



Midlands food white paper preview

UK and global food demand is growing and evolving rapidly. Food price inflation is impacting households, and there are increasing cost pressures on producers. With workforce challenges across the food system, enhancing productivity is essential. Growing concerns about the impact of poor dietary choices on health and the environmental impact of food production mean that delivering sustainable production methods for healthy food is a key priority.

With the right investment and support there are major opportunities for food system growth and innovation, with the Midlands leading the way in the UK.

To deliver a growing, sustainable Midlands food system, action is needed in key areas, including:

1. Skills and workforce

We need a reliable supply of new employees and support for the development and deployment of more automated systems to increase labour productivity.

2. Innovation

We need more collaborative innovation programmes targeted at industry needs e.g. healthy foods.

3. Infrastructure

Internationally competitive food systems need more investment in digital, energy, water and transport infrastructure.

4. Premises supply

We need to develop more specialist food parks, offering the premises needed to attract more foreign investment and drive domestic industry growth.

5. Investment incentives

Targeted incentives for food system businesses, including grants and tax breaks, are needed to encourage more investment by domestic producers, and to attract more foreign investment in a competitive global market.



The Midlands food system opportunity

- **857,000** jobs in food production, distribution and consumption with more than 1 in 6 jobs in the region in the food system
- **66,000** food and drink businesses investing over £3bn per year in expansion, innovation and technology to transform the sector
- **£32bn GVA**
- **£1.8bn** of food and drink exports in 2021

The Midlands food system is delivering for the UK

The Midlands food system is already delivering for the UK by:

- **Growing investment in productivity and sustainability** in new facilities, technologies and processes.
- **Creating high quality jobs** through investment in new skills, innovation and adoption of new technology.
- **Creating a resilient, sustainable food system** that enhances biodiversity, increases water and energy efficiency, and delivers a circular economy.
- **Transitioning towards Net Zero** by investing in innovative regenerative farming, and carbon reduction in food processing and logistics.
- **Delivering healthier diets** through re-formulation and promoting the supply of 'naturally good-for-you' foods.
- **Developing its export potential** and creating opportunities to reshore production in sectors such as fresh produce.
- **Attracting major investments** from many of the largest food companies in the world.

Opportunities for growth

There is potential to increase investment in the Midlands food system to:

- **Increase UK food system productivity** by increasing the rate of adoption of automation and digital technologies, creating high value jobs.
- **Increase domestic food production** through reshoring, investing in modern productive capacity and growing exports
- **Increase the supply of healthy, affordable food choices** to reduce the costs that poor diets impose on consumers & society.
- **Make food production more sustainable** to reduce the impacts on land, air and water and lower carbon emissions.

Building blocks underpinning the Midlands food system opportunity

UK's largest concentration of agriculture and large-scale UK & international added-value food producers, food distribution & storage centres

A thriving food culture with thousands of artisan producers & local specialities e.g. Stilton cheese & UK-leading food events e.g. Ludlow Food Festival

373,000 employees in commercial food production and distribution supported by UK-leading food system skills, education and technology providers

Major investments to grow production including SmartParc Derby, Magnavale Grantham, Mondelez Birmingham and Pepsico in Leicester and Lincoln

All of England & Wales is accessible in one driving day, enabling efficient supply chains and making the Midlands home to the UK's largest food logistics cluster

Over a dozen Universities and R&D centres working on food system technology, including agritech, food processing, food formulation, waste streams, automation, digital supply chains

The UK's foremost advanced manufacturing and engineering centre – leading on new technology adoption in agri-food and food system productivity gains

Home to national HQ of NFU, British Frozen Food Federation, British Growers Association and many others with a commitment to growing a more sustainable UK food system

Developing the white paper

The Midlands Engine partnership is working with industry on an ambitious growth agenda for the Midlands food system for wider benefit.

If you would like to be involved please get in touch via info@midlandsendengine.org. We welcome your input and support.

As part of this, we are developing a Midlands Food White Paper identifying how industry, government and others need to work together.

The White Paper is being developed with our partners from the Midlands Future Food Alliance and our consultants, Collison & Associates Ltd.



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The Midlands Engine is a coalition of local authorities, local enterprise partnerships, universities and businesses across the region, actively working with government to build a collective identity, to enable us to present the Midlands as a competitive and compelling offer that is attractive at home and overseas.

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