



Institute for  
Global Prosperity

# Food in the UK: Addressing Food Insecurity in the 21st Century

Working paper

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## About the Institute for Global Prosperity

The Institute for Global Prosperity at UCL (IGP) is redesigning prosperity for the 21st century, changing the way we conceive and run our economies, and reworking our relationship with the planet. IGP's vision is to build a prosperous, sustainable global future, underpinned by the principles of fairness and justice, and allied to a realistic, long-term vision of humanity's place in the world.

The IGP undertakes pioneering research that seeks to dramatically improve the quality of life for current and future generations. Its strength lies in the way it allies intellectual creativity to effective collaboration and policy development. Of particular importance to the IGP's approach is the way in which it integrates non-academic expertise into its knowledge generation by engaging with governments, policy makers, business, civil society, the arts and local communities.

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# Introduction

The UK is facing multiple interconnected crises, including supply chain disruptions, insecure livelihoods, climate change, and biodiversity loss (Green *et al.*, 2024:3). Extreme weather events linked to climate breakdown are driving low agricultural yields both domestically and internationally, leading to food shortages and rising prices (Horton *et al.*, 2024). At the same time, food insecurity is escalating due to welfare reforms, inflation, and the broader cost-of-living crisis (Baumann and Arens, 2024:1). Many people are struggling to meet their basic nutritional needs (IDS, 2023:5; Jones *et al.*, 2023:3; Butler, 2024b). In January 2024, The Food Foundation reported that 14.8% of UK households were experiencing moderate or severe food insecurity (The Food Foundation, 2023c, 2024c). Meanwhile, demand for food parcels has surged by 94% over the past five years (The Trussell Trust, 2024a; The Food Foundation, 2025:32). These alarming trends highlight a stark reality: access to nutritious, affordable food is slipping further out of reach for many, exacerbating health and social inequalities. Yet, in the UK alone, approximately 6.4 million tonnes of edible food is discarded annually across the food industry, which translates into more than 15 billion lost meals (Drey, 2021; WRAP, 2016).

Healthier, more sustainable food options are often significantly more expensive and less accessible than ultra-processed, unhealthy alternatives, forcing low-income households to prioritise affordability over nutrition and environmental concern (Lee, 2012:1202; Yau *et al.*, 2020:2612; Goudie, 2023:41; The Food Foundation, 2023a, 2023b, 2025; O'Connell *et al.*, 2019). As a result, many families rely on cheap, calorie-dense foods that compromise both dietary quality and long-term health. This issue is further compounded by local food environments, which are overwhelmingly dominated by fast-food outlets offering inexpensive but nutritionally poor options, reinforcing cycles of food insecurity and diet-related health inequalities (The Food Foundation, 2025:21).

Rather than fostering wellbeing, the industrialised food system- dominated by powerful corporations- prioritises profit over public health, contributing to rising rates of diet-related illness and placing long-term burdens on healthcare systems (Jackson, 2024:3). Beyond its public health implications,

modern food production- driven by economic efficiency and mass production- has led to widespread environmental degradation, excessive waste, and resource depletion (Jones *et al.*, 2023:3; Hasnain *et al.*, 2020:27; Craveiro *et al.*, 2019:1). Industrial-scale agriculture is a major contributor to greenhouse gas emissions, soil degradation, and water pollution (Clapp and Moseley, 2020:1401; Craveiro *et al.*, 2019:1; Fisher and Goodwin, 2024). Globally, the food system accounts for over one-third of human-induced greenhouse gas emissions, consumes 70% of the world's freshwater, and generates 80% of river and lake pollution (Crippa *et al.*, 2021; Carrington, 2023; Lang, 2010; Poore and Nemecek, 2018). Transforming the UK's food system is not just necessary- it is imperative for both human and planetary health. This requires a holistic, systems-based approach rooted in social solidarity and collective responsibility (Baumann and Arens, 2024:1).

Since its inception, the Institute for Global Prosperity (IGP) has championed innovative strategies to enhance livelihood security, with Universal Basic Services (UBS) at the heart of this mission. UBS offers a forward-thinking social protection framework that moves beyond traditional redistributive policies, prioritising collective, preventative, and service-based solutions. This working paper examines how UBS, with food as a central pillar, can address the root causes of the broader livelihood crisis by fostering a citizen-led, rather than profit-driven, food system. It amplifies citizen voices and highlights community-led initiatives that are pioneering alternative pathways toward more resilient, sustainable, and just food systems (Feiteira and Pantzer, 2024; Neumann and Sharpe, 2023:3).

# 01 Food Affordability

Economic constraints are making it increasingly difficult for many households, particularly those with children, to access good food in the UK (see Figure 1) (Goudie, 2023:3; The Food Foundation, 2025:30; Van Tulleken, 2023). Recent global events have exacerbated existing challenges, leading to widespread shortages and severe disruption in supply chains (Beck *et al.*, 2023). Market shocks and uncertainties have had ripple effects, driving up costs across critical areas like energy, housing, and notably, food. In particular, the war in Ukraine has strained agricultural production and transportation, which has led to sharp increases in the price of essential food staples worldwide. In the UK, the impact has been particularly severe, with food prices rising 40% more than in the EU (Hutton, 2023). This stark contrast underscores the UK's unique vulnerabilities in its food supply chains and market structure.

As shown in Figure 2, food inflation has significantly outpaced overall inflation, placing immense financial strain on individuals and households. Compounding this issue, the UK benefits system has failed to keep up with rising food costs, with benefit rates increasing by just 13.5% compared to a 30% surge in food prices since 2021 (Brown, 2024; Schmeuecker, 2024; Jackson, 2024:8; ONS, 2025). As a result, household on Universal Credit are particularly vulnerable. Data from The Food Foundation further highlight that Universal Credit recipients are disproportionately affected by food security (see Figure 3). This underscores a broader issue: the minimum wage and social security provisions are insufficient to ensure low-income households can afford a nutritious, adequate diet, exposing them to poor-quality food and associated health risks (The Food Foundation, 2025:32).

This crisis is especially dire for families, as restrictive free school meal eligibility leaves approximately 800,000 children in poverty without access to this essential support (Brown, 2024; CPAG, 2024). In response to the growing food insecurity crisis, London Mayor Sadiq Khan has introduced free school meals for all primary school pupils for the 2024-2025 academic year. This initiative is expected to ease financial pressure on families, saving approximately £440 per child annually (Greater London Authority, 2023). Additionally, it eliminates

the stigma often associated with free school meals, ensuring that no child is excluded or overlooked. However, as discussed in the latter part of this paper, there is potential to build on this initiative, particularly as schools- given their extensive reach- are uniquely positioned to promote healthy, sustainable food practices that extend beyond the cafeteria, fostering long-term benefits for both students and communities.

People across all income levels are increasingly struggling to meet dietary recommendations (HoL, 2024). However, for the poorest fifth of UK households, following the government's Eatwell Guide for a healthy diet would require an 'unrealistic' 45% of their disposable income- rising to 70% for households with children (The Food Foundation, 2025:30; Goudie, 2023:9; McRae and Westwater, 2023). In contrast, the wealthiest fifth of households would need to allocate just 11% of their income to meet the same dietary standards (see Figure 4) (Johnstone and Lonnie, 2023; The Food Foundation, 2023b). This stark disparity highlights the economic inequalities that make nutritious food an unattainable 'luxury' for many (Jackson, 2024:8).

Genuine consumer choice in food is largely a privilege of the relatively affluent, 'who are able to eat healthily, or purchase fair or sustainably produced items' (Yates *et al.*, 2021:3). Healthier foods now cost more than twice as much per calorie as less nutritious options, with their prices rising at double the rate of unhealthy foods over the past two years (The Food Foundation, 2025:6). A survey by More in Common highlights the impact of financial hardship on dietary choices: nearly half (49%) of respondents reported opting for cheaper, less nutritious foods due to economic pressures, while two-thirds (66%) agreed that healthy food is affordable only for some or a few people (FFCC, 2024a; Jackson, 2024:9). However, four in five respondents (80%) believe that access to healthy food is a basic right- second only to healthcare (87%) and ranking far above home ownership (52%). These findings reinforce that unhealthy diets are not a matter of preference but rather a consequence of financial and time constraints, exposing the structural barriers that prevent many from making nutritious choices (Jackson, 2024:9).

