

Government response to the House of Lords report, ‘Hungry for Change: fixing the failures in food’

Introduction

1. The Government thanks the Committee for its report, ‘Hungry for Change: fixing the failures in food’.
2. The Government is committed to ensuring our food system delivers safe, healthy, affordable food for everyone, regardless of where they live or how much they earn, and which is built on a sustainable and resilient agriculture sector. That is why we commissioned Henry Dimbleby, the Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs’ (Defra) lead Non-Executive Director, to lead an Independent Review and develop a series of recommendations that will help shape our food system.
3. The National Food Strategy Independent Review will cover the entire food chain from farm to fork, building on work already underway in the Agriculture Bill, the Environment Bill and the Fisheries Bill. The scope will be England, but the strategy will consider our relationships with the devolved administrations, the European Union and our other trading partners.
4. Part One of the National Food Strategy Independent Review was published on 29 July 2020, and can be found here: <https://www.nationalfoodstrategy.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/NFS-Part-One-SP-CP.pdf>. It contains recommendations in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic and preceding the end of the transition period with the European Union. The report examines how the food system was impacted by COVID-19, and features chapters on trade, health and food insecurity. Part Two of the National Food Strategy Independent Review will be published in 2021. It will include a root and branch examination of the food system and the economics that shape it. The report will also investigate issues of climate change, biodiversity, pollution, antimicrobial resistance, zoonotic diseases and sustainable use of resources. The Government has committed to responding to the Review’s recommendations in the form of a White Paper within six months of the release of the final report.
5. COVID-19 has brought the risks of obesity into sharp focus and makes it more important than ever to support all parts of the UK in achieving a healthier lifestyle. The Prime Minister wants to tackle this issue so that people feel fitter and healthier, we reduce our health risks, protect ourselves against coronavirus and take pressure off the NHS. This strategy is outlined in the Department of Health and Social Care’s (DHSC) recently published policy paper, ‘Tackling obesity: empowering adults and children to live healthier lives’, which can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/tackling-obesity-government-strategy/tackling-obesity-empowering-adults-and-children-to-live-healthier-lives>. It includes: introducing a new campaign — a call to action to take steps to lose weight; working to expand weight management services available through the NHS; publishing a public consultation to gather views and evidence on our current ‘traffic light’ labelling scheme; consulting on companies providing calorie labelling on

alcohol; introducing legislation to require large out-of-home sector businesses to calorie label the food they sell; legislating to end the promotion of foods high in fat, salt or sugar (HFSS), both online and in physical stores in England; and banning the advertising of HFSS products being shown on TV and online before 9pm.

6. It is vitally important for children to grow up with the knowledge, skills and confidence they need to lead a healthy lifestyle. That is why we have made health education compulsory for all pupils at state-funded schools. At primary school, health education will cover the characteristics of a healthy lifestyle alongside important knowledge about healthy eating such as what constitutes a healthy diet, the principles of planning and preparing a range of healthy meals, and the characteristics of a poor diet and risks associated with unhealthy eating. At secondary level, teaching will introduce more complex topics, such as the characteristics and evidence of what constitutes a healthy lifestyle, including the links between a poor diet and health risks such as tooth decay and cancer.
7. The food system affects many areas of our lives, and as such is incorporated into the work of several departments. The Government recognises the importance of coordination on food policy across Whitehall in order to deliver our shared ambition of ensuring that our food system delivers healthy, affordable and sustainable food that everyone can access.
8. The Committee has made a number of recommendations and conclusions. The Government has responded to the recommendations below.

Response to recommendations

The relationships between dietary quality and food insecurity must be fully understood. The Government must commit to continuing to run the food insecurity measurement questions currently contained within the Family Resources Survey. To better understand the impacts of food insecurity on diet and related outcomes, the Government must determine how best to collect data on food insecurity and dietary intake in the same individuals. (Paragraph 82)

9. The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) has included a set of food security questions to the Family Resources Survey (FRS) since April 2019, allowing the combined analysis of family resources and the impact on food security. The FRS is a National Statistic published under the Code of Practice for Statistics. Compliance with the Code provides confidence that published government statistics have public value, are high quality and are trustworthy. The Head of Profession for Statistics is accountable for the methods, content, and timing of the release of these statistics. DWP will continue to include the food security questions in the FRS, and publish them, as long as they meet the requirements of the Code.

10. Alongside this, Public Health England (PHE)¹ will consider collecting data on food security through their National Diet and Nutrition Survey.

The five-week wait for Universal Credit presents acute difficulties and requires urgent overhaul. While we cannot anticipate the findings of two Parliamentary reports dedicated to this topic, the Government must fully respond to the reports of both Committees. A replacement scheme must have regard to:

- **The recommendations of the House of Commons Work and Pensions Committee and the House of Lords Economic Affairs Committee;**
 - **Analysis of the impact of repayments over a period of time on the ability to afford a healthy diet;**
 - **The imperative to avoid a situation where a person awaiting benefits has no choice but to visit a food bank;**
 - **Analysis of data pertaining to the increase in UC claims following the outbreak of COVID-19;**
 - **The possibility that different groups of claimants may require different arrangements for advances and their repayment; and**
 - **A continual and effective system of training to help claimants manage their money. (Paragraph 104)**
11. No new Universal Credit claimant needs to wait five weeks if they need upfront support. New claimants can request up to 100% of their estimated Universal Credit upfront, and receive it within a few days of making their claim. We are ensuring that all new claimants are aware of this support when they first make a Universal Credit claim.
 12. In the recent March 2020 Budget, the Government announced measures to make advances even more flexible, ensuring that claimants would not be discouraged from applying. The repayment time for advances has already been extended from six months to 12 months, and a further extension to 24 months was announced starting from October 2021. This means, instead of an average advance repayment of around £60 over 12 months, new Universal Credit claimants taking up an advance and repaying it over 24 months will have their monthly repayments reduced by around £30 per month, on average. Claimants can also ask for advance repayments to be delayed for up to three months in exceptional circumstances, if they cannot afford them.
 13. DWP is constantly analysing the impact of both advance repayments and other deductions on indebted claimants. Analysis around the impact of repaying advances and other deductions helped to drive the October 2021 measures that will better support such claimants.
 14. DWP published weekly management information on Universal Credit claims and advances from 1 March 2020 until the end of June 2020 at

¹ Alongside work to establish the National Institute for Health Protection, the Government will continue to focus on health improvement and preventing ill-health with support from the expert teams currently located in PHE, who will continue with their excellent work. We do not envisage any changes to where those responsibilities will sit before spring 2021. We will be engaging with an external stakeholder advisory group to develop options on where PHE's health improvement functions would be best placed in order to support the public health system and improve the public's health.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/universal-credit-declarations-claims-and-advances-management-information>. Going forward, information on claims to Universal Credit will be available as part of official statistics at <https://stat-xplore.dwp.gov.uk>.

