



Love British Food's Public Sector Influencers Meeting to discuss British supply chains

20th March 2024



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By Tom Pearson, Nuffield Scholar, on behalf of Love British Food

Tom Pearson is farmer and medical doctor currently undertaking a Nuffield Farming Scholarship studying links between agriculture and nutritional health, including exploring the role farmers can play in delivering positive impacts on local community health.

“Love British Food has led the way for a long time in promoting British food and farming to the public sector. I am delighted to host their public sector influencers event on my farm. I am looking forward to working with them to share the true societal and environment value of buying British; and lead farmers to understand the commercial opportunity of supplying schools, hospitals and other institutions.”

Stuart Roberts, cereal, beef and sheep farmer, Hammonds End farm, Hertfordshire and former NFU Deputy President

“This is the first time that public sector leaders, providers, suppliers and farmers have gathered together to discuss the supply chain. Momentum is building as we in the public sector, want to buy more British food. I hope this event provides farmers the confidence to invest in supplying the public sector helping us, as buyers, to understand the true value of buying British. There will be plenty of frank discussions, I am sure. What better place to have them, than on a farm. Thank you to Love British Food for organising.”

Phil Shelley, Chair NHS Food Review and National Lead for Net Zero Food, NHS England



Introduction

On Wednesday 20th March, people gathered at Stuart Robert's Hammonds End Farm to participate in a unique opportunity to have frank discussions on how public sector providers and British farmers and producers can work together to achieve sustainable and robust domestic supply chains.



Alexia Robinson, Founder of Love British Food, had convened a group of public sector leaders, providers, suppliers and farmers to discuss a UK provenance supply chain for the public sector. Farmers included dairy, potatoes, fruits, beef, lamb and arable. (For a full list of attendees see appendix 2).

Added value

After a brief introduction from Stuart about his 300 acre beef, lamb and arable farm, we squeezed into a trailer and took a short drive around the fields. The sunshine came out and so did the chatter of skylarks. As a red kite swooped along the hedgerow lines, Stuart reminded us that **there was a choice to farm in a way that works for both food production and the environment**; and British farmers are leading the way in the production of healthy nutritious food with **multiple additional benefits such as nature habitat, flood mitigation, water quality, and carbon sequestration. All the while supporting the rural economy and their local communities.**

Stuart also reminded us that **farmers are not necessarily great at telling their story**, and traditionally there has been **poor communication around what British food can offer the public sector.**

One key message was defining why we should buy British. Alexia reminded us that it was **not about buying British for the sake of being British** or some patriotic nostalgia. **Buying British food means the consumer pound goes well beyond just food production**, contributing to the local economy and the wider farmed landscape; supporting hedgerows, wildlife habitats, on farm woodlands, ponds etc. This has an **environmental value but also a human wellbeing value** as a farmed landscape is an important place for people to connect with nature. This was well demonstrated by Stuart's QR codes all around his farm that visitors walking on public and permitted footpaths could use to understand more about the food grown and nature nurtured.

We were also reminded that **these additional values were benefiting the British public who are, after all, the end customers of UK public sector catering.**

Buying British is also about delivering confidence in traceability, environmental, sustainable and animal welfare credentials through several trusted assurance schemes.

Background¹:

According to 2010 government estimates the public sector spent about £2.4 billion annually procuring food and catering services, which represented approximately 5.5% of UK food service sector sales. Of the total spend, 29% was in schools, 29% in further and higher education settings, 25% in hospitals and care homes, 11% in the armed forces, 5% in prisons, and 1% in government offices.

The Government Buying Standards for Food and Catering Services (GBSF) sets out standards for public sector organisations to apply when procuring food and catering services. These standards relate to food production, processing and distribution, nutrition, resource efficiency, and socio-economic considerations. Some of the standards are mandatory, and some are best practice.

Currently use of the GBSF is mandatory for catering in government buildings, the NHS hospitals, the armed forces and prisons. The wider public sector is encouraged, but not mandated, to comply with the standards. The GBSF is referenced by the School Food Standards for England.

With the fresh air and sunshine priming our senses, we disembarked ready for a challenging round table discussion, or in this case, a round straw bale discussion, with a focus on the NHS and Education.

Healthcare

First up was a look at the NHS with Tim Radcliffe (Net Zero Food Program manager, NHS England and a Director of Love British Food, pictured left) chairing the session and Phil Shelley (Chair NHS Food Review and National Lead for Net Zero Food NHS England, pictured centre) and Frank Fiore (Milton Keynes Hospital & Chair Love British Food Hospital & Care Catering Working Group, pictured right) leading the conversation.



NHS England states² that ‘every healthcare organisation has a responsibility to provide the highest level of care possible for their patients, staff and visitors. This includes the quality, nutritional value and the sustainable aspects of the food and drink that is served, as well as the overall experience and environment in which it is eaten. It is important that all healthcare organisations see the intrinsic value in the view of ‘food as medicine’ and that it remains a standing item on the board agenda. Senior NHS leaders must be held accountable for the standard and quality of food served in their organisation, and patient and staff nutrition must be prioritised.’ (Nov 2022)

The Provenance Story

Tim stressed **how important the story behind the food is. Patients like to know where their food comes from:** he described locally sourced Forest of Bowland venison meals in East Lancashire Hospital Trust becoming the most chosen items on the days they were available, accounting for 33-50% of patient meal choices. Food provenance maps in staff restaurants such as Royal Blackburn, Burnley General, Royal Free (London), Somerset and Salford Royal hospitals were also proving popular; each month highlighting a different British product, such as where the beetroot comes from. Some Hospitals have fruit and vegetables for sale onsite in front of the hospital. These are run by local fruit & veg businesses, so not purchased by the Trust and are therefore not part of the Trust’s procurement processes. They are offered for the benefit of staff & visitors and are a great way of involving the local community.

