NATURE, FOOD AND FARMING

FOOD AND THE RECOVERY OF NATURE, COMMUNITIES AND LIVELIHOODS

CALL FOR EVIDENCE

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This is a call for evidence on **food and the recovery of nature, communities and livelihoods** for the nature, food and farming theme of **IPPR's Environmental Justice Commission (EJC).**

It is one of several calls for evidence issued for the EJC.

The deadline for this call for evidence is **Friday 20th November 2020.**

If you have questions or queries about this call for evidence, or the Environmental Justice Commission, please e-mail ejc@ippr.org.

Background to this call for evidence

As well as a major driver of biodiversity loss and contributor to carbon emissions, food intersects in immeasurable ways with the life of the nation. In addition to the calories we put on our plates, food helps frame our cultural attitudes, binds together communities and families, shapes our landscapes, impacts places far beyond these shores, constitutes a significant portion of our economy, and significantly influences our health and wellbeing.

In some ways, the extent to which the food system has developed to be able to deliver cheap and plentiful food for the convenience of the public is extraordinary. Even under the strain of an unprecedented market shock at the outset of the Covid-19 pandemic, supply chains remained largely functioning and only a few product lines were absent from shop shelves, and for only a short period.

Yet the pandemic has also highlighted some of the more persistent vulnerabilities in the food system, including household food insecurity for some of the country's most marginalised groups, the relative inflexibility of many food supply chains in the face of disruption, and an undervaluing of labour in the food system.

The Environmental Justice Commission is keen to explore ways in which a transition to a healthier, fairer and more environmentally sustainable food system could accompany and complement the empowerment of communities, economic recovery and improving wellbeing and livelihoods.

Mission, Vision and Framework of the EJC

"Present an ambitious, positive vision shaped around people's experiences and needs, and develop a plan of action that integrates policy both to address the climate and environmental emergencies and to deliver economic and social justice."

IPPR's Environmental Justice Commission Mission Statement

The vision of the IPPR Environmental Justice Commission is of a vibrant, healthy society, and a clean, innovative economy, driven by the key principle of fairness. Realising this ambition will require a transformation that is both rapid and fair and that places people at its heart. It will require a fundamental change to our economic, democratic and societal model: a programme of renewal.

Securing this transformation will require that all policies and programmes together address the climate emergency and restore nature; improve lives and offer opportunities for all in a transformed and thriving economy – leaving no-one behind. It is through this framework that the commission is assessing whether individual policy proposals and policy programmes *as a whole* achieve our goals.

It is through this framework that we will consider the policy proposals that we intend to put forward as part of our work on food. Any proposals must be designed around the objective of delivering a faster shift while simultaneously increasing justice and delivering a transformed and thriving economy and more resilient society.

The chart shows a 2x2 matrix with axes "Social and economic justice" (vertical) and "Faster shift to climate and nature safe economy" (horizontal):

- Top-left: "Justice-enhancing policies": Improve fairness but do not contribute to, or may impede, faster shift
- Top-right: "Just transition" policies: achieve a faster shift while simultaneously increasing justice and delivering a transformed and thriving economy and more resilient society.
- Bottom-left: "Extractive" policies: Those that neither enhance fairness nor speed up the shift, or which actively damage both
- Bottom-right: "Faster action" policies: achieve a more rapid shift to a climate and nature safe economy but either do not tackle or deepen injustice.

The food system

As part of the "Nature, Food and Farming" theme of the EJC, we will be preparing a briefing laying out a series of policy proposals that would facilitate just and transformative change in the food system, delivered through the intersecting lenses of **a) health**, **b) environment**, **c) fairness** and **d) livelihoods**. With this in mind, we are eager to receive contributions from government, businesses, researchers, NGOs and community initiatives with progressive, innovative and potentially transformative policy ideas and areas of investment that would deliver positive and systemic change for food.

The kinds of policies and policy approaches we would like to consider include:

- Using regulation effectively – what should be controlled and how?
- Taxation and other financial instruments e.g. levies on damaging products of companies
- Incentivising or investing in better products or practices e.g. subsidising the cost of fruit and vegetables
- New institutions e.g. local government functions, partnerships or hubs to connect local supply and demand
- New approaches to government e.g. integrating aspects of policy areas on health, food and environment
- Infrastructures e.g. investment in local abattoirs or meat processing, establishing local food markets, digital platforms for dealing with food waste
- Competitions policy to ensure diversity in the food sector

- Planning and land management policy e.g. facilitating community access to land and space for food growing

- Industrial policy e.g. incentivising the growth of the horticultural and fruit and vegetable sectors

We would ask respondents to consider the following areas of potential policy and action in detail:

Local food economies: the potential for "local" food to play an integral role in the future of food has been raised by many and highlighted by an increased interest in recent months. Food is potentially a medium through which to connect people to each other and to places, capturing value locally, creating space for new and innovative businesses, increasing transparency and accountability in supply chains and increasing the responsiveness of businesses to local needs. But "local" can mean different things in different contexts and to different people.

