



Comments from across the Eating Better alliance in response to the government's Food Strategy for England.

Simon Billing, executive director at Eating Better said:

“There’s nothing really nailed-down in this food strategy strategy and there’s no new, proposed legislation to affect the real, positive and long-term change in the food environment in England that Henry Dimbleby has been advocating for.”

“There’s nothing on reducing meat consumption, rather a focus on maintaining and increasing food production using technology and innovation, while passing the buck to farmers to balance the demands of producing more food and restoring nature. Innovation alone isn’t going to tackle the interconnected climate, nature and health crises. Science tells us we need to produce less meat and that means reducing livestock numbers and shifting away from destructive, intensive animal agriculture.

“On healthy and sustainable diets, the strategy puts a lot of emphasis on individual responsibility and people making better food choices. This laissez-faire approach falls well short of the government intervention needed to create a healthy, affordable and sustainable food environment for all. We are all let down by this.”

Professor Graham MacGregor, Professor of Cardiovascular Medicine at Queen Mary University of London and Chairman of Action on Sugar and Action on Salt said:

“The National Food Strategy proposed bold, evidence-based recommendations that would have had an enormous impact on improving our food system, making healthier food more available and accessible to all. This included a key recommendation to tax the food industry to ensure they remove excess salt and sugar from their products and help protect the nation’s health from the devastating effects of unhealthy diets – the biggest cause of death and disability globally.

“However, today’s announcement makes it abundantly clear that our Government is in the pocket of the food industry and has no desire to bite the hand that feeds it. We can only assume that Sajid Javid has chosen not to implement these tailor-made recommendations for political reasons which completely contradicts the Government’s levelling up ambitions. This shambolic

decision will no doubt massively impact the NHS and the nation's health which will suffer the consequences and escalating cost of treating obesity, Type 2 Diabetes and tooth decay (all linked to our very high and unnecessary sugar, salt and saturated fat intakes) that the food industry is entirely responsible for."

Kath Dalmeny, Chief Executive of Sustain says:

"In the face of multiple crises in the cost of living, rocketing obesity, climate change and nature loss, the government food strategy looks shamefully weak. Government was given crystal clear analysis and a set of recommendations by the Dimpleby food strategy, and has chosen to take forward only a handful of them. This isn't a strategy, it's a feeble to do list, that may or may not get ticked.

"The commitment to a land use strategy is welcome, which could better balance our food production and responsibility to our natural environment. Support for sustainable UK horticulture could improve affordable access to healthy fruit, veg and pulses. The push to include more local and sustainable food in public sector food, if implemented, could have a powerful impact. And a move to introduce mandatory reporting for food businesses on health would be a step forward. But none of this is underpinned by legislation.

"In this document, the Government acknowledges the National Food Strategy analysis that a junk food cycle exists, and that people on lower incomes find it harder to access an affordable healthy diet. However, the recent government U-turn on child obesity measures has shown that even measures introduced in statute are vulnerable to pressure from vested interests. And where is the support for people struggling to eat in this cost of living crisis? We need decent wages and adequate social security benefits to weather the current storm. The Government will need to take much more and stronger action soon if it is to drive the changes in our food system needed to protect people and the planet."

Pete Richie, Executive Director, Nourish Scotland:

"The Dimpleby plan advocated policy coherence and taking a systems approach. This feeble and incoherent strategy offers only a few welcome but disconnected proposals, for example on mandatory reporting and horticulture. UK wide metrics on health, sustainability and animal welfare would be helpful, but EU wide metrics make more sense given the forthcoming EU law on sustainable food systems.

Scotland's Good Food Nation Bill due to pass into law tomorrow (June 14th) is only a start – but provides a framework for food policy coherence and builds on the existing commitments north of the Border on universal free school meals, the Scottish Child Payment, Best Start Foods, and climate change targets.”

Louisa Casson, head of food and forests, Greenpeace UK:

“By ignoring climate scientists and its own experts in favour of industry lobbyists, the government has published a strategy that, ultimately, will only perpetuate a broken food system and see our planet cook itself.

“A boost in fruit and veg production would be welcome but without detailed support and a transition plan to reduce meat and dairy, the UK will continue wasting vast amounts of land here and abroad to grow animal feed. In the UK that land could grow more nutritious and affordable food for people and, in Brazil, those forests destroyed for livestock feed crops are home to Indigenous Peoples and critical for the world's climate.

“Without significant cuts to meat and dairy, we could stop using fossil fuels tomorrow and still be heading for catastrophic levels of warming to our planet far beyond 1.5C.”

(GP quote previously released to media) Louisa Casson, head of food and forests, Greenpeace UK:

“The government's food strategy isn't just half-baked, it's flatter than a pancake and missing most of the crucial ingredients needed to truly ensure our long-term food security. Instead of listening to the warnings from climate scientists on the urgent need to reduce meat production, ministers seem to be goading UK farmers into producing even more of it.

“With the cost of food soaring, the government should be promoting the most efficient use of our land to produce healthy and affordable food for people, rather than wasting vast amounts of cropland to grow animal feed. Yet even tentative plans to rethink land use have been kicked into the long grass. Worse still, this strategy does nothing to stop the scandal of importing millions of tonnes of soya to feed UK chickens and pigs, driving climate-critical forests to the brink.

