

Powering our nation into the next decade



2024 MANIFESTO

fdf | **FOOD & DRINK**
POWERS OUR NATION



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From farm to fork: the supply chain powering our nation

The UK has a brilliant food and drink manufacturing sector. We're the UK's largest manufacturing industry, with companies and sites across every region of the country. We employ almost 500,000 people who make the fantastic range of food and drink that everyone can buy and enjoy every day.

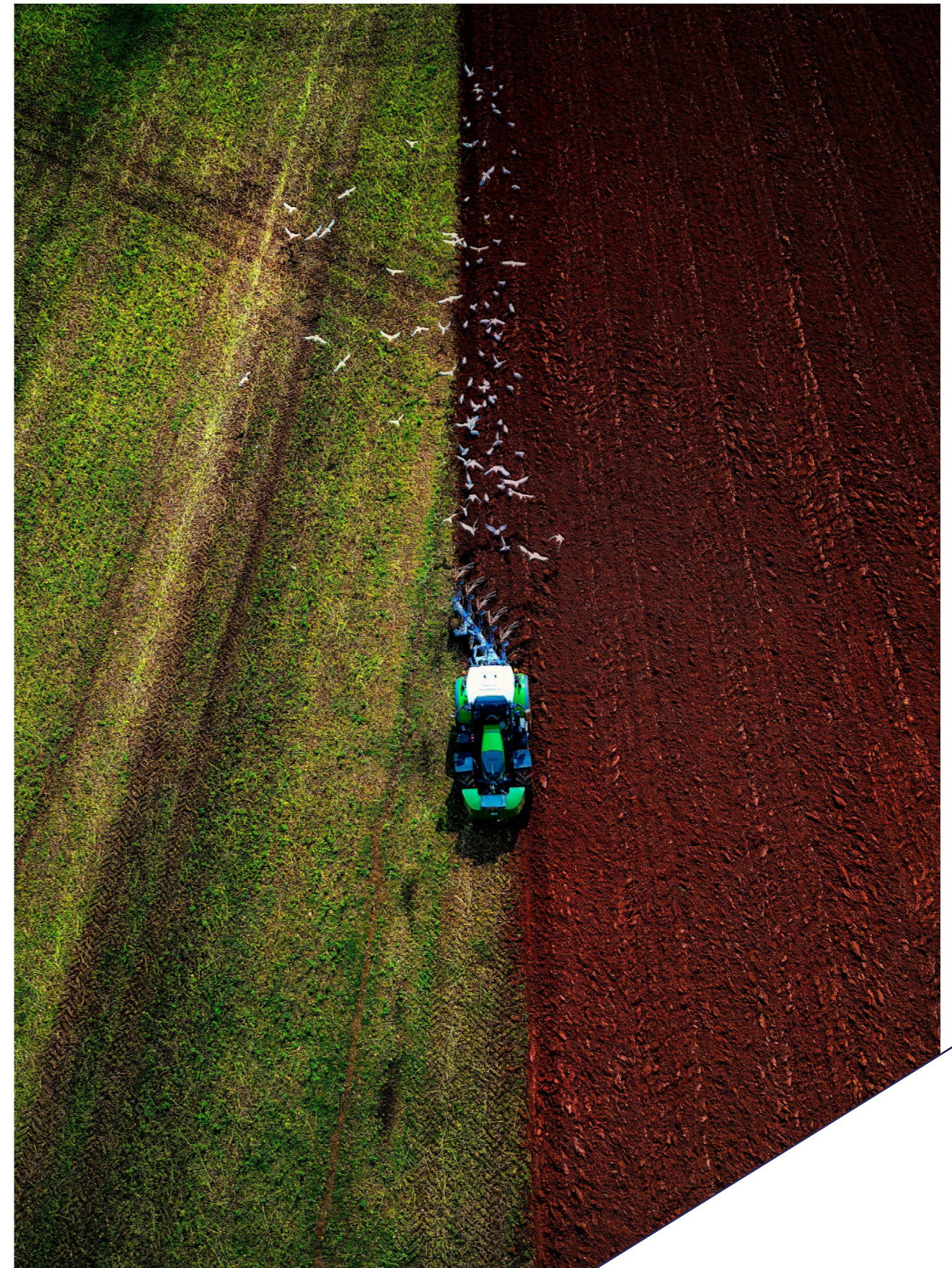
Every day, food and drink manufacturers work tirelessly to create the products we love. From factory kitchens to family businesses, our brands stand for quality and boast centuries of expertise, providing nutritious, delicious and safe products for everyone at all budgets.

