

Food Strategy Advisory Board Meeting – 26 March 2025

Attendees

Daniel Zeichner MP (Chair)
Andrew Selley
Anna Taylor
Ash Amirahmadi
Dalton Philips
Emily Miles
Flor Healy
Hugo Harper (on behalf of Ravi Gurumurthy)
Jillian Moffatt
Sam Godfrey
Simon Roberts
Susan Jebb (dial in)
Sarah Bradbury (Secretariat)
Tessa Jones (Secretariat)

Chris Whitty – Apologies
Tim Smith – Apologies

Agenda

Welcome and Opening Remarks
(14.30-14.40)

Draft Terms of Reference and Declarations of Interest
(14.40-14.55)

Board Member Opening Remarks
(14.55-15.25)

Food Strategy Overview and Outcomes Framework
(15.25-15.55)

Welcome and Opening Remarks

The Minister welcomed attendees to the first meeting of the Board and thanked them for their time.

He set out his hopes for the group and the terms of engagement:

- This would not be a decision-making group, but insights shared would inform Ministerial thinking. Sitting on this group did not mean members were bound to endorse government action in this area, though it was hoped they might.
- Members had been selected for their personal and professional insights across the food system and how each part related to the whole.
- The group would operate under the Chatham House Rule.

Draft Terms of Reference and Declarations of Interest

The Secretariat presented the papers which had been circulated on this item:

- The Terms of Reference were presented and comments invited in writing.
- The Minister noted the high level of interest in this group. It was important to be aware of individual stakes in the food system and the interactions between members.
- Transparency was imperative. Members were invited both to outline their commercial interests in a tour de table, and to submit a formal declaration of interest to the secretariat.

Board member opening remarks

The Minister started by outlining the Government's vision for a food system that grows the economy, feeds the nation, nourishes individuals, and protects the planet, now and in the future. In order to deliver that vision sectors and industry across the food system would need to change.

Around the table, the following points were made:

- The Food Strategy had to consider health, the environment, growth of the economy and food security / resilience.
- There was a need for a joined up approach across government. It was to be welcomed that the Government had established a small ministerial working group including, Defra, DBT, MHCLG, DfE, and DHSC.
- Performance indicators or metrics would need to be established within the strategy to assess progress.
- Regional and local approaches should be considered.
- Legislation should be firmly on the table. A clearer regulatory environment could provide certainty for businesses and support investment.

Food Strategy Overview and Outcomes Framework

In discussing the four outcomes (Economic Growth, Health, Environmental Sustainability, and Food Security) the following points were raised.

- The Government was committed to economic growth. There were challenges in the operating environment for businesses with respect to current government policy.
- There was a need to drive investment into the system. There needed to be more reasons to invest both in primary production (e.g. farming and horticulture) but also in manufacturing.
- There was an interaction between the Food Strategy and the Farming Roadmap, with a join up needed between the two.
- There was a need to consider the role of domestic production and to empower farmers to grow more food locally and secure the supply chain.
- The cost of food needed to be considered when looking at systems change. Farming needed to be profitable, and people needed to be able to afford nutritious food.
- Economic growth needed to support a healthy food system and population. Obesity and diet related ill health needed to be a key outcome measure.
- Nutritious diets needed to become the most accessible, affordable, convenient, easiest option.
- There was an opportunity to build on the local social food infrastructure to stimulate new opportunities to get produce to people in a less processed way.
- The change needed to tackle obesity needed to be contextualised for what it meant for individuals, daily.
- Resilience had been overlooked historically but must be a focus for the strategy, in particular considering domestic production versus imports.
- The food system is at the centre of national security and needed to be given greater recognition.
- Food science and research also had a role to play to make crops more resilient to long term climate change.
- Our food culture should be a source of national pride.
- The food strategy should not lose sight of the joy associated with food.
- There was a discussion on the role of education in driving food culture and diet shift and the relative importance of food environments over individuals' knowledge.
- It was important to properly consider out of home food consumption.

AOB, Next Steps and Close

The Secretariat summarised the discussion:

- The Board had had a positive initial discussion – people came into the room energised, ambitious and seeing real opportunities.
- Members shared reflections and insights on what it would take to change the food system – the conditions for, and implications of, that.
- There was appetite for more detail, quickly, on the 'what', and agreement on the need to prioritise action, and make aims very specific.
- There was a commitment to come back together rapidly to drill into that detail – quantitative outcome measures would be key.

The following actions were agreed:

- Further development of the pillars / outcomes and impacts for the food strategy.
- Focus on the interaction between growth and health in the next meeting.
- Confirm membership of the group.
- Lengthen meetings to two hours.
- Submit declarations of interest to the secretariat.
- Confirm minutes for publication.