

## Brexit: Farming for public health

*“Food production is ultimately about health. I want to ensure we have a food and farming policy that includes higher standards and ambitions, and that results in better outcomes, including for public health.”*

Michael Gove, Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, April 2018



## Brexit provides a rare opportunity to re-orient agricultural policy and practice to support healthier diets and improved public health, including by:

### **Recognising public health as a public good**

- Public health should be recognised as a public good in the context of agricultural payments. Payments of public money in farming should be associated with public health outcomes, alongside other public goods.

### **Ending the routine, preventative use of antibiotics and promoting systems-change**

- Banning the routine, preventative use of antibiotics in livestock farming, setting targets to reduce farm antibiotic use 50% by 2020 and 80% by 2050, and imposing restrictions on animal products imported from countries with less rigorous requirements on antibiotics, would help to diminish the threat of antimicrobial resistance.
- Promoting organic production systems which use significantly less antibiotics, and introducing transition funding to support farmers to move towards less intensive systems, would help reduce antibiotic usage.

### **Stimulating demand for British and local vegetables, pulses and fruits through public procurement**

- Implementing Defra's Balanced Scorecard across the whole public sector and requiring procurement decisions to place a weighting of at least 60% on quality relative to cost would channel an extra £200m into British farming.
- Re-specifying the School Fruit and Veg Scheme so that a higher percentage of produce is British, local and organic would shorten supply chains, reduce pesticide levels, and make the produce more appealing to children.
- Doubling the number of Food for Life Served Here meals to 3.6 million meals per day would grow the market for assurance schemes including Red Tractor, LEAF, RSPCA-assured and organic, while supporting healthy eating.

### **Supporting British horticulture**

- Prioritising horticulture, including by implementing financial incentives and grants to support farmers to move into or start horticultural production, with an emphasis on ecological growing techniques such as organic, would allow UK-grown fruits and vegetables to supply more of the UK market, mitigating price increases and volatility.

### **Promoting 'less but better' meat**

- Healthier and more sustainable diets that include less and better meat and more veg would be promoted by integrating sustainability fully into healthy eating advice to the public, including the Eatwell Guide.
- Introducing regulation requiring clear and honest labelling, including a mandatory method of production labelling, for all livestock products, would empower the public while levelling the playing field for farmers.

### **Implementing nature-based health promotion**

- Actively promoting nature-based social prescriptions, including farm-based interventions, and making additional funding available to farmers to host visits (including through Care Farming UK), would benefit public wellbeing.
- Linking farming and nature within the Nature Friendly Schools programme by understanding 'nature visits' to be farm visits will benefit child wellbeing and help children to reconnect with where food comes from.
- Promoting a 'whole school approach', such as is embodied in the Food for Life School Award, which involves children in food growing and farm visits, has been shown to result in increased consumption of veg and fruit.

## Contact us:

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