

BUILDING A FAIRER FOOD SYSTEM

Our strategy for food
systems change
2026 - 2030



SECTION ONE: WHY CHANGE IS NEEDED

Food systems are failing
people, animals, and the planet
- but change is possible.



THE CHALLENGE

Food systems are shaped by unequal power, short-term incentives, and decision-making that excludes those most affected. What's driving this?

Underfunded transformation

Ethical food systems solutions lack the investment needed to scale and sustain change, while billions continue to reinforce the status quo.

Disconnected efforts

Organisations and actors with shared goals often work in isolation and competition, limiting collective power.

Excluded voices

Communities most affected by food injustice are too rarely shaping decisions that affect them.

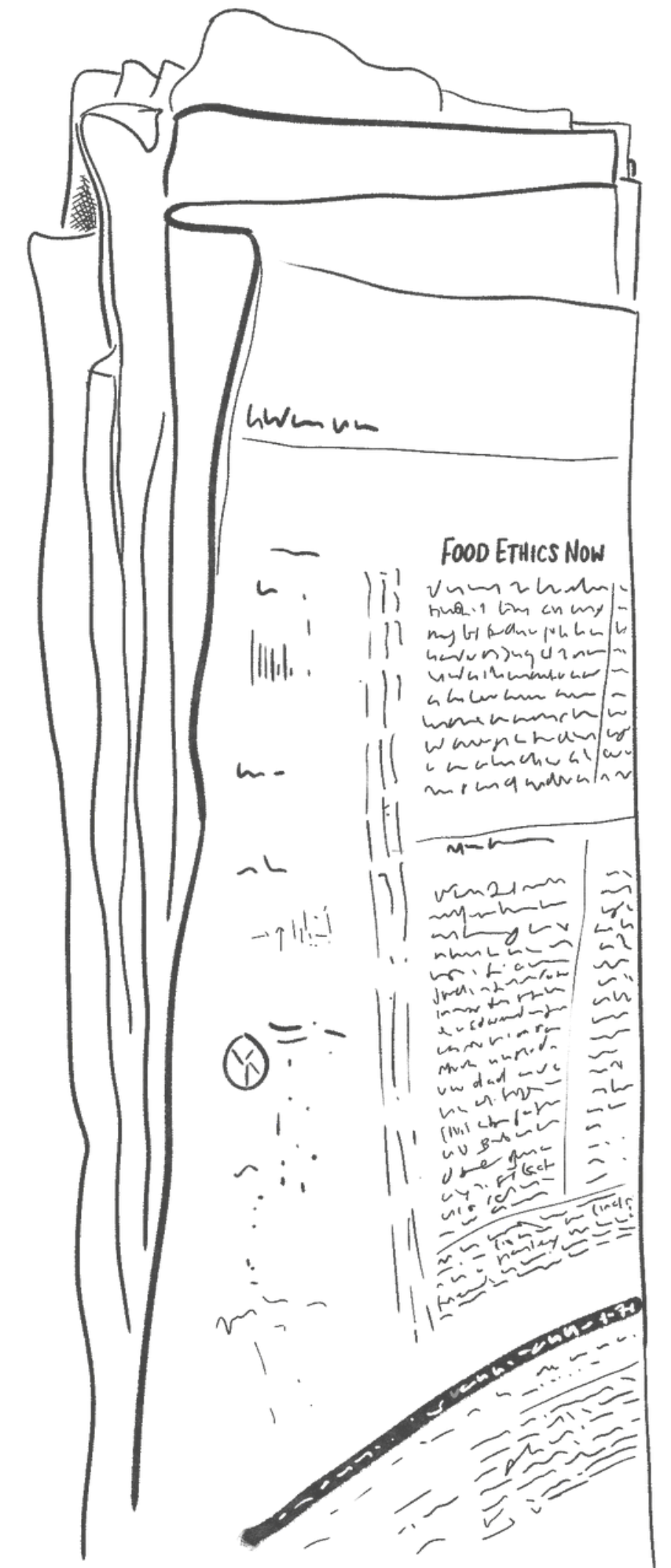
The result? A food system that too often fails to deliver fairness, dignity, and long-term wellbeing for all.

WHY NOW?

We are living through a period of profound **disruption**.

Climate shocks, rising food insecurity, worsening public health and growing pressure on farmers are exposing the fragility of a food system that is struggling to deliver for people, communities and the planet.

At the same time, trust in institutions is declining and public debate is becoming more polarised, making collective action harder just when it is needed most.

