



Our Strategy to 2020

November 2017



Introduction

Thank you for reading our updated strategy. It's over five years since we set out on the Road to 2020, not long after I started here as CEO. This is such a pivotal moment for our food, farming and countryside, so we want to make sure that we are doing everything we can to mitigate the threats, and make the most of the opportunities we will have over the next couple of years.

The Soil Association was founded in 1946 to explore the relationship between the health of soils, plants, animals and mankind. We are best known for championing organic food and farming. We developed some of the world's first organic standards in the 1960s, and continue to strive to improve organic farming practice, as well as increase the amount of certified organic food and farming. Farming with very few non-renewable inputs drives innovation, blending traditional wisdom with the opportunities that appropriate new technologies can bring. Farming organically also protects consumers and citizens, by being very cautious about the use of drugs, pesticides and novel gene manipulations. Over the decades, these precautions have been shown to be well founded. Organic farming puts health, animal welfare and nature centre stage, while helping farmers take more control of their economic destiny through shortening the chain between farm and fork wherever possible.

Even so, we understand that not all farmers will become accredited organic producers, so we share knowledge widely to help all farming become more humane and sustainable. Climate change, the biodiversity crash, antibiotic resistance and the obesity/malnutrition epidemic are huge challenges we are facing; and the way we eat and farm is at the heart of all of them.

We're less well known for our transformational work tackling food culture. Millions of people aren't getting the nutritious food they need and obesity and diabetes are putting huge pressure on the NHS. Our programmes are helping to change this and put prevention not cure first for our society's health.

The Soil Association has a responsibility to use its seventy years of wisdom to help wherever we can. Our mantra of 'start where people are' reflects our commitment to serve by providing stepping stones that will encourage progression at a manageable pace and cost – both in how we produce our food and what we eat. Our experience has shown that once people get going, confidence and momentum builds. We will be working as hard as we can to catch the wind of change over the coming years.

**Helen Browning, OBE,
Chief Executive**



Our vision

**Good food for all,
produced with care
for the natural world.**



What we do

Our organic values mean we care about human health, nature, soil, water, forests, and animal welfare. We are in a unique position to bring together farmers and scientists, doctors and teachers, chefs and foresters to transform the way we eat, farm and care for the natural world. Given the environmental and social problems humanity must tackle, so many of which relate to food, farming and forestry, could any mission be more important? The good news is that we are not alone in recognising the scale of the challenge. We work with many friends and partners to persuade politicians to develop farming and food policies that put the nation's health first. Our work has two major strategic themes that align with our vision for the future: Good Food for All and Farming for the Future. And underpinning the work we do as a charity is our impact as a certifier; we have the privilege of working with over 6,000 businesses who live our values, and turn the theory into practice.



The world is changing & we're changing with it

When we published our 'Road to 2020' strategy in 2012, we set ourselves some big goals. Five years on, we find ourselves in a rapidly changing environment. It's vital we review our progress and respond to the world around us. We consulted with staff, partners, farmers, businesses, trustees and supporters. Understanding how our close stakeholders feel about the Soil Association's progress has helped influence our strategic direction.

The Road to 2020 set out our ambition to play a bigger role in the world; to share our organic expertise and principles with all farmers, growers, policy makers and communities so that together

we can improve the way we eat, farm and care for the natural world. To do this, we choose our partners carefully, alongside providing stepping stones and support for those who are keen to make progress. We champion certified organic production, while recognising that organic farming systems are not perfect, and will always seek to learn and advance them further.

We have achieved much of what we aspired to in The Road to 2020 though in many areas it will always be a work in progress. The threats and opportunities we face now are unprecedented in recent decades, and we must rise to these challenges.



How we work

Our campaigns highlight the need for change but we also work alongside farmers and communities to find and test solutions to the issues we raise. We evaluate these approaches to understand what works, then find ways to scale up the best of them. The experience of doing this, and being so close to the coal face with businesses, producers, schools and hospitals; gives us real world credibility with policymakers. It is a virtuous circle which aligns the work of all our staff, wherever they sit, in our mission to deliver solutions which secure healthy, humane and sustainable food, farming and forestry, for the benefit of everyone.