15. In publishing this data, we aim to support the information needs of society, parliamentarians and stakeholders. Universal Credit is one of the means of supporting individuals and families during these difficult times.
16. Releasing information on applications to Universal Credit ahead of the routine publication of this information in official statistics ensures a timely response, and gives society and stakeholders important information on the level of support that has been required by individuals and families.
17. As we move into the next phase of COVID-19 response and recovery we are continually working across government departments to review priorities. Analysis of this Universal Credit data is just one source of information used to enable us to monitor the evolving economic and labour market situation, and to help us to identify the most effective ways to support people both now and in the future.
18. Providing certain groups of claimants with special terms for their advances and repayments would be incredibly problematic to implement. Any special repayment terms would raise equality concerns from groups of claimants to whom such terms were not extended. In addition, establishing a claimant's eligibility for such treatment would require manual intervention and likely delay the initial payment of an advance. Instead, the Government believes it is right to concentrate on measures which ensure urgent support is available to those in need, whilst reducing the impact of advance repayments for all claimants. Claimants can also ask for advance repayments to be delayed for up to three months in exceptional circumstances if they cannot afford them.
19. As well as advances, new claimants may be eligible for other non-repayable support. Claimants receiving Housing Benefit immediately before their Universal Credit claim will continue to receive this for the first two weeks of the new Universal Credit claim. From 22 July 2020, up to an additional two-week run on of Income Support, income-based Jobseeker's Allowance and income-related Employment and Support Allowance will be available for all eligible claimants whose claim to Universal Credit ends their entitlement to these benefits.
20. Jobcentre staff have access to information on services and support available in their local area for claimants and will signpost claimants to national and local organisations which provide specialist debt and money management support.
21. In addition, support is available for Universal Credit claimants via the Money and Pensions Service (MaPS). MaPS helps Universal Credit claimants with personal budgeting and money management through its free helpline, printed guides and digital guidance.
22. For those Universal Credit claimants who are in most need of debt advice, MaPS will continue to work with DWP and other agencies to ensure that they are signposted and

referred quickly to local provision. MaPS funds free-to-consumer debt advice in England through a network of providers including StepChange, the Money Advice Trust and Citizens Advice.

We recommend that the Government produce an action plan to ensure that the gathering of data on food insecurity includes and records the situations of those with no recourse to public funds. Urgent planning must begin now to establish a Government-funded programme to ensure that all those with no recourse to public funds are able to access sufficient, nutritious food. (Paragraph 110)

23. There are no plans to gather data on food security for those with no recourse to public funds (NRPF), nor to establish a government-funded programme to ensure that all those with NRPF are able to access sufficient, nutritious food, beyond the existing support mechanisms and safeguards in place.
24. The majority of non-UK nationals visiting, studying, working or joining family in the UK are subject to an NRPF condition until they have obtained indefinite leave to remain. This is because in order to be granted leave to enter or remain in the UK, most non-UK nationals must demonstrate that they can maintain and support themselves and their families without posing a burden on the UK's welfare system. The public interest principle for them to be financially independent is long-established. People who are subject to an NRPF condition are not, therefore, eligible to access taxpayer-funded benefits such as Universal Credit although they can claim contributory benefits providing they meet the eligibility criteria.
25. We recognise that some non-UK nationals may not be financially independent and yet still have a right to remain in the UK, which is why some exceptions are made to the NRPF condition. Individuals granted leave under the family and human rights routes, for example, can apply to have the NRPF condition lifted (a 'change of conditions' application) if they are destitute or at risk of destitution, if the welfare of their child is at risk due to their low income, or where there are other exceptional financial circumstances. On Thursday 30 July 2020, the Home Office released figures relating to 'change of conditions' applications, which are available at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/no-recourse-to-public-funds-applications-to-change-conditions-of-leave-july-2020>. The figures show a high acceptance rate for change of conditions applications.
26. Migrants who are here without leave are also subject to NRPF, by virtue of their being in the UK without status. Individuals in this situation are encouraged either to regularise their status or to leave the UK voluntarily, for which support is available. Local authorities may also provide basic safety net support, regardless of immigration status, if it is established that there is a genuine care need that does not arise solely from destitution. To help them respond to COVID-19 pressures across all the services they deliver, including providing this support, the Government has allocated £3.7 billion to local authorities in England, and additional funding under the Barnett formula to the devolved administrations.
27. In response to other pressures arising from the pandemic, the Government has introduced a range of additional measures to provide financial protection for those affected by COVID-19, including those subject to NRPF. These include the

Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme, Self-Employment Income Support Scheme, and rent and mortgage holidays. Further information on the support available to those with NRPF has been published at <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-get-support-if-youre-a-migrant-living-in-the-uk>. During the pandemic, the Department for Education (DfE) has also temporarily extended eligibility for free school meals to include some groups who have NRPF.

28. Employers are able to apply for grants under the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme for workers on the PAYE system. The Government has also extended Statutory Sick Pay, which is not classed as a public fund, to be payable from Day 1 rather than Day 4 and made Contributory Employment and Support Allowance available from the first day of sickness rather than the eighth, subject to other eligibility criteria. For those who file Self-Assessment returns, the Government has deferred Income Tax Self-Assessment payments from July 2020 to January 2021.

The Government should be fully aware of the cost of eating the diet it recommends, and the ability of different demographic groups to access this diet. To underpin any national food strategy, the Government must, in its 2021 review of benefits rates, commit to giving its dietary guidance—the Eatwell Guide—a firm place in the development of policy. (Paragraph 127)

The Government should embed consideration of the cost of the Eatwell Guide into calculations of benefit payment rates. (Paragraph 132)

29. The Social Security Administration Act 1992 requires the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions to conduct an annual review of benefits and pension rates to determine whether they have retained their value in relation to the general level of prices or, for pensions, earnings. The up-rating process has traditionally relied on the September Consumer Price Index and May-July Average Weekly Earnings Figures. The legislation as currently drafted gives the Secretary of State a wide range of discretion as to how to up-rate a number of working age benefits and she can take into account the national economic situation and other relevant matters.
30. To embed the consideration of the cost of the Eatwell Guide into the calculation of benefit and pension rates would require an amendment to the up-rating primary legislation and would be a significant change to the current legislative regime. In addition, we do not think it appropriate to amend the legislation to change the way benefits and pensions are up-rated to put one particular issue ahead of others.
31. For these reasons we will not be including the cost of the Eatwell Guide in the calculation of benefit rates.

We recommend that the Government should undertake a fuller assessment of the cost of a healthy and sustainable diet. The cost of the Government’s dietary guidance should be built in as a reference point to consideration of government interventions, including those relating to welfare and public food provision. (Paragraph 133)

32. The Government advocates a healthy balanced diet, based on the national food model the Eatwell Guide. The Guide depicts a diet that is based on fruit, vegetables and higher fibre starchy carbohydrates. It shows the proportions of the five main food

groups that are needed for a well-balanced and healthy diet. It is appropriate for most people over the age of five and is suitable for those following plant-based diets.

33. The Carbon Trust conducted a sustainability assessment of the Eatwell Guide when it was launched in 2016. The analysis shows an appreciably lower environmental impact than the current UK diet.
34. PHE will explore options on assessing the cost of a healthy balanced diet.

The value of the Healthy Start vouchers is insufficient. The vouchers must immediately be uprated. This uprating should be substantial, but as an absolute minimum it should enable recipients to purchase the same amount of food that could be purchased in 2009, when the scheme began. The amount must be linked to the Consumer Price Index thereafter. (Paragraph 184)

35. The value of the Healthy Start voucher is kept under continuous review. Frozen fruit and vegetables were added to the scheme in 2011 to help the voucher value go further. The Government has also recently amended the Healthy Start Scheme and Welfare Regulations to introduce pulses, and canned fruit and vegetables into the scheme from 1 October 2020, which will help make the value go even further.

Comprehensive reform of the Healthy Start Scheme is long overdue. The Government must release a wide-ranging consultation addressing “root and branch” reform before the end of 2020 and appoint a Healthy Start champion to raise awareness of the scheme among individuals and retailers. (Paragraph 194)

36. DHSC is working to review the operation of the Healthy Start scheme and is considering opportunities to improve the scheme. In particular, DHSC is in the process of digitising the scheme to make it easier for families to apply for, receive and use Healthy Start benefits.
37. The NHS Business Services Authority (NHSBSA) is delivering the project to digitise the Healthy Start scheme. As part of the project NHSBSA holds monthly showcase events for stakeholders, this includes representatives from NHS Trusts and local authorities.
38. NHSBSA will continue to communicate with all appropriate stakeholders in advance of each stage of the rollout of the digital project.
39. We have also recently made improvements to the Healthy Start scheme to support beneficiaries during the COVID-19 pandemic. The Healthy Start Scheme and Welfare Food (Miscellaneous Amendments) Regulations 2020, which came into force on 6 April 2020, removed the requirement for a health professional signature on the Healthy Start application form.
40. This supports people, for example pregnant women who are self-isolating, to apply for the scheme and reduces pressure on healthcare professionals. We have also temporarily extended the validity period of three sets of Healthy Start vouchers from eight weeks to 12 weeks, in response to concerns about delays with the postal system, and we will keep this under review.

