

Food Ethics Council/ London, UK

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Brexit alarm bells ringing as younger generations show concern for future of food system

Young people believe the UK's food system is 'unfair' to workers in developing nations, the natural environment and to farm animals, and that Brexit will make things worse

A survey by the Food Ethics Council, released today, shows UK generations divided on how fair our food system is, with around half of 16 to 24-year-olds expressing concerns about some of the ways our food is produced and consumed. Many also worry that Brexit will adversely affect our food system, particularly its impacts on farm animal welfare and the environment.

The Populus poll, commissioned by the Food Ethics Council for its 20th anniversary, interviewed a nationally representative sample of 2,131 respondents in the UK. Respondents were asked whether the food system was 'fair' to people in the UK, to those working in food and farming in the UK and in developing countries, to the natural environment and to farm animals.

The survey reveals that while the majority of people (54%) believe that the current food system is generally 'fair' to the UK population, 45% of people believe that the food system is 'unfair' to people working in food farming in developing countries.

For younger generations, farm animal welfare and the natural environment are key concerns; 55% of 16 to 24-year-olds surveyed believe that the food system is 'unfair' to farm animals, compared to just 32% of over 65s, and 46% of 16 to 24-year-olds say it is 'unfair' to the natural environment - for those aged 55 to 64 and the over 65s this figure falls to 28%.

The Food Ethics Council believes that a fair food system in the UK must not only provide nutritious and safe food for the whole UK population. It must also be fair to all those producing our food, to farm animals and to the planet.

Dan Crossley, Executive Director of the Food Ethics Council said: *"This survey shows that younger generations are particularly concerned by unfairness in our food system. The UK Government needs to do more to protect the food system that young people - and their future children and grandchildren - will inherit. Much as we have seen the introduction of the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act in Wales, we need stronger mechanisms in place in Westminster that take into account the needs of future generations when it comes to food."*

On Brexit, the public is divided on its potential effects and there is little consensus on whether leaving the EU will be beneficial or detrimental to the UK's food system. What is clear however, is that there is a generational split, with young people fearing the possible impacts of Brexit on the

fairness of our food system more than older generations. Major concerns for those under 35 are centred, again, on farm animal welfare and the natural environment.

Dan Crossley, Executive Director of the Food Ethics Council said: *“If the UK wants to be a global leader on food systems, we need to take responsibility for all our impacts, both within and beyond our borders. Food and farming can not thrive in the long run, unless we have a just food system. In post-Brexit trade negotiations, the fairness of our food system must not be compromised.”*

Key findings:

- The majority (54%) of respondents believe that the food system is ‘fair’ to the UK population.
- 45% of those surveyed believe that the food system is ‘unfair’ to people working in food and farming in developing countries.
- The majority (55%) of respondents 16 to 24-year-olds believe that the food system is ‘unfair’ to farm animals, compared to 32% of over 65s and 35% of 55 to 64-year-olds.
- One third (32%) of 16 to 24-year-olds think the food system will be ‘less fair’ to the UK population after Brexit, compared to just 16% of over 65s.
- 31% of 16 to 24-year-olds and 31% of 25 to 34-year-olds believe that the UK food system will be ‘less fair’ to farm animals after Brexit, compared to just 13% of those over 65.
- 28% of 16 to 24-year-olds and 29% of 25 to 34-year-olds believe that the UK food system will be ‘less fair’ to the natural environment after Brexit, compared to 14% of those over 65.

Populus conducted 2,131 online interviews with a nationally representative sample of UK respondents aged 16+. Interviews took place between the 18th and 20th May 2018.

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Notes to editors

The full results of the Populus survey are published [here](#)

The Food Ethics Council (foodethicscouncil.org) is a UK-based charity that provides independent advice on the ethics of food and farming. Our aim is to create a food system that is fair and healthy for people, animals and the environment.

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