

# Food Strategy Advisory Board Meeting – 28 April 2025

## Attendees

Daniel Zeichner MP (Chair)  
Andrew Selley  
Anna Taylor  
Ash Amirahmadi  
Chris Whitty  
Dalton Philips  
Emily Miles  
Flor Healy  
Jillian Moffatt  
Ravi Gurumurthy  
Sam Godfrey  
Simon Roberts  
Susan Jebb  
Tim Smith  
Catherine Frances (Guest)  
Sarah Bradbury (Secretariat)  
Tessa Jones (Secretariat)

## Agenda

Welcome and Opening Remarks  
(15.30-15.35)

Food System Insights  
(15:35-15:50)

Workshop on Health  
(15.50-16.30)

Workshop on Economic Growth  
(16.35–17.15)

AOB, Next Steps and Close  
(17.15-17.30)

## Welcome and Opening Remarks

- Decisions were taken to:
  - Publish Terms of Reference.
  - Publish declarations of interest.
  - Publish meeting minutes.

## Food System Insights

The Secretariat presented a high level analysis of food consumption trends in the UK, now and into the future. This included insights into where households consume and purchase foods, exploration of drivers for food choices / purchases, international comparisons of food prices, and how the average UK diet compared to the Eatwell plate.

## Workshop on Health

Board members were invited to debate how health should feature within the food strategy. The following points were raised:

- The food environment played a significant role as a determinant of health. The ambition was to improve the impacts for individuals, across the whole country, and the whole of society.
- The key question was how to change the system in such a way that the incentives were to produce healthier diets – a ‘good food’ cycle rather than a ‘junk food’ cycle?
- Place and poverty were significantly correlated with diet related ill health. It was important to ensure that policies worked for the poorest in society.
- Increases in obesity and diet related ill health were an international challenge.
- There was a link to domestic food production and security – we should be producing healthy food ‘at home’.
- Metrics and reporting across the food system were currently inconsistent – the playing field was not ‘level’.
- There were important learnings from salt / sugar / fat reduction policies over the last 20+ years.
- School food was an important component of addressing children’s diets.
- Taxation was often raised as a potential approach. The benefits of this approach were debated. The link to the cost of food needed to be carefully considered and of balancing taxes with subsidised access to nutritious food for those on low incomes.
- Education was part of the solution, but improving access and the relative affordability of healthy foods would make a bigger impact.

## Workshop on Economic Growth

The Board members were invited to debate the opportunities for the food system to contribute to economic growth. The following points were raised:

- Industry needed certainty to invest in capital expenditure. The current planning system was sluggish, undermining investor confidence.
- Capital investors wanted outcomes beyond financial returns. The whole system of investment needed to be considered in the broadest sense, including the circular economy.
- The type and quality of land and weather in the UK constrains what could be grown. Energy prices were an important consideration in domestic production, particularly horticulture.
- There could be opportunities to provide fiscal incentives for elements of the food sectors to ensure growth.
- There were also opportunities to shift the risk and reward calculations for farmers to invest further in their businesses. Support was expressed for the work of Baroness Batters looking at farm profitability.
- Economic growth should consider opportunities for export of British products.
- A resilient food system would need both large companies with national reach as well as smaller producers and local supply chains.
- Government could play a role as a market shaper and enabler for innovation, including through support for place based food systems with local economic multipliers. This should be balanced with the national reach of retailers and agri-businesses.
- Further consideration should be given to the opportunities for SME scale up.

## **AOB, Next Steps and Close**

### **The Secretariat summarised the discussion**

- The deep dive into the interaction of the health and growth pillars of the food strategy considered in particular the win/wins and tensions between these two.
- There was broad consensus on the nature of the problems, and the shape of some potential early solutions. Mandatory reporting on health metrics was widely acknowledged to be important.
- Discussion of the importance of local food systems, and the role that place-based food policies can play in driving local economic growth (through jobs and innovation, resilience, and healthier diets).

### **The following actions were agreed**

- Further work would be done on the ideas raised.
- The Board would return to these issues at its next meeting in June.