

# Cross-Party Group on Food

27 February 2024 at 6pm, Committee Room 3 and Teams

Minute

Present

MSPs

Rhoda Grant MSP (Chair)  
Annie Wells MSP (Co-Chair) (Virtually)

Invited guests

Mairi Gougeon MSP, Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs, Land Reform and Islands

Non-MSP Group Members

In person

Kirsty Tinsdale, Food and Drink Federation Scotland/CPG Food Secretary  
Cat Hay, Food and Drink Federation Scotland  
David Thomson, Food and Drink Federation Scotland  
Iain Clunie, Food and Drink Federation Scotland  
Mads Fischer-Moller, WWF Scotland  
Sarah Millar, QMS  
Colin Smith, Scottish Wholesale Association  
Ylva Haglund, Scottish Wholesale Association  
Jayne Swanson, Scottish Wholesale Association  
Sarah Duley, Soil Association Scotland  
Mary Brennan, University of Edinburgh and Chair of Scottish Food Coalition  
Kirsty Jenkins, OneKind  
Tilly Robinson-Miles, Food Train  
David Watts, the Rowett Institute, University of Aberdeen  
Michelle McWilliams, the Rowett Institute, University of Aberdeen  
Baukje de Roos, the Rowett Institute, University of Aberdeen  
Ewan MacDonald-Russell, the Scottish Retail Consortium  
Sally Measom, Company Shop Group  
Tracy McCollin, the Scottish Government  
Stephanie Mander, the Scottish Government  
Peter Faassen de Heer, the Scottish Government  
Pat Abel, Transition Edinburgh South  
Alistair Williams, National Manufacturing Institute Scotland  
Laura Wyness, Nutrition Research & Communications  
Pete Ritchie, Nourish Scotland

Anna Chworow, Nourish Scotland  
Sarah Govan, ClimateXChange  
Jon Wilkin, Abertay University  
Boon-Seang Chu, Abertay University

Virtually

Alison Owens, Public Health Scotland  
Alistair Trail, SAC Consulting (Part of SRUC)  
Angela Mitchell, Nesta  
Ann Packard, RSA Fellows  
Antonia Ineson, Myreside Organics  
Csaba Babak, Nestlé UK & Ireland  
Beatrice Morrice, NFUS  
Bill Crosson, IFST  
Caroline Timmins, SCFDI  
Charlotte Maltin, Biomics Ltd  
Christine Fraser, Food Training Scotland  
Claire Hislop, Public Health Scotland  
Gillian Purdon, Food Standards Scotland  
Graeme Findlay, SQA  
Hamish Macdonell, QMS  
Heather Anderson, Councillor  
Jackie McCabe, the Royal Environmental Health Institute of Scotland  
Jane Bunting, the Royal Environmental Health Institute of Scotland  
Jennifer Forsyth, Obesity Action Scotland  
Joe Hind, Scotland Food & Drink  
Jules Griffin, The Rowett Institute, University of Aberdeen  
Kaia Waxenberg, SRUC  
Keith Robson, the Open University in Scotland  
Kerry Hammond, SAC Consulting (Part of SRUC)  
Kirsten Leask, Learning for Sustainability Scotland  
Kirsty Tait, Food, Farming and Countryside Commission  
Laura Wilson, Food Standards Scotland  
Laura-Alexandra Smith, Royal Society of Chemistry  
Lesley Atkins, Glenkens Food Hub  
Liz Barron-Majerik, Lantra Scotland  
Anneli Lofstedt, University of Aberdeen  
Lusi Alderslowe, Propagate  
Martin Meteyard, Co-operative consultant  
Eluned Michael, Queen Margaret University  
Nicola Holden, SRUC  
Orchid Liu, UK Chinese Times  
Rachel Robson, Perth and Kinross Council  
Robert McGeachy, Food Standards Scotland  
Rosa Holt, Dietitian  
Ruth Watson, Keep Scotland the Brand  
Sandra Williamson, The Royal Environmental Health Institute of Scotland  
Simon Macdonald, Fisheries and Processing Consultant  
Sterre Vester, SAC Consulting (Part of SRUC)

Tyra Dempster  
Viv Collie, Eat and Drink Dundee  
Wendy Barrie, Scottish Food Guide  
Bosse Dahlgren, Scottish Food Guide

## 1. Welcome and Apologies for Absence

Annie Wells MSP (AW) welcomed all to the meeting. She noted that Rhoda Grant MSP (RG) - who was chairing this meeting - would be late due to business in the Chamber overrunning.