Traceability was a key theme that came up. Farmers were keen for this to be a two-way process and described the **value to them in understanding that their produce has ended up in public sector catering.**

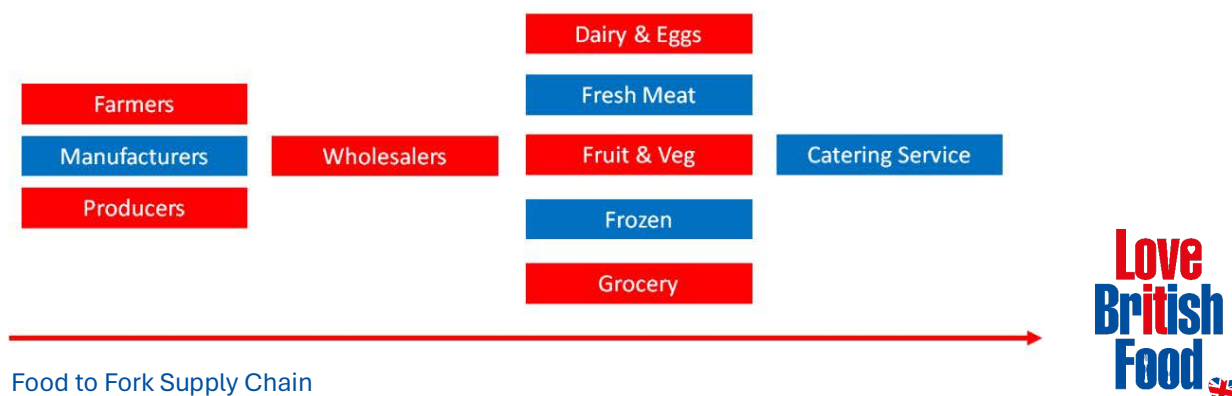


Tom Sebire, a beef farmer from Derbyshire, was keen to understand how stories about sourcing from particular suppliers are being used: *‘Publicity is important, but the danger is that the buyers or big food groups just need one farmer to give them the story they want to give their activities the veneer they are looking for. There is no guarantee of support or demand for the farmer or British food in the long term.’*

There was widespread agreement that **quality now outweighs price by 60 to 40** (used to be the other way round).

Routes to market

Farmers were keen to understand how they could get their produce into the NHS. Routes to market were described: getting yourself listed as a supplier on the NHS Supply Chain dynamic procurement system (6-8 week approval times), aligning with a wholesaler and get listed in their catalogue, going through providers or just reaching out directly to your local hospital, perhaps through a local contact in the Hospital Caterers Association.



Carbon Footprint

Tim discussed how the **NHS has a clear sustainable roadmap and by April 2028 every product needs to be carbon footprinted.** Prior to that (from April 2027), all suppliers will be required to publicly report targets, emissions and publish a Carbon Reduction Plan for global emissions aligned to the NHS net zero target for all of their scope 1, 2 and 3 emissions.³

There was agreement that **current knowledge around carbon footprints of procured food was thin on the ground.** Farmers discussed their use of carbon calculating tools and were confident that they could gear up to provide this data.

Buying Standards

There was discussion around Government buying standards for food and catering services (GBSF) currently in place (last updated 2021). **Farmers were unfamiliar with GBSF** and learnt how they outline mandatory and best practice standards for healthier food and drink options across the public sector, **including seasonality and farm level integrated management of nature, water and soils.**

Some 'farmer relevant' Government buying standards for food and catering services (GBSF)⁴:

'Mandatory standard 10' refers to designing menus that reflect *'the natural growing or production period of the UK'*, highlighting in-season produce of the menu.

'Mandatory standard 7' requires at least 10% of the total monetary value of raw ingredients (in food and drink) to be inspected and certified to deliver farm level integrated management of natural habitats and biodiversity, prevention and control of pollution, energy, water and waste and management of soils, landscape and watercourses. This rises to 40% in the best practice category.

There are also standards (mandatory standard 29) to include small to medium enterprises (SMEs) in food-related tenders and this offering is significantly expanded on in the best practice standard of inclusion of SMEs.

Disappointingly, it was commented on that **only about 60% of hospitals are managing to adhere to the mandatory GBSF standards at present.** Tim responded that it does depend on the way you measure. When asked about each of the standards independently, 75% or more of Trusts self-rated themselves to be achieving that standard, but the question hasn't been asked about all the standards together.

Farmers were introduced to the requirement (since 2022) that all contracts have to deliver a **minimum 10% net zero and social value weighting⁵.** Community values such as locally sourced food could be included but often this box is ticked through a more generic 'commitment to carbon reduction' declaration. **Farmers put forward the idea that if they could link a proven provenance-value-added story to their produce** (through the additional values intrinsically linked to their produce such as net zero, social value and natural capital) in a format that synced with this social value weighting system, this could be helpful to NHS procurement requirements.



'Food provenance stories improve patient satisfaction and appetite.'

'Patients and staff require and deserve good nutrition and value.'

'How often do you check up on suppliers [and their UK provenance obligations]?'

