

Webinar

Follow the Carrot:

How can more free school meals
boost British farming?

Tuesday 23rd September | 12:00pm - 1:00pm

Speakers:

Myles Bremner

Bremner & Co

Rosie Osborne

Bremner & Co

Caroline Morgan

Local Food Links

Tom Simmons

Riviera Produce

Hannah Gibbs

Bridging the Gap, Sustain

Jayne Jones

Chair, Public Sector Catering Alliance

sustain



**Children's Food
Campaign**

Bremner & Co



**AMPNEY BROOK
FOUNDATION**



Follow the Carrot

Could expanding free school meals boost the UK food and farming economy?

Research & findings overview

sustain
the alliance for better food and farming

Brenner & Co

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FOUNDATION

Impact
on **Urban**
Health

K



We set out to understand...



Free school meal
expansion



Increased meal
uptake



Fresh food
demand



£ benefit to UK
food & farming



And what **conditions** are needed to make it happen?

What would school meal expansion in England deliver?

September 2026!

Scenario 1:

Universal Credit

over +70 million more meals

>7% uplift

Scenario 2:

Universal Primary FSM

+220 million more meals

22% uplift

Scenario 3:

Universal FSM

+540 million more meals

54% uplift

Follow the Carrot report

Universal expansion of free school meals in England could unlock a **£600 million boost** for UK farmers and growers

This is more than just putting food on plates – it's a chance to:

- 🥕 **Improve children's health and education**
- 🥦 **Strengthen sustainable British farming and protect our climate**
- 🍷 **Deliver long-term benefits for the UK economy**





7.8 million sacks of potatoes
increasing sales
from £155m to £250m

1.3 billion florets of broccoli
worth £68m
up from £42m

1,540 lorry-loads of carrots
boosting annual sales
from £11 to £18m

Follow the
Carrot
report

Realising the opportunity could unlock...

- Greater use of **British vegetables and plant proteins** on school plates
- **Secure, long-term markets** for farmers and SMEs
- **Reduced reliance** on imports, stronger **resilience** to shocks
- **Better diets** for children and **climate-aligned** menus



Conditions for success



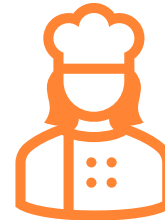
Fair and adequate funding

Reform of school food funding to reflect the real cost of quality British ingredients, including 'less and better' British meat and more beans and pulses.



Flexible, accessible procurement

Establishment of contracting systems that enable SME participation and bolster local supply networks through simpler, more transparent processes.



Investment in facilities and skills

Delivery of centrally designated capital investment for kitchen and supply chain infrastructure that supports local and regional supply networks and sourcing.




Standards & monitoring

Promotion of domestic & sustainable sourcing within SFS review, establish regular monitoring, and align schools with GBS targets.

Five key recommendations for government:

1. **Review and update school food funding** to reflect the true cost of quality and invest in supply chain infrastructure
2. **Update school food standards and enforce compliance** to ensure nutritious, sustainable food in every school
3. **Scale up proven local and regional models** that deliver benefits for both children and farmers
4. **Join up strategies across health, farming and the economy** to maximise the impact of public food spending
5. **Unlock growth for UK producers** by continuing expansion towards universal free school meals





“This is a golden opportunity to nourish our children with good, wholesome British food whilst giving our farmers the boost they desperately need.

Expanding free school meals isn’t about filling plates, it’s about filling them with fresh, sustainable, home-grown produce that supports children’s health and strengthens our farming economy.

With the right investment and leadership, we can turn 540 million extra school meals into a win-win for kids, farmers and the planet.”

Hugh Fearnley-Whittingstall

British chef, food writer, and broadcaster

Thank you for listening!

We would love to hear from you. Please take a few minutes to complete our survey by scanning the QR Code below:

