



The Rt Hon Alok Sharma MP, President for COP 26  
The Rt Hon George Eustice MP, Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs

Cc: Victoria Prentis MP, Parliamentary Under-Secretary (Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs)

29 of September 2021

Dear Sirs

**Re: Supporting our communities, farmers and animal welfare while addressing the urgent climate and nature emergency.**

The Sustainable Food Places (SFP) Network is a pioneering group of food partnerships across the UK that are driving innovation and best practice in all aspects of healthy and sustainable food. On their behalf, we call on the UK Government to recognise the key role food and farming systems must play if we are to achieve Net Zero and to include food and farming in the revised and more ambitious UK Nationally Determined Contributions.

As hosts of COP26, with new trade deals on the horizon and an intention to reform public sector food procurement, the UK Government has a unique opportunity to protect high-quality UK food production. In so doing, it can also help the UK to achieve its climate, biodiversity and public health goals.

The SFP Network is a rapidly growing movement of over 60 food partnerships in cities and other municipalities across the UK. Through these cross-sector food partnerships, local authorities and other public bodies are working together with third sector, businesses and academic organisations to transform their local food system with the aim of tackling critical sustainability issues such as food waste and the climate and nature emergencies and they can help national government achieve its net zero ambition.

Many members of the SFP Network are also among the signatories of the Glasgow Food and Climate Declaration, bringing together all types and sizes of local authorities around the world to speak as a unified voice to put food and farming at the heart of the global response to the climate emergency.

On Wednesday the 29<sup>th</sup> of September, food partnerships around the UK are coming together for a food and climate day of celebration highlighting examples of local action to reduce the impact of food production and consumption on our planet such as:

- serving freshly cooked meals with more sustainable ingredients in schools, nurseries and other public and private institutions, many accredited to Food for Life Served Here standards;
- setting up food waste collection and management systems and running projects and campaigns to divert food surplus to community projects and reduce food waste among businesses and households;
- protecting and earmarking land for community food growing, community orchards and other growing projects;
- running campaigns to shift consumption towards more plants and better meat to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and improve the health of our communities;

- convening and facilitating networks bringing communities together with farmers and food service to increase understanding and support for sustainable food production and consumption.

While local action can make an important contribution to reduce emissions from food systems, sequester carbon and build resilience, the impact of this local work will be limited without decisive action at the national and international levels.

That's why we are writing to you both today to ask you to take decisive action by including food in ambitious Nationally Determined Contributions and ensure that only food that meets British standards is included in public sector food contracts. We would also ask you to make the case at Cabinet against low standard trade deals that could undermine UK climate targets and the Government's ambitions to improve the environment in public institutions.

There is overwhelming public support for public institutions to serve climate friendly food. A recent public opinion poll commissioned by SFP showed that 79% of respondents agreed that public sector food should help us minimise our impact on the environment and limit climate change and 80% agreed that public sector food should serve high quality and high welfare meat and dairy that meets British environmental and welfare standards as a minimum.

Our recent survey of public sector food caterers found overwhelming support for serving sustainable and healthy meals. Nearly all want to do more, but say that leadership and policy from government isn't supporting them to do so. They report that current buying standards don't allow for or guarantee sustainable and healthy food. They also say that costs and product availability are barriers, with suppliers lacking the clear direction that would allow them to invest in products for public-sector customers.

We therefore ask you as a matter of urgency to prioritize the recommendations in the National Food Strategy to alter the Government Buying Standards and make public sector food reflect a sustainable and healthy diet and show the direction of travel for food service. We would like to request an opportunity to present the extraordinary work of our members in more detail and to work with government to ensure such partnerships can support the national climate goals.

Yours faithfully



Tom Andrews

Programme Director Sustainable Food Places

Sustainable Food Places is a partnership programme led by the Soil Association, Food Matters and Sustain - the alliance for better food and farming. The call on government outlined in this letter is supported by the food partnerships below:

Aberdeen – Granite City Food City

Bath and North East Somerset – Bath and North East Somerset Sustainable Food Partnership

Belfast – Good Food Belfast

Birmingham – Creating a Healthy Food City Forum

Blackburn with Darwen – Blackburn with Darwen Food Alliance

Brighton and Hove – Brighton & Hove Food Partnership

Bristol – Bristol Food Network

Buckinghamshire – Buckinghamshire Food Partnership

Calderdale – Calderdale Food Network

Cambridge – Cambridge Sustainable Food

Cardiff – Food Cardiff

Carlisle – Food Carlisle

Clackmannanshire – Clackmannanshire Good Food Partnership

County Durham – Food Durham

Coventry – Coventry Food Network

Devon – Devon Food Partnership

Doncaster – Good Food Doncaster

Dumfries and Galloway – Sustainable Food Partnership Dumfries and Galloway

Edinburgh – Edible Edinburgh

Exeter – Food Exeter

Glasgow – Glasgow Food Policy Partnership

Greenwich – Good Food Greenwich

Greater Manchester – Good Food Greater Manchester

Greater London – London Food Board

Herefordshire – Herefordshire Food Alliance

Highland – Highland Good Food Partnership

Hull – Hull Food Partnership

Lambeth – Lambeth Food Partnership

Lancaster – Food Futures

Leeds – Food Wise Leeds

Leicester - Leicester's Food Plan

Leicestershire – Good Food Leicestershire

Lewisham – Good Food Lewisham

Lincolnshire – Lincolnshire Food Partnership

Luton – Luton Food Plan

Manchester City – Manchester Food Board

Merton – Sustainable Merton

Middlesbrough – Middlesbrough Food Partnership

Monmouthshire – Monmouthshire Food Partnership

Newcastle – Food Newcastle

North Ayrshire – North Ayrshire Food Forum

North Lincolnshire – Food in North Lincolnshire

Nottingham – Nottingham Good Food Partnership

Oldham – Oldham Food Network

Oxfordshire – Good Food Oxfordshire

Plymouth – Food Plymouth

Sheffield – Sheffood

South Lanarkshire – South Lanarkshire Good Food Forum

Stirling – Stirling Regional Food Partnership

Sutton – Sutton Food Forum

Tameside – Tameside Food Partnership

Tower Hamlets – Tower Hamlets Food Partnership

Vale of Glamorgan – Food Vale / Bwyd yfro

Wandsworth – Wandsworth Food Partnership

Wells – Wells Food Network

West Northamptonshire – West Northamptonshire Sustainable Food Place

Winchester – Winchester Food Partnership

York – Good Food York