There were comments on what systems and assurances are in place to be confident that food in public procurement is delivering on the UK provenance contractual obligations... *'how often do you check up on suppliers?'* There was also discussion around the uncertainty of further updates of the GBS which were issued for consultation in August/September 2022 are still currently residing with DEFRA. We await news on when and if they will be progressed.

There was frustration and concern about DEFRA's use of the word 'local' in the proposed new GBS. Without significant investment in local supply chain infrastructure, 'Local' supply chains will be unrealistic in many areas of the country. The public procurement supply chain, in its current state, is not feasible if it has to rely on local supply. So although local supply chains should be encouraged and invested in, everyone agreed that the word 'British' needs to be used instead.

Extract from the draft GBS update, currently out for consultation:

2.4. Public procurement leading by example:

2.4.1. Our vision is that public sector food and catering is an exemplar for wider society, delivering positive health, animal welfare, environmental and socio-economic impacts. Public sector food should be healthier, more sustainable and provided by a diverse range of local suppliers. Locally produced food with reduced distance between farm and fork can provide societal benefits, such as creating personal connection between producers and consumers, supporting local food cultures and local economic growth, and improving traceability of food through shorter supply chains.

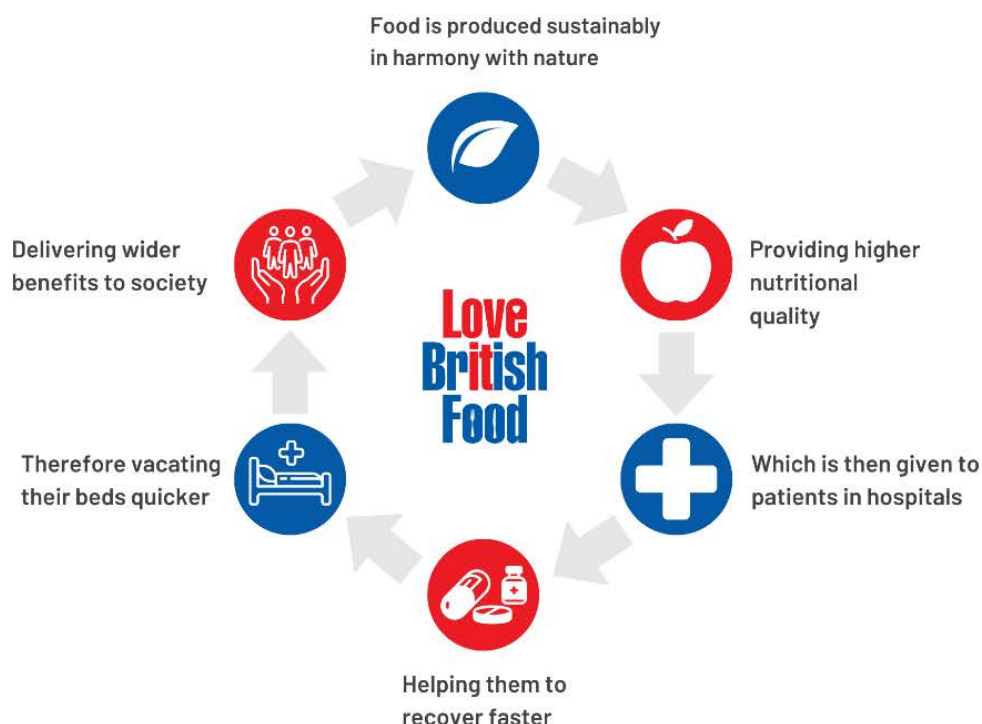
2.4.2 To deliver this vision, we are consulting on public sector food and catering policy, including the Government Buying Standards for Food and Catering Services (GBSF). We will consider widening the scope of the policy to be mandatory across the whole public sector. Within the consultation we will propose that the public sector reports on progress towards an aspiration that 50% of its food expenditure is on food produced locally or to higher environmental production standards such as organic, Linking Environment and Farming (LEAF) Marque or equivalent, while maintaining value for money for taxpayers. We will also support the sector to work with more small and local suppliers, implement new policy measures, and explore using an assurance scheme to drive continuous improvement on a local level and recognise high performing institutions. To improve accountability and inform future policy changes, we will require public organisations to report on the food they buy, serve and waste in a similar way as we will expect large companies to report on food sales under the Food Data Transparency Partnership.

Nutrition

Tim cited BAPEN statistics⁶ that showed that 40% of patients admitted to hospital are at risk of malnutrition. NHS data showed that more than 800,000 patients were admitted to hospital with malnutrition and nutritional deficiencies in 2022, a three-fold increase from 2012.⁷

Rupi Valentine (HCA London SE and food service dietician at Barts Health) and Dr Hannah Fraser (Nuffield Farming Scholar researching farming systems and the nutritional density of food) talked about the nutritional value of food. There are clear guidelines within the GBSF including mandatory and best practice standards on reduced salt, saturated fat and sugar, and increased fibre and fruit and vegetable consumption. Rupi was clear that we know what is good for our patients but delivering this can be challenging. **Understanding economic links between reducing costly length of stay in hospital and more nutritious food is a priority that might help drive a rethink about budgets on food.** Patients that arrive in hospital malnourished on average stay in hospital for three days longer⁸.