The decision to increase the funding for lunches during school closures is welcome. The value cannot be allowed to regress once children return to school. The allowance allocated to schools for free school meals must be updated to at least the level provided during the school closures and linked to inflation thereafter. (Paragraph 201)

41. The Government took unprecedented and substantial action to provide free school meals to eligible children who were staying at home as a result of the coronavirus pandemic.
42. Under normal circumstances, schools do not provide free school meals to eligible children who are not in school. However, during the COVID-19 outbreak, we asked schools to continue supporting children eligible for benefits-related free school meals who were at home. In the first instance, we asked schools to speak to their suppliers and catering teams to arrange food parcels for collection or delivery. Where this was not possible, DfE established a national voucher scheme as an alternative means of provision.
43. Under the national voucher scheme, eligible children could receive a supermarket voucher worth £15 a week. The value of these vouchers reflected that parents would not be able to achieve the same economies of scale when buying food for their children from a supermarket as schools could achieve when buying in bulk for their pupils.
44. The free school meals factor in the national funding formula for schools increased in line with inflation in 2020-21. Both local authorities and schools have freedom to apply their own funding formulae locally.

We recommend that the Government outlines how it intends to mitigate the impact that their eligibility proposals will have on those families who will lose eligibility for free school meals. (Paragraph 206)

45. The Government has not made any change to free school meal eligibility that would result in a child losing any existing entitlement to free school meals.
46. Free school meals are an integral part of our provision for families on low incomes and our wider actions to promote social mobility. We are supporting around 1.4 million of the most disadvantaged children through benefits-related free school meals, saving families around £400 a year for each child. This compares with 1.1 million children receiving benefits-related free school meals in 2017.
47. More widely, since 2014 we have expanded free school meals to include further education students, and introduced universal infant free school meals which ensures a further 1.4 million pupils in Reception, Year 1 and Year 2 receive a free nutritious meal each day. DfE would need to explore the impact of any further adjustment to free school meal eligibility and consider this alongside other funding decisions.

We recommend that the Government must undertake rigorous research on the impact of Universal Infant Free School Meals on health and attainment outcomes and use the

results of this evidence base to inform future policy on school meals, including breakfasts. (Paragraph 212)

48. Take-up of universal infant free school meals has been consistently high since the policy was introduced in 2014. The evaluation of the pilots in Durham and Newham found that these meals created a culture where children sat down to eat with friends and teachers in a civilised environment: broadening social skills, teaching table manners and supporting equality and fairness by levelling differences in social background.
49. There have been a number of independent evaluations of universal infant free school meals, including by the Education Policy Institute in January 2019. Their findings showed that there has been a rapid increase in school meal take-up and many school leaders believe the meals have improved the profile of healthy eating across their school.

Monitoring and evaluation of the school food standards must be centrally coordinated to ensure consistent compliance. The Departments for Education and Health and Social Care should establish a joint task force responsible for monitoring and enforcing adherence to the school food standards. The taskforce should have the power to publish the names of non-adhering schools and where necessary require the development of an agreed action plan to meet standards. (Paragraph 229)

50. The Schools Food Standards provide the legislative framework to ensure schools provide children with healthy food and drink options, and to make sure that children get the energy and nutrition they need across the school day. The standards restrict food high in fat, salt and sugar (HFSS).
51. Compliance with the School Food Standards is mandatory for all maintained schools. We also expect all academies and free schools to comply with the standards, and since 2014 we have made this an explicit requirement in their funding agreements.
52. Governors have a responsibility to ensure compliance and should appropriately challenge the headteacher and the senior leadership team to ensure the school is meeting its obligations. If parents feel there is an issue with the content of the food being served at their child's school, they should in the first instance talk to the headteacher or senior leadership team, and should they be unhappy with the response, they may choose to make a complaint using the school's own complaints procedure. It is right and fair that a school has the opportunity to address a complaint in the first instance, and many issues can be resolved between schools and parents at a local level. However, if a parent has been through the school's complaints process and is not satisfied, they also can make a complaint to the Secretary of State, who can investigate.
53. DfE is working with PHE to update the School Food Standards to bring them into line with revised nutritional recommendations on sugar and fibre. The update will be coupled with detailed guidance to caterers and schools so that they are well prepared to adapt to the changes. DfE will consider this recommendation alongside its work to update the School Food Standards.

We recommend that the eligibility threshold for the National Schools Breakfast Programme is lowered and funding increased to ensure that the programme reaches all of those who need it. (Paragraph 241)

54. DfE is investing up to £35 million into the National School Breakfast Programme, which aims to kick-start or improve breakfast clubs in up to 2,450 schools in disadvantaged areas, making them sustainable in the long run. Before the coronavirus pandemic, Family Action estimated that the programme was providing a healthy and nutritious breakfast to around 280,000 children every day.
55. The focus of these clubs has been to target the most disadvantaged areas of the country – including DfE’s Opportunity Areas – to help make sure every child gets the best start in life. This is based on an eligibility criteria using the Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index (IDACI) deprivation scale – a nationally recognised indicator of need – to ensure fairness of provision is directed where it is most in need.
56. As the Committee notes, funding for the programme was extended by a further year until March 2021. As with all areas of government expenditure, DfE’s future departmental spending decisions is subject to the spending review, which is yet to be determined. We are working on identifying options for the future of school breakfast provision and will provide all interested parties with information in due course.

The National Schools Breakfast Programme must support and train facilitators to enable schools to access future external funding. (Paragraph 242)

57. The funds for the National School Breakfast Programme are designed to kick-start or improve breakfast clubs in disadvantaged areas and make them sustainable in the long run. The programme co-ordinators, Family Action and Magic Breakfast, already work closely with schools to provide guidance and support to help them to keep their breakfast clubs continuing to operate once their involvement in the programme ceases.

Notwithstanding Government support to access funds, central funding for the National School Breakfast Programme must not be withdrawn all at once, producing a ‘cliff edge’ effect. The funding must be removed gradually and only when schools are able to access reliable sources of funding to sustain the clubs. (Paragraph 243)

58. The National School Breakfast Programme was extended by a further year until March 2021, with up to £11.8 million being invested in 2020-21. These funds will help schools in the programme to continue with their breakfast clubs as well as enable our supplier Family Action to recruit up to an additional 650 new schools. DfE is working on identifying options for the future of school breakfast provision and will provide all interested parties with information in due course.

We recommend that the Government should significantly extend the funding provided through the Holiday Activities and Food programme to ensure that more children can access holiday clubs. It should use generous thresholds based on the Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index to determine which areas should receive this funding. (Paragraph 253)

59. This summer, our £9 million Holiday Activities and Food programme will work across 17 Local Authority areas, providing thousands of children with access to healthy meals and enriching activities and building on the success of the 2018 and 2019 programmes. The Government has not made any commitments beyond the 2020 programme. The future of the programme will be considered as part of the forthcoming spending review and, like all programmes, will be considered alongside other government priorities.