Making the case for change

We campaign and influence decision makers with robust evidence

Delivering solutions for lasting impact

We build capacity through advice, training and assurance

Developing solutions

We work alongside farmers and communities to find and test solutions

Farming for the Future

We have a small window to start a big transition in how we use the land

The way the UK uses land to feed, fuel, house and clothe ourselves overreaches the Earth's ecological limits. The growing cost to wildlife and humanity cannot be justified, and our use of some resources cannot be sustained.

The next three years present a crucial window to change this. First, we still have time – just – to avert the worst consequences of climate change. Second, the UK leaving the EU provides the first chance to reset the fundamentals of farm policy since the Soil Association was founded.

We are striving to seize this opportunity by campaigning for better policies and working on the ground with farmers, foresters and communities in the UK and internationally.

Climate change is make or break for so much – for health, wildlife, farming communities, food security and animal welfare. Therefore, our priority is to get the UK on track for zero carbon farming by 2050.

What will this take?

Build on what works. Organic farmers have led the way in devising systems that are humane, healthy and good for wildlife, and recycle renewable resources. It serves all farmers well to invest in growing this living laboratory.

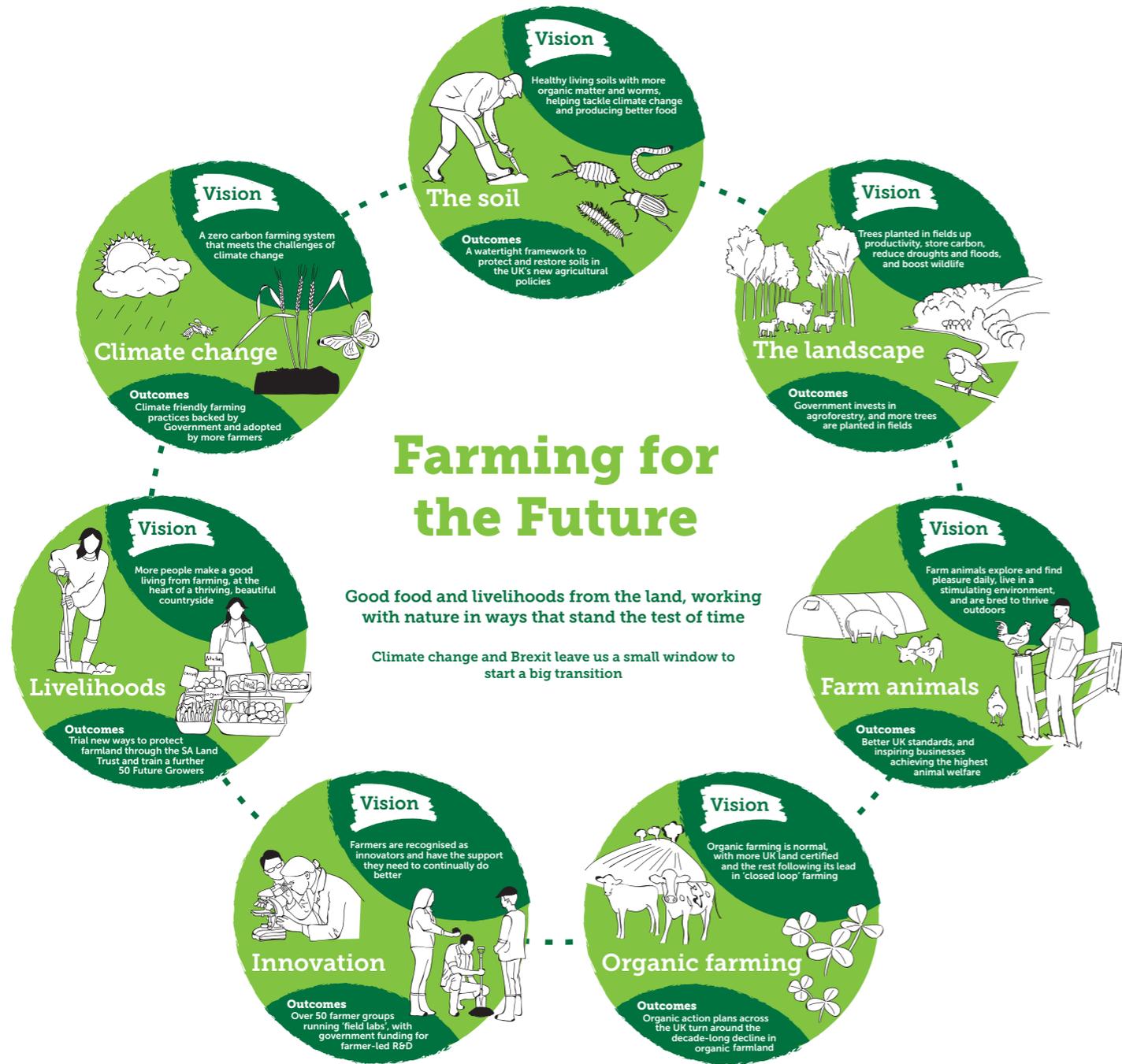
More trees on farms– lots more – if we are to lock up enough carbon. The UK needs ambitious tree-planting targets and a joined-up, landscape approach to farming and woodland. Planting trees on farmland, known as agroforestry, can lift productivity as well as helping tackle climate change.