But it isn't just about the products. It's about the people who make them and the communities we serve. Our industry powers our nation, ensuring people have the products they need, bringing communities together and spreading joy through delicious food and drink.

Our industry contributes £38 billion to the UK economy and our 12,500 businesses provide not just jobs but also careers in the heart of communities, with opportunities from the production line to high-end engineering.

We also fly the flag for the UK across the world, generating a record high of nearly £25 billion in exports in 2022.

But as we begin the next chapter in our sector's story, we know we must work to become more sustainable, innovative, healthier and drive growth. To do this we want to partner with the next government so that together we can unlock the potential of the UK's largest manufacturing sector.



Our bold vision for the next decade

Our industry is optimistic. We are practised in turning tough times into new opportunities. Over the next decade we intend to continue our ambitious work building a resilient, sustainable and growing food and drink manufacturing sector that supports the wider supply chain. To do that, we need to partner with the next government to tackle the challenges of today and embrace the opportunities of tomorrow.

Over the next ten years, government and industry will need to work together to seize the opportunities — and overcome the challenges — of reaching net zero. Globally, the food system is responsible for around a quarter of greenhouse gas emissions, from what we eat and how we grow, ship and cook it to how we dispose of, and sometimes waste, it.

Our industry knows that we must play an active role in tackling climate change. We must continue to adapt in order to keep producing food for a growing population. We must protect

our natural environment by lowering our emissions, reducing plastics and waste, shifting to greener energy solutions and building more sustainable supply chains.

The next decade will see the industry embrace the opportunities of new and improved innovation and technology. This change is critical to securing the resilience of agricultural and food systems in the face of climate change, in order to provide reliable access to safe, sufficient, affordable and nutritious food for all.

It is imperative, therefore, that we keep up the pace of transformational research and development in our industry so we can find novel ways of tackling the challenges ahead, whether by increasing crop yields, controlling animal disease, improving soil health, implementing data or increasing recyclable packaging which also cuts down on food waste. This is as much a challenge for government as it is for industry, so we must work together to drive change.



As we face the future, our industry wants to work more with government to ensure we are attracting the right investment into the future of food. The next government must support innovation in our sector and foster investment in technologies such as robotics, and in scientific developments such as novel ingredients. This will be key to future food security and health.