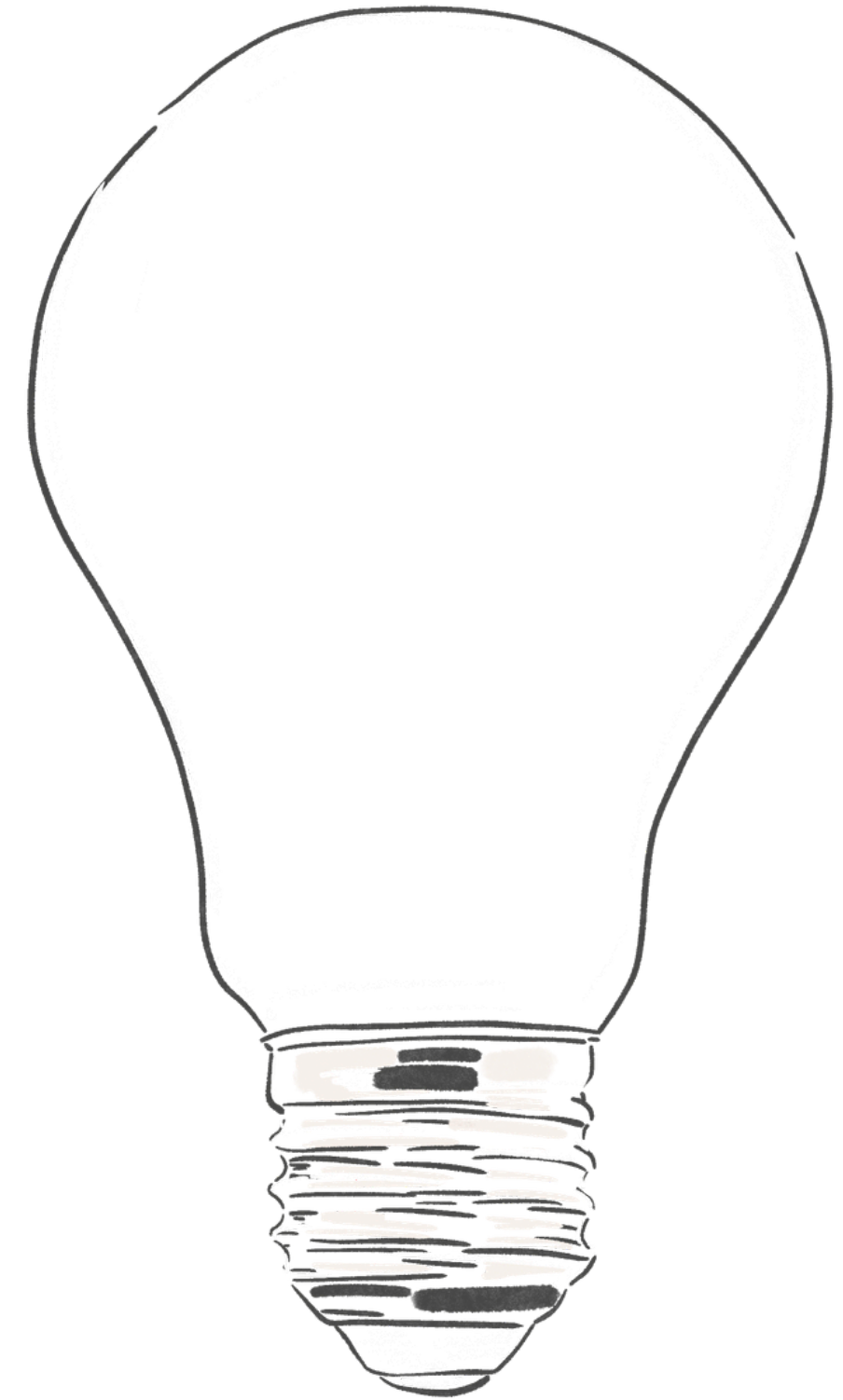


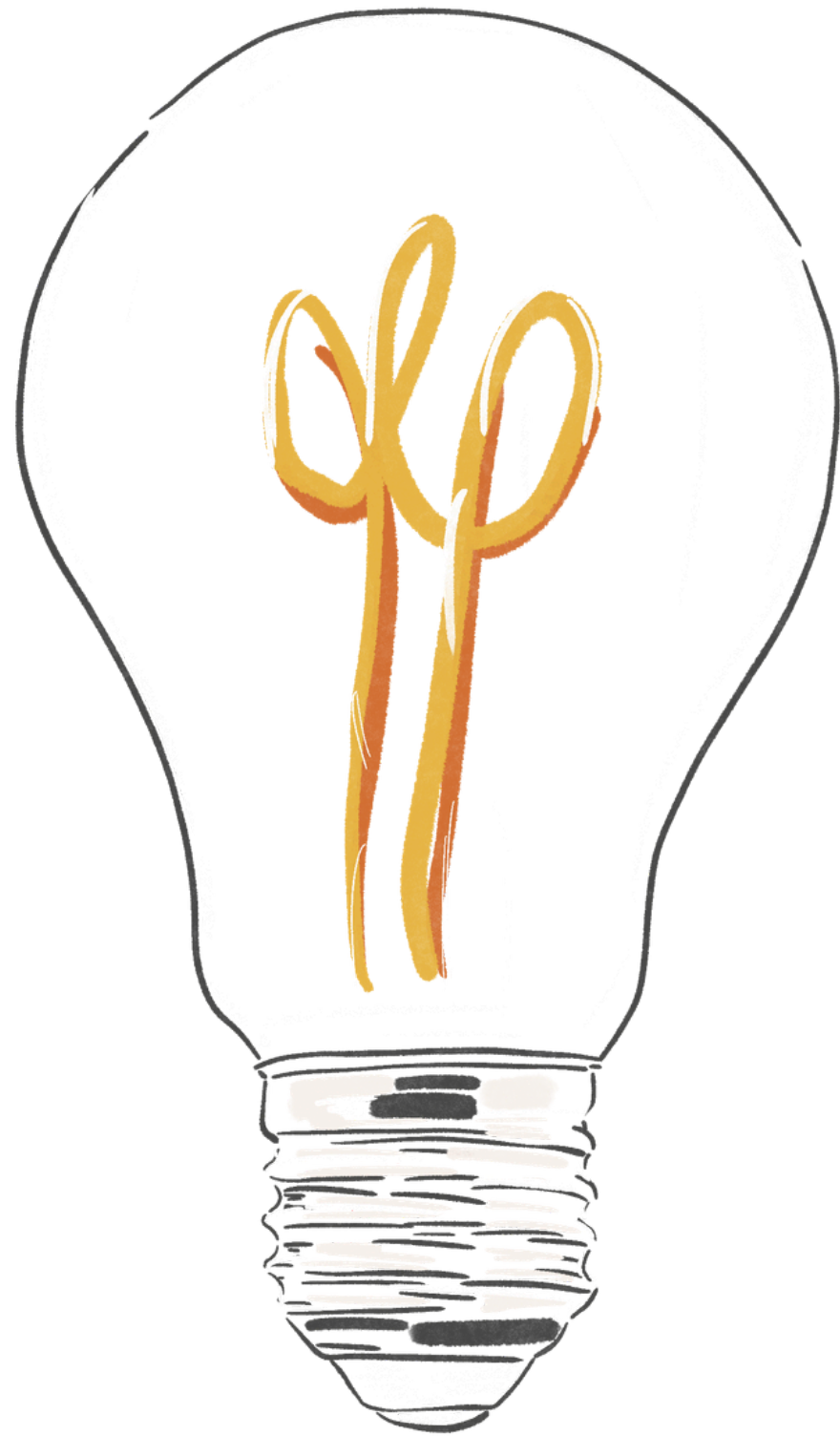
This is also a moment of **opportunity**.

Food is increasingly recognised as a critical lever for addressing interconnected challenges across health, climate, nature and economic resilience.

New policy windows are opening, community-led initiatives are growing, and a new generation of leaders is demanding change.

The decisions made in the coming years will shape the future of our food system for decades.





