

**England's Food Policy Response to Covid-19:
Review of policy issues and interventions**

Kelly Parsons and David Barling
Food Systems and Policy Research Group

Contents

Introduction.....	3
Methods.....	3
Key to Departmental Acronymns.....	3
Part I: Issues and Interventions (March – September 2020).....	4
Part II: Timeline of Food Policy Interventions (March-September 2020).....	10
Conclusion.....	20
References.....	21

Suggested Citation: Parsons, K., & Barling, D. (2021). *England’s Food Policy Response to Covid: Review of Policy Issues and Interventions*. University of Hertfordshire. <https://doi.org/10.18745/pb.24277>

© 2021 The Author(s). This an open access work distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution Licence (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>), which permits unrestricted reuse, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited.

Introduction

This report was produced as part of a project on England’s food policy and food security, funded through Research England’s Quality-related Research Strategic Priorities Fund at the University of Hertfordshire.

The aim of the project is to analyse England’s food policy response to the Covid-19 pandemic, to gain insights into the current state of its food policy processes and operations. A particular focus is the coordination of national food policy approaches, and their implications for food policy and food security going forward.

This report presents a review of food-related issues and interventions related to the Covid-19 pandemic. An forthcoming journal paper focuses on the role of coordination in the response. The report has two main parts, the first presents issues and interventions, using the different segments of the supply chain as an organising framework. Part II presents a timeline of interventions between March-September 2020, with a primary focus on government policy interventions.

Methods

The report is based on data from multiple sources, including submissions to, and the report of, the UK Parliamentary Select Committee on Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Inquiry on Covid and Food Supply, launched April 2020 and published July 2020 (EFRA 2020a). The inquiry received 150 written submissions and took oral evidence from businesses in the food supply chain, food aid organisations, charities, academics and DEFRA. In addition, a timeline of food-relevant developments was created. The timeline was populated with policy announcements, taken from the Gov.uk website. Developments were also identified through a range of other sources, including the Food Research Collaboration’s tracker tool (Food Research Collaboration 2020), and the news archives of private sector and civil society groups: National Farmers’ Union (National Farmers Union n.d); British Retail Consortium (BRC n.d); Food and Drink Federation (FDF n.d); Food Foundation (Food Foundation n.d); Sustain (Sustain n.d.). These sources were complimented with additional documentary data, including media reports. For each development, the key responsible organisation was documented.

The following table provides a key to the departmental acronyms used in the review.

Table 1: Key to Departmental Acronyms

BEIS: Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy	FSA: Food Standards Agency
DCMS: Department for Culture, Media and Sport	HMG: Her Majesty’s Government (UK Government)
DEFRA: Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs	HMT: Her Majesty’s Treasury
DfE: Department for Education	MHCLG: Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government
DfT: Department for Transport	PHE: Public Health England (Agency)
DHSC: Department of Health and Social Care	RPA: Rural Payments Agency
DIT: Department for International Trade	WRAP: Waste Resources Action Plan
DWP: Department of Work and Pensions	

Part I: Issues and Interventions (March – September 2020)

In this section, overarching non-food policy interventions impacting the food system are outlined, followed by issues and interventions at each stage of the food supply chain.

Overarching Issues and Interventions

A series of interventions to contain the spread of the virus impacted across the entire food chain, including closure of businesses (including hospitality and workplaces more broadly), schools and other education settings. These had significant economic consequences, leading to a broad range of supports, including: a Job Retention Scheme for furloughing of staff, business interruption loans, grants and relief on business rates (DEFRA 2020).

Along with economic supports, overarching food-related interventions included assigning key worker status (that is, those whose work is considered critical to the Covid-19 response) to those working in food chain - those involved in food production, processing, distribution, sale and delivery as well as those essential to the provision of other key goods (for example hygienic supplies and veterinary medicines) (DEFRA 2020), and the relaxation of regulations to allow collaboration across the supply chain and within different sectors such as retail.

In addition, there were issues specific to particular segments of the supply chain, with interventions to address these associated with a wide range of government departments, for example: remote inspections of farms and other food businesses (FSA); initiatives to ensure agricultural labour supply (DEFRA); relaxation of regulations on labelling (FSA), driver/delivery hours (DfT - Department for Transport); relaxation of competition rules (DEFRA; BEIS – Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy); retailer-led restrictions on food purchasing; guidance for food businesses on Covid-19 (PHE, DEFRA); relaxation of planning rules to allow pubs and restaurants to operate as hot food takeaways (MHCLG – Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government); the Eat Out to Help Out discount scheme to encourage a return to hospitality (HMT – Her Majesty's Treasury); a voucher scheme replacing free school meals (DfE – Department for Education); and several food assistance interventions to the vulnerable, who were either shielding or could not otherwise access food (DEFRA).

Inputs and Primary Production

Though the UK relies heavily on imported agricultural inputs, including chemicals and feed, and supply disruptions have been noted in other countries (Lamichhane and Reay-Jones 2020; All About Feed 2020), impacts on food production in the UK have not been particularly significant, though some price rises have been noted (AHDB 2020). The same cannot be said for the impacts of closure of hospitality and other catering businesses on producers. The resulting slump in demand from such buyers had serious impacts on farmers and fishers, who - because of distinct supply chains for food service and retail – were left with excess stock. Farmers were pictured in news reports pouring away milk they could not sell, due to a 'near total shutdown of demand for milk going into the food service/hospitality sector' (EFRA 2020a). Several other sectors reliant on restaurant buyers, such as beef and fish, were also badly affected. High price cuts of beef to restaurants were unable to be redeployed to retail supply chains in a timely fashion and in some cases were converted into cheaper minced beef portions to meet increased consumer demand (Parsons and Barling 2020).

