

A close-up, warm-toned photograph of a chef's hands. The chef is wearing a white uniform and a watch on their left wrist. They are using a large knife to chop ingredients on a wooden cutting board. In the background, there are two white mugs on a tray, and other kitchen items are visible, creating a professional food preparation environment.

Ethics

A toolkit for food businesses

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About this toolkit

The Food Ethics Council is the independent advisory body on the ethics of food and farming. We have created this toolkit to introduce food businesses to **key ideas in ethics**, and to provide a **framework for decision-making**.

It is part of our wider work, which includes:

- Helping guide the way through difficult issues by analysing problems, challenging accepted opinion and creating a space for dialogue.
- Building tools to put ethics at the heart of decisions about food in business, policy and civil society.

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Ethics refers to the values, principles and codes by which people live. Acting ethically means taking values seriously and asking ‘what should I do, all things considered?’

Of course, we can’t question everything we do. But, whether we notice it or not, our values often influence the decisions we make in our personal, social and professional lives. For centuries, philosophers have wrestled with how to do this better. While there are no easy answers, their advice includes:

- **Work out likely winners and losers** but remember, the future is uncertain and some things can be wrong irrespective of the benefits.
- **It isn’t always about knowing right from wrong** – sometimes you need to tell right from right – the key is to ask right for whom?
- **Being fair is fundamental** – to feel what’s fair, imagine you’re in the biggest loser’s shoes.
- **Be clear and open about your reasons** and the principles that lie behind them – we have a tool on P12 to help.
- **Talk it through** – there’s nothing like a good argument to help work things out.

Ethics is about trying to make good decisions. It is about how you do business, not just about what products you sell.

What is ethics?

“A BUSINESS
THAT MAKES
NOTHING BUT
MONEY
IS A POOR
KIND OF
BUSINESS.”

Henry Ford

NOS B
Accompagnés d'une Grande
Salade Verte, tomates, courgettes,
• Brick à l'œuf _____
Viande hachée, oignons, tomates, pommes de terre
• Brick à La MerGuet _____
maquereaux, œufs, pommes de terre, oignons
• Brick au Thon _____
Thon, œufs, pommes de terre, oignons
• Brick à La Sardine _____

NOS GRANDES

• Salade composée _____



Five myths about business ethics

Myth 1: Businesses should act ethically because of the rewards, and the risks of not doing so.

FALSE – Ethical behaviour can boost profits and cut reputational and regulatory risks, but you cannot reduce ethics to self-interest. Business ethics is about good governance and meeting your responsibilities to all stakeholders.

Myth 2: Ethics is about niche brands for rich people.

FALSE – ‘Ethical’ brands are just the tip of the iceberg. Ethics has tools to help all businesses make better decisions. Research shows most people would like to eat ethically.

Myth 3: Ethics is only for marketing and CSR.

FALSE – Ethics is relevant to NPD, supply chains, contracts, HR, corporate strategy and much more. Sometimes you can benefit by marketing products as ‘ethical’ but, remember, honest marketing is itself an ethical issue.

Myth 4: Businesses only have one responsibility – to their shareholders.

FALSE – Even the worst companies in the world argue they’re doing the right thing – that they are duty-bound to make money for their shareholders, wherever that takes them. In practice businesses have other contractual and moral responsibilities, for example to their customers and workers.

Myth 5: Ethics simply means being good to other people.

FALSE – Animals and the environment come into the equation too, and not just because they’re useful to humans: after all it might be stupid to kick a tractor in frustration, but it’s wrong to do the same to a cow.

Choice matters. Shoppers like options and don't like being told what to eat.

So it is easy to play the choice card when you are pulled up on your environmental or social performance – by claiming that consumer demand, not corporate strategy, is the root of the problem.

But things aren't that simple. As a food business you exert a powerful influence on what we eat and want to eat, through what you put on the shelves and through how you promote different products and categories.

Real respect for consumer choice means meeting people's expectations about the high standards of your products and supply chains, and bringing your customers with you on the journey towards a food system where it is easy to eat a sustainable, fair and healthy diet.





