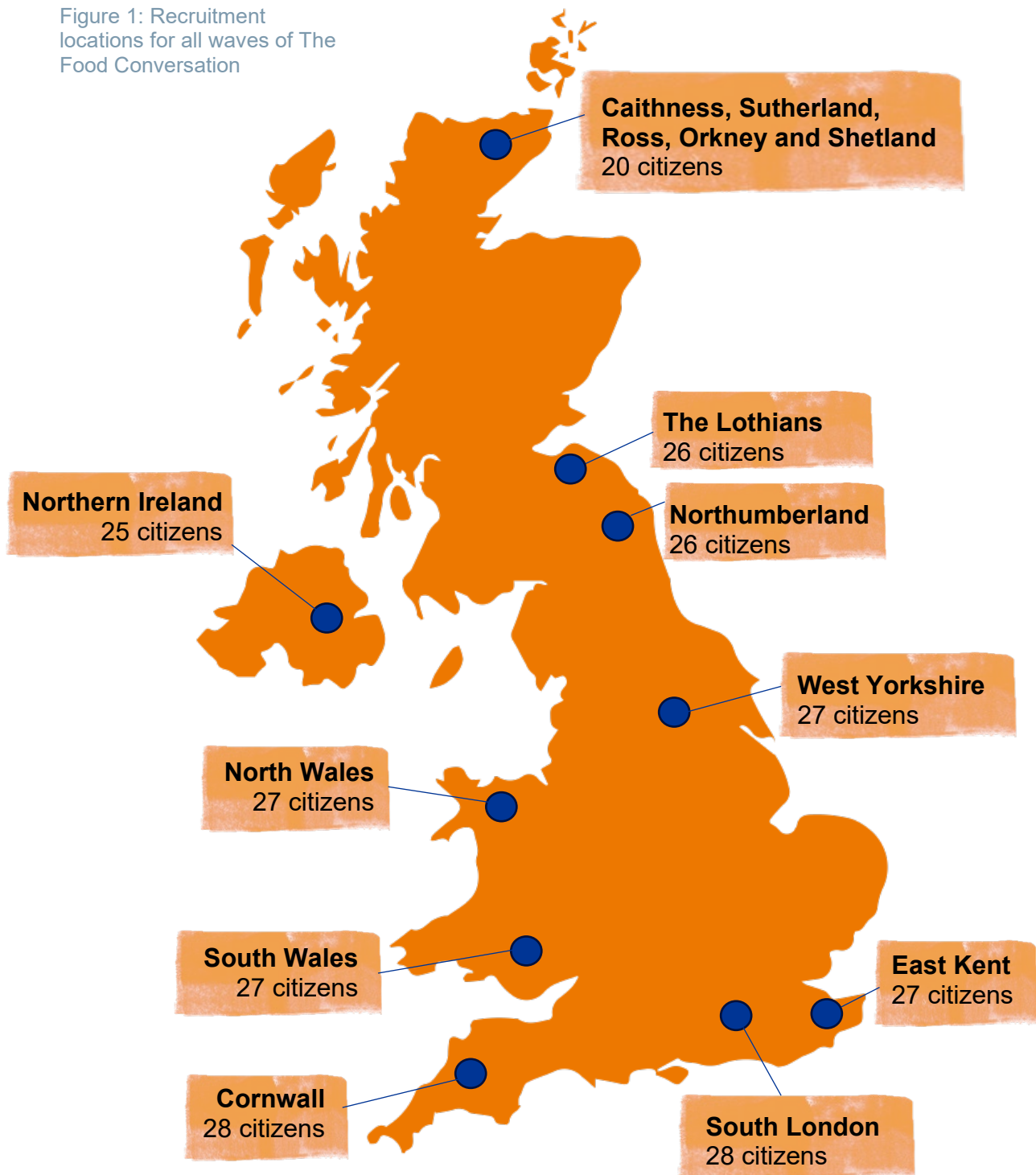
Stage 2

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 the confirmed participants in each location from the pool of

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people who registered. This is done in such a way as to create a representative sample (e.g., the age profile of participants in The Food Conversation is broadly similar to the age profile of the population of the areas as a whole). In this case the Sortition Foundation did this ten times - once for each area. Details of the specific algorithm used, 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**: using government statistics to classify all addresses as lying in an urban or rural area.
- **IMD**: using 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 changed their mind or had something come up (using the algorithm).

1.5 Methodology

In the proof of concept phase in 2023 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 deliberative process to be framed around understanding of what participants in previous deliberative process had called for.

Within those topics, policy actions were summarised and shared with participants (see Appendix 2 for the full policy action summary) as a sample of the policy actions that have already been proposed. The dialogue was therefore framed to encourage participants to review policy actions already suggested by a range of organisations, 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, where power lies in the system, the principles that underlie thinking on the food system and the need for change. A [chicken wrap](#) was used throughout the process as a window into the food system, and a device to illustrate its complexity.

Dialogue process

The main topics within which policy actions were discussed, and the dialogue framework are set out in Figure 2.
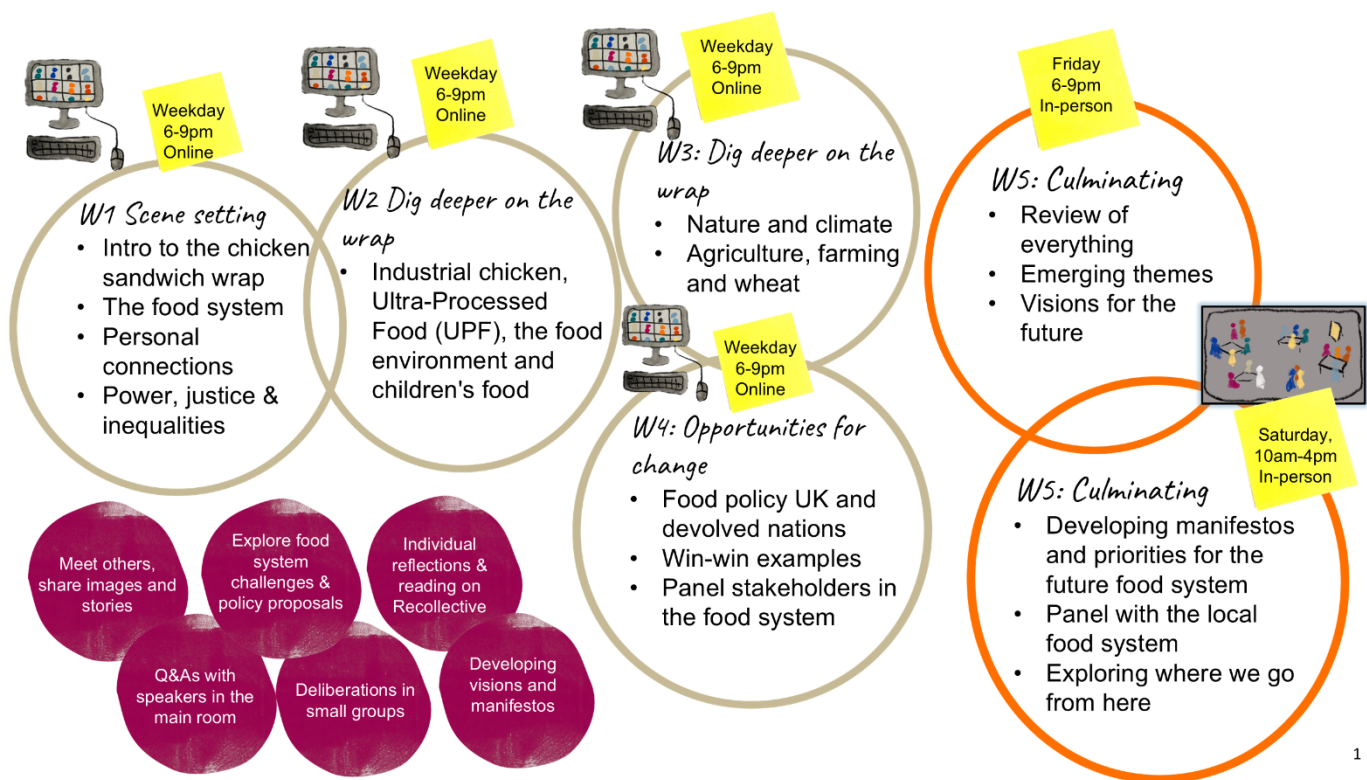
Figure 2: The dialogue process and framing

The dialogue was designed around five workshops. Four workshops were held online for three hours on weekday evenings over a two-week period. The final workshop was held in-person from Friday evening to Saturday afternoon (see Figure 2). Each online workshop included specialist presentations (see Appendix 3) which contextualised the topic and framed the issues. In small groups the policy actions were reviewed and discussed. The final workshop was a culminating process in which participants focused on their visions for the future and manifestos for change based on reviewing the policy actions discussed during the online workshops. Throughout the dialogue participants had access to the online platform Recollective, which allowed them to have thinking time, using the stimulus, outside of the workshop. Speaker presentations, as well as additional stimuli, were uploaded to Recollective immediately after workshops and participants completed several short online activities, including the image sharing activity that forms the basis of the 'Connections to the Food System' discussion (Section 3).

Participants were supported throughout by the facilitation and support teams, a participant handbook, a tech support session with individuals and in small groups, and other support to ensure they could take part in the dialogue. Participants that needed them were loaned pcs, web cams, headphones or Wi-Fi hot spots to ensure they were not excluded from the process due to a lack of equipment.

Interpreting and extrapolating findings

Public deliberations - whether dialogues, Citizens' Juries or Assemblies - 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. Deliberation 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 and re-reading 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 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 locations. Points of disagreement are described. However, it should be noted that a great deal of commonality, unity and agreement on what matters about our food has been found through this process.

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.

Summary reports have been produced for each of the dialogue waves.[4] These reports share participants' views for the locations within each wave and contain the full demographic details for each location, plus the participants' manifestos in their own words.

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, South London

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[4] Hopkins Van Mil, Food Farming & Countryside Commission *Findings Reports from Each Wave of The Food Conversation* (2024), available here: https://ffcc.co.uk/publications/deliberation-reports

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This report is illustrated with participant images from each location, and original [Lydia Hopkins Design](#).

2. What matters?

In this chapter we outline what matters to participants, and their vision for the food system of the future. We share the key messages citizens have for policy makers about what needs to happen to get us there. Finally, we discuss how participants feel about some specific recommendations for policy (and non-policy) actions in the food system.

2.1 Visions

At each in-person workshop participants were asked to transport themselves forward by just six years to 2030 and write a postcard back to their 2024 selves. In these postcards from the future participants envisioned a virtuous circle delivering a healthy, fair and well governed system bringing benefits across society, mitigating the current risks to health and the environment. From this activity and the discussions that sprung from it, we see participants want a future for food which:

- Focuses on local food, and connects farming with communities
- Embeds fairness and equity throughout the system
- Prioritises healthy food (no UPFs)
- Regenerates nature and addresses the impacts of climate change
- Creates a virtuous circle for the future of food emanating from effective leadership and good governance.

A focus on local
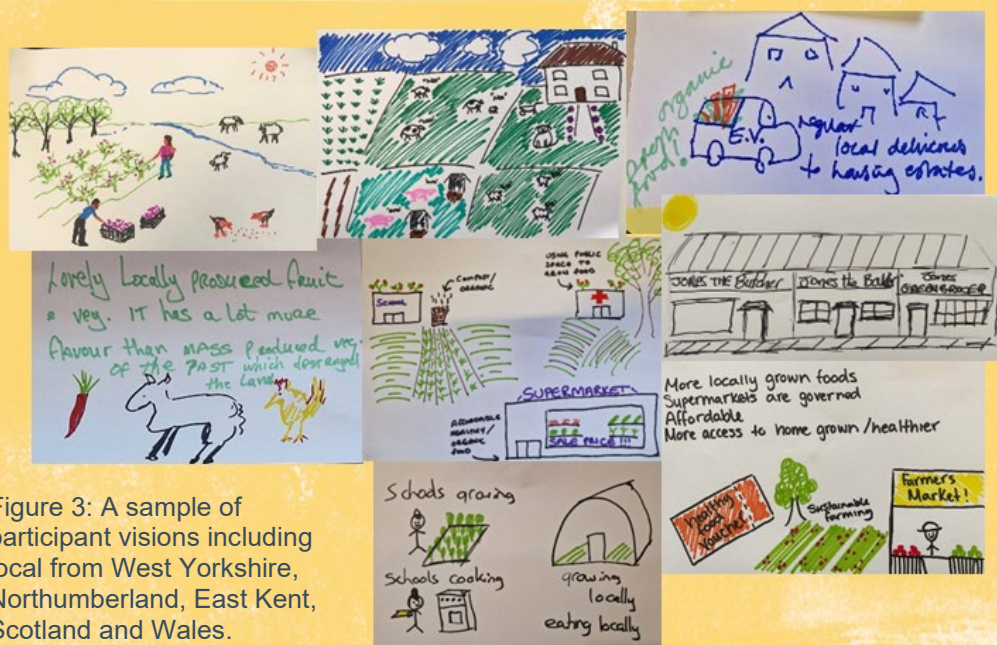
Figure 3: A sample of participant visions including local from West Yorkshire, Northumberland, East Kent, Scotland and Wales.

For participants across the process, local food with greater connections between farming and communities is an important part of their vision. From growing and producing to procurement and consumption, in 2030 there has been a move away from the dominance of multi-national corporations in the system and local independent shops and food markets thrive, providing for the needs of communities.

This local and sustainable food production and distribution brings food from farm to fork in far fewer steps than in 2024 with community growing working alongside farm produced food. In many visions city growing is also important so that people can see more directly the link between what they eat and how it is produced.

All locations included local food production in their visions for the future in one form or another. Some locations had specific areas of focus when thinking about local food:

- **Northumberland and East Kent**: farmers markets and farm food delivery mechanisms.
- **Cornwall and South London**: food as a focal point for community hubs.
- **Wales**: a greater connection between communities and farming – this includes farming as a practice, as a production method and also to farmers themselves.
- **Scotland and Northern Ireland**: the simplification of food, slimming down a very complex system to deliver better at a local level.

A fair and equitable system

Fairness and equity were significant parts of participants' 2030 visions.

Figure 4: A sample of participant visions including fairness from West Yorkshire, Northumberland, Scotland and Wales.

Fairness, power sharing and transparency is at the heart of these visions. Healthy food is affordable, there is no need for food banks, and everyone, no matter their circumstances, has access to it.

Connected systemic issues are fixed so people are no longer prioritising heat or rent over food. The welfare system provides support for those on lower incomes and in financial hardship so that they too can access the healthy, nutritious food they need.

The prioritisation of healthy food

Healthy food is prioritised in participants' visions. In Scotland this gave rise to a particular focus on public health, with a desire for the measures already in motion in Scottish law being pushed further and delivered throughout the future food system.

