

Food Matters

Towards a Strategy for the 21st Century

Executive summary

The Strategy Unit
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The aims of this report are: to review the main trends in food production and consumption in the UK; to analyse the implications of those trends for the economy, society and the environment; to assess the robustness of the current policy framework for food; and to determine what the objectives of future food strategy should be and the measures needed to achieve them.

Diet and attitudes to food have changed markedly in recent years in the UK – and will continue to do so. Demand for better quality food has risen, and people aspire to eat both more healthily and to buy food that has a reduced impact on the environment. But consumers also want affordability and food that fits their lifestyles – as demonstrated by the demand for convenience and by people eating outside of the home more often.

Over the longer term, food prices have fallen relative to incomes and to the prices of other goods and services, although recent rises in food prices have put a brake on this trend. The less well off continue to devote a significantly higher proportion of their income to buying food than the better off.

The food and drink supply chain is a major part of the UK economy, accounting for 7% of GDP and employing 3.7 million people in everything from food retailing to restaurants and canteens to farming and fishing. Food manufacturing is the UK's single largest manufacturing sector.

The food system faces a series of future challenges in relation to:

- economics and equity – recent increases in global commodity prices have brought to an end the long-term decline in the price of food, and few expect food prices to return to past lows;
- health – an estimated 70,000 premature deaths in the UK could be avoided each year if UK diets matched nutritional guidelines;
- safety – the food that we eat in the UK is safer than it has ever been but continuing vigilance is needed to minimise food contamination; and
- environment – the food chain has huge environmental impacts (around 18% of UK greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions are related to food production and consumption).

The Government's vision for the food system is one that is more sustainable – economically, socially and environmentally. The future strategic policy objectives for food should be to secure: fair prices, choice, access to food and food security through open and competitive markets; continuous improvement in the safety of food; a further transition to healthier diets; and a more environmentally sustainable food chain.

Many of the elements required for a comprehensive food policy are already in place. But central government needs to better integrate them and to work with the public, food chain businesses and other stakeholders, and in consultation with other tiers of government, to put a new policy framework in place.

This report addresses the major issues facing the food system in the UK and sets out a series of agreed actions – all of which will be taken forward by the Government. The key actions and conclusions are outlined below:

- Bringing together, for the first time, integrated information and advice for consumers on the impacts of food on health and the environment.
- Making it easier for consumers to make healthy choices when eating out.
- Recognising that community groups, voluntary organisations and social enterprises have an important role to play in supporting activities that promote healthy eating and more sustainable production and consumption, and in encouraging public debate about food issues, and thus in promoting new social norms that facilitate behavioural and cultural change.
- There is no room for complacency about food safety. Smarter approaches are needed to ensure that interventions focus on the points of highest risk in the food chain.
- In view of the evidence of its importance for diet and health outcomes, making further progress with the 5 A DAY campaign to increase average daily consumption of fruit and vegetables is a priority. Renewed focus is needed on targeting groups where intake remains low, such as low-income families, and on working with industry to take the campaign forward through expanding the range of products that can count towards the target, and improving the clarity of messaging to consumers.
- The public sector in England should be leading by example. More nutritious, environmentally sustainable food will be delivered through a new 'Healthier Food Mark' linked to standards for food served in the public sector. The standards will help in delivering better food with existing resources. The scheme will be voluntary initially and piloted within central government, HM Prison Service and NHS services. The Government will then consider if compliance should be made compulsory in England for central government and for prisons. As the scheme progresses, all public bodies in England will eventually be encouraged to sign up – ensuring a minimum standard of healthier food across the public sector.
- Well-functioning, competitive markets should provide fair prices for consumers and a fair deal throughout the supply chain. Reducing distortions in agricultural trade and raising agricultural productivity in the developing world would improve global food security.
- Recent rises in food commodity prices call for a concerted international response. The UK Government has acted promptly to address the challenges posed by increases in global food prices. Actions taken include a £455 million aid package and work with international agencies to redouble efforts to raise agricultural productivity, especially in Africa.
- Maintaining global food security while responding to climate change is a critical collective challenge for the 21st century. The Government's Chief Scientific Adviser is commissioning a major new study to examine how the global food system needs to evolve in a world adapting to, and mitigating, climate change.

