

Statement by the Food and Drink Federation (FDF), Unite, Usdaw, BFAWU and GMB

Working together to feed the nation

Every single person working in food and drink manufacturing – whether in production, distribution, or packaging – is doing vital work feeding the nation. The issue of food security has moved to its rightful place as a top priority. The unions and FDF are aware of the exceptionally demanding situation in the sector and are proud of the work being done, but also equally determined to ensure food and drink workers and their families stay safe.

We recognise the personal sacrifices everyone across the industry is making at this time of national crisis. That contribution has been widely recognised, including among others, by HRH Prince Charles, by Secretary of State Rt Hon George Eustice MP, Shadow Secretary of State Luke Pollard MP, Scotland's First Minister Nicola Sturgeon and by many, many people in the wider community.

We thank you for the part you are playing and set out below the key elements we have jointly identified as important for a successful partnership approach between industry and the trade unions at this difficult time, and building on this into the future.

Working together: Unions and Food and Drink Manufacturers

We share two objectives:

- to ensure that essential workers in food and drink manufacturing stay safe and are properly respected
- that we continue to produce the food and drink we need to feed the people of the United Kingdom.

We know that co-operation between us can achieve both goals.

Together, we would like to highlight examples of great partnership between food and drink manufacturers, trade unions and employees that have resulted in the safety of workers and effective running of our workplaces. We believe these examples – and many others – show how we are working together for the common good.

What we are doing is essential

Our industry has been designated because every item of food and drink produced in the UK is important to feeding our fellow citizens and to keeping the shelves stocked. At a time when many are confined, the small pleasures from food and drink can go a long way in lifting spirits. Our workforce is essential as we seek to maintain production, evenly spread across businesses and different product categories, which relieves the pressure on the entire industry.

Working together to resolve concerns

Many businesses have significantly increased the dialogue between managers, unions and employees. This has driven increased levels of communication and mutual support to solve problems and concerns in those workplaces. We know further co-operation is needed to ensure the industry's continued ability to produce food and to keep everyone safe and healthy.

Working together to help those who can't be at work

We are an essential industry and we should lead on how we support our colleagues who need to be away from the workplace. Remuneration will be a matter for each business, driven by its own financial imperatives and recognising agreed relationships with trade unions. This is an unprecedented time and we hope that every business will give serious consideration to how they support their essential workforce through pay and conditions.

As positive examples, many businesses are paying in full:

- those in the 'highly vulnerable' category during the 12 weeks who need to be at home and isolated in line with government guidelines and;
- those with Covid-19 symptoms or who are self-isolating.

Working together to make people safe at work

A large number of responsible manufacturers and unions have agreed and implemented a series of measures to make people safe in their workplace. These include appropriate social distancing, enhanced hygiene measures and personal protective equipment as applicable and appropriate.

Drawing on the food sector-specific guidance set out by Public Health England and Food Standards Scotland, the key hygiene and social distancing measures employers are recommended to implement are available [here](#) and [here](#).

In particular, businesses should ensure they are:

- Raising awareness amongst all staff
- Promoting effective personal hygiene
- Promoting safe and appropriate staff behaviours
- Ensuring effective and regular cleaning and disinfecting
- Ensuring social distancing measures on site and in food production areas
- Ensuring the correct use of appropriate personal protective equipment
- Acting quickly and supportively when a member of staff displays symptoms of Covid 19, to protect them and others, and conducting appropriate deep cleaning operations
- Keeping informed of developing advice.

These are only some examples of the ways in which business, unions and employees are working together. At the heart of all these relationships is mutual respect for the role each of us has to play in this vital national endeavour. Across the food and drink industry we are making a real difference. We thank you for your total commitment to that cause and celebrate your contribution as our industry's hidden and unsung heroes.

Signed on behalf of

fdf	Ian Wright CBE, Chief Executive
Unite	Diana Holland, Assistant General Secretary, and Joe Clarke, National Officer Food & Beverages
Usdaw	David Gill, National Officer, Food and Manufacturing
BFAWU	Sarah Woolley, General Secretary
GMB	Jude Brimble, National Secretary, and Eamon O'Hearn, National Officer