

# Northern Ireland Food Strategy Framework



## Food at the Heart of our Society - A Prospectus for Change *Public Consultation Document* 2021

*Sustainability at the heart of a living, working, active landscape valued by everyone.*



Department of  
**Agriculture, Environment  
and Rural Affairs**

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## Glossary

**Agri-food Single Supply Chain** - The movement of agricultural goods from production level to final consumer - recognising the strategic interdependence of agricultural production, food processing, retail, distribution and consumption.

**Circular Economy** - A circular economy is based on the principles of designing out waste and pollution, keeping products and materials in use, and regenerating natural systems. ([ellenmacarthurfoundation.org](http://ellenmacarthurfoundation.org)).

**Education** - For the purpose of this consultation, education means in its broadest sense and includes early years, childcare, schools, youth settings and adults.

**Food Citizenship** - Shared belief that people want to and can shape the food system for the better, given the right conditions.

**Food Culture** - The attitudes, beliefs and practices that surround the production and consumption of food.

**Food Poverty** - The inability to have an adequate and nutritious diet due to issues of affordability and access to food, with related impacts on health, culture and social participation being felt.

**Food System** - The elements and activities that are involved in feeding a population - the production, processing, packaging, distribution marketing, consumption and disposal of food.

**Food Security** - When all people, at all times, have physical and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food.

**One Health** - The collaborative efforts of multiple disciplines working locally, nationally, and globally, to attain optimal health for people, animals and our environment.

**Sustainability** - Meeting the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs. Sustainability has three components: economic, environmental, and social.

**Sustainable Food System** - A food system that:

- is profitable (economic sustainability);
- is beneficial for society (social sustainability); and
- has a positive or neutral impact on the natural environment (environmental sustainability).

**Sustainable Diets** - Are protective and respectful of biodiversity and ecosystems, culturally acceptable, accessible, economically fair and affordable; nutritionally adequate, safe and healthy, while optimising natural and human resources.

**Transparency in Supply Chains** - For the purposes of this consultation document, transparency in supply chains includes the requirements on relevant businesses to report on their progress in relation to identifying and addressing modern slavery risks in both their operation and in supply chains.



## 1. Preface

The Covid-19 pandemic, EU Exit and climate change challenges are making people think and talk about food as never before. Food contributes to our regional economic prosperity and can help to address many of our most significant societal challenges. From obesity, food poverty and waste to climate change and biodiversity loss, the food we produce and eat is a major factor in some of the greatest problems facing Northern Ireland. It is also a vital part of the solutions.

There is growing international acceptance of the interconnectedness between food, health and the environment. There is also an expectation that a food system should ensure environmental, social and economic sustainability and a growing interest in the concept of sustainable healthy diets.

The proposed Northern Ireland Food Strategy Framework recognises this interconnectedness. It uses an innovative food systems approach to set a long term vision, high level principles and areas for strategic focus, which will seek to optimise cross departmental working on food matters to deliver Programme for Government and departmental objectives.

The Framework proposes a new strategic approach for Northern Ireland. It will ensure coherence across food policies that affect all our lives and help to improve economic, environmental, health and social outcomes for Northern Ireland.

Food cuts across the policy responsibilities of a number of Northern Ireland Ministers, including Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs, Economy, Communities, Health, Education, Finance and Justice. Although led by DAERA, the proposed Food Strategy Framework has been developed in collaboration with the other NI Departments, the Food Standards Agency NI, Invest NI, and key stakeholders. The NI Food Strategy Framework will be a dedicated programme within the Executive's Green Growth Strategy and Delivery Framework, which includes an inter-Ministerial Group chaired by the DAERA Minister. Each Department will continue to have responsibility for its respective departmental policy areas.

The Northern Ireland Executive has agreed in principle to the cross-departmental approach for a Northern Ireland Food Strategy Framework under Green Growth.

Within DAERA, a 'sister' strategy on agriculture is dealing with increased productivity, environmental sustainability, improved resilience, and supply chain integration. The new agriculture strategy will be closely linked to the Food Framework through the supply chain pillar, and will sit alongside Food as a programme within the Green Growth Framework.

The purpose of this document is to consult on the vision, principles and goals of a Northern Ireland Food Strategy Framework.

In short, the Framework sets a shared long term direction of travel for food policy in Northern Ireland. Subject to the outcome of this consultation exercise, it is anticipated that an agreed Framework will be published in early 2022.

## Purpose of this consultation document

The purpose of this consultation is to seek views on a proposed Northern Ireland Food Strategy Framework.



## 2.0 Introduction

In the context of the Covid-19 pandemic, post EU Exit and climate change challenges, we have a unique opportunity to shape the future direction of our food system in ways that will benefit generations to come. This new approach on food is part of wider policy development that is underway in Northern Ireland on such strategic issues as Circular Economy, Climate, Environment, Farming, Health, Education, Skills and Science.

The rationale for government involvement in food is clear. Food is at the heart of a healthy society. During the COVID-19 pandemic we have been reminded about how much food shapes our sense of self, family, community and cultural identity. The COVID-19 crisis has brought into focus the importance of security of food supply. Looking towards COVID-19 recovery and the opportunities following EU Exit, together with changing consumer demands and new agricultural support mechanisms, we have an opportunity to transform our food system for future generations.

The social, health, environmental and economic components of our food system are interdependent but are often addressed in isolation. The relationship between how we produce and eat food and how we care for our health and our environment is complex

(Figure 1).

Figure 1: Relationship between how we produce and eat food and how we care for our health and our environment.



In summer 2019 in the absence of Ministers, it was agreed that DAERA would begin to explore with the Department for Economy, and other NI Departments and interested parties, the merits, scope and content of a possible Food Strategy Framework which would develop strategic alignment across NI Departments and help shape a future food system for Northern Ireland. A Food Strategy Framework will provide a structure within which government, industry, voluntary and community organisations can operate. It will allow autonomy with guidance on the direction of travel, but the flexibility to adapt to changing global trends, policy mandates, and marketplace needs.

A strategic Food Framework will help to focus collective efforts to address many of Northern Ireland's significant societal challenges. For example, providing opportunities to improve the environment, health and wellbeing, food poverty, as well as continuing to deliver regional economic prosperity and making a significant contribution to achieving many outcomes within the Programme for Government Draft Outcomes Framework.