Figure 5: A sample of participant visions including healthy food from South London, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales.
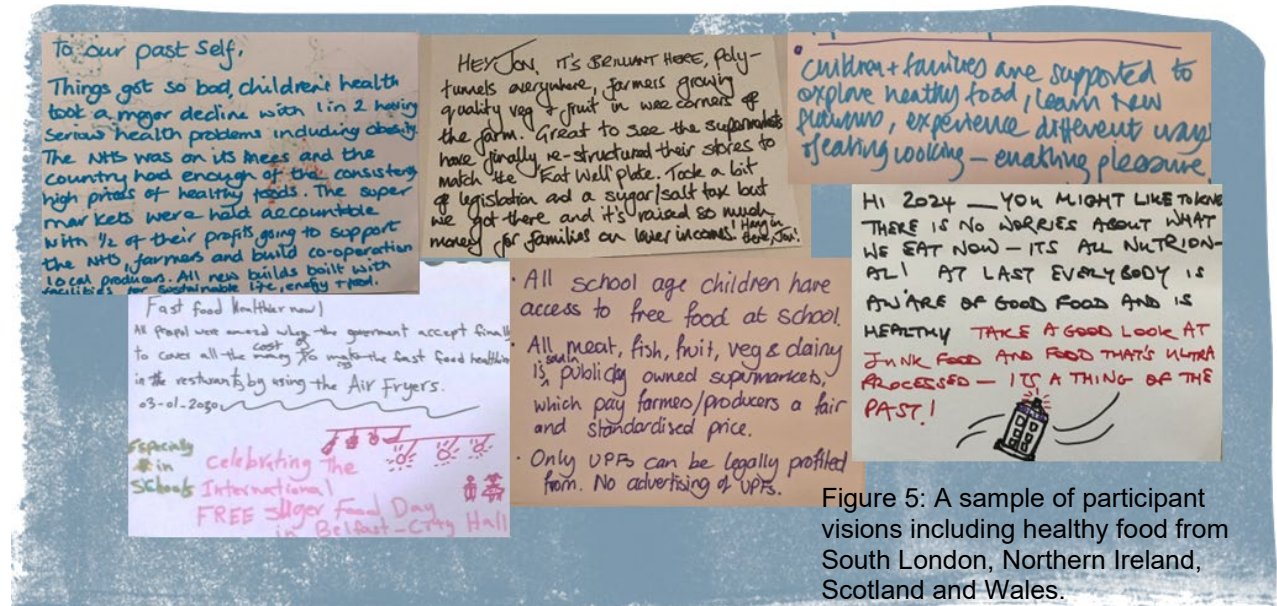
Across the deliberative waves participants created visions in which:

Everyone understands what nutritious and healthy food is, UPFs have been reduced/ removed, positive marketing and advertising promote the benefits of healthy food - not junk food. Education in schools works as a lever for intergenerational awareness and change. There is a realisation across society that UPFs and foods high in salt, sugar and fat do not contribute to the healthy, fair and well-governed system they wish to see.

Public health has improved: the 2030 food system is having a positive impact on health, which has also reduced the strain on NHS budgets. Because children's food has been improved, the next generation is in better shape, and there is hope for the future.

Nature regenerated and the impacts of climate change addressed

Figure 6: A sample of participant visions including nature and the environment from West Yorkshire, East Kent, Cornwall, South London, Northern Ireland and Wales.
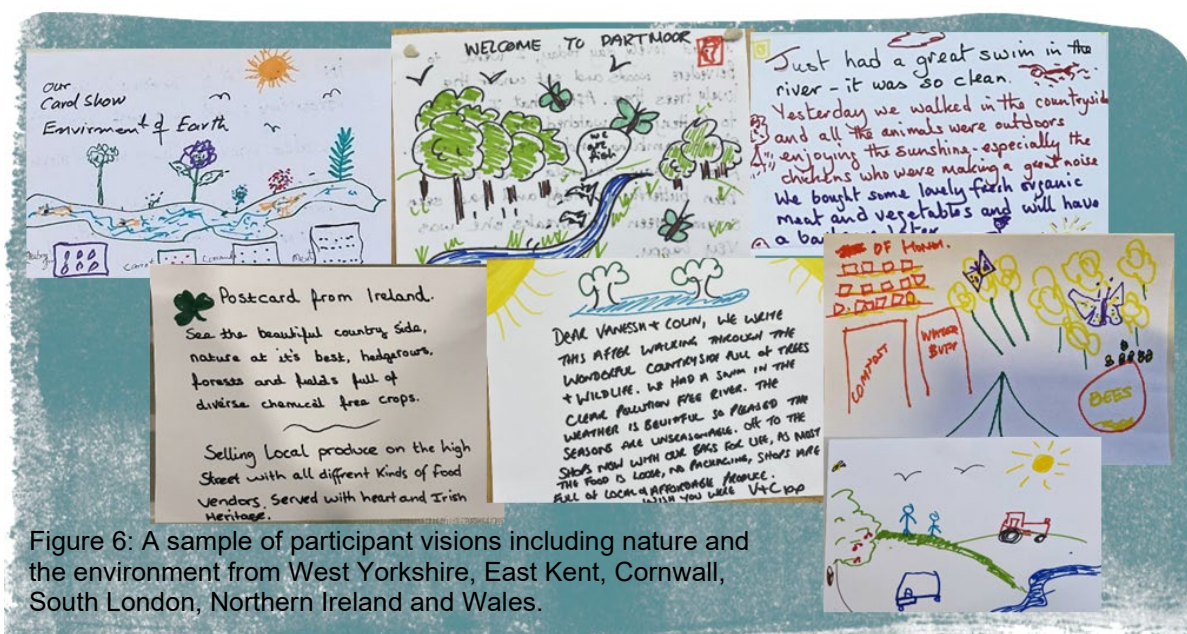
In 2030 participants are seeing a food system which **works with nature to ensure wide-scale restoration of nature and significant biodiversity improvements** because farming and food 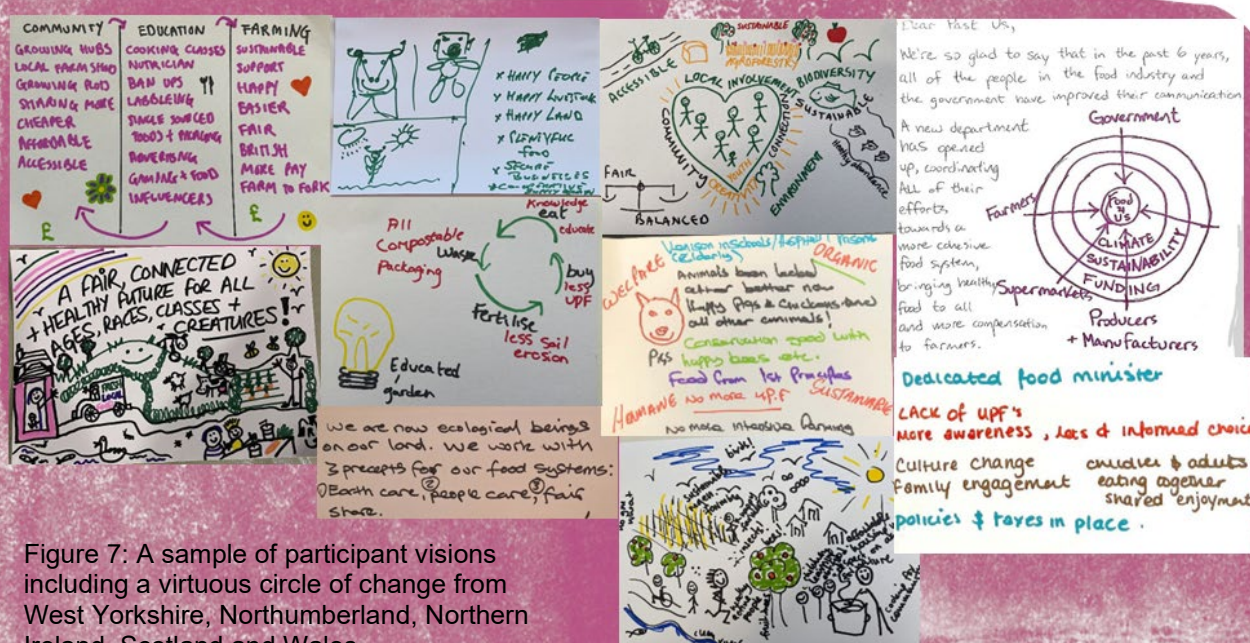production prioritises combatting climate change and values animals, biodiversity, nature and the planet. **Because farming is sustainable and regenerative:** rivers are clean without pollution from agricultural run-off; wildlife is thriving with habitats that encourage biodiversity and farmers have been supported in this transitional phase.

Sustainable and regenerative farming is a particular focus for the participant visions in both North and South Wales.

A virtuous circle

Some participants' visions describe a virtuous circle, where with good, strong and co-ordinated leadership all aspects of the food system work well, enabling people to thrive alongside a healthy, sustainable, biodiverse environment.

Figure 7: A sample of participant visions including a virtuous circle of change from West Yorkshire, Northumberland, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales.

We see in these 2030 visions **strong, cross governmental leadership** based on a clear, transparent and simple vision with accountable decision making.

In their visions for the future participants are **hopeful** that change is possible and will bring substantial benefits to **communities, the planet and future generations**.

> *"Our vision is for a future where communities and farmers are mutually supportive and connected. Where government takes action, actually does something to change food in a fair way for us all – for now and future generations."* South Wales

2.2 Manifesto key messages

Five clear messages for policy makers were identified by drawing out themes from across 40 manifestos developed in four waves of deliberation with participants across the UK. These messages were then tested, in a small workshop with a sample of participants. From these we see that UK citizens are calling for **urgent and co-ordinated food system change.**
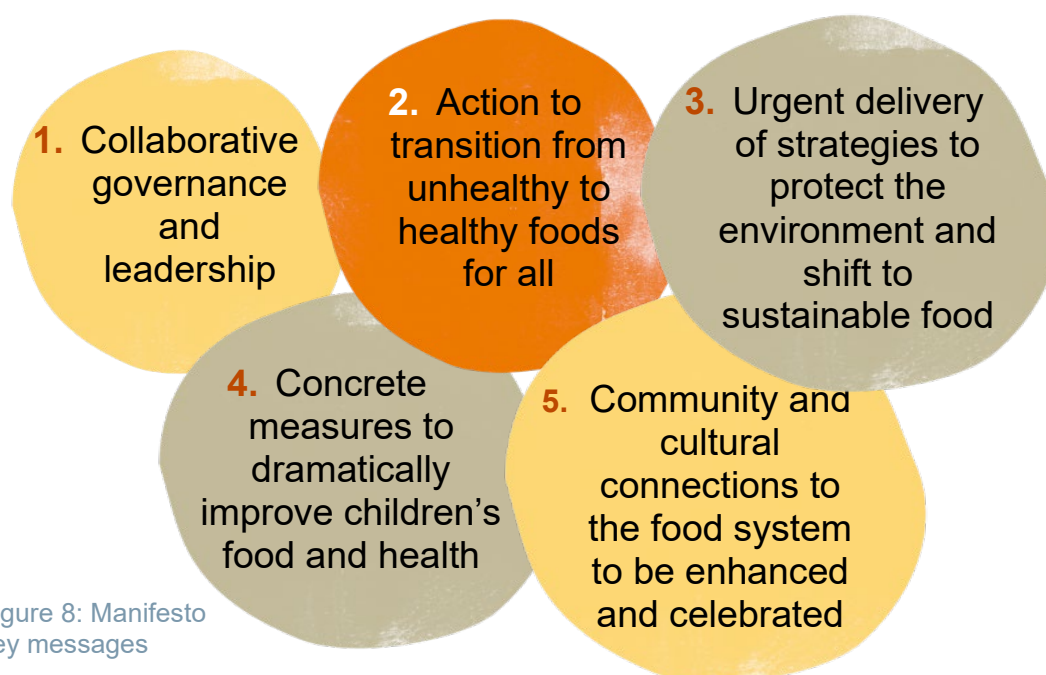
1. Collaborative governance and leadership

2. Action to transition from unhealthy to healthy foods for all

3. Urgent delivery of strategies to protect the environment and shift to sustainable food

4. Concrete measures to dramatically improve children's food and health

5. Community and cultural connections to the food system to be enhanced and celebrated

Figure 8: Manifesto key messages

1. Collaborative governance and leadership

Improve and strengthen food governance across the UK and in each of the devolved nations. Use a holistic approach to policy making so that decisions implemented in one area do not conflict with another. Embed engagement with citizens, farmers and other food system stakeholders throughout the system and in the implementation of policies.

2. Action to transition from unhealthy to healthy foods for all

Improve access to healthy and sustainable food throughout the system and for everyone by:

- Prioritising the creation of a healthy food environments with unnecessary Ultra Processed Food (UPF) restricted and ultimately phased out.
- Leading by example - improving the quality and standards of food served in public institutions
- Ensuring no one should have less access to healthy and sustainable food due to their economic circumstances.

3. **Urgent delivery of strategies** to protect the environment and shift to sustainable food production methods

Pivot the farming sector towards sustainable practices and protect the environment with:

- Support for the farming sector to transition to sustainable farming practices; improve animal welfare across the system; and improve the resilience of the sector to attract future generations to farming.
- The creation of a fairer system which limits the power of food corporations and supermarkets and empowers farmers.
- Strong legislation, regulation and enforcement to tackle food industry harms to the environment, including action to reduce food waste and stop excessive and unnecessary food packaging.

4. Concrete measures to dramatically improve children's food and health

Embed action to enable children to learn about and experience healthy food from early infancy. Get the message out early and continue through education which supports children and their families. This will have concrete benefits for the long-term health of the nation.

5. Community and cultural connections to the food system to be enhanced and celebrated

Run national awareness raising campaigns to support food culture change and better food choices. This includes strengthening the local food system which connects communities to local food production and improves access to fresh local produce in rural and urban settings.

2.3 Manifesto actions and policy solutions

A range of measures sit beneath the manifestos participants created together. Throughout their deliberations, participants reviewed policy solutions that others have previously proposed – from sources such as the National Food Strategy, the United Nations, UKRI funded research, and other charities and NGOs. Existing policy solutions were reviewed under the following workshop themes:

- A fair deal for farmers and citizens
- UPFs, child nutrition and the food environment
- Intensive farming
- Nature, climate and sustainable farming

An online activity was carried out after the first three online workshops by participants. They were asked to assess and rank each policy they had heard about in the last workshop according to:

Do it	Debate it
'I support this proposal and think we just need to get going and do it.'	'This is a complex issue, and I think the pros and cons require inclusive and balanced debate and collective leadership before a decision is made.'
Test it	Don't do it
'I like this proposal but suggest we start by trialling it to assess its effectiveness.'	'I do not like this proposal and do not wish to see it taken forward.'

Behind the rankings lay nuanced discussion held in-person during deliberations. For example, not choosing 'Do it' did not necessarily mean that participants weren't in favour of the concept. In some cases, participants wanted measures to go further than had been suggested (e.g. restricting advertising). In other cases, participants had questions about specific wording or felt there needed to be clear definition of key terms first in order to make the proposal effective. For example:

> *"I'm thinking about the transitional budget. I think it's a great thing to encourage farmers to look at sustainable farming methods. I think it's got to be the way to go, but why would you limit it to 2029? Is five years maybe going to be sufficient in order to make a reasonable change in farming practices? To implement sustainable methods?"* West Yorkshire

The ranking exercise was designed to provoke discussion and give a broad sense of where support lay for a specific sample of 38 existing proposals[5]. We have grouped these according to what the proposals are aiming to achieve, as well as by broad levels of support:

- **High degree of support** (all policies in this group received at least 64% saying 'Do it', but generally between 70-86%)
- **Medium levels of support** (all policies in this group received at least 43% saying 'Do it', but generally between 53-73%)
- **Mixed support** (policies in this group tended to receive less than 50% support with some noted exceptions).

Participants also came up with their own solutions, or had adjustments or conditions associated with ones they were shown. They also had ambitions at a higher level which drew together a range of proposals (such as food culture change or collaboration and better food governance). We discuss these in text boxes labelled

'*From participants*...' in this chapter.