Unleashing farmers' ingenuity. This will be a time of rapid change. Public research funds should support innovation by farmers, and spend less developing products to be sold to farmers for profit.

A global view. If efforts to protect the UK's environment, see us import more food they simply push the problem off-shore. That's why our Food for Life work tackles eating habits, helping to make sustainable diets the norm. It is also why our work to protect forests in over 50 countries is more important than ever.



We are not alone in wanting this. The Soil Association is part of a growing movement bringing together practical experience and evidence from farmers, foresters and communities. We focus on learning from nature, whether from farm rotations that cycle nutrients, encouraging diverse landscapes, or taking cues from animals' behaviour to understand their welfare.





What has changed since 2012?

-  The EU referendum result threatens laws protecting the environment and animal welfare, and revealed widespread disenfranchisement, but also creates a chance to reset farm policy.
-  In 2016, Organic land in conversion increased by more than 22%
-  Research has bolstered evidence that organic farming can play a leading part in feeding the world sustainably. It has highlighted that addressing climate change and biodiversity loss will take action at a landscape scale not just farm-by-farm.
-  The largest meta-analyses to date have concluded that organic food is nutritionally different.



What have we achieved?

-  We have improved our organic standards to aim for bigger impact with less hassle for our licensees, informed by animal welfare metrics that we have helped to make the industry standard.
-  After years of campaigning, farming's part in resolving the crisis of antibiotic resistance is now widely recognised.
-  Our Innovative Farmers network has run more than 50 practical 'field labs', reached thousands of farmers and caught the attention of policy makers and research funders.
-  We brought forestry back into the heart of the organisation, having co-founded the Forest Stewardship Council 25 years ago.
-  The Soil Association Land Trust provides a haven for beautiful, farmed countryside. We have invested in infrastructure, wood-fuelled heating and solar power to help our farms meet their own energy needs and become more resilient.

Our priorities to 2020

Campaigning

High standards. We will campaign alongside others to protect and improve farming and environmental standards as the UK leaves the EU. In particular, we aim for farm antibiotic use to fall 50% by 2020, for UK pesticide regulation to respect the precautionary principle, and for “method of production” labels (as already required on eggs) to be displayed on all animal products.

Organic policy. We will work with others in the organic movement, through established forums across the UK and through IFOAM, to secure a reliable regulatory environment and stronger support for organic farming and food as the UK leaves the EU. Organic farming is a model for harnessing market demand and farmer innovation to deliver quality products and public benefits.

Soils. Rebuilding our run-down soils is the foundation for sustainable, resilient farming. The UK has committed to increase soil carbon by 0.4% a year – enough to stop the annual rise in CO₂ in atmosphere – and we need to hold Government to it. By 2020 we want Government to have an effective plan in place to protect soils and to meet this crucial target.

Agroforestry. By 2020 we want Government to have made a strategic commitment to promoting agroforestry as vital to achieving zero carbon future. We will work with farmers, advisors and policy makers to make agroforestry mainstream.



Developing solutions

Innovative Farmers. We aim to build our thriving network to support farmer-led innovation across the UK, with backing from public research funders. There will be at least 60 farmer groups solving problems through 'field labs' by 2020, with more than 2,000 farmers involved in the network.

Deforestation. Food and feed production for the UK drive deforestation around the world, and tackling this is beyond the reach of our current forestry certification. Working to address this with businesses, other NGOs and the communities affected is a priority for our research and development.

Ensuring change continues, and grows in impact

Data and reporting. We will build on our work to monitor the impact of our assurance schemes on issues including animal welfare, environmental and business performance, to support continuous improvement, further strengthen integrity, and inform public and policy campaigns. By 2020 we aim to report regularly on the impact of organic food and farming.