The proposed Vision for the Framework is:

*“A transformed food system that protects natural resources for future generations, is economically and environmentally sustainable and provides safe, nourishing, accessible food to people, who make informed healthy choices.”*

DAERA, on behalf of the NI Executive, are developing a Green Growth Strategy and associated Climate Action Plan which will be the initial route map to climate action, green jobs and a clean environment. The timeline for the Green Growth Strategy will be 2050. The Food Strategy Framework will form part of the Green Growth Strategy and will also be long-term, but the timeline for its initial phase will be to 2030. This timeline recognises that food systems thinking is in its infancy worldwide, and there is limited experience of practical implementation to draw upon. The intention is to test whether this new approach can work successfully in Northern Ireland, and to make it better as we build experience.

A new Food Programme Board will oversee the implementation of the Northern Ireland Food Strategy Framework. The Board will be made up of representatives from all NI Departments that are responsible for aspects of food. The Board will engage with key stakeholders and will report to the inter-Ministerial Group within the governance arrangements for Green Growth. The Food Programme Board will develop a cycle of five year action plans. Review of the action plans by the Board will enable the monitoring of progress and the identification and prioritisation of future resources. This approach will ensure the Framework is dynamic and responsive to changing circumstances, while remaining loyal to the core vision of a sustainable food system.

Subject to the results of this consultation and Executive agreement, it is intended to publish an agreed cross Departmental Food Strategy Framework for Northern Ireland. Detailed implementation plans, including targets, indicators and metrics will follow. Action plans will be informed by the development of the Green Growth strategy and relevant recommendations from the Independent Strategic Review of the Agri-Food Sector (led by Sir Peter Kendall) currently taking place, together with any other related evidence and strategic frameworks under development. The 'Kendall' Review, which is expected to report in October 2021, is considering

the challenges facing both the food processing and primary agriculture industries in Northern Ireland and will make recommendations on how to take full advantage of new opportunities. We will also take account of developments elsewhere, such as the Defra-led National Food Strategy in England.

### 3.0 What is a food systems approach?

There have been previous Northern Ireland food strategies, each of which was developed in the context of the prevailing local and wider world circumstances. Each was time bound, with actionable tasks and, in general, a singular focus on economic growth.

The Food Strategy Framework signals a significant change in approach. Reflecting the different strategic drivers anticipated during the coming decades, the Framework seeks to build a food system that will address economic, environmental and social sustainability. It places a significant focus on the changing values and behaviours of consumers.

Currently in Northern Ireland we have many of the core components of a food strategy framework, but they function largely in isolation.

We therefore propose a Food Systems approach embracing all the elements and activities that are involved in feeding a population - the production, processing, packaging, distribution marketing, consumption and disposal of food (see Figure 2).

## The food system



Figure 2: The food system.

Key to an effective Northern Ireland Food Strategy Framework is a “whole of government approach” which will align policies that affect the food system. The aim is to achieve health, environmental, social and economic goals, while ensuring that policies designed to improve one part of the food system do not undermine others.

Successful delivery of the Framework will require new structures and new ways of working in partnership.

## Section 3 Questions

<b>Q1.</b>	<p><b>Do you agree with taking a food systems, whole of government approach through a NI Food Strategy Framework?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Strongly agree</b></li><li>• <b>Agree</b></li><li>• <b>Neither agree/disagree</b></li><li>• <b>Disagree</b></li><li>• <b>Completely disagree</b></li></ul>
<b>Q2.</b>	<p><b>Please outline your views on taking a Food Systems “whole of government” approach through a Northern Ireland Food Strategy Framework?</b></p>

## 4. Strategic context

A Northern Ireland Food Strategy Framework provides an opportunity for a new approach to food within the context of a number of key strategic drivers. These include New Decade, New Approach (NDNA), Programme for Government, City and Regional Growth Deals, as well as a range of existing and new policies being developed across Government such as the Executive's Green Growth Strategy, Agricultural Policy Framework, Circular Economy Strategic Framework, 10X Economic Vision, 10X Skills Strategy and the revision of the obesity prevention framework, A Fitter Future For All.

### New Decade, New Approach

The New Decade, New Approach Deal published in January 2020 outlined the priority for the NI Executive to develop a regionally-balanced economy with opportunities for all, ensuring that through investment for the future Northern Ireland can harness opportunities and drive sustainable productivity, including opportunities for future trade after EU Exit.

All political parties recognised the need for a coordinated and strategic approach to the challenge of Climate Change. DAERA on behalf of the NI Executive, are developing a Green Growth Strategy and associated Climate Action Plan which will be our initial route map to climate action, green jobs and a clean environment. As a dedicated programme within the Executive's Green Growth Strategy and Delivery Framework, the NI Food Strategy Framework aims to make a food system that is fair, healthy and environmentally friendly and one that helps to deliver sustainable economic growth.

### Draft Programme for Government (PfG) Framework

The Northern Ireland Executive is currently developing a new strategic, Outcomes-based Programme for Government (PfG) - the draft is set out below. Its aim is to improve wellbeing for all citizens and its collective outcomes create a picture of the kind of society in which we all want to live.

### New draft Outcomes Framework

The PfG Outcomes reflect the areas of economic and societal wellbeing that people say matter most to them. The Food Strategy Framework is projected to have input to 7 of the 9 draft Outcomes. In developing the Food Framework we have used this draft PfG as our starting point, given that it is forecast to be approved in 2021.

Figure 3: Draft PfG 2021.



Table 1 in Annex A provides a summary of the draft strategic priorities and linkages with existing strategies across NI Departments and Programme for Government outcomes.

### Section 4 Questions

<p><b>Q3.</b></p>	<p>What are your views on the strategic context identified?</p>
<p><b>Q4.</b></p>	<p>From your perspective, are there any other NI government policy linkages which you feel are relevant?</p>

## 5. Northern Ireland Food Strategy Framework

Development work on the NI Food Strategy Framework has involved extensive stakeholder engagement which commenced prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. It began with the development of a draft Vision by officials from across all government departments. This Vision was tested using a Double Diamond Design Model (Discover, Define, and Develop) in a follow-up Strategic Insight Lab that took place over two days in December 2019. This process involved a wide range of key external stakeholders (including food and farming representative bodies, environmental NGOs, academic, health and education, and consumer interests, and local government). A key finding was that an enhanced collaborative approach is needed across Northern Ireland Departments to address the challenges and maximise the opportunities that a Food Strategy Framework could offer.

### (a) Ambition, Scope, Vision and Aim

The Ambition, Scope, Vision, and Aim resulting from the work with NI Departments and external stakeholders are outlined below.