Apologies were received from:

- Cate Devine, Food journalist
- Paul Rooke, British Coffee Association
- Vivian Maeda, Business in the Community
- Denise Calder, Cancer Research UK Scotland Centre
- Mary Lawton
- Anne Marte Bergseng, ClimateXChange
- Archie Gibson, Agrico
- Brian Whittle MSP
- Martin Carle, CFINE
- Howell Davies, Interface
- Martin Irons, Hospitality Industry Trust
- Sarah Gowanlock, Soil Association
- Uel Morton
- Fiona Bird, Isle of South Uist or Angus

## 2. Minutes of the Last Meeting (28 November 2023)

The minutes of the last meeting were proposed by Simon Macdonald and seconded by David Thomson and therefore approved and noted as a fair reflection of proceedings.

AW reminded members of the group that minutes from these meetings are publicly available and so if you feel anything needs corrected please get in touch with [Kirsty Tinsdale](#).

## 3. Matters Arising

AW highlighted that Jim Fairlie was no longer a Co-Convenor of the Cross Party Group on Food due to being appointed as Minister for Agriculture and Connectivity. We are seeking an MSP to replace him on the group. She thanked Jim for all his support and wished him good luck in his Ministerial role.

AW noted that Kirsty Tinsdale would share the CPG on Food minutes from the May, September, November and today's meetings with Scottish Government officials as part of the draft Good Food Nation National Plan consultation.

#### **4. Update: The National Good Food Nation Plan consultation**

Mairi Gougeon MSP, Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs, Land Reform and Islands, attended the meeting to provide an update on [the National Good Food Nation Plan consultation](#) which is open until the 22 April. The Cabinet Secretary highlighted the following:

The first draft national Good Food Nation Plan includes:

- Part one: Sets the scene for Scotland becoming a Good Food Nation.
- Part two: Proposes the six-overarching Good Food Nation Outcomes and the range of targets and indicators that the Scottish Government will use to gauge the progress towards achieving those.
- Part three: Highlights the wider range of food related policies and initiatives from across the Scottish Government that are going to be the means to which the government hope to achieve those outcomes.

This structure of the plan reflects the legislative requirements of the Good Food Nation (Scotland) Act 2022.

The aim is to ensure that everyone in Scotland has reliable access to safe, nutritious, affordable, sustainable and age and culturally appropriate food. In addition, the government want to ensure a thriving food culture in Scotland with a prosperous and innovative food and drink sector.

There is much to be proud in terms of the food that is produced in Scotland but that there needs to be recognition that there are flaws in the current food system.

##### *Outcomes*

- The six overarching outcomes aim to set the long-term strategic importance of food to Scotland, reflect some of the key challenges and opportunities that exist, embed a human rights approach to food policy, and avoid a siloed approach to policy making.
- The Scottish Government is seeking views on anything that is missing from the outcomes or that needs to be worded differently.

##### *Measuring progress*

- Views are sought on ways of measuring progress against the outcomes through targets and indicators. There was discussion around the targets that had been suggested during the Bill process and it was noted these had been given careful consideration.

- It was noted that setting new targets is a complicated task – they need to be specific, realistic, feasible, affordable, measurable and legal.
- The Scottish Government concluded that there is limited scope to include a wider range of proposed targets in the first plan. The consultation document sets out where it has been possible to extend the targets in relation to current diet and healthy weight commitments and to strengthen household food insecurity commitments. There will be scope to develop and include new targets in future iterations of the plan.

### *Snapshot boxes*

- Views are sought on snapshot boxes within the consultation setting out what life will be like for different groups of people in a Good Food Nation.

### *Other legislative requirements*

- Once the plan is finalised Scottish Ministers will legally be required to have regard to the plan when carrying out "specified functions". Feedback on the specified functions set out in the consultation document would be welcome. Ministers will have to consider the broader impact that their actions are going to have on future policy related to food. This aims to put in place a more cross portfolio approach to policy making which will be supported by the Ministerial Working Group on Food.
- As part of the Act a new Scottish Food Commission will be established. The Commission will advise, inform and assist the Scottish Ministers in making future improvements to the plan.
- The Scottish Government legally needs to assess the progress of the national plan every two years and make revisions where needed every five years.
- Local authorities and health boards will be required to have regard to the national Good Food Nation Plan. The Scottish Government hopes this will provide the direction to support the creation of their local plans.

Members of the CPG provided the following response to the Cabinet Secretary's statement:

### *Targets and indicators*

- The plan could include an acknowledgement of what is missing in terms of the targets and indicators. It could be more explicit in acknowledging where the gaps are, where the areas of work are happening, where the plan is evolving and how the evidence base is being developed.
- It could be interesting to look at how other countries instigated programmes of evidence so we can be confident in the science and in developing smart indicators.

