Putting good food jobs at the heart of the economic recovery

September 2020
Briefing: Putting good food jobs at the heart of the economic recovery

Executive Summary and Recommendations
Food and farming are being overlooked as mechanisms to drive economic recovery across the UK. And yet food, farming and fishing sectors, particularly those which are more environmentally sustainable and make healthier options more accessible, affordable and attractive, could with the right backing deliver on these benefits whilst also delivering on more jobs and better livelihoods.

This report presents a series of opportunities to achieve this through investment and policy support in relevant areas including farming, fishing, certification, alternative livestock feeds or ecofeed, the circular food economy, baking, shorter supply chains, markets and better food retail, and meals on wheels.

Recommendations

For Defra

- To ensure that all new farm support schemes (including ELMS and productivity grants) are designed to: support whole farm agroecology approaches for all farming types; are supported with adequate advice and training provision; facilitate farmer collaboration; support new entrants into farming; and, ensure no net loss of farm diversity as well as delivering environmental and other vital benefits (e.g. public health).
- Set clear, legally-binding targets to restore all UK fish stocks to sustainable levels and to achieve Good Environmental Status for all the UK’s seas.
- Adopt a ‘public money for public goods’ approach for fishing to support sustainability, including compensating fishers where they must reduce catches in the short term to allow stocks to recover.
- Achieve sustainability certification, or a sustainability rating of ‘good’ for all commercial fisheries.
- Re-allocate the UK’s quota to follow a ‘public money for public goods’ approach and benefit smaller-scale and sustainable fishing.
- To meet the challenges of the climate and nature emergency encourage a shift to more sustainable production by setting targets for increasing demand for certified sustainable produce and supporting producers to become certified, including adoption of a 10% targets for UK organic production and market share.
- To reform the law to allow well-regulated, safely treated surplus animal protein in non-ruminant feed, and support a modern, robust heat and acidification treatment system to address the contamination problems associated with the old forms of this practice. This would create a new ‘surplus food-to-feed’ industry creating green jobs and new business opportunities across the UK.
• Reform bread labelling regulations to eliminate misleading labelling, where terms such as sourdough and wholegrain can be used without scrutiny and on products that don’t have the benefits associated with those produced largely by these smaller bakeries. This would shift a part of the market for speciality bread to those businesses supporting more jobs. Develop a food retail plan to achieve a target of at least a 10% market share for non-multiples, to increase the diversity of supply chain options for businesses to sell to.

For Defra, DfE, DHSC
• Set mandatory standards for public sector spend on food to support sustainable diets and jobs in Britain – covering public catering and other public spend including the school fruit and veg scheme and healthy start vouchers.

For DHSC and MHCLG
• Government commits to ensuring that all older and more vulnerable adults have access to at least one good meal every day. This should be delivered by a) a statutory requirement on local authorities to meet this need and b) the necessary government investment.
Introduction
From fishing to food factories, from barns to bars, food and farming is the UK’s largest employer, with 4.1 million people working in this sector in 2018. Or put a different way it’s 1 in 7 of the UK’s workforce. It has the biggest manufacturing sector (valued at £121 billion)\(^1\) with food exports valued above £23 billion.\(^2\) In previous recessions it has been one of the most resilient sectors, and is likely to prove so again as we move into a period of economic instability, which many predict will see mass unemployment.

Yet, in discussions of an economic recovery, food and farming has barely featured. Rightly, much airtime has been given to the idea of a green recovery, but little to how the UK’s largest employer could contribute to this. The Prime Minister has announced his desire to battle the nation’s bulge, but so far there has been little profile to ideas where economic investment in healthier food could help achieve this.

The proposals below constitute an investigation sector by sector of where there may be opportunities through clever policy making and smart investment to seed an economic recovery that will also deliver on the environment, health and social aims. And with food and farming’s long-standing resilience in previous recessions, it has a higher prospect of delivering these goods.