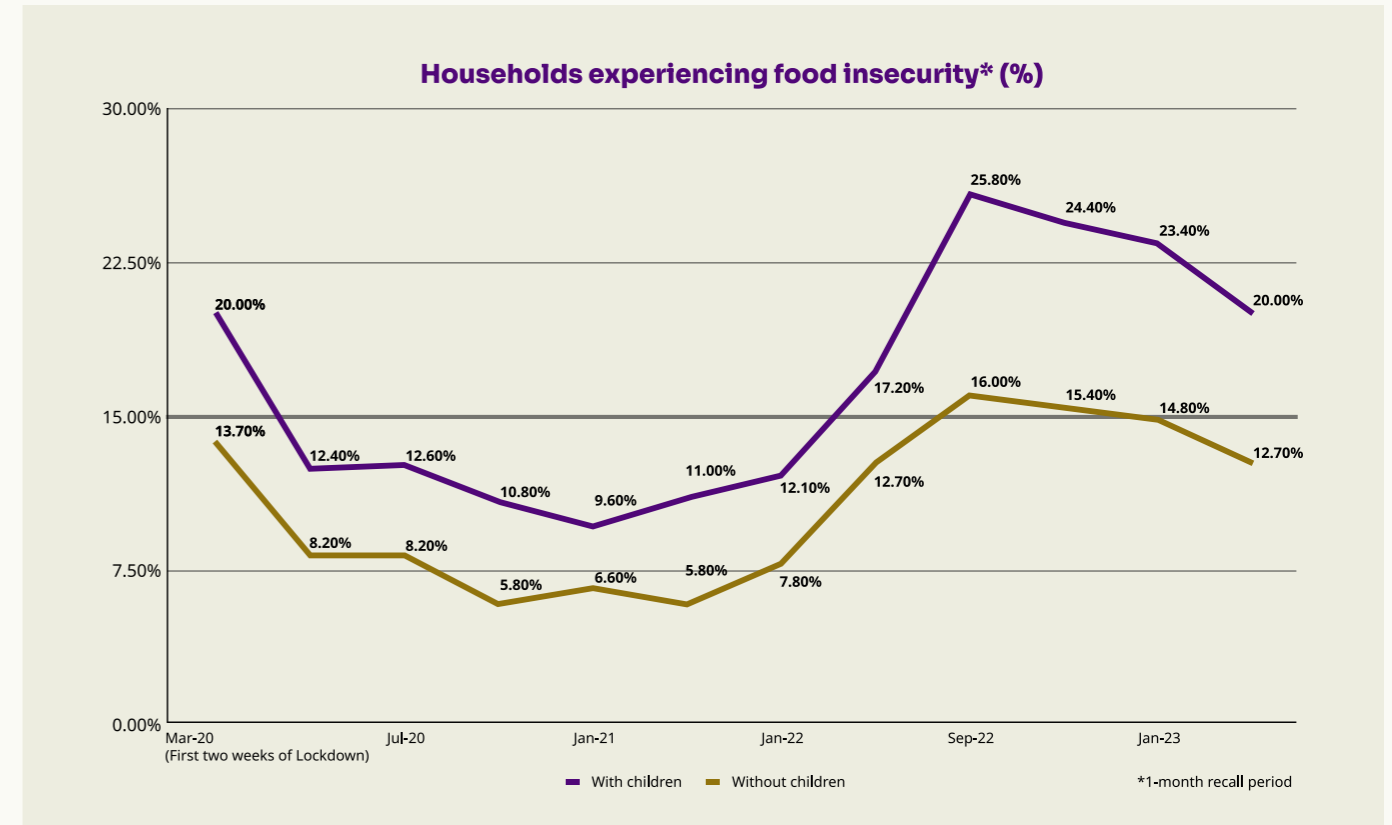


Figure 1: The Food Foundation, 2024b.

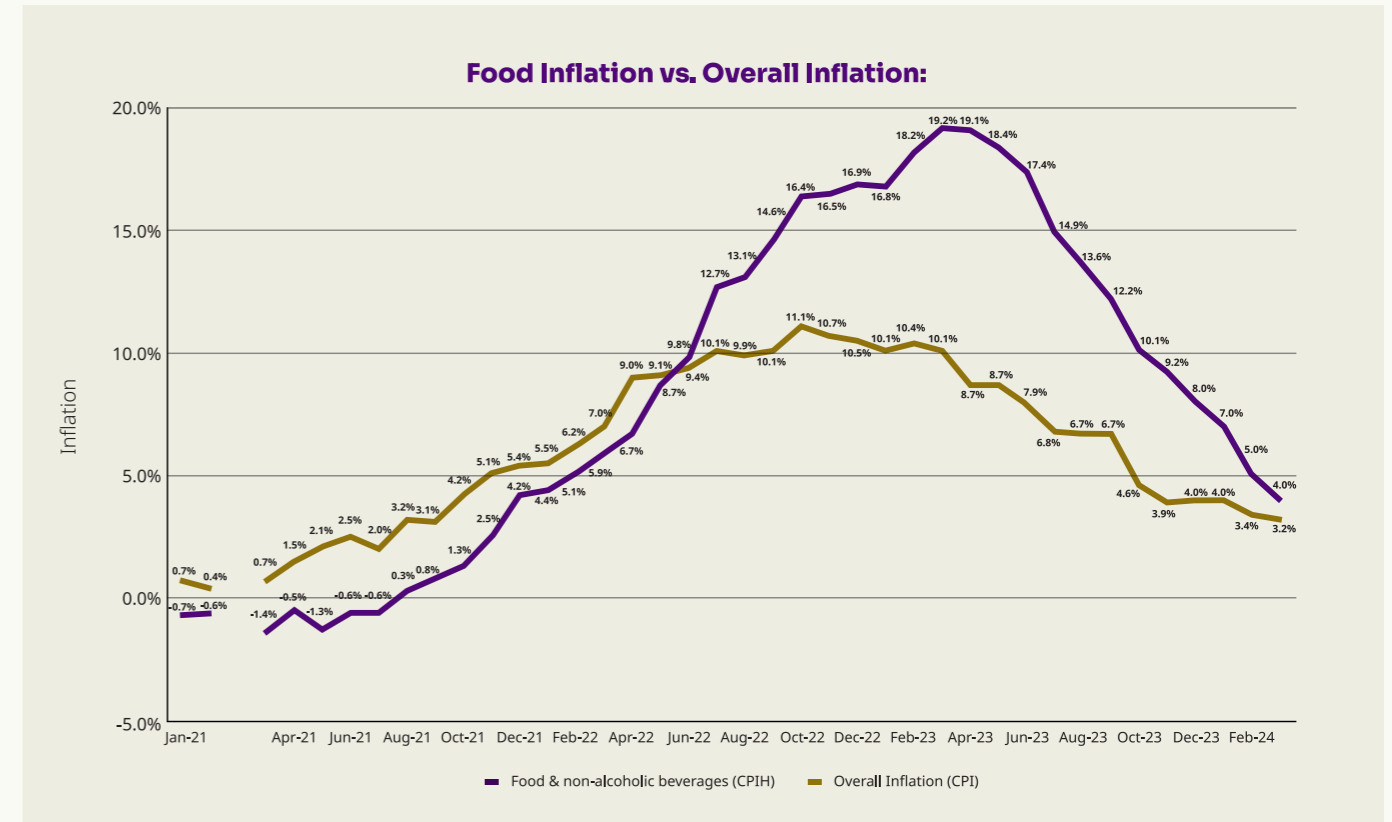


Figure 2: ONS, 2024.

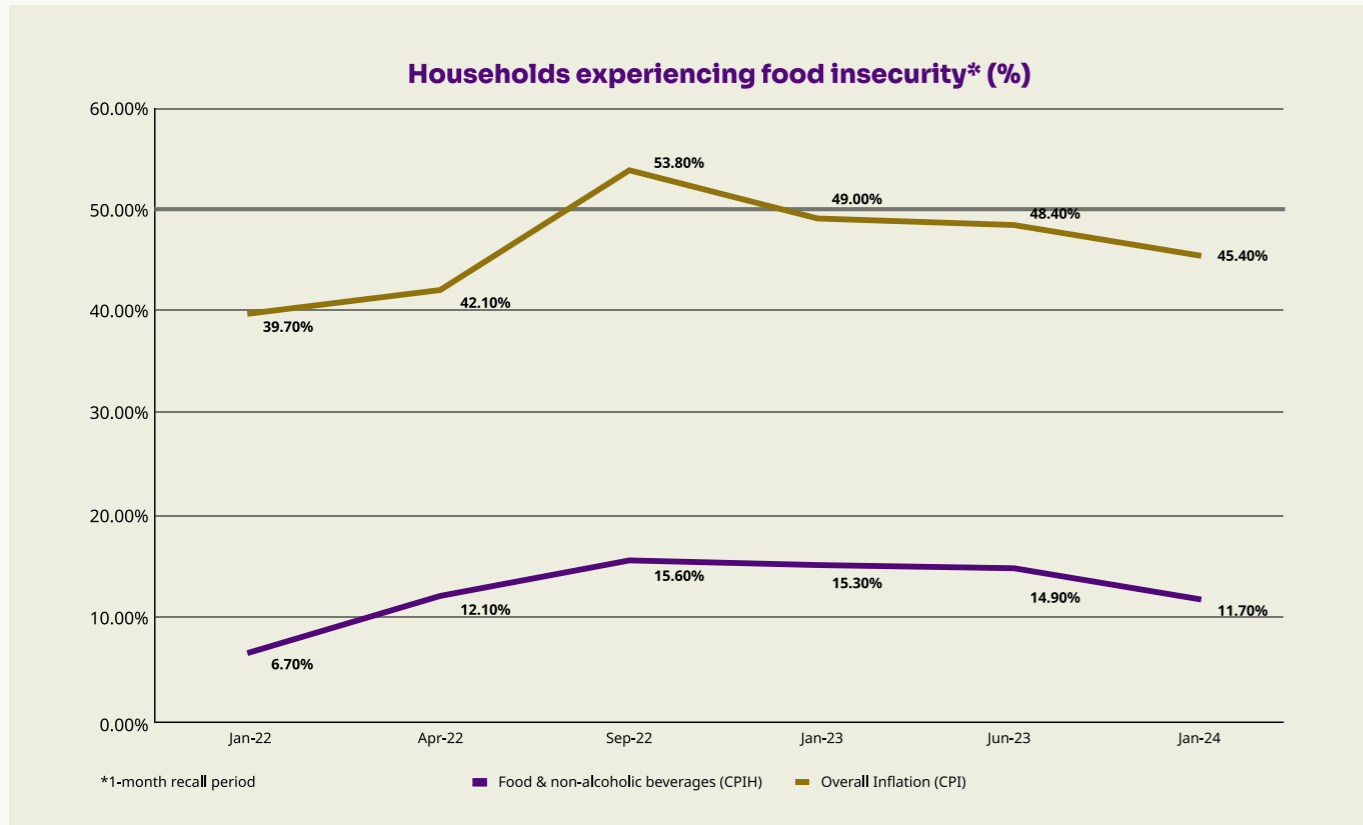


Figure 3: The Food Foundation, 2024.