The policy response later introduced support for connecting supply across separate chains for retail and catering; along with increased collaboration *within* supply chains – for example the Department for Environment, Food and rural Affairs (DEFRA) convened a group of representatives from across the beef supply chain including producers, processors, exporters and retailers to address carcass imbalance - and relaxation of competition law to allow the dairy industry to better collaborate to minimise the volume of surplus milk going to waste (DEFRA 2020). Government also worked with the private sector to produce marketing campaigns to drive consumption of foods in excess supply, such as milk, with a £1m ‘milk your moments’ campaign focused on tea, coffee and milky drinks (AHDB n.d). More direct economic assistance was also provided to particular sectors, including a one-off loss insurance scheme for dairy farmers; a Fisheries Response Fund to assist fishing and aquaculture businesses, and a Domestic Seafood Support Scheme to help seafood businesses in England increase supply of local seafood to domestic markets (DEFRA 2020). In the potato sector Maximum Residue levels permitted for the sprout suppressant CIPC were relaxed to allow potatoes normally destined for the processing sector to access the fresh sales and retail markets (EFRA 2020b).

Beyond these specific sectors, flexibilities and extensions for the Basic Payment Scheme and the Stewardship scheme application deadlines were put in place (Rural Payments Agency 2020), and inspections, for assurance schemes such as Red Tractor and British Lion eggs, switched from in person to remote (Farming UK 2020). This led to concerns about the lack of physical inspections, and about the safety implications of farmers selling raw drinking milk and fishermen selling directly to the public (Food Standards Agency 2020 Horizon).

Disruption to labour supply due to travel restrictions and sickness was another issue at, given the UK agricultural sector’s reliance on seasonal migrant workers (an estimated 70,000 seasonal migrant workers (ONS 2018). Several interventions were made to address the labour issue, including permission for charter flights of Eastern European workers, a joint government-food industry PickforBritain initiative to promote working in agriculture, and removal of barriers to domestic workers taking up seasonal employment, allowing furloughed workers to undertake seasonal labour as well as claiming 80% of government support (DEFRA 2020). In addition, the Gangmasters and Labour Abuse Authority (GLAA), an independent government body charged with protecting vulnerable and exploited workers, issued a temporary licensing scheme for businesses operating within the wider labour supply industry to support labour providers who held GLAA licences (See Table).

Processing/Manufacturing

Along with the economic and other overarching key worker policies and relaxations in rules on collaboration aimed at ensuring smooth supply, additional relaxations were made on food labelling and to audits and hygiene inspections (Food Standards Agency 2020). Like farmers, processors and manufacturers were significantly impacted by the closure of catering, and concurrent increase in retail demand. While supply of ingredients was not a problem per se, the shift created issues for high demand products such as flour and eggs, where packaging was not always available to facilitate transfer between supply chains. Packaging was also impeded by suspensions to recycling collections, which reduced availability of cardboard (The Guardian 2020).

A particularly critical issue was factories, and in particular meat plants - identified as a focus and area of concern for the Food Standards Agency (FSA) (Hancock 2020). Their cold temperatures, metal surfaces and close working arrangements were identified as particularly favourable to virus transmission. In the early phase of the pandemic, lack of clear guidance on use of PPE including face masks, visors in food processing plants, attracted criticism, against a backdrop of controversial policy decisions in the USA to keep plants operating in the face of virus transmission. An editorial in the British Medical Journal described meat plants as 'a new front line', saying businesses had failed in their duty to workers and wider public health (Middleton et al 2020). The tensions are evident in a 03 April letter from the chair of the Food Standards Agency to the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs select committee Chair. The provision of PPE to inspection staff raised concerns from industry because of the 'potential knock-on expectations' of factory workers. Meat factory staff were noted to be raising the issue of masks with their employers (Hancock 2020), and there were walk-outs over safety concerns (Belfast Telegraph 2020).

Distribution and Trade

Relaxation of regulation to minimise disruption to food supply was particularly important in this segment: restrictions on delivery driver hours were loosened (and greeted by some push back from the trade union over potential compromises to worker safety (Personnel Today 2020) and relaxation of delivery restrictions during unsocial hours. Other relaxations included flexibilities to support port health authorities, including deferring some planned food hygiene, food standards and feed inspections, and on documentation for imported food (FSA 2020). On the trade side, along with relaxations at ports were several policy initiatives to support food imports and exports, including an export insurance scheme (STFC 2020). Disruptions to trade, and to supply chains, also drew attention to the somewhat neglected role of storage in the food industry: cold storage capacity came close to outstripping demand during the first months of the pandemic (Logistics manager 2020; Cold Chain Federation 2020) mirroring food industry warnings on the need to improve storage and infrastructure due to Brexit (The Guardian 2020b).

In comparison to other parts of the sector, support for food wholesalers was deemed to be lacking, with the Federation of Wholesale Distributors (FWD) describing its suffering throughout the pandemic, with no specific support available, and wholesalers operating at a loss in order to supply the number of public sector institutions - hospitals, care homes and prisons, and some schools – which rely on it (EFRA 2021). Some pivoted to selling direct to consumers at the start of the pandemic (The Grocer, 2020; BBC 2020).

Retail

This segment was perhaps the most visibly impacted in the early phase of the pandemic, particularly in relation to the availability of both foods and of online shopping capacity. Disruption of supply into the country was an initial concern, but the main issue was caused by disruptions in consumer buying patterns, including people buying greater quantity per shop (and less frequently), a huge rise in demand for online food shopping, and restricted access to shops for various reasons such as being clinically vulnerable, or infected, both requiring isolation at home. According to the government response to the EFRA Inquiry: 'consumer purchasing of certain products surged in the weeks leading up to lockdown, with number of visits and basket size increasing significantly' (DEFRA 2020), with the

British Retail Consortium adding that “the first excessive buying started towards the end of February and went right through to the third week of March” (EFRA 2020a).

