



Midlands food white paper summary

Leading the transformation of the UK food system from the Midlands

The food system faces major challenges, as well as opportunities. Food demand is growing and evolving rapidly, food price inflation is impacting households, and there are increasing cost pressures on producers. There are growing concerns about the health impact of poor dietary choices and the environmental impact of food production – with over a third of greenhouse gas emissions generated by the food industry.

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

This White Paper therefore recommends that industry, academia and public sector partners come together, with national government, to co-create and bring forward delivery of a transformative plan for sustainable food systems growth, with the Midlands at its heart - focused on four themes:

1. Investment & Agricultural Transition
2. Business support & trade
3. Innovation & skills
4. Infrastructure & premises

[View the white paper, our evidence base and case studies here](#)



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The UK food system pivots on the Midlands

- **39%** of vegetable & salad crop
- **41%** of poultry production
- **>70%** seafood processing
- **52%** of larger food manufacturers
- **UK food** distribution hub
- **26%** of food and drink manufacturing FDI
- **Leading** agri-tech clusters
- **32%** of Innovate UK funding awards
- **£2.1bn** exports p.a.

The Midlands food system is delivering for the UK

- **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
- **Attracting major investments** from many of the largest food companies in the world
- **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

Building blocks underpinning the Midlands food system opportunity

A thriving food culture with thousands of artisan producers and local specialities e.g. Stilton cheese and 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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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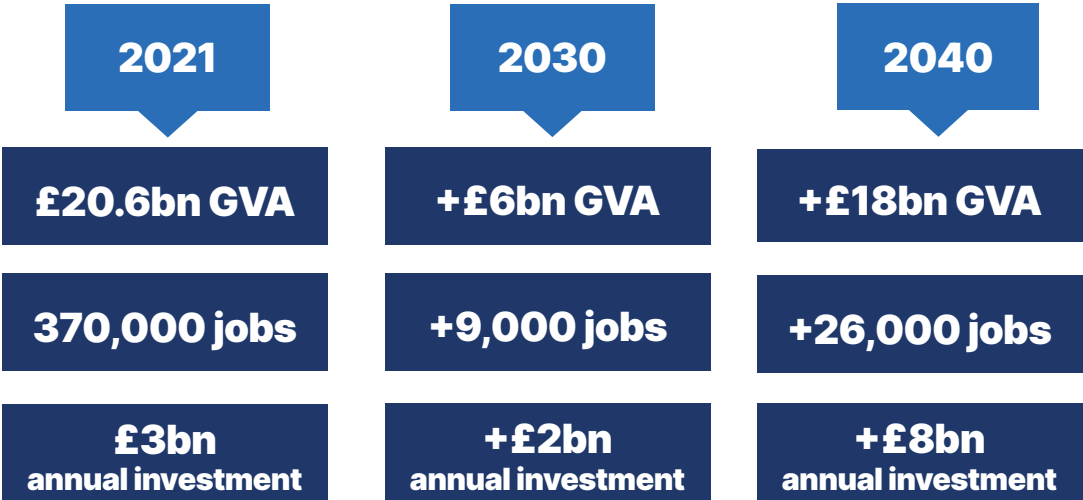
View the full cluster map here

Opportunities and impacts

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 and society
- **Make food production more sustainable** to reduce the impacts on land, air and water and lower carbon emissions

There is potential to increase the economic impact of the Midlands food system, as follows:



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View the 'Invest in UK R&D: Universities and agritech in the Midlands' prospectus here



Recommendations for a transformative plan for sustainable food systems growth

Midlands industry, academia and public sector partners come together, with national government, to co-create and bring forward delivery of a long-term transformative plan for sustainable food systems growth, with the Midlands at its heart, that is overseen by a multi-stakeholder board and focused on the following themes:

<p>Investment & Agricultural Transition</p>	<p>1 Investment: Midlands partners, the Department for Business & Trade (DBT) and the Office for Investment (OfI) working together to deliver a globally competitive investor offer to attract more UK and international food system investment</p>	<p>2 Agricultural Transition: accelerating the Agricultural Transition through sustainable farming and investment programmes, pro-growth infrastructure and fiscal policies for long-term farm investment</p>
<p>Business support & trade</p>	<p>3 Business support: creating a long-term, single, co-ordinated support offer for food and drink businesses, built on existing regional expertise and delivering integrated business support and skills</p>	<p>4 Trade: supporting the development of trade (import and export) in food and drink products and technology used in the industry</p>
<p>Innovation & skills</p>	<p>5 Innovation: Midlands partners working with UK Research & Innovation (UKRI) to co-create a globally competitive food systems innovation partnership and multi-year Collaborative R&D programme for food system innovation</p>	<p>6 Skills: industry, academia and government co-designing a supportive workforce supply plan, including devolved arrangements, focused on flexible apprenticeships, migration and skills investment to support technology adoption</p>
<p>Infrastructure & premises</p>	<p>7 Infrastructure: increasing infrastructure investment in the Midlands as the UK's food production and distribution hub, via devolved regional challenge funds for faster, lower-cost progress</p>	<p>8 Premises: developing a more enabling planning system and premises supply strategy so food and drink businesses can access the premises and facilities they need to grow sustainably e.g. SmartParc model</p>