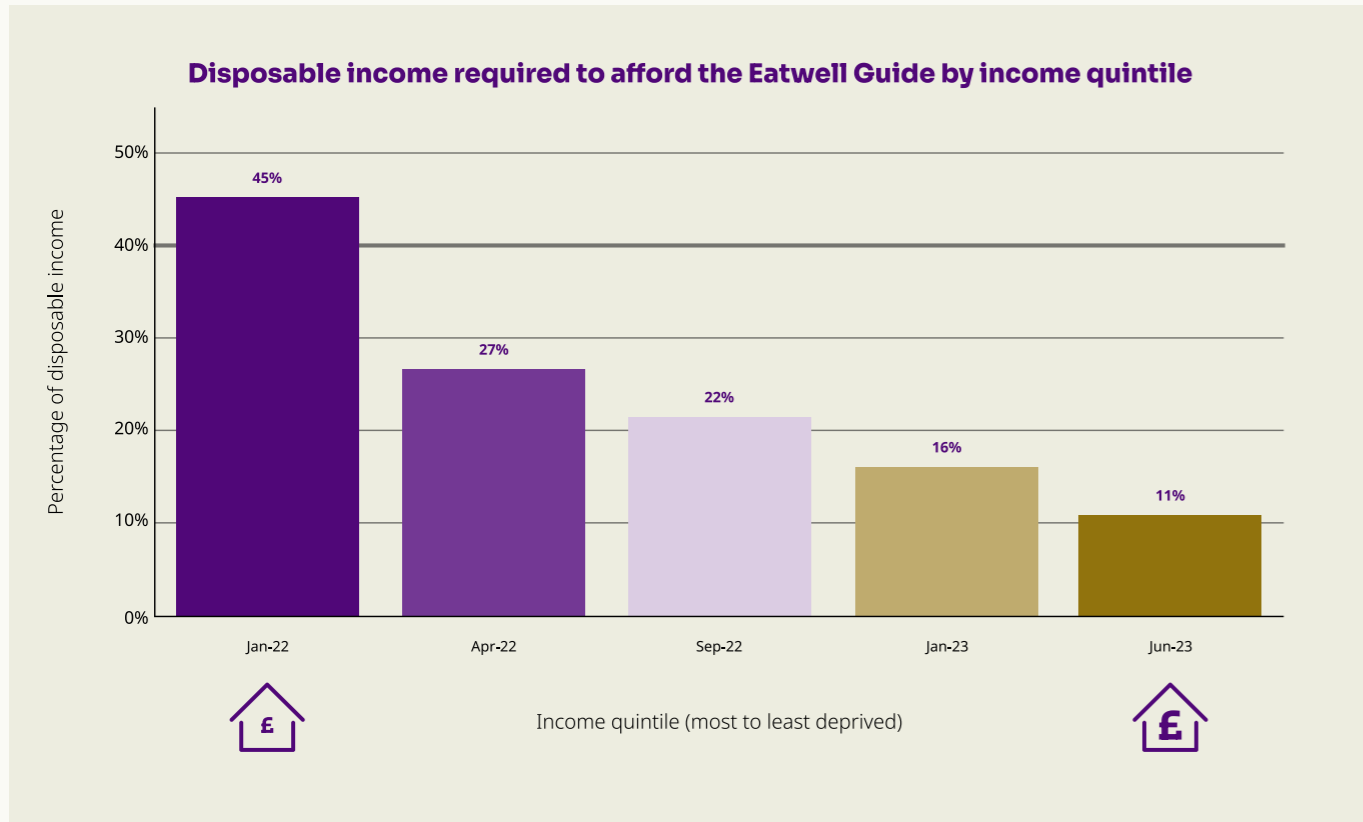


Figure 4: The Food Foundation, 2025.

## 02 Filling the Gaps

Against this backdrop of economic hardship, reliance on food aid in the UK has surged dramatically (Caplan, 2020:8; see Caplan, 2016; Caraher and Furey, 2018; Garthwaite, 2016a; 2016b; Lambie-Mumford and Green, 2017; Riches, 2018; Loopstra *et al.*, 2019). The Trussell Trust has recorded unprecedented demand, distributing the highest number of emergency food parcels in its history during 2023-24 (The Trussell Trust, 2024a). This marks a staggering 94% increase in the past five years and a 240% rise from a decade ago (Jackson, 2024:8). In 2023 alone, more than 760,000 households sought food aid for the first time (The Trussell Trust, 2024a). Alarmingly, one in six recipients are in paid employment, highlighting the extent to which in-work poverty is driving food insecurity (The Trussell Trust, 2024a; McRae and Westwater, 2023; Devereux *et al.*, 2022:27; Alston, 2019). This crisis is further underscored by the growing reliance on food banks within NHS trusts, where nurses and other health workers are struggling to afford necessities (Bryant, 2023). Food banks have now become commonplace in hospitals, with senior staff increasingly relying on them for essential supplies (Jones, 2023).

Shifting welfare responsibilities from the state to the individual means the task of ensuring that no one goes hungry has largely fallen on the voluntary and food support sector, with food aid providers becoming a permanent part of the welfare system. The idea of redistributing food based on need rather than financial means is vividly illustrated through the longstanding model of the soup kitchen (Lundström, 2023:306; Gal and Ajzenstadt, 2013). While it is true that the concept of “soup kitchen altruism” often reflects traditional charitable dynamics between the wealthy and the poor, these spaces hold transformative potential that goes beyond this relationship (Lundström, 2023:306; Carstairs, 2017; Cohen *et al.*, 2017).

There is a broad spectrum of organisations providing food aid, including local authorities, charities, housing associations, educational institutions, and faith groups (Benckekroun *et al.*, 2024:1). Various models have been established in communities, such as food banks and community fridges, social supermarkets, lunch clubs, as well as community

gardens, canteens, and kitchens (Benckekroun *et al.*, 2024:1). Such forms of food assistance can become ‘explorative spaces for social interaction’, where diverse groups come together, fostering new and meaningful connections (Lundström, 2023:306; Williams *et al.*, 2016). These settings not only provide immediate relief for food insecurity but create environments in which novel political and social ideas can take root (Lundström, 2023:306; Williams *et al.*, 2016). Thus, food distribution initiatives can transcend their practical role of addressing hunger to become powerful catalyst for social transformation. They offer opportunities for community building, forging collective identities, and inspiring grassroots action aimed at addressing broader systemic inequalities.

Community food organisations are rightly commended for their invaluable efforts. However, relying on these fragmented and often overstretched measures is inadequate to address society’s broader needs (Brown, 2024). While these groups play a crucial role in mitigating immediate food insecurity, their primary objective is to provide short-term relief rather than addressing the root causes of poverty (Caplan, 2017; Loopstra, 2018). They depend heavily on short- to medium-term funding and a significant portion of their food supply comes from surplus donations distributed by charities, supermarkets, or local businesses (Benckekroun *et al.*, 2024:1). However, this supply is often ‘unpredictable in terms of volume, frequency, and quality’ (Benckekroun *et al.*, 2024:1). As a result, food aid providers, while offering crucial temporary relief, have limited capacity to relieve long-term food security (Yau *et al.*, 2020:2603; Ranta *et al.*, 2022:2044). By stepping in to fill the gaps left by the state, these initiatives risk unintentionally reinforcing a system that normalises hunger (Devereux *et al.*, 2022:30; Spring *et al.*, 2022).

Research by Benckekroun *et al.* (2024:1) in Tower Hamlets, East London and Bradford highlights that many community food organisations question the effectiveness of the food bank model. They view it as ‘inefficient’ due to the high resource demands of food distribution, its heavy reliance on unpredictable surplus donations, and its failure to tackle the underlying causes of food insecurity (Benckekroun



*et al.*, 2024:1). There were also concerns regarding 'the quality of surplus food', particularly regarding nutritional value and its cultural suitability for local populations (Bencheckroun *et al.*, 2024:4). Some organisations suggested that the current food aid model limits 'choice, dignity, and autonomy', while others raised concerns that offering free food over an extended period could risk fostering 'dependency' (Bencheckroun *et al.*, 2024:6).