This ‘demand spike’ led to retailer’s rationing certain popular products, and communicating directly with customers about supply availability. By the second week of March, supermarkets limited shoppers to buying no more than five of certain goods, including antibacterial gels, wipes and sprays, dry pasta, UHT milk and some tinned vegetables (BBC 2020b). And British food retailers wrote a joint letter to their customers to reassure them about extra steps being taken by retailers and called on them to be considerate in the way they shop (BRC 2020). The retailers later instigated special shopping hours for the elderly/vulnerable and/or health and other emergency workers, and - working with data provided by the government – a system of priority slots for those vulnerable who could not physically access stores (Manchester Evening News 2020). Various health measures were also put in place, including queuing and limited customer numbers; floor markings; perspex screens, and sanitiser stations (Which? 2020). Interventions which relaxed the regulations on collaboration on stock data and distribution, designating supermarket staff as key workers, and on driver/delivery hours, were used to keep supply flowing.

Beyond the large retailers, there was a surge in the use of veg box delivery and similar short supply chain schemes (Resilience.org 2020), though data on this section of the supply is more patchy. New - unregulated - marketplaces for food such as via Facebook also emerged or expanded, with numerous profiles on Facebook Marketplace reported to be selling meat, eggs and fish, with often no clear evidence that necessary safety checks had been met (FSA 2020b).

Hotel, Restaurant and Catering (Horeca)

While the retail sector was grappling with a surfeit of business, the opposite was the case for the food service sector (a term used here to encompass hotel, restaurant and catering). The supply chain to food service is reported to have lost nearly 80% of its business overnight with the closures of schools (and other education settings) (See Table) and pubs and restaurants in mid-March (BBC, 2020c). This was the culmination of a period of declining eating and drinking out, exacerbated by a pre-closure warning from the Prime Minister for people to stay away from pubs, clubs and theatres (BBC 2020d). These widespread closures in turn led to a large number of catering staff - estimated 8 in 10 - placed in the Government’s furlough scheme (Food Foundation 2020), and a huge effort to re-purpose surplus produce, and re-purpose businesses, including a shift to takeaway. Planning rules were relaxed so pubs and restaurants could operate as hot food takeaways without making an application for planning permission (See Table). Many restaurants joined online delivery platforms, such as Just Eat, Deliveroo and Uber Eats. The latter reported the number of restaurants on its UK platform almost doubled (FSA 2020b).

Months later, additional interventions were made to support re-opening, including new guidelines on how to be ‘covid-secure’, and a Treasury-led intervention to overcome consumer fear of eating out and support catering businesses, called ‘Eat Out to Help Out’. The scheme allowed customers to get a 50% discount at restaurants registered with the scheme during the month of August (See table), and according to the UK Hospitality trade Association, brought 400,000 workers back from furlough - a 61% reduction in use of furlough as a sector (UK Hospitality 2021).

Eating and Food Waste

By nature, many of the issues and interventions outlined in the previous sections overlap with the supply chain segment *eating*, given that consumers are the target of interventions to ensure a safe and smooth supply of food. As already noted, increased consumer demand and a change in buying habits created a 'demand shock', resulting in unfamiliar instances of empty shelves. Other changes in consumer behaviour included around food waste (WRAP 2020), as a result of a perceived scarcity and more time spent at home and around packaging. Safety concerns led to a preference - both from consumers and producers - for fresh-food packaged in plastic containers (to avoid food contamination and to extend shelf-life), and single-use food packaging and plastic bags (Silva et al 2021).

While physical access was sometimes challenging for the average shopper, issues were acute for vulnerable populations, including those experiencing food insecurity or those in isolation who could not leave home. Food banks saw a surge in demand (at the same time as volunteer help, and supplies of food from donations –disrupted by the demand shock – came under pressure). Key provider the Trussell Trust reported an 89% increase in the number of people turning to its food banks in April 2020 across the UK, compared to the previous year. This was against a backdrop of a slow but significant increase in customers prior to covid. It is estimated that, prior to the pandemic, around 20% of adults experience food insecurity annually (Food Foundation 2020b). Research in the early months estimated that food insecure adults quadrupled under the COVID-19 lockdown (ibid), and in April it was reported the number of people applying for the social welfare scheme Universal Credit rose by 1.4 million since the start of the crisis (Children's Food Campaign 2020).

The organisation FareShare, which distributes often surplus food from the private sector to food banks and other charitable groups, reported a threefold increase in demand at the peak of the crisis (FareShare 2020). There were several policy interventions to support this food waste distribution effort; DEFRA and the FSA renewed their guidance on "best before" dates, allowing for less food waste and more food available for consumption (See Table), and £16m of emergency funding was made available to the charity sector, including £10.5m to FareShare, for the purchase of non-perishable food suitable for food parcels - such as tins, pasta and rice - at cost price from retailers (FareShare 2020). Funding was assigned to a Waste Resource Action Programme (WRAP) COVID-19 Emergency Surplus Food Grant, to enable not-for-profit redistribution organisations to overcome barriers to distribution of surplus food that would otherwise be wasted (DEFRA 2020).

School food was a problematic policy area. Several interventions were made in response to the closure of schools to the majority of pupils, primarily around the replacement of free school meal provision. There was criticism of the design of, and communication around, a voucher scheme replacing free school meals (redeemable at retailers). There was controversy over the government's halting of provision during school holidays. Only after lobbying was the voucher scheme extended to include the Easter holidays (Children's Food Campaign 2020), and similar lobbying - including a high-profile campaign by the footballer Marcus Rashford and civil society groups - took place for provision to continue during subsequent holidays. In addition, the school fruit and veg scheme (which provides a piece of fruit or veg to school children age 4-7), was suspended, which meant vulnerable/keyworker kids who were still in school missed out and there were reports of parents and schools paying out of their own pocket for produce (Food for Life 2020).