- The risk that changes in world animal feed markets – together with European Union (EU) rules on importing genetically modified crops – will create problems for the UK's regulatory system for food, and for the economics of food production, need to be better understood.
- On-farm GHG emissions are set to be the focus of increasing attention in the years ahead, creating significant challenges and opportunities for European farming. There are practical steps that the UK can take to prepare, and it can perform a key role in leading the EU debate.
- England needs a packaging waste management system that does more to encourage prevention of packaging waste and supports the recovery and recycling of such waste from households and businesses.
- UK consumers spend an average of £420 per household each year on food that they then throw away. Eliminating household food waste would deliver major benefits, including a reduction in GHG emissions equivalent to taking one in five cars off UK roads. There are many simple, practical things that can be done by families to reduce the food that they waste (such as storing vegetables in the fridge) and greater efforts should be made to extract the maximum renewable energy from what remains, rather than sending it to landfill.
- The Prime Minister has asked the Cabinet Office to establish and support a Food Strategy Task Force to monitor ongoing developments in the food system and food markets, to drive forward implementation of all the measures in this report and to publish regular updates on progress.

Britain's food culture is changing in step with the lifestyles and interests of a more affluent society

- ES.1** Consumers' shopping habits and cooking and eating patterns in the UK today demonstrate an increasing interest in the convenience, taste, quality and origin of food. The diversity of products in shops and on menus is greater than ever before. Price still matters – recent economic uncertainty is making many think about what value they place on food and what they put in their shopping basket. But this sits alongside rising demand for better quality food produced to a set of values that increasing numbers of

people are prepared to pay for, such as free-range chicken. Many people aspire to eat more healthily, but often these intentions are not met; most consumers are still not eating five portions of fruit and vegetables a day and consume much more saturated fat, salt and added sugar than is good for their health.

The food and drink supply chain is a key part of the British economy but different parts of the food chain face different challenges

- ES.2** The food and drink supply chain – from farming to food retailing to canteens and restaurants – accounts for 7% of UK national

output and supports around 3.7 million jobs. Spending on food and non-alcoholic drink is worth around £129 billion per year. Food and soft drinks manufacturing is the UK's single largest manufacturing sector, generating some £16.5 billion in added value each year¹.

ES.3 The economic picture for farming is mixed. Grain prices received by arable farmers are now high and, despite higher input costs, the outlook is positive. UK livestock farming faces strong competition from elsewhere in Europe and overseas, and has been hit hard by a long series of animal disease outbreaks, while producers of pigs and poultry have been particularly affected by recent rises in the costs of animal feed on international markets. The whole sector is continuing to adjust to reforms in the Common Agricultural Policy (worth £3 billion each year in financial support to the UK) and to the tightening of environmental standards. Farming seems set for further change amidst robust global demand for food and increased volatility in world markets, and with the prospect of continuing reform of the Common Agricultural Policy.

ES.4 Food retailing is highly concentrated – at least two-thirds of sales are accounted for by just four retailers. There has been a huge proliferation of products on offer to consumers; the food and drink industry introduces 10,000 new products each year². Convenience stores have responded to the competitive pressure from large retailers by forming 'symbol groups', sharing common

branding and economies of scale. Traditional street markets have continued to decline but there has been a rapid growth in the number of farmers' markets, indicative of the resurgence of interest in the quality and provenance of food. Other than in contract catering, the food services sector (restaurants, cafes, pubs, fast food outlets, etc) is much more fragmented but has prospered as consumers eat out of the home more often.