Supermarkets giants, food retailers, and local businesses are incentivised to donate surplus products to food aid providers through tax benefits, enabling them to offload excess food (Shittu *et al.*, 2022:11; Pollard and Booth, 2019; Devereux *et al.*, 2022:29; Caraher and Furey, 2022:1). For instance, Tesco has collaborated with The Trussell Trust since 2012 and is now the network's largest single source of donated food (The Trussell Trust, 2024b). These donations often include items that are nearing expiration, overstocked, or deemed unsellable due to their appearance. This arrangement benefits

the donors by reducing waste disposal costs and enhancing their public image through corporate social responsibility initiatives (Devereux *et al.*, 2022:29; Caraher and Furey, 2022:1; Azadian *et al.*, 2022; Caraher and Cavicchi, 2014). The aim here is to highlight what Möller (2021) refers to as the "marketisation of food charity"- which reflects an increasing entanglement of food aid delivery with economic and corporate interests, where the primary beneficiaries are often large corporation and donors rather than those experiencing food insecurity. By merging charitable activities with profit-driven motives, such initiatives risk diverting focus away from addressing the systemic causes of hunger and instead, reinforce the very problems they aim to solve. As Caraher and Furey (2022:1) and Möller (2021) point out, this model can inadvertently perpetuate food insecurity by prioritising short-term relief over sustainable solutions, thereby limiting efforts to tackle the underlying socioeconomic factors that drive hunger.

## 03

# Hunger and Health

In the UK, the relationship between hunger and health is 'complex' (Devlin, 2023; Johnstone and Lonnie, 2023:2). A "triple burden" exists, characterised by the simultaneous presence of overconsumption, underconsumption, and malconsumption (Johnstone and Lonnie, 2023:2; Lang, 2010:89; Graham *et al.*, 2023:723; Pollard and Booth, 2019:1; see also FAO *et al.*, 2022; Nettle *et al.*, 2017; Carvajal-Aldaz *et al.*, 2022). England has one of the highest obesity rates among high-income nations (Green *et al.*, 2024:5). At the same time, malnutrition remains a pressing issue. NHS data from 2023 revealed that over 800,000 patients were hospitalised due to malnutrition and nutritional deficiencies- a figure that has tripled over the past decade (Devlin, 2023).

Unhealthy, highly processed foods have become incredibly accessible and heavily marketed in local food environments (HoL, 2024). According to analysis by The Food Foundation (2025:21-22), fast-food outlets make up a quarter of all food establishments in England, rising to nearly a third in the most deprived neighbourhoods, 'remaining unchanged for six years'. With fast food being both convenient and readily available, it has become 'the default choice' for many busy families with limited time and financial resources (The Food Foundation, 2025:22). Reflecting this shift in eating habits, takeaways and fast-food outlets accounted for almost half (47%) of all food consumed outside the home in 2021, a sharp increase from 31% in 2019 (The Food Foundation, 2025:22, Augsburg *et al.*, 2024).

Poor childhood health and nutrition are of critical concern. On average, children consume fewer than half of the recommended servings of fruit and vegetable while ingesting twice the recommended amount of sugar (The Food Foundation, 2025:37). Childhood obesity is particularly alarming, with more than 20% of children starting school overweight or living with obesity- a figure that rises to nearly 40% by the time they leave primary school at aged 11 (Green *et al.*, 2024:5). Furthermore, children with obesity are five times more likely to remain obese into adulthood, increasing their risk of serious health complications (Green *et al.*, 2024:5). Poor childhood health not only hinders physical growth

and development but also leads to worse health outcomes later in life, underscoring the urgent need for intervention (Graham *et al.*, 2023:723). Alarmingly, children in the UK are both heavier and shorter than their peers in other developed economies (Van Tulleken, 2023:8; NCD Risk Factor Collaboration, 2020).

Significant health inequalities exist both between households and across different regions in the UK (The Food Foundation, 2025:48). Furthermore, an inequality gradient is evident whereby children in the most deprived fifth of the population are more than twice as likely to be living with obesity compared to those in the least deprived fifth (The Food Foundation, 2025:42, UK Government, 2024). As shown in Figure 5, children in the lowest income quintile are also more than twice as likely to have dental decay by the time they leave primary school (The Food Foundation, 2025:48). High sugar intake is a major contributor to dental decay, alongside disparities in access to dental care (The Food Foundation, 2025:48). To address these health inequalities, it is crucial to improve access to nutritious foods.

The global ultra-processed food (UPF) industry now generates at least \$2 trillion in annual revenues, accounting for 22% of the global food market (Jackson, 2024:27, Wood *et al.*, 2023b:13). Among developed nations, the UK has one of the highest levels of UPF consumption, with these products making up 57% of the average adult diet and 66% of the adolescent diet (Jackson, 2024:13, Chavez-Ugalde *et al.*, 2024; Van Tulleken, 2024). UPFs undergo extensive industrial processing and contain emulsifiers, preservatives, artificial colours, sweeteners, and other additives designed to enhance taste, appearance, and shelf life (The Food Foundation, 2025:11; Jackson, 2024:13). Often classified as "industrial formulations," UPFs rarely include whole foods and encompass products such as crisps, soft drinks, and sugary cereals (Jackson, 2024:13, Lane *et al.*, 2021:1; Van Tulleken, 2023:8).

Despite their convenience, UPFs are typically low in nutritional value and heavily over-packaged, contributing excessive waste (Van Tulleken, 2023:7). Emerging research suggests that these

highly processed products may be engineered to encourage overeating and could even possess addictive properties (Van Tulleken, 2023:5; see Rauber *et al.*, 2020; Goudie, 2023:33; Gearhardt *et al.*, 2023). Public awareness of their potential health risks has grown significantly, with three-quarters of British adults now expressing concern about the high proportion of UPFs in their diet or the extent of food processing in general (The Food Foundation, 2025:11; Food Standards Agency, 2024).

The rapid and largely unregulated influx of ultra-processed food (UPF) is already having noticeable health consequences (Jackson, 2024:13). A growing body of evidence links high UPF intake to an increased risk of numerous adverse health outcomes, including obesity, diabetes, heart disease, stroke, inflammatory bowel disease, cancer, reproductive disorders, and various neurological conditions such as dementia, Alzheimer’s disease, and depression (The Food Foundation, 2025:11; Jackson, 2024:14; Smith, 2023:204; see Johnstone and Lonnie, 2023:6; Van Tulleken, 2023:7; Lane *et al.*, 2021; Lane *et al.*, 2023; Mambrini *et al.*, 2023; Valicente *et al.*, 2023; Levy *et al.*, 2021). These associations remain significant even after controlling for socio-demographic factors and other health-related behaviours (Jackson, 2024:14; Lane *et al.*, 2021). However, the precise causal mechanisms behind these effects remain unclear, including whether they stem from specific ingredients, the processing methods, or factors combined (The Food Foundation, 2025:11). Despite the substantial link between UPF consumption and poor health outcomes, this issue remains frequently overlooked (Graham, 2023:725; Johnstone and Lonnie, 2023; see FAO *et al.*, 2022; Romieu *et al.*, 2017; Brown *et al.*, 2019; Alimoradi *et al.*, 2016).

The current food system – designed to nourish and sustain us – is not only ‘making us sick’; it is also ‘killing us’ (Jackson, 2024:14). Jackson (2024) contends that transforming the food system is not just a public health necessity but an economic imperative, as its hidden “shadow costs”- including productivity losses, declining quality of life, reduced wellbeing, and increasing strain on healthcare and social support systems- continue to mount (Jackson, 2024:3; see FAO, 2024; FSEC, 2024; HoL, 2024; Green *et al.*, 2024:5). The burden of chronic, diet-related diseases is draining public resources with healthcare, social care, and welfare costs far exceeding the investment needed to guarantee universal access to nutritious food (Jackson, 2024:34, HoL, 2024). Research by Jackson (2024:32) shows that the total cost of current dietary habits- including both direct and indirect health-related expenses- amounts to a staggering £369.7 billion, while transitioning to diet aligned with the Eatwell Guide would cost just £158.6 billion. In other words, the economic toll of an unhealthy food system surpasses the cost of a healthier one by more than £210 billion (Jackson, 2024:26). These stark figures support a compelling economic case for shifting toward a new food ecology.