Along with those targeting the food insecure, were several food assistance interventions to the vulnerable, who were either shielding or could not otherwise access food. DEFRA created guidance for clinically extremely vulnerable (CEV) populations to self-isolate and provided them with information on access to food, helplines and shopping guidance and behaviour. The government also worked with a range of food wholesalers, other food suppliers and local authorities to make available an increased range of food packages that could be ordered online or over the phone (DEFRA 2020). In addition, there was a one-off emergency drop of food - over 150 bulk deliveries - to Local Authorities in England, with the aim of ensuring councils had the resources to support shielding individuals at the local level while a 'direct to doorstep' system was developed and rolled out. The government subsequently contracted wholesalers Bidfoods and Brakes to deliver weekly parcels of essential items - directly to individuals' doorsteps. According to the government, contents were reviewed by nutritionists to ensure they provided adequate nutrition for one person for one week (DEFRA 2020).

Part II: Timeline of Food Policy Interventions (March-September 2020)

The following section presents a timeline of interventions between March and September 2020. For each intervention, the key responsible stakeholder – government department or agency, private sector organisation or civil society group – is listed. The timeline provides insights into the development of responses, including which actors – government, private sector or civil society – took the lead in responding. This enables the identification of possible gaps between calls for, and delivery of, policy interventions (for example on ensuring food to the vulnerable). These dynamics are discussed in detail in a forthcoming paper on coordination produced for the project.

Table A1: Timeline of Food Policy Issues and Interventions March-September 2020

DATE	GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENT/S/STAKE HOLDER GROUP	POLICY DEVELOPMENT IMPACTING FOOD	SOURCE
08 March 2020	Food Retailers	Supermarkets limit sale of certain foods	https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-51790375 (Accessed March 2021)
09 March 2020	DEFRA	New Measures on night time delivery hours	https://www.gov.uk/government/news/new-measures-on-night-time-deliveries-to-supermarkets-to-support-coronavirus-response (Accessed March 2021)
15 March 2020	Food Civil Society	Civil Society calls on government to secure food supplies	https://www.sustainweb.org/news/mar20_covid_19_vulnerable_people_food_support/ (Accessed March 2021)
	Food Retailers	British food retailers write joint letter to their customers in the wake of coronavirus (Covid-19)	https://brc.org.uk/news/corporate-affairs/food-retailers-reassure-customers-and-ask-them-to-buy-responsibly/ (Accessed March 2021)
16 March 2020	Prime Minister	PM calls on people to stay away from pubs, clubs and theatres and to avoid all non-essential contacts and travel	https://www.theguardian.com/politics/live/2020/mar/16/boris-johnson-press-conference-coronavirus-live-firms-could-soon-be-allowed-to-run-reduced-services-because-of-coronavirus-shapps-suggests-politics-live (Accessed March 2021)
17 March 2020	MHCLG	Permission granted for pubs and restaurants to operate as hot food takeaways	https://www.gov.uk/government/news/government-to-grant-permission-for-pubs-and-restaurants-to-operate-as-takeaways-as-part-of-coronavirus-response (Accessed March 2021)
18 March 2020	DfE	Closure of schools, colleges, early years	https://www.gov.uk/government/news/schools-colleges-and-early-years-settings-to-close (Accessed March 2021)
	MHCLG	Rate relief for retail, hospitality, leisure businesses	https://www.gov.uk/guidance/check-if-your-retail-hospitality-or-leisure-business-is-eligible-for-business-rates-relief-due-to-coronavirus-covid-19 (Accessed March 2021)

19 March 2020	DEFRA, BEIS	Relaxation of competition law	https://www.gov.uk/government/news/supermarkets-to-join-forces-to-feed-the-nation (Accessed March 2021)
	CABINET OFFICE	List of critical workers published	Link no longer available (Accessed March 2020)
	Food and Drink Federation	FDF writes to Secretaries of State calling on the Government to provide childcare for the food and drink supply chain	https://www.fdf.org.uk/dfd/news-media/press-releases/2020-press-releases/closure-of-schools/ (Accessed March 2021)
20 March 2020	DfT	Relaxation of driver hours	https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-on-drivers-hours-relaxations (Accessed March 2021)
	BEIS	Corporate Financing Facility	https://www.gov.uk/guidance/apply-for-the-covid-19-corporate-financing-facility (Accessed March 2021)
	Prime Minister	Closure of Pubs and Restaurants	https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-51981653 (Accessed March 2021)
	Food Civil Society	Civil Society call for intervention by HMT and DWP to support civil society on food access	https://www.sustainweb.org/blogs/mar20_this_is_an_emergency_coronavirus_requires_action_on_food/ (Accessed March 2021)
23 March 2020	Prime Minister	Lockdown Announced	https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/pm-address-to-the-nation-on-coronavirus-23-march-2020 (Accessed March 2021)
	BEIS	Business interruption scheme	https://www.gov.uk/guidance/apply-for-the-coronavirus-business-interruption-loan-scheme (Accessed March 2021)
	CABINET OFFICE	Social Distancing Guidance	https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/full-guidance-on-staying-at-home-and-away-from-others/full-guidance-on-staying-at-home-and-away-from-others#closing-non-essential-shops-and-public-spaces (Accessed March 2021)

	CABINET OFFICE	Additional closures of businesses	https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/further-businesses-and-premises-to-close (Accessed March 2021)
24 March 2020	BEIS	Guidance for Local Authorities on business support funding	https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-on-business-support-grant-funding (Accessed March 2021)
	Food Civil Society	Civil Society Food Bank Networks express concern over ability to operate	https://www.sustainweb.org/news/mar20_independent_food_banks_ask_can_we_stay_open/ (Accessed March 2021)
25 March 2020	PHE, DEFRA	Guidance for food businesses on covid 19	https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-for-food-businesses/guidance-for-food-businesses-on-coronavirus-covid-19 (Accessed March 2021)
	HMG	Coronavirus Act	https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2020/7/note/s/division/2/index.htm (Accessed March 2021)
	DHSC	Health Protection (Coronavirus Restrictions)	https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2020/350/contents/made (Accessed March 2021)
26 March 2020	FSA	FSA - Food safety for food delivery guidance	https://www.food.gov.uk/business-guidance/food-safety-for-food-delivery (Accessed March 2021)
	DEFRA	DEFRA press office issues response to media reports on the inevitability of food rationing	https://DEFRAmedia.blog.gov.uk/2020/03/26/response-to-calls-for-food-rationing/ (Accessed March 2021)
27 March 2020	HMT	Details of Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme Announced	https://www.gov.uk/government/news/further-details-of-coronavirus-job-retention-scheme-announced (Accessed March 2021)