In the coming months each of these sections will be complemented with more detailed proposals of how policies and investments such as these could best work, developed in consultation with academics, sector bodies, NGOs and businesses. The Government has a part to play in all of these, and Sustain would welcome input from civil servants at a national and local level. But their success rests not just on Government’s role, and each will only work with the input and support of key stakeholders, and ultimately citizens and consumers.

Whilst these proposals are for food and farming, this document is not just for DEFRA, or for those focused on food and farming. The remit of economic recovery sits with other department and most notably with the Department for Business, Energy and Innovation Strategy (BEIS) – who amongst other things have a role in the development of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund. This was, certainly pre-COVID 19, the likely vehicle for distributing money to the regions that had previously been allocated through EU funding to support regional development. Some of this funding was to be allocated to Local Economic Partnerships.

With currently little bespoke support for food businesses beyond the farm gate, it is imperative that the potential for businesses providing food up and down the supply chain is part of any government vision for economic recovery. BEIS has set up a process to receive input into their plans for economic recovery around five themes: a green recovery; increasing opportunity for everyone, everywhere; skills and apprenticeships; innovation and investment; and backing new business. We look at three in more detail:

- **Green recovery** – whilst it contributes between a third and a quarter of the UKs GHG emissions, the food and farming sector has not until recently received much attention on how it could reduce its impact, relative to other sectors. The proposals

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\(^1\) DEFRA (2020). Food Statistics in your pocket Summary. GOV.UK
\(^2\) FDF (2020). Facts and stats > Stats at a Glance. FDF public site:
below go some way to identifying where there might be opportunities for employment whilst also driving down emissions, or acting as a carbon sink, and improving nature, in areas such as more sustainable production, certification, the circular economy and increasing demand for these products;

- **Increasing opportunity for everyone, everywhere** - the sector is one of the most dispersed across the UK, from farming, manufacturing, supply, catering and retail, and would act as a good platform from which to drive up employment. Whether through a fishing revival benefitting coastal communities or investment in meals on wheels nationally or through some of the other proposals detailed below, good food jobs could benefit every part of the UK. This sector is also able to provide employment for all levels of skilled, from lower skilled entry level jobs, but with increased mechanisation, there is a higher value put on products made from skilled labour and a not insubstantial market for these products, but a need for skills and training throughout the sector;

- **Backing new business and the future of industry** – the UK’s food and farming sector has a strong track record of innovative start-ups, and given the right support, infrastructure and spaces – digital or physical – such as an increase in market spaces as proposed below, the UK could see a wave of disruptive and green food businesses, particularly in the circular economy;

The proposals below each in their own way contribute to these aims, and in the months ahead we plan to release more detail on how each one could do so.

### A. Sustainable Farming and Fishing – employment on the road to net zero

These sectors are already having to rapidly adapt to leaving the EU, enter into trade deals that may open them up to more competition, or indeed export opportunities, along with the challenges of access to labour and access to waters. This is compounded by the rapidly shifting demands in response to COVID-19, and longer-term shifts linked to climate change in how we produce, what we can produce, and what people want to buy.

Supporting a just transition is crucial as these sectors adapt, which means that we not only maintain but improve the quality and quantity of livelihoods, but that people in all parts of the country benefit, particularly in rural and coastal communities whose fabric depends on these sectors to thrive. UK farming aims to turn from a carbon emitter to a carbon sink. This could happen in part via wise stewardship and creating nature-based carbon sinks (see Farming and Land Use proposal below), alongside shifts in production to agroecology and agroforestry, and appropriate tech jobs such as research and demonstration of innovative farming and new low impact technology such as the Small Robot Company. We need farm support to ensure all sizes of farm business can survive and thrive.

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3 https://innovativefarmers.org/
4 https://www.smallrobotcompany.com/
Additionally, to meet the challenges of the climate and nature emergency we can shift production by increasing demand for certified sustainable produce including organic, RSPCA-assured, LEAF-Marque, Biodynamic, Pasture-Fed, Marine Stewardship Council, Aquaculture Stewardship Council amongst others. The case for investment to increase conversion to these schemes is stronger when considering the markets this might open up: through both exports, where internationally recognised certification e.g. organic, will command higher prices than it simply being British; and domestic markets, such as the public sector, where high procurement standards e.g. for fish, mean that uncertified UK fisheries cannot sell their produce.