- It was felt that some of the diet and healthy weight targets - whilst welcome - could be more specific rather than using terms like significantly reduce and increase. This would help progress to be measured more effectively.
- It was thought that the Commission could have a hard time doing its job without clear targets, metrics and indicators. It was suggested that the Scottish Government would be best placed to figure out how to work both with the Commission and with civil society to generate those targets so that we have something that works and is tailored to the Scottish context, but also draws on best of international evidence.

#### *Working with businesses*

- It was felt that there was a lack of coherence between Scottish Government departments which is not driving Scotland to become a Good Food Nation. The retailers and the food and drink industry are dealing with a large amount of policy burdens coming from other Scottish Government departments at the moment which is making the cost of food more expensive.
- We need to avoid a postcode lottery of opportunities for food businesses when we get down to local plan level.

#### *Health and social care*

- It was pointed out that there's no recognition of food within the National Care Service Bill. The Food, Fluid and Nutritional Care Standards gives people who are in receipt of social care support with food preparation but not food access. It was thought that the plan should reflect everyone having the opportunity to have pride and pleasure from food in Scotland.
- There is inconsistency in the quality of food served in different hospitals and health boards. Some hospitals cook their food on site whilst others heat up food which sometimes travels quite far.

#### *Global food system and exports*

- It is important to remember that Scotland is part of a global food system. We need to work out how best to align local policies with national policies and with international policies.
- It is important on an international scale to show leadership with Scotland being a healthier nation as well promoting good food to export markets.
- We need to promote the blue economy on a global scale as part of this work with Scotland's waters producing an array of high quality foods.

### *Skills and education*

- There was concern highlighted on the level of education needs in Scotland's food and drink manufacturing sector. Universities have faced challenges in recruiting students to study food science related courses. Abertay University is now the only provider of food science degrees in Scotland. To become a Good Food Nation it is thought that the shortages of staffing will need to be addressed.
- There is still the need for a culture change in schools to support young people to make healthier choices.
- There is a need to ensure food education provision at all levels from Primary to Secondary.

### *Agriculture*

- The red meat sector has PGIs for Scottish Beef and Scotch Lamb, which are intrinsically linked to the history and heritage of meat production in Scotland. There is a potential big challenge for the meat industry around lab grown meat with price point competition that might impact our producers. Protections could potentially be put in place for our producers through the Good Food Nation like other countries have done to protect that culturally important way of producing red meat from future innovations.
- There is an opportunity to look at effective pasture management and how that particularly the Northern Ireland evidence base, is supporting some of the farmers towards becoming carbon negative.
- It was thought that there was an opportunity to join up the agendas of the Agriculture Bill, the new payment structure and the Good Food Nation Plans.
- The community led local development LEADER work delivered through CAP was a great way of mobilising energy around local food and local food communities.

The Cabinet Secretary provided the following response:

### *Local plans and working with local authorities*

- There is a need to ensure the national plan sets the direction to provide clarity for local authorities as to how it should be implemented and the kinds of things that they should be looking at.
- The Scottish Government is keen to roll out the Food for Life Programme across Scotland.
- The Scottish Government will continue to engage with stakeholders across the food chain as the local authorities and health boards work on their local plans to ensure a joined-up approach.
- There has been positive work in Tayside where the food is cooked locally and then frozen and then distributed to the local schools. This is good for the local

producers, the local supply chains, the local economy, and the health of our young people in schools.

- Scottish Government is working with the Soil Association to trial the expansion of Food for Life within Glasgow, looking at the wider public sector not just in our schools but other settings including colleges and hospitals.
- The specified functions part of the consultation is likely the best place to feedback on where wider policy needs to take into account the Good Food Nation Plan.
- The Cabinet Secretary will work with officials and relevant Ministerial colleagues to better understand the issue regarding shortages of skills within food production.
- It was noted that the application process for the Food Commission will be set out so as to encourage a broad spectrum of applicants to ensure all the whole food system is represented in reviewing progress in achieving the outcomes in the national and local good food plans and the effectiveness of those plans in addressing food-related issues.

## **5. Discussion: The National Good Food Nation Plan consultation**

After the Cabinet Secretary left there was a discussion on the National Good Food Nation Plan outcomes and the snapshot boxes within the consultation.

### *Outcomes*

#### Outcome 1

- Some status could be given to community supported agriculture.
- Having access to information in areas such as to support people with growing successfully and for schools planning their meals would be helpful.
- Local producers and growers don't always have the confidence to plant because there isn't the guarantee that there's the end user to procure it or to buy it.
- It was thought that some local authorities have the funding to afford to buy local food but others don't.
- The safety part of this outcome doesn't always get recognised. There is a decline in the numbers of Environmental Health Officers who are vital to ensuring our food remains safe.
- There is a concern that people don't always follow the cooking instructions provided by manufacturers to try to save money and cook food more quickly than advised.