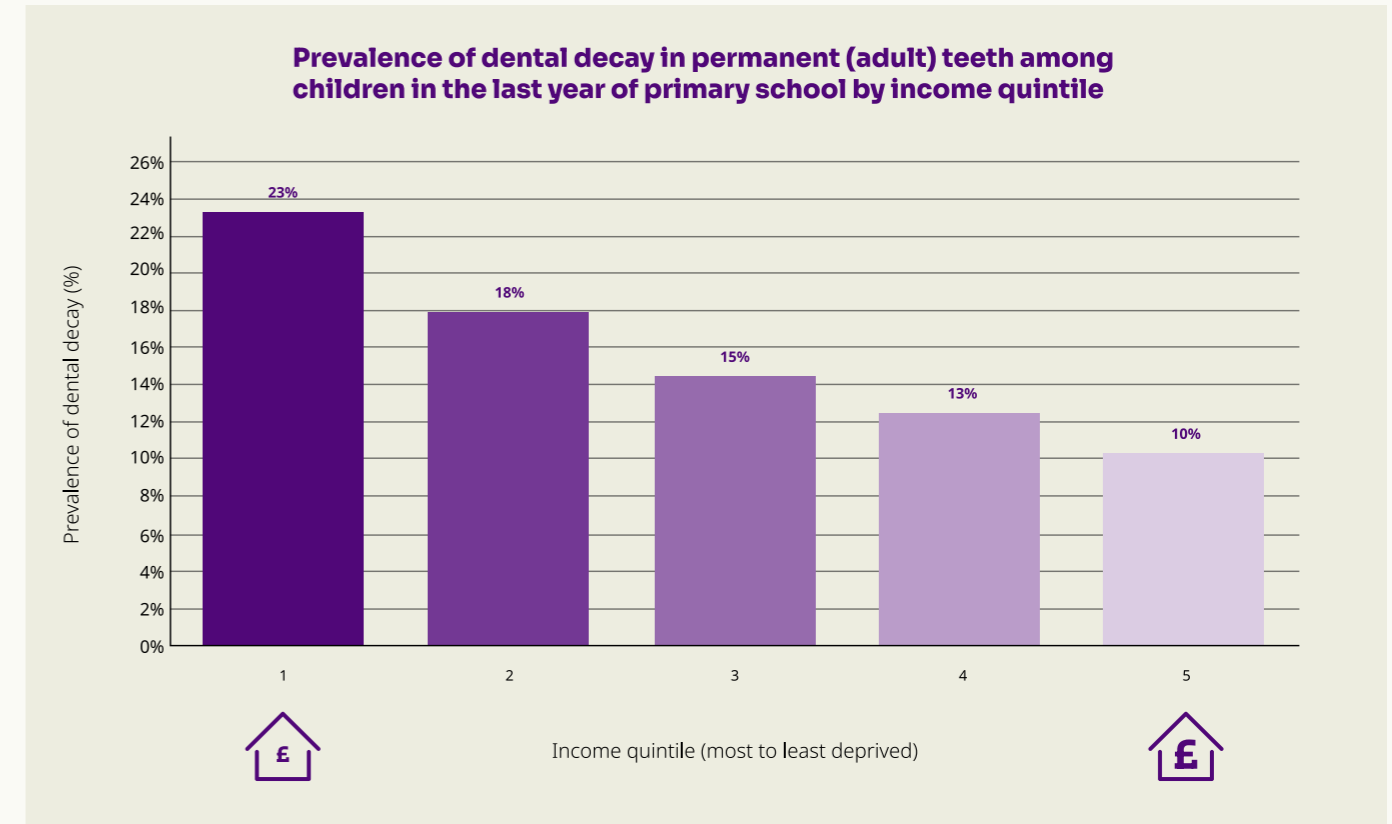


Figure 5: The Food Foundation, 2025 (Oral health survey of children in Year 6 2023, OHID).

## 04 The Dominance of Big Food

The global food industry is a multibillion-pound sector dominated by a small number of powerful transnational corporations and multinational retailers. Just eight corporations control more than half of the global food manufacturing market, shaping what and how people eat on an unprecedented scale (Whitton and Carmichael, 2024; Jackson, 2024:6).

Food environments worldwide are increasingly dictated by the 'predatory behaviour' of these corporate giants- often referred to as "Big Food." Leveraging their vast 'informational advantage' through aggressive marketing, they prioritise profit over public health by 'maximising sales of highly palatable, energy-dense, and nutritionally poor foods' (Dale *et al.*, 2022:614; Yates *et al.*, 2021:2; Howard, 2016). The expansion of Big Food mirrors trends seen across other dominant global industries, characterised by 'financialisation, industrial consolidation, and relentless product innovation', further entrenching their market control (Jackson, 2024:6, Wood *et al.*, 2023a; 2023b).

The UK's food retail sector is heavily concentrated, with just four major supermarkets controlling over 70% of total food sales and more than 80% of fruit and vegetable sales (Foden *et al.*, 2022:481; Rey Vicario *et al.*, 2023:7; Whitton and Carmichael, 2024; Inman, 2023). However, corporate concentration extends far beyond food manufacturing and retail to the global seed and agrochemical industries, with just four companies dominating between 60% and 80% of the market (Yates *et al.*, 2021:2; Clapp, 2021). This profit-driven model prioritises short-term financial returns to shareholders, often 'at the expense' of public health and planetary wellbeing (Jackson, 2024:27-28; Dale *et al.*, 2022:614; Baggini, 2024; Slater *et al.*, 2024; Wood *et al.*, 2023a). In the UK alone, the eight leading food corporations reported collective profits of £23 billion in 2021 (Jackson, 2024:33). In this sense, food systems- far from being 'broken'- are 'functioning as intended for those that prosper from the status quo' (Yates *et al.*, 2021:2).

Unchecked corporate consolidation enables transnational food corporations to dominate markets, stifle competition and exert disproportionate influence over policy and governance (Yates *et al.*, 2021:2; Clapp, 2021; Mooney, 2017). Clapp and Scrinis (2017) illustrate how "Big Food" corporations strategically leverage nutritional messaging to shape public discourse and regulatory frameworks. Beyond structural power, they exercise "discursive power", strategically framing public perceptions of key issues to align with their commercial interests (Clapp and Scrinis, 2017:582; Clapp and Fuchs, 2009). By operating across multiple channels of influence, their dominance is reinforced and expanded (Clapp and Scrinis, 2017:590; Yates *et al.*, 2021:1). McKee and Stuckler (2018) highlight how corporate power often operates covertly, shaping social norms, reframing structural food system failures as individual consumer choices, and fostering resistance to regulatory intervention by invoking fears of state overreach. These tactics normalise unhealthy dietary patterns and further lock society into 'an unjust, unsustainable, dysfunctional food system' (Dale *et al.*, 2022:615; Jackson, 2024:31).

The relentless pursuit of cheap, mass-produced food has also imposed a devastating environmental toll. After the energy sector, the global food system is the largest contributor to greenhouse gas emissions, responsible for a third of total emissions (The Food Foundation, 2025:42). Industrial agriculture depletes soil health, destroys biodiverse ecosystems, accelerates species extinction, and accelerates climate change (Fairfax, 2024; The Food Foundation, 2025:42-45).

## 05 Farming in Crisis

The concentration of market power creates significant challenge for farmers, who must navigate stringent product specifications, sudden order changes, cancellations, and financial instability due to unpredictable demand (Soussi, 2024; Simpson, 2024; Butler, 2024a; Kennedy, 2023). The power imbalance within the food system has left farmers with minimal leverage, resulting in them receiving less than 1% of the total profits once intermediaries and retailers take their share (Sustain, 2022). Meanwhile, in June 2024, Tesco, the UK's largest supermarket, reported a 5.3% rise in annual profits, underscoring the imbalance of power between retailers and producers (Butler, 2024c). With little ability to negotiate fair prices, many farmers struggle to maintain financial viability (Whitton, 2024; Monbiot, 2024; Renting *et al.*, 2003:397; Clapp and Moseley, 2020:1397). A qualitative study by Whitton and Carmichael (2024) further highlights the severity of these disparities, drawing on direct experiences from farmers and the wide agricultural community:

*"You still get the same [financial] reward for wheat, for example, as you did 25 years ago... A beef animal was worth £1000 ten years ago and it's still only worth £1000. Every single thing, I always say this.... Everything is bought of us 'cause we never actually sell anything."*  
FARMER 13  
(Whitton and Carmichael, 2024).

*"Must be the only industry where you can't dictate the price of your end product."*  
FARMER 20  
(Whitton and Carmichael, 2024).

The climate crisis is imposing unprecedented challenges on the agricultural sector, with increasingly erratic weather patterns, water shortages, storms, and flooding disrupting food production (Fairfax, 2024). Record rainfall and extreme weather events have caused significant crop yield failures, becoming some of the most frequent drivers of business disruptions (Simpson, 2024; Horton, 2024b; Jones *et al.*, 2023:12; Ambrose, 2024; Dolores *et al.*, 2023:1). In 2023 alone, climate-related impacts triggered a 10% decline in European field crop yields (Dragonetti, 2023). As climate models predict more frequent and severe weather

extremes, pressures on food systems are expected to intensify, threatening both food security and the economic stability of farming communities (see Dolores *et al.*, 2023; Ault, 2020; Allouche, 2011; Godde *et al.*, 2021).

The future of British farming is in crisis. While agriculture remains outside direct state control, government policies, regulations, and financial incentives exert substantial influence (Fairfax, 2024). At the same time, international trade agreements and global competition limit the prices farmers can secure, leaving most agricultural businesses operating on low profit margins (Fairfax, 2024). The aftermath of Brexit has further destabilised the sector, with nearly half of farmers now fearing bankruptcy due to the loss of EU subsidies and uncertainty over new domestic payment schemes (Horton, 2024a). A study by the London School of Economics found that Brexit has driven a 6% rise in prices, adding to financial pressures across the industry (Bakker *et al.*, 2022; see also Goudie, 2023:11). Meanwhile, price volatility, rising operational costs, and a severe shortage of seasonal labour- exacerbated by Brexit- have made harvesting increasingly difficult, leading to greater food waste and heightened financial instability for farmers (Yau *et al.*, 2020:2612; Goudie, 2023:11; Whitton, 2024; Fairfax, 2024). These mounting pressures are creating widespread instability across the entire food supply chain, affecting not just farming communities but also industries reliant on British agriculture.