With many coastal communities also being some of the most deprived in the UK, we need to find solutions that both restore our marine environments and provide decent livelihoods. Too often have parts of the conservation lobby and fishing industry been pitted against each other to gain headlines. Investment in prosperous and bountiful fisheries, with fishing quota and wealth distributed better around the UK, will benefit everyone. Sustain’s forthcoming Net Worth will lay out the detail for these proposals first outlined in our submission to the National Food Strategy (see also Fishing proposal below).

- **Farming and land use proposal** – Changing the way we farm and use land could allow the UK to produce more of our own food, which is better quality, and provides more, better land-based and food processing jobs. This is the perfect time to do so. The government is embarking on a new system for how it supports farming as the UK leaves the EU Common Agriculture Policy (CAP). The proposed new Environmental Land Management Scheme (ELMS) in England, farm support schemes in the nations, and other policies could deliver on these aims. If well designed, the majority of farmed land could and should be delivering environmental, heritage, public engagement and other outcomes with taxpayer support. There should be a commitment to maintain the current level of farm support at £3 billion per year for ELMS beyond this Parliament to provide long-term security and farm business planning opportunities into agroecology. There should be a commitment to provide a productivity grant scheme such as Defra’s 2018 ‘Adding Value to Agri-Food’\(^5\) RDPE scheme. This should be targeted towards sustainability and supporting ‘food hub’\(^6\) and on-farm processing infrastructure.

We need the new support schemes to focus on the whole farmed environment, to support agro-ecological approaches, to cover all farming sectors (including those not previously receiving much support such as horticulture), and to provide training advice and demonstration for farmers - an essential element for the major transitions ahead. These should also help facilitate farmer collaboration in delivering outcomes which is likely to lead to greater farmer cooperation in other areas such as sharing costs of inputs or in working together to build better market opportunities.

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\(^6\) [https://foodresearch.org.uk/publications/food-hubs/](https://foodresearch.org.uk/publications/food-hubs/)
Such agro-environmental schemes can be significant in terms of socio-economic impacts. A study by Gloucester University found that every £1 spent on similar environmental farming stewardship schemes delivers £1.42 in economic benefits to the local community.

The new farm support programme in each nation should ensure we do not see a major loss of farms through amalgamation or abandonment. Smaller and medium sized farms have significant benefits for the environment (such as smaller fields, more features, more diverse cropping overall) and for the rural economy though supporting livelihoods in farming.

It is particularly crucial also to provide support for new entrants into farming through incentives for those with land or leaving the sector to pass farms onto new farmers or through protection of existing tools such as the County small holdings estate (which are being sold off by local authorities). We need a specific young farmers’ support scheme which should include funding for farmers to upskill in agroecology approaches. This can include an apprenticeship grant (for example: £17,800 per year per person for advanced or degree-level\(^8\)) and a postgraduate scholarship (for example: £11,222 per person\(^9\)) scheme targeted for young people who want to become agroecology farmers.

- **Horticulture and peri-urban growing proposal** - Increasing sustainable horticulture would deliver more jobs and make our farming system more diverse, but it will not happen without investment, support and training alongside a shift in supply chain demand to support growth in production. At present the UK has a large production deficit in the fruit and vegetables it consumes, including products we can grow well here. We need to ensure more land is made accessible and available for sustainable food growing, including freeing up land for environment beneficial fruit and nut tree planting, community food and small farm enterprises, especially in horticulture. Small scale agriculture appears not to have experienced the same urgent staff shortages as larger farms as they provide quality, year-round jobs compatible with family life. Releasing land for these enterprises, especially council owned land nearer to urban conurbations, could also provide access to land to respond to the demand from those living in cities, otherwise unable to pursue a career in farming. Peri-urban farming in London and other cities has shown how it can support skills development.

