

The time is now



Food system solutions in an age
of environmental breakdown

About the Soil Association

We see a future of regeneration. With healthy soils, thriving wildlife, good lives for farm animals, nutritious food, and social equity. But we're under no illusions that such a world will be easily attained. The system we seek to change is vast and complex. The climate, nature and health crises grow more severe by the day. Yet we are convinced that, together, we can turn the tide in the next ten years. The Soil Association is working to transform how we eat, farm and care for the natural world. Since 1946 we've partnered with thousands of people across food, farming, and forestry to innovate and champion practical solutions that lead to a brighter and more hopeful future. Together, we can begin to restore our world, from the ground up.

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Foreword

In my lifetime, the changes we've campaigned for have often been typecast as somewhat esoteric, sometimes as luxuries that a few may aspire to, but have little relevance to most.

A healthy, functioning soil, or unpolluted waterways, antibiotics that work when you need them to; food that nourishes, livelihoods that are nourishing... and fairly rewarded. A connection to the earth, to being earthed when the maelstrom of our own creation gets too much. Pah, that's for the hippies!

Well, maybe it's time to stop hiding our values and our outrage in the hope that by working within the system, the prevailing paradigm, we can gently nudge our way to a better world. Maybe it's time to talk much more openly about the societal changes that are required, if all people, now and in the future, are to have access to the basic provisions that only a resilient natural environment can provide. In these pages, we explore some of those changes, because without them, humanity's prospects look grim. The food system transformation we have always sought now clearly depends on doing some wider things – things that we might be told are not in our brief – differently. To achieve our goals, we must call out the barriers that have prevented timely action to date.

There has been positive progress of course, over recent decades. There is much that allows moments of optimism, much to be inspired by: the upswell of farmers starting to learn about their soils, and how to regenerate them; the wonderful community projects that engage local people are just two examples.

Even the goals that governments have set to reduce emissions and restore nature should be commended. But we are just so far behind the pace, and the impacts that we have sought to avoid through mitigation measures are clearly already upon us. Alongside ongoing and hopefully accelerated action to stabilise the crisis, we will need to deal with its manifestations, prioritising resilience and adaptation in farming, food and forestry.

As a charity with our feet firmly in the soil, we will do all we can to provide that practical assistance, while still collaborating and innovating to shift the political and business landscape. In these pages, we outline the approaches

that governments of any and all persuasions must look to if they are to provide the leadership that is needed now. Most importantly, these issues are beyond party politics. Real leadership will be to build consensus across political divides, to be the grown-ups in the room who refuse to weaponize environmental necessity for political gain. We have worked with many other NGOs and farmers to help build a consensus in favour of agroecological farming and healthy, sustainable diets.

People from all walks of life support government action in pursuit of this vision, as the citizen assemblies convened by the Food, Farming and Countryside Commission and Henry Dimbleby's excellent National Food Strategy have evidenced. We are in the majority, and by working together, we can still realise a better future. Only arrogance and vested interest stand in our way.

Helen Browning

Soil Association CEO and organic farmer



Introduction

We live in an age of environmental breakdown. Extreme weather events and climate shocks are becoming the 'new normal', with catastrophic storms and floods, heat domes, wildfires, and droughts rarely out of the headlines.

Scientists have been warning of an escalating threat for decades – cautioning that our impact on the living world is reaching critically dangerous levels – but the recent pace and intensity of the ecological emergency has still caused widespread shock and dismay. And we know there is more to come. The sense of emergency is set to intensify in years ahead.

In 2020, in the wake of the first wave of Covid-19 lockdowns, the Soil Association published 'Grow Back Better – A resilience route-map for post-Covid-19 food, farming and land-use'. The report was written amid the most severe disruption to societies and food systems in a generation. It sought to draw lessons from the pandemic, outlining policies that might embed resilience. It looked ahead to the post-pandemic world when a greater degree of food system stability might be attained.