To seize this opportunity, people need more than evidence of what is wrong - they need a shared sense of what good looks like and practical ways to move towards it.

This is where the Food Ethics Council has a vital role to play.

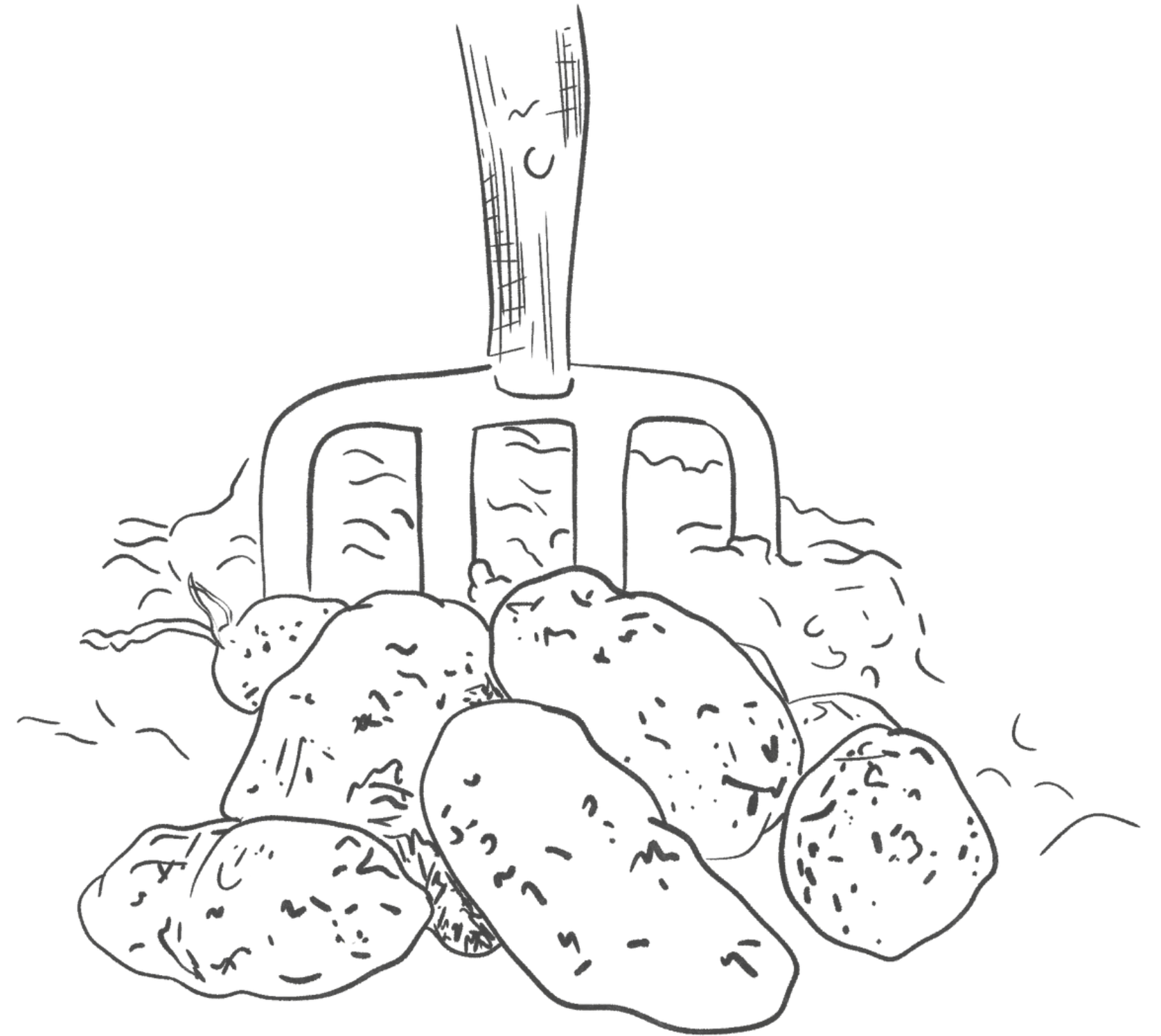
By bringing ethics into decision-making, convening across divides and helping people navigate complexity, we can turn fragmentation into collective action and support the transition to a food system that offers fairness, dignity and long-term wellbeing for all.