- **Organic gains proposal** - Government should officially adopt 10% targets for UK organic production and market share to deliver the environmental as well as market opportunities. One study suggests that there are 32% more jobs per farm than equivalent non-organic farms due to higher labour requirements in field and also on farm marketing associated with organic systems. These findings are based on the

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\(^8\) [https://www.ucas.com/understanding-apprenticeships/discover-how-apprenticeships-work/average-apprenticeship-wage](https://www.ucas.com/understanding-apprenticeships/discover-how-apprenticeships-work/average-apprenticeship-wage)

\(^9\) [https://www.gov.uk/masters-loan/what-youll-get](https://www.gov.uk/masters-loan/what-youll-get)
first national survey of employment on UK organic farms, carried out by the University of Essex for the Soil Association.\textsuperscript{10} Whilst an unlikely scenario, it is interesting to note that if all UK farmers adopted organic farming approaches, it could produce an additional 93,000 on-farm jobs.

A more recent US research study indicated that organic farms employed more workers per acre (95% CI: 2–12% more). Further, a greater proportion (95% CI: 13–43% more) of hired labour on organic farms worked 150 days or more compared to the average farm\textsuperscript{11} Current organic areas is 2.7% of total farmed area (6188 organic producers/processors (3544 producers).\textsuperscript{12}

- **Fishing recovery proposal** - Our proposals are to restore fish populations, ensure our fish can get the best markets and prices by being branded as sustainable, and moderately re-share fishing rights towards smaller and more sustainable vessels. These measures would allow 30% more fish\textsuperscript{13} to be landed by UK fleets (457,000 tonnes extra), and 10,000 jobs in fishing and associated industries like localised processing and transport\textsuperscript{14}. These jobs would be in some of the most economically deprived parts of the UK. The additional tourism\textsuperscript{15} and recreational fishing\textsuperscript{16} from thriving marine wildlife could add another 4000 jobs. The cost to deliver these proposals fully would be just over £350 million initially, dropping to £220 million in following years, but would increase GDP by an estimated £2 billion per year\textsuperscript{17}. These proposals are detailed in a separate briefing and in the forthcoming Net Worth report.

### B. Manufacturing and the circular economy

The concept of a circular economy should be at the heart of any economic recovery. A circular food economy means keeping value in the food chain on bi-products or elements that would otherwise go to waste and ensuring pollution and nutrient loss is eliminated. This therefore goes beyond ideas of redistributing surplus food for free that would otherwise go to waste, as important as this is. It helps to put an economic value on these

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\textsuperscript{10} http://orgprints.org/10178/1/The_employment_benefits_of_organic_farming.pdf
\textsuperscript{11} https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/21683565.2017.1394416
\textsuperscript{14} NEF. Jobs Lost at Sea. https://b.3cdn.net/nefoundation/e966d4ce355b7485c1_a7m6brn5t.pdf
\textsuperscript{16} The Angling Trust http://data.parliament.uk/WrittenEvidence/CommitteeEvidence.svc/EvidenceDocument/Environment,%20Food%20and%20Rural%20Affairs/Scrutiny%20of%20the%20Fisheries%20Bill/Written/93047.html
products, which can create jobs whilst also benefitting the environment by reducing waste or landfill.

There needs to be more support to mainstream, scale up or replicate businesses which operate a circular economy approach. Some notable areas are those turning fruit and veg that would go to waste into soups, smoothies, sauces, preserves or fruit leathers (see Rubies in the Rubble, ChicP and Spare Snacks). And for many of those products that can’t be turned into something edible for humans, we can make better use of them for animals than we are currently, and open up new business opportunities at the same time (see the Ecofeed proposal below).