In general, support for concrete policy interventions in the food system is high, and there is a strong mandate from participants for policy interventions to help achieve the visions they set out.

> *"It's maybe not intelligence that's missing, it's courage. They haven't got the courage to act. I'm talking politicians here. They need to have the courage to develop the leadership to tell us occasionally, just occasionally, what is needed and that this is what we're going to do to deliver […] We would listen to them if they're talking about water and pollution and food because we need it to live."* Northern Ireland

In their rankings of existing policy solutions, there is an average 'Do It' agreement of 57% across all the proposals and an average 'Don't Do It' agreement of just 7.2% of participants. Proposals ranged from 28.2% saying 'Do It' at the lowest, to 86.6% for the highest supported proposals.

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[5] As such, we do not present detailed quantitative analysis of how support for the different proposals compared, and percentages given should only be used as indicative of broad levels of support or otherwise. We also do not report on how it differed across the different waves of deliberation with participants in different parts of the UK, as this is not statistically significant.

In general, participants in Wales and Northern Ireland were less likely than those in England to say 'Don't Do It' for policies, and so in these waves there were 9 and 15 policies, respectively, which received no 'Don't Do It' votes at all, including ones which had less 'Do It' support (i.e. participants wanted to see them debated).

From participants...   **Box 5**

Interventions to tie it all together:

Participants deliberated on existing policy proposals from specific areas of food, farming and environmental policy. However, there were also strong calls to join these policies up.

1. **Transforming food system governance and leadership.** Improve and strengthen food governance across the UK and in each devolved nation, for better policy making and urgent action.

Actions: national food plans (long term, and addressing all aspects of the food system); dedicated food departments; cabinet ministers focused on food; independent regulatory bodies; co-ordination and a holistic approach across the UK, devolved nations, and regionally, so that decisions implemented in one area do not conflict with another; decision-making at appropriate levels, taking account of local context; restrictions on lobbying by food companies; fund independent research.

> *"The other two things that I'm hopeful for, one, is that we get a government that will show leadership, create a strategy, and really choose intervention, rather than doing things around the edges and be bold. The second thing is that a lot of the challenges will be treated with a system thinking kind of way, bringing together health, sustainability, quality. As we've looked at this through this program, I'm hoping that government policy is produced in that way and that we can break down some of those silos and departments."* South London

2. **Listening and collaboration.** Embed engagement with citizens, farmers and other food system stakeholders throughout the system and in the implementation of policies.

Actions: citizens' assemblies, collaborative forums bringing food system stakeholders together, and a communications and engagement strategy.

> *"Our vision and aspiration is for communities of food, about food for everyone in a forum for stakeholders, a citizens' assembly to share and coordinate action and assist the government in generating good policy that delivers for all of us."* Northumberland

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Community and cultural connections to the food system:

Additionally, participants acknowledged a disconnect between people and the food system and a lack of knowledge. They experienced food through its community and cultural significance and saw a role for people and communities in improving the food system. They wanted policy to support greater connections between people and the food system, and improved education, in order to build resilience.

1. **Building knowledge, education, and culture.** Embed holistic food system education into every stage of life, prioritising children and starting at pre-school, and run national awareness raising campaigns to support food culture change and better food choices.

Actions: integrate food education into the curriculum at all stages; experiential learning, prioritising children - growing, sourcing, cooking and sharing nutritional food; information about nutrition, UPFs, and health; community learning opportunities for adults and families; gap years and apprenticeships for young adults to gain experience; national awareness raising campaigns, with high profile media attention; festivals and events that bring communities together to celebrate food cultures, traditions and local food production; introduce a simple, clear, compulsory UK labelling scheme that helps consumers to make informed choices on environmental and health impacts of different foods.

> *"You can even have the kids interacting with people like the local farmers going out to the farm for a day or the local fishermen, whatever, seeing it in action and learning about it at the same time. Paying some money to the farmer or the fisherman for their time and just generally making connections in the community between people as well."* Northern Ireland

2. **Strengthening local food systems.** Strengthen local food systems which connect communities with local food production and improve access to fresh, local produce in rural and urban settings.

Actions: introduce not-for-profit local food hubs, ensuring they are in accessible locations and effectively supported and promoted; support community growing projects, including city projects, and engage children and young people; allocate land for community food production; develop local food plans/ frameworks to revitalise high streets (e.g. utilise empty shops), support local businesses, engage local people and create healthy food environments; encourage supermarkets to stock more local, sustainable produce.

> *"I think a radical approach of somehow to bring production and autonomy more locally and to somehow try and keep the money in the town."* Northumberland
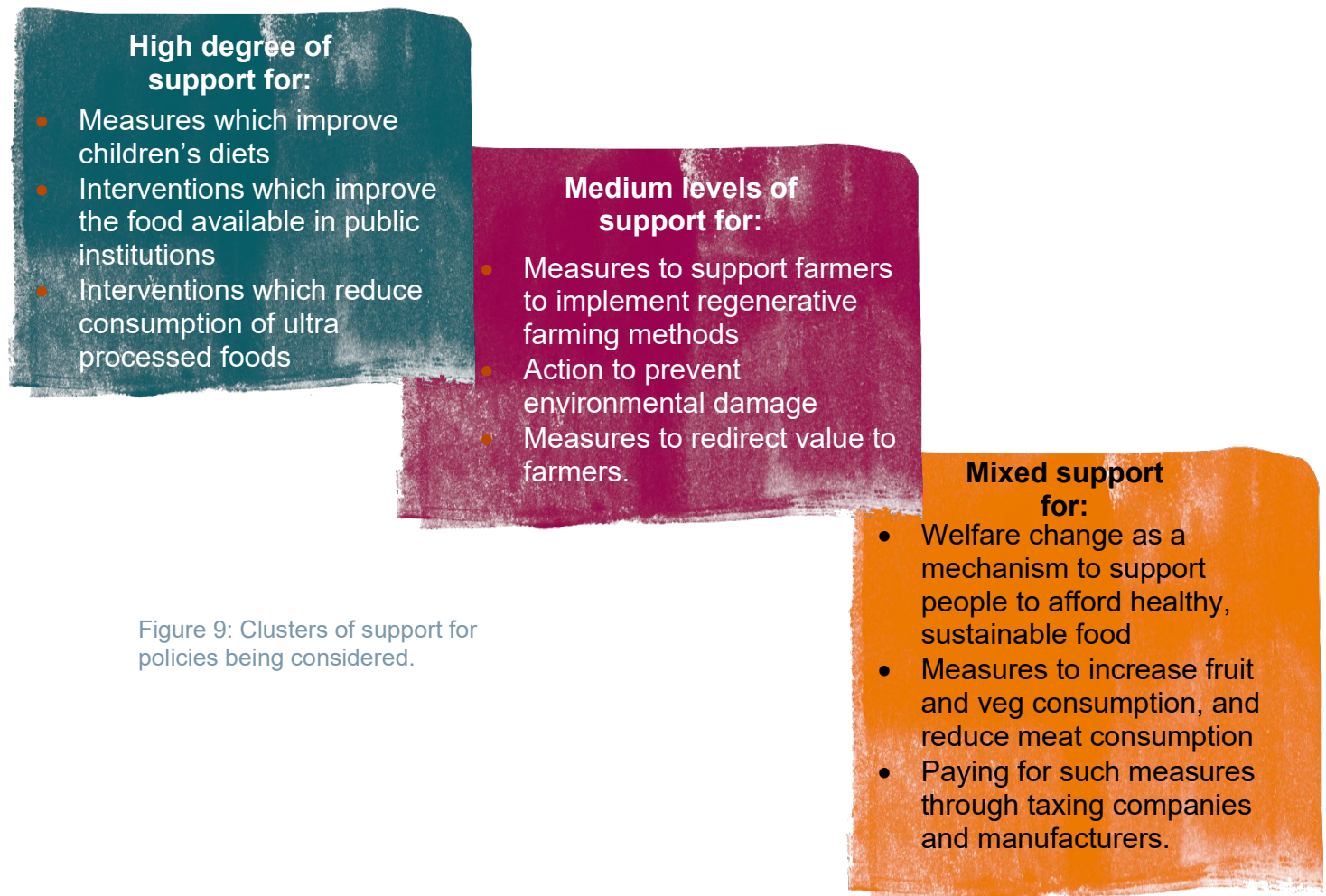
2.4 Levels of support in detail

High degree of support for:
- Measures which improve children's diets
- Interventions which improve the food available in public institutions
- Interventions which reduce consumption of ultra processed foods

Medium levels of support for:
- Measures to support farmers to implement regenerative farming methods
- Action to prevent environmental damage
- Measures to redirect value to farmers.

Mixed support for:
- Welfare change as a mechanism to support people to afford healthy, sustainable food
- Measures to increase fruit and veg consumption, and reduce meat consumption
- Paying for such measures through taxing companies and manufacturers.

Figure 9: Clusters of support for policies being considered.

High levels of support

Measures which improve children's diets:

These included setting standards in early years settings and strengthening them in schools (including to restrict the use of ultra processed foods). There was also high support for extending the Healthy Start scheme, and somewhat less support for providing universal free school meals (although support for this was much higher in Scotland where it was a live political issue). Finally, participants supported restricting junk food advertising before 9pm to reduce children's exposure to marketing messages.

> *"I think the most important of all of them is the standards in early settings. If one in four children in Wales are classified as obese, in that obesity category, I think it's important in that early years setting to tackling the problem from there."* North Wales

Interventions which improve the food available in public institutions:

These include setting (or strengthening, where standards already exist) nutritional and environmental standards for foods served in schools, early years settings, hospitals, prisons and other public institutions. It also includes procuring food for these institutions from smaller and local suppliers.

> *"[Restricting] UPFs in public settings, that's a definite yes. You can't have the only access to food in a hospital being ultra-processed food. That's a definite, that's got to happen. You can't have it."* Cornwall

Interventions which reduce consumption of ultra processed foods:

These include restricting them in public institutions, adding guidance about their reduction in national nutritional guidelines, restricting when companies can advertise them and setting a national target for their reduction.

> *"Advertising. I think that's the one thing that the government could have more impact on is advertising. In the same way that they changed the laws about advertising for tobacco, they should change the laws about advertising for ultra-processed foods and stuff like that."* West Yorkshire

In Figure 10 we can see the intersection of these cluster of policies which have received high levels of support across the waves and locations.
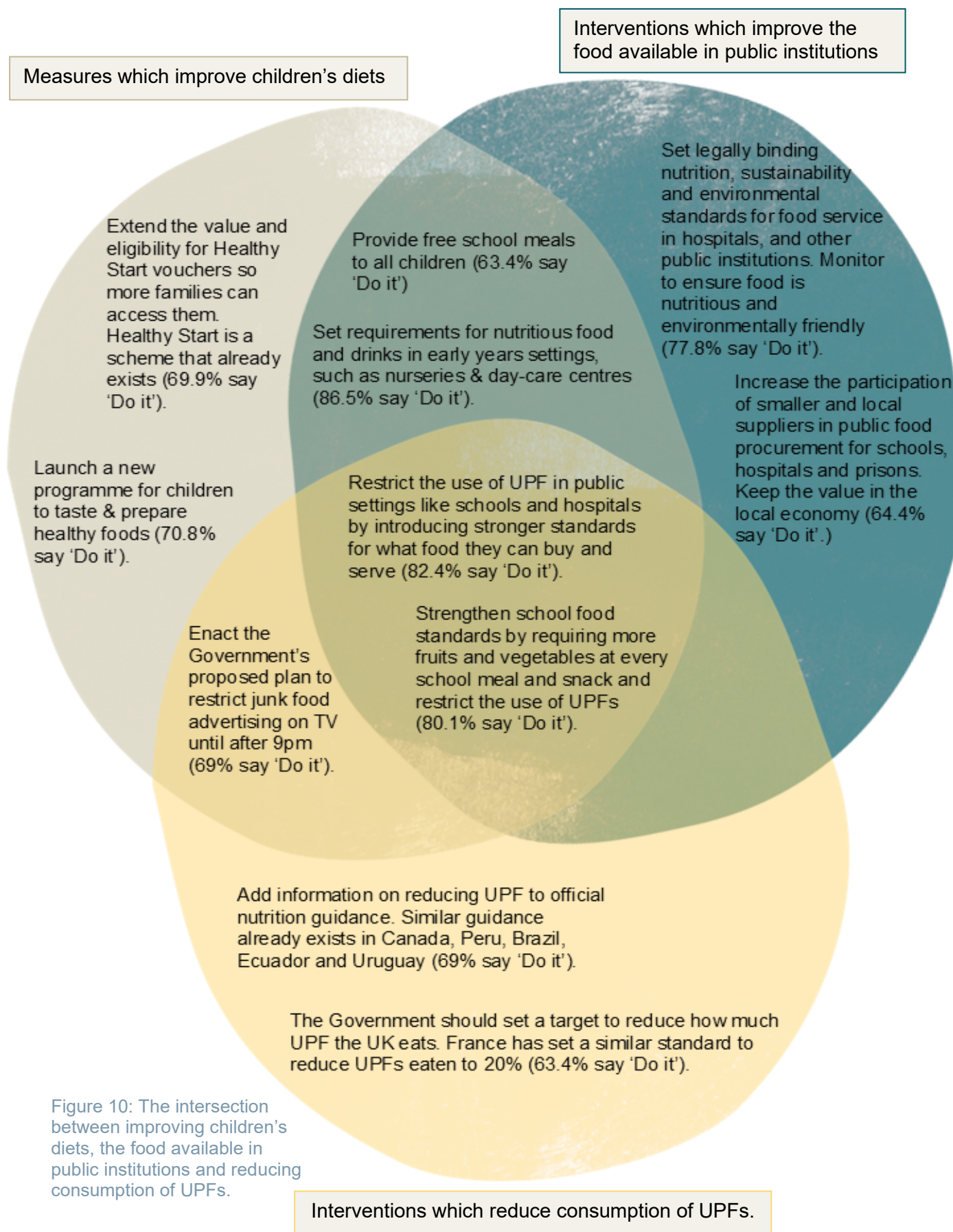
Extend the value and eligibility for Healthy Start vouchers so more families can access them. Healthy Start is a scheme that already exists (69.9% say 'Do it').

Provide free school meals to all children (63.4% say 'Do it')

Set requirements for nutritious food and drinks in early years settings, such as nurseries & day-care centres (86.5% say 'Do it').

Set legally binding nutrition, sustainability and environmental standards for food service in hospitals, and other public institutions. Monitor to ensure food is nutritious and environmentally friendly (77.8% say 'Do it').

Launch a new programme for children to taste & prepare healthy foods (70.8% say 'Do it').

Restrict the use of UPF in public settings like schools and hospitals by introducing stronger standards for what food they can buy and serve (82.4% say 'Do it').

Increase the participation of smaller and local suppliers in public food procurement for schools, hospitals and prisons. Keep the value in the local economy (64.4% say 'Do it'.)

Enact the Government's proposed plan to restrict junk food advertising on TV until after 9pm (69% say 'Do it').

Strengthen school food standards by requiring more fruits and vegetables at every school meal and snack and restrict the use of UPFs (80.1% say 'Do it').

Add information on reducing UPF to official nutrition guidance. Similar guidance already exists in Canada, Peru, Brazil, Ecuador and Uruguay (69% say 'Do it').

The Government should set a target to reduce how much UPF the UK eats. France has set a similar standard to reduce UPFs eaten to 20% (63.4% say 'Do it').

Figure 10: The intersection between improving children's diets, the food available in public institutions and reducing consumption of UPFs.