The benefits of high and robust standards for public procurement and public food offerings are clear. The Government must strengthen and develop the Buying Standards for Food and Catering Services to ensure that they fulfil their potential to create a healthier and more sustainable food environment. In particular, the revised standards should:

- **Apply equally and consistently to all Government procurement, including the NHS, prisons and the armed forces;**
 - **Apply to all private suppliers contracted to provide food for the above;**
 - **Require a significantly higher proportion of food to be produced in line with the Publicly Available Integrated Production or Integrated Farm Management Standard than is currently required;**
 - **Embed nutritional standards based on the Eatwell Guide;**
 - **Disallow any escape clause, as currently exists, for measures on the basis of cost;**
 - **Provide for an enforcement mechanism. (Paragraph 265)**
60. The Government is committed to using public sector food procurement policy to improve the quality of food and catering services within the public sector. This is in terms of quality of produce and quality of food, as well as supporting local communities, better nutrition and improving sustainability. A number of government departments hold responsibility for public sector food provision.
61. The Government Buying Standards for Food and Catering Services (GBSF) are a set of standards owned by Defra that public sector organisations are encouraged to follow when buying food and catering services. It also includes a requirement that all food served must be produced in a way that meets UK legislative standards for animal welfare, or equivalent standards.
62. The GBSF sets out the minimum standards that must be adhered to, if food or catering services are procured via Crown Commercial Services (CCS). These standards are already mandatory across central government departments. This ensures that food and drink served on the government estate, including prisons, the armed forces and hospitals that are also required to follow the GBSF, encourages and enables healthier eating habits. Schools must follow the School Food Standards legislation but may also choose to use the GBSF in addition.
63. Defra is determined to strengthen its collective approach through collaboration across Government departments, industry, the devolved administrations and other partners to increase uptake of the GBSF and to exert a stronger influence in the public procurement space. During COVID-19 Defra worked closely with other Government departments to support them in making arrangements with their suppliers to ensure that food supply continues.

64. Due to the widely different food and catering requirements of public sector organisations, GBSF is required to be generic enough to support all sectors. Defra is working with the NHS to embed the GBSF into the National Healthcare Food Standards, and working with DfE to understand how the GBSF can fit into their School Food Standards.
65. The Government is not responsible for directly procuring food and catering services, and we do not define where food is sourced or what menus should look like. However, any private supplier supplying for the public sector is required to follow the specifications set out in GBSF.
66. Defra works with CCS to integrate our guidance into their new food procurement frameworks, therefore ensuring that private suppliers verified to supply to the public sector are compliant with our food policies.
67. Within the GBSF it is strongly recommended that farm assurance schemes and management plans, such as those stated in the recommendation, are used to verify compliance. The Balanced Scorecard is a supporting tool to use in order to procure food and catering services, and it states that independent certification schemes should be used to help identify suitable suppliers.
68. The GBSF already sets out requirements that all food served must be produced in a way that meets the high UK legislative standards for environmental and animal welfare. For example, all palm oil used for cooking and as an ingredient must be sustainably sourced. In addition, fish must be demonstrably sustainable and all food and drink must meet higher environmental production standards. When updating GBSF, we will work across the Government to understand if we can make this more ambitious to ensure that publicly provided food is of the highest quality.
69. Through the Plan for Public Procurement of Food and Catering Services, the Government is seeking to simplify procurement processes and the procurement landscape to open the market to more SMEs and local producers. To facilitate this Defra is working with CCS to develop a new platform to assist local producers to gain easier access to public procurement contracts.
70. It is important that the public sector leads by example in creating a healthier food environment on their premises. DHSC has responsibility for the nutrition standards in the GBSF. Defra has been working closely with DHSC to update the nutrition standards. On top of this, Part Two of the National Food Strategy Independent Review will include a comprehensive recommendation on what the Government can do to ensure that the food the state pays for directly – for example in schools, hospitals, prisons, and in government offices – is both healthy and sustainable.
71. As committed to in chapter two of the childhood obesity plan, DHSC and Defra have worked together and have consulted on strengthening the nutrition standards in the GBSF to bring them in line with the latest scientific dietary recommendations. PHE has provided advice and support to inform this work. DHSC will publish its response to the consultation in due course.

72. GBSF nutrition-related standards are underpinned by evidence-based dietary recommendations to reduce intakes of salt, sugar and saturated fat and to increase consumption of fruit vegetables, fish and fibre. They align with the Eatwell Guide which shows the proportions of the different types of foods and drinks for a healthy balanced diet.
73. The GBSF toolkit for suppliers and procurers includes a Balanced Scorecard approach to assessing the value of contract bids. It includes award criteria to reward good practice, and to further stimulate investment and innovation. Procurers are strongly encouraged to give sufficient weight to a number of criteria over and above cost, including quality, social impacts, environmental management and the benefits of consuming locally grown seasonal food.
74. Defra is currently looking at updating GBSF to bring it in line with updated policy and public procurement regulations. Defra will work with policy teams across the Government to strengthen and develop all policy areas and ensure that we understand where any escape clauses are and how best to update them.
75. The Government is working to improve how we can measure and evaluate the procurement of food and catering services across the public sector. For central government departments, GBSF compliance is currently measured via The Greening Government Commitment. This measures the actions that UK government departments and their agencies will take to reduce their impacts on the environment.
76. Due to the complex landscape across the different sectors, monitoring and enforcing compliance is best done at the local level. Users of the GBSF (both the contracting authority and suppliers) will need to consider how to monitor and manage compliance with the technical specifications and contract performance requirements agreed through the procurement.
77. We are working with the NHS to embed the GBSF and Balanced Scorecard into the National Healthcare Food Standards via a maturity matrix which will encourage a phased approach to implementation. As part of this work, individual NHS Trusts will be looking at how they can ensure that these standards are implemented and reported on to encourage continuous improvement, in a way that is suitable for their needs.
78. On top of this, the CCS is developing a food supply framework based on a dynamic purchasing system. When the framework is launched it will further help the Government deliver its commitments in this area and incorporate the ability to measure and evaluate the food that is being procured.

The proposals in Chapter 2 of the Childhood Obesity Plan to impose restrictions on the advertising of HFSS foods were welcomed by a large majority of our evidence. The Government must, by the end of 2020, roll out these proposals both for television and online. (Paragraph 278)

79. Current advertising restrictions for HFSS products are failing to protect children from seeing a significant amount of HFSS adverts on TV and online. The advertised diet in the UK does not reflect a healthy balanced diet that would support the population to live healthier lives. Analysis from September 2019 shows that almost half of all food

adverts shown over the month on ITV1, Channel 4, Channel 5 and Sky1 were for HFSS products. This rose to nearly 60% during 6-9pm, the time slot where children's viewing peaks.

80. In response to feedback to our consultation on advertising, the Government intends to ban HFSS products being shown on TV and online before 9pm. We will publish our full consultation response by the end of this year.
81. The Government wants to go further online and we will publish a short consultation as soon as possible on how we would introduce a total HFSS advertising restriction online. It is our intention to implement both TV and online measures at the same time by the end of 2022.

Proposals to end the product placement of HFSS foods in popular supermarket locations were welcomed. The Government must, by the end of 2020, enact them, ensuring that the ban covers the widest range of less healthy foods possible and includes small businesses. (Paragraph 287)

The Government must, by the end of 2020, act on their proposals to restrict price promotions on HFSS products. (Paragraph 293)

82. In the UK we spend more buying food products on promotion than any other European country and these promotions are influencing preferences toward less healthy products. We want to work with supermarkets to support shoppers to purchase healthier options, shift the balance of promotions towards healthier options and maximise the availability of healthier products available on promotion.
83. In response to feedback to our consultation on promotions, the Government will legislate to stop the promotion of HFSS products by volume (such as buy one get one free and multi-buy offers) and location (at checkouts, the end of aisles and store entrances) both online and in store in England.
84. We will publish our full response to the consultation shortly.

The Government must conduct a review on the use of licensing and planning to ensure that:

- a) **local authorities are able to enforce exclusion zones of at least 800m around schools; and**
 - b) **when use of a building subject to use class A3 or A5 is transferred, new planning consent must be obtained. (Paragraph 305)**
85. The revised Healthy and Safe Communities planning practice guidance makes clear that planning policies can, where justified, seek to limit the proliferation of particular uses, such as hot food takeaways, where evidence demonstrates this is appropriate.
 86. A planning application is always needed to open an additional hot food takeaway, and any such application would then be determined in accordance with the local plan policies. All planning permissions apply to the premises and not the owner, and unlike licensing, additional permission is not required when changing hands.

