



## **NFFN Food Policy Position**

### **Production and consumption**

We support a shift to 'less and better' meat and dairy, focusing on the benefits that sustainable livestock can bring. Livestock farming should be supported through payments and advice to provide positive models such as High Nature Value systems, conservation grazing, low-input, and mixed systems where livestock can help recycle nutrients and build soil fertility for other crops. We also support diversifying the type of livestock systems on our land, e.g. through agroecological, silvopastoral and agroforestry systems.

These lower input, higher quality, extensive systems mean we should also encourage the growth of the UK horticulture sector, and expand into more varied crops such as pulses and nuts. Taking a landscape scale approach and encouraging diversity on and between farms could facilitate new ideas and systems, for example by involving several farms to create a mosaic of habitats and food production.

These new approaches allow farmers to be keep up with and be responsive to consumer demand for less and better meat, allowing UK farmers to remain firmly in the picture as consumers increase their environmental awareness. These moves towards a more holistic and sustainable system must not be undermined by trade deals which allow imports of cheap, low quality, environmentally damaging food.

### **Educating consumers**

There is an important role for consumers and the food supply chain in influencing how land is managed. Farmers can contribute to public education around food through marketing, PR and branding so that consumers can have confidence that the product is of high environmental value. There are also several innovative approaches which NFFN are interested in seeing explored:

- Food hubs to provide infrastructure connecting local farmers and producers with consumers – transparency in a shorter food chain may help reconnect people with where their food is produced and how it shapes the environment.
- Community initiatives to reduce food waste.
- Providing affordable/free food courses to help people understand and make the most of seasonal and local food, generating a market for local nature friendly produce.
- Re-connecting people with farms and their food through school visits, community education and workshops on local farms.
- Encouraging new markets to promote and sell nature and climate-friendly produce, including innovative places like schools and hospitals.
- Changing education in agricultural colleges to facilitate better knowledge and communication in the farming sector.

## **Supply chain**

Accreditation schemes can ensure that food produced to high environmental standards is recognised in the market and that farmers producing in this manner are rewarded. For example, food produced on land managed under environmental schemes could be marketed based on its role in delivering environmental benefits. Improved public awareness of environmental schemes would allow the public to understand better the link between the taxes they pay, their spending on food and the management of the countryside. Similarly, there are opportunities to create geographic indicators for products emanating from particular landscapes. Retailers also have a key role to play in ensuring food produced sustainably receives preference and a fair return in the market, reflecting seasonality, environmental impact and carbon footprint in their pricing structure. Public procurement of nature friendly food is another route that public bodies could take to set high environmental standards and support sustainable local food production.

## **Local food**

We would argue that there is no such thing as local food unless there are local food processing and manufacturing facilities. Hidden costs along the entire supply chains e.g. high food miles, can mislead consumers. Investment in this area, and facilitating local abattoirs and on-farm butchering and manufacturing facilities if there's a demand, is vital if we are to improve the environmental footprint of our supply chains. It is also important that farmers receive a fairer share of the profit generated in the supply chain, creating a more even playing field.

## **Policy**

Government can play a key role in facilitating food policy that works for farmers, nature and consumers. Producing food in a manner that restores and enhances our natural resources and delivers public goods such as carbon sequestration, wildlife habitats, clean air and water warrants public funding, and farmers should be incentivised and rewarded for their delivery. While these good environmental practices should be rewarded by public payments, our position is that food production is not a public good. When it comes to food policy, Government's role should be more of an 'enabling' one, setting up structures to facilitate a strategic national approach to food, including regulations, local food networks, transparent supply chains, and sustainable public procurement. For example, future agriculture policy should encourage farmer cooperation to create and develop local sustainable supply chains, which often allow farmers to secure added value for what they produce.

In England, the [National Food Strategy](#) process can provide a space for these interventions.