There are many opportunities with bread and baked goods, such as those that are past their best being used for brewing (see Toast Ale), and looking abroad, in Denmark they are closing this loop further by using spent grain from brewing and distillation into snacks, flour, and ultimately bread again – closing the loop (see Agrain and Circular Food Technology). This is the green innovation and technology that the UK needs to invest in and to become mainstream. We would love to see these techniques become a standard part of our baking industry that could sit alongside our baking proposals below for an Honest Crust Act – an overhaul of bread labelling. This would remove one of the barriers to growth of small Real Bread bakers who have to compete with misleading labelling used by some manufacturers and retailers on products that don’t have the benefits associated with them, with little to no scrutiny. Assuming that some of that market demand would shift with these products, rather than solely rely on convenience, a change in the labelling regulations would create a more level playing field upon which, those smaller businesses could create and support more jobs, as many provide more jobs per loaf.

Baking proposal – Small, local, independent bakeries help to support more jobs per loaf. At present, the UK baking industry employs around 31,000 people. Baker and Real Bread Campaign co-founder Andrew Whitley estimates that an individual artisan/craft baker can produce at most 200 loaves per day, so it would take 60,000 artisan/craft bakers to match the current national output of 12 million loaves, most of which are manufactured using artificial additives by factories or supermarkets. If we add in an extra 25% to our artisan baking army to cover days off for holidays and sickness, the number goes up to 75,000, more than twice as many jobs as the current entire baking industry, the figures for which include cake-makers and ‘biscuiteers’. We believe that the skills and knowledge accumulated and used by real bread bakers are likely to make their jobs more fulfilling than overseeing a fully-automated, computer-controlled industrial loaf production line or feeding part-baked products into a supermarket ovens, therefore better supporting their mental wellbeing. Even a modest shift of manufacture and purchasing of speciality breads through smaller and a more diverse set of producers would lead to a growth in jobs. One of the barriers to a growth in these small bakers is misleading labelling, where terms such as sourdough and wholegrain can be used without scrutiny and on

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18 An Honest Crust Act
https://www.sustainweb.org/resources/files/responses/RealBread_NFSCallForEvidence.pdf
products that don’t have the benefits associated with those produced largely by these smaller bakeries. In short, a change in the labelling regulations – an Honest Crust Act - would shift a part of the market for speciality bread to those businesses supporting more jobs. This could be aided by business support for such small, and new start-up businesses, and a national plan with local support providing access opportunities, such as physical locations, including markets, or locally promoted digital platforms.

- Ecofeed proposal – A 21st century take on an age-old tradition to use food waste for animal feed. Despite the 12.7 million tonnes of food waste generated per year in the UK omnivorous non-ruminant livestock such as pigs and chickens are primarily fed on pulses, oilseed and cereal crops, using up valuable resources including land in the precious Amazon. As well as the environmental benefits of shifting to sources closer to home, this would provide more stability for UK producers who are impacted by price fluctuations and availability of imports of this input, with the livestock industry identifying this as a major concern in the recent pandemic. Feed costs make up around half of pig production costs. In Japan food surplus is processed and fed to pigs safely and with full customer support. They currently have about 360 eco-feed producers, of which 47 process surplus food from retailers and 29 specialise in the processing of meat-containing surplus food from food service outlets: this food surplus based feed is delivered at half the cost of conventional feed. The USA, New Zealand and Australia all allow heat-treated surplus animal protein in non-ruminant feed, and leaving the EU will allow us to define our own rules and innovate on use of food waste for animal feed. REFRESH Life Cycle Costing (LCC) analysis found that using surplus food for animal field could yield net savings of €278m per year in the UK (using a liquid feeding system) – meaning it would be economically viable without subsidies. Feedback’s consumer survey of 3,491 UK respondents found that 94% said they would buy pork which comes from pigs fed on (safely treated) food waste, and 51% said they’d be willing to pay extra if the pigs have been reared to organic welfare standards. Another paper from the University of Cambridge found strong support (>75%) for the re-legalization of surplus food feeding among both pig farmers and other stakeholders in the UK, if procedures were put in place to ensure surplus food was treated properly. Recent research by Feedback, drawing on input from a panel of experts including veterinary epidemiologists, microbiologists, veterinarians and pig nutritionists, has confirmed that a modern, robust treatment system of heat-treatment combined with acidification, if well-regulated, would address the contamination problems.
associated with the old forms of this practice, and a new UK ‘surplus food-to-feed’ industry would create green jobs and new business opportunities spread across the UK24.