Medium levels of support

Measures to support farmers to implement regenerative farming methods:

These include ensuring farmers can get trusted and independent advice, incentivising them to move to regenerative farming methods and providing a guaranteed agricultural transition budget until 2029 to give financial stability to the sector to change to sustainable methods. There is, however, less support for setting an agroecological farming target[6]. In accompanying discussions, participants tended to feel that targets were ineffective.

> *They need some incentives and subsidies from the government otherwise how are farmers going to produce the type of food that everybody wants that's not processed, that's local, that's organic, that's affordable for people. If the infrastructure is not there in the first place and the funding is not there from the government?* North Wales

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From participants...   **Box 9**

Participants speak about food imports, wanting to introduce regulation to ensure food imports meet the same sustainability and welfare standards as in the UK, so that farmers don't lose out when implementing new farming methods. They want to see animal welfare improved across the system. They also want support for the sector to improve its resilience, and to attract future generations to farming.

Action to prevent environmental damage:

These include criminalising environmental damage, which received high levels of support in all locations; sustainability reporting for food businesses; supermarkets to cut ties with companies selling/ using animal feed from deforested land; the principle of 'polluter pays' - fines for companies who damage the environment; and impact assessments for new industrial livestock units.

> *"I absolutely think we should make it a crime to severely damage or destroy ecosystems because we have to look to the future […] If you just tax companies for polluting or what have you, or damaging the ecosystems, they're just going to put prices up. It needs to be a crime. It is a crime."* Cornwall

There is less support for eco labelling, which many participants tended to feel would be ineffective given other barriers to what people are able to buy and how much they are able to scrutinise product labels[7].

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[6] The wording of this was as follows: 'Agroecology is sustainable farming that works with nature. The Government should set a target for regenerative agroecological farming on 75% of UK farmland by 2030.' (43.5% say 'Do It')

[7] The wording of this was as follows: 'The Government should introduce a labelling scheme for food products that tells consumers about the environmental impact of their choices, such as biodiversity, animal welfare and carbon impact.' (44% say 'Do It')

Measures to redirect value to farmers:

These include local food hubs to cut out steps between farmers and consumers, and regulations to ensure fair dealing between retailers and suppliers/intermediaries and farmers. There is less support for supermarkets and food businesses paying the true cost of production, as participants fear the impact on prices at the till[8].

> *"I'm drawn to the regulations one. I think something that puts more of a fair structure around support for the farmers, support for the crofters, support for the intermediaries that struggle, the smaller intermediaries that might struggle, and give them a fairer deal. Take the power away from the retailers, and the supermarkets, and just get more balance in the system."* Scotland

Mixed levels of support

Supporting people to afford healthy, sustainable food through welfare change:

These include low support for introducing a Universal Basic Income[9], and around half of participants supporting a package of support on housing and making sure Universal Credit payments cover a basket of essentials including food, household

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[8] The wording of this was as follows: 'Supermarkets and other food businesses should pay the true cost of production for sustainably produced food, including introducing schemes that reward farmers for reducing their environmental impact.' (44.9% say 'Do It')

[9] 28.2% say 'Do It' with particularly high opposition in Northern Ireland, and slightly more support in Scotland (especially in Caithness, Ross, Sutherland, Orkney and Shetland). It also appeared in group Manifestos in CRSOS and was the top priority in the dot exercise.

bills and travel cost. However, increasing the value and eligibility of the existing Healthy Start scheme has a high degree of support[10].

"I agree with this one [housing support]. With the horrendous hike in private rented properties over the last year many families and single people have been at risk of eviction and homelessness. They are subsidising the food money to pay the rent or becoming behind with their payments to feed themselves. Also feeding their families and going without food themselves." Recollective

<div style="border:2px solid #8e2844;">

From participants...   **Box 12**

Although there are mixed views on changes to the welfare system, some participants call for caps on the price of basic, fresh, healthy food products (while ensuring farmers still get a fair price for their produce).

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Measures to increase fruit and veg consumption, and reduce meat consumption:

These include around half of participants supporting horticulture growth plans for increased production and consumption of fruit and veg; but fewer supporting the idea of incentivising people to eat 'less but better' meat and dairy, with a target to reduce meat consumption by 50% by 2023; and Community Eatwell schemes to prescribe fruit and veg vouchers. [11] More participants want to see the latter tested, due to a potential risk of stigma and burden on GPs – and that it doesn't do anything to change the underlying causes of poverty.

> *"Well, it's the fact that we're having to consider getting GPs to prescribe fruits and vegetables. It talks of a broken system. If we're having to get doctors to give out boxes of fruit to people who can't afford to go and buy it, it speaks to how poor this country is."* Scotland

Paying for such measures through taxing companies and manufacturers:

These include a 'windfall' tax on big food companies which is supported by just over half of participants, and taxing manufacturers on sugar and salt. When it came to a sugar and salt tax, this had higher acceptability when presented in the context of UPFs rather than 'a fair deal'. For some, this is on condition that the cost isn't passed on to the consumer.

Those who disagree with taxation and penalties tend to do so because they do not believe it will result in the required change because:

- Large multi-national companies will find ways of avoiding taxation.
- It will not be possible to monitor and enforce penalties and fines, resulting in long legal battles, and the continuation of the harm.

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[10] See 'Measures which improve children's diets'

[11] 36.6% and 40.3% say 'Do It' respectively

- They do not believe ideologically that more regulation is a good thing, nor that government is independent enough of those causing harm to enforce the change.
- They fear that global problems need a global solution which will be hard to implement only in the UK.
- There is still a concern that manufacturers will simply transfer the cost of paying the taxes to those buying the products. This is of particular concern during the cost of living crisis.

> *"Putting a windfall tax or other tax on those producers, but they'll get around that. That will all be costed into their profit margins and it will just simply put the price of everything else up."* South London

> *"I think the only way is to manipulate what is actually available on the supermarket shelves and government could easily make changes there, by taxing UPFs, taxing salt and sugar content in food in the same way they tax alcohol and smoking, given that we can basically say that sugar is as dangerous for us and unhealthy as smoking is in the impacts it's having."* South Wales
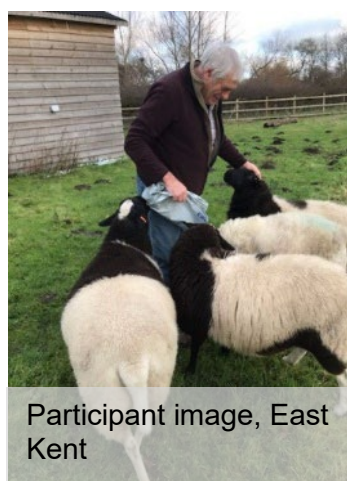
3. Connections to the food system

Prior to the first workshop, participants were asked to review the Nourish Food System Map (Nourish: 2020) 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. The key areas in which people feel most connected are producing, buying, preparing and sharing food – particularly when these actions have creative social value for them and their families.

3.1 Producing food

Farming and crofting

Across all locations participants shared experiences of growing up on farms. Many of these participants reminisced on their childhoods as a time when they felt a particularly strong connection to the food system. This participant evocatively reflected on how their time growing up on the family farm opened her eyes to the complexity of the food system, and especially the social power of food production.

> *"The image I have in my mind is of my whole family having our packed lunch sat on the straw in the harvest field in August when we're combining. This is one of the most powerful memories of my childhood. My grandparents, parents and us three children would all come to the harvest field for harvest lunch, sometimes aunts and cousins and friends too. We grew wheat and barley and indoor pigs. The barley was largely grown to be milled into pig food, with the straw used as edible bedding for them. It was a whole family activity and process, and one filled with joy and freedom and involvement and huge sense of place, teamwork and pride"* Recollective

Participant image, East Kent

Several participants remain active in the farming community and spoke about how farming connects them to all aspects of the food system on a daily basis. This participant feels most connected to the food system when out in the fields with their sheep, which they tend to throughout the day, every day of the year. As a result, this participant feels like an *"ever-turning cog"* in the food production system.

This participant, who is not themselves a farmer, feels most connected to the food system when walking through their local agricultural community and watching food production in action. They specifically spoke about how opening farms to the public enhanced this feeling of connection and pride towards the local food production industry.

Participant image, South London

"This is a photo of me and my friends, taken in a peach orchard in the 'Fruit Loop' which is a winding loop road off the Columbia River Gorge in Oregon next to the border of Washington in the US. The loop contains over 30 public farms, with most being open to the public. This agricultural area is about an hour from where I grew up so lots of this local produce is sold in local grocery stores and farmers markets alongside selling from the farm itself." Recollective

The social power of food production was a particularly prominent theme in discussions within the CSROS group, where several participants belong to crofting communities.

Participant image, CSROS

"My most immediate connection with food are crops that we grow in our polytunnels and open ground here in SE Sutherland. We are lucky to have 3 acres of land and growing our own food throughout the year is important to us. We grow staples like potatoes and onions, peas and beans but also cabbages, spinach, raspberries, blackcurrants and apples. We also use the supermarket of course but for a few months in the year enjoy a degree of self-sufficiency" Recollective

These participants feel most connected to the food system when they are able to use their crofts and products from their fellow crofters to be self-sufficient; in turn, this system strengthens the community. Some reflected on how this means their connection to the food system changes seasonally, depending on how much they are able to grow and how much they have to buy from the supermarket.

Participant image, East Kent

In other parts of the country, some participants chose to share images that communicated how they are feeling increasingly disconnected from the food system as their local farming landscape changes. This feeling was particularly prominent amongst participants from East Kent.

"The county of East Kent, titled the 'Garden of England' by Henry VIII is rapidly converting prime farmland into shoddy housing and huge fields of solar panels" Recollective

The sentiment of this participant from East Kent was echoed by several participants from the Cornwall group, who spoke about feeling increasingly disconnected from the food system as their local fishing industry diminishes.

Growing in allotments and gardens

As well as participants with connections to farming and crofting communities, many more from across the UK shared their experiences producing food on a smaller scale and using the space they have, whether this is in urban allotments or back gardens.

Several participants feel particularly connected to the biological system when growing their own fruit and vegetables. This increases their admiration and respect for the intricate and finely-balanced biological processes involved in growing food, which in turn leads to them eating in a more mindful way. Others feel most connected to food they have grown themselves because they know this has been produced using chemical-free methods.

> *"I only have a small allotment but grow as much fresh fruit and vegetables as possible. These are produced without chemicals and taste delicious."* Recollective, South London

Indeed, across the UK many participants said that they felt most connected to food that had been minimally processed, or not been processed at all. Many echoed the sentiment of this participant from Northumberland, praising the health benefits of eating homegrown produce:

> *"I feel most connected to the food system at my allotment. I like to grow my own food to know where it is coming from and what is in it…so I know it is organic, nutrient rich and not full of rubbish"* Recollective

Several participants praised the mental health benefits of homegrown produce as well as the physical health benefits.

Participant image, West Yorkshire

"This is a picture of some tomatoes I have grown at Airedale Hospital. The gardeners let us use the greenhouse and I escape there most lunchtimes. I find it very relaxing and a little timeout from an often stressful day. I also adopted a courtyard at Airedale which I tend to, bringing a little brightness to patients and staff" Recollective

Other participants spoke about the social value of producing food in their back gardens or allotments.

Participant image, Lothians

This participant from the Lothians spends precious time bonding with their granddaughter when tending to her herb garden.

Another participant from North Wales strengthens all important social bonds with friends and family through sharing home-grown produce:

"I have limited experience growing my own food. But on our small allotment and in our garden we have grown a variety of plants to eat & share with family & friends. Watching the plants grow then making meals, jams, chutneys with them is so satisfying. I feel we are helping the planet in a small way." Recollective

Foraging and fishing

Some participants enjoy venturing beyond their gardens and allotments to find food.

This participant from South London feels most connected to the food system when out foraging. They reflected on how over the years they have learnt how to procure nutritious and tasty wild produce in an urban environment and how they hope to inspire others to do the same.

Participant image, South London

"I'm a forager and I have been for over 40 years. I spend a lot of time in nature leading groups of people to teach about wild edible, the four Fs, really, fruit, fungi, foliage and flowers…I'm leading walks at the moment in Mottingham in South London and have received a grant to do that." Recollective

Other participants, interestingly also those living in more urban areas, spoke about the benefits of foraging for their mental health, providing them with a welcome escape and chance to connect with nature amongst the bustle of the everyday. Similarly, this participant from the CSROS group uses fishing as a means of escapism.

Participant image, CSROS

"One good size trout accompanying a real belter from Swannay Loch on Orkney. About to be steamed and served to close friends. Fishing is my moment of calm and I especially like having something to share with others as a result" Recollective

At work

A few participants feel most connected to the food system at work in the food production industry. As mentioned above, some participants work as farmers. Others work in factories that produce food on an industrial scale for wholesalers and chain restaurants.

Participant image, Northern Ireland

This participant from Belfast who works as an operations manager for a food production company reflected on how their job connects them to all aspects of the food system, but simultaneously leaves them feeling disconnected.

"At work everything is in bulk, conveyor belts, spreadsheets etc. And things are highly processed. So really do I feel connected to these products? No. There is also a lot of

waste, food and even ingredients…are thrown away so not really valued…" Northern Ireland

This participant from South London produces food on a less industrial scale, making small batch hot sauce and pickles with their daughter. Since starting this business, their eyes have been opened to the complexities of the food system and they have felt increasingly more connected to it as a result.

Participant image, South London

"I operate a small industry making pickles and sauces. I decided to go ahead with my daughter to do that because a lot of friends and family were requesting sauces and pickles. I had to go and do a food course in terms of hygiene and the rest of it before I started bottling it and shipping it out to all members of the public. I think about sourcing the products seasonally, and obviously am focused on quality. It has been eye opening." South London

3.2 Buying food

Buying local

As mentioned above, many participants feel most connected to food they know has been produced in an ethical and careful way, including without unnecessary chemical processing. For some, this means feeling most connected to food they have produced themselves. Others feel most connected to food they have bought from a local producer who they know and trust.

Participant image, Cornwall

"Where I feel most connected to the food system is at the Tregew Food Barn, more specifically the Homage to the Bovine stand. During the pandemic (they) began selling the meat of the retired dairy cows direct to consumer. My partner found out about this through social media when they first began by selling packages of various cuts in a box, which at the time of the pandemic we had to go and collect from the farm itself. We would often be stopped before parking by their cows crossing over the road to the next field. So this is really one of the only raw products and certainly the only raw meat product where I have actually been to the source." Recollective

This participant from South Wales feels most connected to the food system when supporting their local restaurant, eating dishes made with local ingredients and giving back to their local community.

Participant image, South Wales

"*This is a local restaurant in Carmarthen called The Warren. All ingredients are local and of good quality. The restaurant owner also helps feed the local community. I swear everything tastes better when it is fresh and produced in Wales*"
Recollective

Buying from smaller, local food producers is not an option for all participants. Across the UK, several spoke about how the cost of living, as well as time pressure, has forced them to buy more food from large supermarkets than they would like, echoing the sentiment of this conversation between participants in West Yorkshire:

> Participant one: *"I do prefer to buy my fruit and vegetables (straight from the farm), however the cost of living at the moment does prevent me from doing this."*

> Participant two: *"I haven't got the time as well. I buy my food at the supermarkets for convenience and price"*

At the supermarket

Many participants spoke about feeling disconnected from the food system whilst in the supermarket. For some, the abundance of packaging acts as physical barrier that prevents a connection from forming. Others feel disconnected due to the processed nature of most products in supermarkets, or the lack of information about the production methods or producers themselves.