#### **AMBITION:**

**For Northern Ireland to be a world-class food region, recognised for the quality, nutrition, safety and integrity of its food and its knowledge based approach. Central to this ambition are our use of sustainable production systems, the award winning quality of our products, the highest ethical and animal welfare standards, respect for the environment and everyone who works in the sector.**

#### **SCOPE:**

**A soil to society approach, encompassing the production, processing, marketing, and consumption of food and the consumer values and behaviours that influence these processes.**

#### **VISION:**

**A transformed food system that protects natural resources for future generations, is economically and environmentally sustainable and provides safe, nourishing, accessible food to people, who make informed healthy choices.**

**AIM:**

**The NI Food Strategy Framework aims to be a cross government unifying strategy, with a shared vision, principles and priorities to guide long term food decision making.**

The scope of the Framework recognises that the ambition and vision cannot be achieved without a whole food supply chain approach. The leadership and implementation structures developed for the Food Strategy Framework will ensure strong alignment across linked policy areas such as agricultural, environment, and land use policies.

### Section 5 (a) Questions

<b>Q5.</b>	<b>What are your views on the proposed ambition of the NI Food Strategy Framework?</b>
<b>Q6.</b>	<b>What are your views on the proposed scope of the NI Food Strategy Framework?</b>
<b>Q7.</b>	<b>What are your views on the proposed vision of the NI Food Strategy Framework?</b>
<b>Q8.</b>	<b>What are your views on the proposed aim of the NI Food Strategy Framework?</b>

**(b) Strategic priorities**

The proposed Framework highlights six strategic priorities to achieve the Vision. Five were identified from the work with NI Departments and key external stakeholders. A sixth was added to take account of experience of the COVID-19 pandemic. These six priorities will provide a focus and direction to NI Departments for future policy interventions on food. The six strategic priorities are:

 <p><b>Priority One:</b></p>	<p><b>Building connections between health / wellbeing and food.</b></p>
 <p><b>Priority Two:</b></p>	<p><b>Building Sustainable Economic Prosperity.</b></p>
 <p><b>Priority Three:</b></p>	<p><b>Building a Food Culture and Food Conscious Society.</b></p>
 <p><b>Priority Four:</b></p>	<p><b>Protecting and Enhancing our Natural Resources.</b></p>
 <p><b>Priority Five:</b></p>	<p><b>Building Healthy Lives through Food Education.</b></p>
 <p><b>Priority Six:</b></p>	<p><b>Building and maintaining appropriate Emergency Contingency plans across the supply chain (added due to COVID-19).</b></p>

Each of these cross-cutting strategic areas will be given prominence and policy coherence under the Framework through the establishment of a high level implementation group that will develop future policy interventions and oversee their implementation.



### Strategic priority one - building connections between health / wellbeing and food

#### Why is this important?

The Northern Ireland Health Survey published in December 2020, reported that approximately 65% of adults were either overweight (38%) or obese (27%) and 26% of children aged 2-15 were either overweight (20%) or obese (6%)<sup>1</sup>. The latest available figures estimate that the total direct and indirect costs of people being obese and overweight in Northern Ireland rose to £457m in 2015/16 - up from £268m in 2009/10<sup>2</sup>, representing a significant financial cost to our health service and human cost for those whose health has been damaged.

Food Poverty has been a significant issue in Northern Ireland for many years, but the Covid-19 pandemic exacerbated the situation. Food bank usage across the Trussell Trust NI network rose from 45,134 emergency food parcels distributed in 2019-20 to 78,827 emergency food parcels in 2020/21<sup>3</sup>. This figure does not include emergency food aid provision from independent food banks, or those householders who are food insecure but do not access food banks, instead relying on other coping mechanisms, including family, friends and neighbours. UK data indicates that for every one food insecure person who uses a food bank, there are nine more who do not<sup>4</sup>, demonstrating that there remains a large number of people who are food insecure who are not accessing support from a food bank. It is estimated in the UK that food insecurity increased five-fold due to Covid-19 pandemic<sup>5</sup>. The Food Security in Northern Ireland report<sup>5</sup> highlighted approximately one in six respondents as being food insecure and a recent report from Safefood and Food Standards Agency underlined that low-income families in Northern Ireland need to spend up to almost half (46%) of their weekly income to afford a healthy food basket that meets basic nutritional needs<sup>6</sup>. The Food Foundation<sup>7</sup> have reported that Northern Ireland has the lowest average number of portions of fruit and vegetables consumed per constituent region of the UK, at just 2.1 relative to the recommended 5 a day messaging and the highest percentage of people (18%) eating less than 1 portion per day.

Strategic priority one will build on the connections between health, wellbeing and food, with a focus on making healthy, nutritious and sustainable food the 'food of choice', and ensuring food is produced to the highest quality, safety and ethical standards. It will enhance collaboration around policy agendas such as obesity, nutritional standards, food poverty, and the principles of One Health (which recognises that the health of humans, animals and ecosystems are interconnected).

#### What would success look like?

Northern Ireland will be a society where everyone has access to safe and nutritious food, where food insecurity and dietary related diseases are in decline, resulting in improved societal health and wellbeing.

### Key partners:

Department of Health, Department of Communities, Department of Justice, DAERA, Food Standards Agency.



## Strategic Priority Two: building sustainable economic prosperity

### Why is this important?

The Food and Drink sector is a core part of the NI economy. In 2019 the agri-food sector<sup>8</sup> had a gross turnover of approximately £5.4billion, employed 24,945 full time equivalent people and contributed 37% to total Northern Ireland manufacturing sales. 48% of our sales were destined to GB, 16% to Republic of Ireland, 8% to other EU countries, 6% to other countries and 23% locally within Northern Ireland. The Framework will encourage the sustainable growth of innovative, adaptable food businesses.

Strategic priority two will build on the connections between the economy, environment and food, with a focus on innovation, value-added, product differentiation, use of technology and data, the continued development of a skills and a professional knowledge base across the entire supply chain, and maximising market opportunities at home and elsewhere. It will enhance collaboration around policy agendas such as circular economy and economic development, innovation, skills and education, rural communities, and tourism.

### What would success look like?

Northern Ireland will have a sustainable food system which is populated by successful, adaptable businesses with increased levels of productivity, circularity and innovation, which are competitive and able to maximise opportunities both in the NI marketplace and on the global stage. The NI agri-food sector is a major source of economic prosperity recognised for its quality, safety and knowledge driven approach, and for fairness and transparency in the supply chain.

### Key Partners:

Department for Economy, DAERA, DoJ, Invest NI, Tourism NI, Food Standards Agency, Local Councils.



