



# Our vision

for a Good Food  
Future for Greater  
Manchester



# Context

Food and drink are a core part of our daily lives – fuel for the body and vital to health, but also a key part of family, community, our economy, and essential for our plans for a sustainable future. COVID-19 has highlighted the vulnerabilities in our food system. However, the pandemic has also demonstrated the power of local people and networks to mobilise resources and distribute food locally. While this has been inspiring, it is important to recognise that many people across Greater Manchester and beyond cannot afford to buy food on their own terms, and this is something we must push to change.

The hospitality sector has seen a huge number of job losses during the pandemic, and now faces a shortage of staff as people make the choice not to go back to an industry that has historically been characterised by poor pay, long hours and tough conditions. The uncertainty of trade deals and a shortage of agricultural labour post Brexit, alongside the growing impacts of climate change may also affect the resilience of our food supply. The urgent need to respond to the climate crisis is forcing us all to change how we live to cut our carbon emissions rapidly.

As Greater Manchester makes plans to recover from the pandemic, creating an accessible, healthy, and sustainable food system for all will be a key driving force for positive change. A whole system approach, that recognises the role our food system can play in bringing economic, environmental, social and health benefits, is key.

At this critical point, there is an opportunity to combat a range of challenges through food. Collectively, we have the potential to influence these changes and to shape what 'good food' looks like in Greater Manchester for generations to come.

This vision has been created through engagement with a range of people and organisations across Greater Manchester. This vision follows the principles of the UN's Sustainable Development Goals. It builds on existing food policies and strategies like the Milan Urban Food Policy Pact, the Sustainable Food Places programme, and the Sustainable Food Vision for Greater Manchester (2014). This document aims to define what we mean when we talk about 'good food', set out a vision for a positive food future for Greater Manchester, and start to map out the sorts of actions we might need to take to get there.



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# Our vision for good food in Greater Manchester

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## We will work to create a food system for Greater Manchester that:

- Meets the needs of all our residents, and also recognises our responsibility to the planet and people everywhere.
  - Is truly sustainable. By this we mean local food production that follows the principles of agroecology (defined below), less meat and dairy consumption, and lots more.
  - Uses food as a powerful positive force for the health and wellbeing of individuals, families and communities.
  - Empowers residents by enabling them to get out of poverty in real, long-lasting ways so that food insecurity becomes a thing of the past.
  - Stamps out food waste by joining the national and global movements to design out food waste, rather than continuing to redistribute the outputs of our currently unsustainable food system.
  - Has a diverse food, drink and hospitality economy that offers good, stable jobs, which enables strong local, independent enterprises to flourish.
- Is transparent, accountable and sustainable, with an increasing proportion of our food grown or produced locally and sustainably, so we know where our food comes from and value it.
  - Creates the conditions for a range of communal growing, cooking and eating initiatives to thrive.
  - Attracts visitors to the region, who experience a vibrant food culture that is uniquely Greater Manchester.

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*Our good food future will be achieved through neighbourhood, town, city and city-region food partnerships supported by local and regional economic, environmental, health and social policies that embed all of the principles of “good food” in our daily lives*

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# Breaking it down: What is good food?

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## A Good Food system is....

1. Accessible to all (provides food security)
2. Healthy and nutritious
3. Sustainable (following the principles of agroecology), local and seasonal
4. A food economy that is local, independent, and responsible
5. A relationship to food that goes beyond 'consumer'
6. Diverse: A food system that represents and includes us all
7. Deliberate, collective and proactive





# Accessing good food





# 1. Accessible to all (providing food security)

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Our vision for Greater Manchester is for a future where everyone in our city-region can access not just enough food, but good food. Our immediate focus is to ensure that children can access a nourishing diet that supports learning, physical development, and social and emotional well-being. However, our push for access to good food is not limited to children. The bottom line is that a good diet should be available to all our residents.

We know that food is not the answer to food insecurity. The only sustainable, long-term solution to food insecurity is to ensure everyone has access to a decent and reliable income, so that they can purchase good food on their own terms. In reality “food poverty” does not exist separately from poverty, and the issue cannot be tackled with food alone. We need substantial changes to our economic and social systems to help people out of poverty in real and long-lasting ways. Greater Manchester’s approach to welfare and the economy can support this goal. At the individual level, when people who are experiencing poverty seek help, they should primarily be supported to increase their household income, minimising reliance on food donations.

The food and hospitality sector (among others) should play a stronger role in keeping people out of poverty by paying more and providing better job security.

Food insecurity can include a range of issues, and the pandemic has highlighted the fact that issues around secure access to food can go far beyond money. For example, residents who are shielding due to health concerns may struggle to access food. Food insecurity can be caused by a lack of local shops that stock healthy affordable food, a lack of local food that is culturally appropriate, mobility and health issues, and lots more.