Alice and Tessa, two vegetable farmers in England, highlight the growing challenges they face in the current agricultural landscape. They voice the frustration and fear that comes with struggling to sustain an agrarian livelihood:

*"It's scary because we have to ask ourselves 'what is it all for then? Why are we putting in all these hours and doing what we love... if we can't afford to feed ourselves?'"*  
TESSA, POTATO FARMER IN PEMBROKESHIRE  
(Kennedy, 2023).



*"It's very difficult to make ends meet as a farmer within the UK at the moment... Brexit has impacted this further through the loss of important subsidies which many farmers had come to rely on."*

ALICE, VEGETABLE FARMER IN DORSET  
(Soussi, 2024).

Farmers across the UK and Europe are sounding the alarm over escalating challenges that threaten their livelihoods. In January 2024, a powerful protest installation outside Parliament featured 49 scarecrows, representing the 49% of growers on the brink of going out of business (Clarke, 2023). Farmers have staged widespread demonstrations, from motorway blockades to large-scale protests, highlighting their deepening frustrations (Butler, 2024a; Prior and Vladev, 2024; Henley, 2024). In March 2024, over 100 tractors participated in a 'go slow' convoy through central London, organised by groups such as Save British Farming and Fairness for Farmers of Kent. These protests spotlighted concerns over soaring production costs, cheap imports, unfair trading practices, stringent regulations, and inadequate government support amid the climate crisis and green agricultural transitions (Prior and Vladev, 2024; Morris and Horton, 2024; Butler, 2024a; Tapper, 2024; Dale and Reidy, 2024). In November 2024, thousands of farmers gathered in Westminster to protest Labour's proposed removal of inheritance tax exemptions on agricultural assets (Osborne-Sherlock, 2024). However, rural discontent has also been exploited by figures like Jeremy Clarkson and groups such as Reform UK and the Together Declaration, who amplify conspiracy theories suggesting that climate policies are a guise for government overreach and an erosion of personal freedoms (Osborne-Sherlock, 2024).

Farmers possess a profound, firsthand understanding of the land, crop cycles, and ecosystems, grounded in years of practical experience and a deep connection to their environment. Despite the invaluable insights they bring, they are often excluded from critical decision-making processes (Feiteira and Pantzer, 2024). To address today's complex challenges and develop truly innovative and resilient solutions, policy frameworks must actively incorporate

and amplify farmers' perspectives, as they are intrinsically linked to both the land and the communities (Feiteira and Pantzer, 2024; Fairfax, 2024). Transforming the food system requires a long-term vision and a deep comprehension of the agricultural ecosystems that farmers nurture and sustain (Fairfax, 2024). Many farmers feel a profound sense of responsibility as 'lifetime stewards and caretakers' of the land (Fairfax, 2024). However, to make sustainable choices, they must have adequate support from the state and business (Fairfax, 2024). Alice highlights how the lack of stability hampers the ability to invest in green, sustainable practices:

*"With stability, farmers would be able to spend farm profits on reinvesting into long-term, environmentally focused improvements to their farms, rather than living year to year and choosing the options that they can afford at the time."*

ALICE, VEGETABLE FARMER IN DORSET  
(Soussi, 2024).

As awareness of the ecological crisis grows, consumer demand for organic food has surged, with spending increasing by a third over the past five years. This shift indicates that, where financially possible, more people are choosing to support a fairer, more sustainable food system that addresses both climate change and biodiversity loss (O'Leary, 2024; Soil Association, 2024). In 2023-24, Riverford- an organic seasonal veg box company- reported an unexpected 11% rise in sales, driven by more people choosing organic produce, seasonal eating, and fairer pricing for farmers (Butler, 2025). However, UK organic farmland has not kept pace with this demand. Figures from 2024 show a decline in the total area under organic cultivation, highlighting a persistent gap between consumer preferences and domestic production capacity (O'Leary, 2024). As a result, the organic sector remains heavily reliant on imports, limiting the potential benefits of sustainable agriculture for local economies and ecosystems (O'Leary, 2024).

## 06

# What do Citizens Want?

Over the past year, *The Food Conversation*, an initiative by the Food, Farming and Countryside Commission (FFCC), has engaged nearly 120,000 citizens in extensive public dialogue and national polling (FFCC, 2024b). Through a combination of online and in-person discussions, participants from diverse socio-demographic backgrounds explored the science of what we eat and how we consume it, as well as addressing key challenges in the food system, such as the influence of large corporations and the environmental impact of food production (FFCC, 2025).

Participants highlighted the profound significance of food in their lives, emphasising its role in bringing family and friends together and fostering personal connections and social identities (FFCC, 2023c:5; see Samuel *et al.*, 2023:136). While recognising food's central importance, Serious concerns were voiced about the current 'unfair, unhealthy, and unsustainable' food system (FFCC, 2023c:5; 2025). *The Food Conversation* revealed broad agreement across political divides that state intervention is essential to addressing the deep-rooted injustices in the food system (see Figure 6) (FFCC, 2023c; 2023b; 2025). Participants called for meaningful change, advocating for a food system that grants 'greater autonomy and power for farmers and citizens' while prioritising the health of people and planet (Jackson, 2024:34; FFCC, 2024b:2). Rather than fearing a so-called "nanny state", participants strongly support decisive government action to ensure universal access to healthy, sustainable food (FFCC, 2025):

*"The government [is] scared to be seen as a nanny state. I think that's a cop out. They need to regulate, and under that can be education standards and all that but yeah, first and foremost, there needs to be policy."*

PARTICIPANT, BIRMINGHAM, WORKSHOP 4  
(FFCC, 2023c:6).

A similar sentiment was echoed in a study by Watts *et al.* (2023:5), where most participants supported state intervention, citing the shortcomings and failures of market-driven food systems:

*"The free market has created obesity. I'd normally suggest leaving it to the market. But obesity is not getting sorted by manufacturers... the government should step in."*

PARTICIPANT K  
(Watts *et al.*, 2023:4).

Discussions in *The Food Conversation* highlight several key barriers to healthy eating, including the high cost of nutritious food, time constraints, and limited access to fresh produce in local food environments. Participants, like Faisal, Pat, and Sam, emphasise that economic challenges make it significantly harder to maintain a healthy diet, as financial pressures often force them to prioritise affordability over nutrition:

*"I'm trying to buy more healthy and sustainable food, but there are real barriers to eating well. Fruit and veg is more expensive than a bag of crisps. Organic food is two, three or four times as expensive as non-organic food"*

FAISAL, 36, BIRMINGHAM  
(FFCC, 2023B).

*"The challenges of eating well now are huge... healthy food is much more expensive than unhealthy food."*

PAT, 70s, BIRMINGHAM  
(FFCC, 2025).

*"Are our choices really our own?... If you're a low-income earner, there are lots of constraints in terms of what you can buy, what you can afford."*

SAM, 35, CAMBRIDGESHIRE  
(FFCC, 2024b).

In *The Food Conversation*, citizens – regardless of demographics or political views- were shocked to learn that major food corporations generate profit while causing lasting harm to both people and the planet (FFCC, 2025). Many participants expressed a sense of betrayal, feeling that the public has been "hoodwinked" by deceptive corporate marketing tactics (FFCC, 2023c:15). In response, they called for greater transparency and education to empower consumers, enabling them to make informed "food choices" and drive meaningful change in the food system (FFCC, 2023a; 2023b):

*"...do they understand what's led to that cost being so low in terms of farming? [...] if people were educated, that could lead to significant change in their decision-making process."*  
 PARTICIPANT, CAMBRIDGE, WORKSHOP 2  
 (FFCC, 2023c).

Like many other citizens involved in The Food Conversation, Andrea, a mother of three from Cambridge, was shocked by her findings during the workshop:

*"I initially thought that we didn't eat many processed foods, but you start looking at the labels of everyday food products and it's shocking. It's a real minefield"*  
 ANDREA, CAMBRIDGE  
 (FFCC, 2023a).

*"...we were shown who profits from a food item- in this case cheese. And the retailer was making all the profit, and the farmer got crumbs. It was shocking to see how the profit was divided up"*  
 ANDREA, CAMBRIDGE  
 (FFCC, 2023a).

A strong consensus underscores the urgent need for a fundamental shift in how food systems operate. In an online poll conducted by the FFCC, 78% of respondents agreed that significant change is essential (FFCC, 2023c:8). Participants in *The Food Conversation* recognise the trade-offs involved in building a more environmentally sustainable and socially just food system, including adapting to a more seasonal and locally driven food supply:

*"We would absolutely accept less food choice. We might accept that we can't have strawberries in December... we will accept more expensive chicken, if that means there would be less impact on the environment..."*  
 PARTICIPANT, BIRMINGHAM, WORKSHOP 4  
 (FFCC, 2023c:15).

*"If we're looking to build an ideal system, we might along the way [need] to make some trade-offs... we might accept less choice or eat less meat in order to have more sustainable farming practices."*  
 PARTICIPANT, BIRMINGHAM, WORKSHOP 4  
 (FFCC, 2023c:13).