Protecting farms and creating opportunities. The Land Trust provides a safe haven for farmland, currently through legacies. By 2020, the Trust aims to have developed novel mechanisms that enable us to protect more farmland, and give opportunities to greater numbers of enterprising and innovative tenants, willing to work with us to secure the future of UK farming and growing.

Training and advice. We will build on our successful Future Growers training scheme to develop new training opportunities for organic farmers and new entrants, and provide professional advice.

Good Food for All

The good food movement is growing; together we can create a healthy food environment and food culture for our children to grow up in.

Millions of people still aren't getting the nutritious food they need to thrive. The obesity and diabetes crises are putting pressure on our health service, and prevention must be our priority. That's why we are committed to making good food the easy choice for everyone.

Everyone should have the opportunity to buy, cook, grow and eat good food, and visit farms so that they develop a positive connection with real food. No-one should have to eat alone.

What will this take?

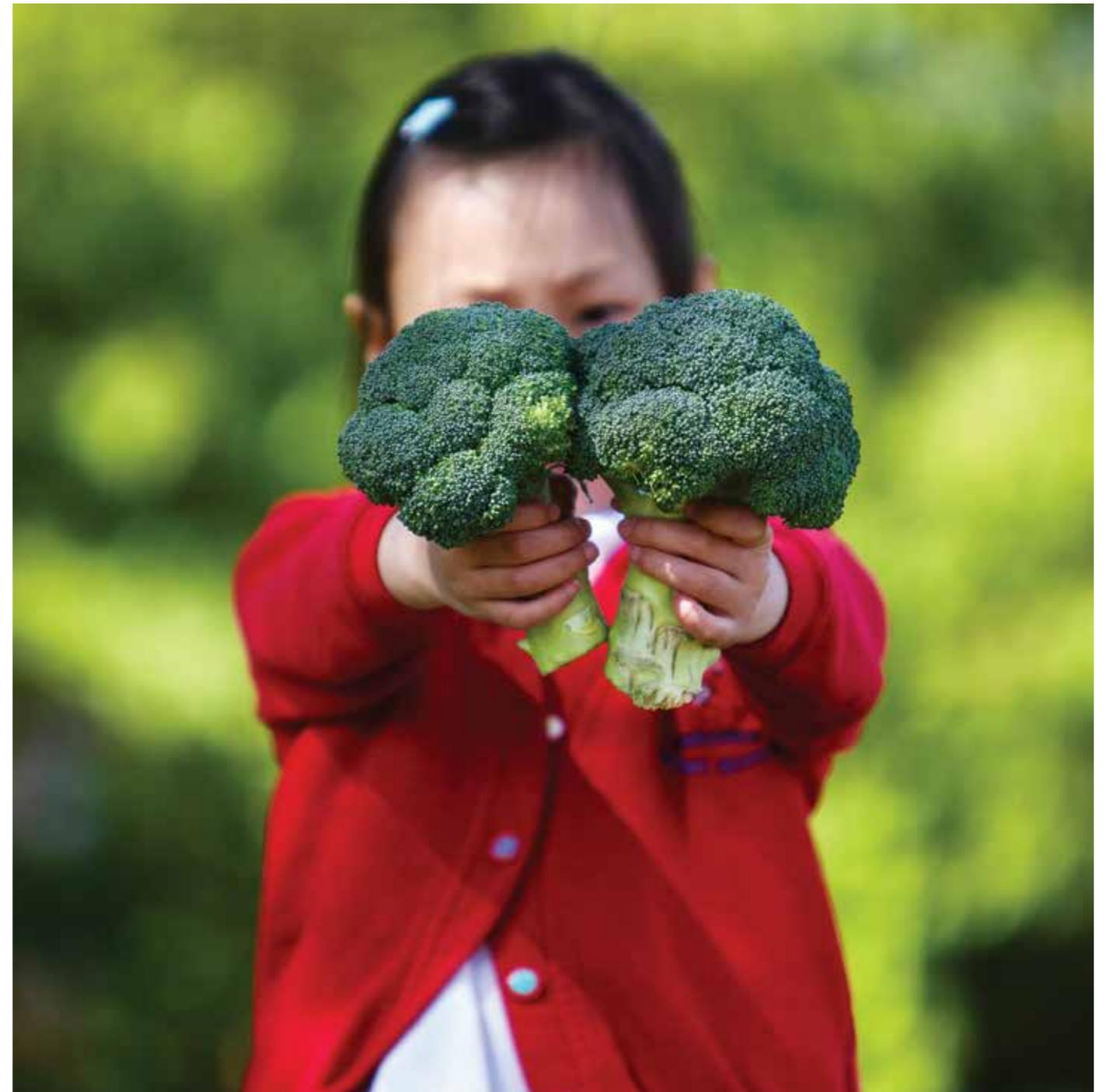
Families should be able to find good, healthy food on the high street and on days out. We will continue to campaign but we will also engage with young people and families to develop a plan for the healthy and sustainable food shop of the future. And secure the policy changes needed to support this vision.

