

Driving better health outcomes through innovations in food production



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Inspiring trust for a more resilient world.



# Introduction.



Sara Walton,  
Sector Lead, BSI Knowledge  
(Food, Retail, Services)

The pandemic has changed the way we all think about food and, when it is over, we will have to consider how we address food systems in future to enhance nutrition, ensure sustainability and protect security of supply chains. Both the pandemic and the independent National Food Strategy (The Plan, published in July 2021 by Henry Dimbleby) have raised questions about the food we eat and about population health.

Some of the answers could well lie in a combination of re-formulation, pushing marketing budgets to healthier options and evaluating what is reported in the boardroom, all whilst being mindful of the industry's impact on the environment.

As the independent National Standards Body for the UK, BSI aims to support the endeavours of all stakeholders to help clarify and improve issues of production and processes in the economy; in this way, BSI also aims to support those looking to improve key factors within the food system.

Supported by in-depth analysis of quantitative data, this report highlights some important factors for anyone looking to drive better health outcomes through innovations in food production and communication.

Looking at diverse issues from production and transport to labelling, the authors consider the post-pandemic food landscape and offer their own insights into areas where changes could be made to improve the health of the nation and the planet.

**Sara Walton, Head of Sector (Food), BSI**

## Chapter 1: The nutritionist's view

# You are what you eat.



Lauren Woodley,  
group nutrition leader  
at Nomad Foods.

Lauren is a registered nutritionist and Group Nutrition Leader at Nomad Foods, Europe's largest frozen food company. She is responsible for developing and delivering nutrition strategies and commitments across the business and provides expertise to colleagues across Europe. Winner of the 2020 Food and Drink Federation Registered Nutritionist of the Year, she is also a member of the University of Leeds School of Food Science and Nutrition Industrial Advisory Board.

The COVID-19 pandemic has made us all take a close look at what we eat and exposed several underlying health issues linked to food, namely, obesity, diabetes and immune health.

Diabetes and obesity (to which type 2 diabetes is directly linked) have both been shown to increase the risk of developing more severe COVID-19 illness and complications. Meanwhile, research into vitamin D status and COVID-19 outcomes has been mixed, but there are signals that vitamin D deficiency is potentially linked to more severe COVID-19 outcomes. This is an area still being researched, but it demonstrates a direct link between nutrient status and immune health.

Thankfully, despite so many people reporting gaining 'lockdown pounds', the UK obesity crisis should likely be no worse than it was pre-coronavirus, due to the findings of the ZOE Covid Symptom Study that people have had varied and even opposing diet and lifestyle responses to the pandemic.

Some have adopted new, healthier behaviours; eating more fruits and vegetables and exercising more. Additionally, with the shutting down of the foodservice industry, those who previously ate most of their meals out-of-home may have developed healthier eating habits by engaging more with what goes into their food through meal planning. Essentially, enforced home-cooking (even if supplemented with occasional takeaways) has meant better control of the amount of salt and sugar being added to meals, as well as the use of healthier fats, vegetables and fruits.

Many are also more concerned about immune health, and as a result, Vitamin C, Zinc and Vitamin D are now more linked in people's minds with immune health.



The government estimated children under 16 were exposed to

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Conversely, some have sought comfort through food and lifestyle, indulging in unhealthy treats and exercising less. The home baking and banana bread craze of the first lockdown has likely increased our sugar and saturated fat intakes as a nation, and home-cooking has not meant a healthier diet for everyone. Those with a narrow cooking repertoire, either due to skills, confidence or access to ingredients, will have had a less varied diet and, therefore, potentially reduced dietary nutrient density.

On balance though, the February 2021 release of ZOE Covid Symptom Study findings showed that those adopting healthier behaviours have slightly outweighed those whose lifestyle health has declined, and overall population weight loss has counteracted population weight gain, so today we actually may have a marginally healthier nation. The pandemic has been a proof point for the saying 'you are what you eat', and for the first time many in the UK have actually seen the short-term health impact of their nutritional status and body weight.

### However, do we as a nation really understand the determinants of our own nutritional health?

Arguably no, given that nutritional health is determined by many complex and interrelated factors, and is influenced at an individual, family, peer, community and societal level.

### The food industry has a pivotal role to play, and in my view has a responsibility to:

-  support healthy, varied diets by delivering a range of products which are nutritionally responsible
-  deliver 'health by stealth' where possible, for example by reducing salt, using lower saturated fat oils or increasing fibre content
-  ensure consumers can make informed choices through clear, accurate and complete nutrition labelling
-  market products responsibly
-  support consumers in adopting more environmentally sustainable diets, through product formulation and consumer communications.

Going forward, food labelling will be particularly crucial in helping consumers continue to make informed, positive food and drink choices. A front of pack nutrition labelling (FOPNL) consultation was run by the government late last year to review which FOPNL scheme the UK should apply in the future. The main models being looked at are the multiple traffic lights nutrition label we currently see on food packaging, the Nutri-Score 5-colour logo which is increasingly popular across Europe and the Chilean warning labels (black labels highlighting high levels of salt and sugar).



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Of course, government policy is also in place to address levels of salt and sugar in food, and plans have been announced to restrict the promotion of HFSS (high fat salt sugar) foods and drinks. The consultation on the HFSS advertising ban, as announced in the Queen's speech in May, cited research finding children were being exposed to increasing online advertising of these products. The government estimated children under 16 were exposed to 15bn 'junk food' adverts online in 2019, compared with an estimated 700m two years earlier. The new 9pm watershed restriction is a positive change, as we know families are watching television and streaming services together later, and a solution to ensure more responsible online advertising will also be beneficial. However, while controlling advertising and promotions of HFSS products is certainly a positive step, many more interventions will be needed to make our society and environment less 'obesogenic' overall.

Throughout the food industry there has been a very positive response to government interventions to tackle obesity and improve the food we all eat. In fact, steps to reduce salt levels were being taken by companies long before there were formal salt targets. If you were to compare something like a ready meal from 20 years ago to one from today, you would generally find salt levels vastly reduced.

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Sugar, however, is a more challenging issue. Where salt is usually most important for flavour, sugar has a more complex role to play in food and is often vital to the very structure of food, so it's not always as simple as just putting less sugar in. Nevertheless,

I think the fact major branded food companies and retailers employ their own nutritionist(s) is testament to how seriously they are taking their role in the nation's health.

But when it comes to nutrition labelling and signposting there is room for improvement. Many companies are increasingly applying nutrient and health claims front of pack to clearly communicate to consumers the benefits of products, however we know that these claims are not always fully understood. Additionally, FOPNL can

cause confusion for consumers or can be seen to oversimplify the complex nutritional composition of products.

The final FOPNL scheme chosen for the UK will be based on the evidence showing its efficacy in encouraging healthier food choices. I would exercise caution when considering Chilean-style warning labels as they have the potential to foster negative relationships with food.