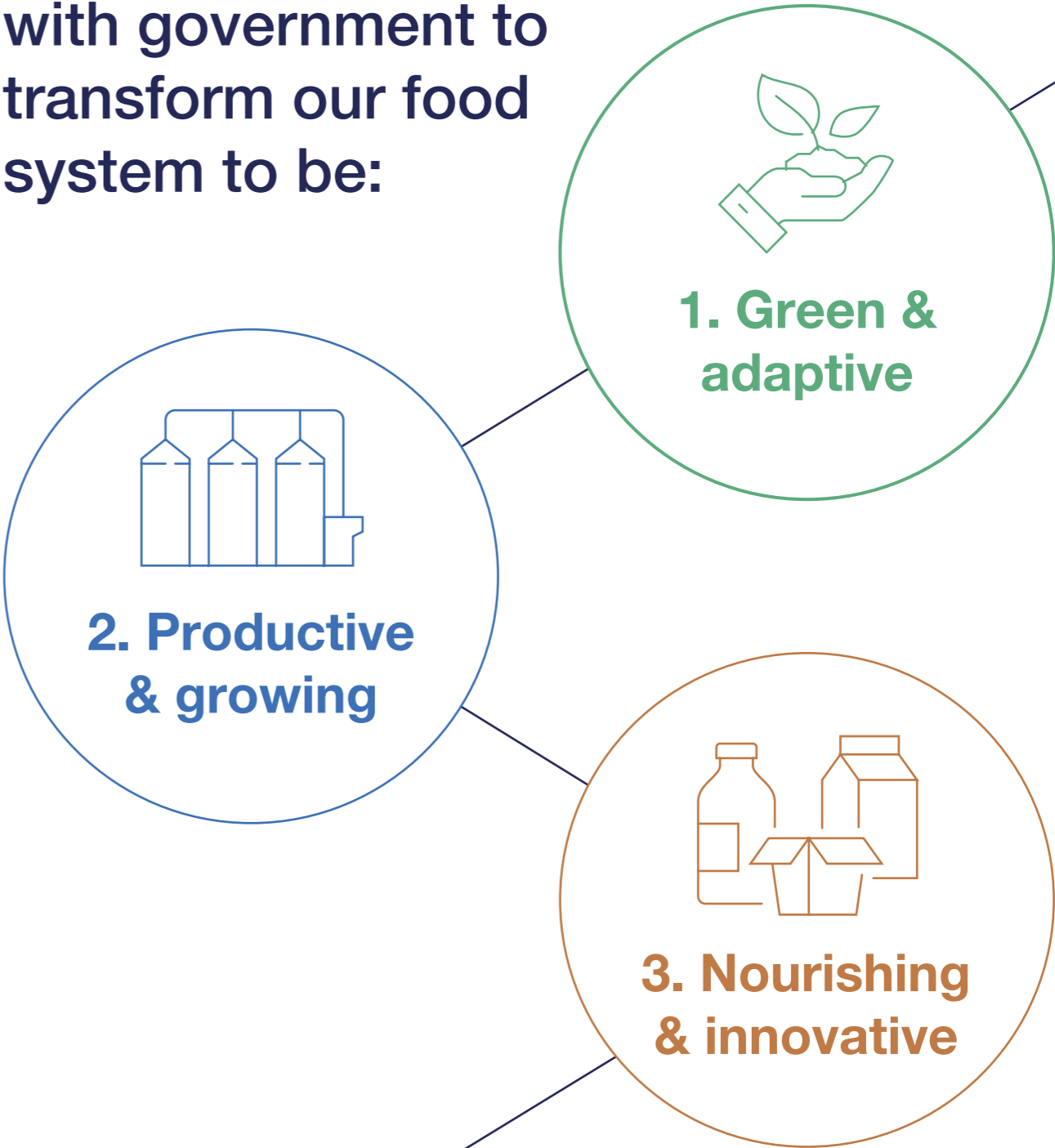
Supporting people’s health has long been at the heart of what we do, and we know we have a crucial role to play in tackling obesity and addressing poor diets.

We continue to work on developing new, healthier products and smaller portion sizes while also changing the recipes of existing products to reduce fat, salt and sugar, and to add fibre.

As a result, the UK’s average shopping basket has become healthier, with FDF member products contributing 13% fewer calories, 15% fewer sugars and 24% less salt than they did eight years ago. But we want to go further. New government support for smaller businesses in developing healthier products, which takes considerable investment in both time and money, would be transformational.



We want to partner with government to transform our food system to be:



OBJECTIVE ONE:

Green & adaptive



Food and drink manufacturers are working in partnership with government and others throughout the wider food system to reduce emissions, protect the natural environment and adapt to a changing climate.

Our industry understands the important and active role we must play in meeting ambitious climate and wider environmental goals.

That is why we have set the ambition of achieving net zero carbon emissions by 2040.

That is why industry is committed to playing a leading role in delivering an efficient circular economy in plastic packaging to improve recycling rates.

And that is why the sector consistently strives to make significant reductions in food waste.

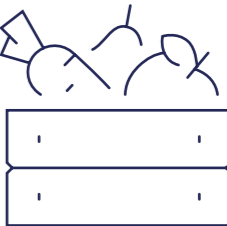
We want to collaborate closely with government to:



Create a fully-functioning circular economy to help us meet our ambitious recycling targets



Deliver Net Zero emissions to play our part in the UK's journey towards a green future, actively contributing to nature restoration and biodiversity, and sourcing more sustainable commodities



Reduce food waste, building on significant industry progress

61.4%

Reported reduction of CO₂ emissions by FDF members' manufacturing (1990 - 2021)

34%

Reduction in food waste per capita delivered by industry since 2007

52k

Tonnes of surplus food redistributed in 2022 – the equivalent of 129 million meals

OBJECTIVE ONE: Green & adaptive

A circular economy



We need to ensure that a truly circular economy in packaging recycling is built in the UK. We are fully committed to the successful establishment of Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) and Deposit Return Schemes (DRS).

These will enable manufacturers to turn recyclable, food-grade packaging back into new packaging, which they cannot currently do.