Hannah commented on the growing ability to measure micro nutritional content of fresh produce. As our understanding of how the way we farm can impact nutritional content, there may be a market for produce that is grown specifically for enhanced nutritional density. She cited examples from Pasture for Life beef (UK) with high Omega 3 (good) and low Omega 6 (bad) fats. From France, with high omega 3 eggs from chickens fed a high omega 3 diet, and Finland, where farmers are applying selenium containing foliar plant feeds to deliver selenium enriched flour. These examples are achievable in the UK if the demand is there. Additionally, British farmers are moving towards healthier soils, and there is growing evidence that this could lead to more nutrient dense foods. **Although micronutrition may not be on the minds of public procurers today, these options are around the corner, and British farmers could position themselves to deliver on these requirements.**



Delivering positive nutritious food messaging and experiences



There was also discussion around how **the public sector has a role to deliver positive public health nutritious food messaging** and, if done well, there is a long-term impact on reducing chronic health and the huge financial burden of this. **UK food provenance, and the story behind the food, plays a key role in helping people make better food choices, and public institutions are uniquely placed to give people a chance to try healthier options.**

Education

Derek Wright (Blackpool Local Authority, LACA director and Director of Love British Food, pictured left) focussed the conversation on School Education and Jane Eve (Head of Contracts for TUCO, pictured centre) and Graeme Collie (Executive Chef at King's Food – King's College London, pictured right) gave an insight into Higher Education procurement and delivery.



Derek talked about the **clear difficulty of working on such small budgets** (£2.53 per day per child, which includes labour costs too). 'This is leading to a race to bottom on quality.'

Current school food regulations...^{1,9,10}

‘Compliance with the requirements for School Food Regulations 2014 is mandatory for all maintained schools, academies and free schools.’

‘It is the statutory responsibility of the governing body and trustees to ensure the School Food Standards are being met and Ofsted are putting a much greater focus on how schools are creating a culture and ethos of healthy eating.’

‘We use the term ‘must’ when the person in question is legally required to do something and ‘should’ when advice is being offered’. [13 references to ‘must’, 16 references to ‘should’ in the school food standards practical guide]

‘Buy seasonal and local food. As well as often being more sustainable in production, it can build greater awareness of local produce and build stronger links with local food suppliers.’

‘The wider public sector [including schools] is encouraged, but not mandated, to comply with the standards. The GBSF is referenced by the School Food Standards for England.’

Complimentary food and nutrition learning

All school food is signed off by a nutritionist and this would include health targets such as no salt. **It takes time and resources to engage with children and help them learn about food provenance and healthy food. Without this, it is often a struggle to get them interested in school food,** especially when their palates might be more used to higher salt, sugar and fat.

Victoria Murray (Brand and marketing Director from Chartwells, part of Compass (UK) discussed delivering educational resources alongside food supply. ‘Beyond the Chartwells Kitchen Programme’ has delivered over 108,000 in-person children’s experiential learning opportunities helping young children understand where their food comes from and the importance of healthy choices, as well as embracing new cultures through food. They also deliver online educational resources designed for teachers and curriculum linked.

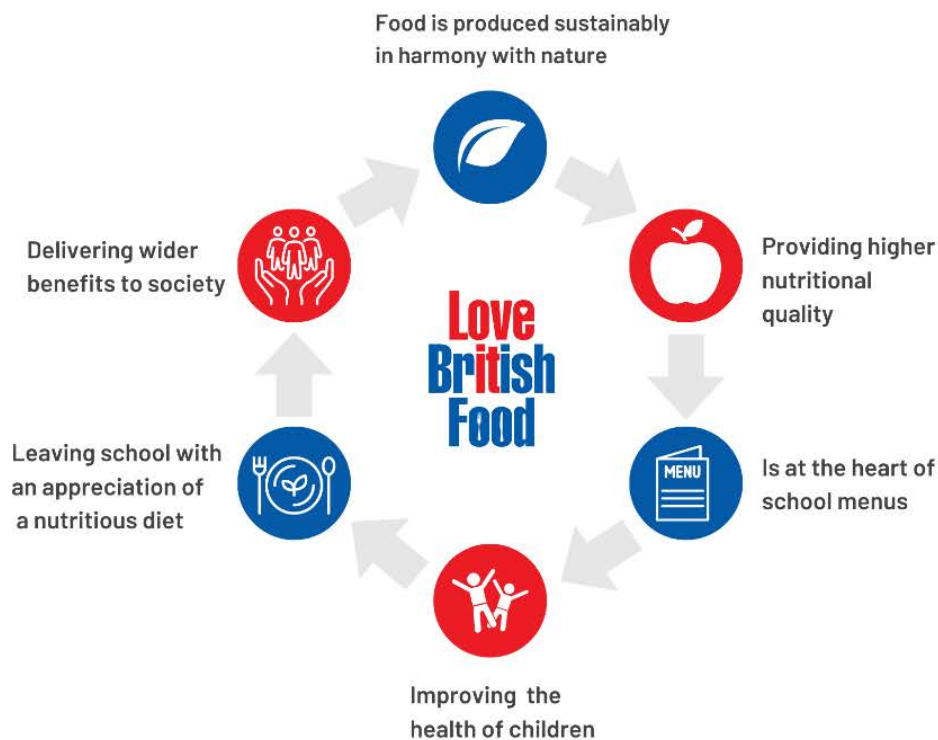


‘Quality in nutrition in the younger years is money in the bank!’

‘Quality will drive sustainability but how do you measure quality?’

‘Put seasonal vegetables on the [school] menu’ [and link this with the curriculum].

‘Schools often have six-month menu cycles, and this doesn’t fit well with seasonal produce’.



British farms are often engaged in on-farm and remote educational access. The sensory experience of seeing your food growing and then eating that food can have profound positive outcomes on children's food choices.