What I would like to see introduced as a priority is mandatory fibre labelling on products (in addition to the current mandatory energy and nutrient values included in nutrition tables on products), as there is a significant gap between recommended (30g) and actual (~20g) daily fibre intakes, and anything we can do to help consumers choose higher fibre options and be aware of their fibre intakes can only be a positive.

Finally, while it is of course a priority to give consumers all the information they need to make informed and positive food choices, and to formulate products in such a way that nutritious options are available by default, standards must not alienate smaller food businesses. Whether they relate to nutritional composition or labelling requirements, it's important they are understandable and attainable for businesses of all sizes. The other lesson from the pandemic: we truly are all in this together.

Women are more likely than men to regard nutritional information as 'extremely important'.





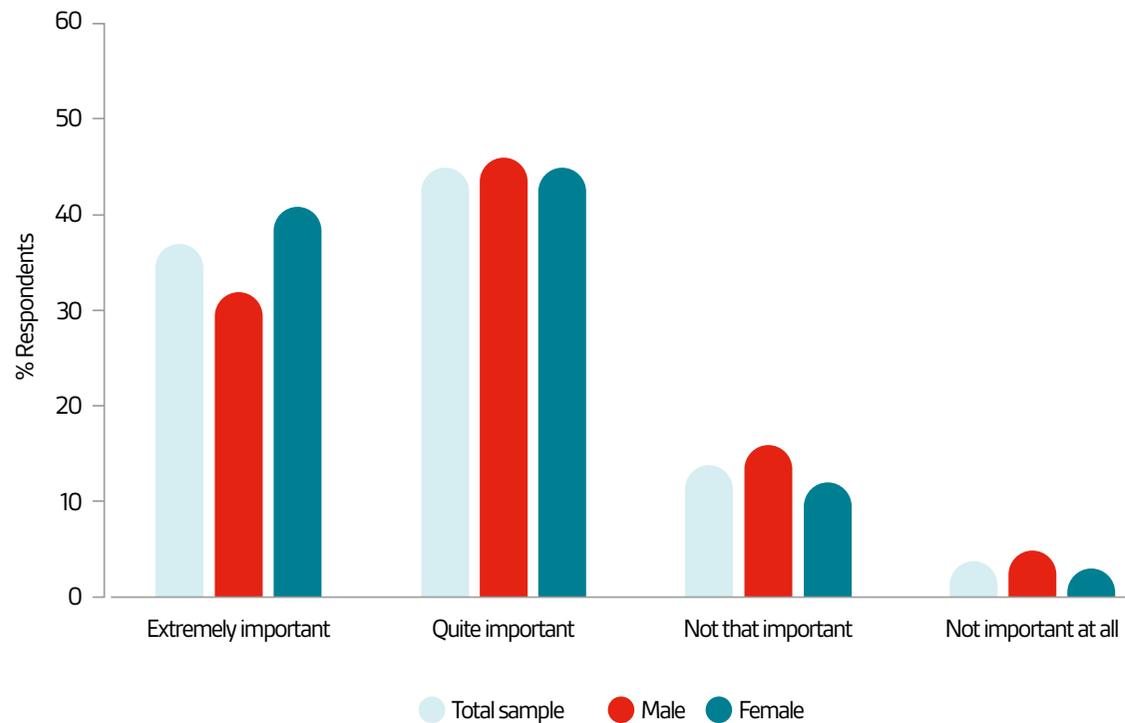
“Traffic light’ indicators are now well established on UK food packaging – it appears that the majority of people are familiar with them.”

## How important is clearly stated nutritional information on food packaging (like the 'traffic light' indicators and ingredient listings) to you?

82% of UK adults believe nutritional information, such as 'traffic light' indicators and ingredient listings, is important, with 37% saying it is 'extremely important' to them. These figures are higher for women than for men – 86% of women say nutritional information is important, and of these 41% say it is 'extremely important'.

"Women remain the prime purchasers of food within many UK families," comments research analyst Chris Blythe, owner of The Brand Nursery, "The maternal desire to be a 'good provider' when preparing the family meal may well be a reason why women rate this information as a little more important than men do."

When looking at these results by age, the overall importance of nutritional labelling peaks amongst those aged 35-54, and there is a slight fall off in importance amongst those aged 55+, but even amongst the oldest respondents around 80% find this information important.

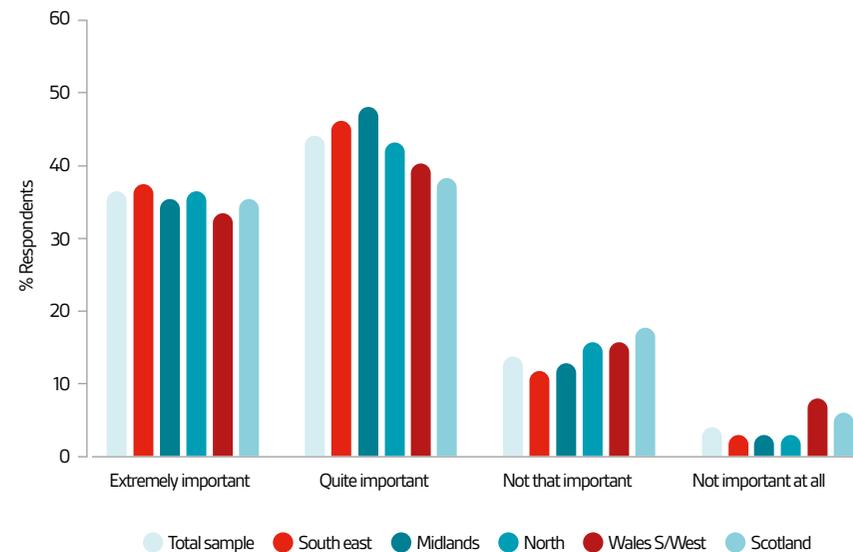
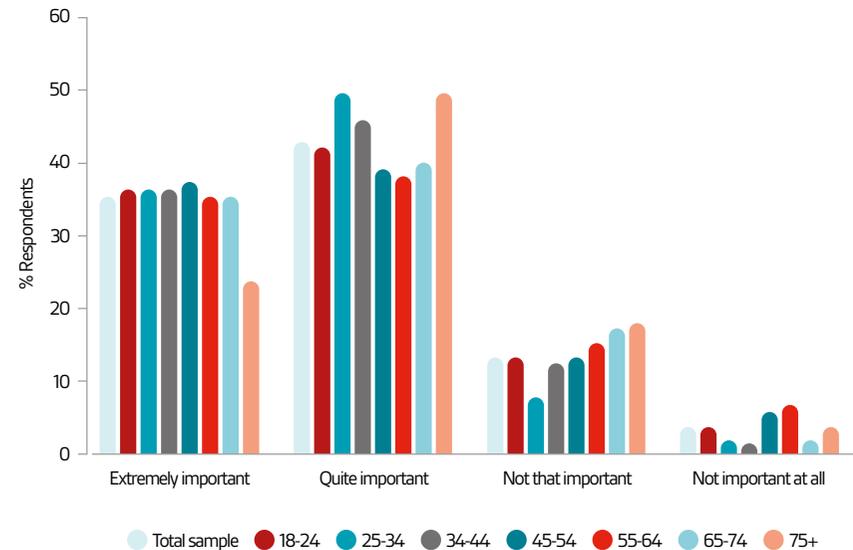


Nutritional information on food packaging is rated as more important by those in the English regions than those in Scotland and Wales (and South-West England). 75% Scots say this information is important to them – still a healthy majority of people – compared to 85% of those in South-East England and the Midlands.