- Which aspects or qualities of "local" food economies have the potential to bring the most positive change to the food system? What are the biggest significant barriers to expanding their role in the UK's food system?

- What policies or investments hold the most promise to unlock growth in, scale-up or replicate successful local food models?

- What is the role for local or regional government in delivering a more sustainable food system? What are the best opportunities or models for increased community and democratic control of the food system?

- To what extent should "local" food be prioritised in food and agricultural policy? And at the other end of the scale, how does this link to what the UK should be doing to reduce the environmental impact of food we buy from overseas?

- In what ways can local food systems support more nature-friendly farming, such as reduced chemical use, agroecology or organic production?

IPPR is planning a focused briefing on the relationship between food and trade as part of this work in 2021 but if there are any points related to trade and trade policy you would like to raise at this point they would be very welcome.

Health and food justice: accessing healthy food is a constant struggle for thousands of people in the UK. Unequal and insufficient access to healthy food is often found hand-in-hand with social problems such as poverty, unemployment and lower levels of education. These can be shaped by a range of factors and thus cannot be addressed through the prism of the food system without reference to housing and costs of living, decent livelihoods, infrastructure and transport, welfare state provision, and access to education. "Access" in this sense is not only determined by the presence of goods on shelves but involves ensuring that people have the financial and physical access to culturally appropriate and safe foods, and that people have the necessary skills to prepare their own healthy meals. Addressing the interrelated challenges of poverty, food insecurity, obesity, malnutrition and poor-diet requires a holistic food systems approach that considers all aspects of the food system.

- Should the reliable provision of affordable, safe and healthy food be the primary objective of the food system? In what ways could a "right to food" support this?

- How might other policy areas and initiatives be better shaped to integrate health and food justice outcomes?

- In what ways can we empower communities to design better systems for accessing healthy food? To what extent can food act as a vehicle for wider community empowerment?

- How do we ensure the cultural importance of food is recognised and accounted for in public policies focused on food production and provisioning? How do we bring transformative food policy that does not entrench existing biases e.g. along class, race or gender lines?

- How do we ensure that people have the necessary skills to prepare safe, healthy, affordable meals and understand the impact of food choices on their health?

- How do we ensure that all environments, such as schools, workplaces, homes and neighbourhoods, provide access to healthy and affordable food options?

Brands and supermarkets: Supermarkets, brands and large agri-food businesses play a major role in the governance of our food system. Their relative size and power mean they can often dictate the terms on which food is brought to market. On the one hand this can bring consumer choice, scale and efficiencies and enables the low prices that customers often enjoy. On the other hand, this can mean squeezing out smaller and independent competitors, marginalising non-commercial priorities, and centralising food supply systems.

- How well does regulation of the food system function in the current UK context? To what extent should the state take on a greater responsibility for its governance?

- What role should major brands, supermarkets and commercial players have in governing our food system? How do or could supermarkets best contribute to the places, communities and landscapes in which they operate?

- How can we better internalise and better distribute the true costs of food production? How can we do so without disadvantaging the worst-off?

- What is the best way to rebalance power within food supply chains and systems?

The role of technology: technology is playing an increasing role in how the food system operates and is managed, including at various points in the supply chain and development of genetically modified crops. Digitalisation of the food system could yield improvements in food growing, logistics and delivery, minimising food waste and loss, and increased efficiencies but technology is rarely neutral and without winners and losers.

- How do we ensure the advent of innovation and new technology in the food system is done fairly? How do we mitigate the negative impacts on workers and communities?

- How can we make sure an increasing reliance on technology does not disproportionately benefit already powerful supply chain actors?

- Where are the best examples of using technology to better connect producers and consumers, improve food choices, or reveal critical information about the impacts of food systems?

- How can local communities and individuals already struggling to access food use apps and technology to address challenges associated with food poverty and food insecurity? And in what way could technology exacerbated existing inequalities?

Future shock: the UK's 'just-in-time' food supply chain, which provides a cost-effective and regular supply of food under normal circumstances, is highly susceptible to shock and disruption, as demonstrated during the Covid-19 pandemic. Along with the possibility of rising temperatures, water shortages, pest species outbreaks and other social and economic changes, it is going to be a challenge for the existing food system to keep pace with demand over coming decades. There is an urgent need to restructure the food system to ensure that it is resilient to future shock and disruption, while addressing interrelated threats of climate change, poverty and social injustice and promoting access to healthy food.

