

Summary of recommendations

Recommendation 1: Implement a Comprehensive Strategy to Enhance Sector Attractiveness

Timing: short term

Responsibility to deliver: industry

To improve sector image, the FDSC must lead a comprehensive strategy that includes:

- Communication campaigns targeted at changing public perception about the sector
- Developing careers advice provided by schools and education/training providers
- Reviewing methods through which pay, staff benefits and conditions can be improved
- Recognition of role that hard-to-reach and disengaged groups can offer businesses

Recommendation 2: Access to Migrant Labour

Timing: short term

Responsibility to deliver: government

Seasonal Worker route

Announce the replacement of the scheme by the end of 2023, guaranteed for a minimum of five years. Consider removing the cap on the total number of visas and extend the length of visas to nine months. Selected businesses should have the ability to directly sponsor workers. Employers should bear responsibility for the cost of the NHS health surcharge. A robust enforcement mechanism must be implemented and managed by the GLAA to reduce labour exploitation.

Skilled Worker route

Widen the eligibility criteria for the route to reclassify occupations so they become eligible and reduce the high financial costs to access the route. It is essential that Shortage Occupation List (SOL) reviews take place more frequently and the English language requirement is relaxed.

Recommendation 3: Invest in Domestic Workers

Timing: medium term

Responsibility to deliver: government and industry

Businesses should provide clear training and career development plans for workers, focusing on skills that are specific to the food supply chain sector. Sectoral organisations should collaborate

to create a portal which garners labour market data that businesses can access. Government to consider providing businesses with access to HR support via Local Enterprise Partnerships.

Recommendation 4: Reform the Apprenticeship Levy

Timing: medium term

Responsibility to deliver: government and industry

Overhaul the Levy in collaboration with industry input to provide a highly skilled workforce and enable greater access for SMEs, named the Skills and Development Levy. To achieve this:

- Introduce a flexible approach that includes a wider range of training, simplify the application process, and introduce a Research and Development-style tax record system
- Increase flexibility in the use of funding
- Provide clarity on the use of the expired Levy funding

Recommendation 5: Build on Skills Supply Collaboration

Timing: long term

Responsibility to deliver: government, education bodies and industry

Greater collaboration between the government, education providers and industry through formalised engagement, focusing on informing policymaking, skills development, investment in training and education provision.

Recommendation 6: Support Food Career Curriculum Delivery

Timing: medium term

Responsibility to deliver: government and education bodies

Next generation of entrants to the food supply chain must be seen as a matter of national importance in assisting with the security of the sector. Higher education funding bodies should review food supply chain-related subjects to ensure funding for relevant courses.

Recommendation 7: Produce a Workforce Data Strategy

Timing: long term

Responsibility to deliver: government

Set out a workforce data strategy in partnership with the Office for National Statistics and Department for Education's Unit for Future Skills to improve available data on labour and skills supply. They should include commissioning real-time LMI and improving existing datasets and mapping workforce trends within the sector to ensure a pipeline of skills.

Recommendation 8: Incentivise Automation

Timing: long term

Responsibility to deliver: government

Improve access to funding that incentivises the uptake of automation among businesses to encourage productivity gains, boost employment and achieve environmental outcomes. Replacement of the Fruit and Vegetables Aid Scheme must open grant aid to individual producers, and an equivalent scheme needs to be introduced for the food and drink manufacturing sector.

Recommendation 9: Advance Automation Knowledge

Timing: long term

Responsibility to deliver: government and industry

Implement a coordinated, cross-industry approach to knowledge-sharing and promote the adoption of automation which eliminates existing barriers and simplified access to new technology. The FDSC should act as the initial forum.

Recommendation 10: Moonshot Approach to Innovation

Timing: long term

Responsibility to deliver: government, research funding bodies and industry

There needs to be a moon-shot approach to innovation funding where collaboration between relevant stakeholders can identify gaps in existing technologies, provide new revenue streams and support the wider adoption of automation, driven by the FDSC.