Those with teenage children are most likely to regard nutritional information as 'extremely important' – scoring peaks amongst those with kids aged 16-18 (47%), while those without children are a little more likely to view this information as unimportant, although the vast majority (80%) of adults with no children in their household still regard it as important.

Chris adds: "Traffic light' indicators are now well established on UK food packaging – it appears that the majority of people are both familiar with them and find them to be useful signposts to the nutritional content of the food they are buying.

**“Over the past few years, we have seen growing evidence across a range of food research projects that many consumers are looking more closely at ingredients and nutritional information as they seek to provide good, wholesome food for their families.”**





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## Chapter 2: The producer's view

# Sustainable farming.



**Rob Percival,**  
Head of food policy,  
the Soil Association.

Rob Percival is head of food policy at the Soil Association, the only UK charity working across the spectrum of human health, the environment and animal welfare.

The intensification of farming over the past half century has made huge volumes of food available, helping to feed a growing population, but at great expense to soils, biodiversity and animal welfare. We need to place food-production on a more nature-friendly footing. That means adopting agroecology and organic – these are farming systems which regenerate the soil and minimise the use of ecologically costly inputs such as chemical pesticides and synthetic fertilisers.

These farming systems are sometimes said to be less productive, and it's true that yields can be lower, but modelling has shown they can produce ample healthy food for our growing population, whilst resolving the climate and nature crises.

Achieving a transition to agroecology will require the right policy framework. The UK government has commissioned a National Food Strategy and is developing its approach to post-Brexit farmer

payments; some of the pieces of the puzzle are in place, and a growing number of farmers are adopting more regenerative practices, but we have a long way to go until food production and consumption are truly sustainable.

We need to tackle the issue of food waste. 10 million tonnes of food are thrown away in the UK every year, of which 6 million tonnes is avoidable. This waste contributes to the climate crisis by generating avoidable emissions, both in its production and when it's deposited in landfill.

Around 40% of food waste in the UK ends up in landfill. As organic matter begins to rot, it releases methane, a greenhouse gas several times more potent than carbon dioxide. Globally, around one third of all food is wasted, with the UN Food and Agriculture Organisation reporting that if global food waste was a country it would be the third largest GHG emitting country in the world.



The most important dietary move any of us can make is to begin buying, wherever possible, plant and animal products from agroecological and organic farmers, while cutting out industrial meat and dairy.



To achieve a sustainable future, we will need to waste much less food – perhaps 50% less as an initial target. This will require action across the supply chain as well as at consumer level.

We also need to eat differently. Truly sustainable food production requires a shift to agroecology and the rapid phase out of industrial animal farming, which is ecologically costly and poses threats to human health such as antimicrobial resistance. The most important dietary move any of us can make is to begin buying, wherever possible, plant and animal products from agroecological and organic farmers, while cutting out industrial meat and dairy.

Such a dietary move would not only be of environmental benefit, it would help to address one of the leading threats to human health, antimicrobial resistance.

Worldwide, it is estimated 66% of all antibiotics are used in animals, not people. Much of this use is routine, enabling livestock to be kept in unhygienic and stressful conditions where disease spreads easily. The number of dangerous, pathogenic bacteria that are resistant to the effect of antibiotics is consequently increasing. Ten million people a year could die from antibiotic-resistant infections by 2050 if we fail to take decisive action now.

In 2022, new EU legislation will prohibit all forms of routine antibiotic use in farming, including preventative group treatments. This is hugely

welcome, and the UK must step up its ambitions to stay apace. Progress has been made in recent years, and British farm antibiotic use fell by about 50% between 2014 and 2018, partly due to a variety of voluntary industry initiatives.

Unfortunately, recently published data for 2019 showed a 3% increase in use and there are still no regulations in the UK to prevent preventative mass medication in UK farming. Defra has said it will launch a consultation on whether to follow the 2022 EU changes to antibiotic regulations, but hasn't said when. The UK is currently on course to have some of the weakest regulations for farm antibiotic use in Western Europe.

The UK's approach to antibiotics is, however, more progressive than elsewhere. Antibiotic use per animal is about five times higher in the US and Canada compared with the UK, with use in US cattle being about seven times higher. There are concerns that cheaply produced meat could be imported from these countries, undermining UK efforts to reduce the use of farm antibiotics.

To resolve the issue, we need a UK ban on all routine use of antibiotics and all preventative use of antibiotics in groups of animals. Antibiotic-reduction strategies must ensure farm animals are kept in less-intensive conditions with, wherever possible, access to the outdoors, in order to reduce the spread of infections when they occur.

Such strategies should include measures aimed at improving husbandry standards, reducing stocking densities, improving health at weaning, and avoiding the use of breeds of animals that require higher levels of antibiotic use. Trade policies should also prevent the UK from importing food that has been produced with irresponsible antibiotic use.

Many of these problems are being exacerbated by changing diets and public demand. For example, the UK's cultural expectation is that chicken is cheap, and rising levels of consumption, have fuelled consolidation and intensification in the poultry sector. With UK producers competing with imported products, the sector has been locked into low animal welfare standards and high environmental costs.

If we want our farmers to produce food in more nature-friendly ways, we must be willing to pay more and eat differently, consuming less and better meat, and supporting those employing organic and agroecological production.

When it comes to standards in food production, we must strive to balance the need for sufficient, nutritious food with the need to protect the environment and the resources on which we rely. The only way to do this is to put the importance of our own health on a level footing with the health of the planet, and improve standards of animal welfare.