SECTION TWO: OUR ROLE AND VISION

The Food Ethics Council plays a distinctive role connecting ethics, systems thinking and collective action across the food system.



“The Food Ethics Council is unafraid to take on the sticky issues...”



Sue Pritchard

Chief Executive, Food, Farming and Countryside Commission

OUR ROLES

1. Assemblers

We create space for questions of power, fairness, and responsibility in food system decision-making.

3. Interpreters

We turn food ethics into practical imagination, agency, and pathways for change.

2. Challengers

We challenge the assumptions, incentives, and power structures shaping food systems.

4. Connectors





We work across silos to strengthen and catalyse collaboration, coherence and collective power.



OUR VISION FOR THE FUTURE








We're working towards a future where food systems are fair for people, animals, and the planet.

-  **Everyone can access, and enjoy, good food with dignity**
People have enough nutritious, affordable and culturally appropriate food.
-  **Farmers and others working in the food system can thrive**
A decent living is possible while caring for land, animals, and ecosystems.
-  **Food systems protect and restore the natural world**
The way food is produced, distributed, and consumed supports climate resilience, biodiversity and healthy ecosystems.
-  **Farmed animals have a life worth living**
All animals that are raised for food are cared for and slaughtered humanely.

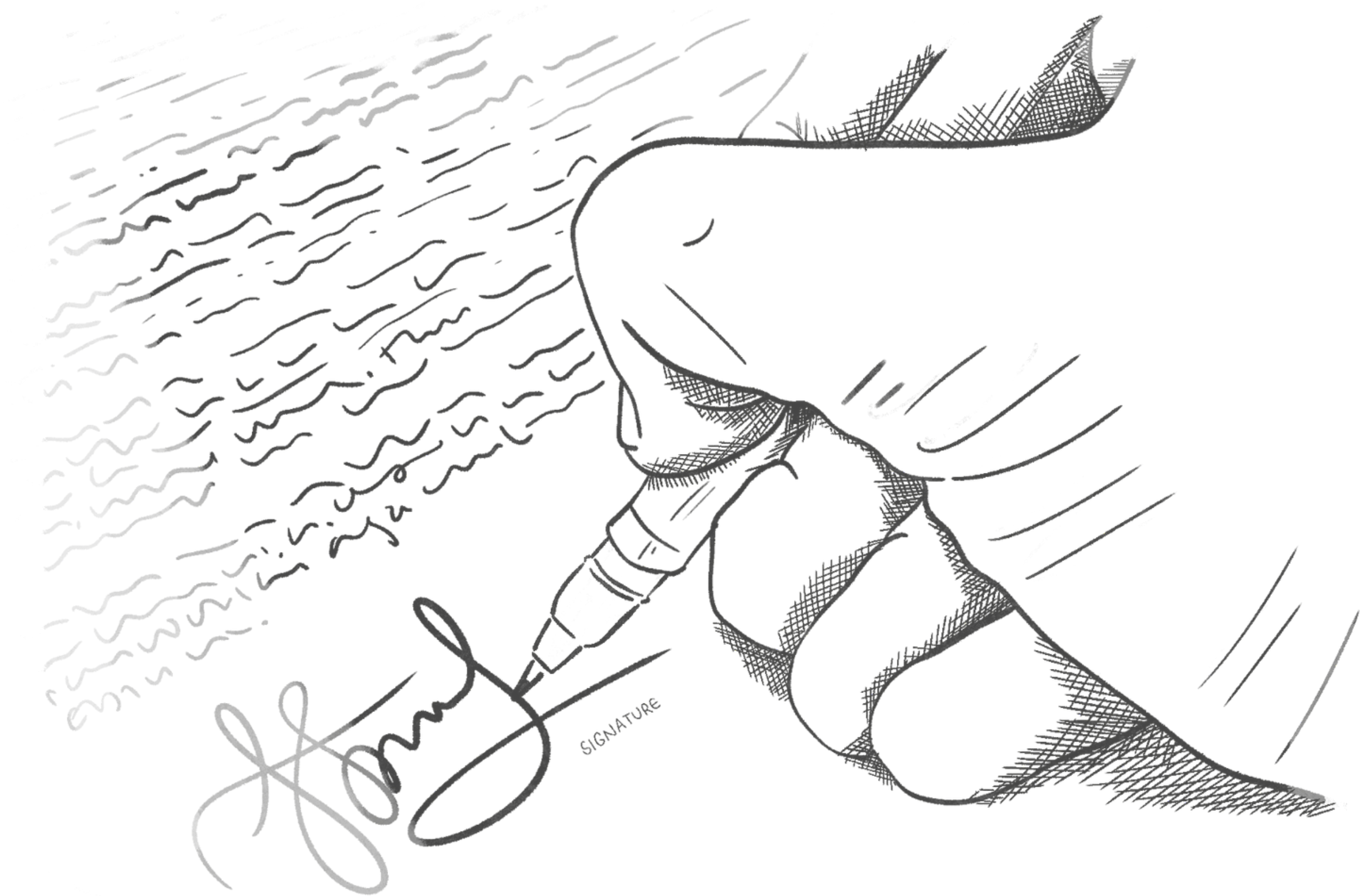
OUR STRATEGIC PRINCIPLES

This vision is only possible when:

-  **Ethics guide the system**
Justice, root cause solutions and 'in the round' thinking must guide food systems policy, practice, governance and investment.
-  **People shape decisions**
Communities most affected by food injustice must move from consultation to real influence.
-  **Power is more equally distributed**
Lasting change requires redistributing influence over how food systems are shaped, governed and funded - especially towards communities most affected by injustice.
-  **Change is collective**
No single organisation can transform the system alone - collaboration and alignment are essential.
-  **Resources match the change required**
Funding and investment determine the scale and durability of transformation.

SECTION THREE: OUR STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

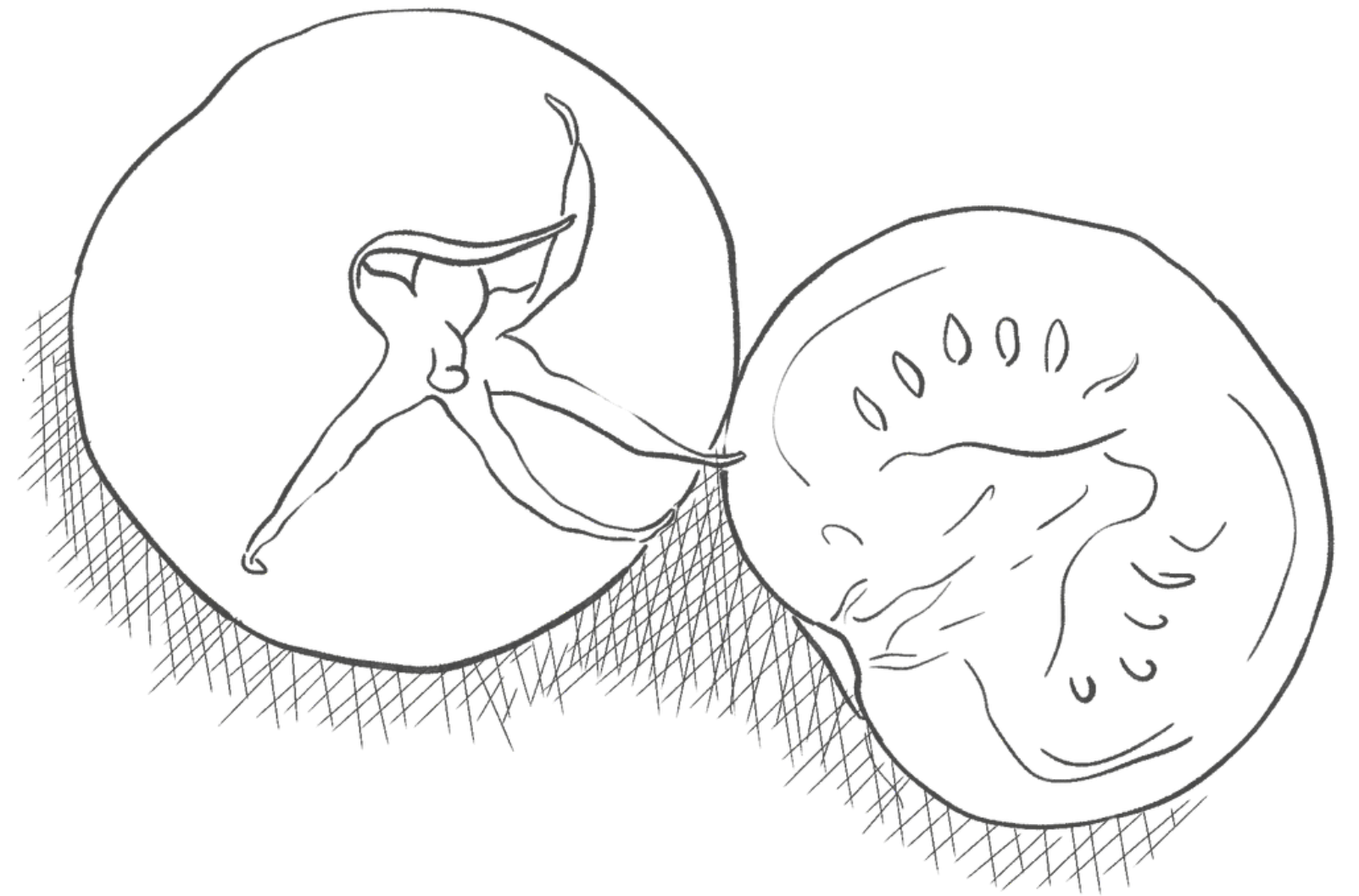
Transforming food systems requires shifts across policy, funding, civil society and business.