87. We know that in some councils, public health teams are already inputting on licensing decisions but not all food outlets need to apply for a license. Food outlets, such as takeaways, do not need to apply for a license from the council unless they want to trade between the hours of 11pm and 5am.
88. Street food vendors, such as ice cream vans and burger vans, do need licences from councils. We know some councils are already taking action in this space, for example Leicester City Council has introduced a street trading policy to prevent burger vans trading outside school gates, and Guildford Borough Council has a policy that requires at least one healthier meal option to be on the menu.
89. Councils should support the role that town centres play at the heart of their communities and promote their long-term vitality and viability. They will need to consider the interaction with the location of existing high streets, shopping parades and local shops as rigid exclusion zones could serve to undermine the viability of such long-standing retail uses.
90. The Childhood Obesity Trailblazer Programme, run in partnership between DHSC, Local Government Association and PHE, supports five local authorities to address childhood obesity at local level including local action to create healthier food environments through the planning system. A key part of the programme is to share this learning with others to encourage and empower wider local action across the country. This learning will help the Government to consider further actions we could take to enable ambitious local action.

Immediately following the withdrawal of the permitted development rights introduced in March 2020, the Government should consult upon and enact a scheme to enable local authorities to charge out of home food outlets an amount of council tax which is in proportion to the healthiness of their food offering. (Paragraph 306)

91. To assist restaurants, cafés and drinking establishments that had to close in March to reduce the spread of coronavirus, a time-limited permitted right was introduced to enable them to provide a food takeaway and delivery service. The right is available until 23 March 2021, and after that date restaurants, cafés and pubs wishing to operate as a hot food takeaways will require an application for planning permission. This flexibility has helped restaurants, cafés and pubs to continue to operate during the COVID-19 lockdown and restrictions, and increased the availability of food to members of the public who may be shielding.
92. Non-domestic properties, such as cafés and takeaways, are liable for business rates rather than council tax. A property's business rates bill is based on its 'rateable value' which represents the annual rent that a tenant would be willing to pay for it on the open market. Rateable values are assessed independently of Ministers by the Valuation Office Agency and we do not intervene in that process. This ensures that the burden of business rates is shared fairly amongst businesses around the country. While there are no plans to reform the business rates system in order to reflect the healthiness of any food offering that ratepayers provide, the Government is currently undertaking a fundamental review of business rates and is considering the assessment of rateable values and the effectiveness and operation of different reliefs as part of that exercise.

The Government, in partnership with local authorities, should develop a scheme to support food retailer businesses, including those providing fast food, to develop and sell healthy alternatives. It should also determine and provide support to empower other kinds of food providers such as street vendors to sell healthy food in communities. (Paragraph 312)

93. The revised National Planning Policy Framework has a dedicated chapter on ‘Promoting healthy and safe communities’. It expects planning policies and decisions to achieve healthy, inclusive and safe places, which promote social interaction, are safe and accessible, and support healthy lifestyles, especially where this would address identified local health and wellbeing needs.
94. Planning can influence the built environment to improve health through improving access to healthier food for local communities. Local planning authorities can support opportunities for communities to access a wide range of healthier food production (e.g. allotments) and consumption choices (e.g. food markets and local shops).

The Government must publish its consultation on how to address the marketing and labelling of infant food without delay. The responses to that consultation, and the related measures to ensure parents and carers have accurate information on infant food products must be published in 2020. (Paragraph 316)

95. DHSC will consult later this year on our proposals to help parents and carers of infants and young children to make healthier choices through more honest marketing and labelling of infant foods.

We recommend that the Government conduct a review of labelling on food and drink products. The findings of the review should form the basis of regulations which address both date labelling and the standardisation and simplification of front-of pack traffic light labelling. The new regulations should be compulsory for all food manufacturers and retailers. (Paragraph 324)

96. The Government is committed to helping consumers make informed and healthier choices, and supporting consumers to understand the nutritional content of the food and drink they buy is key. To ensure UK labelling remains effective for consumers, we will consider a range of measures to build on the success of our current ‘traffic light’ nutritional labelling scheme.
97. The Government has launched a public consultation to gather views and evidence on our current ‘traffic light’ Front of Pack Nutrition Labelling scheme, on new international examples and to learn about how Front of Pack Nutrition Labels on food and drinks are being used by consumers and industry.
98. We want to hear how the public think we can build on the success of Front of Pack Nutrition Labelling in the UK to ensure it helps consumers make informed decisions about the food and drink they buy. This consultation will inform our next steps on labelling at the end of the transition period, now the UK has left the EU.

99. The ‘best before’ date indicating the date the food is best consumed before, and the ‘use by’ date indicating that the food must be used by this date for safety reasons, remains helpful to consumers and we know that most people (83%) know that food remains safe after the expiry of the ‘best before’ date.²
100. The Government fully supports the valuable evidence-based work that Waste and Resources Action Programme (WRAP) are doing in;
- helping businesses apply the correct date in an appropriate way: ‘use by’ only when necessary, and both ‘use by’ and ‘best before’ providing as long as possible before expiry;
 - supporting consumers, both through public information and by guidance for on-pack information, to continue to increase the understanding of how to store food properly and understand the difference between ‘best before’ and ‘use by’;
 - providing comprehensive guidance on redistribution of surplus food to businesses, charities and other organisations; and
 - supporting information on the safe use of food beyond its ‘best before’ date for consumers.

The Government should review the current zero-rated VAT arrangements on some food products which are known to be energy dense, and contain high levels of salt, sugar and unhealthy types of fat. It should commence this review before the end of the transition period in 2020. (Paragraph 378)

101. We note the Committee’s recommendation. Decisions about the tax system are made by the Chancellor at fiscal events, in line with the Government’s tax policy-making framework.

As part of any future measures the Government sets out to tackle obesity and poor dietary health, it should develop and publish a consultation with industry on the issue of mandating maximum calories per portion. This consultation process must involve active engagement with SMEs and the catering sector. (Paragraph 392)

102. The reduction and reformulation programme, which forms part of the measures to reduce childhood obesity, encourages manufacturers to reduce the portion size of their products by setting maximum calorie guidelines and engaging with stakeholders during the process of doing so. Stakeholder engagement is a key element of PHE’s work on the programme, which has a particular focus on the eating out, takeaway and delivery sector including caterers. The engagement includes trade associations, and the PHE regions and local authorities, which helps to ensure that messages reach the wider sector including small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs).
103. Although the focus of the programme is on larger businesses, as they contribute the largest amount of calories, salt, sugar etc into the diet, they are also relevant to SMEs.
104. Successful action has already been taken by some businesses to reduce portion sizes and reformulate products. The second progress report for the sugar reduction

² https://wrap.org.uk/sites/files/wrap/Citizen_responses_to_the_Covid-19_lockdown_0.pdf

programme showed reductions in calories per portion for chocolate and sweet confectionery, and yogurts.

We recommend that all reformulation programmes, both voluntary and mandatory, should be subject to transparent and regular monitoring. Progress reports need to be carried out on a regular basis by the responsible body and should include details of the companies that have successfully made reductions in the levels of salt and sugar in their products, to aid industry-wide reformulation. (Paragraph 399)

105. Reduction and reformulation progress reports are published regularly for each strand of the reformulation programme. These reports include assessments of progress by industry for the programme as a whole, as well as at individual business and food / drink category level where the data permits. This includes businesses with the biggest share of the market, and the top selling products, within each product category.