	Food Civil Society	Civil Society publish concerns on government food parcels are missing people in need of support including schoolchildren, people with elevated health risk.	https://www.sustainweb.org/news/mar20_millions_people_will_need_food_aid/ (Accessed March 2021)
28 March 2020	DEFRA	Food Heroes campaign	https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=500282100606361 (Accessed March 2021)
29 March	MHCLG	First food parcels delivered to clinically vulnerable	https://www.gov.uk/government/news/first-food-parcels-delivered-to-clinically-vulnerable-people (Accessed March 2021)
30 March 2020	HMRC	Destroying spoilt beer, cider, wine or made-wine during coronavirus	https://www.gov.uk/guidance/destroying-spoilt-beer-during-coronavirus-covid-19 (Accessed March 2021)
21 April 2020	WRAP, FSA, DEFRA	Surplus Food Redistribution Labelling Guidance	https://wrap.org.uk/resources/guide/surplus-food-redistribution-labelling-guidance (Accessed March 2021)
01 April 2020	RURAL PAYMENTS AGENCY	Coronavirus (COVID-19): information for farmers, landowners and rural businesses	https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-information-for-farmers-landowners-and-rural-businesses (Accessed March 2021)
	BEIS	Coronavirus Retail, Hospitality and Leisure Grant Fund	https://www.gov.uk/guidance/check-if-youre-eligible-for-the-coronavirus-retail-hospitality-and-leisure-grant-fund (Accessed March 2021)
	GANGMASTERS AND LABOUR ABUSE AUTHORITY	Introduction of temporary licensing scheme to support food production sector in accessing the labour it needs.	https://www.gla.gov.uk/whats-new/latest-press-releases/31032020-temporary-licences-to-be-issued-during-coronavirus-outbreak/ (Accessed March 2021)
02 April 2020	DEFRA	Essential Supplies to the Vulnerable Taskforce established	https://www.lucyallan.com/news/government-providing-food-and-essential-supplies-those-need (Accessed March 2021)

	Food Civil Society		https://www.sustainweb.org/news/apr20_emergency_food_boxes_jenni_russell/ (Accessed March 2021)
		Civil society groups criticise Government food parcels in response to media coverage of poor quality content	
03 April 2020	DEFRA	Cash support for food redistribution	https://www.gov.uk/government/news/cash-support-for-food-redistribution-during-coronavirus-outbreak?utm_source=f5ca22f6-c4df-4708-b12c-a2df39406c8f&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=govuk-notifications&utm_content=immediate (Accessed March 2021)
	BEIS	Large Business interruption loan scheme	https://www.gov.uk/guidance/apply-for-the-coronavirus-large-business-interruption-loan-scheme#eligibility (Accessed March 2021)
	DHSC	Waiver of need for professional's signature for Healthy Start voucher applications	https://www.healthystart.nhs.uk/healthy-start-vouchers/how-to-apply/ (Accessed March 2021)
	Food Civil Society	Civil Society calls for increased support and recognition of role of street markets	https://www.sustainweb.org/news/apr20_emergency_food_boxes_jenni_russell/ (Accessed March 2021)
07 April 2020	FSA	Open Letter to the Meat Industry	https://www.food.gov.uk/news-alerts/news/open-letter-to-the-meat-industry-in-england-in-response-to-coronavirus (Accessed March 2021)
	FSA	Food safety for community cooking and food banks guidance	https://www.food.gov.uk/safety-hygiene/food-safety-for-community-cooking-and-food-banks (Accessed March 2021)
08 April 2020	BEIS	A list of the rules that have been temporarily relaxed to make it easier for businesses to continue working through the disruption caused by coronavirus (COVID-19)	https://www.gov.uk/guidance/rules-that-have-been-relaxed-to-help-businesses-during-the-coronavirus-pandemic (Accessed March 2021)
09 April 2020	DFE	Agreement to extend Free School Meal eligibility	https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-free-school-meals-guidance/guidance-for-the-

			temporary-extension-of-free-school-meals-eligibility-to-nrpf-groups (Accessed March 2021)
	Food Civil Society	Health campaigners call for the Government to take action on obesity as part of their Covid-19 inquiry	https://www.sustainweb.org/news/may20_call_for_obesity_action/ (Accessed March 2021)
17 April 2020	DEFRA	Pick for Britain campaign	https://www.gov.uk/government/news/dairy-industry-to-join-together-to-manage-milk-supply (Accessed March 2021)
	DEFRA, BEIS	Competition rules temporarily relaxed to allow dairy industry to work together more during coronavirus crisis	https://www.gov.uk/government/news/dairy-industry-to-join-together-to-manage-milk-supply25 (Accessed March 2021)
	FSA	Guidance for consumers on safety of food and coronavirus issued	https://www.food.gov.uk/news-alerts/news/fsa-publishes-guidance-for-consumers-on-coronavirus-covid-19 https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-for-consumers-on-coronavirus-covid-19-and-food/guidance-for-consumers-on-coronavirus-covid-19-and-food (Accessed March 2021)
	HMT; DEFRA	Financial Support for Fishing Businesses	https://www.gov.uk/government/news/government-announces-financial-support-for-englands-fishing-businesses (Accessed March 2021)
20 April 2020	National Farmers Union	Letter and Urgent crisis meeting on Dairy Industry held by NFU and government	https://www.nfuonline.com/sectors/dairy/dairy-news/dairy-industry-unites-behind-calls-for-urgent-government-action-to-save-sector/ (Accessed March 2021)
21 April 2020	Food Industry	Food industry open letter to government on food and drink imports and exports	https://www.cips.org/supply-management/news/2020/april/food-and-drink-supply-chain-tells-uk-to-reject-trade-restrictions/ (Accessed March 2021)
23 April 2020	ENVIRONMENT AGENCY	New Position Statement on COVID-19 and spreading slurry or milk on land, or storing slurry	https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-and-spreading-slurry-or-milk-on-land-or-storing-slurry-rps-c12 (Accessed March 2021)