Local milk for local schools

Michael Oakes (dairy farmer and NFU Dairy Board Chair) described how it is not easy for schools to work directly with local milk supply. There are **barriers to overcome but also some solutions emerging**. The free school milk payment by the local authority is fairly straightforward, but if the schools want to continue the choice of milk beyond this, organising a payment system between parents and the milk supplier is difficult. There is also the issue around the chill chain: schools have to have the staff and refrigeration to manage the delivery. Some local authorities are very proactive in making it possible for local milk to go into local schools, but this is a minority. Cool Milk is an example of a company that has managed to tackle some of the barriers. They deal directly with the dairy, the schools and the parents and even offer refrigeration on loan, deal with the claim submissions and audit paperwork, and offer educational materials.

University Catering



Universities offer slightly different challenges and opportunities. They often compete with trade outside the university such as takeaways, restaurants and cafes. They also have **vocal students who often demand more sustainability and welfare assurances**. Students are interested in provenance, the quality of the cooking and nutritional value. They recognise the opportunity of achieving better learning outcomes through good nutrition and hydration.

It's about quality – the food has to have a USP to compete with alternative off campus food options. Universities often have weekly fruit and veg markets. There are student ambassadors to champion food and tasting tables in the canteens.

Jane Eve (Head of Contracts for TUCO) described a different procurement process for universities. It was commented on that there are **more flexible routes for SMEs to join the tendering process**. TUCO have 267 approved suppliers of which 80% are SMEs. She discussed the option of TUCO members buying via their framework agreements. The tender process involves a Tender Working Party made up of representatives from the membership. A number of distributors are appointed. Members can place a direct award with the distributor who scores highest or a further competition inviting all appointed distributors for the members specific requirement. The route to market for growers and manufacturers products would be through an appointed distributor.

'Our Cow Molly' was cited as a British supplier with a successful relationship with Sheffield University. This has **fostered innovation to reduce waste** with reusable churns. It was also commented on that although the locally sourced milk delivered considerable added value to the university, **a lot of work was put into contract tenders to qualify these benefits and therefore put Our Cow Molly on a level playing field with other suppliers**.

Best practice award schemes

The Soil Association's 'Food for Life' award scheme was mentioned. This helps to focus school's ambitions on food and nutrition education and school meals, and is based around the framework of food quality, food leadership and culture, food education and community and partnerships. The Gold level awards schools who serve food that is healthy, ethical, uses lots of local ingredients and is animal and climate friendly, including a minimum of 15% organic and 5% free range. Schools are also actively involved in the life of a local farm and create an environment where eating a school meal is the norm.



Matt White, Director of Student Experience and Education at the University of Reading and who is also Chair of the Public Sector Catering Alliance, described how Reading is among the first universities in the UK to commit to following the 'Menus of Change' principles, which include buying fresh and seasonal produce, focusing on whole minimally processed foods, and rewarding better agricultural practices.¹¹

Schemes like these set goals that schools and their suppliers can aspire to and work towards. It gives British farmers the chance to get involved and potentially supply into participating schools as part of the award requirements.

Availability

Lee Sheppard (Apetito, that supplies 1 in 4 hospital meals and owns Wiltshire Farm Foods) discussed some of the feedback he had received from producers and wholesalers when asked about barriers to buying British. There was a question of **overall availability of British food**, for example the UK can only deliver 65% of UK consumer poultry requirements. British producers are geared up to supply retail and tailored to that, including **smaller packaging formats not suitable for public procurement**. There is also a **lack of investment in processing in the UK**.

Farmers commented on a likelihood that **stronger commitments from public procurement to buy British would allow for confidence to invest in certain areas of farming like horticulture and poultry**.

Farmers also discussed level playing fields, asking the question, how can a Buy British Food procurement plan **work in tandem with appropriate non-UK produce from equally sustainable provenance?**

A question of availability...¹²

The UK currently produces about 60% of its domestic food consumption by economic value, part of which is exported. This means just under half of the actual food on plates is produced in the UK, including the majority of grains, meat, dairy, and eggs.

The UK produces 50% of the vegetables consumed domestically and only 16% of the fruit.

The UK currently delivers 65% of UK consumer poultry requirements.

Farmers reminded the group of also thinking about availability in the future, and the impact of climate change and weather patterns on food production. Although this is likely to affect British farming, climate projections suggest that most of the current non-UK sources for fruit and vegetables are likely to be under considerably more pressure, especially water restrictions. British food production has the potential to withstand climate change pressures and be a reliable supply option in the coming years.

Leadership

The group talked about the **importance of leaders in the field and building the enthusiasm**. Public sector catering managers are longing to improve the food they serve and want to engage in the farming discussion. They enthuse about the close relationships with suppliers which can be built up. Government procurement policy won't work without those enthused people.

Henry Dimbleby told a national newspaper (The Telegraph) in 2022: *“Every school or hospital that I have ever visited that serves nutritious, delicious food does so not because of government decree but because a leader has personally brought about the change. You can't pass a law that makes people cook well.”*



‘Let’s get rid of some of the complexity to allow us to trade together.’

‘There are some opportunities to get on with it – where there is a will there is a way.’

‘We should be utilising the supply chains already in play.’

‘Don’t wait for policy. Ask for forgiveness rather than permission!’

Summary

This was the first time that public sector leaders, providers, suppliers and farmers have gathered together to discuss the supply chain. The on-farm working discussion made positive steps in initiating debate between public sector providers and British farmers and food producers on how they can work together to achieve robust, sustainable supply chains of nutritious food.