Recent increases in global commodity prices have brought an end to the long-term decline in food prices

ES.5 Rising prices in international agricultural commodity markets, together with higher energy costs, have put a brake on the long-term trend of food becoming ever more affordable for consumers.

ES.6 The average UK household now devotes around 9% of its expenditure to food, down from 16% in 1984. But the poorest 10% of households in the UK saw 15% of their expenditure spent on food in 2005–06, whereas the richest 10% spent just 7%³. Low-income households also spend proportionately more on basic staples such as milk, eggs and bread, which are among the products to have seen the biggest price increases in recent months. So, increases in the cost of food still hit the poorest the hardest.

ES.7 Agricultural commodity prices have risen substantially since 2006, especially grains.

¹ Office for National Statistics (ONS) *Annual Business Inquiry* (June 2008)

² Mintel, direct communication

³ ONS (2007) *Family Spending 2006*

A prompt response by the world community to these price changes is critically important, especially for the poor in the developing world, for whom 50–80% of household expenditure can be absorbed by food⁴. Price rises have contributed to social unrest in a number of countries and threaten severe hardship for some of the poorest people on the planet, urban and rural populations alike. The UK is responding with targeted aid and is working with partners to provide financial and other support to the countries most affected. It is also pressing for a speedy conclusion to the World Trade Organization's Doha Development Agenda, with reductions in the present level of distortion of agricultural trade.

- ES.8** As farmers respond to market signals by increasing output, futures traders are converting expectations of good harvests into lower forward prices. But constraints on international trade in food, including export bans, could still see these trends reversed, and the vagaries of weather and other events make the outlook uncertain. It is widely expected that market volatility will be a fact of life for the world's food economy for some years to come.
- ES.9** Global food stocks are at relatively low levels. The effect of population growth on demand for grain is compounded by the transition to a more meat-intensive diet that is taking place in many emerging economies⁵. Robust demand, together with high energy costs and the ever-present prospect of drought and

poor weather, in part due to climate change, mean that few experts expect food prices to return to past lows for the foreseeable future.

The safety of food underpins consumer confidence in the food system – and cannot be taken for granted

- ES.10** Food is as safe as it has ever been. Public confidence in food has increased in recent years following the problems of the past, such as BSE (bovine spongiform encephalopathy) in cattle. Yet it is estimated that there are still around 765,000 cases of food poisoning each year in England and Wales, and the rate of decline seems to be slowing⁶. Deaths due to *Listeria* are rising. Microbiological contamination of meat supply chains is a continuing challenge, as is the threat of diseases transferring to humans from animals and poultry. Vigilance is needed to reduce the risk of food contamination, particularly in respect of foods imported from outside the EU.

Changes in eating patterns would bring huge health gains here in the UK

- ES.11** Poor diet is known to influence the risk of cancer, heart disease and other conditions. The importance of nutrition for mental health and well-being is gradually becoming clearer. Around 70,000 fewer people would die prematurely each year in the UK if diets matched the nutritional guidelines on fruit and vegetable consumption, and saturated

⁴ Food and Agriculture Organization

⁵ Production of 1 kg of beef is said to require 7–10 kg of grain

⁶ Food Standards Agency (2007) *Annual Report of the Chief Scientist*

fat, added sugar and salt intake⁷. There are social inequalities within diet-related ill health that demand attention. And alongside the social impacts, the economic burdens of diet-related ill health are huge – perhaps £6 billion in additional NHS costs alone each year⁸.

- ES.12** The dietary health of those less able to care for themselves is also a real concern. A national survey in 2007 found that 28% of people (mostly elderly) admitted to hospitals and care homes in the UK were malnourished⁹.
- ES.13** Consumer awareness of the importance of healthy eating is rising. Indeed it is one of the strongest trends in the marketplace. New product development and reformulation of existing recipes by the food industry are helping to make healthier food options more accessible. But major behavioural changes and shifts in cultural norms are required before healthy diets are the norm.
- ES.14** Patterns of eating and exercise need to change further if the UK is to reverse the rising levels of obesity. Nearly a quarter of adults and about 10% of children are already classed as obese. There are challenges here too for the public sector as an employer. There may be more than 3 million obese and overweight people on the public sector payroll. Globally, it is estimated that there are a billion overweight people, 300 million of them obese¹⁰, while at least 800 million are chronically hungry due to poverty and lack of access to food¹¹.

