



Fair Wages, Working Conditions, Social Protection and Media Representation in UK Food Labour

Executive Summary

Food labour includes all paid and unpaid labour processes and practices required to generate food (Touboulic et al., 2021), encompassing activities such as agricultural labour (farming, harvesting, and animal husbandry), processing labour, service labour, and distribution.

Television and digital media discuss food labour as a simplistic process without critically analysing all food system labour. The Family Farm TV (British Television programme aired 2018) provides viewers with a realistic portrayal of the demands and rewards of farming life. The show focusses on the learning experiences of three families and acknowledges the broader issues of food labour including its demanding nature and the often-overlooked contributions of farmers and agricultural workers. On the other hand, Eat Well For Less? (BBC, 2023) focusses on helping families make healthier food choices on budget, acknowledges aspects of food labour but does not deeply explore or appreciate the labour behind food production. The latter is more consumer focussed but does not engage with the realities of labour in agriculture processing and retail.

Policy Recommendations

- **Champion Fair Representation of Food Labour:** Establish and enforce ethical and transparent media and advertising standards to ensure accurate representation of farm labour and food sourcing. Implement stricter guidelines against fictitious farm names to enhance consumer trust and market transparency by preventing misrepresentative practices.
- **Uphold Labour Rights and Equity:** Implement policies to ensure fair wages, improved working conditions, and social protection for food workers, alongside effective monitoring systems to detect misleading marketing practices in the food industry.
- **Foster Food Education and Public Awareness:** Integrate the realities of food labour into school curricula and higher education programs to promote informed consumer behaviour and encourage engagement with pertinent policies. Initiate programs aimed at enhancing public awareness regarding the crucial role that farmers occupy within food supply chains.

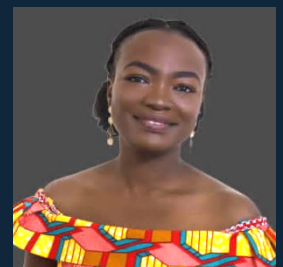
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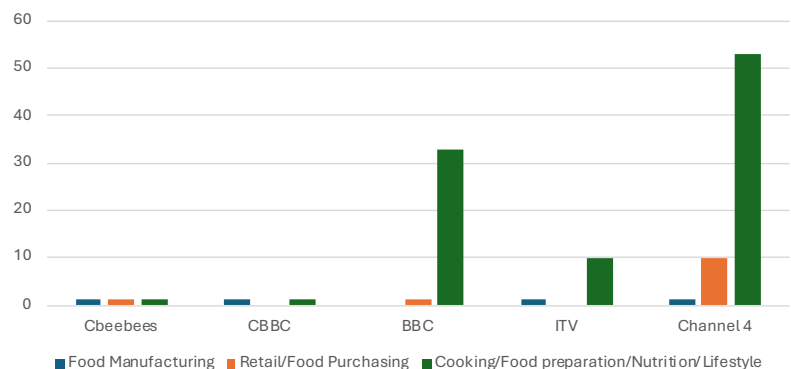


Media Representations of Farm Labour

A Multi-Modal Critical Discourse Analysis (M-CDA) explored representations of food labour in UK television programs. Employing the Labour Process Theory (LPT) (Braverman, 1998) as a framework to comprehend how capitalist food systems devalue agricultural work, alongside insights from global research on food media, key findings emerged.

A Year on the Farm (Channel 4) presents an idealised, passion-driven view of farming, which conceals the financial instability and labour-intensive realities experienced by workers (McCarthy, Touboullic and Glover, 2021), while Böhm et al. (2020) observe media portrayals obscuring precarious and exploitative labour conditions, constructing farming as a 'labour of love'. The *New Politics of Food* (Phillipov, 2016) celebrates artisanal and local food movements but rarely engage with the realities of migrant and low-paid agricultural work. *Inside the Factory* (BBC) illustrates food production as a predominantly automated process, where robots have largely replaced human labour, portraying "deskilling" loss of labour value Braverman's (1998).

Food Labour Programmes on TV
(Other Componets)



TV programme representations showcasing different stages of UK food labour: McCarthy, Toublic & Gover (2022)

The rise of celebrity chefs has shifted public attention away from the labour involved in food production and towards consumer experiences (Hansen, 2008).

Programs like *Eat Well for Less?* (BBC) focus on cost savings and convenience without addressing the effects of food prices on farmworkers. Television cooking shows influence public attitudes toward food consumption but do little to educate audiences about the systemic inequalities in food production.

Project Benefit

Improving the wages, working conditions and well-being of agricultural workers in turn enhances rural communities. Educated consumers have the power to drive demand for ethically produced food, motivating businesses to adopt just labour practices and contribute to a fairer food system. Fair labour policies are pivotal in establishing stable and ethical food supply chains at both national and international levels, reinforcing our commitment to global welfare.

Further Reading

Böhm et al. (2020)

<https://doi.org/10.1177/1350508419888901>

Braverman (1998). *Labor and monopoly capital: The degradation of work in the twentieth century*. nyu Press.

Hansen (2008)

<https://doi.org/10.2752/155280108X276050>

Phillipov (2016) *The New Politics of Food: Television and the Media/Food Industries*. London: Bloomsbury

McCarthy, Touboullic and Glover (2022)

<https://doi.org/10.1177/0950017021997357>