We are at a pivotal point in our food system, and it is our responsibility to look if there are potential better systems.

Public sector leaders, providers, suppliers, and farmers all contributed and shared some key observations and ideas:

- **Certain farming systems will deliver a lot more than ‘food’:** your ideal producer will deliver healthy nutritious food with multiple additional benefits such as nature habitat, flood mitigation, water quality, and carbon sequestration. All the while supporting the rural economy and their local communities.
- British food can do this and should **strive to excel in delivering the stories, facts and assurances** around these claims. If we are asking people to make British food first supplier of choice, we must give them reasons to **value** it... and be clear about these values.
- Strategies can be very effective, **perhaps we need a strategy that sets a roadmap for how more British foods can enter public procurement.** An example was given from the UK Dairy Board: they have ‘The Dairy Roadmap’ Strategy which has been a very helpful cross-industry approach to the setting of targets and driving progress on the environmental ambitions and commitments made by the dairy sector.
- In addition to the general points about maintaining the British countryside, supporting the rural economy in this country, and reducing the air miles of our food, there is also the question of whether British produce is *actually* better than non-UK sourced produce? Better may be defined in terms of better animal husbandry, less use of chemicals, or improved nutrition, but **some good clear information about the reality of what is currently in the public sector supply chain, where it has come from, and how products from those sources compare to those from the British system and standards,** would be very useful to the buyers to help them to justify demanding British.
- Does the Public sector want these additional values, and can they find a way to put a value on them and incorporate them into budgeting decisions? How can we work to move beyond price with a **true understanding of the social and environmental value of foods purchased?**
- **Best practice tools** such as The Soil Association’s ‘Food for Life’ awards for schools and the ‘Menus of Change’ principles for universities can be helpful in setting goals that institutions and their suppliers can aspire to, and work towards. It gives British farmers the chance to get involved and potentially supply into participating institutions as part of the award requirements.

- There was a question of **overall availability of British food and shortage of supply issues**. What would be the impact of greater demand from the likes of Apetito for British ingredients? Would price constraints in the public sector mean that they would not be able to compete for the supply with supermarkets? Farmers commented on a likelihood that **stronger commitments from public procurement to buy British would allow for confidence to invest in certain areas of farming like horticulture and poultry**. Farmers also discussed level playing fields asking the question, how can a Buy British Food procurement plan work in tandem with appropriate non-UK produce from equally sustainable provenance?
- The impact of climate change and weather patterns on food production are important considerations for procurement. **British food production has the potential to withstand climate change pressures and be a reliable supply option in the coming years.**
- If the public sector wants British produce, they will need to ask companies such as Apetito and Bon Culina to go and get it, and **specify that certain ingredients must be British**. No doubt this would increase the price, but the demand needs to come from the customer. At the moment they seem to pick from a catalogue and accept broad claims about % British ingredients. This request would have to be flexible and realistic to account for seasonality, hunger gap and weather impacts.
- *'The challenge seems to be to get buyers (i) thinking about where the ingredients in the food come from and (ii) demanding that their suppliers make sure that as much as possible is British.'* Tom Sebire (Organic Beef farmer, Derbyshire)
- **We must support leaders in the field and build the enthusiasm.** Government procurement policy won't work without enthused people.
- Perhaps we should be pushing **wholesalers and providers to include a Buy British section on their catalogues**, similar to the Buy British button that supermarkets have adopted?
- We are starting to learn that different farming systems effect the nutritional value of the food, and although micronutrition may not be on the minds of public procurers today, these options are around the corner, and British farmers could position themselves to deliver on these requirements.
- The public sector has a **role to deliver positive public health nutritious food messaging**. UK food provenance, and the story behind the food, plays a key role in helping people make better food choices. Public institutions are uniquely placed to give people a chance to try healthier options.
- Scale is important. Local provenance examples have their place and are a useful tool to help with consumer engagement. But relying on pockets of local supply chain procurement on an ad hoc basis will not translate to a shift on scale. It must be a **universal commitment across food service to make British food first supplier of choice**.

Next Steps

1. The discussion will be continued via a new **Love British Food podcast**, enabling an evolving discussion similar to that of an industry ‘think tank’ but in a medium that is accessible to many. The podcast will be an opportunity to hear from those at the front line of producing and delivering sustainable supply chains in communities across the country. From farmers and producers, wholesalers, school chefs, NHS catering teams and people who are doing wonderful things. So many people have a story to tell and experience to share. All are united by a passion to reinvigorate our food system.



We will be talking to industry experts, farmers, food producers, retailers and caterers about the work they are doing to make good food available for everyone through British supply chains. **The podcast will be launched at the end of April 2024 and will be available on your chosen podcast app.**

2. **Love British Food’s industry working groups will continue the discussion.** Both meet every two months (by Teams). Providers, wholesalers and producers are invited to join the groups.
 - Love British Food Education Working Group chaired by Derek Wright, Blackpool Local Authority, and Jane Eve, Head of Contracts, TUCO
 - Love British Food Hospital and Care Caterers Working Group chaired by Frank Fiore, Milton Keynes NHS Trust and Sophie Murray, Harbour Healthcare and former Deputy Chair NACC.