Despite the progress made, we are still a long way from having an environmentally sustainable food chain

- ES.15** The food chain has huge environmental impacts. Reducing the food chain's dependence on energy, water and other resources will reduce its exposure to future increases in resource prices. Reducing the quantity of waste and GHG emissions can improve resource efficiency and anticipate the changes required for the transition to a low-carbon economy.
- ES.16** Farming helps to maintain the much-loved appearance and character of the UK countryside and its place in the national self-identity. Grassland and other habitats supported by farming sustain valued ecosystems and the species within them. But these systems are sensitive, as changes in farming practice can threaten or boost biodiversity.
- ES.17** Around 18% of UK GHG emissions are related to food production and consumption. Nearly half of these emissions come from farms, mostly in the form of methane and nitrous oxide that fall outside current UK domestic targets for carbon dioxide (CO₂), and are beyond the scope of the EU Emissions Trading Scheme and other carbon pricing mechanisms¹².

⁷ Strategy Unit (2008) *Food: An analysis of the issues*

⁸ Rayner M and Scarborough P (2005) The burden of food related ill health in the UK, *Journal of Epidemiology and Community Health*, 59, 1054–7

⁹ British Association for Parenteral and Enteral Nutrition; National Nutrition Screening Week 2007. See www.bapen.org.uk

¹⁰ World Health Organization, www.who.int/dietphysicalactivity/publications/facts/obesity/en/

¹¹ World Food Programme, *Winning the War on Hunger*, www.wfp.org/policies/introduction/other/documents/guide_winning_hunger/default.html

¹² ONS (2007) *Environmental Accounts, Spring 2007*

ES.18 The food chain generates large quantities of waste food and material, such as packaging. Food waste alone results in unnecessary GHG emissions equivalent to 18 million tonnes of CO₂ each year. Packaging has an important role in presenting, protecting and preserving food products, but there is much more to be done to reduce unnecessary packaging and raise recycling rates.

ES.19 In many parts of the world, food production is based on unsustainable patterns of water use. Under-pricing and mismanagement of water resources are widespread. On a global basis, the amount of fresh water available per person is falling rapidly¹³. Worldwide, soils are similarly under pressure as a result of poor land management (over-grazing, over-irrigation, run-off, etc). There is a clear need for countries, industries and communities to address these issues.

ES.20 Global fish stocks continue to decline. In the UK we import most of our most popular fish – cod and haddock – for want of adequate domestic stocks, and have developed a taste for exotic species reared in the tropics (such as tiger prawns). A stronger focus on sustainable sourcing from consumers, food retailers, caterers and restaurateurs would help to encourage the fishing industry here and abroad to adopt sustainable management practices.

The long-term challenges for world food security are more fundamental still

ES.21 At a global level, food output must rise to feed a growing, wealthier population. The World Bank estimates that cereal production needs to increase by 50% and meat production by 85% between 2000 and 2030 to meet demand¹⁴. This implies further increases in agricultural productivity.

ES.22 But productive land, as well as water, fossil fuels and other natural resources, are set to become scarcer. And the food chain, especially farming, is a large contributor to global GHG emissions. Carbon released by land clearance, methane from ruminant animals and nitrous oxide released from fertilisers and manure help to contribute to the GHG emissions from agriculture and land-use change. Agriculture is estimated to account for 10–12% of the total emissions of the gases that contribute to the human-induced global warming effect¹⁵ (land-use change, such as deforestation for farming, adds more).