On the other hand, some participants said that the supermarket is the only place that they *do* feel any sense of connection to a wider food system. The availability of international products, as well as the increasing prevalence of product shortages and empty shelves, makes them feel part of a complex global network.

Buying online

Similarly, several participants reflected on how shopping online connects them to the global food system. This participant feels a strong connection as a result of buying and delivering ingredients from around the world to their home on Orkney:

> *"I feel very connected to food systems in Orkney. In the city, I would have picked the local Asian corner shop -foreign vegetables and spices- and the smiling owner. I'm still connected to that world via online sources, I buy food (mostly ingredients) from all over the world and have them delivered."*
> Recollective

Other participants struggle to feel connected to the wider food system when they buy food online, including this participant from East Kent:

> *"My photo was just really to demonstrate how easy it is when you're working 60 hours a week to just be able to log on, go to Ocado, just click whatever you want and for it to arrive the next day, and how easy it is to maybe not think about where the food is coming from. Not to think about sustainability, not to think about cost, not to think about exactly what everyone else was just saying*

in terms of what the farmer is making from it. Just for convenience, working 50 hours a week, 2 kids in tow, being able to click and just have everything arrive at my door" Recollective

3.3 Preparing food

Physical and mental health

For many participants, preparing food transcends the act of getting it ready to eat; it is also an important means of looking after one's physical and mental wellbeing.

Cooking with certain ingredients or using specific techniques is an important way in which several participants manage health conditions. This participant, who lives with coeliac disease, spoke about how they felt more connected to the complexities of the food system after their diagnosis forced them to carefully consider everything they eat:

> *"I found out I had coeliac disease, and that opened the doors to, what am I actually eating? That was a big thing for me. Then I started to actually look at ingredients and prepare them in certain ways instead of just picking things off the shelf that looked nice for lunch and dinner. That's really where I got involved with food…through health reasons"* Recollective, Lothians

Other participants spoke about preparing foods in specific ways in pursuit of specific physical goals, including this participant from South Wales whose diet plays a large part in their training for endurance events:
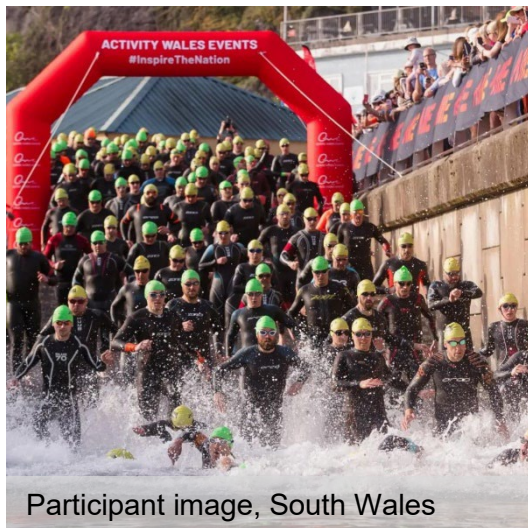
Participant image, South Wales

> *"I feel most connected when I'm focused on my nutrition for performance – prioritising meal planning and prep and fuelling my body for races"* Recollective

This participant from Northumberland has recently started experimenting with fermentation in an attempt to strengthen their gut microbiome:

> *"I like to experiment with fermenting vegetables, as I believe eating fermented foods is important to build a health gut microbiome"* Recollective

Other participants spoke about preparing food in the context of their mental wellbeing. For this participant from Belfast, the ritual act of preparing a matcha drink is a therapeutic creative outlet:

Participant image, Belfast

"*Although matcha (and coffee in general) is not shown in the 'Food System' video, it has been my work and passion over the last few years. It has become almost an integral part of how I view myself…it is the only true connection I have formed to anything food related. Having struggles with disordered eating for years, food has always been a difficult topic for me but I have managed to find comfort, an escape, in creating art and producing something of good quality that has heart in it*"
Recollective

Other participants find great comfort in preparing traditional local dishes. In both South and North Wales participants shared photographs of homemade Welsh cakes, Bara Brith and cawl. For these participants, preparing traditional Welsh food as those before them did is a precious opportunity to simultaneously unwind and connect with their heritage.

This participant from Cornwall recently enrolled in a cooking course at a local college. For them, expanding their knowledge of food preparation techniques is an act of self-care and classes are a welcome break from everyday busyness. It has also opened their eyes to the complexity of the food system.

Participant image, Cornwall

"*I've been attending the Food Preparation Cookery Classes at Cambourne College, night school, Saturdays, that sort of thing. It's a fascinating insight into the world of how food is sourced, prepared and delivered to the consumer*"
Recollective

Family connection

For participants across the UK, preparing food is a way of strengthening all-important bonds with family members.
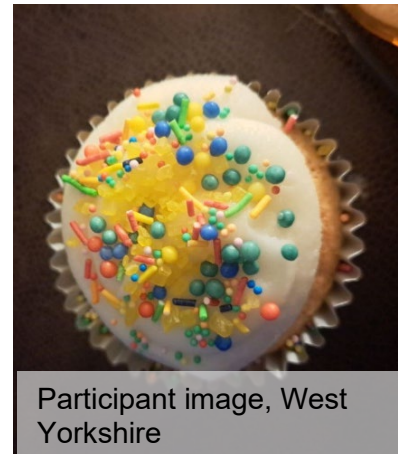

Participant image, Cornwall

"*I love cooking and preparing food and I think it's important that people (especially children) understand where food comes from and how it should be prepared…Once a week I try to make sure it is my step-son's job to make dinner. Here he is making pesto, which is one of his favourites*"
Recollective

"Me and my little boy, we bake together quite a lot. I'm a single working parent and we find that time in the kitchen and cooking together is a great way to spend time together away from technology because he's 12 and he is very involved in gaming" Recollective

This participant from North Wales reflected on how they prepare food for their grandchildren with their health and future at the front of their mind.

Participant image, West Yorkshire

"When my children were growing up, I always made sure they had fruit, vegetables, everything. What I have noticed with my own children, they're not doing it. They're going for the junk food and packet foods. If I watch their lists for Tesco, I nearly drop dead. I make sure I buy my grandchildren fruit and vegetables every week, and prepare their meals without additional sugar, salt etc. There is so much obesity in children, it's crazy. Unfortunately, my granddaughter has learning difficulties, but she's on the very verge of obesity and it worries me" West Yorkshire

3.4 Sharing food

Participant image, South London

Some participants feel the strongest connection to the food system not when preparing food, but at the point of sharing it with others. Across the UK, participants shared images that represented the important role sharing food played in celebrating their cultural traditions and connecting with distant relatives.

"Sharing food is the centre of my day. I love cooking my Mexican food and showing people how much variety of dishes you can have with the same four ingredients. It makes me feel closer to home" Recollective

Participant image, Belfast

"This is an example of a Syrian breakfast I made and shared with my friends" Recollective

Sharing food is something many do to help friends and family during more trying times. One participant from the CSROS group chose to share a poignant memory of when her neighbour tended to her allotment and shared fresh produce with her during a period of ill health.

Participant image, CSROS

"*This year I was unable to grow and look after my stuff in the garden but my neighbour grew veg that she shared regularly with me"* Recollective

Indeed, some participants said they felt most connected to the wider food system when sharing food with those in need, including this participant from the Lothians group:

Participant image, Lothians

"This is a picture of the local food pantry that I volunteer for and use regularly. It is run by the local development trust and relies on donations and membership fees to reduce food waste of local businesses and prevent food poverty." Recollective

Across the UK, many participants shared images of family meals, their own kitchens and dining tables. They feel a powerful connection to the food system when sharing a meal with loved ones.

"I feel food is a way for anyone to connect really, time to see friends, it's time to sit with your family at the end of each day and ask how each other's day was. It was a time for me when growing up where we could all be present" Recollective

Participants reminisced on their childhoods, where eating with the family around the dinner table each night was standard. They felt more connected to food back then because meals, particularly dinner, were not just sustenance but also vessels for spending precious time with family members.

Participant image, Northumberland

Several participants feel strongly about continuing this tradition now they have their own children and grandchildren. Other participants without children also spoke about the importance of creating opportunities to share a meal with friends and catch up around the dinner table. These participants are concerned that dinner is increasingly 'on the go' or in front of the television. Not only are they concerned about how this impacts social life, but also the health of individuals who are distracted and therefore not fully aware of what they are eating.

Participant image, Northumberland

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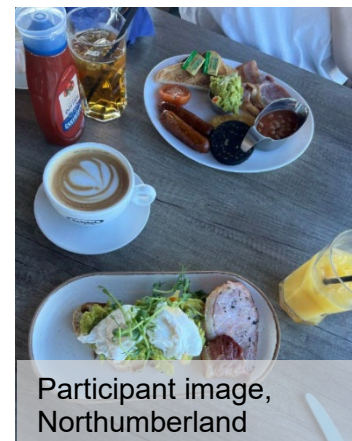
"For me, a huge part of my social life revolves around going to coffee shops, independent cafes. It's often where I am able to decompress along with friends, engage in conversation. The ambience is relaxing as people my age, we have limited space in our own accommodation when sharing with flatmates" Recollective


Participant image, South Wales

Participant image, Northumberland

"Food to me is bringing people around a table" Northumberland

3.5 Feeling disconnected

Some participants saw this activity as an opportunity to share how disconnected they feel from any aspect of the food system.

This participant from CSROS does not think that a 'system' is the correct way to explore something as symbolic and emotional as food. They are concerned that the Nourish food system map is a ploy used by greedy players in the food system wanting to profit from the fact that we need to eat to survive.
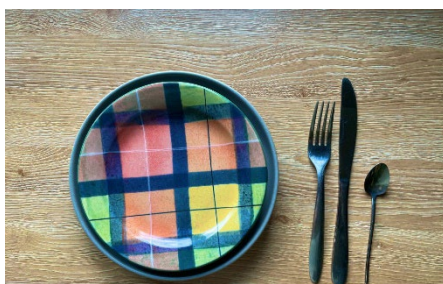
Participant image, CSROS

"*I have no connection to the food system. The food system is a set of calculated criteria with statistical data and costs being the driver. I only feel a connection to my cutlery and stoneware"* Recollective

Similarly, this participant from Belfast feels that capitalism and the commoditisation of food often prevents us from connecting with the food itself and eating mindfully:

"This is where I feel most connected to food, or really is it only a connection between consumer and manufacturer. The food itself…chemicals and synthetic products…is it possible to meaningfully connect with something so artificial?" Recollective

Another participant is hoping that they will start to feel more connected to the food system once they start studying dietetics. They currently feel there the abundance misinformation around food is preventing a connection to the food they eat.

"I am starting my masters in September, so I hope this will connect me more as I will be involved a lot with the health side of the food system" Recollective

4. Power in the food system

4.1 Background

After being introduced to the concept of power in the food system in their first online workshop[12], participants discussed power throughout the dialogue in terms of an imbalance between those:

- Who have power and influence, but shoulder little responsibility for their actions
- With much responsibility but little power to make change.

Many participants feel strongly that the power in the food system is in the wrong hands – those of the supermarkets and food businesses. They feel that it urgently needs to be more fairly distributed between supermarkets, food businesses, farmers, producers and consumers. They see this imbalance as a barrier to making positive change, as those with a vested interest in the status quo are those who hold the most power.

> *"I was quite shocked about how small the control is over certain aspects. Three major providers of chicken hold a monopoly on chicken production, distribution, or consumption in the UK. Seven major providers hold that monopoly. How much power is shared amongst so few is quite shocking. Then add in the supermarkets and the power they have. What can we do to break that up, re-balance things and make food more equitable, make it more publicly, socially focused?"* CSROS

4.2 Participants' understanding of power currently

Participants conceptualise power as the ability to influence a situation, especially to make (or impede) change. In many cases, they feel this comes from money – as in the case of **supermarkets or food manufacturers**. Here, they feel the scale of their operations and the money they make as a result of that scale, means these food businesses are able to influence and maintain the status quo in their own interests (to create profit for shareholders). This includes lobbying government, using consumer psychology techniques to market products to people and negotiating prices paid to farmers and growers.
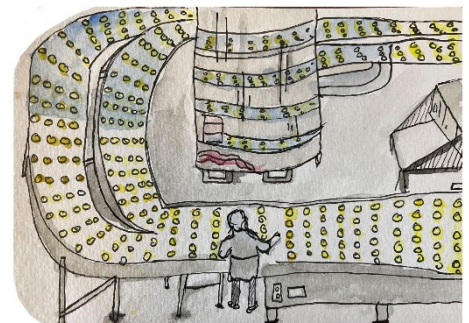
Many participants feel this power is 'hidden', for example participants were shocked at the scale of food brand ownership by large global food manufacturers (this came up particularly strongly in Wave 3 with participants in Cornwall and South London). They feel that the relationship between power and profit is circular: the more profit is

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[12] Presentation by Dr Angelina Sanderson Bellamy, Associate Professor of Food Systems in the Department of Applied Sciences and the Centre for Research in Biosciences at UWE Bristol

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made, the greater power and influence the food business has, which in turn allows them to make larger profits.

> *"The power is immense from business, but it's because we don't pay for our government, and we don't call party donations bribes, which is what they are. You can see constantly a constant flow of illogical, or just a flow of policy changes that are not to the benefit of UK PLC but are to the benefit of big business, various sectors of it."* Cornwall

Participants also recognise that the **UK government** (and to a lesser extent, devolved governments and local governments) have power as a result of the levers available to them through policy and legislation, as well as tax revenues which pay for the funding they allocate. However, they feel that there is a lack of will to use these powers available to them, when it comes to the food system. Participants in the devolved nations tend to feel that their Government's power is restricted by UK government setting budgets, even if food and farming matters are devolved.

> *"The Government could do an awful lot more. In Northern Ireland yes, but even more so Westminster. They could average the price better but in a few weeks' time now, you'll be reading in the paper that the supermarkets are making so many billion, the factories is making so many million. You'll flick over the page, and you'll see so many farmers going out of business or changing, selling their dairy herd out or whatever. Well, who's making the money? And what's are the Governments doing?"* Northern Ireland

Participants generally feel that people in society and farmers and producers have less power. As **people in society**, they feel that their power over the food system is indirect and only becomes powerful when engaged collectively, either from participating in democracy by voting for political parties based on values they believe in, or by sending market signals to food businesses when they shop for food.

> "Participant 2: *I just think you as a person have no power at all. Just one single person. No.*
>
> Participant 1: *Well, if we could rally all the consumers in the country to work together, we might get some power.*
>
> Participant 4: *There's been a lot of talk, hasn't there, about voting with your purse and consumer power, but--*
>
> Participant 3: *Because it seems to be the only power you have. It's the only statement you can make where you put your pound, isn't it really?"* East Kent

In Wave 2 in Wales and Wave 3 in Cornwall/South London, participants identify the rising cost of food during a cost of living crisis, as a barrier to people being able to unite or exercise their purchasing power to influence supply or food business behaviour[13]. More direct engagement such as growing their own food or buying directly from farmers are also discussed as potential powers available to people. In South Wales, participants support local food hubs which they feel could empower local decision making on food production by reducing the power of intermediaries.

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[13] Alongside other barriers like availability, lack of awareness/education, or an entrenched culture of convenience

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As for **farmers and producers**, participants feel they have little power on their own in negotiations with supermarkets and are not listened to by government. This is because they tend to operate individually, have limited routes to market, and a perishable product. They feel that farmers joining together in cooperatives and other collectives has the potential to increase their power (in negotiations with retailers and in lobbying for change with governments). Participants tend to think of small farms, especially in the waves of work in Wales and Northern Ireland, rather than large farming businesses. Some feel that larger farming businesses have more power in the system than smaller farming businesses.