3. **Two further farm visits for public sector caterers** are being hosted by Love British Food in June this year:

- Holkham Estate in Norfolk with Jake Fiennes
- Bwlchwernen Fawr in West Wales with Patrick Holden

NHS England has asked **Love British Food to organise for a member of every NHS catering team to attend a farm visit within the next 3 years**. Five farm visits have been held to date, in addition to the Public Sector Influencers' event at Stuart Roberts farm. Love British Food and NHS England to work together to resource the follow up on these visits. Many good ideas and suggestions are proposed at each but the individuals voicing them need support actioning them when they return to their work place.



4. In order to help farmers understand the public sector customer, **Love British Food will organise for farmers and producers to be invited to visit a leading provider site**.
5. **The power of stories will be harnessed to inspire and enable everyone in the supply chain**: case studies, examples of successful British supplier tenders, stories from farmers and wholesalers who are already supplying the public sector. These will be shared through social media, trade media and the new Love British Food podcast.
6. A **communication strategy** is needed to ensure that food is a priority on the desks of Head Teachers in schools, CEOs of NHS Trusts and leaders of all public institutions for which food is a core part of their delivery. The CEO of Milton Keynes Hospital NHS Foundation Trust, Joe Harrison, and the CEO of NHS Norfolk and Waveney ICB, Tracey Bleakley, are both engaged with Love British Food and perhaps could be invited to encourage other CEOs similarly.
7. A **PR campaign will be conducted in the farming media to promote the public sector as a customer for British farming**. Farmers Guardian is a supportive media partner in helping to achieve this. This will include a QR code to advice on selling to the public sector; e.g. registering on NHS Supply Chain and other dynamic procurement frameworks; approaching your Local Authority or Hospital Caterers Association.
8. NHS England will be asked to provide **advice to all NHS Trusts procurement teams on writing a tender to enable SMEs to apply**, using the successful example of Somerset NHS Trust's recent Milk Tender.

9. **NHS Exemplar sites will all provide a case study on their current sourcing approaches**, with a particular focus on the British ingredients they purchase. These case studies will be published on the Love British Food website as part of its public procurement portal.
10. **Where progress is made, it needs to be maintained.** For example, some NHS Trusts have done wonderful things over the last few years on their menus, but a few have since gone backwards due to a change in management or new budget requirements. When shining examples are lost, we need to be asking ‘why?’ and supporting them to regain the ground they have lost.
11. We will work with all parties involved in **writing the new Government Buying Standards to ensure they encourage and enable British supply chains, not limit them.** The wording needs to reflect the reality of the British supply chain. Reference to buying from ‘local’ suppliers limits opportunities. Terminology needs to be around ‘British’ suppliers, not ‘local’. ‘Local’ is not realistic for many.
12. **The new Crown Commercial Service (CCS) buying system, Buying Better Food and Drink, led by the Cabinet Office, needs understanding, and the opportunities it provides for the British supply chain, communicating.** The CCS is the UK’s largest public procurement organisation, Entegra, a Sodexo company, and expert in procurement solutions, has been named as the supplier to the CCS. They have been asked to implement the government’s new Buying Better Food and Drink public sector agreement, which has been developed with Defra.
13. **British Food Fortnight**, the national food celebration, that takes place every Autumn is a proven catalyst at inspiring public sector organisations to run British promotions and menus. 1,000s of schools, 100s of care homes, many NHS Trusts and Universities take part every year. For many, it is an established part of their promotional calendar. Most of the major food service providers also take part: Sodexo, Brakes, Compass (through Chartwells and Medirest) and Harrison Catering are joined this year by Aramark, ISS, Apetito and A to Z. Discussions are underway with Pelican Procurement too. All public sector organisations will be invited to take part this year. The event runs from 20th September to 6th October 2024.
14. All **food service providers will be encouraged to include a ‘Buy British’ category in their product listings**, similar to the new ‘Buy British’ button that the supermarkets have adopted recently. Many providers do so for British Food Fortnight already. Brakes is a particularly good example.



References

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- ³ www.england.nhs.uk/greenernhs/get-involved/suppliers/
- ⁴ Guidance: Government Buying Standard for Food and catering services (updated 18/8/21)
- ⁵ Applying net zero and social value in the procurement of NHS goods & services 1 March 2022, Version 1
- ⁶ Survey of Malnutrition and Nutritional Care in Adults, BAPEN, October 2021
- ⁷ www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2023/dec/21/surge-in-number-of-people-in-hospital-with-nutrient-deficiencies-nhs-figures-show
- ⁸ www.malnutritiontaskforce.org.uk/malnutrition-england-factsheet
- ⁹ www.gov.uk/government/publications/standards-for-school-food-in-england/school-food-in-england
- ¹⁰ www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-food-standards-resources-for-schools/school-food-standards-practical-guide
- ¹¹ Menus of Change is a joint Academic-Food operator framework with 24 key principles for Healthy and Sustainable Menus, developed by the Harvard TH Chan School of Public Health and the Culinary Institute of America. <https://www.menusofchange.org/about-moc>
- ¹² www.gov.uk/government/statistics/united-kingdom-food-security-report-2021/united-kingdom-food-security-report-2021-theme-2-uk-food-supply-sources

Acknowledgements

With thanks to our Love British Food Partners, who very kindly help fund our activities.



Appendix 1 – Questions

This conversation was in part directed around these questions. Not all were covered during the day but are included here to help keep help the conversation going.