C. Retail and Catering – supporting short supply chains and a diverse and resilient food system

A lack of diversity in the supply chain and market options for producers is creating a less resilient food system in the UK, as well as missing out on benefits that local and short supply chains create. Sourcing food from the growing regional and sustainable food sector could contribute to climate change mitigation in supply chains, but also bolster local economic resilience (as much as £3 in social, economic and environmental value for each £1 spent25).

Over 95% of groceries are sold through the top 9 multiples, and 3.7% of the market share for the alternatives.26 In recent decades, many producers have had to make the choice to scale up and simplify production or go out of business. Recent events have left them with even less power in the supply chain or choice of who to sell to. This squeeze has contributed to the decline of small and family farms which can be seen as synonymous with the decline in farm diversity, nature and environmental goods, and with jobs in rural economies.27 As farms disappear or are amalgamated wildlife features and habitats are lost.28 Research also shows the smallest farms (below 20ha) hold the highest concentration of parcels of deciduous woodland, semi-natural vegetation and extensive grass.29 University of Exeter surveys suggests that smaller farms also employ more labour per unit of area.30

Attention to this would be timely as the retail sector undergoes a major shift, with online sales growth and new players like Amazon Fresh, and shifts of staffing in store in supermarkets. There are opportunities to start developing long-term changes to retail to remove weak policies, address and factor in external costs that currently go unaccounted for (such as environmental harm and high street damage) and invest in food retail and trading systems that reward farmers and workers adequately, create good, stable jobs whilst paying for the true costs of production (see retail diversity proposal below).


25 Feeding Britain; our food problems and how to fix them – Prof Tim Lang cited in https://www.soilassociation.org/media/20821/shortening_supply_chains_report_web.pdf

26 https://www.kantarworldpanel.com/en/grocery-market-share/great-britain/snapshot/06.10.19/


30 Winter, M. and Lobley M (2016), p54 – see above
The lockdown measures implemented as a result of COVID saw a decimation of the hospitality and catering sector and, with it, limited options for its wholesale suppliers, many of whom were unable, unwilling or unsupported to alter their supply chains, for example to supply supermarkets. Some wholesalers pivoted to online retail ordering services to sell direct to customers, though usually at a smaller scale than their previous lines of business. Accounts of perfectly edible food being wasted and milk was poured down the drain – at the same time that shops suffered shortages - because people suddenly shifted their buying habits and supply chains could not adapt. A report by the Dynamic Food Procurement National Advisory Board also points to a food system dominated by too few distributors, over specialisation, and too much power at the end of the supply chain.

Through our work during Covid-19, Sustain learned a very different picture from smaller food businesses that, with the right support, were able to adapt to lockdown quickly with minimal waste, retaining local jobs and trading connections with farmers. For example, Growing Communities is an Organic veg box scheme in East London and following lockdown their scheme increased the volume of produce supplied each week to members by 12% creating a projected sales increase from £778k in 2019/20 to £1,029k in 2020/21. There not-for-profit wholesale business, the Better Food Shed, which also supplies 14 other community-led veg schemes around London (the Better Food Traders), also increased weekly sales by 50%. Both these schemes support employment within their own enterprises and throughout the supply chain, all paid at Living Wage. In the future any measures to support catering companies should prioritise support for those selling healthier and sustainable options, many of whom are part of schemes like Food for Life or the Sustainable Restaurant Association. Focused attention should go to public sector caterers, to ensure that taxpayers’ money can help healthier and sustainable food, and support British producers, thus amplifying the economic benefits (see public sector food proposal below).