## Strategic Priority Three - building a food culture and food conscious society

### Why is this important?

Food culture incorporates our ethnicity, cultural heritage and provides a way of communicating within our families and communities and with others. In other parts of the world, a high quality food culture acts as a tremendous societal and economic stimulus. Northern Ireland Food and Drink produce is being recognised amongst the very best in the British Isles and further afield. In particular, businesses are obtaining notable success at the UK Great Taste Awards, the World Cheese Awards, the International Wine and Spirit Competition Awards and the Blas na hÉireann, Irish Food and Drink Awards. The hugely successful 2016 year of Food and Drink culminated with Belfast winning the coveted “World’s best food destination” at the 2018 International Travel and Tourism Awards.

Strategic priority three will build on the connections between the economy, environment, and food, with a focus on creating a healthy food culture, reconnecting people with knowledge of where their food comes from, building a food citizenship movement and promoting our quality produce. It will enhance collaboration around policy agendas such as economic prosperity, environment, rural communities, and tourism.

### What would success look like?

Northern Ireland will have a culture of civic pride as the home of good food, where the social value of food is nurtured and celebrated. The food sector will be more resilient as a result of increased local, national and international demand encouraged by co-ordinated NI agri-food market awareness and promotion.

### Key Partners:

Department for Economy, Department of Communities, DAERA, Tourism NI, Invest NI, Food Standards Agency, Local Councils.



### Strategic Priority Four - protecting and enhancing our natural resources

#### Why is this important?

A sustainable food system involves the whole food supply chain and has environmental sustainability as one of its core elements. This priority area is directly linked to the long term vision for the Northern Ireland agricultural industry, which is increased productivity, environmental sustainability, improved resilience, and supply chain integration. Farmers/ growers, processors, retailers, food service sector and consumers all have an important role in protecting and enhancing our natural resources, while maximising circular economy and carbon reduction opportunities.

Waste - and food waste in particular - will continue to be a key area of focus. Globally, one third of all food produced is wasted<sup>9</sup>. The UN Sustainable Goal 12.3 sets a target by 2030 to reduce by 50% global per capita food waste at the retail and consumer levels and reduce food losses along production and supply chains, including post-harvest losses. Northern Ireland meets its global obligations as part of the UK and will continue to seek to reduce food waste. The most recent report by the charity, Waste and Resources Action Programme (WRAP)<sup>10</sup>, estimated that the UK produced around 9.5 million tonnes of food waste in 2018, down from 10 million tonnes in 2015. While 70% of this came from households; manufacturing, hospitality and retail sectors also contributed significantly. WRAP estimated that the greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions associated with total UK food waste is around 25 million tonnes CO<sub>2</sub>e. - It has said that of this waste, 6.4 million tonnes could have been eaten - the equivalent of over 15 billion meals, and at a time that coincides with the rise of food poverty.

There will also be a focus on food packaging. Statistics from Keep Northern Ireland Beautiful<sup>11</sup> showed that there were 1.3 million pieces of litter on our streets at any one time, equating to 28 tonnes of rubbish, resulting in an annual clean-up bill of £45 million. A total of 71% of all waste collected was made up of plastics, much of which can end up in landfill and pollution of waterways and oceans. These figures demonstrate the need to further reduce single use plastics and encourage the use of recycled materials in food packaging.

Strategic priority four will build on the connections between agricultural primary production, environment, and food, enhancing collaboration around policy agendas such as future agriculture support, environment, biodiversity and land use, reduction in food waste, carbon reduction and Green Growth. This priority has strong linkages with priority two.

#### What would success look like?

Northern Ireland will become a low carbon society where natural resources deployed in food production are responsibly managed and associated environmental costs/benefits are

appropriately valued and reflected across the food supply chain.

There will be a strong emphasis on circular economy, nature friendly farming practices, and opportunities to create profitable and shorter supply chains, minimise food waste, and redistribute surplus where possible.

### **Key partners:**

Department for Economy, DAERA, Invest NI.



## **Strategic Priority Five - building healthy lives through food education**

### **Why is this important?**

What happens to children in their earliest years is key to outcomes in adult life. A healthy balanced diet is critical to children's growth and development, to their educational performance and attainment and to their long term health and wellbeing. The relationship between poor health, nutrition and low school achievement is well documented<sup>12</sup>. Experience in the earliest years and at school has a crucial role in influencing children and young people about the importance of a balanced diet, how to make healthy food choices and the impacts of poor diet on health.

Strategic priority five will build on the connections between health, education, farming, environment, and food. It will enhance collaboration around policy agendas such as food in schools, obesity, healthy eating, and nutritional standards.

### **What will success look like?**

School food education will create a strong foundation for a healthy lifelong relationship with food, encouraging and supporting children to eat well, understand where and how their food is produced and processed, and how food choices impact on their health and the environment. In addition, this priority focuses on education throughout life to also improve adult education in healthy foods and nutrition. There are particular links to strategic priorities one and three.

Key features will include developing and supporting education interventions to improve the understanding of healthy foods and nutrition, how food is produced and the skills of growing fruit and vegetables, rearing animals for food, cooking, and minimising food waste.

### **Key Partners:**

Department of Education, Department of Health, Education Authority, DAERA, Food Standards Agency.



## Strategic Priority Six - building and maintaining appropriate emergency contingency plans across the supply chain.

### Why is this important?

Strategic priority six will build on the connections between food supply security, food poverty, safety and integrity of food and protection of the food system economy. The food supply chain is global, dynamic, and complex. New and challenging risks are emerging, including climate change, threat of cyber-attacks, product contamination, and unexpected shutdowns of key supply chain infrastructure.

During the Covid-19 pandemic, Northern Ireland put in place emergency plans to ensure the continuity of food supply to supermarket shelves here and the accessibility of food to vulnerable families and individuals. This priority will build on the existing Food Supply Security work, led by DAERA during the Covid-19 pandemic, which involved a coordinated cross-sectoral approach to address existing or emerging risks along the entire food chain.

### What will success look like?

The Northern Ireland food system (industry, Government, voluntary and community sectors) will proactively manage risk along the entire food chain. It will include accessibility to food by people who live here, the safety and integrity of food, and protection of the food system economy.

This priority will aim to ensure that emergency contingency plans will be ready to operate in any future crisis to ensure a continued supply of safe food for all the people of Northern Ireland. There is a significant role for industry to maintain robust contingency plans to deal with disruptions to food supplies. Government has a role in co-ordinating the response to crises affecting food systems. It will encourage partnerships with industry and the voluntary and community sector to mitigate risks to consumers. The lessons learnt from previous pandemics/disease outbreaks will inform the plans for dealing with future emergencies.

### Key partners:

Department of Communities, Department of Health, Food Standards Agency, DAERA, Department of Economy, Invest NI.