The Government should:

- Work with us to establish a **world-beating, producer-led EPR** by the end of the next parliamentary term to drive up recycling of plastic packaging.
- **Attract investment into the UK's recycling infrastructure**, tackling the complexity and fragmentation of the current system. The Government should **ring-fence EPR fees** to ensure that local authorities use the additional funding to improve the UK's recycling infrastructure. It should also **confirm acceptance of mass balance accounting** to unlock investment in chemical recycling.
- Ensure certainty for drinks manufacturers by implementing a **single, interoperable UK DRS** as soon as possible, aligning scope and labelling requirements in all four nations.

OBJECTIVE ONE: Green & adaptive

Net Zero



Investment is critical to accelerating the transition to net zero. Decarbonising manufacturing and supply chains requires action across all operations, including the adoption of new technologies as well as making improvements and greater efficiencies to existing processes. Government support is vital for

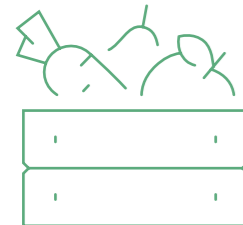
building experience and confidence in new green technologies for food and drink manufacturing.

The Government should:

- Build on the successes of the **Industrial Energy Transformation Fund** with **green incentives and grants** to ensure manufacturers of all sizes are able to invest in energy efficiency and de-carbonisation.
- Incorporate both energy efficiency and decarbonisation into future **Climate Change Agreements targets** to incentivise the switch to lower or zero carbon fuels alongside energy efficiency measures.
- Facilitate a new **Sustainable Food Pact** — a structured, pre-competitive industry collaboration to restore and maintain the natural systems needed for agricultural productivity, and to transition the food system towards sourcing **more sustainable commodities**.

OBJECTIVE ONE: Green & adaptive

Reducing food waste



Since 2007, the food and drink sector has reduced food waste by over 34% per capita, putting us on track to reach the UN's Sustainable Development Goal of 50% per capita by 2030. This requires manufacturers to work across the supply chain to reduce food waste.

The Government should focus on minimising waste, meaning that measuring and reporting requirements should be as least burdensome as possible through alignment with existing requirements under the UK's Food Waste Reduction Roadmap.

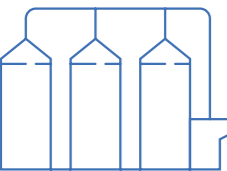
The Government should:

- Ensure **food waste reporting** aligns with existing industry practice and does not place burdens on businesses already measuring and taking action to reduce waste.
- Work with businesses, local communities and charities to **redistribute surplus food**, including the targeting of government subsidies to ensure no food goes to waste.



OBJECTIVE TWO:

Productive & growing



The UK’s food and drink sector is incredibly advanced, and renowned for innovation, R&D projects and investment in new technologies.

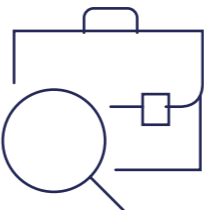
As the UK’s largest manufacturing sector, we are determined to fulfil our central role in delivering growth, prosperity and food security across all the nations and regions of the country.

There is significant opportunity to drive productivity and ensure resilience in the food and drink sector by: fostering investment in innovation and technology; enabling a well-conceived and well-executed regulatory environment; turbo-charging the UK’s trading performance; and creating the skilled workforce of tomorrow.

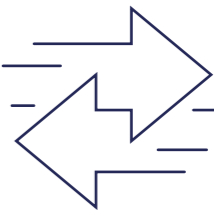
We want to collaborate closely with government to:



Foster investment in innovation in the food and drink manufacturing sector, to secure the resilience of our food system



Facilitate an effective regulatory environment, with appropriate regulation underpinned by science and evidence



Deliver a coherent trade strategy that takes into account the importance of imports and exports to the sector



Create the workforce of tomorrow by developing a pipeline of future skills for the sector



Worth of **sector exports** to over 220 countries



UK food and drink **productivity** is second only to the USA



New food and drink **products** introduced in the UK in 2021

OBJECTIVE TWO: Productive & growing

Investing in innovation



The UK’s food and drink sector operates to the highest standards, consistently using the latest science and data to ensure food is delicious and safe to eat. We are always at the forefront, utilising cutting-edge technologies and processes such as AI to support the development of new products.