That stability has not been attained. The disruption caused by the pandemic may have mostly passed, but geopolitical tensions and environmental stresses have intensified. Russia's invasion of Ukraine has caused economic and social turmoil, while the climate and nature crises have snowballed to reach a 'critical mass'. And there is no going back. A dynamic and self-reinforcing process of environmental breakdown has been set in train – a state of chronic and compounding destabilisation in natural systems that has

begun to permeate human systems. It is in this challenging context that we must strive to transform the way we eat, farm, and care for the natural world.

The Soil Association has long advocated for food system solutions – not piecemeal policies, but a cohesive cross-government and societal agenda; not tweaks to the status quo, but transformative change. That systemic approach is needed now more than ever. The economic pressures felt by farmers and families cannot be separated from the degradation of soils and rivers, the overuse of antibiotics and agrochemicals, or the entrenchment of fossil fuel-based interests. It's all connected. If we're to put food production on a viable long-term footing and ensure everyone can access and enjoy a healthy and sustainable diet, we need bold, joined-up, and transformative action.

This report can be read as a sequel to 'Grow Back Better'. It outlines the Soil Association's priorities and vision for the decade ahead. It diagnoses the challenges that confront us, and calls in response for better food, farming, and land use policies, and a better approach to policymaking and political engagement, rooted in the realities of the ecological emergency, which is now squarely upon us. The window of opportunity is small, but we still have agency, the chance to forge a better future, if we act swiftly and decisively. If change is to be realised, the time is now.



The challenge

As has been amply documented, our food system does some things well and others poorly. For decades, it has excelled in providing abundant, cheap food, but at considerable cost to public health, animal welfare, and the environment.

These costs are growing by the year. One in four parents in the UK recently skipped a meal to provide for their family. Roughly sixty percent of the British diet is ultra-processed. Many farmers are struggling to make ends meet, hit by volatile fuel and fertiliser prices. Our rivers are polluted, our soils are degraded, and our climate ambitions fall short.

Addressing these challenges would be testing at the best of times, but these are not the best of times. These are unstable, uncertain, and difficult times. Our vulnerability in the face of the climate and nature crises has never been more palpable.

Food production is acutely sensitive to the extreme weather conditions that are becoming commonplace. Impacts on production ripple across supply chains, translating into food shortages and price hikes. Social destabilisation in one region or nation will spill over into another. Stresses are being placed on ecological and human systems from multiple angles, creating an increasingly difficult environment in which to pursue transformative change.

The following three challenges illustrate the bind in which politics and policymakers are increasingly held.

• **The cost challenge.** As environmental breakdown progresses, societies and governments will be forced to spend more money and more effort treating the symptoms of the crisis, plausibly at the cost of addressing the underlying causes. Vast amounts of public funds are going to be spent in the decade head cleaning up after floods, rebuilding after wildfires, providing emergency food aid, and trying to repair the basic fabric of society as it strains under environmental pressure. The risk is this means less money, less effort, and less attention targeted at systemic solutions.

• **The time challenge.** The short-termism of the markets and political cycle also poses a severe and growing challenge. Climate change, antimicrobial resistance, and the threat of zoonotic disease are multigenerational challenges. Policymakers should be looking to the long-term, trying to embed resilience, but our political and economic institutions are poorly equipped to take a long view. Politicians think in electoral cycles. The market struggles to look to the horizon. Short-termism holds us hostage.

• **The justice challenge.** The ecological crisis is likely to exacerbate inequalities, as the most vulnerable bear the heaviest burden, with climate shocks already impacting global development. If the crisis is to be addressed, societies and economies will have to undergo rapid and unprecedented structural changes, and many of the required policies may be divisive and disruptive. This could lead in some contexts to political destabilisation and populism, further exacerbating inequalities, undermining justice, and distracting from the necessary action.

But all is not lost. Set against this troubling picture is a groundswell of public appetite for bold and hopeful action. Farmers of all stripes are beginning to embrace regenerative approaches to farming and land management. Communities are coming together in support of local food solutions. Polling reveals that climate, nature, and animal welfare are consistently high priorities for the majority of citizens, building the political capital needed for a transformative government agenda. There are solutions that still lie within reach, ways we can dampen the impacts of environmental breakdown, and much to be gained from their realisation.

Our vision



Imagine everyone is enjoying a healthy and sustainable diet, sourced from nature-friendly farming systems. Political consciousness has shifted, and the climate and nature crises are recognised as the defining issues of our day.