## Section 5 (b) Questions

<b>Q9.</b>	<p><b>Do you agree with the proposed six strategic priorities?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Strongly agree</b></li><li>• <b>Agree</b></li><li>• <b>Neither agree/disagree</b></li><li>• <b>Disagree</b></li><li>• <b>Completely disagree</b></li></ul>
<b>Q10.</b>	<p><b>Are there any amendments or refinements that you would like to make to these priorities?</b></p>
<b>Q11.</b>	<p><b>From your perspective, are there any strategic priorities that are missing from the NI Food Strategy Framework? If 'yes', what are they and why?</b></p>

## Decision Making Principles

Eight guiding principles will guide the development of plans and future policy interventions by the implementation groups that will be responsible for each of the six strategic priorities (see Table 2):

*Table 2: Decision Making Principles*

<b>Principle One</b>	Inclusivity and Openness - all voices of society are part of the ongoing dialogue on food issues.
<b>Principle Two</b>	Collaboration and Leadership - improved integration, shared responsibility in food related policies and programmes.
<b>Principle Three</b>	Evidence and Accountability - food related policies and programmes are evidence based, transparent, accountable and results orientated.
<b>Principle Four</b>	Right to Food - Everyone in society has the right to adequate, available and accessible, safe and nutritious food.
<b>Principle Five</b>	Sustainability - a food system where decision making supports social, environmental and economic sustainability.
<b>Principle Six</b>	Adaptability - a food system that is people focused, knowledge and science driven, resilient and adaptive to new innovations as priorities emerge.
<b>Principle Seven</b>	Long Term Focus - a sustained, long term strategic approach, which is flexible and measurable through short, medium and long term milestones.
<b>Principle Eight</b>	Single Supply Chain - food related policies and programmes are designed with due regard to the needs and development of a fair and equitable single supply chain.

## Section 5 (c) Questions

<b>Q12.</b>	<b>What are your views on the proposed guiding principles to be used to guide the development of future policy interventions?</b>
<b>Q13.</b>	<b>From your perspective, are there any guiding principles missing? If yes, what are they and why?</b>
<b>Q14.</b>	<b>Do you agree with the high level vision, principles and strategic areas contained in the proposed NI Food Strategy Framework?</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Strongly agree</b></li><li>• <b>Agree</b></li><li>• <b>Neither agree/disagree</b></li><li>• <b>Disagree</b></li><li>• <b>Completely disagree</b></li></ul>
<b>Q15.</b>	<b>Have you any other comments on the proposed NI Food Strategy Framework?</b>

## 6. Implementation Approach

Delivery of the framework will require significant leadership, a shared understanding of needs, the combining of resources, and effective governance arrangements. It is recognised that no single Department has all the policy tools required. Partnership working across central and local government, the private sector, and the community and voluntary sector is fundamental to fostering sustainability and ensuring the best possible outcomes for people. Key enablers will include the use of education, knowledge, skills, science and innovation.

The Food Strategy Framework sets a long term strategic direction. NI Departments will work with other organisations to design and implement five year programmes of work under each of the priority areas identified in the Framework. A formal review of the first phase of the Food Strategy Framework will take place in 2030.

### Governance Structures

The Food Strategy Framework will sit within the governance arrangements of the Executive's Green Growth Strategy, which is led by an Inter-Ministerial Group (IMG), chaired by the DAERA Minister, supported by a Senior Officials Group representing all Departments. A new Food Programme Board will report to the Senior Officials Group. These structures will provide a mechanism for the identification and prioritisation of resources. (See Figure 4)

The Food Programme Board will align food responsibilities across government and facilitate engagement and partnership with stakeholders, including the food Industry, voluntary and community sector, and consumers.

To design plans that cut across departments and sectors to deliver better outcomes around food, the Board will have to work outside traditional boundaries. Collaboration and teamwork with a wide range of key stakeholders and partners from across industry, community and voluntary sectors will be key to the implementation and delivery of the Framework.

The Board will consider how best to engage with stakeholders, while avoiding nugatory duplication. It will examine whether the existing arrangements for stakeholder engagement could be adapted to optimise working on food. It will also consider whether it would be useful to establish new stakeholder Food Forums.

Each of the six strategic priority areas will be led by an implementation group chaired by the appropriate NI Department(s). These groups will develop five year action plans and will oversee the implementation of these plans. The groups will set up topic-specific working groups as appropriate. It is acknowledged that a number of these relevant topic specific working groups may already exist; such groups will not need to be dismantled and recreated. It is very much the intention that issues will be addressed by the combined efforts of many, rather than the individual efforts of a few.