4.3 Where do participants want power and responsibility to lie?

Participants feel that farmers currently shoulder the greatest responsibility, in the sense that a lot is asked of them. Participants see farmers as balancing food production, with managing the land and nature, and caring for livestock. They feel that farmers are challenged by having to negotiate agricultural policy and regulation whilst making a profit, all within often uncertain weather conditions. Participants repeatedly talked about the long hours that farmers work. They feel it is 'unfair' that (small) farmers have little power in negotiations with buyers or with governments setting agricultural support schemes. Whilst they agree that farmers should have responsibility (especially to manage their land in a way that is not damaging to the environment), they also feel they should have more power in the food system as a whole. Participants in Cornwall, for example, want government to create conditions which empower the farming community against unreasonable demands and prices set by supermarkets.

> "I think farmers get a pretty raw deal, to be honest. They always say farmers moan about the weather and all this sort of thing, but to not be able to ask the going price for what you produce seems unfair. What's being done about that?" Cornwall

Participants feel strongly that governments have the responsibility, and the ability, to act, to protect the health and safety of their populations and future generations, but choose not to.

> "I think the Government has the power to take the power if the Government chooses to, but whether it does have power because it chooses not to use the power, I don't know. It can control the whole supply chain. It can control the amount of profit supermarkets make, it can control subsidies to farmers, it can control how contracts get negotiated. I'm sure it could if it wanted to." South London

There is a sense amongst participants that taking difficult decisions with a long-term view is challenging for political parties working on four-year election cycles. Participants are decisively in favour of governments using the powers available to them, when it comes to making food systems that are healthier, fairer and more environmentally sustainable.

This includes using policy levers to reduce the powers of dominant corporations, for example by curbing unhealthy food advertising (part of participants' visions of the food system in 2030 in Wave 2 in Wales).

In addition, participants see government's role as empowering people in society to make healthy and sustainable choices (by for example, changing the food environment and options available to them, providing information and guidance, or ensuring they have the finances to do so). In some locations, this is about empowering communities to make decisions about their local food systems. In Wave 1, participants in West Yorkshire, East Kent and Northumberland want government leadership on food system change which includes a national food framework that empowers local action – as well as citizen engagement (like this dialogue).

Participants feel that large food businesses are able to use their money to shirk responsibility (e.g., by paying fines but continuing the same behaviour, by negotiating prices with farmers/ growers which are too low, or by lobbying government against regulations).

Participants want food businesses and supermarkets to take more responsibility for actions which can pollute waters, degrade soils, emit greenhouse gases and endanger wildlife. They want food businesses to take more responsibility for actions which encourage the excessive purchase and consumption of unhealthy foods, especially by children.

They feel that the scale of these businesses' operations and profits means changes they make would have a large impact on the whole system – using their power for public good. Many participants would like to see some power transferred from food
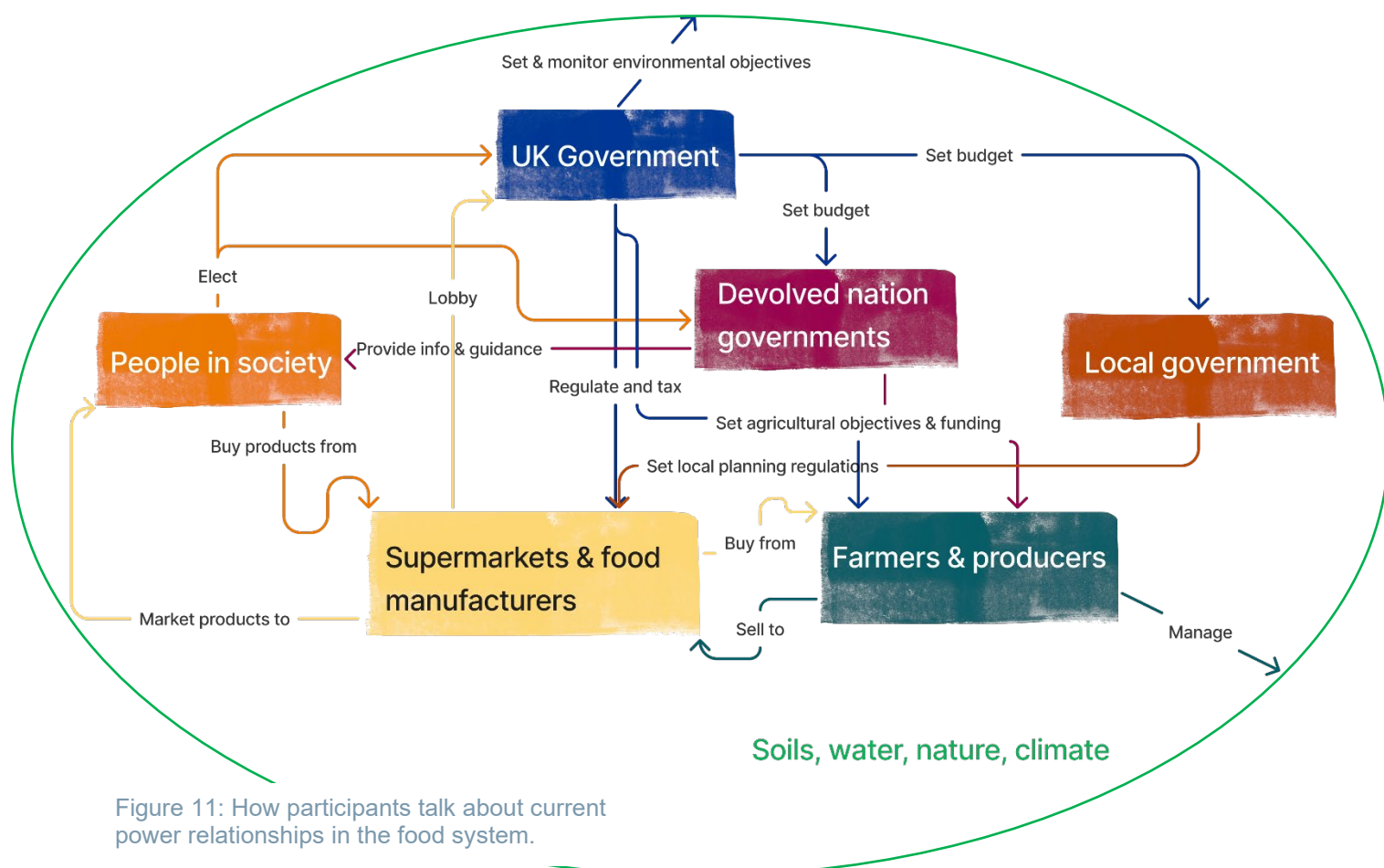

Figure 11: How participants talk about current power relationships in the food system.

businesses, however, towards farmers and growers to make things fairer (especially those farming regeneratively). This was a central tenet of the food manifestos developed in Wave 1 (West Yorkshire, East Kent, Northumberland) and in Wave 4 (Scotland, Northern Ireland).

5. Food system challenges

In this chapter we outline the challenges participants across the UK are concerned about in the food system and where they feel the main challenges lie.

5.1 An imbalance of power and risk

Running through all of these challenges is the common thread of an imbalance of power in the system, with retailers and supermarkets holding the most power and farmers and citizens holding the least. Participants see this as a barrier to change, as those with power have a vested interest in the status quo. Participants associate money with power and believe that large food corporations will always prioritise profit over fairness and sustainability. They see an unjust system being cloaked as 'consumer choice'.

> *"You get this kind of sense that it's all about consumer choice and, "Oh, we can go and buy things if we want," but we are held to ransom with food. We need to buy food. It's just so unfair that there are people who can't afford a decent meal with that much inequality."* East Kent

Participants feel that such power imbalance means that risk is unfairly distributed, with farmers and growers more exposed to risk than other actors in the food system.

> *"For me, the two people that are suffering the most are the people that are producing [food] and the people that are consuming it. Everyone in between is reaping the rewards."* South Wales

They also speak about barriers to people being able to unite to exercise 'people power' in their purchasing (or other organising), including lack of money, time, awareness and education about the food system, availability of food and an entrenched culture of convenience.

5.2 The food we eat

Participants are concerned that the food we eat is making us sicker. Concern about current diets – either one's own or others – is often cited by participants as a motivating factor for joining the discussions. Some participants are concerned about the economic impact of poor diets on the economy, through NHS spending.

There is particular concern about additives in foods and the increasing prevalence of ultra processed foods (UPFs) in modern diets. Some participants find the prevalence of UPFs 'scary' or 'frightening', particularly in the context of trying to protect their children from eating them, and in the rapid rise of novel plant-based products.

> *"Then you look at what you eat, and you realise that what you actually eat is more processed than you thought. It's quite shocking really, isn't it? A lot of greenwashing and healthy food washing that supermarkets do as well.*

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Claiming that some of the vegan options are healthier when actually they come under the UPF category. That's really confusing." East Kent

They describe children navigating unhealthy food environments, with powerful marketing and advertising of unhealthy foods targeting them – and few fresh and healthy foods available in the most deprived areas. Many participants feel the dominance of supermarkets and large food businesses enables them to intensively (and/or misleadingly) market unhealthy foods.

"It always amazes me how the government and other companies say that there's a big problem, that children are overweight, they're eating too much sugar, but then supermarkets are allowed to literally target children with their marketing and advertising, even putting products at children's eye level specifically for that pester power. I say it always amazes me that's not regulated or controlled." Northern Ireland

Participants describe an unsustainable situation in which the price of food, especially healthy food, is inaccessible to many (leading to reliance on ultra processed foods) but is too cheap to ensure good animal welfare and lower environmental impact from intensive farming practices. They are concerned how changes to the food system could raise prices, even while they feel higher prices are necessary to ensure a fair deal for farmers.

"Everybody is saying that we want better food, but we also need cheaper food because these people can't afford it. Yet the people who are producing it are having to go and take second jobs because they can't do the farming - this all comes down to paying the farmer a fair price for his goods." Northern Ireland

When thinking about affordability, participants aren't only thinking about how much particular foods cost, but about how food shopping features in people's overall budgets. Some participants feel that food is a cost where people can be more flexible, whilst other costs (like fuel, energy bills and housing costs) are fixed.

"I'm on maternity leave, and when you get the money from the Government, that's the kind of food you have to go for, UPFs." West Yorkshire

Participants are also very concerned about levels of food waste throughout the system. This ranged from food wasted because of labour shortages or changing demand (e.g. through dairy contracts) to being driven by practices in shops (such as larger pack sizes and offers, and 'use by' labelling). Participants feel that offering such a wide variety of food available to buy will inevitably lead to food waste.

5.3 The place of food

Participants also describe a changed UK food culture, which places less importance and value on food than it did in the past or compared to other countries. Despite many sharing their connection to the food system through cooking, making and sharing food, they also commented that, as a society, food, cooking, and eating together is no longer a priority for all. Lack of money and time to cook are seen as great impediments to change.

"It's just the environment that is facilitating this consumption of ultra-processed food. It just brings you to think about how maybe it's the environment rather than food in isolation. It's a whole lot of things

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that bring you to, 'okay, this is convenient'. I'm going to go and get ultra-processed food instead of that healthy meal that I could possibly make at home if I had a few more hours." South London

They note that supermarkets and convenience shops have taken over from the independent food retailers many remember from childhood. This has led, in their view, to unhealthy options being normalised with the over-availability of fast food chains and take-aways in the high street and for at-home delivery.

In Cornwall, participants also commented on negative changes to once-thriving fishing communities, as a result of overfishing, also wrecking aquatic ecosystems.

5.4 How we produce it

Shock is expressed at the small profit available for (especially small) farms for producing food, with farmers having to take second jobs off-farm or diversifying into non-food-growing activities like tourism. They deeply respect the work of farmers in caring for the land and producing food, in challenging circumstances. They are concerned about the economic viability for many farms to run as profitable businesses, especially smaller or family run farms. Participants in rural areas told us stories of neighbouring farmers forced to sell their produce for less than the cost of producing it, with some deciding to leave farming altogether.

> *"I think it is quite shocking that farmers are getting beaten down so that supermarkets can increase their profits. Obviously, they're growing it, they're working long hard hours to do the best they can. Then they're really held to ransom by the supermarkets who sometimes don't even give them the value of what they've put into it."* The Lothians

Equal concern is expressed about the impact of farming on climate and nature, especially on reducing wildlife species and polluting rivers and waterways. Participants feel that UK farmers are inadequately supported to improve the situation. Participants are shocked by the large amount of land given over to food production, including taking into account land overseas used for foods we import.

> *"The farming industry that are close to rivers, I don't agree with the fertilisation because they're destroying the rivers. There's so much blue algae. The levels in the water are much worse than they were 30, 40 years ago. We know the agricultural problem there is, but that's due to government demand of quantity, it continues."* Cornwall

Although it wasn't discussed deeply in all waves of dialogue, animal welfare is a big and emotive concern for those who raise it as an issue. Participants are concerned that a drive for cheap food is leading to animal suffering, and that in turn, poor animal welfare practices are leading to decline in taste, health and nutritional quality of food.

In rural and island communities, some participants contrast what is available for them to buy with what is produced locally. This includes: living amongst farmland but struggling to buy local produce or meat (in the Lothians and Northern Ireland); how much meat is produced for export in Northern Ireland and Wales specifically (and the environmental challenges this results in, such as dealing with agricultural waste), and difficulties accessing local fish and seafood in Scotland (in the CRSOS workshop), exported to countries like Portugal.
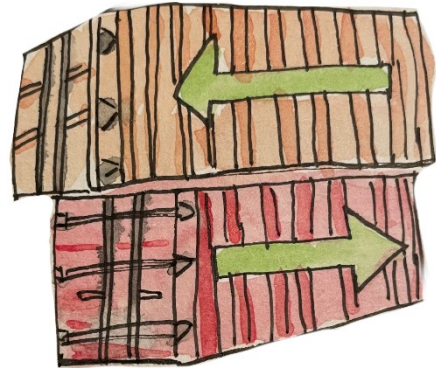
> *"The fact that we are producing so much we don't eat here in Wales, and so much gets exported […] a lot of that is meat and we don't have that local access to vegetables and even fruit. I think that's one of the biggest things, is that shift there and how we use our land."* South Wales

Conversely, some participants (especially from areas with less favourable farmland) are concerned that variable terrain and land is not taken into consideration enough in conversations about what UK diets should be, for example, eating less meat when some land is most suited for extensive grazing.

> *"How would they be able to go to a sustainable option because what else can you put apart from grass on some of these hillsides, particularly up in the rural Northumberland up in the valleys."* Northumberland

5.5 How the system is governed

In each location there is a shared view that government should be using a range of policy levers to create change. Participants told us they are sceptical about the will, ability or ambition of governments to make meaningful change, even though many believe that governments are ultimately responsible for change.

> *"We have the two major players and their manifestos barely touch on any food related issue. It is just not a big part, so it is almost like it is not important to them."* Cornwall
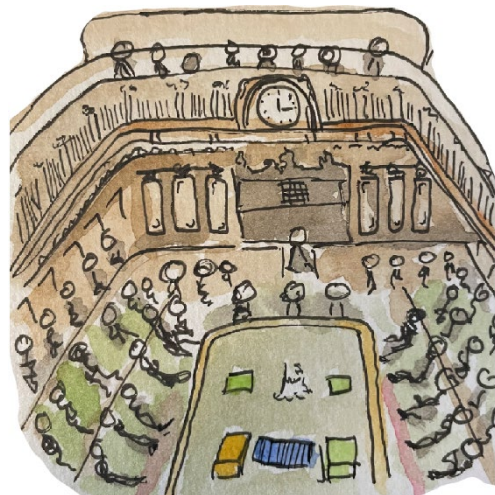
They are astounded by how long ideas take to become policy and see government structures as impediments to rapid change. They are sceptical that the current way in which food system policy is made (like the range of departments involved) can create an effective and joined-up approach, labelling it as 'messy'. Participants feel that party politics and election cycles hamper long-term thinking in government.

