Summary

This report sets out a new framework proposed by the Government for food policy to ensure that it is equipped to play a part in the continuing transformation of the UK’s food system.

The aims of the report are:

- To review the main trends in food production and consumption in the UK;
- To analyse the implications of those trends for the economy, society and the environment;
- To assess the robustness of the current policy framework for food; and
- To determine what the objectives of future food strategy should be and the measures needed to achieve them.

The report highlights future challenges facing the food system which include:

**Economics and equity**
- Increases in global commodity prices;
- Changes in the world animal feed markets and rules importing genetically modified crops; and
- Elimination of household food waste.

**Health**
- It is estimated 70,000 premature deaths in the UK each year could be preventable if diets matched nutritional guidelines;
- Most consumers are still not eating ‘5 A Day’ and consume more saturated fat, salt and added sugar than is good for their health;
- The dietary health of those less able to care for themselves is a real concern; and
- Nearly a quarter of adults and 10% of children are classed as obese.

**Safety**
- Continuing vigilance is needed to minimise contamination as the safety of food underpins consumer confidence and cannot be taken for granted.

**Environment**
- The food chain has huge environmental impacts (around 18% of UK greenhouse gas emissions are related to food production and consumption);
- England needs a packaging waste management system; and
- The food chain needs to reduce its dependence on energy, water and other resources, to reduce its exposure to future increases in resource prices.

The Government’s vision for the food system is one that is more sustainable – economically, socially and environmentally – from production to consumption.

The key actions agreed by the report:

- Bringing together integrated information and advice for consumers on the impacts of food on health and the environment.
- To make healthy food choices easier out of the home.
- To promote new social norms that facilitate behavioural and cultural change in relation to food issues using community groups, voluntary organisations and social enterprises.
- To renew the focus of the 5 A Day campaign to target groups where intake remains low; expanding the range of products that can count towards the target and improving the clarity of the message.
- Introduction of a ‘Healthier Food Mark,’ linked to standards for food served in the public sector.
- Ensure a well-functioning and competitive market to provide fair prices to consumers and reduce distortions in the agricultural trade, which would also improve global food security.
- Work with international agencies to redouble the efforts to raise agricultural productivity; to address the challenges posed by increases in global food prices.
- Maintaining global food security while responding to climate change.

The report concludes that although the framework attempts to ensure the Government is equipped to play its part in the changing food system, it is the decisions of consumers and industry, and the values and preferences of society at large that will determine how fast and how far the process moves. The proposed food policy framework will try to ensure a collective effort is made to build a thriving food system that produces safe, low—impact food and healthy diets.
Delivering the Government’s vision

This report has set out a vision and strategic policy objectives to underpin future policy on food and a series of measures to realise them.

The Government has accepted all of the recommendations made in this report and will take them forward as government policy. The Prime Minister has asked the Cabinet Office to establish and support a Food Strategy Task Force to monitor ongoing developments in the food system and food markets, to drive forward implementation of all the measures and to publish regular reports on progress.

New delivery arrangements have been made to co-ordinate cross-government work to address food policy as a priority, so that the Government is able to anticipate future challenges and be able to respond promptly and coherently as they arise:

**A Food Strategy Task Force** will help ensure effective cross-government work to address the issues raised in this report. The Task Force will:
- Oversee the Government’s medium-term response to the developments in international food markets;
- drive forward the delivery of measures announced in this report;
- join up food policy in different government departments; and
- ensure that common positions on food policy are reached and properly disseminated.

The work of the Task Force will be transparent, with updates and reports published on an annual basis. Task Force sub-groups, constituted on a cross-Whitehall basis, will take forward individual key actions from this report and progress will be reported.

**The performance management framework** will improve food policy outcomes by ensuring that efforts are harnessed across Whitehall towards achieving the Government’s top priorities, outlined in 30 Public Service Agreements.

**A joint research strategy** will be put in place in a cross-departmental fashion, to ensure closer coordination of food-related research to help ensure that policy is supported by the best evidence. The strategy will define a ‘virtual’ research programme that cuts across the work of individual departments.

**Public reports** will be released in summer 2009 and summer 2010 when the Task Force reports to the Prime Minister on the progress made in implementing the actions identified in this report.

**A joint statement by the Department of Health (DH) and the Food Standards Agency (FSA)** will clarify the roles and responsibilities for the Healthy Food Code of Good Practice. This will clarify, for stakeholders, which institution leads on particular areas of work and help ensure that communication between departments and between departments and stakeholders works effectively on all food-related issues.

Key nutrition and food-related action points to be taken from the report:
- The FSA will expand its current advice to consumers on nutrition, food and sustainability and food safety.
- The FSA will launch a new programme focused on food eaten out of the home, working with consumers and food businesses.
- The Government, together with industry, will develop a ‘whole food chain approach’ to identify the most important and high-risk food safety hazards.
- The DH will target messages aimed at increasing fruit and vegetable consumption at specific ‘low intake’ groups.
- The Government’s Chief Scientific Adviser will commission a major new Foresight project to examine future global food systems.
- More nutritious, environmentally sustainable food will be delivered through a new ‘Healthier Food Mark’, which will be linked to standards for food served in the public sector.
- The Government will put in place a cross-departmental strategy to ensure coordination of research and development relating to safe, low-impact food and a healthy diet.
- The Food Strategy Task Force will help ensure effective cross-government work to address and deliver the measures outlined in this report and will report to the Prime Minister on its progress and on key developments in summer 2009 and summer 2010.
• The Government will work with the Waste & Resources Action Programme (WRAP) and the food industry to secure a voluntary agreement that will cut the amount of food wasted in the supply chain and in the home.
• The DH and FSA will publish a joint statement clarifying the roles and responsibilities for the Healthy Food Code of Good Practice.