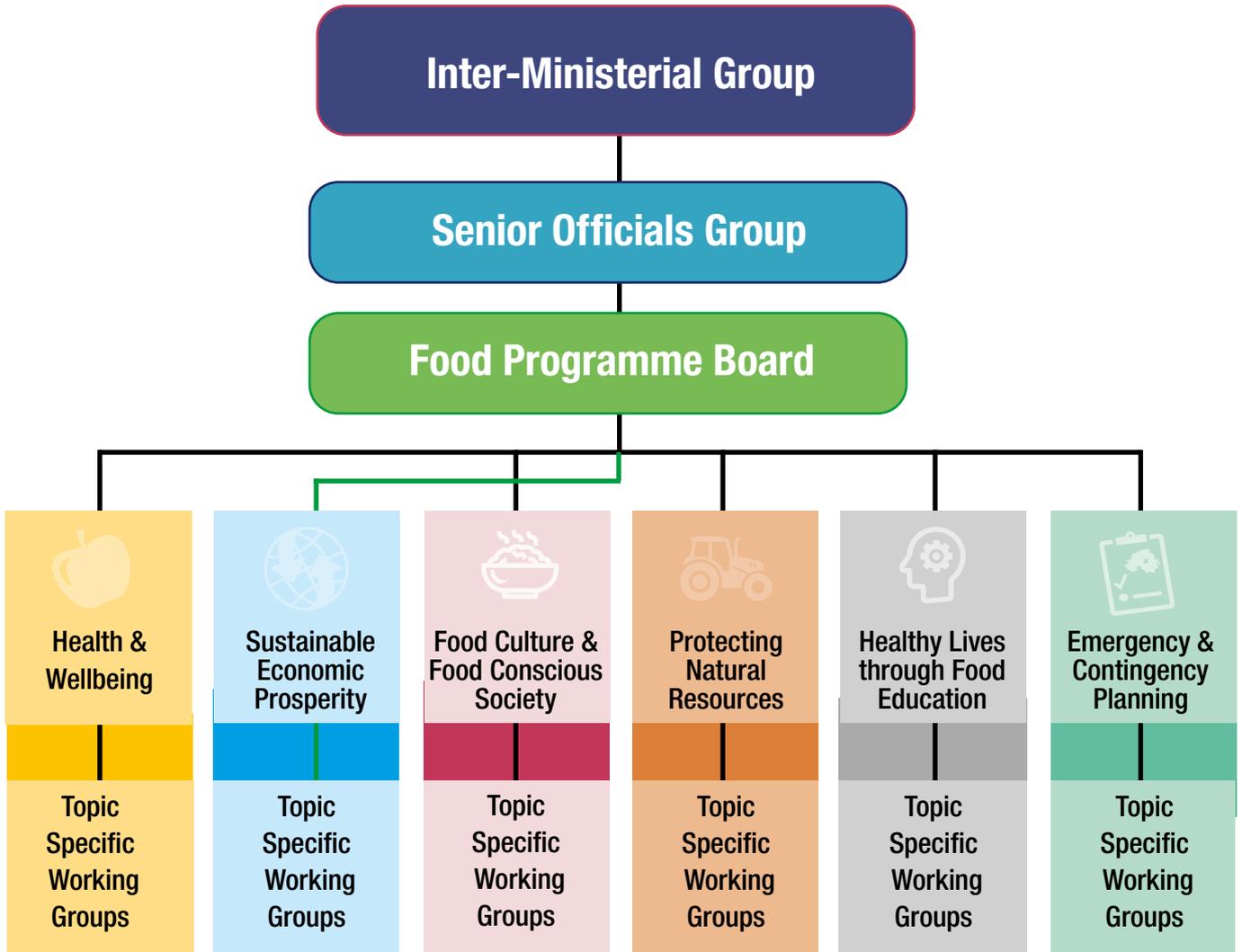


Figure 4: Proposed Food Programme Board.

To encourage collaborative working across organisational boundaries and demonstrate early progress, the Framework will identify a number of early Foundation Projects which, subject to resource and Ministerial agreement where appropriate, will be progressed over the short to medium term.

For example, in one early Project, a cross departmental task force will investigate the opportunity to increase the amount of food sourced locally by government. It is recognised that it has been difficult for smaller, local producers and suppliers to access the public sector food supply chain. The Project will focus on supply to NI schools, hospitals and prisons and seek to learn from the experiences of other regions, who are piloting novel dynamic procurement systems. This Project will seek to promote health, environmental, socio-economic objectives and will contribute to food supply resilience.

Another potential early Project will explore how to encourage children in schools to eat more fruit and vegetables, including seasonal local produce. This Project will seek to promote health, socio-economic, environmental and education objectives. It will aim to help to connect children with where their food comes from and encourage them to make healthy eating choices.

## Section 6 Questions

<b>Q16.</b>	What are your views on the proposed approach to implementation, i.e. five year action plans will be developed and implemented in collaboration with key stakeholders and partners?
<b>Q17.</b>	What are your views on the establishment of a Food Programme Board that is embedded within the governance arrangements for Green Growth?
<b>Q18.</b>	Do you have any comments on future arrangements for engagement with stakeholders about implementation and delivery of the NI Food Strategy Framework?
<b>Q19.</b>	Have you any other comments on how to achieve a diverse and inclusive process for public engagement?

## 7. Benefits to be realised

A Food Systems approach provides an opportunity to work together to achieve health, environmental and economic goals in synergy. As it is a new approach for Northern Ireland, evidence of the benefits that the Food Strategy Framework delivers will be gathered throughout its implementation. There is the potential to achieve the following benefits:

-  Improved collective responsibility, leadership & collaboration - “shared solutions to shared issues”. Achieved through:
  - Partnership working with industry, community and voluntary sectors and the general public
  - Actively seeking synergies for better delivery of public policy
  - Working with existing community planning structures and processes
  - Development of evidence base with academic institutions
-  Agreed focus on priorities.
-  Better value for money for the public purse.
-  Maximise opportunities from new technologies, data and innovation.

- ✓ Coordinated repositioning of food messaging to enhance reputation.
- ✓ Greater economic, social and environmental sustainability.
- ✓ Food becomes an even bigger part of Northern Ireland’s international presence.
- ✓ Food becomes a platform for educational and economic improvement.
- ✓ Contribution to NI PfG and UK commitment to the UN Sustainable Development Goals. (Figure 5)

Figure 5: UN Sustainable Development Goals



Delivery of the key objectives detailed within the five year action plans for each strategic priority will also provide evidence of progress.

A Northern Ireland Food Strategy Framework Report will be produced at the mid-point of implementation, i.e. at the end of the first five year action plan. A formal review of the framework will take place no later than 2030.

This retrospective evaluation of the first phase of the Framework will inform the development of its successor.

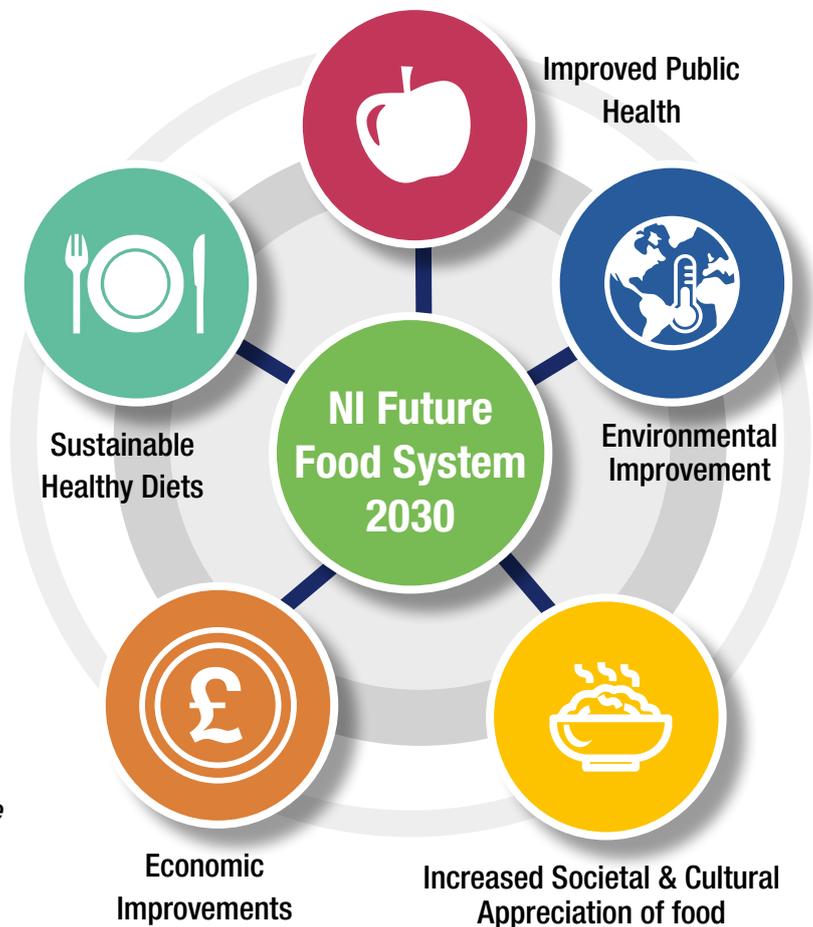


Figure 6: Future benefits

## Section 7 Questions

**Q20.**

Do you agree with the potential benefits to be derived from taking a Food Strategy Framework approach?