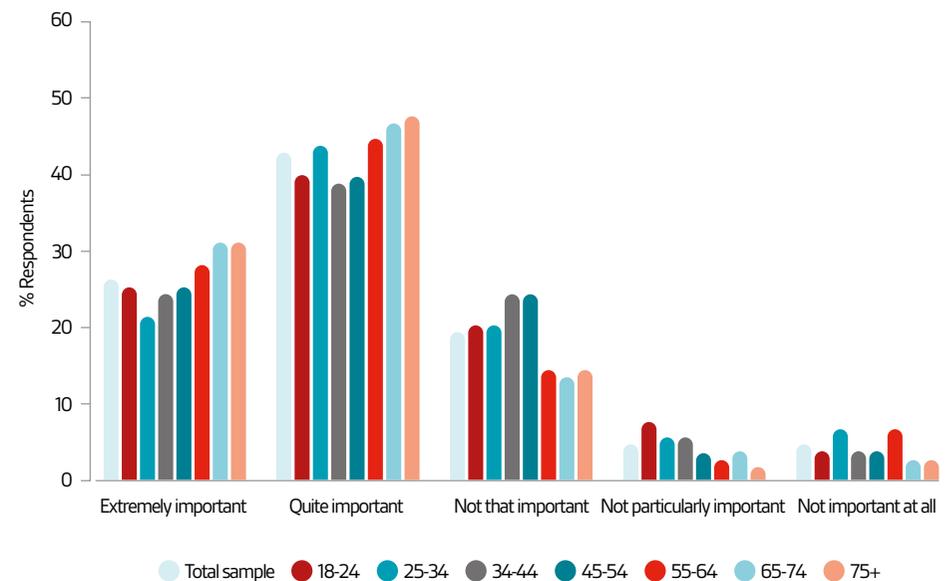
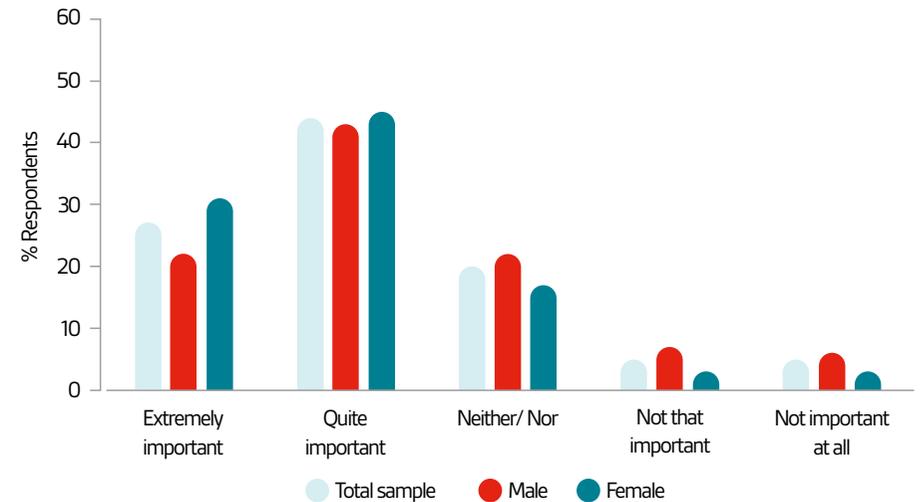
## Thinking about how the food you eat is farmed and produced, how important is this to you?

71% UK adults think the way their food is farmed or produced is important – of those, 27% say it is 'extremely important'. Only 10% UK adults don't believe this is an important issue. Women are more concerned about this issue than men – 76% women say it is important (vs 65% men) and of those, 31% say it is 'extremely important'. Chris Blythe comments: "The higher levels of concern amongst women may, again, be a reflection of their larger role as the 'household provider' that still persists in our society."

The way in which food is farmed and produced appears to become a more important issue as age increases. 81% of those aged 75+, 80% of 65–74 year olds and 75% of those aged 55–64 see this as an important issue, compared to just 67% of 18–34 year olds. The greater importance placed on this issue by older people could be because they are focusing more upon ways to pro-actively preserve their bodies, or it could be a greater suspicion about modern farming methods amongst this older generation.

Chris observes: "As with nutritional indicators, there are only a very small number of UK adults who say they don't think the way their food is farmed and produced is important – again, this probably reflects the greater emphasis that has been placed on the issue in recent years, particularly within the media (Hugh Fearnley-Whittingstall for example).

**"More recent coverage of the potential dangers of chlorinated chicken and GM-fed meat that has emerged around post-Brexit trade deals may also be influencing this."**





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## Chapter 3: The school food view

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The role of education  
in securing a  
healthy future.



Stephanie Slater,  
founder and CEO of  
School Food Matters

In 2007, Stephanie Slater set up the charity School Food Matters, which works to engage parents and head teachers about the quality and delivery of school meals. In 2012 she was invited to join the School Food Plan's expert panel, tasked by the Department for Education to help head teachers improve school food.

We all remember Jamie Oliver's high-profile school dinners campaign in 2005. Two years after this, and perplexed by the unappealing and quite often unidentifiable school food offered to my two children, I started School Food Matters. I'm happy to say things have changed significantly since then.

Jamie putting Turkey Twizzlers in the spotlight led to the introduction of the school food standards and the work continued in 2013 with the publication of the School Food Plan. The three most important things to come out of the Plan were:

-  food education became a compulsory part of the National Curriculum
-  universal infant free school meals were introduced
-  new food-based standards became mandatory

The idea behind the School Food Standards was to make them easy for school cooks and caterers to understand so they could be creative within an agreed nutrition framework. I think they did a very good job of that, but we know they need to be reviewed.

The Childhood Obesity Plan, which aims to significantly reduce childhood obesity by supporting healthier choices, has committed to reviewing School Food Standards in line with the SACN (Scientific Advisory Committee on Nutrition) report on sugar and fibre. The review was scheduled to happen before the pandemic hit and will now probably take place in 2022.

My hope is this review will result in bold action on school food as a way to tackle childhood obesity but it's not just the nutritional content of school food that needs to be reviewed, it's the way the standards are implemented.



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Whilst the standards are mandatory, there is currently no requirement or incentive for schools to report on compliance. Additionally, while food education has been a compulsory part of the National Curriculum since 2014, we know that delivery is patchy.

The National Curriculum describes food education as an 'entitlement', meaning every child has the right to learn about food from age 4 to 14. It talks about instilling a love of food and a joy of cooking.

Generally speaking, primary schools seem to be doing a better job despite having fewer resources and facilities, while secondary schools often have fully equipped food rooms, but no food teacher.

In 2016 the Childhood Obesity Plan commissioned Ofsted to do a review of what was happening around food in schools to support children's healthy weight. In its study of 60 schools it was noted very little food education was happening, and that is still the case. Clearly there is room for improvement.

Of course, the pandemic has put many things temporarily on the back burner, but it has also exposed further areas where standards need to be raised.

The biggest thing that we found during the school closures is that families in need of support aren't always eligible for free school meals – up to 1-in-4 families based on our own Covid response programme Breakfast Boxes. I firmly believe the threshold is set too low, or the wrong measures are being used, to identify families who need support.

This issue has also been identified in the National Food Strategy (NFS) part one which recommends that every family in receipt of Universal Credit should get a free school meal. We hope that Part 2 of the strategy, due for publication in July will make further recommendations to ensure that no child misses out.