Good food should be on the menu for those who need it most. We will build on the successes of our Food for Life Served Here scheme and continue to champion local and organic producers and support caterers to make changes. We will work to find local and national funding solutions so that every school and nursery can be a Food for Life School, where pupils are twice as likely to eat their five a day.

No-one should have to eat alone. Through our Better Care programme, we will harness the power of sharing good food to improve the health and wellbeing of people in later life and bring generations together to reduce loneliness.

Key to the success of all this work are the countless 'good food heroes' in schools, hospitals, care settings, caterers, suppliers and farms across the country. And our Sustainable Food Cities network, co-hosted with Sustain and Food Matters is growing into a good food movement, that brings volunteers and community groups together with businesses and local authority leaders to put good food at the heart of their communities.







What has changed since 2012?

- Research shows the cost of Type 2 diabetes to the NHS has doubled in a decade and now accounts for over 10% of NHS spending.
- 40% of meals in the UK are now eaten outside the home making Food for Life Served Here more relevant than ever before.
- Universal Infant Free School Meals have been introduced for all children in their first three years of school (and were successfully defended by Food for Life with our partners when the policy was threatened in the 2017 Conservative manifesto).
- The 2016 Childhood Obesity Plan contained a sugary drinks levy but little else. The Government is cutting local authority public health budgets, which in turn threatens funding for prevention programmes like Food for Life.



What have we achieved?

- Our Food for Life Served Here (FFLSH) scheme now certifies over 1.7 million meals a day, with more than 1 million meeting our Silver & Gold standards. Half of England's primary schools (>10,000) can now say "Food for Life Served Here".
- We have transitioned our Schools programme from Lottery funding to public health commissioning in over 20 local authorities across England. Lottery funding has continued to support us to innovate and extend our work into nurseries, hospitals and care settings.
- Over 1000 schools have achieved a Food for Life School Award for their 'whole school approach to food' and we have launched an equivalent award for nurseries. Independent evaluation has shown that pupils in Food for Life schools are twice as likely to eat their five-a-day compared to pupils in matched comparison schools. The impact travels home: 45% of parents report that they eat more vegetables
- Since we launched Sustainable Food Cities with Sustain and Food Matters, more than 50 cities have joined the network and 10 have achieved prestigious SFC Awards. Our Out to Lunch campaign has made over 8 million children's meals a year more nutritious and sustainable. An army of 'secret diner' families helped rank high street restaurants and visitor attractions on the healthiness of their food.
- Organic food is now on the school menu in some of the most disadvantaged communities in the country, from Tower Hamlets to Oldham.
- The proportion of organic in the food service has doubled in the last two years, with £9m of organic produce now served in schools and hospitals.



Our priorities to 2020:

Campaigning

Out to Lunch: we will continue to shine an annual spotlight on children's food in high street chains and visitor attractions, aiming to improve over 50 million children's meals a year by 2020.

Investment in child health: we will join with our public health partners to call for an end to budget cuts for public health that are starving child health programmes, like Food for Life.

Public sector food procurement: we will join partners, Sustain and Jamie Oliver Food Foundation, to highlight threats to quality. We want the Government to use the £2bn annual public investment in school and hospital meals to promote good food for all and our strong British values around the countryside, wildlife and animal welfare.

Developing solutions

Better food for older people – with £1.2 million funding from the Big Lottery, we will learn with older people and their carers in Edinburgh, Calderdale, Leicester and Leicestershire, how food and shared food activities can transform their health and wellbeing.

Future food shop – we will involve young people in designing a rating tool for food retail and a plan for a future food shop that would support them to make healthy and sustainable food choices.