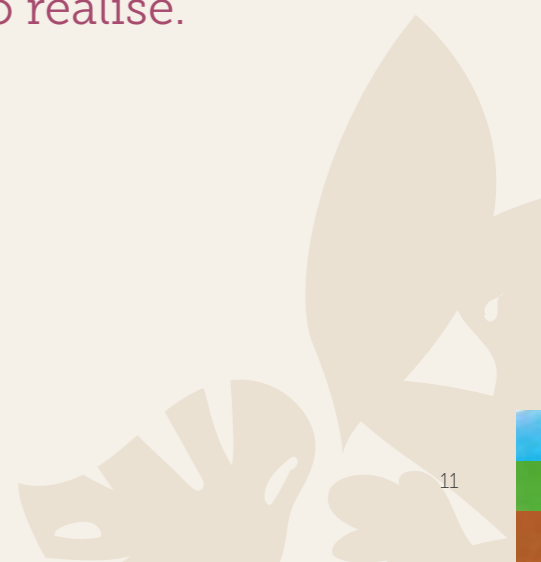
Agroecological and organic food and farming are championed, and a strategic approach to land use has been adopted by government. The economics of the food system no longer drive towards agrochemical intensification and ultra-processing, but towards the provision of good food for everyone. Power and agency are placed back in the hands of farmers and citizens.

The UK's physical landscape is being transformed. Droughts and floods are becoming more common, but food production is rooted in healthy soils and diverse landscapes, with nature recovery enabled across different forms of land-use. Grazing livestock recycle nutrients and manage biodiverse pastures, while pigs and poultry live mostly on waste streams. A far greater range of arable crops are grown and eaten, as are fruits, nuts, pulses, and vegetables suited to our climate. Trees and forests are woven throughout the landscape, agrochemical use is minimised, and peer-to-peer knowledge is driving innovation. Diversity in human and living systems is embraced as the key to a resilient future. Adaptation to environmental breakdown is recognised as the crux of 'food security'.

Supply chains are also being reconfigured. Climate shocks and geopolitical tensions have led to food shortages and price hikes globally, but regional processing, marketing and distribution infrastructure is buffering the UK from the worst impacts, allowing fresh, delicious, wholesome food to be delivered to customers at prices that are fair to them and to producers.

Businesses are working down the supply chain to drive localisation, ecological regeneration, and social equity. Food is embraced as central to community cohesion, with children in schools learning about food, farming and the natural world, and healthy and sustainable school meals universally available.

This is the vision the Soil Association is working to realise.



It is a vision rooted in agroecology as both an approach to farming and a social movement. It is inspired by organic pioneers, the farmers and food businesses showing that a better world is possible. It sees nature recovery and food production as two sides of the same coin. It recognises that social justice and food system resilience go hand-in-hand. In this vision of the future, environmental breakdown is still in train, placing the food system under severe strain – the process is already beyond our control and cannot be stopped – but its consequences can be better managed, the threat it poses levered to drive positive change.

We believe that such a world is still possible, if we act swiftly and decisively. The Soil Association is working to catalyse a 'ten year transition to agroecology and sustainable land use' and a parallel 'transition to healthy and sustainable diets'.

This report sets out how we hope to realise this vision, and the actions needed from government and other stakeholders to accelerate progress towards a more resilient future.

As headline outcomes, we want to ensure that by 2030:



Every farmer can find a resilient and profitable pathway to agroecological farming, bringing trees and abundant nature back into our farmed countryside.



Every child has at least one healthy and sustainable meal every day, setting the habits of a lifetime.



Organic food is affordable, available and accessible to everyone in society.



Forests, new and old, are managed regeneratively to increase their benefits for the climate, nature and people.



Local food system leaders are well supported nationally to scale up their impact.



How we get there

Environmental breakdown demands not just the introduction of more ambitious food and farming policies, but a better approach to politics and policymaking.

The decade ahead demands new alliances, new forms of citizen engagement, a new spirit of pragmatism and courage in political decision-making. Though notable progress has been made in the past decade in building political consensus towards action – such as local and national political bodies across the UK declaring a climate and nature emergency – there have been times when cynicism and party politics have impeded the response we urgently need.