We recommend that where voluntary approaches are adopted, the Government should make clear that if the industry does not respond comprehensively and swiftly then regulatory action will follow. Both the sugar and salt reduction programmes are unlikely to meet their stated targets. To ensure that necessary and significant public health improvements are actually achieved, the Government needs to face the reality of the situation and start to plan now for how further progress on reformulation might be delivered. The Government should set out now what mandatory action would look like, if sufficient progress is not made on the existing reformation programmes in the near future. Industry can then prepare. We ask that the Government does this by the end of 2020. (Paragraph 400)

106. We note that the voluntary reformulation programme is due to run until 2021. It would not be appropriate to make a decision about further measures until after the programme has concluded.

107. The process of voluntary engagement with the food industry to reduce levels of nutrients in foods has a strong track record, as acknowledged by the Committee, but reformulation takes time and the programmes of work are not yet concluded.

108. Work on reduction and reformulation is one aspect of government action to reduce obesity.

109. We have been clear where progress is not being delivered, we will consider what further action can be taken. We have laid down a strong marker, in the soft drinks industry levy, that the Government is willing to take regulatory action.

Mandatory (fiscal) approaches can be highly successful, as evidenced by the Soft Drinks Industry Levy. As there is a proven mechanism for delivering successful reductions in harmful ingredients, in a way which has not had a significant detrimental impact on the industry, the Government must not delay in exploring the application of fiscal measures (such as further levies or changes to VAT) to other product categories where reformulation is not in line with Government guidance or targets. (Paragraph 401)

110. The Government is monitoring the effectiveness of the voluntary product reformulation programmes, and notes the role the soft drinks industry levy has played in encouraging the reformulation of soft drinks.

111. The Government has been clear, for example, that if the evidence shows that industry has not made enough progress on reducing sugar, we may extend the levy to sugary milk drinks.

We recommend that the Government stands by its commitment to review the Soft Drinks Industry Levy in 2020, and commits to extending the levy to other drinks containing added sugar, including sugary milk-based drinks. It should also conduct work to explore the impact of lowering the current sugar thresholds to encourage further reformulation. It should rapidly determine which other food products high in sugar could be subjected to a similar levy. (Paragraph 402)

112. Sweetened milk based drinks are currently exempt from the soft drinks industry levy as they are a source of calcium and other nutrients. The Government has previously committed to review the exemption for sugary milk drinks from the levy this year, and further announcements about this will be made in due course. We are clear that dairy — or dairy alternatives — form an important part of a balanced diet.

We note that the Government’s transition plan includes a commitment for largely unchanged funding for farmers until at least the end of the current Parliament. During this time, we urge the Government to undertake full and transparent consultation when considering the public goods that will be rewarded under the ELMS. (Paragraph 426)

113. The Government is committed to a full and transparent consultation of the Environmental Land Management (ELM) scheme design prior to full rollout in 2024. We also continue to work closely with stakeholders to develop the scheme design.

114. From 28 February 2020, Defra made publicly available a ‘Policy Discussion Document’ (PDD) outlining initial thinking of scheme design, principles and proposals including the classification and details of the public goods identified for ELM, and how the scheme could be built around them. Defra invited responses to the PDD in both written and online formats in two periods between February - April and then 24 June - 31 July 2020 (the intervening pause was due to COVID-19 restrictions). Throughout July Defra completed a series of live webinars open to public participation, again outlining the PDD details and giving the wider public the opportunity to question and listen to responses from the ELM team on proposals and the identified public goods.

115. Defra has continued to meet regularly with a strategic stakeholder group, the ELM Engagement Group, which is made up of circa 30 representatives across farming, environmental and other interested organisations, specifically to engage and consider the scheme progression and design. Defra has also run a series of ‘Satellite’ sub groups to look at specific areas of scheme design (Payments, Advice & Guidance & Spatial Priorities), and a series of ‘sector specific’ deep dives to consider sector concerns and views.

116. Defra is also running a ‘Tests & Trials’ programme with a variety of stakeholders, land managers, practitioners and NGOs to look at various components of scheme design and principals designed to deliver the identified ELM public goods. This commenced activity in 2019 and is planned to run for the duration of transition, into ELM rollout and beyond. Periodical reports of the progress and outcomes of these Tests & Trials will be published for public circulation.
117. Defra plans to run a ‘National Pilot’ with live practitioners in several phases between 2021 - 2024 to further test consolidated parts of the developing scheme design, and to feed into the iterative design process, in order to enhance ongoing and open consultation and learning.
118. Defra is also planning a further programme of public engagement in various formats including Agricultural Shows and events, attending third party organised events, and using related trusted networks and Arm’s Length Bodies to raise awareness of the of development and proposals of the ELM policy and to give the public opportunity to understand and feed in.

The Government must ensure that every public good outlined in the Agriculture Bill is accompanied by a standardised framework to allow measurements and targets to be clear, consistent and easy to use. (Paragraph 429)

119. Clause 1 of the Agriculture Bill will provide Defra with the ability to spend money for furthering certain ‘purposes’. This will allow Defra to introduce its policies in respect of environmental land management, productivity, plant health and animal health and welfare. These purposes encompass the environmental public goods identified in the 25 Year Environment Plan that the ELM scheme is intended to deliver: clean air; clean and plentiful water; thriving plants and wildlife; reduction in and protection from environmental hazards; beauty, heritage and engagement with the environment; and mitigation of and adaptation to climate change.
120. Defra is in the process of determining in more detail what ELM will pay for. As part of this, Defra is considering which land management actions can create the intended environmental public goods. These actions will be supported with clear technical guidance on how to deliver the environmental outcomes. In addition, Defra will determine the range of indicators and metrics needed to monitor delivery of environmental outcomes. Defra will make sure that this additional information is communicated clearly and consistently and is easy to use.
121. Defra is also determining the most appropriate basis for payments for ELM, including whether we pay for actions or outcomes. As set out in the Policy Discussion Document, Defra anticipates that payments for Tier 1 will be action-based. Therefore, under Tier 1 farmers will not miss out on payments if, through no fault of their own, the intended outcome is not achieved. Defra also anticipates that Tier 2 payments will initially be based on actions. However, Defra could offer top-up payments for delivery of additional results or move towards a more results-based approach in the longer term. This would only be where output result indicators can be tested and proven to be feasible. Defra recognises that any agreed targets must be clear, realistic, practicable and measurable.

122. Defra currently monitors agricultural and environmental change in England using a number of indicators (for example ammonia emissions, farmland bird populations and chemical levels in rivers) that measure environmental outcomes such as water and air quality, and increased biodiversity. Defra will continue to use these and develop further indicators and monitoring options that relate to the public goods, in order to assess the benefits realised as a direct result of the new agricultural system, and in particular the ELM scheme.

The Government must ensure that the ability to stipulate conditions for payments under the Environmental Land Management Scheme is both rigorously and fairly deployed. Where conditions are not met, enforcement action in the form of withholding payment must reliably follow. (Paragraph 431)

123. The Government is committed to ensuring that the scheme conditions are comprehensive and have sufficient infrastructure to be rigorously and fairly deployed. Defra proposes that this key area will be tested in the National Pilot, and a consultation on the enabling enforcement 'Statutory Instrument' was in circulation for the month of August, confirming our commitment and priority of this area of scheme design.

124. Defra is also using the National Pilot to trial new things, so a major consideration for our monitoring and enforcement approach is to minimise the chance that participants fear being punished for making 'mistakes'. Defra wants to learn as much as possible from them about what works and what does not. The monitoring and enforcement approach needs to be fully attuned to this significant change from the past.

125. Where appropriate, Defra proposes that it would provide advice or guidance in order to support the agreement-holder to deliver aims and also to remedy breaches, if this is necessary. This is particularly relevant to the ELM National Pilot where it will be important for us to learn as much as possible about what works and what does not. Defra proposes that action against any breach is only taken when there is serious misuse of public money or fraud. Defra also proposes to have a provision to consider whether account should be taken of exceptional circumstances, possibly something akin to 'force majeure' or wider.

126. Using these proposals in the National Pilot will allow Defra to develop a modern, strong and comprehensive system for ensuring that scheme conditions are fairly and correctly deployed and subsequently enforced as part of the full roll out of the ELM scheme.