“What does it take to shift how we think about food – not just what we eat, but who decides, who benefits, who’s left out? That’s the work of the Food Ethics Council.”

Elta Smith

Chair, Food Ethics Council



OUR PILLARS FOR CHANGE

1. Advocating for fairer, more inclusive food policymaking

2. Catalysing ethical food systems funding

3. Strengthening coherence across the food movement



ADVOCATING FOR FAIRER, MORE INCLUSIVE FOOD POLICYMAKING

Why this matters

Policy sets the rules of the system - but policymaking is often fragmented, short-term and exclusionary.

Our focus

Shift UK food policy towards fairness, inclusion and root-cause thinking, through stronger citizen voice and long-term foundations for change.

How we work

- Champion fairer, more inclusive policymaking and meaningful citizen voice
- Advocate for long-term foundations such as the right to food, a UK Food Bill and a coherent Food Strategy



Indicators of progress

- Greater commitments to fairness and inclusion in food and farming policymaking
- Increased traction for the right to food and other long-term policy foundations
- Ethical approaches become more visible in campaigns, media, and public debate

CATALYSING ETHICAL FOOD SYSTEMS FUNDING

Why this matters

Funding determines what change is possible - but investment remains misaligned with transformation needs.

Our focus

Encourage increased investment in ethical food systems and capital shifted towards long-term transformation.

How we work

- Make the case that ethical food systems are essential and currently underfunded
- Work with others to shift investment towards long-term, systemic food systems change



Indicators of progress

- Investment in ethical food systems increases across the UK
- Funders and civil society become more aligned around long-term systems change

STRENGTHENING COHERENCE ACROSS THE FOOD MOVEMENT

Why this matters

Fragmentation limits impact - greater coherence increases collective power and influence.

Our focus

Strengthen coherence across progressive food and farming business and civil society through trusted spaces, shared learning and collaboration.

How we work

- Create trusted spaces to explore root causes and pathways forward
- Share insights, tools and learning to strengthen ethical practice across the sector
- Promote coherence and collaboration across progressive food system civil society and enterprise, including the Movement Strategy coalition
- Challenge injustice, platform marginalised voices and act as allies



Indicators of progress

- Greater coherence across food movement actors working for change
- Ethical approaches become more visible across campaigns, discourse, and media

HOW WE MAKE CHANGE HAPPEN



A fairer food system is possible
Systems change requires shifts in both resources and power