In pursuit of better politics, the Soil Association is calling for renewed emphasis on:

- **Citizen voice.** The Citizen Assembly model has been successfully employed to garner civic engagement on climate, nature, and food issues, and similar fora are likely to be needed in years ahead as we grapple with the consequences of ecological and societal unrest. Difficult decisions lie ahead, and citizen voice must be central to political discourse and decision-making, with a particular emphasis on youth and marginalised voices.
- **Direct action.** The inertia characteristic of traditional party politics is likely to inspire more people in the decade ahead to take direct action. Peaceful, disruptive protest should be seen as valuable and necessary. Draconian anti-protest measures should be rolled back, ensuring the right to peaceful protest is protected in the UK.
- **Future generations.** Legislation for the well-being of future generations should be adopted across the UK, introducing a legal obligation on governments to act in the interests of future generations, ensuring their right to a habitable and healthy environment. Those yet to be born should be central to political deliberations regarding the climate and nature crises.
- **Cross-party alliances.** The environmental and public health challenges that confront us are too important and complex to be tackled via oppositional party politics. Where possible, forms of cross-party collaboration should be pursued, recognising our shared vulnerability in the face of the environmental breakdown, and our collective responsibility to respond.
- **A four nations approach.** A more co-operative approach on all aspects of climate and nature policy is needed across the four nations, including in relation to land use. Current inter-governmental processes and frameworks are insufficient to the scale of the challenge at hand and should be revised to ensure cohesive action is delivered across the UK.

In addition, we need a better approach to food, farming, and land-use policymaking. This would be an approach that prioritises:

- **Co-benefits.** Food systems are complex, and siloed policymaking has always been a challenge. Now more than ever we need a systemic approach that delivers transformative change across multiple agendas. What are the public health policies that also address the climate crisis? What are the synergies between animal welfare and nature recovery? The pursuit of co-benefits should be embraced as the primary driver of good policymaking.
- **Preparedness.** It's going to get worse before it gets better. Policymakers should recognise that chronic destabilisation is now the norm and set to intensify. Food and farming systems need to be fundamentally restructured to become more resilient, and at pace. Where are the vulnerabilities in our supply chains? How can social security nets be improved? Being prepared means working to embed resilience in every component of the system.
- **Justice.** Structural transformation of the food system requires that we confront the vested interests and perverse drivers propelling us deeper into crisis. Equality, diversity, and justice need to be at the heart of food and farming policymaking. How can power be taken from agrochemical companies, grain traders, intensive livestock processors, and ultra-processed food manufacturers, and placed in the hands of farmers and citizens?
- **Better innovation.** Technological innovations should not be pursued for their own sake but in support of an agroecological transition and food system resilience. Policymakers should focus on farmer-led and agroecological innovation as much as technological breakthroughs. Producers are on the front line of environmental breakdown – how can farms and farmers be empowered to support one another, share knowledge, and devise their own solutions?
- **Better economics.** Policymakers should urgently seek to configure the economics of the food system, ensuring that financial flows are aiming at resilience, rather than further ecological and social harm. This means embracing 'circular economy' approaches, ensuring that natural capital and green finance are pushing towards an agroecological transition, and embedding core principles such as 'the polluter pays' in future policy development.

The following recommendations for government action have been designed with these approaches to 'better politics' and 'better policymaking' in mind.

Ten year transition to agroecology and sustainable land use

By embracing agroecology, we can build resilience into ecological and human systems. By nurturing healthy soils and protecting wildlife, by raising levels of animal welfare and re-localising food supply chains, by putting power back in the hands of farmers and citizens, we can be better prepared for the pressures of the decade ahead. The benefits will be economic as well as social and ecological, a return on investment realised in the form of healthier citizens and enhanced natural capital.

There will be an essential role for businesses and citizens in enabling an agroecological future.

Businesses can support the transition by investing in their supply chains, working with producers and suppliers to gather robust and transparent data on environmental and social outcomes. The Soil Association Exchange programme provides an online platform that can support this ambition. Many businesses are already looking to measure and reduce greenhouse gas emissions. By simultaneously measuring and working to improve outcomes related to nature, animal welfare, social equity, and public health, businesses can orient their spending towards an agroecological future.