## 8. Rural needs considerations

All government departments have a statutory duty to screen decisions to consider the likely impacts of proposed decisions on rural areas.

A high level rural needs assessment has been completed and is available [here](#).

While potential impacts of the strategy on rural areas have been identified, the rural needs assessment template is a living document and therefore any additional views you may have on how the food strategy framework could impact rural areas are welcome.

## Section 8 Questions

**Q21.**

Are there any rural needs comments that you wish to raise at this point about the impact of the NI Food Strategy Framework on Rural areas? Do you have any evidence that would be useful to Departments? If so, can you describe the evidence and provide a copy.

## 9. Equality considerations

Section 75 of the NI Act 1998 (the Act) requires public authorities, in carrying out their functions relating to Northern Ireland, to have due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity and regard to the desirability of promoting good relations across a range of categories outlined in the Act. DAERA commits to having effective internal arrangements in place for ensuring our effective compliance with the Section 75 statutory duties and for monitoring and reviewing our progress.

In the context of Section 75, 'policy' is very broadly defined and it covers all the ways in which we carry out or propose to carry out our functions. In making any decision with respect to a policy adopted or proposed to be adopted, we take into account any assessment and consultation carried out in relation to the policy.

Departments use the tools of screening and equality impact assessment to assess the likely impact of a policy on the promotion of equality of opportunity and good relations. Screening is completed at the earliest opportunity in the policy development/review process. Policies which we propose to adopt will be subject to screening prior to implementation. For more detailed strategies or policies that are to be put in place through a series of stages, we will screen at various stages during implementation.

An Equality and Human Rights Screening exercise has been completed for this Food Strategy Framework; the Framework has been screened out of a full equality impact assessment. Once this Framework is finalised and published then all policies that will cascade from this framework will be equality screened and where necessary a full Equality Impact Assessment will be completed by the relevant Department. We welcome any information you may have about relevant equality aspects in consideration of this NI Food Strategy Framework during this consultation. Consideration will also be given to appropriate strategic environmental assessment.

### Section 9 Questions

<b>Q22.</b>	Are there any equality comments that you wish to raise at this point? Do you have any evidence that would be useful to Departments? If so, can you describe the evidence and provide a copy.
<b>Q23.</b>	Are there any environmental impact comments that you wish to raise at this point? Do you have any evidence that would be useful to Departments? If so, can you describe the evidence and provide a copy.
<b>Q24.</b>	Are there any other comments you wish to make or any other evidence of need that you think Departments would find helpful? Please submit any evidence with your response.

## 10. Consultation and next steps

DAERA welcomes responses and comments from stakeholders on the questions outlined in this document to help develop proposals for a NI Food Strategy Framework.

### How to respond

A full list of questions in this document can be found at Section 11.

When responding please provide the following information:

Your name;

Contact details (preferably e-mail); and

Organisation you represent (if applicable).

This consultation exercise uses the Citizen Space Hub, accessible at: <https://consultations.nidirect.gov.uk/daera-food-and-farming-policy/food-at-the-heart-of-our-society-a-prospectus-for-change> as the primary means of response, in order to make it as accessible as possible.

Email responses should be sent to: [futurefoodpolicy@daera-ni.gov.uk](mailto:futurefoodpolicy@daera-ni.gov.uk)

If you are unable to email and would prefer to post your response, please call 028 90524150, in order to make the necessary arrangements.

The closing date for responses is 19th November 2021. Please ensure your response is submitted by that date.

## Publication of responses

DAERA is leading the consultation on behalf of NI Departments, and will share the responses with the other relevant Departments. At the end of the engagement, DAERA intends to publish a summary of responses following the closing date for receipt of views. Your response, and all other responses to this publication, may be disclosed on request. The Department can only refuse to disclose information in exceptional circumstances. Any confidentiality disclaimer generated by your IT system in e-mail responses will not be treated as such a request.

Section 8(e) of the Data Protection Act 2018 permits processing of personal data when necessary for an activity that supports or promotes democratic engagement. Information provided by respondents to this stakeholder engagement exercise will be held and used for the purposes of the administration of this current exercise and subsequently disposed of in accordance with the provisions of the Data Protection Act 2018 and General Data Protection Regulation.

The Freedom of Information Act gives the public a right of access to any information held by a public authority, namely, the Department in this case. This right of access to information includes information provided in response to a stakeholder engagement exercise. The Department cannot automatically consider as confidential information supplied to it in response to a stakeholder engagement exercise. However, it does have the responsibility to decide whether any information provided by you in response to this stakeholder engagement exercise, including information about your identity, should be made public or be treated as confidential. If you do not wish information about your identity to be made public, please include an explanation in your response.

This means that information provided by you in response to the stakeholder engagement is unlikely to be treated as confidential, except in very particular circumstances. The Lord Chancellor's Code of Practice on the Freedom of Information Act provides that:

- The Department should only accept information from third parties in confidence if it is necessary to obtain that information in connection with the exercise of any of the Department's functions and it would not otherwise be provided;
- The Department should not agree to hold information received from third parties "in confidence" which is not confidential in nature; and
- Acceptance by the Department of confidentiality provisions must be for good reasons, capable of being justified to the Information Commissioner.

For further information about confidentiality of responses please contact the Information Commissioner's Office. (<https://ico.org.uk/>).