ES.23 None of this is sustainable in the long term, especially if the world community has embarked (as it must) on an aggressive programme of cuts in total GHG emissions. Well before 2050, the world will need farming systems capable of feeding 8–11 billion people within a resource-light, low-carbon economy. The necessary progress towards this outcome will not happen of its own accord.

¹³ United Nations Environment Programme (2002) *Global Environmental Outlook 3*, www.unep.org/geo/geo3/english/pdfs/synthesis.pdf

¹⁴ World Bank (2007) *World Development Report 2008*

¹⁵ Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (2007) *Fourth Assessment Report: Working Group III Report Mitigation of Climate Change*

There are clear gains to be had from cutting food waste

ES.24 In the developing world, up to 40% of food harvested can be lost before it is consumed owing to the inadequacies of processing, storage and transport¹⁶. Much of this is avoidable with more efficient infrastructure and logistics systems. Here in the UK, widespread concern about higher food prices sits awkwardly alongside evidence showing that consumers throw away 4.1 million tonnes of food that could have been eaten – worth an average of £420 per household – every year¹⁷.

But an isolationist attitude to national food security is unlikely to be part of the solution

ES.25 The UK produces about half of the food consumed here, and is about 60% 'self-sufficient' if UK exports and local consumption are set against UK production. Most UK food imports come from elsewhere in the EU (68% in 2006) and the UK is well placed to access the food it needs from world markets, where required¹⁸. Attempting to pursue national food security in isolation from the global context is unlikely to be practicable, sustainable or financially rational, not least because key inputs (such as energy, feed and fertiliser) are sourced globally¹⁹. Poor weather and animal disease can hit output anywhere, including the UK.

ES.26 Improving competitiveness in food production, raising sustainable output and building a successful food chain economy

are important objectives in their own right. They may result in 'positive' movement in self-sufficiency measures but do not need to be justified in those terms.

ES.27 But increasing global food security makes for a more stable world, which is in the common interest. If yields in Africa and elsewhere reached their potential, global food output would be much higher, far fewer people would go hungry and the threat of food-related political and social instability around the world would decrease. The recent international market fluctuations re-emphasise the positive case for trade reform and completion of the Doha Round, reducing distortions in agricultural markets and providing price incentives for farmers around the world to produce food.

These challenges mean that the UK needs a stronger and more integrated approach to food policy

ES.28 Many of the issues we face as a society – poverty, public health, climate change and others – have a food dimension. But direct interventions focused on the food system will often not be the solution because the root of the problem often lies elsewhere. Nonetheless, food cuts across many aspects of public policy and managing the multiple challenges in a consistent, joined-up manner is far from straightforward.

ES.29 The UK needs a clearer public policy framework for food and the machinery in government to help deliver it. The key elements of that framework should be

¹⁶ World Resources Institute (1998) *Earth Trends: Featured Topic*, http://earthtrends.wri.org/pdf_library/feature/agr_fea_disappear.pdf

¹⁷ Waste and Resources Action Programme (2008) *The Food We Waste*

¹⁸ Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) (2008) *Agricultural Quick Statistics*

¹⁹ The UK, a net energy importer, is around 63% self-sufficient in fertiliser and imports significant quantities of soya-based animal feed (Defra, unpublished)

a new shared vision for the food system of the future, a set of core strategic objectives that respond to central aspects of that vision, and an integrated statement of strategy that sets out how to move forward.

ES.30 There is a future of food that is far more sustainable – economically, environmentally and socially. It is a future where consumers are able to access healthy, low-impact food that fits their lifestyles and time pressures – whether cooking from basic ingredients or buying a prepared meal. The food chain is populated by successful, innovative food businesses and is a major source of wealth creation and employment. Farming is no longer subsidised. Natural resources are responsibly managed and their external costs and benefits properly priced. Healthy eating is the norm, and both easy and enjoyable. Diet-related ill health and obesity are in steep decline. Public sector food is of a universally high standard and makes a positive contribution to a nutritionally balanced diet.