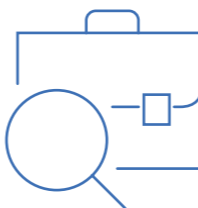
We are renowned for our strength in science, research and innovation. We want to continue working in partnership with the UK’s research community to draw on our world-leading expertise and translate research into applications on the factory floor. But investment has fallen in our sector over recent years, so in the next Parliament we need to work with government to unlock it again.

The Government should:

- Create a **formal food and drink innovation partnership**, such as those with other manufacturing sectors, to work collaboratively and invest in outreach to engage food and drink manufacturers and fully understand their unique processes and challenges.
- Target financial incentives through a **Food and Drink Manufacturing Transformation Fund** to increase the uptake of robotics, automation and digital technologies in food and drink; to unlock private-sector investment; and to deliver productivity growth, higher-skilled jobs and improved environmental outcomes.
- Ensure that **UK Research and Innovation investment prioritises food and drink manufacturing** as an advanced manufacturing sector that is strategically vital for UK food security. This will involve creating partnerships between the industry and the UK’s world-leading academic base to deliver higher returns on investment and maintain food safety, while tackling key environmental and social challenges that are important to the UK economy.

OBJECTIVE TWO: Productive & growing

An effective regulatory environment



The UK’s food and drink is prized for its quality and safety, underpinning everything we do. This is supported by how our industry is regulated. We value the work of our regulators in ensuring the safety and authenticity of the food we consume, whether approving ingredients and additives, introducing new packaging or helping companies understand how to apply allergen labelling.

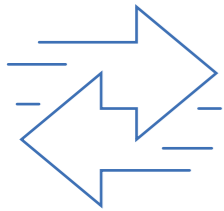
We want to help create a supportive regulatory approach that is sufficiently funded and efficient to enable timely evaluations of new science and evidence. It is essential that the Government works on delivering effective, joined-up regulation through efficient collaboration and communication between Whitehall, the Devolved Administrations and regulators, to ensure that the regulatory environment remains flexible and promotes investment.

The Government should:

- Give the **Food Standards Agency** sufficient resources to support its increased workload, enabling the fast-track approval of regulated ingredients and processes approved by other trusted regulators. The Government should also ensure there is a **strong, independent Groceries Code Adjudicator**, ensuring that the **Groceries Supply Code of Practice** remains fit for purpose.
- Invest in the **greater capability and capacity of UK laboratories** to undertake food-safety and authenticity testing and create a fast-track system for samples to move across borders.
- **Establish a mechanism to oversee the joined-up delivery of food policy** across Whitehall departments to break down silos.
- **Work closely with the Devolved Administrations** on developing regulation related to food and drink, ensuring there are not different rules in different parts of the UK – adding cost and complexity to businesses.

OBJECTIVE TWO: Productive & growing

A coherent trade strategy



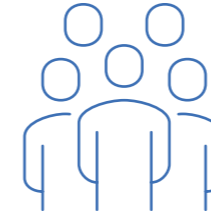
Food and drink exports hit a record £25bn in 2022 and imports play a critical role in the UK's food supply chain resilience. To maximise the benefits of this trade, we want to partner with government to build a coherent trade strategy for food and drink.

The Government should:

- Make it **easier for businesses to trade with Europe post-Brexit**, for example by seeking opportunities to improve the UK-EU Trade and Cooperation Agreement ahead of the five-year review, and by removing impediments such as UK-wide 'Not for EU' labelling.
- Enact a more **strategic approach to imports** by establishing a more efficient process for duty suspensions, thus increasing pace, predictability, and transparency to help businesses react to seasonal supply challenges.
- Ensure a **common policy framework at the border** that underpins UK trade ambitions through the UK's Single Trade Window to standardise a common approach between all stakeholders involved in UK border policy with the aim of also delivering a physical Single Trade Window.
- **Provide greater practical support for UK traders**, including a dedicated **UK trade information portal** to ensure SMEs can access essential information, to build business confidence and ensuring compliance with new trading requirements.

OBJECTIVE TWO: Productive & growing

The workforce of tomorrow



A highly skilled, diverse and motivated workforce is key to delivering a more sustainable and secure food system. We provide good jobs and great careers for over 470,000 people, and support a further 4.3 million jobs across the food supply chain. But sustained labour and skills shortages in our sector (above the UK and wider manufacturing average) are holding back growth and investment.

