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By Michael Barker

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Dimbleby to lead food strategy review

Michael Gove appoints Leon co-founder to produce recommendations for new National Food Strategy



Henry Dimbleby Photo: Rachaelgough

Henry Dimbleby has been appointed by Defra secretary Michael Gove to lead an independent review aimed at ensuring England's food system is fit for the future.

The co-founder of the Leon restaurant chain and advocate of sustainable foodservice will tackle the first major review of the UK food system in 75 years, with the review's recommendations to feed into the new National Food Strategy. The strategy is scheduled to be published in 2020.

Dimbleby will investigate the entire food system from field to fork, analysing what changes are needed to ensure that it delivers safe, healthy, affordable food, regardless of where people live or how much they earn; is robust in the face of future shocks; restores and enhances the natural environment for the next generation; is built upon a resilient and sustainable agriculture sector; is a

thriving contributor to the country's urban and rural economies, delivering well-paid jobs and supporting innovative producers and manufacturers; and does all of this in an efficient and cost-effective way.

Gove said the UK's impending departure from the EU represents a "great opportunity" for British farmers and food producers. "But with an expanding population, the urgent threat of climate change and rising levels of diet-related disease, we face many challenges too.

"That is why the time is right for us to look afresh at our food system to ensure everyone has access to high-quality British food and our environment is protected for future generations. I am delighted that Henry Dimbleby will be leading this once-in-a-generation opportunity to cultivate a stronger food system for the future."

Dimbleby himself added: "No part of our

economy matters more than food. It is vital to life and shapes our sense of identity. But there are urgent challenges with which we must grapple. Populations are growing, diet-related conditions are harming the lives of millions, and climate change is altering what our land will yield.

"From farmers in the field to chefs in the kitchen, over the next year I'll be speaking with people from across the food chain to address these challenges and ensure everyone has a say in shaping the future."

Food Foundation executive director Anna Taylor added: "Today's pledge to develop a groundbreaking new National Food Strategy will send a signal to the world that our food system needs radical reform in order to reign in its devastating impacts on our health and our planet. Let's hope the businesses which put food on our plates see this as an exciting opportunity to be part of the solution."

And NFU president Minette Batters said: "I am very pleased to see that the government is taking food production seriously and putting plans in place for a national food strategy – this review is long overdue.

"It is crucial that this strategy delivers for everyone – from food producers

to families across the country, regardless of their income. Safe, traceable, affordable food that is produced to high standards of animal welfare and environmental protection is a right for all and British farmers should be the number-one supplier of this.

"The NFU has done some

early work with Henry Dimbleby on what a food strategy can look like and I am delighted that he has included much of this in his framework. We are looking forward to working with his review to deliver a food system that is fair for all."