ES.31 The UK Government's strategic policy objectives should be to secure:

- fair prices, choice, access to food and food security through open and competitive markets;
- continuous improvement in the safety of food;
- the changes needed to deliver a further transition to healthier diets; and
- a more environmentally sustainable food chain.

ES.32 The Government will test and refine the new strategic framework for food set out in this report as part of an open and collaborative process to be run over the next year.

ES.33 Government action to realise this vision and these strategic objectives is needed in three areas: (i) active engagement with consumers; (ii) working in partnership with the supply chain; and (iii) leadership by example. A series of measures under each of these headings are set out in this report – all of which will be taken forward by the Government.

More can be done to help consumers choose safe, low-environmental-impact food and a healthier diet

ES.34 The Government will do more to join up its advice to consumers on different food issues, focusing on health, food safety and the environment. The Food Standards Agency (FSA) will expand its current advice to provide a one-stop-shop to consumers looking for information and advice on nutrition, food and sustainability, and food safety. Campaigns and engagement efforts on food-related issues will be better coordinated across departments.

ES.35 Public policy needs to work with key consumer trends and, specifically, recognise that people are eating out more often. The FSA will extend its programme focused on food eaten out of the home. It will work with food businesses and consumers

to understand what information consumers would find helpful when eating out of the home, and to improve the nutritional standard of the food on offer.

ES.36 Reaching the 5 A DAY target for fruit and vegetable consumption could mean that around 42,000 premature deaths are avoided each year. Progress has been made but we need to go further. As part of its broader communication strategy on healthier eating, the Government will develop messages targeted at specific population groups where consumption is low (such as young men). It will adopt a specific target of increasing fruit and vegetable consumption in low-income young families.

ES.37 People have become more interested in food production and provenance. The public sector, including local authorities, can nurture this by supporting farmers' markets and food fairs, retaining allotments (making best use of unused land) and encouraging social enterprises that work with communities on food issues.

Government needs to work in partnership with the food chain to bring about change

ES.38 The Government will continue to work with the food industry on advancing the Healthy Food Code of Good Practice set out earlier this year in the Government's strategy to tackle the problems of excess weight and obesity in England (*Healthy Weight, Healthy Lives*). It will look at how it can work with retailers and manufacturers to ensure that

barriers to achieving the 5 A DAY target for fruit and vegetables are addressed, looking at accessibility, product placement and the range of products that can count as a portion of fruit or vegetables.

ES.39 Together with industry, the Government will develop a 'whole food chain approach' for identifying the most important and high-risk food safety hazards in the food supply chain, and the points at which they can be best controlled. This will consider risk from all sources of food safety hazards, not just food-borne disease/microbial hazards, and will focus interventions at the highest risk points in the food chain.

ES.40 The framework put forward in the Stern Review²⁰ – carbon pricing, new technologies and tackling market barriers – needs to be applied to the full food chain, here in the UK and elsewhere. As this happens, the non-CO₂ GHG emissions associated with farming will receive more attention from policy-makers than they have had to date. There are new opportunities for farm businesses to exploit – such as generation of renewable energy from farm waste. But a smarter system for calculating on-farm GHG emissions is needed if we are to be able to recognise and reward abatement. The Government has commissioned research to deliver such a system for the UK, and will work with international partners to learn from their approaches. The Government will also continue its leadership role on climate change in Europe by promoting the part that agriculture has to play in both the mitigation of, and adaptation to, climate change.

²⁰ HM Treasury (2006) *Stern Review on the Economics of Climate Change*

ES.41 Maintaining global food security while responding to climate change is a critical collective challenge for the 21st century. The Government will continue its global leadership on food security and climate change through its Chief Scientific Adviser commissioning a major new project to examine future global food systems. The project will explore how future systems might evolve in a world adapting to and mitigating climate change. The project will be international in scope, and will consider the implications for policy in the UK.