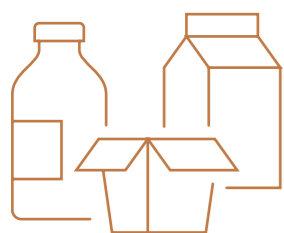
A healthier and more diverse workforce will also help our industry to develop and implement creative solutions to meet future challenges on health and the environment, encouraging more successful and innovative businesses.

The Government should:

- Reform the **Apprenticeship Levy** so businesses can invest more of their levy funds on shorter, modular training to address immediate skills needs and improve productivity growth. The system should be further improved through dedicated support to help drive wider participation in apprenticeships and promote job opportunities in the sector.
- Deliver a **globally competitive immigration system** that enables UK employers to attract international talent where key roles cannot easily be filled from the domestic workforce.
- Maintain a **flexible labour market** so that employers can maintain good pay and conditions for employees while continuing to boost employment prospects.
- **Encourage schools to work with local food and drink manufacturers** to inspire young people to consider careers in the industry, by enacting a more joined-up approach across government, industry and education.

OBJECTIVE THREE:

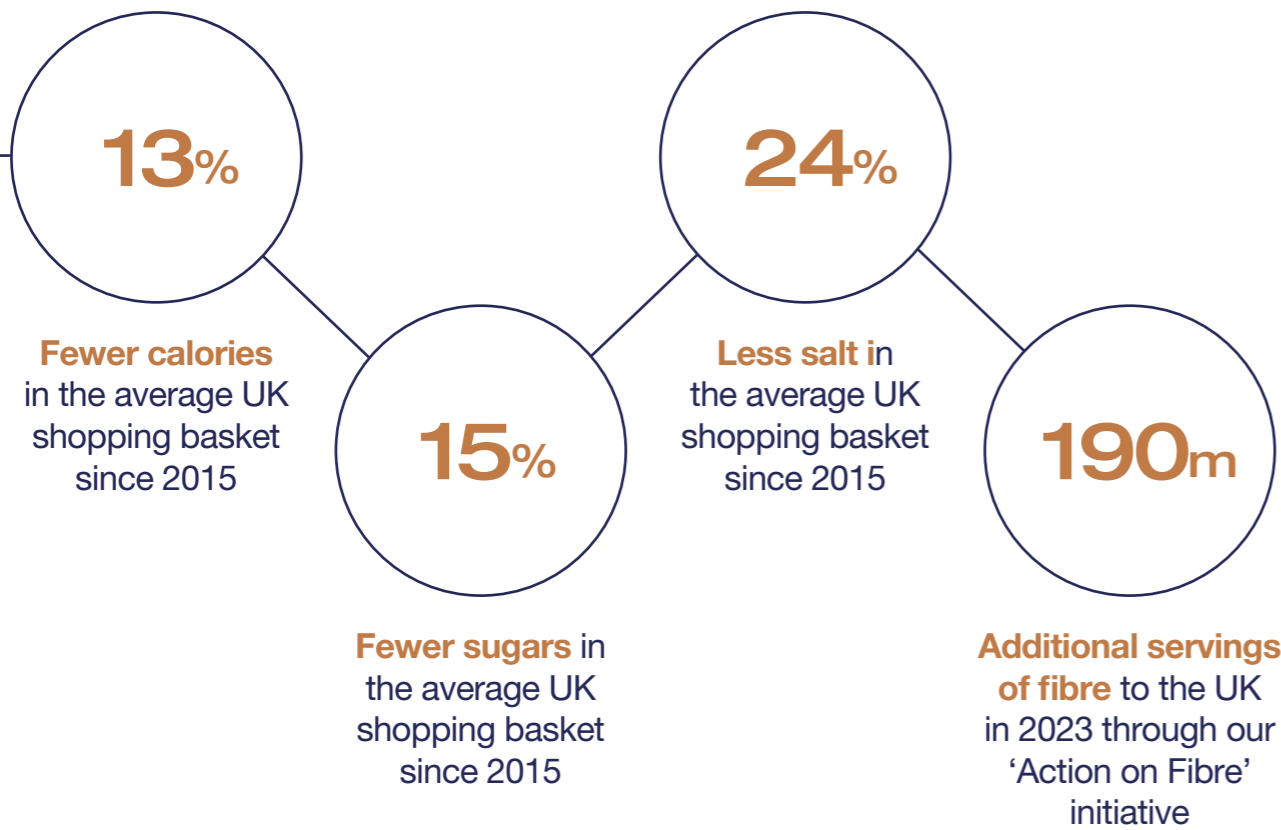
Nourishing & innovative



Our industry recognises the role we play in supporting healthier and more balanced diets. We continue to take bold steps to provide healthier options for some of the nation’s best-known brands by changing recipes; creating new, healthier products; and providing smaller portion sizes.