In terms of the emergency provision of school meals during school closures, much has been posted online about substandard food parcels. Whilst there is no doubt some caterers' offerings were paltry, and rightly highlighted by the twitter storm that erupted when a parent posted a photograph of a meagre food parcel, we do have to give the Department for Education some credit. Lobbied by SFM and other charities, the department recognised that the national voucher scheme, introduced during the first lockdown, did not serve all families, particularly those in rural areas without access to the big supermarkets. During the second round of school closures in January, a flexible offer was put in place, allowing schools could choose the best solution for their communities; vouchers, food parcels or cash payments.

#### Why does all this matter?

It is well documented that children will perform better at school if they eat well, but we also have lots of anecdotal evidence that when children are educated about healthy eating it can have a positive impact on healthy weight and go some way to addressing health inequalities. There needs to be some rigorous study around this, and it will be one of the focuses of our five-year Healthy Zones programme with Impact on Urban Health, a part of Guy's and St Thomas' Charity (GSTC).

There are lots of things we are getting right. There are many school cooks, chefs and catering teams across the country doing brilliant work. The quality of school food has improved massively since I started School Food Matters.

But whilst there are some schools doing brilliantly, others are lagging behind, and I want to see every child enjoying a nutritious school meal. One area that needs some attention is funding for school meals, which at the moment is too complicated. That's why we're calling on government to conduct a comprehensive review of school food funding and policy. We need greater transparency so that schools, local authorities and caterers can together make sure that every pound invested in school food results in good nutrition, so that every child at school is well nourished and ready to learn.

! Those in the  
**North & Scotland**  
are less confident about  
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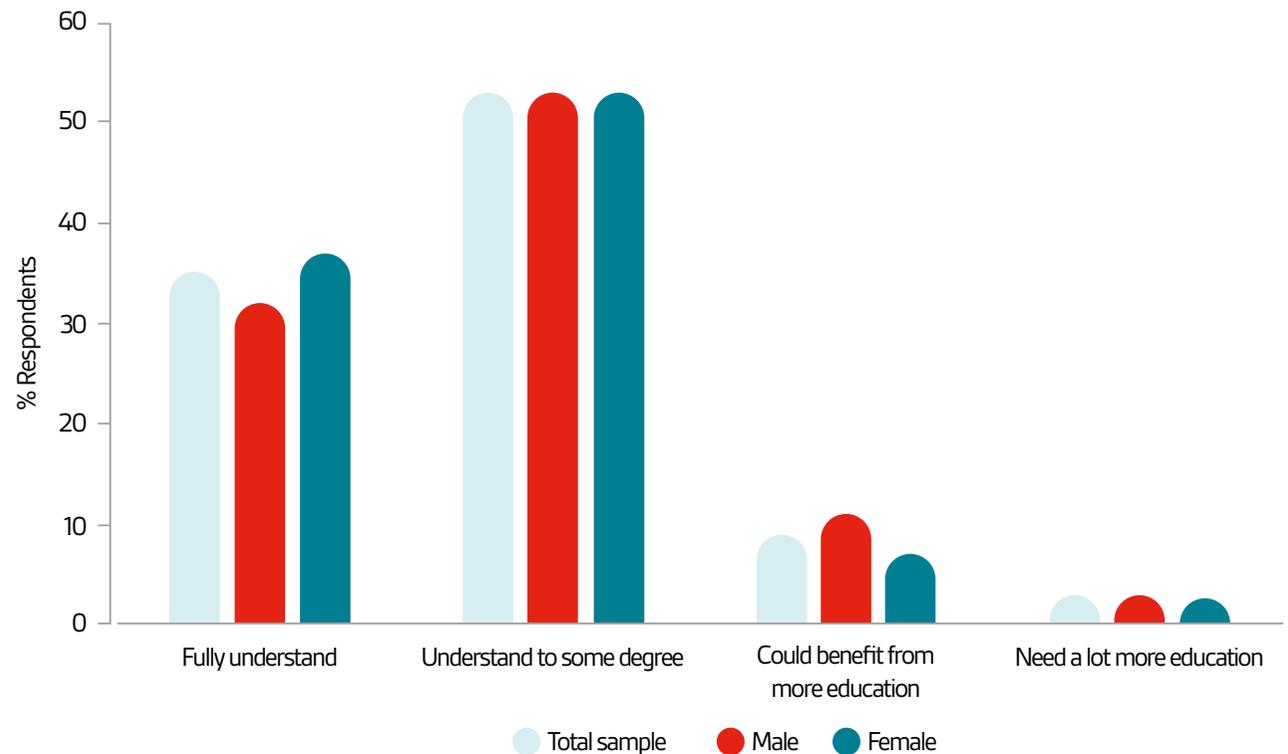


## To what extent do you believe you understand which foods are important for a balanced, nutritious diet?

Just over a third of UK adults (35%) believe they 'fully understand' what constitutes a balanced, nutritious diet – so 65% could still benefit from some further education on this. However, the vast majority (88%) believe that they understand, at least to some degree, what makes for a balanced diet – only 3% think they need 'a lot more education'.

Those aged 18-24 are most confident that they 'fully understand' what constitutes a balanced diet, whilst those aged 75+ are less sure.