1. Define what British food is, what it offers, (what it could offer?)
2. Why (should you consider) buy(ing) British?
3. What does buying British mean?
4. Why does the Public sector want to buy British?
5. Why are we asking Public Procurement?
6. How could Buying British be helpful to public institutions?
7. What does public procurement need from producers?
8. What are the barriers to buying British?
9. What does the Public Sector offer the food producer (farmer/grower)?
10. What is it about the public sector that farmers don't get?
11. What are the barriers to farmers viewing the public sector as a customer?
12. What are the barriers to delivering a more reliable British food offering?
13. What can farmers/growers do to help make public procurement buy British?
14. What can the public sector do to make itself attractive to farmers/growers?
15. What can the public sector do to encourage farmers to invest in supplying it?
16. What is it about British farming that can deliver for Public Procurement?
17. Is public sector potentially a better customer for the British farmer/grower than retail?
18. How much is price an issue? What value should be placed on additional benefits (does it need to be taken off the discussion table to think about other aspects first and understand hidden values?)
19. Should we be moving from price to value (robust supply, net zero, sustainability, animal welfare, community/local, seasonality, nutritional value, public health messaging*, hospital length of stay) [* food behaviour change for long term chronic illness avoidance/management]
20. Is there recognition and evidence that different farming systems produce different nutritional values?
21. Is the traceability/provenance trail/audit a barrier? Can we do it better?
22. How easy/difficult is it to track sustainability criteria, provenance, carbon footprint etc.?
23. Should this be a two-way system?... (value to farmers/growers to know they are supplying hospitals and schools, for example).
24. Procuring a % of British food... is this the inspiring metric to work towards?! How can we express this metric in more positive visible terms (eg rural economy, community).
25. Does seasonality (and hungry gap) worry you when talking about procuring British food? How do we address this?
26. How can a British Food procurement plan work in tandem with appropriate non-UK produce from equally sustainable provenance?
27. What robust supply chains exist outside Britain that we need to complement our own supply chains? So we have a reinvigorated approach to the whole public procurement food system.
28. How can we learn from each other? What stories and examples would public procurement have to help engage with farmers (and visa versa)?

Appendix 2 - List of Attendees

Chair: Alexia Robinson, Founder and Director of Love British Food

PUBLIC SECTOR

- Apetito: Lee Sheppard, Director of Corporate Affairs, Policy & Sustainability
- Blackpool LA: Derek Wright, Catering Services Mgr, LACA director and Director Love British Food
- Brakes: Cathy Amos, Head of Customer Marketing
- Compass: Victoria Murray, Marketing Director, Chartwells
- Country Range Group: Graham Caldwell, Marketing Manager
- HCA London SE: Rupi Valentine, Food Service Dietitian at Barts Health
- HCA Oxford chair: Steven Hall
- ISS: Ika Bobrowska, Franchise Operations Manager, Healthcare
- Milton Keynes Hospital & Chair Love British Food Hospital & Care Catering Working Group: Frank Fiore
- Milton Keynes Hospital: Louise Sayell, Deputy Catering Manager
- NHS England: Phil Shelley, Chair Food Review & National Lead Net Zero Food: Phil Shelley
- NHS England: Tim Radcliffe, Net Zero Food Programme Manager and Director Love British Food
- OCS: Leigh Ashley, Contract Manager – Public Sector; and Debbie Noakes, Support Director for Catering and Continuous Improvement
- Public Sector Catering Alliance: Matt White, Chair and Dir. Student Experience University of Reading
- Sodexo: Militsa Pribetich-Gill, Head of Product – Patient Experience
- TUCO: Jane Eve, Head of Contracts; and Graeme Collie, Culinary Lead

PRODUCERS

- Host for the Day: Stuart Roberts
- AB Fruits: Roberto Bosco
- AG Wright and Son (Farms) potatoes: Jack Smith
- Arable: Jamie Burrows
- Beef and cereals: Cathy Simms
- Beef and lamb: Rob Pratt
- Dairy sector: Charles Goadby, Amy Eggleston, Michael Oakes and Claire Daw
- Organic beef, Derbyshire: Tom Sebire and Nicky Stonebridge
- Yeo Valley: Bobby Houghton-Brown, National Account Manager
- Dr Hannah Fraser: Organic Arable Farmer and 2023 Nuffield Farming Scholar studying farming systems and the nutritional density of food.
- Dr Tom Pearson: Regenerative arable farmer and 2023 Nuffield Farming Scholar studying how farmers can make a positive impact on local community health.

MEDIA

- PSC: David Foad
- Food Manufacture: Will Dodds
- Six Inches of Soil producer & representing Cambridge Children's hospital: Claire Mackenzie

APOLOGIES FROM THE FOLLOWING WHO WANTED TO ATTEND BUT COULDN'T:

- A Passion for Seafood: Mike Warner, Retail Fishmonger and Wholesale Fish Merchant
- Aramark: Phil Quinn, Head of Brands, Concepts & Innovation; Rodney Payne, Workplace Business Director; and Daniel Broughton, Senior Development Chef
- Bon Culina: Colin Clarke, National Account Manager
- Brakes: James Armitage, Marketing Director Fresh Direct; and Lee O'Mahoney, Brand Marketing Director
- Caterforce: Tom Matthew, Group Commercial Director, Dunsters Farm and Santosh Salunkhe, Transformation and Social Value Manager
- Compass: Egle Cironkaite, Contract General Manager Commercial Healthcare; and Lone Middleton, Proposition Director, Compass One
- Farmers Guardian: Chris Brayford
- HCA new Chair and Solent NHS: Iain Roberston, Catering Operations Manager
- NHS Supply: Kirston Morris, Business Director
- William White Meats: Rebecca Marks and Thomas White