



OFFICIAL REPORT
AITHISG OIFIGEIL

Rural Affairs, Islands and Natural Environment Committee

Wednesday 2 February 2022

Session 6



The Scottish Parliament
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

© Parliamentary copyright. Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body

Information on the Scottish Parliament's copyright policy can be found on the website - www.parliament.scot or by contacting Public Information on 0131 348 5000

Wednesday 2 February 2022

CONTENTS

	Col.
DECISION ON TAKING BUSINESS IN PRIVATE	1
GOOD FOOD NATION (SCOTLAND) BILL: STAGE 1	2
SUBORDINATE LEGISLATION	56
Phytosanitary Conditions (Amendment) Regulations 2022 (PH/36)	56
Milk and Milk Products (Pupils in Educational Establishments) Aid Applications (England and Scotland) Regulations 2022 (AGS/10)	56
Private Storage Aid Scheme (Pigmeat) (Scotland) Amendment Regulations 2021 (SSI 2021/492)	57

RURAL AFFAIRS, ISLANDS AND NATURAL ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE **4th Meeting 2022, Session 6**

CONVENER

*Finlay Carson (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con)

DEPUTY CONVENER

*Beatrice Wishart (Shetland Islands) (LD)

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

*Karen Adam (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP)

*Dr Alasdair Allan (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP)

*Ariane Burgess (Highlands and Islands) (Green)

*Jim Fairlie (Perthshire South and Kinross-shire) (SNP)

*Rachael Hamilton (Etrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con)

*Jenni Minto (Argyll and Bute) (SNP)

*Mercedes Villalba (North East Scotland) (Lab)

*attended

THE FOLLOWING ALSO PARTICIPATED:

Dr Isabel Fletcher (University of Edinburgh)

Iain Gulland (Zero Waste Scotland)

Claire Hislop (Public Health Scotland)

Jill Muirie (Glasgow Centre for Population Health)

Dr Mike Rivington (James Hutton Institute)

Dr Kirsteen Shields (Global Academy of Agriculture and Food Security)

Vicki Swales (Scottish Environment LINK)

Jo Teece (British Dietetic Association)

CLERK TO THE COMMITTEE

Emma Johnston

LOCATION

The Mary Fairfax Somerville Room (CR2)

Scottish Parliament

Rural Affairs, Islands and Natural Environment Committee

Wednesday 2 February 2022

[The Convener opened the meeting at 09:00]

Decision on Taking Business in Private

The Convener (Finlay Carson): Good morning, and welcome to the fourth meeting in 2022 of the Rural Affairs, Islands and Natural Environment Committee. I remind everyone who is using electronic devices to switch them to silent.

Our first item of business is a decision on whether to take items 5 and 6 in private. Do members agree to do so?

Members indicated agreement.

Good Food Nation (Scotland) Bill: Stage 1

09:00

The Convener: Under agenda item 2, we are continuing our evidence sessions on the Good Food Nation (Scotland) Bill. I welcome our first panel, who will focus on policy outcomes relating to environment and sustainability. With us today are Iain Gulland, executive director and chief executive officer of Zero Waste Scotland; Dr Mike Rivington, land use system modeller at the James Hutton Institute; Dr Kirsteen Shields, lecturer in international law and food security at the Global Academy of Agriculture and Food Security; and Vicki Swales, head of land use policy at RSPB Scotland, who is representing Scottish Environment LINK.

We have about 90 minutes for questions. I will kick off. What are your experiences of the food system and the issues that Scotland faces in that system with regard to the environment, waste and related issues? I will go to each member of the panel. I would like Dr Rivington also to expand on experiences during the pandemic and how those might inform our approach to food policies in the event of further environmental shocks. However, we will start with Iain Gulland.

Iain Gulland (Zero Waste Scotland): Thank you for the opportunity to speak to the committee. We welcome the introduction of the Good Food Nation (Scotland) Bill and its commitment not just to addressing environmental aspects of the food system but to giving equal importance to the social, health and economic pillars.

Our focus is obviously on food waste and its impact. It is true to say that, to date, the impact of our food system in tackling the climate emergency has been severely understated. Topics such as energy, transport and plastic often dominate our conversation about the environment. That was also evident during the 26th United Nations climate change conference of the parties—COP26.

Our consumption of materials and resources is responsible for around 80 per cent of Scotland's carbon footprint, and food makes up a significant part of that. I think we all know that agriculture and associated land use accounts for about a quarter of Scotland's total greenhouse gas emissions. Looking at the global picture, if food loss and waste were a country, it would have the third largest carbon footprint in the world after the USA and China, yet a staggering one third of all the food that we produce globally is lost or wasted.

Food production does not just contribute to climate change; it is also one of the biggest causes of biodiversity loss, as habitats of the natural environment are destroyed to create farmland. An area larger than China is used to grow food that is never eaten. There is also a moral issue: the 1 billion hungry people in the world could be fed on less than a quarter of the food that is wasted in the United Kingdom, the USA and Europe put together.