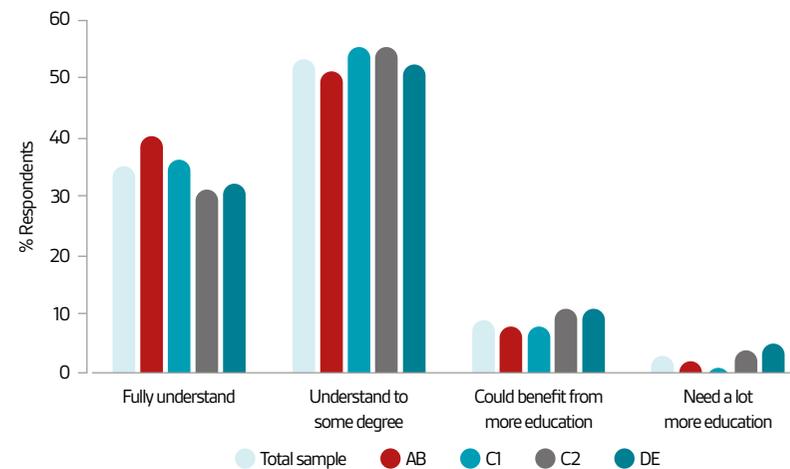
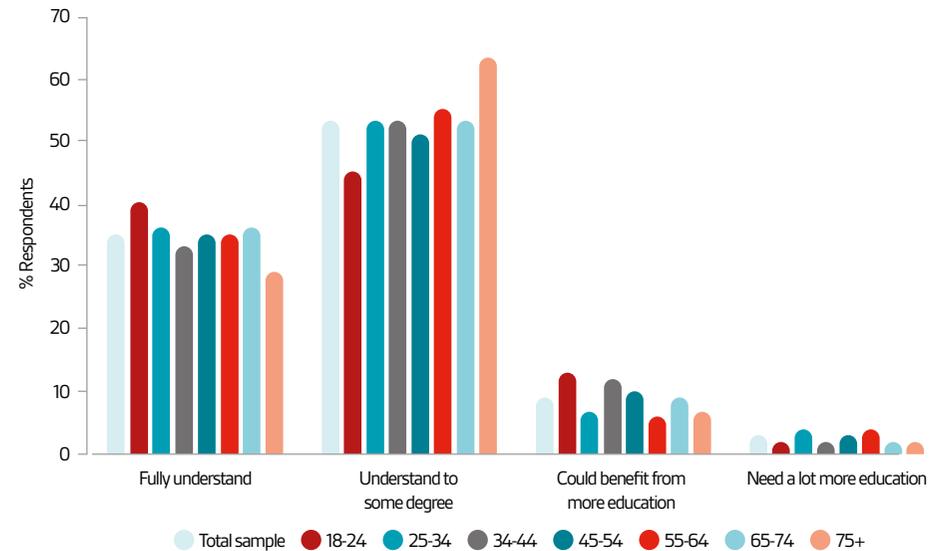
When looking at understanding by social classification, AB's are the most confident they 'Fully Understand' what constitutes a balanced, nutritious diet, whilst C2DE's are more likely to believe that they could benefit from more education on this matter. However, even amongst C2DE's, only around 15% believe more education would help them – the vast majority feel they understand this issue, at least to some degree.



Chris Blythe find it interesting that the presence of children in the household, and the age of those children appears to make very little difference to the belief that someone understands what constitutes a balanced, nutritious diet.

He adds: "It is difficult to judge whether these figures indicate that the UK population has a sound, proper understanding of what makes up a balanced, nutritious diet, or whether there is actually a large amount of complacency and misunderstanding.

**"Certainly, the fact that most are claiming to understand "to some degree" does imply there is still a need to keep educating – and re-enforces the value of simple, well-presented nutritional indicators such as the 'traffic lights' labelling system."**



## Chapter 4: The ethical view

# The fight against food waste.



**Jo Dyson,**  
Former Head of Food,  
FareShare

Jo Dyson has worked for several food retailers in buying, supply chain and logistics, and acted as a consultant to industry and government. Her team at FareShare works across the whole food supply chain, from farmers and producers through to distributors, retailers and foodservice companies, to source food for thousands of charities.

Every year the food industry wastes 3.6 million tonnes of food. More than 2 million tonnes of this - or around 4.7 billion meals - is good to eat and could be redistributed.

Across the entire UK supply chain, the equivalent of 27m tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> is emitted from food surplus and waste, which is more than the national emissions of Sri Lanka. It's clear that for the benefit of both society and the environment the food industry has a responsibility to address how surplus food is disposed of.

There is existing guidance on what to do with food waste, as set out in the food waste hierarchy, which prioritises edible waste going to humans. The government is due to launch its consultation on mandatory food waste reporting and has announced intentions to consult on introducing legal powers to establish food waste targets and surplus food redistribution obligations.

However public pressure and retailer commitments, which then trickle down the supply chain, are ahead of this in some places already. Food waste from people's houses and at farm level are the biggest sources of food waste, which largely sit outside this proposed legislation.

In theory, most edible surplus food (which is suitable for human consumption) can be redistributed, but currently there is no country in the world achieving this. Globally, we are working to achieve sustainable development goal (SDG) 12.3, which is that by 2030, global food waste at retail and consumer levels will be halved per capita, and food losses along production and supply chains reduced, including post-harvest losses.

To this end, there is a lot more that can be done to increase the amount of food redistributed and reduce the amount wasted.

One approach to avoid unnecessary food waste is to re-evaluate the use of best before dates. WRAP, in conjunction with the Food Standards Agency (FSA), has issued comprehensive guidance on Best before dates and is encouraging removal from more categories.

However there is considerable public education required as we encounter a fair degree of resistance from some charities and community groups who are not prepared to take food beyond its Best before date due to concerns over food safety and quality.

If dates are removed there will be a potential return to the closed date systems which preceded best before. This was essentially a code that consisted of a series of letters and/or numbers applied by manufacturers to identify the date and time of production. Such coding is required to enable stock rotation and for brands to ensure their product is offered for sale in the best condition, but there was public negativity towards closed dates which impacted trust in the industry, so best before dates were seen as more acceptable.

Yet confusion around 'use by' and 'best before' labelling is undoubtedly leading to unnecessary food waste, so it's important to find a middle ground where transparency meets common sense.

When it comes to increasing the amount of surplus food that is re-distributed, a multi-pronged approach is required. Firstly, we need to continue to raise awareness of the benefits to industry of surplus

redistribution and find ways to make it cost neutral for more food manufacturers and producers to commit to redistributing more surplus.

Secondly, there needs to be more focus on last-mile supermarket and foodservice food, which is some of the most difficult to redistribute due to its short shelf-life.

Thirdly, significant volumes of surplus exist on farms due to variable crop yields and product specification variances. This product can be costly to access so it is more economic to leave it to rot in fields or plough back into the ground. Financial incentives are needed to encourage farmers to save this product from going to waste and make it available for redistribution.

The good news is businesses are increasingly recognising the importance of food waste reduction and redistribution as part of their CSR policy.

Most other organisations that represent the industry, including The Food and Drink Federation (FDF), the British Retail Consortium (BRC) and the Institute of Grocery Distributors (IGD), are working with their members to meet the WRAP Courtauld 2025 and SDG 12.3 food waste reduction targets. More and more companies have signed up to the WRAP Food Waste Reduction Roadmap and there is an increasing consumer demand for more environmentally conscious business practices.



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We have also seen a significant number of businesses approach us motivated by the social benefits that come from redistributing food. They would much rather see surplus food go to our network of charities and the people who need it, than wasted or sent to other industrial processes.

Of course, nothing has taught us more about the vital role of food redistribution than the pandemic. We saw an immediate increase in demand as businesses shut down overnight and schools closed, leaving considerable gaps in food provision. This especially impacted families reliant on free school meals and in employment with zero hours contracts.

The food industry was very quick to respond; redistributing the considerable volumes of surplus which arose because of the overnight foodservice closure, then donating huge amounts of non-surplus food to meet the continuing need. In addition, at FareShare we strengthened our partnership working with other charities, for example the British Red Cross and the Trussell Trust to maximise redistribution efficiencies.

The experience has shown us that the food industry, working together with the redistribution sector, is agile and able to respond to need quickly.