Citizens also have a key role to play, both by supporting organic and agroecological farmers and by acting as 'food citizens'. Some can choose to purchase sustainable and ethical produce, and where alternative routes to market have been established – such as through farmers markets, box schemes, or independent retailers – consumers can support producers and food businesses directly. But we are not only consumers. By engaging with our community and neighbourhood; growing, cooking, eating and sharing food; and participating in local and national political processes, we can act as 'food citizens', driving change towards an agroecological future.



As a priority, Governments should:

1. Invest in an agroecological transition

Every farmer should be able to find a resilient and profitable pathway to agroecological farming, bringing trees and abundant nature back into our farmed landscape. The Soil Association is working to realise this ambition by supporting farmer-led innovation and peer-to-peer learning; influencing policy and payment frameworks in support of agroecology and organic; and campaigning for the regulatory baseline to be raised and for harmful practices – such as those associated with agrochemicals, antibiotic use, and industrial livestock – to be phased out.

Governments can support this ambition by producing a vision for farming with agroecology at its heart, and a UK-wide land use framework that aligns food production with nature recovery. Targets for pesticide reduction and a 'systems approach' to nitrogen reduction should be introduced. To make the transition viable, multi-annual farm support funding will be needed, including for the devolved administrations, along with high-quality advice for farmers, centred around whole-farm planning and agroecological approaches. With the cost of future extreme weather events projected to run into the billions, investing in agroecological resilience makes sure financial sense.

2. Enable 'organic for all'

Organic farming is an established form of agroecological production, with proven benefits for animal welfare and the environment. Organic food should be affordable, available and accessible to everyone in society. The Soil Association is working to realise this ambition by ensuring organic is valued by diverse actors, from policymakers to retailers to consumers; supported in policy, in regulation, and by investment in research, advice, and training; and widely available in retail and public settings, and in communities.

In support of this ambition, Governments should introduce comprehensive organic action plans. Though the organic market continues to grow year-on-year, supportive policy is piecemeal and inadequate, and a coordinated cross-nation UK-wide approach is needed. These plans should set targets for growing organic production and consumption, with action across the supply chain to make organic available to everyone. New farmer payment schemes should support organic, and relevant policy agendas, such as those pertaining to trade, genome editing, and labelling, should be aligned accordingly. Investment in organic represents an investment in soils, climate adaptation, wildlife, and animal welfare.





3. Champion agroecological horticulture

UK-grown vegetables, fruits, nuts, and pulses should be much more prevalent in the national diet, and agroecological production supported by governments, recognising the benefits of reduced agrochemical use and improved soil health. The Soil Association is working to realise this ambition by championing organic farming, boosting veg consumption in schools and hospitals, and by supporting peer-to-peer learning and agroecological innovation through the Innovative Farmers programme.

In support of this ambition, Governments can develop comprehensive horticulture strategies, backed by financial incentives and grants to support farmers to move into horticultural production, with an emphasis on organic and agroecological growing. Policies should be introduced to improve access to land for diverse new entrants, and investment in skills for agroecological production. The labour challenge must be addressed, with a sure supply of workers to take up meaningful work picking fruit and other crops at harvest. Horticultural produce should be accessible and affordable to families, with public procurement harnessed to increase consumption. These policies, enacted in concert, will deliver co-benefits for public health and food system resilience.



4. Incite a 'farmer-led tree revolution'

Trees brought back into the farmed countryside in a variety of guises, under agroforestry systems, as farm woodlands, and in tree abundant landscapes, will deliver multiple benefits. The Soil Association is working to realise this ambition by championing regenerative forestry and agroforestry, by certifying sustainably managed forests both in the UK and overseas, and by advocating for integrated land use, managed for food, fibre, timber, and wildlife, providing tree-centric livelihoods for farmers and land managers.