## Types of actions and changes needed

- A.** Prioritise good food for children, in and out of school. Complement the “No Child Should Go Hungry” effort to end holiday hunger with actions to address the root causes of food insecurity in families.
- B.** Adopt a “cash first” principle where individuals experiencing food insecurity are offered cash grants ahead of food donations or vouchers.
- C.** Also adopt an “advice first” approach, ensuring people in crisis are supported to access all the financial support they are entitled to.
- D.** Increase advice and support services in non-stigmatising settings.
- E.** Monitor and measure indicators of food insecurity to ensure the right support is being given in the right places.
- F.** Involve people with lived experience of food insecurity in decision-making about preventing and responding to financial crises.
- G.** Support businesses to become Real Living Wage employers and sign up to the GM Good Employment Charter, reducing in-work poverty.



**Advice  
first  
approach**

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# Healthier diet



## 2. Healthy and nutritious

Access to a nutritious, balanced diet is one of the key rights of every child under the UN Human Rights Act and should be available to all our residents regardless of their income or situation (see section 1).

A healthy and nutritious diet includes more fresh vegetables and fruit, less (and better quality) meat and animal products, and less processed food. Our healthy food future is one in which diet related ill-health is significantly reduced, reducing pressure on the NHS, and supporting our residents in being more active. Healthy diets are not just good for people, but the planet too, with a more plant-based diet reducing our carbon footprint, and local and seasonal food providing more densely packed nutrition.

The journey to a healthier diet will require us to engage and educate children and adults around different types of healthy ingredients and how to use them – growing, cooking and eating together as a community. Our healthy food future will also require us to transform our high street, currently saturated with very unhealthy food options, and shift towards a healthier local food economy. In particular we want to protect our children from access to, and advertising for, very unhealthy food.

### Types of actions and changes needed

- A. Prioritise good food for children in and out of school.
- B. Promote and support businesses offering more healthy and sustainable food options.
- C. Restrict access to and marketing of food and drink high in fat, sugar, and salt to children.
- D. Create spaces, such as community food hubs, that enable and support growing, cooking, eating and socialising with food.
- E. Ensure access to free, clean drinking water.



# Sustainable food system





### 3. Sustainable, local and seasonal

**Important definition:** Agroecology – Truly sustainable farming that works with nature. Agroecology means studying how living things and systems interact (ecology), and then applying that knowledge to our farming (agriculture) practices. Agroecological principles protect soil, wildlife and biodiversity, which creates a truly sustainable system for producing food, by safeguarding the soil and environments we need to grow crops and raise animals.

Our food system is associated with around a third of global carbon emissions. To achieve the Greater Manchester ambition of becoming carbon neutral by 2038, we need to reduce our impact on the environment by eating more sustainably produced plant-based foods, and eating less (but better quality) meat and animal products. Agroecological farming practices are essential because they protect our soil for generations to come, restore biodiversity, reduce water stress, and produce more nutritious food. Where possible our food should be grown or produced locally in our towns, cities and surrounding areas. Our food supply should also be diverse and resilient enough to ensure food security for all our residents in the face of climate change and other shocks to the food system.

It's not possible for Greater Manchester to produce all the food our population needs, so this vision and our strategy for food needs to look beyond the borders of Greater Manchester to the whole of the North West, and beyond. Significantly increasing food grown and produced within Greater Manchester should still be a strong focus of our sustainable food future, as should sourcing more food from within the North West, and then from around the UK.

A sustainable food system is also one in which perfectly edible food no longer goes to waste for financial and logistical reasons. Greater Manchester must be part of the national and global movements to design food waste out of our system, and move beyond the stopgap of redistributing food that would otherwise go to waste.

## Types of actions and changes needed

- A.** Support more growing and farming in cities and surrounding, more rural, areas by ensuring better access to land, including by protecting green belt land and avoiding land use changing from agricultural to other uses to make money.
- B.** Offer training and support for new and existing food producers, particularly in using more sustainable food production methods, like agroecology.
- C.** Ensure public and anchor institutions buy more locally produced and sustainable food, and lead by example.
- D.** Work to end avoidable food waste. In the short term, divert food that will go to waste to feed people (waste food redistribution). In the longer-term work with businesses and residents to design food waste out of our food system.
- E.** Educate our residents (including children) about what sustainable food means, where it comes from and what to look for.
- F.** Produce more of our food in Greater Manchester, and source more food from the North West of England.



**Local,  
independant  
and diverse**





## 4. A food economy that is local, independent, diverse and responsible

Small independent businesses are not only the backbone of our local food and drink economy, but they are also what make Greater Manchester's food scene unique. By supporting local independent food and drink businesses (including community & social enterprises) we are supporting a thriving, interesting and diverse food scene, better employment in food and drink, and more money staying in our city region's economy.

Larger national and multi-national food businesses are an established part of our high street, with large food retailers employing thousands of people across Greater Manchester. As far as possible, we will influence larger food businesses to make positive changes like becoming Real Living Wage Employers and offering decent and stable jobs with fair conditions.