“Ministers have turned a blind eye to the vast majority of recommendations in the independent review they themselves commissioned. They're ignoring the science and their own experts, and this won't solve any of the crises we're facing.”

"Commenting on the publication of the [Government Food Strategy](#) today, Katie White, Executive Director of Advocacy and Campaigns at WWF, said:

“Making UK farming good for climate and nature is the only way to fix a broken food system to ensure healthy, affordable, sustainable food is available for everyone, now and for generations to come.

“This is not the first time the Government has watered down its climate and nature ambitions. Putting nature and climate at the heart of our food system was a clear promise of this government at COP26 – now it must raise its game and prove it’s got the backbone to deliver for people and planet.

“We not only need cross-government action but leadership from the top to drive a shift towards more sustainable diets, support UK farmers as they adopt nature friendly approaches, and set core environmental standards for all food sold in the UK, so that we can be confident the food on our plates doesn’t cost the earth.”

Clare Oxborrow, senior sustainability analyst at Friends of the Earth, said:

“The government promised it would revolutionise our broken food system. Instead, it has chosen to ignore much of the vision and ambition set out in Henry Dimbleby’s review.

“Ministers can’t seem to grasp that a thriving, resilient, food and farming system must be built on the foundations of a healthy environment. Meat and dairy production is a key driver of climate breakdown and biodiversity loss, yet there’s barely any mention of it in the new strategy.

“While it’s positive that the government will investigate how best to encourage healthier, and more sustainable eating, meat and dairy must be a focal point of this. If we’re to meet our climate goals, we need to see a dramatic reduction in the amount eaten. This is still possible, but the government must support nature-friendly farming alongside a mantra of eating less, but better quality meat and dairy.”

Barakat Omomayowa, an 18 year-old campaigner with Bite Back 2030, said:

"Today's white paper makes it very clear to us that this Government is not prepared to do what's needed to protect our health and our planet. We are living in a world flooded with junk food, and as young people we've campaigned for years against the inequality that's at the heart of our broken food system. Today was an opportunity to make it easier for everyone to eat healthily, but the Government has yet again missed the mark. But there's still hope - we want to see the Government expanding Free School Meals to more young people, and big corporations reformulating food so that it's better for all of us."

Jimmy Pierson, Director of ProVeg UK:

“Today's White Paper, which fails to even mention the climate impact of meat and dairy and omits any reference to plant-based food as a solution to the climate crisis, is a dereliction of duty. It's a cop out, and largely ignores the National Food Strategy, which called on the nation to

eat 30% less meat. Instead, the Government has served up 30 pages of precious little, wasting a golden opportunity to fix our broken food system. I'm sure we're not the only organisation dedicated to securing a healthier and more sustainable future that's in utter despair with this Government today.

“While we support the Government’s sentiments on educating children around healthy and sustainable food, it falls short of any meaningful way of reducing the barriers and making them more accessible to all, which is so desperately needed.”

Leon Ballin, Sustainable Food Places Programme Manager says:

“We’re pleased with the recognition of the value of food partnerships, but without support, funding or a statutory requirement for local areas to set up food partnerships and forge ahead with food plans, there will be little difference on the ground for local authorities struggling with budget cuts to public health and dealing with rising food insecurity.”

Sustainable Food Places will encourage and support our England members to get involved in the public consultations on procurement and mandatory reporting as well as continue to feed into Defra’s next steps on “work with local authorities and food charities in these priority areas”. We will also work with our UK wide network and movement to continue to lobby the government to take a stronger stance on addressing food system issues and make having a food partnership in every local authority area a statutory requirement.

Responding to the white paper, Founder and Chief Executive of School Food Matters Stephanie Slater, said:

“The government’s response is disappointing as it fails to address many of the issues we are seeing in schools. While commitments to improve food education are reiterated, these are nothing new. Failing to take this opportunity to expand free school meals in the middle of a cost of living crisis is out of touch with the reality for so many families. I urge the government to reconsider Dimbleby’s proposals in full, and make the ambitious changes needed to safeguard our children’s health and future environment.”

Paul Stuart, CEO [Ripple Effect](#) said:

“The UK’s National Food Strategy could learn from the food and farming practices developed in low-income countries, like those in Africa where Ripple Effect works. Our community workers actively encourage families to eat a wider variety of nutritious foods. They’re produced without costly ‘technological’ additives following a low-cost farm systems approach that can have a *net positive* climate impact, with livestock fodder grown organically on-farm.”

Anna Taylor, executive director at the Food Foundation said:

“Today’s White Paper shows that no one in leadership in government appears to have really grasped the scale and urgency of the challenges posed to our health and our planet by the food

system. What's more, these challenges are growing exponentially with the cost of living crisis. Despite its name, the whole document is lacking a strategy to transition the food system towards delivering good food which is accessible to everyone. And without a commitment to a new Food Bill, many of the commendable commitments are in reality, toothless. It is a feeble interpretation of Henry Dimbleby's recommendation, which will not be sufficient to drive the long-term change that we know is so urgently needed.

About Eating Better

Eating Better is a movement for change of [sixty organisations working together](#) to accelerate the transition from producing and eating too much meat and dairy to a fairer, healthier and more sustainable food system that is better for our own health, for animal welfare and for nature.

Together we can all eat better for people and planet

<https://www.eating-better.org>

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