Governments can play a key role in support of this ambition by putting farmers in the driving seat and inciting a 'farmer-led tree revolution'. As a priority, policy should direct public funding and regulation to drive the adoption of regenerative forest management practices, with the aim that 5% of agricultural land is under agroforestry by 2030 and 10% by 2040. The current 1 million hectares of farm woodland, which is approximately one third of all UK forest cover, should double by 2050. In addition to climate mitigation benefits, these investments would support on-farm resilience, with potential benefits for animal welfare and horticultural productivity.



5. Phase out industrial livestock

Many of our food system's failings coalesce around industrial livestock production. Excess antibiotic use, low levels of animal welfare, unsustainable land use, and agrochemical intensive animal feed production are pressing issues that must be urgently addressed. The Soil Association is working with farmers to demonstrate that an alternative is possible. Livestock can be part of the solution, as when cattle and sheep are grazed on biodiverse pastures and integrated in mixed, agroecological systems, and when pigs and chickens are provided with high levels of animal welfare and sustainable feed.

In support of this ambition, Governments should commit to a 'just transition' for farmers away from intensive livestock and into mixed, agroecological production. A combination of policy change and financial support will need to be harnessed, including by ensuring agricultural payment support systems set a bold ambition. Government should offer tax relief or capital grants to help farmers repurpose buildings and animal housing, and public procurement should be used to create a secure demand for the meat produced in more extensive systems. Harder policy measures could also be introduced, such as a ban on the routine, preventative use of antibiotics; improvements to legal animal welfare standards; and measures to reduce reliance on imported animal feed. The return on investment will be realised in the form of reduced reliance on global commodity markets, healthier soils and rivers, and essential improvements in animal welfare outcomes.

Ten year transition to healthy and sustainable diets

In the diet, as in nature, diversity is the cornerstone of health and resilience. By investing in locally adapted and culturally appropriate foods, provided by agroecological and organic farming, and by reconfiguring the power dynamics of the food system to ensure everyone can access and afford a healthy diet, the way that we eat can become part of the solution, benefitting human and ecological health.

There will be an essential role for businesses and citizens in enabling healthy and sustainable diets.

BUSINESSES can play their part by making it easy, normal, and enjoyable for everyone to eat well. This means marketing products in an ethical and appropriate manner, especially if intended for consumption by children or infants, and placing price promotions on fresh and minimally processed foods, rather than ultra-processed products. Businesses should also take a robust approach to forest risk commodities and agrochemical use in their national and international supply chains, ensuring environmental degradation is avoided, channelling spend and investment into sustainable produce.

CITIZENS can support a transition by purchasing agroecological and organic foods, when they can afford to, and by supporting local farmers and food businesses. The structural transformation of our food system will also require political engagement, that consumers act as 'food citizens'. By selecting political representatives engaged with environmental breakdown and working to achieve food system transformation, from the grassroots to the national, each of us can help to drive the structural changes needed to enable healthier and more sustainable diets.



As a priority, Governments should:

6. Re-balance ultra-processed diets

A growing body of evidence is associating diets rich in ultra-processed foods with poor health and environmental outcomes. Action is urgently needed to re-balance diets towards diverse minimally processed foods, mostly plants. The Soil Association is working to deliver this ambition by drawing attention to the underlying, food system drivers of ultra-processing. Through our Food for Life programme, we are reconnecting children and communities with healthy food, and through Sustainable Food Places we are making good food a defining characteristic of where people live.

Governments can support this ambition by setting a percentage reduction target for ultra-processed foods, laying the groundwork for the re-balancing of the national diet. National dietary guidelines that promote more minimally processed foods should also be produced. Marketing restrictions may be placed on ultra-processed products for children and infants, and policies enacted to support everyone to access and afford vegetables, pulses, fruits, and nuts. The benefits of this action would be realised in a reduced NHS bill, greater social equity, and a healthier and more resilient population.

7. Support schools to be catalysts for change.

Schools can be catalysts for change, helping to embed a love of good food among all children, and supporting families and communities to reconnect with where food comes from. The Soil Association is working to realise this ambition through its Food for Life programme which is demonstrating the benefits of a 'whole school approach', while working to ensure that every child has access to at least one healthy and sustainable meal each day, setting the habits of a lifetime.