Hospitals Award – to solve the crisis of diet-related ill health, hospitals need to become 'beacons of good food' in their communities. We will engage staff, patients and visitors from our Food for Life Hospitals Network to develop a vision for a future hospital, as well as co-design an Award for hospitals that aim high.

Early Years – we will engage families in disadvantaged communities to understand how Food for Life Early Years can help them give their children the best possible start to their food journey both at nursery and at home.

Green Kitchen Standard – Soil Association Certification and Carbon Trust have joined forces to create a new scheme which recognises caterers that are taking positive steps to sustainably manage energy, water and waste. Together, with Food for Life Served Here, this creates a one-stop shop for verifying compliance with the Government's Balanced Scorecard for public procurement of food and catering, and we will continue to develop and promote this scheme.





Ensuring change continues, & grows in impact

Sustainable Food Cities – by 2020 we aim to have helped more than 70 towns and cities across the UK to have developed Sustainable Food Cities programmes and for 30 of those to have achieved an Award, helping them make good food a defining characteristic of their community.

Food for Life Schools and Early Years – by 2020 we aim to double the number of schools and nurseries taking a ‘whole setting approach to food’, giving more children the best possible start to their relationship with food.

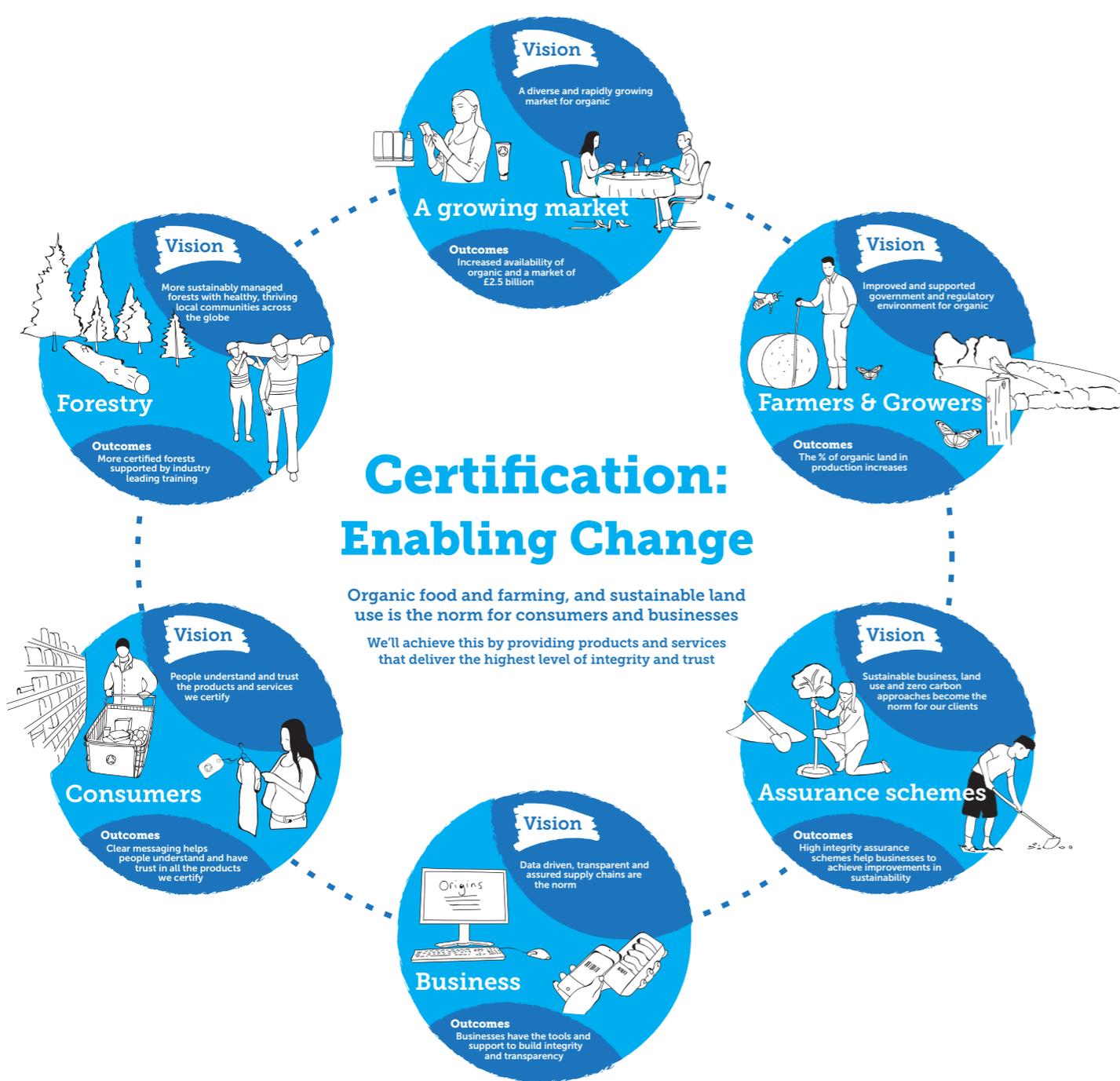
Food for Life Served Here – by 2020 we aim to double the number of meals certified at Silver and Gold to reach over 2 million Silver & Gold meals a day by 2020, making organic, local and high-welfare food more widely available to all.