- Where are the best opportunities for increasing the resilience and adaptability of food supply chains?

- What support will smaller companies and organisations need to be able to cope with future disruption?

- What are the main vulnerabilities and areas of weakness in the UK's food supply chain?

- What actions can or should the UK take to address the impact food production has on the prevalence and transmission of communicable disease e.g. deforestation and virus spread; increased antimicrobial resistance?

- What are the main threats the UK food system is likely to face in the coming decades and how can we ensure that the food system is ready for these future shocks?

HOW TO SUBMIT EVIDENCE

This call for evidence is open until Friday 20th November 2020.

Submissions, of no more than 2,500 words, can be made in writing, and preferably sent as an attachment to ejc@ippr.org.

If you do not wish your submission to be made public, please state this clearly at the start of your submission. Respondents may publicise their written evidence themselves, but in doing so should indicate that it was prepared for the Commission. When responding, please ensure that you include your relevant contact details. Evidence should be attributed and dated, with a note of your name and, if applicable, your position. Please state whether you are responding as an individual or representing

an organisation. If you are responding on behalf of an organisation, please make it clear whom the organisation represents and, where applicable, how the views of members were assembled.

ABOUT THE IPPR ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE COMMISSION

The IPPR Environmental Justice Commission (EJC) is a landmark initiative – building on IPPR's pioneering work on environmental breakdown and its Commission for Economic Justice – to help develop the ideas and policies to bring about a rapid green transition that is fair and just.

IPPR's EJC will respond to the challenges facing the UK by setting out an ambitious programme of reform, capable of tackling the dual problems of the climate and nature emergency and wider economic and social injustices. It will:

- Set out the bold policy action required for the UK to deliver its contribution to tackle climate change and wider environmental breakdown, cutting emissions to net zero in an economically and socially just way.

- Demonstrate how bold action can provide enormous benefits for communities, through the creation of green jobs, spreading prosperity and ensuring a just transition in the UK.

- Help build the public and political support required to deliver this ambitious programme of reform.

- Provide the UK with a platform to demonstrate real leadership on the issues of climate change and just transition ready for the next Conference of the Parties (COP26) in 2020.

The Commission is looking in practice at how the UK can address mass declines in nature and deliver its contribution to tackling climate change and cutting emissions to net zero in an economically and socially just way. It is considering how to ensure a rapid and just transition for all through a green transformation of the entire economy, creating hundreds of thousands of good quality jobs and giving people real ownership over their future in the process. The Commission is considering the economic and social injustices associated with the issue including the disproportionate impact by, for example, gender, class and ethnicity. It is also examining the UK's international responsibilities in tackling the accelerating climate and nature crises.

The Commission is engaging with politicians and policymakers of all political parties, experts and academics, civil society, workers and trade unions, businesses and business groups, local government and communities, and climate and environment activists. The Commission is also seeking the views of the public, using a participative model of engagement including the use of 'citizens juries'.

The Commission's Final Report will be published in 2021.

Commissioners

1. **Hilary Benn**, Labour party MP for Leeds Central **(Co-Chair of the Commission)**
2. **Caroline Lucas**, Green party MP for Brighton Pavilion (**Co-Chair of the Commission**)
3. **Laura Sandys,** Chair, BEIS Energy System Data Taskforce, Conservative MP 2010-15 (**Co-Chair of the Commission**)
4. **Paul Booth** OBE, Chair of Tees Valley Local Enterprise Partnership
5. **Beth Farhat,** Northern Regional Secretary, Trades Union Congress
6. **Angela Francis**, Chief Advisor, Economics and Economic Development at WWF-UK
7. **Charlotte Hartley**, Member of 2050 Climate Group & the Scottish Just Transition Commission
8. **Fatima Zaha-Ibrahim**, Campaigner and climate activist
9. **Prof Michael Jacobs**, Head of Engagement and Impact at SPERI
10. **Tom Kibasi**, former Director of IPPR
11. **Catherine McGuinness**, Chair, Policy & Resources Committee, City of London Corporation
12. **Paul Nowak**, Deputy General Secretary, Trade Union Congress
13. **Kate Raworth**, Senior visiting Research Associate, Environmental Change Institute, University of Oxford
14. **Dr Emily Shuckburgh**, Director of Research on Carbon Neutrality, the University of Cambridge
15. **David Symons**, Global Future Ready programme leader, WSP
16. **Anna Taylor**, Student climate striker and activist
17. **Steve Waygood**, Chief Responsible Investment Officer, Aviva Investors
18. **Farhana Yamin**, IPPC environmental lawyer and Extinction Rebellion activist