

The Hope Farm Statement

Food and farming in the UK are at a critical inflection point.

In the aftermath of World War II, the UK government asked farmers to intensify production, maximise yields and produce food as cheaply as possible - and they did this very well. However, we know now that this policy has come at a significant societal and environmental cost, while increasingly trapping farmers themselves in a supply chain vulnerable to global price shocks, climate threats and geopolitical crises. These costs, both visible and hidden, are paid by us all - by the environment, through our taxes, and in the health and wellbeing of present and future generations. Right now, farmers are struggling with the impacts of climate change, are not receiving a fair price for their produce, and more and more households face food poverty and insecurity, while good food is wasted.

It does not have to be like this. We have an opportunity - and in some cases a legal obligation - to ensure that everyone in the UK has enough healthy, nutritious, and sustainable food, and to tackle dietary inequalities; to provide a clear direction, fair reward, and reliable, long-term package of support to the farmers to produce the healthy food we need; to ensure a healthy and flourishing countryside and natural environment; to address the climate and biodiversity crises, and to safeguard high animal welfare.

Over the past year, a group of leaders from farming, business, civil society, research, and government has met to reflect on how we can play our full part in leading the transition. We ourselves are inspired by the citizens involved in the UK-wide Food Conversation, who are clear in their call for governments across the UK and businesses to act for fairer, greener, healthier food and farming. And we know that pivoting from the current system to a new one will require clear and courageous leadership; strategically aligned policies; and supportive regulation.

Together, we are calling for the next UK Government as a matter of urgent national priority - starting in its first 100 days - to implement a bold national food and farming strategy for the UK, drawing on the wealth of evidence available, including in the National Food Strategy.

Our six core recommendations are:

1. **Legally binding targets and policy coherence:** the adoption of **clear and legally binding national food systems targets** designed to deliver sustained progress against a coherent set of long-term food system objectives which should include: access to healthy, sustainable diets; the safeguarding of food resilience; tackling and adapting to climate change; protecting and restoring nature; ensuring water security; and ending household food insecurity. These targets should be underpinned by an effective **cross-cutting governance structure to ensure policy** coherence and be aligned with nature and climate targets already set out in law;

2. **Increased public as well as private sector funding to support farmers with the transition to more sustainable practices:** a **guaranteed agricultural budget** commensurate with the scale of the task until 2029, sufficient to invest in a just transition to sustainable farming and food resilience; food production in harmony with nature, based on regenerative and sustainable farming systems; and the protection and restoration of nature and action on climate to which the UK is committed by law; and **the development of reliable and secure income streams for farmers** from private sources, paying them for their work to further create and enhance public and private services, focused on climate, natural capital and social outcomes;
3. **Robust public procurement standards, coupled with tighter regulation on unhealthy food: robust, mandatory nutrition and sustainability standards for all public food procurement,** setting a target of [at least] 50% local procurement with high environmental standards. This would be coupled with the implementation of existing regulations on the statute books concerning **unhealthy food advertising and volume promotions**, noting that the right policy framework and incentives will stimulate action from the public as well as private sector to shift to healthier, more sustainable foods;
4. **Multifunctional land use framework: a multifunctional land use framework to support local decision-making** that meets climate, health, nature, and food resilience goals, includes targets for sustainable food production, and which helps to mediate decisions with other sectors (such as housing and energy);
5. **Fair and consistent standards:** the application of high standards that encourage fairness with a **strong and straightforward regulatory framework that covers all sectors and ensures fair dealing** between retailers and intermediaries and farmers. This would be linked to a **coherent trade strategy** built around core standards for environmental sustainability, animal health and welfare, and that covers imported food; designed to ensure that domestic food production is not undermined by imports produced to lower standards;
6. **Measurement and disclosure frameworks for accountability:** based on a **common measurement framework** which enables decision-makers to assess the impacts of their policies and delivery for climate, nature, health, and social capital; coupled with **mandatory public reporting by food companies** of sales data on health and sustainability metrics.

Signatories 08.05.2024

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