Certification: Enabling Change

Providing high-integrity assurance across food, farming and forestry to drive lasting change.

As successive scandals have caused consumers to question the quality and origins of their food, and growing numbers of people and businesses want to contribute to a better world through their purchases, providing tight checks against high standards has become ever more important. Our not for profit subsidiary, Soil Association Certification provides this across food, forestry, land use, textiles, and health and beauty. By building the demand for certified products, we encourage more sustainable food, forestry and land use.





What has changed since 2012?

- 🌿 The UK organic market has bounced back from a low in 2012, growing at 7% against a flat non-organic market in 2016; its fifth year of consecutive growth
- 🌿 Brexit has resulted in uncertainty for organic farming subsidies with differences between the devolved nations' approaches in the build up to leaving the EU. Despite this, organic land in conversion is now increasing again.
- 🌿 Organic beauty has seen a significant increase in both demand and production. We are a founding partner of COSMOS and have led the implementation of this unified standard across our Licensees.
- 🌿 Sustainable textile production has been recognised as a necessity by major brands and retailers. We are a part of the Sustainable Cotton Initiative, led by the International Sustainability Unit, which brings together 13 leading brands.
- 🌿 The food retail landscape in the UK has changed; the share of organic food sold by supermarkets has dropped from 80% to 69% as new ways of eating and shopping develop.



What have we achieved?

- 🌿 There is now over £15 million of organic food sold in public places such as schools and hospitals or on the High Street. We have developed new schemes to support this and to build supply chain links into food service for organic. All the large UK wholesalers now have organic ranges available.
- 🌿 Our marketing and communications have helped to ensure that 80% of shoppers now have some understanding of what organic food is. (England Marketing 2017).
- 🌿 The number of organic processors (businesses), who benefit from our business support, have increased significantly.
- 🌿 Soil Association Certification now certifies over 15 million hectares of forest around the world and works with 2,500 businesses in 54 countries, covering everything from builders' merchants and furniture makers, to saw mills, printers, toy manufacturers and publishers. We have also started certifying to the Woodland Carbon Code.
- 🌿 82% of the public now buy organic food at least once a year. 39% buy it weekly. (England Marketing 2017). Organic food is now stocked in over 8,000 outlets across the UK ranging from Independent stores and discounters, to box schemes and online.
- 🌿 Organic Beauty is now established as a viable and mainstream market with both supply and demand increasing by over 20% year on year and engaging more people with organic. COSMOS is fully launched as a unified international standard providing increased consumer confidence.



Our priorities to 2020

Ensuring a clear certification and regulatory environment for our licensees and the market.

Recognising the need for the organic industry to have a joined-up voice and to ensure a clear regulatory environment for business, we will work with other certification bodies, the Organic Forums and governments across the devolved nations to facilitate this.

Building demand for certified products

Building consumer understanding of organic through a cross industry approach and clear, consistent and simple messaging in a complex food labelling world. We will work to be more compelling to consumers by talking with one voice.

Supporting consumer choices through working in partnership with retailers and outlets to ensure the availability of organic products. We will provide the market insight and knowledge through our networking and knowledge exchange forums, and support the innovative businesses that we certify to build new routes to market.

Recognising the **global context**, we will continue to support licensees to work across the world through our certification expertise but also through our inclusion in Department of Business and Industry initiatives such as Food is Great and the UK Food and Drink International Action Plan 2016 – 2020, which focuses on organic.

