

# Local Food Procurement in the South West

## Public Sector Declaration of Intent

1. This Declaration has been prepared by partners in [Heart of the South West/Great South West] in response to the UK Government's Food Strategy published by Defra (June 2022) and research published by the University of Exeter into Public Procurement of Food in the South West (March 2022).
2. We will endeavour to source, and guide our local providers to source, more seasonally and domestically available locally produced food, aiming for at least 50% of all food spend to be procured from growers/ producers/ manufacturers within the South West local region\* by 2028 and 75% from the UK].
3. We recognise that by more local sourcing we will contribute positively to the climate change emergency, and net zero objectives. Moreover, improving food security and resilience in supply chains supports our SMEs and local economy, contributes towards rural levelling up and underpins healthy eating in our communities.
4. We will seek to review our procurement policies and build pre-market engagement into our process to streamline it to enable local food producers and processors to supply into our organisation. We will encourage others related to our food sourcing supply chain, both direct and indirect, to do the same.
5. Wherever possible we will work with partners and funders to seek opportunity to champion and cascade best practice, supporting new ideas, training, knowledge and innovation.
6. We will publicly report on our progress against these objectives through existing corporate reporting arrangements to enable the impact of this Declaration to be monitored.

We encourage every public sector organisation, and those who supply them, to call on the Government to work with us to deliver this Declaration. Through collective action, innovation and influence we will be able to create a mutually supportive regional food supply chain economy that maintains high standards of people and animal welfare, delivering local, sustainable food in the public sector across the South West region.

\* Locally produced food is defined as ingredients produced/grown/caught within the same region as it is consumed, or a neighbouring county (for counties at regional boundaries), as set out in Defra's consultation on the Public Sector Food and Catering Policy. Multi-ingredient foods may qualify as 'locally produced' if at least 50% quantity (Kg or L) of their ingredients are produced/grown/caught in the local region.

## Context

Domestic food production is a vital contributor to national resilience and food security, it plays a critical role in meeting our carbon and environmental targets, and it reduces the offshoring of food production to countries that do not meet our high environmental and animal welfare standards. The food and drink industry also has an important role to play in levelling up as it is the UK's largest manufacturing industry (bigger than the aerospace and automotive industries combined), creates over £120 billion of value for the economy every year and employs over 4 million people.

Nationally, it has been estimated that public sector organisations spent £2.4 billion annually on food products in 2014. While big players dominate some sectors, a large proportion are smaller businesses. In the food and drink manufacturing sector (excluding beverages) for instance, 96% of business are SMEs and account for 25% of employment and total turnover of the sector. In the South West, many agricultural enterprises are small family farms that contribute to the rural economy, local communities and to landscape quality.

The UK Food Security report published by the government (December 2021) concluded there is a high degree of food security in the UK, with 60% of the value of all food we need being domestically produced, rising to 74% of food which we can grow or rear in the UK. Of the 9.2 million hectares of farmland in England, we have some of the best performing farms in the world such that 57% of agricultural output comes from just 33% of the farmed land area. We produce more lamb and liquid milk than we consume and, in recent years, our production in sectors like poultry and soft fruit has increased with further sustainable growth opportunities such as horticulture and seafood.

The government's Food Strategy (June 2022) aims for farmers to broadly maintain the current level of food we produce domestically whilst also aspiring for at least 50% of public sector spend on food to be on food produced locally or certified to higher environmental production standards. They have committed to support the sector to work with more small and local suppliers and to improve accountability by requiring public organisations to report on the food they buy, serve and waste. The government believes this could be an exemplar for wider society, delivering positive health, animal welfare, environmental and socio-economic impacts.

The University of Exeter's research into Public Procurement of Food in the South West (March 2022) showed a growing interest among all stakeholders regarding the opportunities and benefits of shortened supply chains, including increasing competitiveness and productivity. Building on this research and the government's consultation during the summer on the Public Sector Food and Catering Policy, South West public sector organisations have made this declaration.