

Institute of Food Science and Technology (IFST) Response to the UK Government Food Strategy for England 2025

The Institute of Food Science and Technology (IFST), the UK's leading professional body for those involved in all aspects of food science and technology, food manufacturing, and related disciplines welcomes the publication of the UK Government's Food Strategy for England.

We commend the Government's ambition in setting out a holistic and long-term framework to ensure a healthier, more sustainable, and more resilient food system, and are pleased to see a clear emphasis on innovation, workforce development, and public engagement.

Supporting Healthier and More Affordable Food

We strongly support the strategy's aims to improve access to safe, nutritious, and affordable food for all. Food scientists and technologists are critical to achieving these goals, playing a central role in reformulating products to improve nutrition profiles, reduce food waste, and enhance safety. As the strategy moves towards implementation, we urge close collaboration with industry experts and professional bodies to ensure that evidence-based, science-led solutions underpin policy and practice. The industry-research-policy interface will be crucial to ensuring the successful implementation of improved access to safe, nutritious, and affordable food for all.

Enabling Good Growth

IFST welcomes the Government's recognition of the food sector's economic and societal value. We particularly support the focus on innovation and productivity as essential levers for sustainable growth. From precision fermentation to AI-driven supply chain optimisation, applied science is already transforming how we produce and deliver food. We encourage ongoing investment in R&D and stronger links between academia, industry, and government to maintain the UK's global leadership in this space.

We are also pleased to see a commitment to developing a skilled, diverse workforce across the country. IFST is proud to lead initiatives such as our Student Launchpads, Mentorship Programme, and National Food Science and Technology Week, all designed to attract and retain the next generation of talent. Continued investment in STEM education and vocational training will be critical to delivering on this vision. We urge the Government to recognise and effectively support the vital role of universities in developing a pipeline of skilled workers for the food industry.

Securing Sustainable and Resilient Supply

The Strategy rightly highlights the importance of environmental sustainability, animal welfare, and resilience. It is essential that the UK food system is equipped to anticipate, adapt to, and recover from disruptions. The role of food science & technology in improving shelf-life, optimising logistics, and minimising waste cannot be overstated.

We welcome the focus on high British standards in trade and support the expansion of export opportunities for innovative and sustainable UK food products. Ensuring that policy is aligned with international best practice and scientific consensus will help ensure competitiveness while upholding integrity and trust in the food system.

Celebrating Vibrant Food Cultures

We applaud the strategy's recognition of the cultural importance of food. Celebrating regional and local food cultures whilst cherishing and celebrating the culturally diverse nature of UK cuisine fosters pride, supports local economies, and enhances community resilience. Crucially, empowering people with the knowledge and skills to engage with food will support their overall wellbeing and long-term health outcomes. This can be achieved through education, cooking, and understanding supply chains. This will build a stronger, more confident consumer base.

Implementation of the Strategy

As the Government moves forward, the real test of this strategy will lie not in its intentions, but in its delivery. Ambition alone is not enough. What is now urgently required is a clear, actionable plan for implementation across every element of the strategy. This plan must be underpinned by evidence-based science, accountability, and cross-sector collaboration.

We cannot afford to let this become another well-meaning policy document that fails to translate into tangible outcomes. The time for bold words has passed; we now need bold action.

IFST stands ready to contribute its scientific expertise, professional insight, and convening power to support effective delivery. We urge the Government to work closely with those who understand the complexity of the food system: its challenges, opportunities, and the tools required to make meaningful progress. The success of this strategy must ultimately be judged by its impact on people's lives, the environment, and the long-term resilience of the UK food system.