Working alongside partner organisations, our members have a proud history of supporting communities, providing healthy options to breakfast clubs and redistributing surplus food to those who need it, as well as delivering extensive workplace health initiatives. We now want to work with government to partner on ways to tackle obesity and health inequalities in communities throughout the UK.

FDF member products contribute:

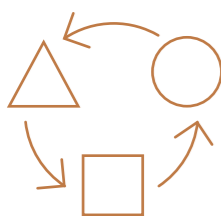


We want to collaborate closely with government to:



OBJECTIVE THREE: Nourishing & innovative

A whole-systems approach



We believe that there is a real opportunity to build on existing workplace and community programmes, to broaden their reach and to improve health outcomes by working in partnership with others.

Several of our member companies are exploring this by working in partnership with MoreLife and Leeds Beckett University to pilot a whole-systems approach around specific factory sites, co-designing programmes with local partners.

The Government should:

- Implement a **whole-systems approach** to underpin any government strategy to enable healthier lifestyles for everyone.
- Work with industry to **help build and amplify community programmes**, including the FDF’s ongoing pilots, to explore the potential scope for expansion and deliver meaningful change in communities.

There is a real opportunity to build on existing workplace and community programmes to enable healthier lifestyles

OBJECTIVE THREE: Nourishing & innovative

Safety & nutrition through innovation



Thanks to ongoing dedication and substantial investment, our companies continue to take bold steps to provide healthier options for much-loved brands. They have worked with government to deliver voluntary reformulation programmes that have reduced calories, salt and sugar. We

value the work of the Food Standards Agency in reviewing the science and safety of ingredients (such as sweeteners and emulsifiers) often needed for the successful implementation of reformulation programmes.

Our companies have also increased positive nutrients, including through the FDF’s Action on Fibre initiative, launched two years ago, which has successfully delivered 190 million more servings of fibre to the population in 2023.

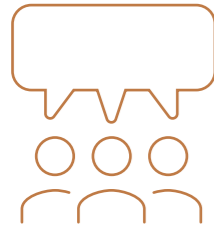
We want to work with government to build on the progress already made.

The Government should:

- Provide broader and **more accessible financial support for reformulation** and healthier product innovation, through existing R&D tax credits, grants and capital allowance schemes. This should include bringing capital within the scope of R&D tax credits, thus allowing companies to offset the significant upfront costs that can often prevent further investment in product reformulation and innovation.
- Establish **funding for regional or national programmes based on the Scottish Government-funded Reformulation for Health Programme**. We estimate a scheme could be established across the whole of the UK for c£4m per annum, or c£3m per annum for England alone.

OBJECTIVE THREE: Nourishing & innovative

Clear and consistent messaging



Food and drink manufacturers continue to provide nutrition information on food labels and digital channels to help consumers make informed choices. We are also working closely with regulators to support companies to prepare for the advertising restrictions of food and drink high in fat, sugar or salt due to come into force in October 2025.

However, we believe that more can be done to empower people to make healthier choices, and that government should deliver a public health campaign — supported and amplified by the industry — using positive, practical messaging that helps make the healthy choice the easier choice.

The Government should:

- Champion **positive, practical messaging** to support people to achieve a healthy lifestyle, as part of a new public health campaign.
- Collaborate with the broadest range of stakeholders — including food companies, health charities and community enterprises — to develop and deliver this campaign with **holistic and consistent messaging to drive healthier choices**.





The Food and Drink Federation (FDF) is the voice of the food and drink manufacturing industry – the UK’s largest manufacturing sector. We contribute over £30 billion to the country’s economy, supporting half a million jobs in every region and nation, and producing products that are loved in the UK and around the world. [Food and drink powers our nation.](#)

Find out more about our latest news and the work we do at:

[FDF.org.uk](https://www.fdf.org.uk),

X: [@FoodanddrinkFed](#)

[Linkedin](#)