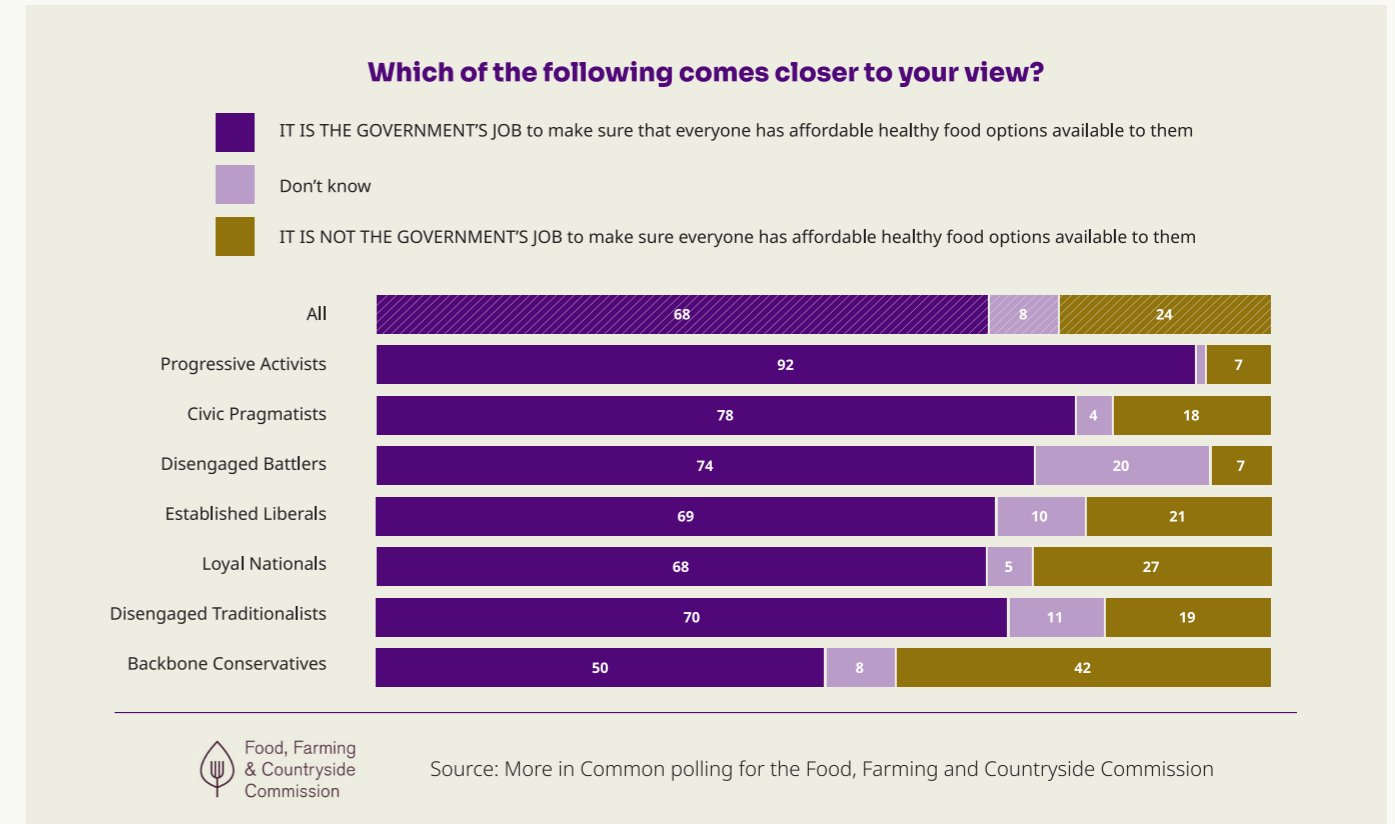


Figure 6: The Food Foundation, 2025

## 07

# A New Ecology of Food

The current food system, designed primarily for efficiency and economic growth, has failed to adequately address food insecurity, hunger, and the environmental consequences of food production and consumption. By 2020, global food production was yielding more than enough to feed everyone, yet affordability and distribution challenges have left many struggling to access essential nutrition (Baggini, 2024). Despite this abundance, structural inequalities, policy failures, and the food environment continue to drive food poverty and poor health outcomes (The Food Foundation, 2025:38).

Ultimately, the need for a new food ecology in the UK is undeniable- one that is ‘fairer, healthier, and more sustainable’, ensuring that everyone, regardless of class, income, gender, geography, race, or age, has access to nutritious food (Jackson, 2024:3). Grounded in the principles of agroecology and food sovereignty, UBS Food can drive deeper institutional change by supporting localised, collective action. Implemented through public, private, or non-profit organisations, UBS Food can form part of a holistic, whole-systems approach that maximises community wellbeing and fosters a more resilient, responsive model for tackling local challenges.

UBS moves beyond short-term, individualistic interventions, fostering long-term, community-centred solutions that tackle systemic inequalities across society (Moore and Collins, 2020). Rather than functioning as a direct intervention, UBS establishes a framework for systemic change, addressing interconnected challenges of human and ecological sustainability (Gould and Moore, 2021:2). Recognising the diverse challenges faced across the UK, UBS advocates for a shift away from rigid, top-down policies. Instead, it addresses the inefficiencies of fragmented public services by bringing diverse actors into a unified framework, ensuring that public services meet specific community needs and empower individuals with the necessary ‘tools, skills, and relationships’ to fully participate in society and contribute to a thriving economy (Gould and Moore, 2021:2; Coote and Percy, 2020:133). By providing a “social wage” through seven universally accessible services, UBS offers a more effective solution to

livelihood insecurity than direct cash transfers or basic income schemes (Portes *et al.*, 2017). Achieving this vision requires both radical improvements to existing services and an expansion of public provisions to encompass essential areas of life, all of which are crucial for ‘full participation in a modern, developed economy’ (Portes *et al.*, 2017:22).

Local food systems, often undervalued in mainstream policy discussions, play a critical role in food security (Shittu *et al.*, 2022:7; Maye and Kirwan, 2013). While food insecurity is frequently framed as a global or national issue, the prevailing responses- such as sustainable intensification and market liberalisation- fail to address its localised dimensions (Shittu *et al.*, 2022:7; Maye and Kirwan, 2013). Recognising food insecurity as a “multiscalar issue” enables the development of targeted solutions at different levels, allowing for more effective and timely interventions (Shittu *et al.*, 2022:7; Maye and Kirwan, 2013). Transformative local food systems rely on more than just market forces; they are intentionally shaped through collaboration between farmers, producers, retailers, local authorities, and consumers (Renting *et al.*, 2003:399). Short food supply chains, knowledge-sharing networks, and green delivery systems play a crucial role in this transformation (Baibarac-Duignan and Medesan, 2023:12; Craveiro *et al.*, 2019:2). Appendix 2 examines how local food systems can be collectively shaped at the city level. The examples from Liège, Tuscany, and Bristol illustrate how urban food systems can be reimagined to align economic, environmental, and social objectives, creating self-sustaining local food networks with far-reaching positive effects across the city. Each of these initiatives strengthens social investment by addressing complex societal challenges holistically, generating widespread benefits that enhance local economies, social cohesion, public health, and urban sustainability (Coote, 2023:9).

Community-led initiatives offer valuable insights into how food aid can extend beyond merely addressing hunger to create inclusive, caring spaces where people come together to share nutritious meals. The case studies in Appendix 1 showcase a diverse range of adaptable, place-based strategies tailored to meet the specific needs and preferences of different

communities. Beyond improving food security, these initiatives strengthen social connections and cultivate a sense of belonging through shared experiences. However, despite their substantial social, environmental, and economic benefits, many remain fragmented due to inconsistent government support, oversight, and coordination- limiting their overall impact and scalability (Lundström, 2023; Ibrahim *et al.*, 2019:14).

## Conclusion

Livelihoods across the UK are under increasing strain, underscoring the urgent need to rethink and reshape our economies- and the ideologies underpinning them- to address 21<sup>st</sup> century challenges (Moore and Boothroyd, 2022:15). This working paper has highlighted a troubling reality: too many people in the UK lack the financial means to access healthy, nutritious food, while much of the food that is readily available harms both human and planetary health (The Food Foundation, 2025:50). The responsibility for making “healthy” food choices is unfairly placed on individuals, overlooking systemic barriers such as affordability and accessibility in local food environments (Watts *et al.*, 2023:1; Bell and Crossley, 2023; IDS, 2023:4). While farmers, the backbone of our food system, are caught in a cycle of low profits, high risks, and increasing pressures, making it ever more difficult to sustain their livelihoods and uphold national food security.

Addressing these systemic inequalities requires a whole-systems approach that prioritises both people and the planet, ensuring a fairer, healthier, and more resilient food system for all. By fostering an interconnected and revitalised food ecology- where small-scale producers, private businesses, cooperatives, and community groups collaborate alongside charitable organisations and local authorities. A reimagined food system rooted in care and solidarity can strengthen local economies, promote fair trade, and guarantee access to healthy, nutritious food produced in environmentally and ecologically responsible ways.



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# Appendix 1: Community Food in Practice

To help breakdown the imagination barrier, the following case studies illustrate diverse ways in which non-profit organisations, private businesses, community groups, and alternative food networks are radically reshaping food systems and promoting the provision of community food in context-specific and innovative ways. In these communal spaces, people share knowledge, connect, and support one another, fostering a sense of belonging and shared purpose while growing, cooking, and eating nutritious, healthy food (Ibrahim *et al.*, 2019:14).

## 1 COEXIST COMMUNITY KITCHEN

Coexist Community Kitchen in Easton, Bristol, UK, prepares and shares free-of-charge nutritious meals, offering a welcoming space where everyone, especially those facing social marginalisation and economic challenges, can eat and share space.<sup>1</sup> Through collective experiences and food literacy, it promotes sustainable practices and builds community power and influence.