27 April 2020	Groceries Code Adjudicator	Groceries Code Adjudicator - term extended for six months	https://www.gov.uk/government/news/christine-tacon-to-continue-as-groceries-code-adjudicator (Accessed March 2021)
	BEIS	Coronavirus Bounce Back Loan	https://www.gov.uk/guidance/apply-for-a-coronavirus-bounce-back-loan (Accessed March 2021)
29 April 2020	DEFRA	Accessing Food and Essential Supplies (information released)	https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-accessing-food-and-essential-supplies (Accessed March 2021)
30 April 2020	HMT	Self Employed Income Support Scheme	https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/self-employment-income-support-scheme-grant-extension/self-employment-income-support-scheme-grant-extension (Accessed March 2021)
05 May 2020	Food Civil Society	Consumer group calls for urgent action from government to help vulnerable unable to access food	https://www.sustainweb.org/news/may20_vulnerable_people_struggle_to_shop_during_covid19/ (Accessed March 2021)
06 May 2020	DEFRA	New funding to support dairy farmers	https://www.gov.uk/government/news/new-funding-to-support-dairy-farmers-through-coronavirus (Accessed March 2021)
07 May 2020	Food Civil Society	Health campaigners call for halt in advertising of HFSS foods during lockdown	https://www.campaignlive.co.uk/article/health-campaign-groups-call-halt-unhealthy-ads-until-end-lockdown/1682616 (Accessed March 2021)
08 May 2020	DCMS; DEFRA	£16mn funding for food charities	https://www.gov.uk/government/news/16-million-for-food-charities-to-provide-meals-for-those-in-need (Accessed March 2021)
11 May 2020	DEFRA	Food Charities Grant Fund	https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-apply-for-the-food-charities-grant-fund (Accessed March 2021)

13 May	Food Manufacturers	Food manufacturers push back against 14 day quarantine plan	https://foodfoundation.org.uk/covid_19/uk-food-manufacturers-push-back-against-14-day-quarantine-plan/ (Accessed March 2021)
14 May 2020	FSA	Reopening and adapting your food business during COVID-19	https://www.food.gov.uk/business-guidance/reopening-and-adapting-your-food-business-duringcovid-19 (Accessed March 2021)
20 May 2020	BEIS	£40m boost for cutting-edge start-ups	https://www.gov.uk/government/news/40m-boost-for-cutting-edge-start-ups (Accessed March 2021)
22 May 2020	HOME OFFICE	New measures at the UK border to guard against a second wave of coronavirus infections announced	https://www.gov.uk/government/news/home-secretary-announces-new-public-health-measures-for-all-uk-arrivals (Accessed March 2021)
24 May 2020	MCHLG	The Reopening High Streets Safely Fund	https://www.gov.uk/government/news/50-million-boost-to-support-the-recovery-of-our-high-streets (Accessed March 2021)
	DfE	Opening Schools and Educational Settings	https://web.archive.org/web/20200603201146/https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/closure-of-educational-settings-information-for-parents-and-carers/reopening-schools-and-other-educational-settings-from-1-june (Accessed March 2021)
03 June 2020	DEFRA; DHSC	Advice for seasonal agricultural workers coming to England to pick fruit and vegetables on farms, and their employers	https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coming-to-the-uk-for-seasonal-agricultural-work-on-english-farms (Accessed March 2021)
	Food Civil Society	Campaign groups renew calls for clampdown on marketing of unhealthy food and drink	https://foodfoundation.org.uk/covid_19/campaign-groups-renew-calls-for-clampdown-on-marketing-of-unhealthy-food-and-drink/ (Accessed March 2021)
11 June 2020	DEFRA; MCHLG; DWP	£63 mn fund to Local Authorities	https://www.gov.uk/government/news/63-million-for-local-authorities-to-assist-those-struggling-to

			afford-food-and-other-essentials (Accessed March 2021)
	CABINET OFFICE	Visitor Taskforces	https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-roadmap-taskforces/covid-19-roadmap-taskforces (Accessed March 2021)
16 June 2020	HMG	Government pledges to support children on Free School Meals over the summer holidays with food vouchers	https://foodfoundation.org.uk/vulnerable_groups/government-makes-a-u-turn-on-providing-free-school-meal-vouchers-over-summer-holidays/ (Accessed March 2021)
	Food and Drink Federation	FDF warns government on suppliers to hospitality with 'Squeezed Middle' report	https://www.fdf.org.uk/df/news-media/press-releases/2020-press-releases/squeezed-middle-need-support-if-hospitality-restart-is-to-succeed/ (Accessed March 2021)
18 June 2020	RPA; DEFRA	The Dairy Response Fund 2020	https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/dairy-response-fund-2020#history (Accessed March 2021)
22 June 2020	DEFRA; DIT	Announcement of 'bounce back' plan of trade measures for the agriculture, food and drink industry	https://www.gov.uk/government/news/bounce-back-plan-for-agriculture-food-and-drink-industry-launched (Accessed March 2021)
25 June 2020	DFE	Guidance for schools and local authorities on providing vouchers to support pupils eligible for free school meals over the summer holiday period during the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak.	https://www.gov.uk/guidance/covid-summer-food-fund (Accessed March 2021)
	DfE	Temporary extension of Free School Meals to No Recourse to Public Funds	https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-free-school-meals-guidance/guidance-for-the-temporary-extension-of-free-school-meals-eligibility-to-nrpf-groups (Accessed March 2021)
06 July 2020	National Farmers Union	Phased resumption of Red Tractor physical farm inspections	https://www.nfuonline.com/news/coronavirus-updates-and-advice/coronavirus-news/coronavirus-how-are-the-food-chain-and-farm-assurance-schemes-affected/ (Accessed March 2021)

