

ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY FORUM

c/o Society for the Environment
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National Food Strategy submission by the Environmental Policy Forum

Restore and enhance the natural environment for the next generation in this country

The UK food system needs to operate within a 'one planet diet', linked to the UK's commitments to the UN Sustainable Development Goals, also addressing the public's rapidly growing awareness and concern about the 'climate and nature emergency' we are all facing.

In our opinion, food waste is a currently under-scrutinised contributor to this situation. In the UK food waste has been estimated at 10 million tonnes per year, post farmgate, with 60% of that being avoidable.¹ WRAP estimated that UK food waste is associated with around 20 million tonnes of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions.²

When food is unnecessarily wasted, labour, water, energy, land and other natural and synthetic resources have clearly not been as efficiently used as could be possible, and this has a number of potential negative impacts. Reducing food waste therefore not only improves resource efficiency and the environment but can also help feed our growing population without driving an increase in agricultural area and intensification of farming which can be detrimental to biodiversity.³

We would therefore like to see:

- Reporting on measurable targets, such as halving of food loss and waste.
- All existing and future Government investment and spend on food and farming to be assessed against its impact on climate change and the natural environment, by, for example:
 - Ensuring that the estimated £3bn of farm support is used to deliver on a wide range of public goods, including "whole farm systems" which deliver multiple outcomes, including public health and soil health.
 - Prioritising environmental sustainability and net gain in work funded by the UK Shared Prosperity Fund by repatriating of EU structural funds; the Food and Drink Sector deal; and funding for research and innovation.
 - Applying mandatory climate, environment and nature-friendly standards to all of the £2.4bn public money spent annually on food in public sector catering, including a trajectory towards "less" and "better" meat and dairy; more seasonal and local fruit and veg; zero waste; certified sustainable ingredients; and verifiably sustainable fish.

¹ [Food waste in England](#), HoC EFRA Committee, April 2017.

² [Estimates of food surplus and waste arisings in the UK](#), WRAP briefing, Jan 2017.

³ [Biodiversity for food and agriculture](#), Food and Agriculture Organization for the UN, 2019.

- Providing funding (and other incentives, promotion and market access) to stimulate lower environmental impact and more sustainable fishing and fish farming methods.
- Consulting on methods of reducing biocide, pesticide and herbicide use in agriculture, including access to independent advice on more sustainable biocide, pesticide and herbicide use – as well as maintaining strong chemicals regulation post-Brexit.

Create a resilient and sustainable agriculture sector

Supporting farmers to make the transition to more sustainable, agro-ecological, climate-friendly production must be treated as an absolute priority, and many of the recommendations under other headings are intended to help achieve this aim. We must systematically help build a profitable market for sustainably produced food.

To these ends, we would like to see:

- A target of at least 10% organic by 2030, with investment to help farms to go into conversion, alongside turbo-charging other climate and nature-friendly schemes.
- Tax relief and targeted support for farmers and growers using agro-ecological systems and/or levies and increasing regulation on systems that are ecologically damaging.
- A plan for a net-zero contribution from farming and land use to climate change by 2040.

Ensure, where appropriate, British food is recognised internationally for creating a new benchmark for the highest standards of production and transparency. This could be helped by:

- A ban on the routine preventative use of antibiotics in groups of healthy animals, and a dramatic cut (sometimes ban) on the farm use of antibiotics critically important to human medicine; compliance with the highest international standards of Anti-Microbial Resistance (AMR) prevention, and as these standards mature, to move progressively, with no regression.
- Mandatory food labels, especially for meat, fish and dairy, on where and how it is produced and processed, helping to stimulate public awareness, consumer choice and the market for higher welfare food.

Align international food imports to the high standards set by the National Food Strategy

It is crucial then that the National Food Strategy does all that it can to maintain or improve standards which might be undermined by trade deals which might allow cheaper produce of lower standards to be imported.

International trade in food provides great opportunities to support lower income countries and keep UK diets varied. However, UK consumers have said they wouldn't knowingly buy food of lower standards in the future, even if it was cheaper. We must ensure that food imports support and do not undermine high standards, by:

- Ensuring imported food is subject to high climate, sustainability, safety, health, animal welfare, labour, and antibiotics stewardship standards, certainly no lower than those that apply to domestically produced food.
- Ensuring that trade deals are transparent and are subject to proper scrutiny.



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Notes

1. The Environmental Policy Forum (EPF) is a network of UK environmental professional bodies promoting environmental sustainability and resilience for the public benefit. The EPF's member bodies have a collective membership of around 70,000 environmental professionals, many of whom are individually chartered in environmental practice, science and engineering disciplines.

www.envpolicyforum.org.uk

2. The Chartered Institute of Environmental Health (CIEH) is the membership and awarding body for the environmental health sector. Our members work around the world, improving lives and demonstrating excellence across all areas of environmental health including food, public health, housing, environmental protection, and health and safety.

www.cieh.org

3. The Institute of Fisheries Management (IFM) is an international organisation of people sharing a common interest in the modern management of recreational and commercial fisheries.

www.ifm.org.uk

4. The Chartered Institution of Water and Environmental Management (CIWEM) Represents and supports a community of thousands of members and organisations in over 89 countries who are dedicated to improving water and the environmental management for the benefit of the public.

<https://www.ciwem.org/>

5. The Society for the Environment (SocEnv) is comprised of 24 Licenced Bodies, with over 500,000 members between them. It received a Royal Charter in 2004, which empowers it to regulate the Chartered Environmentalist (CEnv) and Registered Environmental Technician (REnvTech) professional registrations globally. There are now over 7,000 environmental professionals currently registered who share a common vision of delivering sustainability through environmental professionalism.

www.socenv.org.uk