The Government's White Paper on the National Food Strategy must include a definitive outline of what constitutes a sustainable diet with regards to health, social and environmental impacts. It must be accompanied with a graded action plan and communications strategy to move towards this diet. (Paragraph 440)

127. The National Food Strategy Independent Review was commissioned to deliver safe, healthy, affordable food, regardless of where people live or how much they earn, and to restore and enhance the natural environment for the next generation in this country. We will carefully consider any recommendations that the final National Food Strategy Independent Review makes in relation to diet.

The National Food Strategy should outline a comprehensive action plan to increase the demand for and consumption of fruit and vegetables. (Paragraph 445)

128. The Government will carefully consider appropriate measures to support the consumption of fruit and vegetables as part of our response to the final National Food Strategy Independent Review.

We recommend that Government should list Public Health as a ‘Public Good’ under Clause One of the Agriculture Bill. Measures eligible for financial assistance to improve public health should be focussed on (but not necessarily limited to) those activities which increase demand for fruits and vegetables. (Paragraph 455)

129. The Government recognises that in many ways agriculture and health are connected. The Government is also putting public health at the heart of everything we do. That is why we are working across the Government to ensure that improving public health is a priority for government policy.

130. We want to encourage increased production of fruit and vegetables in a sustainable way, increasing both quantity and quality on a domestic level, and increasing exports. Clause 1(2) of the Agriculture Bill gives powers to provide financial assistance for the purposes of starting, or improving the productivity of, a horticultural activity. We are currently considering the best way to support the horticulture sector, and will work with the industry to design a replacement for the EU Fruit and Vegetable Aid Scheme.

131. The provisions set out in the Bill are designed to ensure that farmers, land managers and growers, receive the support they need in order to provide home-grown food produced to high environmental and animal welfare standards.

132. The National Food Strategy Independent Review will cover the entire food chain from farm to fork and will address the challenge of supporting people to eat healthy diets.

Food imports must be required to adhere to the same health, environmental and animal welfare standards as food produced in the UK. To fail to do so would make a mockery of our stated environmental values, and irrevocably undermine British producers. The Government must set out how it intends to ensure that current standards are maintained in future trade agreements, and what safeguards will be in place to guarantee this. (Paragraph 469)

133. The Government has a clear manifesto commitment that in all of our trade negotiations we will not compromise on our high environmental protection, animal welfare and food safety standards, and we are working to deliver that commitment. The European Union (Withdrawal) Act 2018 retains our standards on environmental protections, animal welfare, animal and plant health, and food safety at the end of the transition period. This provides a firm basis for maintaining the same high level of protection for both domestic and imported products.

134. Existing food safety provisions on the decontamination of poultry carcasses were transferred onto the UK statute book through the European Union (Withdrawal) Act 2018 and will continue to operate independently in UK law after the transition period. No products, other than potable water, are approved in the EU to decontaminate poultry carcasses and this remains the case in the UK now we have left the EU. The UK has also transposed EU Council Directive 96/22/EC (as amended), which bans the import and production of meat using growth promoting hormone or beta agonist treatments and is UK law through national legislation for each administration of the United Kingdom. This will also continue now we have left the EU.
135. The Government has recently announced the establishment of a Trade and Agriculture Commission. This Commission brings together industry stakeholders including farming unions across the UK, using their expertise to advise on how best the UK can seize new export opportunities, while ensuring animal welfare and environmental standards in food production are not undermined. The Commission will provide advice to inform our approach as we negotiate free trade deals and promote our agenda at the WTO and other international fora, and to advance and protect consumer interests and those of developing countries. The Commission has a fixed six month lifetime, at the end of which it will submit an advisory report which will be presented to Parliament by the Department for International Trade.
136. Without exception, all imports into the UK will meet our high food safety standards. These standards, for both domestic production and imports, are overseen by the Food Standards Agency and Food Standards Scotland. These agencies provide independent advice to the UK Government and devolved administrations. They will continue to do so in order to ensure that all food imports comply with the UK's high safety standards and retain the confidence of consumers and international trading partners.
137. Alongside this, the UK will repatriate the functions of audit and inspections that are currently carried out by the European Commission to ensure that trading partners continue to meet our import conditions for food and feed safety, animal and plant health, and animal welfare at slaughter. This will provide a standing, robust system that will work alongside border controls to maintain our high standards. It will ensure that trading partners have the necessary infrastructure and regulation in place to export safe food and animal products to the UK, which either meet or exceed UK import conditions, and will then ensure that these standards are maintained.
138. The Government is committed to the highest standards of animal welfare. We have committed to a serious and rapid examination of the role of labelling in promoting high standards and high welfare across the UK market, and to consult on this at the end of the transition period. We are going into all our trade negotiations clear that we will uphold our animal welfare standards and the values of our farmers in future deals and we will use the most appropriate levers available to achieve this.
139. The Government is clear that more trade should not come at the expense of the environment. In line with our international obligations, the Government will continue to ensure a high level of protection of the environment in new trade agreements. We are committed to upholding the UK's high environmental standards and will consider the full range of mechanisms available to us. Prior to negotiations commencing, the

Government published scoping assessments of the broad impacts of new free trade agreements. This includes a preliminary assessment of the potential implications for the environment. The Government will also publish a full impact assessment alongside the full treaty text at the end of negotiations.

140. More widely, the Government wants to go further and do better on environmental protection, and has no intention of lowering the UK's already high standards. Leaving the EU is an opportunity for better regulation – looking at how excessively bureaucratic and disproportionate EU rules and processes can be reformed (for example, as set out by the Secretary of State on 27 July 2020 in relation to the new Environmental Land Management scheme for farmers³). We will champion the most effective policies and legislation for our environmental ambition. As part of measures in the Environment Bill, the Government will conduct a review every two years of the significant developments in legislation made internationally on the environment. This will ensure we keep abreast of developments in driving forward our domestic environmental protection legislation.

The Government must provide sufficient and stable funding for research and development into agricultural technology and new ways of farming if sought after progress in increasing farming efficiency is to be made. (Paragraph 478)

141. The Government recognises the need for sufficient and stable long-term funding for research and development (R&D) in order to realise the goals of increased productivity, sustainability and resilience in the agri-food system, and has committed to invest 2.4% of GDP in R&D within 10 years.
142. The Government has committed significant funding to agri-tech and innovation through the £160 million Agri-Tech Strategy in 2013 and currently with the £90 million Industrial Strategy Challenge Fund 'Transforming Food Production' (TFP) initiative. TFP aims to put the UK at the forefront of advanced sustainable agriculture through transformative, game-changing industry-led R&D projects which will contribute to achieving net zero agricultural emissions.
143. Building upon these programmes, Defra is also developing an ambitious Innovation R&D package as part of the new policy measures for agriculture outside of the Common Agriculture Policy, planned to launch from 2022. This package aims to generate ground-breaking research and increase the uptake of transformative technologies and new approaches that could offer step changes in production efficiency and GHG reduction.
144. The Innovation R&D package will focus on supporting research to deliver a boost to agricultural productivity, sustainability, and resilience. Research will support the transition to low-carbon farming methods and contribute to delivery of the Government's target of net zero emissions by 2050. It will improve the connectivity between industry, researchers, farmers and growers by coordinating research into strategic priorities and industry-specific hurdles, and accelerating the adoption of new innovation.