### Types of actions and changes needed

- A.** Champion decent jobs in the food, drink and hospitality sector, including the Real Living Wage campaign and the Greater Manchester Good Employment Charter.
- B.** Support local, sustainable, ethical food and drink businesses.
- C.** Promote our good food economy by making it easier for consumers to find local healthy and sustainable food.
- D.** Develop opportunities for good food entrepreneurs, including training, support and funding or access to finance.
- E.** Work with existing local food and drink businesses to support healthy and sustainable fast food.
- F.** Celebrate our local, independent, sustainable, and ethical food economy and make it a cornerstone of our identity as a city-region, and a central part of our tourist offer.
- G.** Transform procurement, particularly in public sector and anchor institutions, to embody the principles of local, sustainable, and ethical.

# Going beyond the 'consumer'



## 5. A relationship to food that goes beyond ‘consumer’

A good food future is one in which we recognise that our relationship with food is more than being ‘consumers’ – i.e. more than just what food we buy and where from. The idea of becoming a “food citizen” means that each of us would engage in a mix of economic activity related to food (i.e. buying good food), and non-economic activity. Non-economic activities around food might include attending a free community supper, helping out on a neighbourhood allotment, or getting more involved in organising and leading social and community food activity like teaching local free healthy cooking lessons. A good food future is about more than money - it’s one in which food is social and inclusive, regardless of income.

### Types of actions and changes needed

- A.** Redesign our neighbourhoods and communities so that everyone can have access to shared spaces to grow, cook and eat together.
- B.** Educate and raise awareness to support everyone in Greater Manchester to understand what good food is, and why it is important.
- C.** Provide opportunities to learn, engage and join in around good food, including offering visits to sustainable farms to strengthen the connection between urban and rural life.
- D.** Promote good food activities in ways that reach a wide range of people. This could include training in areas like community organising and volunteer recruitment and coordination, to help strong local groups form and develop.
- E.** Foster a food citizenship culture that values both economic and non-economic food activity.
- F.** Support independent grass-root activities at the community level that foster good food principles.



# Diverse food system



## 6. Diverse: A food system that represents and includes us all

A truly good food system is as diverse as the people it feeds. Greater Manchester is proud to be home to a huge range of ethnicities and cultures. We believe that our food system should represent and be driven by everyone in Greater Manchester.

### Types of actions and changes needed

- A.** Engage representatives from all of our diverse communities in Greater Manchester to become leaders and active participants in our decision-making around food.
- B.** Ensure that our actions are relevant, or can be made relevant, to people from a wide range of cultures and faiths, and that education materials are available in a range of languages and formats.
- C.** Ensure that training and support and other opportunities are actively promoted to a wide range of communities and are genuinely widely accessible.
- D.** Ensure that any actions or projects we develop are assessed for potential barriers in relation to gender, language, culture, faith, disability, age, sexual orientation, etc. Create actions and projects in a way that actively brings people from different backgrounds and lifestyles together, to create positive and diverse communities.



**Positive,  
healthy,  
fair,  
social,  
sustainable  
and  
representative**



## 7. Deliberate, collective and proactive

A good food system that is positive, healthy, fair, social, sustainable, and representative will not happen by accident. It requires strong and conscious leadership across all sectors. It will require all of us to educate ourselves and each other about what good food is. It will require deliberate informed choices and sustained action at every level in order to deliver this collective vision. Although policy makers have a unique and vital responsibility to enable positive change, our good food future will require all of us to get involved and to take steps in the right direction.

### Types of actions and changes needed

- A.** Leaders, including public sector and other larger organisations should work together to support good food practically (i.e. in what food they buy and sell) and strategically (i.e. in how they communicate and influence).
- B.** Individuals with lived experience of the issues being tackled should be involved in decision-making and recognised / remunerated for their time.
- C.** Food partnerships should be encouraged at every level. These should be open to all and representative.
- D.** Working groups should be convened to tackle specific issues, based on open and democratic working.
- E.** Data-led food intelligence should be used to map, monitor, and evaluate the Greater Manchester food system.
- F.** Key people leading strategic work in Greater Manchester should be well informed about food health, food security, food sustainability, food procurement, food economy and more to understand how this collective vision for good food links to a range of other issues and can be put into practice.



# Putting the vision into action

## What do we do next?

Writing the vision gives us something to aim for, but how do we get there? The answer isn't simple. It starts with education, awareness raising and influencing. We need to make sure that leaders in all sectors (local Government, NHS and health, education, business, farming, VCSE, and beyond) understand what we mean when we say good food, and then we need to work with them to help everyone understand how we can embed our good food future in really practical ways. Over the coming months we'll be developing specific plans to engage leaders and influencers as well as creating tool kits for change for everyone to use. We'll only achieve our goal if everyone in Greater Manchester takes action.

We invite everyone to read through this vision, and to start to think about how your organisation, strategy, business, or household might take steps towards our good food future. This could include purchasing and procuring in different ways, changing your food offer to staff or customers, getting involved in community growing, and much more.

*There's no silver bullet here, our good food future will involve thousands of small actions that push us in the right direction, and no matter how small, they are all important. We invite you to get involved and make our good food future a reality.*