Many participants in the devolved nations feel that the tension around devolving powers to Stormont and Holyrood leads to political point-scoring with Westminster which impedes work on improving public health and the environment. Participants

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feel that Holyrood and Stormont, despite food and farming being devolved matters, hold little power because it is Westminster who decides on each country's funding. Nevertheless, some participants feel more hopeful that devolution has enabled more progress towards addressing food system issues (e.g. a more extensive free school meals offer in Scotland). In Northern Ireland in particular, years of political instability mean that some participants feel the country is further behind the rest of the UK in thinking strategically about addressing challenges in the food system.

> *"It's too political an issue. The parties are just scoring political points off each other. The different approaches and the devolved nations just indicate that we should have a universal policy. It's a public health emergency. We have to treat it as such. Our longevity rates are falling. People are dying earlier due to diets, lack of exercise, lifestyle, whatever. Something needs to be addressed."*
> The Lothians

6. Thoughts to feed into the ongoing conversation

Participants who have been involved in The Food Conversation across the UK are calling for urgent systemic change. They see a food system which is not currently delivering for people, the environment, for biodiversity or for farmers. In developing their manifestos (see section 2.2) they have considered a range of policy proposals and related actions, and as a result, they want to pivot away from the 'broken' system to ensure that:

1. The **challenges** they see in the current food system are addressed including tackling the:

- Health implications of poor diets – and unhealthy food being cheaper than a healthy diet
- Normalisation, and indeed promotion over healthy food, of unhealthy food in our food environments
- Imbalance in food production where farming is less and less viable when the profits are distributed unfairly, with little going to farmers
- Impact of farming on climate and nature, with inadequate support for farming to transition to more sustainable practices
- Lack of co-ordinated governance on food.

2. Their **visions** for the future can be delivered so that there can be:

- A focus on local food, and connecting farming with communities
- Fairness and equity throughout the system
- A priority placed on healthy food with specific action on UPFs
- Action to regenerate nature and address the impacts of climate change
- A virtuous circle created for the future of food emanating from effective leadership and good governance.

3. Their **key manifesto messages** are taken seriously and acted upon:

- Collaborative governance and leadership using a holistic approach to policy
- Action to transition from unhealthy to healthy foods for all
- Urgent delivery of strategies to protect the environment and shift to sustainable food production methods
- Concrete measures to dramatically improve children's food and health
- Community and cultural connections to the food system to be enhanced and celebrated

A deliberative process 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 climate change, health, poverty, social justice, economy, the welfare state, industry regulation, and biodiversity loss. This brings with it a sense of responsibility which participants throughout the Food Conversation have taken extremely seriously.

Across the dialogue participants, as a result of their participation, **have a sense of togetherness and mutuality** which they want to continue. They feel that the

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momentum built around The Food Conversation should continue, creating a cohesive community to challenge now disproved assumptions that people do not want government action on the issue of food. These participants are stating loudly and clearly that change needs to happen, that government action is not only welcome but expected. They believe this action should pervade all 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.

Participants are keen to continue the conversation locally, nationally and across the UK and hope policy makers listen to this nationwide call, or rather shout, for change.

> *"I see in particular this food conversation we're being part of as a very positive thing. I do hope that whatever comes out of this is taken up to the right levels, and followed through, and we'll keep pushing until the people are heard, and policies change, and regulations are put in place"* Scotland

Appendix 1: Detailed UK manifesto action points

This draft UK manifesto for the food system draws out themes and actions from approx. 40 manifestos developed by small groups during Waves 1, 2, 3 and 4 of the Food Conversation. This version incorporates feedback from a group of participants from across the Waves that met on online 4th November 2024 to review it.

The actions are primarily ones that were proposed in multiple locations; however, there are also a few new ideas that won't have been discussed in all locations.

- Wave one: Northumberland, West Yorkshire, East Kent
- Wave two: North Wales, South Wales
- Wave three: South London, Cornwall
- Wave four: Northern Ireland, the Lothians, Caithness, Sutherland, Ross, Orkney and Shetland (CSROS)

The food system as it is and as it should be

We call for urgent and significant change in the food system. The current system is unfair, unhealthy, broken, profit-driven, expensive, complex, unsustainable, unbalanced. Instead, we want to see policies that deliver a system that is fair, healthy, sustainable, affordable, accessible, educated, balanced, and equitable.

Manifesto priorities

We call for the following actions:

Collaboration, governance and leadership

1. **Transforming food system governance and leadership.** Improve and strengthen food governance across the UK and in each devolved nation, for better policy making and urgent action.
2. **Listening and collaboration.** Embed engagement with citizens, farmers and other food system stakeholders throughout the system and in the implementation of policies.

Action to transition from unhealthy to healthy foods for all

3. **Tackling unhealthy foods**. Prioritise the food environment to ensure that healthy and sustainable food choices are readily available, and Ultra Processed Foods (UPFs) are restricted and ultimately phased out.
4. **Improving institutional food standards.** Improve quality and standards of food served in public institutions, such as schools and hospitals, to lead by example and improve access to healthy and sustainable food.
5. **Accessibility and affordability of healthy, sustainable food.** Ensure that healthy and sustainable food is affordable and accessible to everyone, regardless of their economic circumstances, with a special focus on children.

Community, cultural connection and education

6. **Building knowledge, education, and culture.** Embed holistic food system education into every stage of life, prioritising children and starting at pre-

school; run national awareness raising campaigns to support food culture change and better food choices.

7. **Strengthening local food systems.** Strengthen local food systems which connect communities with local food production and improve access to fresh, local produce in rural and urban settings.

Protecting the environment and shifting to sustainable food production methods

8. **Enabling environmentally sustainable farming.** Support for the farming sector to transition to sustainable farming practices; improve animal welfare across the system; and improve the resilience of the sector to attract future generations to farming.
9. **Rebalancing the food system and ensuring fair profit distribution.** Create a fairer food system which limits the power of food corporations and supermarkets and empowers farmers.
10. **Protecting the environment and tackling food waste.** Strong legislation, regulation and enforcement to tackle food industry harms to the environment, including action to reduce food waste and stop excessive and unnecessary food packaging.

Concrete measures to dramatically improve children's food and health

Throughout the themes above, citizens call for embedded action to enable children to learn about and have access to healthy sustainable food from an early age. This will have concrete benefits for the long-term health of the nation.

Manifesto policy actions

We call for the following actions:

Collaboration, governance and leadership

1)Transforming food system governance and leadership. Improve and strengthen food governance across the UK and in each devolved nation, for better policy making and urgent action.

Actions: national food plans (long term, and addressing all aspects of the food system); dedicated food departments; cabinet ministers focused on food; independent regulatory bodies; co-ordination and a holistic approach across the UK, devolved nations, and regionally, so that decisions implemented in one area do not conflict with another; decision-making at appropriate levels, taking account of local context; restrictions on lobbying by food companies; fund independent research.

2) Listening and collaboration. Embed engagement with citizens, farmers and other food system stakeholders throughout the system and in the implementation of policies.

Actions: citizens' assemblies, collaborative forums bringing food system stakeholders together, and a communications and engagement strategy.

Action to transition from unhealthy to healthy foods for all

3) Tackling unhealthy foods. Prioritise the food environment to ensure that healthy and sustainable food choices are readily available, and Ultra Processed Foods (UPFs) are restricted and eventually phased out.

Actions: restrict the availability of UPFs (e.g., limit or ban UPFs in public settings; regulate content in baby food; develop a legislative framework to restrict UPFs, with clear definitions and regulations to avoid food companies finding loopholes); set a target for reducing UPF consumption; restrict the marketing and advertising of UPFs, especially to children (going beyond existing plans); support marketing, advertising and availability of healthy foods, with a special focus on children; include UPFs in national nutritional guidance; add warning labels to products, like cigarettes.

4) Improving institutional food standards. Improve quality and standards of food served in public institutions, such as schools and hospitals, to lead by example and improve access to healthy and sustainable food.

Actions: enforce strict nutritional and sustainability standards for food served in public institutions such as schools, hospitals and early years settings; support local/ small suppliers in public procurement.

5) Accessibility and affordability of healthy, sustainable food. Ensure that healthy and sustainable food is affordable and accessible to everyone, regardless of their economic circumstances, with a special focus on children.

Actions: Expand (electronic) food voucher schemes (e.g. Healthy Start), increase value and make available to more people; free healthy school meals for all pre and primary school years; address supermarket and food company pricing by putting caps on the price of basic, fresh, healthy food products (while ensuring farmers still get a fair price for their produce).

Community, cultural connection and education

6) Building knowledge, education, and culture. Embed holistic food system education into every stage of life, prioritising children and starting at pre-school, and run national awareness raising campaigns to support food culture change and better food choices.

Actions: integrate food education into the curriculum at all stages; experiential learning, prioritising children - growing, sourcing, cooking and sharing nutritional food; information about nutrition, UPFs, and health; community learning opportunities for adults and families; gap years and apprenticeships for young adults to gain experience; national awareness raising campaigns, with high profile media attention; festivals and events that bring communities together to celebrate food cultures, traditions and local food production; introduce a simple, clear, compulsory UK labelling scheme that helps consumers to make informed choices on environmental and health impacts of different foods.

7) Strengthening local food systems. Strengthen local food systems which connect communities with local food production and improve access to fresh, local produce in rural and urban settings.

Actions: introduce not-for-profit local food hubs, ensuring they are in accessible locations and effectively supported and promoted; support community growing projects, including city projects, and engage children and young people; allocate land for community food production; develop local food plans/ frameworks to revitalise

high streets (e.g. utilise empty shops), support local businesses, engage local people and create healthy food environments; encourage supermarkets to stock more local, sustainable produce.

Protecting the environment and shifting to sustainable food production methods

8) Enabling environmentally sustainable farming. Support for the farming sector to transition to sustainable farming practices; improve animal welfare across the system; and improve the resilience of the sector to attract future generations to farming.

Actions: financial incentives and subsidies to support farmers to transition; transition budget to give financial stability to farming sector to change to sustainable methods; independent farmer advice and support; introduce regulation to ensure food imports meet the same sustainability and welfare standards as in the UK; introduce a land-use framework.

9) Rebalancing the food system and ensuring fair profit distribution. Create a fairer food system which limits the power of food corporations and supermarkets and empowers farmers.

Actions: Introduce a regulatory framework that supports fairer dealing across the food system and better prices for farmers; introduce worker owned national food co-operative supermarket, with profits reinvested back into the food system; set maximum profits for supermarkets and food companies, with excess profits redistributed to farmers and workers; tax food producers (e.g. salt and sugar in products) to fund food system change, on condition that costs are not passed on to consumers.

10) Protecting the environment and tackling food waste. Strong legislation, regulation and enforcement to tackle food industry harms to the environment, including action to reduce food waste and stop excessive and unnecessary food packaging.

Actions: prosecute companies that cause environmental damage (criminalise environmental destruction); fine food companies that pollute the environment (polluter pays), making sure costs are not passed on to consumers; introduce systems to tackle food waste across the whole food system; reduce food packaging and make it fully recyclable.

Appendix 2: Policy proposals[14]

The following information was provided to participants on Recollective, with relevant sections shared after workshops, and as a hard copy at the final in person workshop.

Potential solutions to food system challenges

We are not starting from scratch in our discussions about the food system. Lots of organisations have made recommendations about how to tackle issues within the food system. At each workshop, we have looked at a few examples of these recommendations that we are calling 'policy proposals' to illustrate the range of the ideas available. This list isn't exhaustive, as there is a limit to what we could cover in our workshops.

The aim is for you to hear about a range of ideas and to have the opportunity to build on existing thinking by various organisations and individuals. Their inclusion does not mean that the Food, Farming and Countryside Commission (FFCC) formally endorses them.

After each workshop, you also had the opportunity to tell us what you thought about the proposals you have discussed by choosing one of the following options:

- DO IT – I support this proposal and think we just need to get going and do it.
- TEST IT – I like this proposal but suggest we start by piloting it to assess its effectiveness.
- DEBATE IT – I have reservations about this proposal and think the pros and cons require inclusive and balanced debate and collective leadership before a decision is made whether to progress it.
- DO NOT DO IT – I do not like this proposal and do not wish to see it taken forward.

Workshop One – A fair deal for farmers and citizens

A fair deal for farmers and citizens
What are the issues?

Farmers get a tiny fraction of the sale of basic foods compared to shops, advertisers, processors and suppliers. A farmer covers more than half the costs of production on a 480g block of cheese, but takes only 0.02% of the profit (1)

At the other end of the supply chain, many UK adults can't afford to pay for essential foods due to rising costs. 3 million emergency food parcels were distributed by Trussell Trust food banks in 2022-2023 – 81,000 of which were distributed in Northern Ireland - the most parcels ever distributed by the network in a year (2)

Policy proposals (a fair deal for citizens)

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[14] These were adapted for Northern Ireland and Scotland when the policies proposed, or action already taken is different from Wales and England.

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- **Universal Credit.** Make sure that Universal Credit payments are enough to cover a basket of essentials including food, household bills and travel cost. (3)
- **Housing support.** Create a package of support on housing (e.g., affordable social housing, rent cap) to ensure people aren't having to prioritise their rent payments above buying food. (4)
- **Healthy Start vouchers**. 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. Healthy Start is a scheme that already exists. (5)
- **Tax manufacturers**. Pay for schemes like the above by introducing a tax on manufacturers based on the amount of sugar and salt they use. (6)
- **Universal Basic Income.** Introduce Universal Basic Income to provide everyone, regardless of circumstances, with regular payments, ensuring a financial safety net for essential food. (7)

Policy proposals (a fair deal for farmers)

- **Producer payments.** Ensure government agricultural payments incentivise sustainable farming and pay producers for delivering 'public goods' such as habitats for wildlife, clean water, and flood management. (8)
- **Local food hubs**. 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 and growers. (9)
- **Windfall tax on food companies**. Pay for schemes like those mentioned by introducing a windfall tax for big food companies who profit the most when prices rise. (10)
- **Regulations.** Introduce a strong and straightforward regulatory framework that ensures fair dealing between retailers and suppliers/intermediaries and farmers. (11)

Workshop Two – Intensive chicken farming, UPFs and the food environment

Intensive chicken farming
What are the issues?

Chicken is the most popular meat in the UK. Just a few companies produce most of the UK's chicken: Avara foods (Cargill), Moy Park and Two Sisters. 95% of our chickens are raised in intensive indoor units. When concentrated in an area, these units can pollute the surrounding area with nitrate and ammonia.

25% of the UK's chicken production is based around the River Wye. Pollution from intensive units has led to the river's ecological status being downgraded. Moy Park, a poultry meat producer, is Northern Ireland's largest company by turnover and has a poor record of breaching pollution discharge limits, implicating it, along with a number of other sources, in the algal bloom crisis in Lough Neagh. (12)

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The demand for these crops puts pressure on vulnerable areas like the Amazon rainforest and leads to deforestation. Less would be needed if people ate them directly (instead of feeding them to animals).