In some parts of the country the government and local authority response was not as quick, but as the crisis developed government did step in to provide funding to purchase food for redistribution, and we were pleased to see the government extend the Holiday Activity and Food Programme and increase the value of healthy start vouchers. In addition to this we would also like to see an

expansion of Free School Meals to all under-16s where a parent or guardian is in receipt of Universal Credit or equivalent benefit.

But the issue of food poverty is not one that will disappear once the pandemic ends.

**The Trussell Trust recently published a report on the drivers of hunger which identified three reasons people use food banks, putting emphasis on the first:**

-  Not having sufficient income from the social security safety net
-  Ill-health or adverse life experiences
-  Lack of informal and/or formal support

The first is a political question, while the second two are complex social issues that have a multitude of causes and there is no easy fix.

Equally challenging is how we improve diets in the UK. The government has worked collaboratively and successfully with the food industry to reformulate foods, notably salt levels in foods and to a lesser degree to reduce sugar. It has introduced fiscal measures which have led to reduced consumption of high sugar drinks. There is a ban on promotion of food and drinks that are high in fat, salt or sugar pre the watershed and most supermarkets no longer display confectionery at the checkouts and many supermarkets have striven to make fruit and veg much more affordable.



None of this has reduced obesity rates in the UK. Food safety standards in this country are arguably the highest in the world, yet people's diets in the UK are amongst the worst in the world. As a result, the UK has an obesity crisis which has a knock-on effect on life outcomes for many, as well as the cost to the NHS, economy, mental health and well-being.

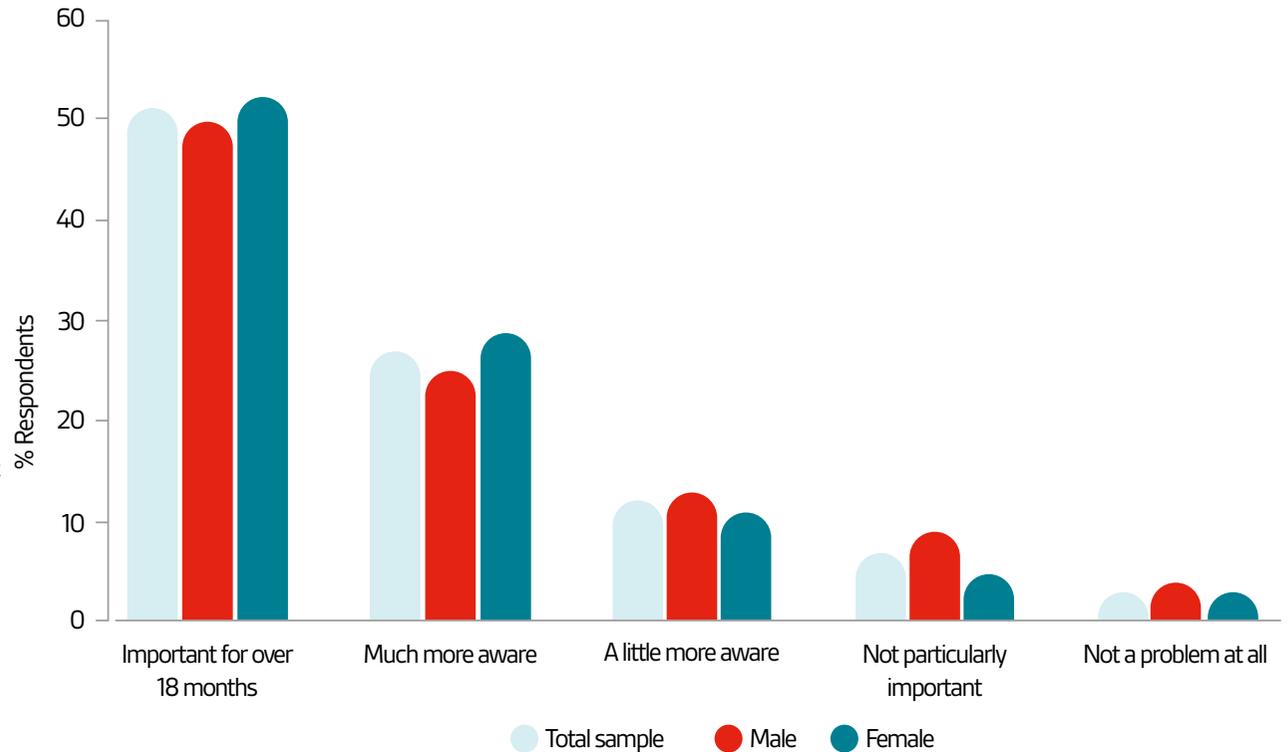
The food industry should aim to make more progress in food reformulation, which will in turn mean more nutritious surplus food. Additionally, much can be done to avoid the obesogenic environments which proliferate in high streets and near schools: access to cheap calorie dense foods has increased significantly over the past 30 years with little effective action to educate the public.

Setting a nutritional standard for these foods may have a small impact, but a more fundamental shift is needed to really improve the nation's health.

## Which of these statements about food waste best applies to you?

- I have believed that food waste is an important issue for society for over 18 months
- The past 18 months have made me much more aware that food waste is an important issue for our society
- The past 18 months have made me a little more aware that food waste is an important issue for our society
- I don't feel that food waste is a particularly important issue for our society
- I don't think that food waste is a problem at all in the UK

Food waste was considered to be an important issue before the pandemic by just over half (51%) of all UK adults. A further 39% of UK adults have become more aware of the problem of food waste during the pandemic – only 10% don't think food waste is a problem.