08 July 2020	HMT	Plan for Jobs and Eat Out to Help Out	https://www.gov.uk/government/news/rishis-plan-for-jobs-will-help-britain-bounce-back (Accessed March 2021)
09 July 2020	Food Civil Society	Health campaigners criticise Eat Out to Help Out Scheme	https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-8505423/A-green-light-junk-food-Obesity-campaigners-blast-Eat-Help-scheme.html (Accessed March 2021)
27 July 2020	DHSC	New Obesity Strategy and Better Health Campaign	https://www.nhs.uk/better-health/ ; https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/tackling-obesity-government-strategy 27 (Accessed March 2021)
01 September 2020	Private Sector and Charities	Launch of Child food Poverty Taskforce	https://www.bbc.co.uk/newsround/53981879 (Accessed March 2021)

Source: Authors

Conclusion

The findings presented in this review illustrate the breadth of actors which constituted the food policy response to the pandemic. These actors cross multiple government departments, plus private sector and civil society groups. As such, the review echoes previous research which has identified the range of departments with a role in food policymaking (Parsons 2020). The findings have important implications for the coordination of food policy, which are explored in the accompanying journal paper on coordination in the response.

References

AHDB, n.d. *Milk Your Moments*. Available at: <https://ahdb.org.uk/milk-your-moments> (accessed March 2021)

AHDB, 2020. *How has Covid 19 affected input prices?* Available at: <https://ahdb.org.uk/news/how-has-covid-19-affected-input-prices> (Accessed March 2021).

<https://ahdb.org.uk/news/how-has-covid-19-affected-input-prices>;

All About Feed.net, 2020. Covid 19: The Impact on the Animal Feed Industry. Available AT: <https://www.allaboutfeed.net/animal-feed/raw-materials/covid-19-the-impact-on-the-animal-feed-industry/> (Accessed March 2021).

BBC, 2020. *Food Wholesalers Offer Online Orders to Sell Stock*. Available at: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/technology-52066764> (Accessed March 2021).

BBC, 2020b. *Tesco Limits Sale of Essential Items*. Available at: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-51790375> (Accessed March 2021).

BBC, 2020c. *UK Pubs and Restaurants Told to Shut in Virus Fight*. Available at: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-51981653> (Accessed March 2021).

BBC, 2020d. *Coronavirus: PM says everyone should avoid office, pubs and travelling*. Available at: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-51917562> (Accessed March 2021).

BRC, 2020. *Food Retailers Reassure Customers and Ask Them to Buy Responsible*. Available at: <https://brc.org.uk/news/corporate-affairs/food-retailers-reassure-customers-and-ask-them-to-buy-responsibly/> (Accessed March 2021).

BRC ,n.d. *The Latest News and Comment from the BRC*. British Retail Consortium. Retrieved March 2021, from: <https://brc.org.uk/news/#21>

Belfast Telegraph, 2020. *Staff at Moy Park Walk Out in Dispute Over Coronavirus Safety Fears*. Available at: <https://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/business/northern-ireland/staff-at-moy-park-walk-out-in-dispute-over-coronavirus-safety-fears-39076887.html> (Accessed March 2021).

Children's Food Campaign, 2020. *Written evidence submitted to the House of Commons Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee*. Available at: <https://committees.parliament.uk/writtenevidence/3381/html/> (Accessed March 2021).

Cold Chain Federation, 2020. *UK Cold Storage Sector*. Available at: <https://www.coldchainfederation.org.uk/uk-cold-storage-sector/> (Accessed March 2021)

DEFRA, 2020. *Written evidence submitted by the Department for Food, Environment and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) (COV0142) to the House of Commons Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee*. Available at: <https://committees.parliament.uk/writtenevidence/5286/pdf/> (Accessed March 2021).

EFRA (2020a) *House of Commons Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee. Covid 19 and Food Supply*. First Report of Session 2019–21. London: House of Commons Committee on Environment, Food and Rural Affairs.

EFRA (2020b) *House of Commons Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee. Covid 19 and Food Supply*. Government Response to the Committee's First Report. London: House of Commons Committee on Environment, Food and Rural Affairs

Fareshare, 2020. *Mammoth Covid 19 Response*. Available at: <https://fareshare.org.uk/news-media/news/mammoth-covid-19-response-sees-16-million-meals-provided-to-uks-most-vulnerable-through-pandemic/> (Accessed March 2021).

Farming UK, 2020. Red Tractor suspends physical inspections on farms. Available at: https://www.farminguk.com/news/coronavirus-red-tractor-suspends-physical-inspections-on-farms_55270.html (Accessed March 2021).

Food and Drink Federation, n.d. *News Feed*. Food and Drink Federation. Retrieved March 2021, from: <https://www.fdf.org.uk/fdf/news-media/?SearchTerm=&Tag=&SortOrder=&PageSize=7&Show=>

Food for Life, 2020. *The School Fruit and Veg Scheme Must Be Reinstated*. Available at: <https://www.foodforlife.org.uk/whats-happening/news/news-post/the-school-fruit-and-veg-scheme-must-be-reinstated> (Accessed March 2021).

Food Foundation, 2020. *Hospitality Sector Furloughs 80% of Staff*. Available at: https://foodfoundation.org.uk/food_businesses/hospitality-sector-furloughs-80-of-staff-although-seasonal-workers-excluded/ (Accessed March 2021).