Take the transparency test

It is getting harder to play the choice card. In fact, the trend is towards 'choice editing'. This means taking ethics into account when you make choices for your customers.

This can mean taking the worst products off the shelves. Research for Defra has found consumers are comfortable with this where it does not reduce their quality of life.

The plain fact is that most shoppers expect some choice editing – you hardly expect to be able to buy a threatened fish species or a product made with child labour.

Try taking the transparency test.

Would your customers still eat your food if they knew where it came from?

If you're not sure, then you're doing something wrong, whatever the market is telling you.

A lot more than profit is at stake in your business: people's livelihoods and health, the environment, animal welfare and even future generations. It is important to know who all your stakeholders are, even if you consider some more important than others. It can be helpful to think of anything that matters in its own right - a farm animal or even an ecosystem - as a stakeholder.



Know your stakeholders



Does it help ↓ be →	Well?	Free?	Fairly treated?
People	health & well being	informed choice	social justice
Animals	animal welfare	behavioural freedom	natural character
Environment	conservation	biodiversity	sustainability

Making decisions ethically

The table opposite is a tool to help with making ethical decisions. It works by taking three important ethical principles (respect for welfare, autonomy and fairness) and asking what they mean for different stakeholders or interest groups.

This tool is based on the Ethical Matrix, developed by Professor Ben Mepham. It is a general framework that can be used for scoping your responsibilities, thinking through difficult trade-offs and deliberating with stakeholders. It is designed to help you clarify issues and justify your decisions to others.

Try it yourself.

Next time you face a **TRICKY DECISION**...

1. Draw a **GRID**.
2. Down the left, list **WHO** and **WHAT** the decision could affect.
3. Along the top list **HOW** the decision might affect them - will it help them to be well, free and fairly-treated?
4. Think what goes **IN EACH BOX** - what does each principle mean for each stakeholder.
5. This helps you map out the issues and think how to **WEIGHT** them.
6. **DISCUSS** with others.
7. Don't expect an **EASIER** answer but do expect a **BETTER** one.

The Food Ethics Council offers a range of support, from consultancy to workshops, seminars and conferences*.

We work with businesses on issues including seasonality and water stewardship.

We facilitate workshops on many subjects related to food and farming, including meat and livestock, air freighting and future trends.

We run seminars to enable businesses to 'meet the mavericks' who shape the ethical agenda in food and farming.

We co-host and run workshops at industry conferences.

To discuss your business needs, contact Tom MacMillan, Executive Director: **tom@foodethicscouncil.org**

*We are an independent charity, run on ethical principles. All collaborations must support our aim to champion better food and farming by challenging government, business and the public to tackle problems ethically. They must not compromise our integrity or independence, or restrict our freedom of inquiry.



**Bespoke
services**



Business forum

Hosted by leading opinion formers, the business forum meets six times a year. It provides senior food executives with a unique opportunity to explore the big issues around food and farming over an early dinner at a celebrated London restaurant.

The meetings use short expert presentations to launch a roundtable discussion where members learn from each others' experience. **Each meeting tackles a key issue**. Recent topics include:

- Climate change and food production.
- Food packaging.
- Zoonosis.
- Health claims and functional foods.

Membership is by invitation only and is strictly limited. Benefits include:

Insight through dialogue with top experts and opinion leaders.

Four **exclusive, high-level meetings** where you set the agenda.

The opportunity to **build unique partnerships** to manage difficult issues.

Concise reports of key meeting points to take back to your business.

Complimentary copies of our **quarterly magazine**.

To find out more email Tom MacMillan, Executive Director:
tom@foodethicscouncil.org.

Covering one major theme each quarter, Food Ethics magazine contains cutting edge analysis, debate, reviews and upcoming events. It is essential reading for anyone with an active interest in food and farming. Subscribers range from leading food businesses to celebrity chefs.