³ <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/government-to-cut-red-tape-for-farmers-as-they-plan-for-2021>

The Government must ensure that the multi-annual financial assistance plans to be published under the Agriculture Bill are stable and not subject to substantive change: providing a sufficient amount of detail to allow farmers to make investment decisions. (Paragraph 483)

145. Clause 4 of the Agriculture Bill places a duty on the Defra Secretary of State to prepare, and then have regard to, multi-annual financial assistance ('MAFA') plans. The plans must be published and laid before Parliament and this will allow Parliament and stakeholders to scrutinise the strategic priorities for which financial assistance will be given. To provide stability and certainty, the first MAFA plan will initially cover a seven-year period whilst subsequent plans must be for a minimum of five years. The Government has set out its priorities and intentions, which are consistent with Defra's 25 Year Environment Plan and does not expect that the plans will require frequent changes. If social, economic or environmental circumstances change and strategic objectives and details of financial assistance schemes within a MAFA plan need to be amended, the Bill makes it clear that this is possible.

146. The Government has already pledged to guarantee the current level of funding in every year of this Parliament. This commitment and the detail outlined within the MAFA plan will provide certainty for farmers and the sector to make investment decisions. Future spending allocations will be determined in the usual way at fiscal events. Should those events substantively impact on the strategic objectives and financial assistance schemes, then the Government is legally obligated to amend the plan — ensuring that there is always an updated plan available for scrutiny.

Any investment in or policy change related to farming productivity, including investment in agricultural technology or land use must take account of the imperatives to avoid undermining the ability to produce food in the future, and to protect biodiversity and animal welfare. (Paragraph 488)

147. The Government is clear that food production and the environment can, and should, go hand in hand. Agriculture policy is devolved, and in England the Agriculture Bill will place an obligation on the Defra Secretary of State to have regard to the need to encourage the production of food in an environmentally sustainable way.

148. As we move away from the EU's Common Agricultural Policy, the Government's reformed agricultural policy will include measures to support a more prosperous, efficient and productive sector, which also has a positive impact on the environment.

149. We will provide grants to farmers, foresters and growers so that they can invest in equipment, technology and infrastructure that will help them to increase their productivity, improve animal health and welfare, and enhance the environment. These investments will not only improve business performance, but will also help to deliver environmental benefits by reducing inputs, emissions and waste.

150. We will also invest in innovation, with an R&D package that will not only seek to produce a step change in UK agricultural productivity, but will also enhance the sustainability, efficiency and resilience of UK food production. Our Innovation R&D package will include targeted research, focused on key strategic themes such as clean

growth and climate-smart agriculture to enhance the sustainability of food production and help achieve the Government's target of net zero emissions by 2050.

151. These productivity measures will operate alongside the Government's flagship ELM scheme, which will help safeguard the natural assets that support domestic food production by rewarding farmers and other land managers for delivering public goods such as clean air, clean and plentiful water, adaptation to and mitigation of climate change, and thriving plants and wildlife.

152. We are also committed to maintaining the UK's position as world leaders in animal welfare. Improved animal health strengthens animal welfare, and we are working to establish a new Animal Health and Welfare Pathway, developing a new way for the Government and farmers to work in partnership.

Progress in tackling food waste will not be achieved without meaningful action from the retail sector. The Government should embark on a concerted effort to encourage sustainable purchasing behaviour from retailers. Consideration should be given to financial disincentives for retail or purchasing practices which lead to excessive pre-farm gate food waste. (Paragraph 501)

153. The Government acknowledges that more can be done to reduce food waste in the primary production stage.

154. Conversations with industry have suggested that a principal cause of food waste on farm is unfair business practices at the point of first sale, where unreasonably late cancellations or late specification changes, among other scenarios, can lead to produce being left unharvested or rotting in the field.

155. We are taking action to clamp down on these kinds of unfair contractual practices through the 'fair dealings' powers contained in the Agriculture Bill. We intend to work with the farming and processing industries as we design the statutory codes of practice to be introduced under these powers. The recently published consultation into dairy sector contracts invites views about how the dairy supply chain can become more efficient. The Government intends to replicate this approach with other relevant production sectors in turn.

156. The Government also supports the Courtauld Commitment 2025, a voluntary agreement which aims to reduce food waste from farm to fork and is delivered by WRAP. Courtauld 2025 calls on food businesses, such as retailers, to work with their suppliers to reduce waste in their operations, including in primary production.

157. WRAP is at the international forefront of establishing a robust evidence base for pre-farm gate food surplus and waste, through aiding producers to measure and report their data. They have calculated that there is an estimated £1.2 billion worth of food waste in UK primary production. WRAP is using the findings of pilot food waste reduction projects in the strawberry and salad bag supply chains to develop guidance for other agricultural sectors.

158. The Government is supporting WRAP's efforts to improve quality specifications, a priority area highlighted by growers, to improve resource efficiency in production and to improve relationships across the supply chain.

We recommend that the Government should remain committed to responding to the National Food Strategy review with a White Paper within six months of the review's publication. It should commit to action the review's recommendations on publication. (Paragraph 516)

159. The Government remains committed to responding to the National Food Strategy Independent Review within six months of the final report, which is expected to be published in 2021. We will consider the recommendations from the Review, and will outline the Government's policy intentions through a White Paper.

Government must implement a mandatory reporting regime for adherence to clear and consistent sustainability and health metrics, as well as adherence to procurement standards. This should apply to all supermarkets, major food and drink manufacturers, public procurers and their contracted suppliers, and food outlets. (Paragraph 493)
In advance of the publication of the National Food Strategy review's final report, the Government should review levels of reporting on health and sustainability across the food system, to identify where gaps might exist in the current data sets that are available. (Paragraph 537)

The Government should develop and introduce a standardised set of mandatory reporting metrics aimed at monitoring the performance of Government departments and assessing progress made by the industry towards making healthy and sustainable food more accessible. The Government and the industry should be required to report on progress against those targets on a regular basis. (Paragraph 539)

160. The Government will carefully consider appropriate measurement and evaluation as part of our response to the final National Food Strategy Independent Review, including a review of existing health and sustainability indicators.

The Government must ensure that the appropriate Whitehall infrastructure is in place to ensure that the aims of the forthcoming National Food Strategy can be coordinated effectively across Government departments. (Paragraph 552)

161. The Government will ensure it has the appropriate infrastructure in place to consider the proposals within the National Food Strategy Independent Review across government departments, and will deliver a coordinated response.

Given the success of the salt reduction programme under the Food Standards Agency, if industry fails to make the necessary progress against Government reformulation targets, the Government should return the responsibility for nutrition, labelling and reformulation programmes to the FSA, and provide it with the appropriate resources. (Paragraph 555)

162. The sugar reduction programme is making progress. Retailers and manufacturers achieved a 2.9% reduction in sales weighted average total sugar per 100g, for products included in the programme, between 2015 and 2018. Progress has been achieved in specific food categories, particularly for breakfast cereals (8.5%

reduction) and yogurts and fromage frais (10.3% reduction). For out of home businesses, the simple average total sugar per 100g has reduced by 4.9% between 2017 and 2018.

163. There have also been continued reductions in sugar levels in drinks that are subject to the soft drinks industry levy. We have seen the average sugar content of drinks subject to the levy decreasing by 28.8% between 2015 and 2018. This is clearly a great success.

164. Nevertheless, the Government remains committed to reviewing what more can be done to make sure we meet our bold ambition of halving childhood obesity by 2030 and will continue to monitor progress and emerging evidence carefully.

165. The voluntary sugar reduction and reformulation programme's final progress report will be in 2021.

166. We have been clear where progress is not being delivered, we will consider what further action can be taken.

We recommend the establishment of an independent body, analogous to the Committee on Climate Change, with responsibility for strategic oversight of the implementation of the National Food Strategy. This should include the monitoring and reporting on progress made against the health and sustainability targets outlined in paragraph 538. This independent body should have the power to advise the Government and report to Parliament on progress. (Paragraph 563)

167. The Government will carefully consider the appropriate governance and accountability structures as part of our response to the final National Food Strategy Independent Review, including the case for an independent body. It is Government policy that new Arm's Length Bodies should only be set up as a last resort, when consideration of all other delivery mechanisms have been exhausted. The establishment of any new body would need to be subject to rigorous cost-benefit analysis. The Government of the day is always accountable to Parliament.