#### Outcome 2

- There could be a stronger direction of travel with regards to animal welfare. It was felt that more detail could be provided on the ongoing work to include a suite of animal welfare targets in future.



- Some thought could be given to what happens when food isn't perfect and where that will go and how that will be redistributed to people that need it. It was felt that was missing from this outcome.
- Consideration was given to whether people would have a sufficient understanding of 'biodiversity' and whether the outcome adequately recognised the vital role of biodiversity for our planet.

### Outcome 3

- Some thought this outcome may be a bit too high level and wondered how we can support people to make the healthier choice the easier choice.
- It was noted that making healthier choices is not always affordable to people with some people struggling to put food on the table.

### Outcome 4

- There is an opportunity to be more inclusive and holistic about the people we consider to be workers in our food and drink sector – counting those who work in primary production and manufacturing through to retail, hospitality and our hospital and school kitchens. It is important to note how central food and drink is to our neighbourhoods, communities, local authorities, regions and our economy as a whole.
- It is positive to see food security mentioned – being able to sustain food for our own population is something that has to be included.
- It is a very challenging economic environment for businesses – with the increasing cost base to which businesses have to produce a product while consumers are not able to pay a higher price point for that product. We need to be careful not to put Scottish businesses at a disadvantage compared to businesses in other places in the world. We don't want to threaten our food security and local economy unnecessarily or unintentionally through policy that would go against this outcome.
- Some people don't buy Scottish as the first choice because too often Scottish produce is sold as a premium which is not affordable to the average person.
- Public procurement can focus on price rather than on buying Scottish which is an issue when working towards becoming a Good Food Nation.
- It is important to take into account nutritional security, which could mean producing more of what will underpin the other outcomes.
- It was noted that there could be a potential trade-off between competitive advantage and food security. Consideration was given to whether Scotland should grow more of particular types of food to become more resilient and be less impacted by global disruption and climate change or whether we should maximise economic growth by focussing on products such as whisky that we are well known for.
- It was highlighted that it is positive that the importance of industry is recognised in this outcome. It was thought that we need to keep in mind that, in order to exist, Scotland's food and drink industry needs to keep compete both in the UK and global marketplace.
- It was thought that Outcome 4 and Outcome 2 exist in tension and synergy with each other. The supply chain is responding to Outcome 2, which is in

international law – this is a great opportunity to make Scotland more competitive in the international market.

- To make this outcome a reality we need to ensure we have the people and skills to ensure we continue to produce the high quality and safe food that we are known for.
- It was thought that paying our population the living wage is a very positive thing but that it adds to the cost base of a product that is higher than other parts of the world that is not being recovered from the marketplace.

#### Outcome 5

- It was thought that this outcome and the others need to provide greater recognition of the enjoyment that food brings – celebrating the fact that food is an important part of our culture.
- It was thought that it needs to be reflected that citizens need to be active participants in shaping the food system. It was considered that the Food Commission could continue the work that is happening through the consultation process.
- There could be an opportunity to create a culture of good food across the curriculum – not just health and wellbeing and home economics and at any level of learning. Part of this could be linking the learning for sustainability action plan with the Good Food Nation Plan.
- It was felt that the development of people's skills into higher education presents a gap between Outcome 4 and outcome 5. There are examples of university students that are passionate about food and have good transferable skills that are not undertaking food degrees – how do we encourage those people into the industry.

#### Outcome 6

- With this outcome it was thought it will be important to work out how we will track the data and what evidence base is being used. It was suggested that before we lead the world on outcome 6 we need to have some targets and metrics and indicators that can tell us where we currently stand.
- It was suggested that there's a huge need to collaborate with international partners as well and it was felt that the word 'collaboration' is missing from this outcome.

#### Snapshot boxes

- Making safe food was felt to be missing from the snapshot boxes.
- It was thought that the relationship between the existing set of targets and indicators in the consultation document could be better fleshed out, and that the snapshot boxes could cover more breadth. It was noted that certain population groups have really specific food needs - such as older people and that explicit recognition of that in the snapshot boxes is important.
- It was felt across the snapshot boxes more recognition could be given to food and health inequalities.

- It was noted that the wholesaler and surplus food surplus redistributor are missing snapshot boxes.

## 6. AOB

RG highlighted that she has lodged a Bill with the Scottish Parliament, which aims to enshrine a Right to Food into Scots Law and would empower the Scottish Food Commission to oversee and report on the operation of the law. She is seeking support from MSPs.

## 7. Dates of the next meeting

The next meeting will take place on Tuesday 28 May 2024 at 6pm, and the AGM will take place on Wednesday 11 September 2024 at 6pm. Both take place at the Scottish Parliament. There will also be an option to join online via Teams.