Developing certification, training and complementary services

Through investing in and developing our new IT system, we will improve the certification experience, streamlining our processes and giving improved value and efficiency to licensees and offering best in class certification systems.

As certification and supply chains become more complex in a global and fast moving environment, we will explore technologies that help to provide full transparency and integrity, building on our initial trial in this area.

Working with partners and other organisations is essential to our approach and we will continue to develop data sharing solutions and products.

We work with brands, retail and corporates to help deliver their own sustainable/ environmental assurances, ensuring integrity through their supply chains. These are delivered through consultancy, third party auditing and training.

Through the support of the Shuttleworth Trust, we will develop and deliver international industry leading Sustainable Forestry training.

Ensuring that change continues, and grows in impact

Organic Served Here. Our scheme to recognise and support more organic food being served on the High Street will grow by over 80%, assisting restaurants and cafes to source more organic products.

Supply into Food Service. We will double the number of organic licensees supplying food service through our ground-breaking supplier scheme; building reach into public procurement, and into schools, hospitals and workplaces alongside training and supporting licensees.

Grow land in organic conversion. Through supporting potential applicants effectively and through supply chain work, we will provide the information, networking and knowledge that is needed to ensure a balanced supply and demand.

Forestry certification. The global reach of our forestry certification provides us with powerful insights into international and local issues and concerns. We aim to continue to build on this activity, seeking to achieve increased impact through this work. We hope to be certifying 16.5 million hectares of certified forest by 2020.

Invest in organic textiles and health and beauty as these grow and support businesses in a sustainable journey. We will increase the number of licensees to 400 and invest in building supply chains.



Building our organisation

We've been making some big changes to the way we work.

To achieve our ambitions, the Soil Association needs to be in the best shape it can be – as proactive, efficient and forward-thinking as possible. We will do this by investing in our staff and systems, making best use of digital technology, measuring our impact and continually learning from and reviewing what we do. As charities face ever greater public scrutiny we will continue to strive for first class governance, to ensure we are a robust and stable organisation working in line with best practice. At the same time we are committed to securing the necessary funding to deliver really great work.

We are keen to work in partnership to develop solutions to some of the world's biggest problems. Currently our work is touching more people's lives than ever before but we plan to redouble our efforts to communicate more widely, influence more people, attract more supporters and strengthen relationships with existing donors. We know that we must talk to those who share our aspirations so that together we can build a better food and farming future.







Inspiring others with our vision for change

We have reinvigorated our brand with the aim of presenting ourselves to the world as a dynamic and positive organisation, keen to work with others on solutions to some of the world's biggest problems. Now our work is touching more people's lives than ever before but we will redouble our efforts to become better known, attract more supporters, and influence more people to make changes. We seek the holy grail, to be able to communicate the breadth and depth of what we do in a straightforward and compelling way.

Investment in additional fundraising resources and supporting systems is now bearing fruit, as we strengthen existing donor relationships and make new friends. Growing membership numbers

continues to be a challenge and we are yet to meet our modest goals in this area. We will look at how we get our messages across to those who might support our work, and show how we share their aspirations for a better food and farming future. This is vital, as it is the 'unrestricted' funds from members and donors which allow us to campaign and communicate freely, to develop new policy thinking, and to respond instantly to threats and opportunities.

We are building on strategic funding partnerships with corporates who share our vision and values. Despite the competitive environment, our funding from charitable trusts and foundations has grown steadily and provides the bedrock of project funding.

A charity fit-for-purpose

The combination of philanthropic support alongside significant contributions from earned income sources, such as service contracts and returns from our trading subsidiaries, means we have a diverse income base. We will continue to ensure this is the case. Yet we can never become complacent. Over the next couple of years, we have plans to deliver a series of modest annual surpluses so we can achieve our free reserves target. This will help us weather financial uncertainties and seize opportunities when they arise.

Charities are facing ever greater public scrutiny and as a result, there is increasing regulation designed to improve confidence in the sector. Our 2014 governance review ensured we are line with best practice and we continue to strengthen the mechanisms which support our Trustees in their scrutiny of the Soil Association, including most recently, our responsibilities around fundraising and management of data.





At the Soil Association we care about human health, nature, soil, water, forests and animal welfare. If you share our vision of good food for all, produced with care for the natural world, I'd love to talk to you about how you might be able to make a difference.

Now, more than ever before, we need to work together to make the most of the opportunities ahead. Please do get in touch.

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Helen Browning, OBE, Chief Executive

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