We work across three key pillars for change

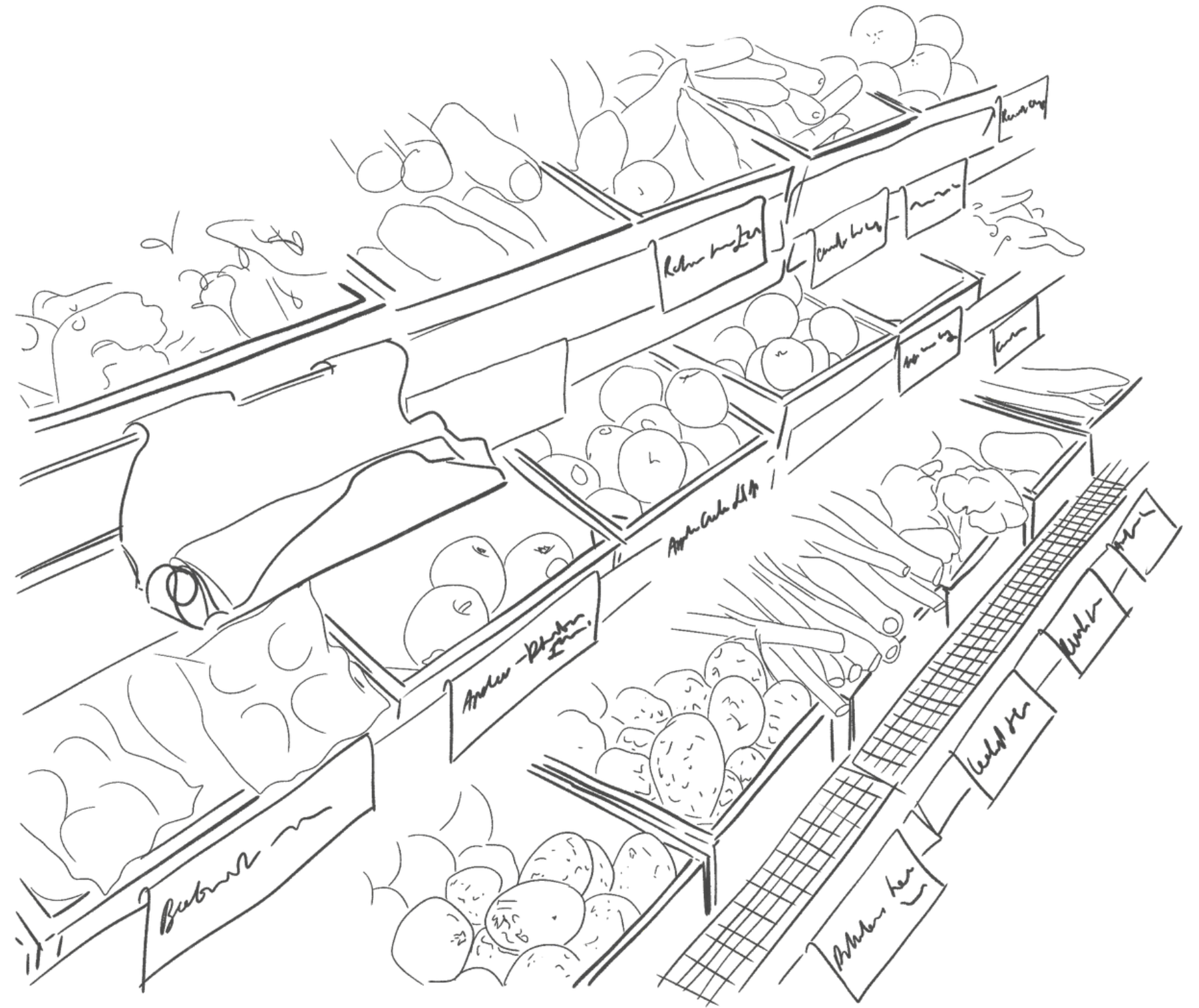
- 1. Advocating for fair, inclusive food policymaking
- 2. Catalysing funding for ethical food systems
- 3. Strengthening coherence across the food movement

The future we're working towards

- Farmers and others working in the food system can thrive
- Food systems protect and restore the natural world
- Everyone can access and enjoy good food with dignity
- Farmed animals have a life worth living

SECTION FOUR: WHY US

From a fairer dairy sector to food citizenship, the Food Ethics Council is a driver of change across the food system.



“Whether through resources, workshops or webinars, the Food Ethics Council has a unique ability to reframe complex problems in ways that make the impossible seem possible.”

Andrew Stark

Senior Research and Policy Manager, Eating Better



HOW WE'VE DRIVEN CHANGE



Dairy fairness

Amplified farmers' voices and helped build momentum for stronger dairy contract regulation and fairer supply chains.



Food citizenship

Helped shift thinking from passive consumers to active food citizens, now reflected across 100+ UK food partnerships



Eating Better alliance

Instrumental in the formation of a 70+ organisation movement advocating for 'less and better' meat.



Community resilience

Helped shift conversations beyond emergency food aid towards community-led approaches to food insecurity.



INFLUENCING THE PUSH FOR FAIRER, MORE SECURE MILK CONTRACTS

The challenge

Dairy farmers in the UK faced structural imbalances favouring processors and retailers, leaving many on the brink and locked into damaging systems.