Food Foundation, 2020b. *Vulnerability to food insecurity since the COVID-19 lockdown*. Available at: https://foodfoundation.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/Report_COVID19FoodInsecurity-final.pdf (Accessed March 2021).

Food Foundation, n.d. *Covid-19 Food Tracker*. Food Foundation. Retrieved March 2021, from: <https://foodfoundation.lcdev.co.uk/launching-next-week-food-foundation-covid-19-tracker-latest-impact-on-food/>

Food Research Collaboration, 2020. *Covid-19 food policy in England, the first four months*. Food Research Collaboration. Retrieved March 2021, from: <https://foodresearch.org.uk/publications/covid-19-food-policy-in-england-the-first-four-months/>

FSA, 2020. *FSA Response to Covid 19*. Available at: <https://www.food.gov.uk/sites/default/files/media/document/fsa-20-06-04-fsa-response-to-covid-19.pdf> (Accessed March 2021).

FSA, 2020b. *Annual Report on Horizon Scanning*. Available at: <https://www.food.gov.uk/sites/default/files/media/document/fsa-20-08-06-annual-horizon-scanning.pdf> (Accessed March 2021).

The Grocer, 2020. *Brakes starts selling direct to consumers*. Available at: <https://www.thegrocer.co.uk/wholesalers/brakes-starts-selling-direct-to-consumers-via-food-shop-service/603470.article>; (Accessed March 2021).

The Guardian, 2020. *UK Faces Cardboard Shortage*. Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2020/mar/31/uk-faces-cardboard-shortage-due-to-coronavirus-crisis> (Accessed March 2021).

- The Guardian, 2020b. *UK Running Out of Warehouse Space*. Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2018/nov/18/uk-running-out-of-food-warehouse-space-as-no-deal-brexit-fears-rise> (Accessed March 2021).
- Hancock, H., 2020. *Letter from Chair of Food Standards Agency to EFRA Chair Neil Parish*. Available at: <https://committees.parliament.uk/publications/651/documents/2724/default/> (Accessed march 2021).
- Lamichhane, J.R., Reay-Jones, F.P., 2020. Editorial: Impacts of COVID-19 on global plant health and crop protection and the resulting effect on global food security and safety, *CropProtection*, doi: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cropro.2020.105383>.
- Logistics manager, 2020. *Cold Stores Could be Full in Two Weeks*. Available at: <https://www.logisticsmanager.com/cold-stores-could-be-full-in-two-weeks/>; (Accessed March 2021)
- Manchester Evening News, 2020. *Delivery Slots for UK Supermarkets*. <https://www.manchestereveningnews.co.uk/news/uk-news/delivery-slots-supermarkets-asda-tesco-18070668>
- Middleton, J., Reintjes, R. and Lopes, H., 2020. Meat plants—a new front line in the covid-19 pandemic. *British Medical Journal* 370, m2716.
- National Farmers Union, n.d. *NFU News*. Retrieved March 2021, from: https://www.google.com/search?q=National+farmers+union+news&rlz=1C1CHBF_en-GBGB874GB874&oq=National+farmers+union+news&aqs=chrome..69i57j0i22i30.4752j0i4&sourceid=chrome&ie=UTF-8
- ONS, 2018. *Labour in the agriculture industry, UK: February 2018*. Available at: <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/populationandmigration/internationalmigration/articles/labourintheagricultureindustry/2018-02-06> (Accessed March 2021).
- Parsons, K, 2020. *Who makes Food Policy in England? A Map of Government Actors and Activities*. Rethinking Food Governance Report 1. London: Food Research Collaboration; 2020. Available at: <https://foodresearch.org.uk/publications/who-makes-food-policy-in-england-map-government-actors/> (Accessed March 2021).
- Parsons, K. and Barling, D., 2020. *Written evidence submitted to the House of Commons Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee*. Available at: <https://committees.parliament.uk/writtenevidence/4100/pdf/> (Accessed March 2021).
- Personnel Today, 2020. *Union warns against relaxing drivers' hours rules*. Available at: <https://www.personneltoday.com/hr/relaxing-drivers-hours-coronavirus/> (Accessed March 2021).
- Resilience.org, 2020. *In Praise of Short Supply Chains*. Available at: <https://www.resilience.org/stories/2020-04-15/in-praise-of-short-supply-chains/> (Access March 2021).
- Rural Payments Agency, 2020. *Covid 19 information for farmers, landowners and rural businesses*. <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-information-for-farmers-landowners-and-rural-businesses> (Accessed March 2021).
- Silva, A.L.P., Prata, J.C., Walker, T.R., Campos, D., Duarte, A.C., Soares, A.M., Barcelò, D. and Rocha-Santos, T., 2020. Rethinking and optimising plastic waste management under COVID-19 pandemic:

Policy solutions based on redesign and reduction of single-use plastics and personal protective equipment. *Science of the Total Environment*, 742, p.140565.

STFC Food Network, 2020. *Written evidence submitted to the House of Commons Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee*. Available at: <https://committees.parliament.uk/work/217/covid19-and-food-supply/publications/written-evidence/> (Accessed March 2021).

Sustain, n.d. *Covid-19 news feed*. Sustain. Retrieved March 2021, from: <https://www.sustainweb.org/news/?section=121>

UK Hospitality, 2021. *Oral evidence to the House of Commons Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee*. Available at: <https://committees.parliament.uk/oralevidence/1681/html/> (Accessed March 2021).

Which?, 2020. *How to shop safely at the supermarket*, Available at: <https://www.which.co.uk/news/2020/07/coronavirus-how-to-shop-safely-at-the-supermarket/> (Accessed March 2021).

WRAP, 2020. *Life Under Covid 19*. Available at: <https://wrap.org.uk/sites/default/files/2021-02/WRAP-Life-under-Covid-19-Food-waste-attitudes-and-behaviours-in-2020.pdf> (Accessed March 2021).