The truly terrible effects of Russia’s illegal invasion of Ukraine are being felt across the globe, including disruptions to world food security and supply. Government and industry’s immediate focus continues to be on doing everything we can, within our power, to support the people of Ukraine and address their humanitarian need.

However, the wider consequences of this illegal invasion cannot be ignored so we have also assessed the potential impacts on Scotland’s food supply chain urgently, including the knock-on effects on the cost of living crisis.

The Short-life Food Security and Supply Taskforce was established on 17 March 2022 with a purpose to: *“monitor, identify and respond to any potential disruption to food security and supply resulting from the impact of the ongoing conflict in Ukraine”.*

In writing this final report, the Taskforce has drawn on technical and scientific knowledge and expertise from across a range of sectors, agencies and organisations, including key food and drink industry leaders. We thank them for the speed at which they have worked, and the contribution they have made, to shaping the recommendations in the report.

The many links in the food and drink supply chain have undoubtedly experienced a series of significant shocks from COVID-19 and Brexit which have disrupted supply chains and/or created new barriers to trade. In response to the pandemic, Scottish businesses, across all industries, have benefitted from more than £4.7 billion in support since March 2020. This includes grant funding and non-domestic rates relief for businesses in the food and drink sector to help these businesses survive and protect jobs during the pandemic.

The situation in Ukraine is now having further impacts, including rising energy prices; acute labour shortages, logistics and transportation challenges and increases in raw material costs. However, while there is greater strain on the food supply chain than has been seen for many years, immediate supplies of food and animal feed are secure.

Inevitably, there are limits on what we can influence because of the global factors at play. The reality is that the UK Government also holds many of the levers to help address many of these issues and we will continue to urge them to take action.

That said, we believe this report marks a turning point in our attitude to food security in this country. Ukraine has brought this issue into sharp focus but the climate emergency, for example, will keep it in the spotlight. We will now establish new food security structures in Scotland because, and as this report identifies, effective management and monitoring of Scotland’s food security will be important, including by creating mechanisms to intervene where required.

The attached report sets out a set of short, medium and longer-term recommendations that cover three key themes where *it considers its* recommendations can support progress: *business and supply chain support, future national food security structures and reserved issues to be raised with the UK Government*.

None of this is easy and it is important that we get the right balance between consumer, retail and supplier interests, so that, in the face of a less predictable and more volatile world, we are able to manage the impacts of shocks to our own food security.

The taskforce has shown how a collaboration between Government and industry can work to the benefit of all our interests and focus on outcomes that protect us all. It is in this spirit that we must now move forward.

Mairi Gougeon
Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs and Islands

James Withers
Chief Executive of Scotland Food and Drink