

Q36. Is there any additional information you would like to provide?

The Institute of Food Science and Technology (IFST) expresses disappointment that the Food Sector has not been identified as a priority area within the current Industrial Strategy. While we acknowledge that sector prioritisation has been based on data from 1997 - 2022, we believe the strategic importance of a vibrant, technology-driven food industry is fundamental to ensuring the future security, sustainability, and health of the UK's food system. Food is a public good, essential to everyone, and the food system should be at the core of the Industrial Strategy. The increasing stresses on food security, coupled with the sector's critical role in supporting national resilience, make a compelling case for its designation as a priority area. As the population grows and consumer demands evolve, the need for a robust, innovative food sector will only intensify, further cementing its importance to the UK's economic and social fabric. Historical data used to assess the sector's potential may not fully capture emerging opportunities, such as the rapid growth in alternative proteins. The food and drink industry is the largest manufacturing sector in the UK employing more than 470,000 people (see FDF Industry at a Glance), and a third of all European companies working on cell cultivated meat and fish products are in the UK (see GFI state of the cultivated meat sector annual report). This is exemplified by the recent investment in this technology: Imperial College London received \$30M (£23M) from the Bezos Earth Fund and a consortium of UK academic institutes received £15m from BBSRC (with an additional £23 million of co-investment) to launch the National Alternative Proteins Innovate Centre (NAPIC). A third of all European cultivated meat companies are in the UK. All of this is to say that the UK is world leading in emerging food technology and highlight the potential of industry investment in the food sector to drive innovation and economic growth. Recent food crises, exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic and the war in Ukraine, underscore the fragility of the UK and global food systems. To build resilience and address the dual challenges of health and sustainability, it is vital to invest in new technologies and provide robust support to the food industry. We welcome the Strategy's emphasis on education and research investment. These elements are critical for the growth and success of the food sector. A strong pipeline of STEM-educated professionals entering the food industry is essential to ensure the UK's continued leadership in food production and manufacturing. IFST urges the government to reconsider the strategic role of the Food Sector within the Industrial Strategy, recognising its centrality to national resilience, sustainability, and public health, and its potential to deliver sustained economic growth in the future. The Institute of Food Science and Technology is the UK's leading professional body that aims to advance the application of food science and technology for the benefit, safety and health of the public, and support the development and maintenance of professional standards and science-based food standards that underpin the success of British food manufacturing, retail and regulation. As an independent, charitable body, we bring professional expertise from across academia, industry and the public sector, centred around the professional, sustainable advancement of the UK food system. We would be happy to discuss this information in further detail