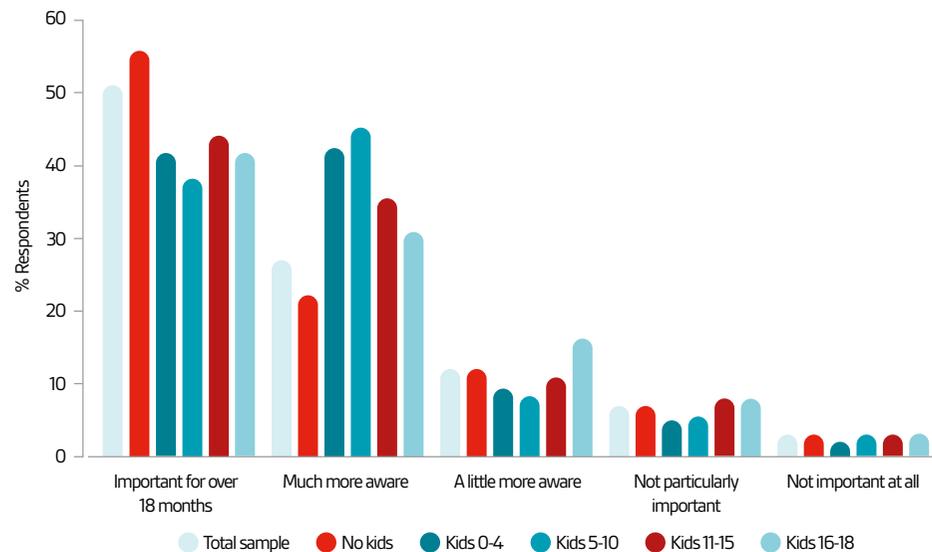
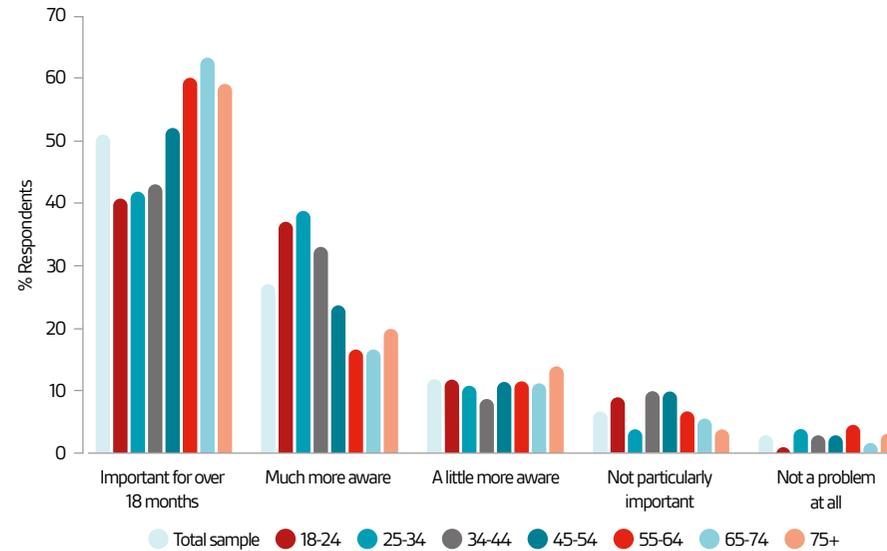


Those aged 55+ are significantly more likely to have viewed food waste as a problem for over 18 months, while those aged 18-44 are most likely to have been alerted to the problem of food waste during the pandemic.

Adults without children are much more likely to have considered food waste to be an important issue for more than 18 months – 56% say this is the case. Those with children aged under 10 are the most likely group to say they have become much more aware of the problem of food waste during the past 18 months. Those with children of primary school age may well have been most directly exposed to this issue, explaining why their perception of food waste as an important issue to address has been greater than that of other age groups.

Chris Blythe comments: “The campaign to address the problem of food waste had begun well before the pandemic struck, with several supermarkets and The Grocer pre-eminent. Whilst there may be some over-claiming by those who say it has been on their radar for more than 18 months, it does appear to have been recognised by many UK adults as a problem for some time.

**“However, the combination of the focus on the need to keep foodbank supplies, and on the provision of free school meals (the Marcus Rashford effect) may also be contributing to the extended awareness of the food waste issue over the past 18 months.”**



# Conclusion.

In new markets and innovative areas of work, standards are an essential tool to assist the development of key infrastructure, helping disseminate knowledge and provide credibility.

Standards could be used to:

- establish consumer trust, confidence and acceptance of new crops, methods, products, and markets, by providing assurance around the quality, safety and public benefits of solutions developed. For example, using food safety management standards such as BS EN ISO 22000.
- support innovation management, alternative business models and emerging supply chains\*
- support the current legal infrastructure and help statutory bodies incorporate innovation into their existing regulatory frameworks
- provide UK leadership in an international market - accessing global solutions more readily and providing common standards that allow the UK to trade with other countries\*\*

- support the agri-food sector and its stakeholders in its objectives to improve the environment – recognising links between sustainability, carbon reduction and improved population health\*\*\*

Standards exist or are being developed to address some of the concerns raised in this report, including standards to help organisations move towards net zero. New standards work is also underway internationally on food loss and food waste, and on developments in smart farming.



For information about any of these initiatives, please contact [sara.walton@bsigroup.com](mailto:sara.walton@bsigroup.com).

\* The BSI/Innovate UK report on ways forward for industrial biotechnology contains information on agri-tech - [www.bsigroup.com/en-GB/industries-and-sectors/manufacturing-and-processing/industrial-biotechnology-roadmap](http://www.bsigroup.com/en-GB/industries-and-sectors/manufacturing-and-processing/industrial-biotechnology-roadmap)

\*\*Visit [www.bsigroup.com/en-GB/our-services/international-projects](http://www.bsigroup.com/en-GB/our-services/international-projects) for information about other collaborative work undertaken by the International Projects team.

\*\*\* BSI already has standards in place to support carbon reduction, energy management, soil ality, biodiversity, etc– see [www.bsigroup.com/en-GB/standards](http://www.bsigroup.com/en-GB/standards) and [www.bsigroup.com/en-GB/topics/sustainable-resilience/net-zero](http://www.bsigroup.com/en-GB/topics/sustainable-resilience/net-zero) for more information.

# Research methodology.

The quantitative research in this report was carried out by Chris Blythe, owner of The Brand Nursery. Chris has worked within the brand communications industry for more than twenty years. His key skills are in brand strategy formulation, research analysis and interpretation.

The research for this report was conducted through the placing of selected questions on a UK Omnibus study conducted via an online questionnaire between 11-13 June 2021 amongst a representative sample of 2009 UK adults aged 18+.

Demographic information was collected for each respondent to enable cross-tabulation of answers by each demographic sub-group.

## The questions asked were:

-  How important is clearly stated nutritional information on food packaging (like the 'traffic light' indicators and ingredient listings) to you?
-  Which of these statements about food waste best applies to you?
-  To what extent do you believe you understand which foods are important for a balanced, nutritious diet?
-  To what extent are you concerned about how the food you eat is farmed and produced?

## Get in touch

At BSI we are always interested in exploring the potential need for standards in the food and agriculture sector, and are currently engaged in some interesting conversations about farm robots and other emerging areas such as hemp, insect protein, natural fortification of crops and the circular economy. If you would like to speak to anyone about the issues and challenges you are facing, even if you think there is no necessity for standardisation at the moment, please don't get hesitate to get in touch.

**Email:** [sara.walton@bsigroup.com](mailto:sara.walton@bsigroup.com)

## About BSI

BSI is the UK's national standards body (NSB) - the first national standards body to be created. We represent UK economic and social interests across all European and international standards organisations and in the development of information solutions for British organisations of all sizes and sectors.

Our role is to help improve the quality and safety of products, services and systems by enabling the creation of standards and encouraging their use.

We publish more than 3,100 standards annually, underpinned by a collaborative approach, engaging with experts, government bodies, trade associations, organizations of all sizes, and consumers, to develop standards which reflect best practice and clarity around common outcomes.



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