

Public to have their say on the food system of the future

British shoppers will be able to buy environmentally friendly, healthy and affordable food under plans for a radical shake-up of the UK's food industry.

As one of the first steps, the government is today launching a call for evidence, giving everyone from consumers, farmers and food producers, to scientists and academics, an opportunity to shape how we produce, sell and consume food in the UK.

Their views will inform the first major review of the nation's food system in nearly 75 years, led by entrepreneur Henry Dimbleby, to ensure the food industry is fit for the future, supports growth, enhances the environment and is resilient to the challenges posed by climate change.

The review will look at what is working well already and the role of new technology to revolutionise our food supply – from innovations like vertical farming and robotics, to carbon neutral manufacturing and crops that tackle climate change. No idea is too big or small to be considered.

Environment Secretary Theresa Villiers said:

As well as keeping us alive and healthy, food plays a central role in our culture and our national life. The threats from climate change, loss of biodiversity and the need to deliver safe and affordable food gives rise to new challenges we must address.

As we leave the EU and seek to capitalise on the opportunities this can provide for the UK's farmers and food producers, we have the chance to reshape our food system from farm to fork to ensure it is ready to deal with these 21st century pressures.

So I am delighted to launch this call for evidence to build on the excellent work Henry Dimbleby has already done on this important review. We should not underplay the importance of the food we eat for our environment, our health and our society, and I encourage people to share their views on the way ahead.

Independent Review Lead Henry Dimbleby said:

We're launching the call for evidence today to gather insights and inspiration to help transform our food system.

These could be policies or ideas that make it easier for us to make more informed decisions about the food we eat; that make food production more environmentally sustainable; that help food

businesses and communities to thrive; or that could put our country at the forefront of innovation in the coming years.

Whether you are someone who works in a food business, a farmer, a food processor, an interested citizen – whoever you are – we want to hear from you. We can't wait to read your submissions and hear about your ideas.

Prue Leith CBE restaurateur, food writer, cookery campaigner and broadcaster said:

For too long we have tinkered with food and food education. But we really need to grasp the nettle and do something radical. The National Food Strategy is an opportunity not to be missed, for our generation and for our children and grandchildren.

Through this Strategy we have the opportunity to improve the nation's health and embrace sustainability and I urge everyone to engage with it.

Ian Wright CBE, Chief Executive Food and Drink Federation said:

Today's announcement signals the serious commitment from government to the first independent review of the food and drink sector in over 70 years. We are absolutely delighted that Defra will be leading this work, with the Food and Drink Sector Council playing a leading role in shaping the strategy as it develops.

Food and drink is part of our critical national infrastructure. The National Food Strategy will ensure that UK food and drink remains a vital national asset, and continues to be one of the UK's biggest success stories.

FDF will be submitting evidence, and we would encourage everyone up and down the food and drink supply chain to do the same.

Minette Batters, National Farming Union President said:

British food is amongst the best, safest and most affordable in the world and UK farming plays a crucial role in providing the raw ingredients that form the backbone of our country's food system. It's time we took pride and interest in our food industry, which is worth over £120 billion to the national economy and employs 4 million people.

The NFU is pleased to work with Henry Dimbleby to continue the development of a food system that delivers high quality, safe and affordable food for all.

Professor Judy Buttriss, Director General of British Nutrition Foundation said:

The Call for Evidence to help develop Defra's National Food Strategy provides an opportunity to shape a strategy that looks at food, nutrition and the environment in the round, through multiple lenses. The opportunity should not be missed.

Good nutrition is as much about eating more of some things as it is about cutting back on others. The integrated message of variety, balance and nutrient density – making every calorie count – needs to be reflected in food production right through to what we teach children in school.

Kath Dalmeny, Chief Executive of Sustain said:

We need a food system that can reliably provide us with good, health-promoting food, now and for generations to come. This means averting dangerous climate change and restoring the natural systems on which we all depend for our food, water and clean air.

The whole system must also support decent livelihoods in farming and fishing, in perpetuity. These are tall orders, but it is the great task of our generation to tackle these fundamental issues that will underpin our ability to sustain human life and pursue social progress. We look forward to the National Food Strategy spearheading transformative action to create the social, economic, policy and legislative conditions for better food, farming and fishing to thrive and accelerate into the mainstream.

Iain Ferguson, Industry Co-Chair of the Food and Drink Sector Council said:

The National Food Strategy offers a once in a generation opportunity. We encourage everyone in the industry to contribute their ideas to help create the sustainable food system of the future. The Food and Drink Sector Council will give Henry Dimbleby and the review its full support.

Together these findings will inform the Government's trailblazing new National Food Strategy, published next year.