## 11. Capturing stakeholder views

<b>QUESTION 1.</b>	<p>Do you agree with taking a food systems, whole of government approach through a NI Food Strategy Framework?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Completely agree</li> <li>• Agree</li> <li>• Neither agree/disagree</li> <li>• Disagree</li> <li>• Completely disagree</li> </ul>
<b>QUESTION 2.</b>	<p>What are your views on taking a Food Systems “whole of government” approach through a NI Food Strategy Framework?</p>
<b>QUESTION 3.</b>	<p>What are your views on the strategic context identified?</p>
<b>QUESTION 4.</b>	<p>From your perspective, are there any other NI government policy linkages which you feel are relevant?</p>
<b>QUESTION 5.</b>	<p>What are your views on the proposed ambition of the NI Food Strategy Framework?</p>
<b>QUESTION 6.</b>	<p>What are your views on the proposed scope of the NI Food Strategy Framework?</p>
<b>QUESTION 7.</b>	<p>What are your views on the proposed vision of the NI Food Strategy Framework?</p>
<b>QUESTION 8.</b>	<p>What are your views on the proposed aim of the NI Food Strategy Framework?</p>
<b>QUESTION 9.</b>	<p>Do you agree with the proposed six strategic priorities?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strongly agree</li> <li>• Agree</li> <li>• Neither agree/disagree</li> <li>• Disagree</li> <li>• Completely disagree</li> </ul>
<b>QUESTION 10.</b>	<p>Are there any amendments or refinements that you would like to make to these priorities?</p>
<b>QUESTION 11.</b>	<p>From your perspective, are there any strategic priorities that are missing from the NI Food Strategy Framework? If ‘yes’, what are they and why?</p>
<b>QUESTION 12.</b>	<p>What are your views on the proposed guiding principles to be used to guide the development of future policy interventions?</p>
<b>QUESTION 13.</b>	<p>From your perspective, are there any guiding principles missing? If yes, what are they and why?</p>

<b>QUESTION 14.</b>	<p>Do you agree with the high level vision, principles and strategic areas contained in the proposed NI Food Strategy Framework?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Completely agree</li> <li>• Agree</li> <li>• Neither agree/disagree</li> <li>• Disagree</li> <li>• Completely disagree</li> </ul>
<b>QUESTION 15.</b>	<p>Have you any other comments on the proposed NI Food Strategy Framework?</p>
<b>QUESTION 16.</b>	<p>What are your views on the proposed approach to implementation, i.e. five year action plans will be developed and implemented in collaboration with key stakeholders and partners?</p>
<b>QUESTION 17.</b>	<p>What are your views on the establishment of a Food Programme Board that is embedded within the governance arrangements for Green Growth?</p>
<b>QUESTION 18.</b>	<p>Do you have any comments on future arrangements for engagement with stakeholders about implementation and delivery of the NI Food Strategy Framework?</p>
<b>QUESTION 19.</b>	<p>Have you any other comments on how to achieve a diverse and inclusive process for public engagement?</p>
<b>QUESTION 20.</b>	<p>Do you agree with the potential benefits to be derived from taking a Food Strategy Framework approach?</p>
<b>QUESTION 21.</b>	<p>Are there any rural needs comments that you wish to raise at this point about the impact of the NI Food Strategy Framework on Rural areas? Do you have any evidence that would be useful to Departments? If so, can you describe the evidence and provide a copy.</p>
<b>QUESTION 22.</b>	<p>Are there any equality comments that you wish to raise at this point? Do you have any evidence that would be useful to Departments? If so, can you describe the evidence and provide a copy.</p>
<b>QUESTION 23.</b>	<p>Are there any environmental impact comments that you wish to raise at this point? Do you have any evidence that would be useful to Departments? If so, can you describe the evidence and provide a copy.</p>
<b>QUESTION 24.</b>	<p>Are there any other comments you wish to make or any other evidence of need that you think Departments would find helpful? Please submit any evidence with your response.</p>

**Table 1:** The draft strategic priorities and linkages with existing strategies across other Departments and Programme for Government outcomes.

Strategic Priorities	Examples of links to existing Strategies / Policies.	PfG Linkages (Draft 2021)
<p><b>Priority One:</b>  <b>Building connections between health /wellbeing and food.</b></p>	<p><b>DoH:</b> Making Life Better, A Fitter Future for All.</p> <p><b>DfC:</b> Anti-Poverty (under development and potential for Food Poverty).</p> <p><b>DAERA:</b> Rural Framework.</p> <p><b>DoF:</b> Public Procurement Policy.</p> <p><b>NIPS:</b> Improving Health Within Criminal Justice</p>	<p>We have an equal and inclusive society where everyone is valued and treated with respect.</p> <p>Our children and young people have the best start in life.</p> <p>We all enjoy long, healthy active lives.</p>
<p><b>Priority Two:</b>  <b>Building Sustainable Economic Prosperity.</b></p>	<p><b>DfE:</b> Economic Strategy, Skills Strategy, Innovation Strategy, Tourism Strategy,</p> <p>10X Economy: An Economic Vision for a decade of innovation and 10X Skills Strategy,</p> <p>FE/ HE Strategies,</p> <p>Circular Economy Strategic Framework (CESF) (under development).</p> <p><b>DAERA:</b> Rural Framework, Knowledge Framework,</p> <p>Green Growth Strategy (under development).</p> <p><b>DoF/DoJ:</b> Public Procurement Policy.</p> <p><b>DoJ:</b> Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking Strategy</p>	<p>Our economy is globally competitive, regionally balanced and carbon-neutral.</p> <p>We live and work sustainably – protecting the environment.</p> <p>Everyone can reach their potential.</p> <p>People want to live, work and visit here.</p>

<p><b>Priority Three:</b>  <b>Building a Food Culture and Food Conscious Society.</b></p>	<p><b>DfE:</b> Tourism Strategy, Economic Strategy.  <b>DAERA:</b> Environment Strategy, Rural Framework.</p>	<p>We have an equal and inclusive society where everyone is valued and treated with respect.          People want to live, work and visit here.</p>
<p><b>Priority Four:</b>  <b>Protecting and Enhancing our Natural Resources.</b></p>	<p><b>DAERA:</b> Agricultural Policy Framework, Environment Strategy, Knowledge Framework, Green Growth Strategy (under development), Waste Prevention Programme 2019: Stopping Waste in its Tracks.  <b>DoF:</b> Public Procurement Policy.  <b>DfE:</b> Circular Economy Strategic Framework (CESF) (under development).</p>	<p>We live and work sustainably – protecting the environment.          Our economy is globally competitive, regionally balanced and carbon-neutral</p>
<p><b>Priority Five:</b>  <b>Building Healthy Lives through Food Education.</b></p>	<p><b>DE&amp; DoH:</b> Food in Schools Policy.  <b>DAERA:</b> Knowledge Framework, Environment Strategy.  <b>DoH:</b> Fitter Future for All, Obesity Strategy.  <b>DoF:</b> Public Procurement Policy.</p>	<p>Our children and young people have the best start in life.</p>

**Priority Six:**  
**Building and maintaining appropriate Emergency Contingency plans across the supply chain. (Added due to COVID-19).**

**DoF:** Public Procurement Policy.

## References

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