- **Public sector food proposal** - Set mandatory standards so that public sector spend on food supports sustainable diets and jobs in Britain. If meals in hospitals, care homes, schools, prisons and defence reflected the Government Eatwell Guide, One Planet Plate, and the recommendations of the Eating Better Alliance, we could see significant benefits for climate change, and for jobs in UK farming and supply chains. Broadly, it would mean:
  - Reducing the amount of meat served overall and redirecting this money to purchase of sustainable meat, dairy and eggs. These industries support more and better livelihoods in the UK. For inspiration, see PS100, the public sector caterers’ network, who cut down on meat by 20 per cent during lockdown.
  - Serving more domestically grown fruit and vegetables, including specifying varieties more suited to our climate, which would be a valuable boost to the UK horticulture sector and would support the land use changes proposed in paragraph 6-7.
  - Serving less heavily processed food and drinks. Sugar, soya and palm oil associated with heavily processed food are major causes of habitat loss, normally overseas.

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31 [https://www.sustainweb.org/publications/good_food_enterprises_adapting_to_lockdown/](https://www.sustainweb.org/publications/good_food_enterprises_adapting_to_lockdown/)
32 Manifesto for a resilient, adaptable and sustainable UK food system [https://www.dynamicfood.org/](https://www.dynamicfood.org/)
Spending less on these products would help respond to the climate and nature emergency and support more investment in food from UK producers.

The ethos of the Preston model, with its focus on community wealth and local supply, should be applied more widely to public food procurement, as has been done recently in the South West by Councils working with Fresh Range, a successful digital platform enabling sourcing from smaller local suppliers within larger contracts.

- **Retail diversity proposal** - A focused drive on supporting supply chain diversity particularly in retail will help reverse some of the decline outlined above, and with it open up many new job opportunities. A target e.g. of 10% market share, and associated policies should drive development of new routes to market and a growth in street, farmer and covered markets (see also market proposal below), co-ops, box schemes, independent, local on-line and symbol group shops and/or short supply chains. This would help address many of the problems for smaller farm businesses, as well as supporting local economies jobs and improving access to healthier, affordable food. A special focus should be given to increasing the number of Better Food Traders that are, by mission and design, able to deliver a fair system for producers and workers, as well as the planet. Some of the policies needed to support this are detailed in our briefing on [food retail diversity](https://www.sustainweb.org/publications/super_market_failure/?section=).

- **Markets proposal** - Markets are one of many sectors that will be building back from a virtual standstill during lockdown, with roughly two thirds of markets closed even after Government had clarified that most markets could open for essential traders. With the predicted wave of unemployment we need not only for all these markets to be supported to reopen, but new ones too, better distributed across the UK as they provide flexible spaces to support small or start up enterprises. Despite having almost 50,000 towns and cities in the UK, there are only just over 1000 markets. We need an ambitious long term plan that would spread the opportunities that markets provide. If only 10% of UK towns and cities had a market, this would mean almost 4000 new markets. A slightly more conservative quadrupling of markets could lead to 100,000 new business opportunities, or at least expansion of (32,400) existing businesses, not to mention the extra trade created for nearby businesses on market days. This will require funding, and buy in particularly from local government, and most importantly it needs high profile national leadership to give this vision the profile needed for it to succeed.

**D. Innovation in food and social care**

Whilst most of the proposals above have focused on the environmental and social benefits associated with measures to boost our food economy, improving the health of the nation

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33 [https://www.sustainweb.org/publications/super_market_failure/?section=](https://www.sustainweb.org/publications/super_market_failure/?section=)
34 [https://www.nmtf.co.uk/coronavirus/surveys/](https://www.nmtf.co.uk/coronavirus/surveys/)
35 [https://www.mission4markets.uk/](https://www.mission4markets.uk/)
offers challenges that smart investment in food systems can help tackle. The Government has committed to halving child obesity by 2030. The measures it has proposed to reduce the proliferation of unhealthy food could go hand in hand with opportunities for innovation in healthier products, and the growth of those producing and selling them. The need to increase and improve production of fruit and veg is well documented, particularly to reduce the importation of goods that can be produced in the UK, as well as increasing demand more generally. A boost to markets as suggested above would be one way for increasing access to fruit and vegetables, as many markets support people on low incomes:Producers benefitting from selling direct to customers at farmers’ markets, and customers being able to buy food in most markets that is, on average, 33% cheaper than supermarkets.