Our contribution

We shifted the debate from “struggling farmers” to systemic unfairness by:

- evidencing imbalance across the supply chain
- advocating for fairer and more flexible contracts
- challenging the use of milk as a loss leader
- reframing the transition needed as a wellbeing and agency issues, not just a financial one

What changed

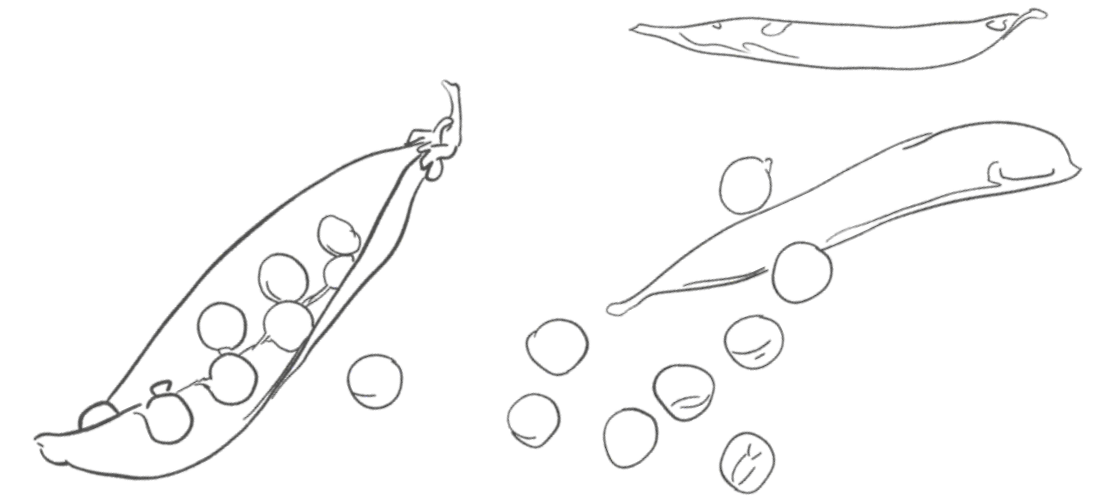
- Our recommendations fed into wider sector pressure that culminated in the Fair Dealing Obligations (Milk) Regulations 2024.
- We also influenced how policymakers, retailers, processors and NGOs talk about dairy transition and farmer support



PIONEERING 'FOOD CITIZENSHIP' IN UK CIVIL SOCIETY

The challenge

Food system interventions too often disempowered people by treating them as passive consumers making individual purchasing choices, rather than citizens with agency to shape the food system itself.



Our contribution

After working with New Citizen Project in 2016-17, the Food Ethics Council helped introduce and popularise the concept of 'food citizenship' in UK civil society. We advocated for approaches that:

- centre participation and lived experience
- involve communities in shaping food systems
- move beyond transactional models towards co-design and shared governance

What changed

- The harm of the 'consumer' mindset and the transformative power of 'citizen' are being increasingly recognised.
- The framing of 'food citizenship' has since been adopted by local authorities, national NGOs and more than 100 UK food partnerships.
- It has informed programmes focused on participation, co-design and community food governance, helping shift interventions from transactional towards more participatory models.

SHAPING THE CONVERSATION ON UK MEAT AND LIVESTOCK

The challenge

In the late 2000s, debates around meat, livestock and sustainability were often polarised and adversarial, with ethical, environmental and economic concerns treated as competing priorities.

Our contribution

Through the *Livestock Dialogues* series with WWF-UK, the Food Ethics Council brought together farmers, retailers, NGOs and others to create more constructive conversations about the future of meat and livestock. The dialogues helped promote the idea that ethical, environmental, and economic considerations must be weighted together when shaping food system change.

What changed

- The work influenced how major retailers and farming bodies talk about meat consumption, sustainable diets and just transitions.
- It also helped catalyse the Eating Better alliance in 2013 - now a movement of more than 70 organisations advocating for 'less and better' meat and sustainable diets.



SHIFTING NARRATIVES ON COMMUNITY FOOD SYSTEMS TOWARDS DIGNITY AND RESILIENCE



The challenge

Responses to food insecurity have often focused on emergency food aid and short-term provision, with limited attention to dignity, agency and long-term community resilience.

Our contribution

The Food Ethics Council helped shift the UK community food sector towards approaches rooted in citizenship, participation, and long-term resilience by:

- reframing food insecurity through the lens of citizenship, not consumption
- challenging the entrenchment of emergency food aid models and promoting alternatives that build power and connection
- publishing a national guide on community food resilience
- convening practitioners to co-design resilience-focused approaches
- influencing narratives shaping policy and public understanding

What changed

Our work has influenced practice, strategy, and public narratives across the community food sector - helping strengthen approaches that prioritise dignity, agency and communities' ability to shape their own food systems.

OUR INVITATION TO YOU



Food systems can change for the better - and they must.

Join us in building a future based on justice, dignity and kindness - galvanising resilient food systems that are fair for people, animals and the planet.

We invite everyone shaping our food future to address root causes, share power, and commit to long-term change over short-term fixes.

By turbo-charging food ethics across the UK, we can make unethical food systems a relic of the past.

Reach out to info@foodethicscouncil.org, join our conversations on [LinkedIn](#) and [sign up](#) to receive regular Food Ethics Council mailings. If you're in a position to, support our work [here](#).