ES.42 Pressures on the food system today also need attention. The Government will commission an analysis of how the EU's regulations concerning genetically modified (GM) material are interacting with global trends in animal feed production and assess any potential impacts on UK livestock farming. The potential impacts of market trends for the integrity of the regulatory system, and thus for consumer confidence, will also be examined. The UK will continue to lobby for the EU to reach quicker decisions, whether positive or negative, on proposed GM products.

ES.43 A new strategy for packaging waste in England will be developed, set within the framework provided by the Waste Strategy for England. The strategy will encourage more prevention of packaging at source. It will aim to get incentives better aligned along the food chain to encourage more prevention of packaging and more re-use and recycling. It will also aim to improve information flows from manufacturers through retailers, consumers and local authorities to re-processors.

ES.44 Alongside the development of this strategy the Government will open discussions with food chain businesses on a new voluntary agreement to achieve a demanding net packaging reduction target for 2012 and on a new objective to encourage the use of recycled material. It will also negotiate Courtauld Commitment-type agreements for other business sectors. It will consult with Devolved Administrations about these proposals and their possible extension beyond England.

ES.45 There is huge potential for households to reduce food waste – saving money and helping the environment. The Government will work with industry to set a target for substantial cuts in food waste in homes and business by 2012 and continue to support consumer-facing campaigns. Again, Devolved Administrations will be consulted about possible participation.

Government should lead by example and commit itself to ensuring that food served by the public sector is healthier, more sustainably sourced, and more efficiently procured

ES.46 The public sector should be leading by example in the delivery of healthier, more environmentally sustainable food. Progress has been made in many areas but there is more to do. In England a promise of nutritious, more environmentally sustainable food will be delivered through a new 'Healthier Food Mark' that will show where healthier, more sustainable food is available. The standards behind the Mark will provide a lever to drive out the inefficiencies that

currently hinder cost-effective public food procurement, so that the money spent yields better food²¹.

- ES.47** Adoption of the standards required to achieve the Healthier Food Mark will initially be voluntary. But, subject to experience, financial impact, further consultation and development of proposals, the Government will look at making compliance compulsory for central government departments and their agencies, and prisons, by 2012. And as the scheme progresses, all public bodies in England will eventually be encouraged to sign up.

New arrangements are needed to ensure the successful delivery of a more integrated approach to food policy

- ES.48** The Cabinet Office will chair a new cross-Whitehall Food Strategy Task Force that will coordinate work across government on food issues (including the Government's medium-term response to developments in global food markets) and ensure progress in delivering the measures in this report. Sub-groups of the Task Force will take forward individual key actions, each chaired by a lead department. The Task Force will report annually to the Prime Minister. The reports will be published.
- ES.49** The Department of Health and the FSA will publish a new statement of roles and responsibilities linked to the Healthy Food Code of Good Practice, to help stakeholders understand more clearly their respective functions and areas of leadership.

- ES.50** To give added impetus to efforts to join up policy in this area, the Government will consider how best to incentivise efforts to reduce the public health and environmental harms associated with food and to support the food economy within the performance management framework for the next Spending Review.

- ES.51** Finally, a Joint Research Strategy for Food will be prepared to ensure better coordination of departments' food-related research spending. The strategy will identify priorities for research, and undertake monitoring and dissemination arrangements. The strategy will define a 'virtual' research programme that cuts across the work of those departments, and will link to Research Councils and other funders.

- ES.52** **The new framework for food policy set out here is intended to ensure that the Government is equipped to play its part in the continuing transformation of the UK's food system. But it is the decisions of consumers and industry, and the values and preferences of society at large, that will determine how fast and how far that process moves. A collective effort is needed to build a thriving food system that produces safe, low-impact food and healthy diets.**

²¹ In 2006, the National Audit Office estimated that inefficiencies in public food procurement were worth £224 million a year

Cabinet Office
Admiralty Arch, The Mall
London SW1A 2WH

E-mail: strategy@cabinet-office.x.gsi.gov.uk
Web address: www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/strategy/

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