We cannot ignore the dietary needs of older people, with investment in a modernised meals on wheels service providing a valuable strand of social care that would create dispersed employment around the UK, reduce costs for the NHS, and provide a better level of care for older and disabled people (See our meals on wheels proposal below). Another proposal that would provide employment and long-term benefits in healthcare is to build food into social prescription and therapeutic treatment. This would provide more employment, whilst also diversifying the types of social prescription and treatment already available to increase care farming, include food growing, which has proven mental and physical health benefits, and potentially other food-related activities, such as Real Bread making.

- **Meals on wheels proposal** – A revamped meals on wheels offer, fit for the 21st century. Prior to the Covid-19 pandemic more than 1.3 million people over 65 in the UK were malnourished or at risk of malnutrition. Yet in recent years provision of meals on wheels has drastically declined, to now less than half (42%) of local authority areas. Building on existing innovative models around the UK and abroad, we estimate that a £7.5million annual contribution across 150 upper tier local authorities would kickstart a revitalised nationwide service, removing the current postcode lottery. It would lead to dispersed employment across the UK, and act as a catalyst for twice as much investment from private sources, as well as provide huge savings for the NHS which has to care for many of those malnourished who end up in hospital. A detailed case for this will be published in 2020 by Sustain.

- **Food growing on prescription proposal** - We believe that a universal offer to all NHS patients, via social prescribing and a move towards Green Prescriptions, so they can access a care farm or community food garden via referral from a health care practitioner, would benefit people’s health and the food and farming sector, while creating savings to health budgets. The evidence that food growing and farming improves health and wellbeing is clear; not only access to nature, but the process of growing food and being part of a productive system have positive impacts on health and wellbeing. This is supported by 2016 Kings Fund report which calls for

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36 https://foodfoundation.org.uk/project/fruit-vegetable-alliance/
38 Together We Rise https://www.sustainweb.org/realbread/future_plans/
gardening to be integrated into health policy and practice\textsuperscript{40}. There are hundreds of care farms and many hundreds more community food gardens that not only produce food but also deliver health outcomes and provide training and jobs. Some are commissioned by NHS, with most relying on grant funding and therefore unable to provide a consistent service via local referral agencies\textsuperscript{41}. Investment in a food growing on prescription programme to create links to the health service, would benefit farms and community food gardens, helping them meet wider social objectives. Providing income streams to cover staff costs to run the programmes would enable the farms and gardens to offer a cost-effective and consistent service for patients, reducing dependency on grant funding, and potentially saving millions in GP time and prescription drugs. A significant amount of pump-priming (approximately £5 -10k x 221 CCGs = £1-2m) is needed for the wider community food growing and farming sector to be recognised alongside other key delivery sectors. More details are available here.

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\textbf{Sustain} is the UK alliance for better food and farming (registered charity number 1018643). We represent around 100 not-for-profit national organisations and many more at local level.

\textsuperscript{1} https://www.sustainweb.org/publications/Fringe-Farming-Briefing-Aug2020/?section=
\textsuperscript{2} https://www.preston.gov.uk/article/1339/What-is-Preston-Model-

\textsuperscript{40} Gardens and Health, Kings Fund, 2016 https://www.kingsfund.org.uk/publications/gardens-and-health
\textsuperscript{41} Food Growing on Prescription, Sustain, 2019
https://www.sustainweb.org/publications/food_growing_on_prescription/
Putting good food jobs at the heart of the economic recovery

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About Sustain
Sustain: The alliance for better food and farming, advocates food and agriculture policies and practices that enhance the health and welfare of people and animals, improve the living and working environment, enrich society and culture, and promote equity. It represents around 100 national public interest organisations working at international, national, regional and local level.

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