Recent contributors include Hilary Benn, Peter Kendall, Mariann Fischer Boel, Don Curry, Tim Lang, Felicity Lawrence, Vandana Shiva, Peter Ainsworth, Andrew Opie, Rick Stein, Ella Heeks and Tristram Stuart.

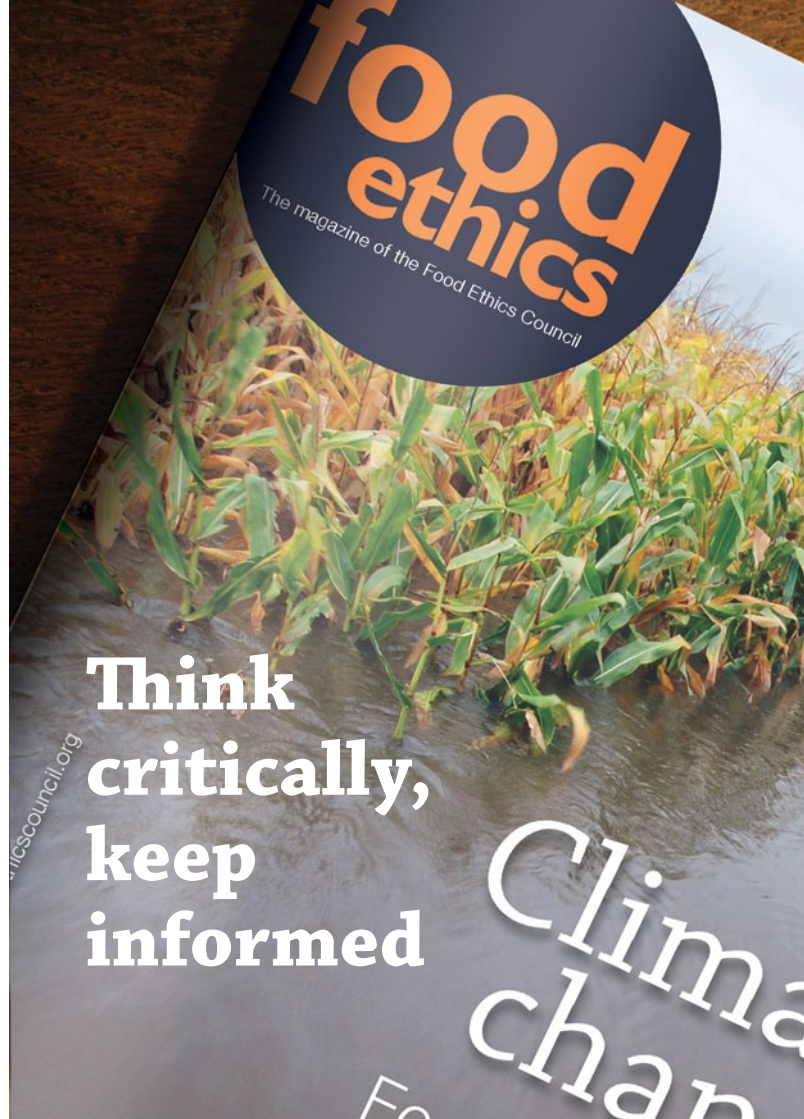
“Cutting-edge analysis that prompts real debate.” Zac Goldsmith, Director of The Ecologist

Subscribe now at:

www.foodethicscouncil.org/subscribe

Or contact Lisa Unsworth on 01273 766 654

Annual rates: £28 individual, £38 academic and £120 business (3 copies)





Our website is the place to go for the low-down on key ethical issues in food and farming. As well as information on our current and previous publications and projects, you can find:

Tools for businesses: including this toolkit, a future scenario planning toolkit, a research directory where you can find people to help you with ethical issues, and more information on our Business Forum.

The issues: short briefings highlighting the most pressing concerns in food and farming, from air freighting to zoonosis.

Success stories: recent work we have undertaken, awards we have won and consultations we have aided.

Who we are: an introduction to the council members and staff at the Food Ethics Council.

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