Governments can support this ambition by ensuring all schools realise the transformative potential of a 'whole school approach' and provide healthy and sustainable school meals. Food for Life's approach should be rolled out nationally, with school leaders and governors supported to prioritise food quality and food education. All children should be provided with a healthy and sustainable school meal, with school food funding and governance mechanisms reformed to ensure high standards and efficient spend. The benefits of investing in school meals will be realised in reduced inequalities and higher attainment, as well as healthier dietary behaviours.





8. Harness public procurement

Public procurement can help to embed healthy and sustainable dietary norms and channel spend into organic and agroecological production. The opportunity is currently being missed, with procurement policy across the four nations falling short. The Soil Association is championing best practice through our Food for Life Served Here scheme, showing that organic and higher welfare ingredients can be served on tight budgets, with appropriate menu reforms, and that healthy and sustainable meals can be both appealing and profitable.

In support of this ambition, Governments should revise national procurement standards, mandated across the public sector, and monitor and enforce compliance. A percentage buying target for organic should be introduced as a priority, alongside a raft of other reforms aimed at driving the purchase of local, agroecological, and higher welfare produce. Procurement standards can also incentivise or require the provision of 'less and better' meat and 'more and better' plants, helping to normalise more sustainable dietary patterns, with benefits for both public health and the climate.



9. Aim for 'less and better' meat

There is an important role for animal foods in a healthy and sustainable diet, if sourced from organic and agroecological farming systems. However, such systems cannot provide the volumes of meat and dairy currently consumed, especially for poultry and pork. The phase out of industrial livestock needs to be driven by, and concordant with, a dietary shift towards 'less and better' meat and dairy in diets. The Soil Association is working to realise this ambition by normalising sustainable diets in public settings, and by shining a campaigning spotlight on the issues associated with intensive poultry.

Governments can contribute by shaping the market and reorienting diets. Public procurement may be harnessed to support people to eat 'more and better' plants, realising the benefits of beans and pulses, as well as 'less and better' meat, with spend channelled towards organic and agroecological farming. Organic and sustainable aquaculture should also be supported through public procurement. Dietary guidelines can be revised to promote reduced meat consumption, and trade policy aligned accordingly. As a priority, government action is needed to address the overconsumption of intensively farmed poultry and pork, which make up almost two thirds of the meat in the average UK diet. Such action would benefit animal welfare and the climate, as well as food system resilience.



10. Enable local change

Local food system leaders from diverse communities are demonstrating that positive local change is possible. The Soil Association is supporting their work and championing local food systems through its Sustainable Food Places programme, working with food partnerships from towns, cities, boroughs, districts and counties to make good food a defining characteristic of where people live. Through My Food Community, we are working to empower diverse and marginalised individuals, giving them voice, and helping them influence local action plans and policy.

In support of this ambition, Governments should require all local areas to develop a local food strategy, predicated on a systems approach. This means having a vision and plan to achieve change across a breadth of different but connected food issues, requiring local people and organisations working at all levels, and across all parts of the system, in a cohesive manner. Governments should build on the example set by the Sustainable Food Places network and invest in enabling all local areas to adopt such an approach. Investment in local and regional supply chains and infrastructure, including grants and funding for on-farm and local/regional processing facilities, will support this ambition. The result would be a more resilient food system, equipped for the challenges of the decade ahead.



Conclusion

The power to forge a brighter future sits in our hands. Time is not on our side. The climate and nature crises have already progressed beyond a 'safe' threshold, and our ability to constrain their consequences grows more limited by the day. A dynamic and self-reinforcing process of environmental breakdown has been set in train – a state of chronic and compounding destabilisation in natural systems that has begun to permeate human systems. But all is not lost. We can still 'grow back better' from the crisis, if we act swiftly and wisely.

This report outlines the solutions that are firmly within our grasp, and the shift in policymaking and politics needed to realise transformative change. We have achieved so much already, and in the decade ahead the Soil Association will be working with diverse partners – with farmers and foresters, schools and caterers, parents and communities – to embed resilience into our food system, ensuring we can all enjoy a flourishing, healthy, and hopeful future.

Join us at [soilassociation.org](https://www.soilassociation.org)

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