## 2 MADE IN HACKNEY

In East London, Made in Hackney partners with local service providers to tackle both immediate hunger and promote long-term wellbeing. As well as communal meals, cookery courses are held in community spaces such as schools, hostels, and refuges. Focusing on culturally diverse, plant-based foods, Made in Hackney fosters social solidarity, bringing people together to share in the experience of preparing and enjoying healthy meals (Hanson, 2023). It reduces social isolation and empowers participants to eat well and cook from scratch:

*"I always meet new people and make friends in [Made in Hackney] cookery classes. Even though I'm going through a rough path right now I always feel happier and more motivated to eat well after attending".*

MARY,  
COOKING COURSE ATTENDEE<sup>2</sup>

## 3 CUISINES DE QUARTIER

In Brussels, Belgium, Cuisines De Quartier (Neighbourhood Kitchens) provides an equipped cooking space open for community use with support from various non-profit organisations and Brussels Government as part of the Good Food Strategy. With or without the practical help of a local association, community members form social support groups to collectively prepare "home cooked" meals together.<sup>3</sup> The community space not only ensures food security but serves as a catalyst for social interaction, empowerment, and personal development (Ibrahim *et al.*, 2019:2).

## 4 GRANVILLE COMMUNITY KITCHEN

Granville Community Kitchen in South Kilburn, London, began as a food bank but has since expanded to include the Kitchen, Granville Community Garden, and Good Food Box, each component reinforces one another to strengthen community cohesion and reduce social isolation through food-focused activities. Supported by a wide network of funders and partners- including the Community Food Growers Network, Brent Council's Health Matters programme, Lonsdale Medical Centre, and UCL's Grand Challenges Fund- the project offers various resources to the community.

The Garden- with support from Capital Growth, London's Food Growing Network- provides practical training in organic urban farming.<sup>4</sup> The Good Food Box features a pay-what-you-can model with 'solidarity' pricing, enabling customers to subsidise organic vegetable boxes for those who might otherwise struggle to afford them.<sup>5</sup> Meanwhile, the Kitchen serves regular free, nutritious, and culturally inclusive communal meals, creating a welcoming space for all:

*"As a lone pensioner (like so many others), I welcome the thoughts of convivial company and heart hot/warm food, all at no expense to myself."*

PETER DENTON,  
SOUTH KILBURN RESIDENT<sup>6</sup>

## 5 HACKNEY ORGANIC SCHOOL FOOD PILOT

The Hackney Organic School Food pilot in East London, a joint effort by Bridging the Gap, Growing Communities, and Hackney Council, is transforming school canteens by serving meals made with fresh, organic produce that is 'sourced as locally and sustainably as possible', thereby minimising waste and lowering supply chain emissions. This pilot emphasises sustainable procurement practices to bolster urban agriculture and support local enterprises, such as the Better Food Shed, a nonprofit organic fruit and vegetable wholesaler in East London (Hanson, 2023). Scheduled to continue until May 2025, this 12-month project aims to set a new standard for environmentally conscious school meal programs.<sup>7</sup>

## 6 FEEDING BRISTOL

As part of Bristol Good Food 2030: A One City Framework for Action, Feeding Bristol collaborates with Bristol Food Network on the Food Justice element of the framework.<sup>8</sup> Feeding Bristol collaborates with Bristol City Council to improve access to healthy, nutritious, and organic food. One key initiative is The Children's Kitchen, a city-wide project developed by Feeding Bristol<sup>9</sup> and Bristol Early Years.<sup>10</sup> This program lets children and young families explore, eat, and grow fresh food in a playful, child-led environment. It aims to raise awareness about the importance of developing healthy relationships with food from a young age and works with early years settings to embed food and urban growing into educational activities.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Coexist Community Kitchen, <https://www.coexistcommunitykitchen.org/>

<sup>2</sup> Made in Hackney, <https://madeinhackney.org/services/classes-and-courses>

<sup>3</sup> Cuisines De Quartier, <https://cuisinesdequartier.be/>

<sup>4</sup> The Garden, <https://granvillecommunitykitchen.org.uk/the-garden/>

<sup>5</sup> Good Food Box, <https://granvillecommunitykitchen.org.uk/good-food-box/>

<sup>6</sup> GCK 2023 Annual Report, <https://granvillecommunitykitchen.org.uk/>

<sup>7</sup> Hackney Organic School Food, <https://www.sustainweb.org/news/jun24-hackney-school-organic-fruit-veg-bridging-gap/>

<sup>8</sup> Bristol Good Food 2030, <https://bristolgoodfood.org/action-plans/>

<sup>9</sup> The Children's Kitchen, <https://www.feedingbristol.org/projects/the-childrens-kitchen/>

<sup>10</sup> The Children's Kitchen, <https://www.bristolearlyyears.org.uk/health/the-childrens-kitchen/>

<sup>11</sup> The Children's Kitchen, <https://www.thechildrenskitchen.co.uk/>

## Appendix 2: City Level Initiatives

The following examples showcase city-level initiatives that use a variety of methods, funding sources, and delivery models to address food insecurity in urban areas.

### 1 TUSCANY, ITALY

In Tuscany, Italy, a political initiative has redefined the role of public canteens in schools, care homes, and hospitals, positioning them as vital catalysts for regional supply chains and local economic development. In 2020, the Ministry of the Environment introduced Minimum Environmental Criteria (MEC), establishing guidelines aligned with a circular economy approach for public buildings. MEC promotes fair competition in public catering tenders, encourages the use of organic products, reduces waste, and strengthens ties within local communities (Paltrinieri and Taglietti, 2023:11).

These environmental policies have bolstered businesses like Qualità & Servizi, which partners with local producers to deliver seasonal, nutritious, and organic meals to around 70 schools in the region (Feiteira and Pantzer, 2024). By building community partnerships and utilising local resources, the local economy is strengthened and illustrates how public services can be aligned with environmental and social goals (Paltrinieri and Taglietti, 2023:8).

### 2 LIÈGE, BELGIUM

The Liège Food Belt, a non-profit organisation in Liège, Belgium, unites 28 food cooperatives and about 300 hyper-local producers, originating from a group of activists committed to creating a more sustainable, just, and green urban food system (Beddington, 2023). The Liège Food Belt offers various services, such as weekly markets in the city centre featuring produce from its network, communal meals, nature walks, and cookery classes, all aimed at increasing access to sustainable, organic food (Beddington, 2023). Retailers in the network agree to annual purchasing commitments, while producers set fair pricing, fostering a supportive and stable food ecosystem. Supported through local, regional, and European funding, with the city's help, the Food Belt has launched school meal programs, established a logistics hub, and secured additional financial resources (Beddington, 2023).

As part of a city-wide initiative, the Liège Food Belt is working with around 100 schools to offer 100% organic, locally sourced school meals. Additionally, its "breaktime soup" initiative provides free organic soup to students in deprived areas. The soup is made by Echafaudage, a nonprofit that helps the long-term unemployed re-enter the workforce and is delivered by the Food Belt's Rayon9 co-op using cargo bikes (Beddington, 2023). The success of the breaktime soup initiative has meant regional funding increased fivefold (Beddington, 2023). Due to the program's success, regional funding for the initiative has increased fivefold (Beddington, 2023).

### 3 BRISTOL, ENGLAND

Like many European cities, Bristol is striving to create a fair and sustainable local food system, with the Bristol Food Network at the forefront of these efforts. This network fosters citywide collaboration across various sectors, strengthening community ties, supporting urban agriculture, and encouraging residents to engage with Bristol's diverse food landscape.<sup>12</sup> Through partnerships with urban and peri-urban food producers in both Bristol, UK, and Oslo, Norway, Bristol Food Network promotes knowledge exchange.<sup>13</sup>

The network also supports a variety of initiatives, for instance, in 2019, with backing from environmental charity, Hubbub UK, Bristol Food Network launched the city's first Community Fridge. Located in a well-frequented community centre, the Community Fridge allows local food retailers, producers, cafes, and allotment holders to donate surplus food, reducing food waste and making food freely available without the need for registration. This initiative fosters community solidarity and reduces the stigma oftentimes associated with food assistance.<sup>14</sup>

In 2021, the network, in collaboration with Bristol City Council and other partners, led Bristol to earn "Gold Sustainable Food City" status. Building on this achievement, Bristol Food Network established the Bristol Good Food Partnership in 2023 with council support and launched "Bristol Good Food 2030: A One City Framework for Action". Developed with input from over 50 organisations, the framework unites charities, community groups, and residents to drive transformation in six priority areas: Eating Better, Food Justice, Food Waste, Good Food Governance, Local Food Economy, and Urban Growing.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>12</sup> Bristol Food Network, 2022, <https://www.bristolfoodnetwork.org/news/bristol-good-food-launch/>

<sup>13</sup> Bristol Food Network, 2023, <https://www.bristolfoodnetwork.org/news/the-norwegian-institute-of-bioeconomy-research-nibio/>

<sup>14</sup> Bristol Food Network, 2019, <https://www.bristolfoodnetwork.org/past-projects/bristol-community-fridge-network/>

<sup>15</sup> Bristol Good Food 2030, <https://bristolgoodfood.org/action-plans/>



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