Policy proposals

- **Dietary change.** Incentivise people to eat "less but better" meat and dairy, instead eating more beans, nuts, pulses, fruit and vegetables. Reduce overall consumption by 50% by 2030. (13)
- **Polluter pays.** Fine industrial meat producers who damage the environment. Use the money to help low-income households pay food bills. (14)
- **Incentives for farmers.** Incentivise farmers to change to regenerative farming methods, including less intensive and higher welfare chicken production systems. (15)
- **Impact assessment.** Require climate and environmental impact assessments in order to get permission to develop new industrial livestock units. (16)
- **Land use framework.** Create structures to support local decision making on land use – a land use framework - that considers climate, nature, and food security. (17)

Ultra-processed foods
What are the issues?

Ultra-processed foods (UPFs) are industrially made foods that often contain high levels of saturated fat, salt, sugar, and artificial additives.

They are often relatively cheap, convenient, and heavily marketed. Examples include fizzy drinks, mass produced bread, sugary cereals and sausages.

Studies show they are associated with an increased risk of poor health and rising obesity rates. The ingredients that go into UPFs – like wheat, soy and corn – are often grown in industrial agricultural systems, reliant on fossil fuel derived pesticides and fertilisers.

Overall half of the UK's calorie intake now comes from UPFs. For children and lower income households the rate is even higher, and one study found 60-70% of calories in UK school lunches were from UPFs.

Policy Proposals

- **UPFs in public settings**. Restrict the use of UPF in public settings like schools and hospitals by introducing stronger standards for what food they can buy and serve. (18)
- **Sugar/salt tax**. Charge the manufacturers and importers of processed foods a tax based on how much sugar and salt they use in their products. (19)

- **National guidance.** Add information on reducing UPF to official nutrition guidance. Similar guidance already exists in Canada, Peru, Brazil, Ecuador, and Uruguay. (20)
- **Target.** The Government should set a target to reduce how much UPF the UK eats. France has set a similar standard to reduce UPFs eaten by 20%. (21)
- **Community Eatwell scheme.** Enable GPs to prescribe fruit and vegetable vouchers to people on low income who have poor diets or experience food insecurity. (22)

Children's Food
What are the issues?

Getting the right nutrition is important for child development, but many young children in the UK have poor diets - too much salt and sugar and not enough fibre. This is particularly the case for children living in deprived areas.

Many children have limited access to affordable and nutritious food, leading to unhealthy diets. The marketing of unhealthy foods also influences what children want to eat.

Poor nutrition puts children at risk of health conditions such as: obesity, diabetes, mental health conditions and tooth decay from sugary drinks and foods.

Policy proposals

- **Standards in early years settings.** Set requirements for nutritious food and drinks in early years settings, such as nurseries and day-care centres. (23)
- **Free school meals.** Provide free school meals to all children. (24)
- **Programme for children**. Launch a new programme for children to taste and prepare healthy foods. (25)
- **Restricting advertising.** Enact the Government's proposed plan to restrict junk food advertising on TV until after 9pm. (26)
- **School food standards.** Strengthen school food standards by requiring more fruits and vegetables at every school meal and snack and restrict the use of Ultra Processed Foods. (27)

Food environment
What are the issues?

The places people live, work, and play have a big influence on what they eat. Deprived areas often have more fast-food outlets and not much access to healthy foods. People with lower incomes are also likely to lack time and face additional stress in their lives, making it harder for them to access and cook and eat healthy food.

The food served in public institutions, such as schools and hospitals, is often low quality. It's not always sustainable or nutritious and lots of it gets wasted because it

isn't tasty. Institutional food standards could better align with climate and nature commitments or public preferences, highlighting the need for reform.

Policy proposals

- **Local/ small retailers.** Local authorities or public health agencies should collaborate with small retailers, such as convenience stores, to make their food offering healthier. (28)
- **Local food partnerships.** Local authorities should support the establishment of cross-sector food partnerships in every local area to help create a more healthy, sustainable, and fair local food system, using their Community Planning powers. (29)
- **Food standards in public institutions.** Set legally binding nutrition, sustainability and environmental standards for food served in hospitals, and other public institutions. Monitor to ensure food is nutritious and environmentally friendly. (30)
- **Public procurement with local input.** Increase the participation of smaller and local suppliers in public food procurement for schools, hospitals and prisons. Keep the value in the local economy. (31)

Workshop Three – Nature, climate and sustainable farming

Nature, climate and the food system
What are the issues?

While modern farming has increased food availability and affordability, certain types of food production and intensive farming practices can also damage the environment. About 20% of the UK's greenhouse gas emissions come from the food system - or 30% if you include food imports.

Intensive farming relies on fertilisers and pesticides, further impacting nature and the environment. Turning natural ecosystems into intensive farmland has resulted in habitat loss, which in turn impacts biodiversity. The global food system is one of the primary drivers of biodiversity loss around the world.

Policy proposals

- **Sustainability reporting.** The Government should require food businesses to make public reports on their impact on health, animal welfare and sustainability. (32)
- **Action on deforestation.** Supermarkets should cut ties with companies selling or using animal feed from deforested land in places like the Amazon rainforest. (33)
- **True cost.** Supermarkets and other food businesses should pay the true cost of production for sustainably produced food, including introducing schemes that reward farmers for reducing their environmental impact. (34)

- **Polluter pays.** Tax the businesses that profit from polluting, such as companies that make pesticides and fertilisers or encourage intensive meat production. (35)
- **Criminalise environmental destruction.** Make it a crime to severely damage or destroy ecosystems (also known as 'ecocide'). (36)
- **Eco-labelling of food products.** The Government should introduce a labelling scheme for food products that tells consumers about the environmental impact of their choices, such as biodiversity, animal welfare and carbon impact. (37)

A just and sustainable agricultural transition
What are the issues?

Climate change, a lack of biodiversity and rising operation costs are already making it harder for farmers to produce enough food and make a profit. Some farmers face going out of business, which could affect how much food we are able to produce in the UK.

To tackle the climate and nature crisis, farmers will have to change to more sustainable practices. But 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.

It takes several years to change the way a farm produces food, and many farmers already make little profit from the food they produce, relying on agricultural payments from the government. After Brexit, these payments are changing, and there is an opportunity for agricultural payments to help farmers transition to more sustainable practices.

Policy proposals

- **Farmer advice.** Make sure every farmer can get trusted, independent advice by trained peer mentors and support networks. (38)
- **Horticulture.** Governments across the UK should commit to ambitious horticulture (fruit and veg) growth plans to support the production and increased consumption of fruits and vegetables. (39)
- **Agroecological Farming.** Agroecology is sustainable farming that works with nature. The Government should set a target for regenerative agroecological farming on 75% of UK farmland by 2030. (40)
- **Transition budget.** Set a guaranteed agricultural budget until 2029, to give financial support to farmers so they can change to sustainable farming methods. (41)

References

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Appendix 3: Sample workshop agendas and speakers

Workshop 1 (online)

Time	Activity – Introduction to the food system & Power, fairness and inequalities in the food system
6.00	Workshop welcome & introduction, Menti questions
6.25	**Speaker 1: Mhairi Brown, Head of Food Futures, FFCC** – an introduction to The Food Conversation and a chicken wrap as a way into this conversation
6.35	Small group discussion – thinking about your connections to the food system
6.55	**Speaker 2: Angelina Sanderson Bellamy, Professor of Food Systems, UWE Bristol.** Introduction to the food system, range of actors in the food system and how power is distributed. Q&A with Angelina and Mhairi
7.20	Small group discussion – reflecting on the presentations and exploring perceptions of power in the food system.
7.45	Break
7.55	An introduction to inequalities across the food system consumers **Speaker 3: Charlotte Hardman, Professor of Psychology and Eating Behaviour, University of Liverpool** **Speaker 4: Jonny Blair, farmer from Northern Ireland.** Q&A with **Charlotte** and **Jonny**
8.20	Small group discussion – reflecting on power, fairness, and inequalities in the food system. What are the challenges and reviewing policy proposals that seek to support a fair deal for consumers and producers?
8.50	Final plenary
9:00	Close

Workshop 2 (online)

Time	Activity – the impacts of UPFs, intensively farmed meat and chicken and the food environment
6.00	Workshop welcome & introduction, Menti questions
6.20	**Speaker 1: Mhairi Brown, Head of Food Futures, FFCC**– where are we with the chicken wrap? An introduction to this evening's topics
6.25	**Speaker 2: Kristin Bash**, University of Sheffield, The impacts of Ultra Processed Foods (UPFs) and foods high in sugar and salt and policy - proposals to address these **Speaker 3: Andrew Stark, Eating Better.** The impacts of intensively farmed meat and chicken, thoughts on land use and policy proposals to address these challenges. Q&A with Kristin and Andrew
7.00	Small group discussion– reflecting on the presentations and exploring policy proposals to address the impacts.
7.40	Break
7.50	**Speakers 4 and 5: Claire Hislop, Public Health Scotland and Dr. Aileen McGloin, Safefood**. The food environment, challenges and opportunities.
8.00	Q&A with Claire and Aileen
8.15	Small group discussion– reflecting on the presentation, exploring policy proposals on children's food and the food environment.
8.50	Final plenary with menti questions.
9:00	Close

Workshop 3 (online)

Time	Activity – the impacts of the food system on climate, nature and biodiversity, an introduction to sustainable agriculture
6.00	Workshop welcome & introduction, Menti questions
6.20	**Speaker 1: Mhairi Brown, Head of Food Futures, FFCC** – where are we with the chicken wrap? An introduction to this evening's topics
6.25 6.35 6:45	**Speaker 2: Claire Daly, Head of Policy and Advocacy, WWF Scotland** **Speaker 3: John Martin, Head of Policy and Advocacy, RSPB Northern Ireland** The impacts (and opportunities) of the food system on climate, nature and biodiversity Q&A with John and Claire
7.00	Small group discussion – reflecting on the presentations and exploring policy proposals to address the impacts on climate, nature and biodiversity.
7.40	Break
7.50	**Speakers 4: Davy McCracken, Head of Department, Integrated Land Management, Hill & Mountain Research Centre** - An introduction to the transition to sustainable agriculture
8.00	Q&A with Davy, joined by **Bronagh O'Kane, Northern Ireland Livestock farmer** – who will start with a brief introduction.
8:15	Small group discussion – reflecting on the presentations, exploring policy proposals on sustainable agriculture and farming.
8.50	Final plenary with Menti questions.
9:00	Close

Workshop 4 (online)

Time	Activity – food policy, policy making and governance
6.00	Workshop welcome & introduction, Menti questions
6.15	**Speaker 1: Mhairi Brown, Head of Food Futures, FFCC** – where are we with the chicken wrap? An introduction to this evening's topics
6.20 6:30 6:40	An introduction to food policy, policy making and governance in the UK, Scotland and Northern Ireland **Speaker 2: Mary Brennan, Chair of Food Marketing and Society, University of Edinburgh** **Speaker 3: Philippa McKeown-Brown, Head of Food Policy and Emerging Markets at the Consumer Council Northern Ireland** Q&A with Mary and Philippa
6.50	Small group discussion – food system policy making and governance in the UK and devolved nations.
7.20	Break
7.30	Speaker panel and Q&A: • Joe McDonald, Head of Corporate Affairs, Asda, Northern Ireland • Will Frazer, Northern Ireland Farmer/ Director of Hillmount Holdings • Robin Gourlay, Previous advisor to Scottish Government on public sector food and drink policy
8.15	Small group discussion – reflecting on the panel discussions and thinking forward to our in-person discussions
8.50	A final menti and preparing for our next workshop.
9.00	Close

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Workshop 5- all locations (in person)

Time	Activity –
6.00	Welcome, housekeeping & introductions Where we are with the chicken wrap
6.10	Menti.com question
6:20	Presentation: **1) A round up of what we have heard so far** **2) Summary of the key points you've made so far**
6.35	Working in small groups gathering thoughts on: **The food system as it is, the food system as it should be…**
6:40	Small group discussion: **Your vision for the future of our food system** A postcard from the future
7.30	Filmed speaker: **A round up of challenges and policy solutions**, Tim Benton, Chatham House Filmed speaker: **The Danish experience**, Lise Walbom, CEO, Food Nation Briefing about tomorrow
8.00	**A meal together**
9.00	Close

Workshop 6 – Belfast (in person)

Time	Activity
10.00	Welcome, housekeeping & introduction
10:10	**Creating manifestos for the food system**
11:05	Break
11:20	Small group discussion: **Actions: what steps need to be taken to address the problems**
12:45	Lunch break
13:30	**Sharing your manifestos – with each other and guests**
14:00	**Northern Ireland speaker panel** Beth Bell, Co-founder of Carrick Greengrocers, Food Ethics Council and Co-chair of the Belfast Sustainable Food Partnership Collin Coffey, Chair of the Public Health Agency John McLenaghan, Deputy President, Ulster Farmers Union
14:45	Coming together to prioritise our manifesto actions
15:05	**Thinking to the future - Presentation Food Farming and Countryside Commission (FFCC) – Our plans, how to stay involved** Freya Harding, Action and Research Coordinator, FFCC
15:25	**The marketplace: exploring how to stay involved** • Get involved in advocacy. Meet your Member of the Legislative Assembly (MLA) • Continue the Food Conversation with family, friends and your wider communities • Join our speaker and explore what else you might want to do locally
15:50	Final menti.com and thank you!
16:00	Close / group photo

Workshop 6 – Gorebridge (in person)

10.00	Welcome, housekeeping & introduction
10:10	**Creating manifestos for the food system**
11:05	Break
11:20	Small group discussion: **Actions: what steps need to be taken to address the problems**
12:45	Lunch break
13:30	**Sharing your manifestos – with each other and guests**
14:00	**The Lothians speaker panel** Elizabeth Massie, of 300 acre mixed farm Pressmennan, near Dunbar, East Lothian Ellen Scott, Midlothian Council, Councillor and Cabinet Member with responsibility for education, children & young people Danny Wight, Tyninghame Community Farm
14:45	Coming together to prioritise our manifesto actions
15:05	**Thinking to the future - Presentation Food Farming and Countryside Commission (FFCC) – Our plans, how to stay involved** Mhairi Brown, Head of Futures, FFCC
15:25	**The marketplace: exploring how to stay involved** • Get involved in advocacy. Meet your MSP • Continue the Food Conversation with family, friends and your wider communities • Join our speaker and explore what else you might want to do locally
15:50	Final menti.com and thank you!
16:00	Close / group photo

Workshop 6 – Wick (in person)

10.00	Welcome, housekeeping & introduction
10:10	**Creating manifestos for the food system**
11:05	Break
11:20	Small group discussion: **Actions: what steps need to be taken to address the problems**
12:45	Lunch break
13:30	**Sharing your manifestos – with each other and guests**
14:00	**The Caithness, Sutherland, Ross, Orkney and Shetland speaker panel** Sally Crowe, Hawkhill Croft, Keiss, Caithness Bryan Dods, Poverty aAction Officer, Caithness Voluntary Group Dennis Overton/ Lorna Dawson
14:45	Coming together to prioritise our manifesto actions
15:05	**Thinking to the future - Presentation Food Farming and Countryside Commission (FFCC) – Our plans, how to stay involved** Kenny McCarthy, Programme Manager Citizen Engagement, FFCC
15:25	**The marketplace: exploring how to stay involved** • Get involved in advocacy. Meet your MSP • Continue the Food Conversation with family, friends and your wider communities • Join our speaker and explore what else you might want to do locally
15:50	Final menti.com and thank you!
16:00	Close / group photo

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Hopkins Van Mil
Bringing people together to inform the future