In Scotland, we are, unfortunately, part of that problem. Collectively, we throw away more than 980,000 tonnes of food—just under 1 million tonnes of food—every year. Of that waste, 40 per cent comes from our food industries—manufacturing, retail, hospitality and food services—but more than 60 per cent comes from households up and down Scotland. Therefore, we all have a role to play, whether we are part of the food industry or not.

In hospitality and food services in Scotland, the equivalent of 106 million meals are discarded every year. That is one out of every six meals that are served, and it is a great cost to our hospitality and food service industry. Even filling a wheelie bin with food waste every week would cost a business about £8,000 a year.

We need to grow more food in Scotland to save emissions from importing food and to ensure that our food supply chain is more resilient to global shocks such as the pandemic, which the convener mentioned. At the same time, inedible parts and by-products from food production should be fed back into the system to grow more food or to enable creative new solutions.

Ultimately, we need to support Scottish households across the country to put an end to edible food waste in our homes and to recycle as much as we can of what cannot be eaten, to prevent it from going to landfill. When we waste food, we also waste the water, energy and resources that went into growing it. The Good Food Nation (Scotland) Bill should be seen as an enabler for that support.

The inclusion of a food waste indicator and food waste reduction actions in the national, the national health service and the local authority good food nation plans will help us to monitor progress and allow for smarter targeting of action and support. The bill needs to be a catalyst for a system-wide approach to how we grow, produce, supply and consume our food, so that we deliver a more sustainable, healthy and equitable future for all.

Dr Mike Rivington (James Hutton Institute): First, I will pick up your question about the Covid aspects, because that will help to set the context. The Covid impact was primarily a demand-side

shock, not a production shock. There were impacts on the production side, but the impact was primarily on the demand side and was caused by the loss of income.

We saw a divide in the impact on the demand side, with some people's economic and physical access to food severely impacted by the Covid pandemic. However, the production side was not badly impacted, despite 2020 having a combination of severe weather events that meant that overall production in the UK was lower than average. Trying to glean what we could from looking at the Covid impact was further complicated by Brexit and trying to understand what its impacts were.

The main message from the Covid impact is that we need to ensure food security within Scotland to support the most vulnerable people. That can best be achieved through financial support rather than by making food available directly. There was no shortage of food; what was in short supply was access to affordable food, because of the economic aspects. We can connect that to the Good Food Nation (Scotland) Bill by looking at what the bill is trying to achieve in handling the impacts of climate change, biodiversity loss and ecosystem degradation on food. That is likely to be a production-side shock. Therefore, because the future risks that we are talking about are primarily production-side shocks, the two situations are difficult to compare.

It is important to flag that the UK as a whole imports about 48 per cent of its food, so we need to consider the international impacts of all the drivers that are likely to produce production shocks. We cannot look at Scotland in isolation. Iain Gulland made some good points about the scale of the international aspect, which has a key role, and the fact that we waste and lose so much food. The amount is likely to increase with climate change impacts. Therefore, when we look at the Good Food Nation (Scotland) Bill, it is important to consider the international context as well.

Dr Kirsteen Shields (Global Academy of Agriculture and Food Security): My research has been on law and governance in relation to land and food. In response to the question about our observations resulting from Covid and so forth, the key one is that we cannot rely on changes at household level. If we want people to have healthy and sustainable diets, we must have healthy and sustainable sources of food. A good place to start is with public institutions such as schools and hospitals. To increase access to sustainable food sources, we need to look at access in different ways and to understand the obstacles to access.

I also have a few comments on the scope and ambition of the bill. It focuses on process and on duties on relevant authorities to create food plans.

That is exciting from a democratic perspective. It is helpful to have those bodies on board for partnership, but it cannot be assumed that that will create equality of impacts or food system transitions. The Good Food Nation (Scotland) Bill needs to engage with the whole food system, from production to consumption—from farm to fork. In particular, there is an opportunity to close the gap between farm and fork. By that, I mean to cultivate closer relationships with farms and food producers through local suppliers of food.

There is also an opportunity to do something innovative in relation to the nexus of land and diets. For example, despite being the UK's largest local authority area by landmass, the Highland region produces very little fruit. [*Interruption.*]

The Convener: It looks as though we have lost Dr Shields. I ask Vicki Swales to come in, until we get Dr Shields back.

Vicki Swales (Scottish Environment LINK): Thank you, convener, and good morning to the members of the committee. I will pick up on Scottish Environment LINK's understanding of the environmental impacts of our food system. As previous speakers have indicated, we know that our food system has a very significant environmental footprint, affecting biodiversity—[*Inaudible.*—globally and domestically, on land and at sea. In the face of the nature and climate emergency, it is critical that we look at our food system and at reducing its environmental impacts.

From our perspective, it is critical that we take action now—and quickly. This decade to 2030 is significant: it is the United Nations decade on ecosystem restoration. We are going to have legally binding targets for nature recovery, and we have to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 75 per cent by 2030 if we are to get to net zero by 2045.

There is a clear and growing evidence base about the state of our environment and some of the drivers behind that. There have been big international assessments of biodiversity, such as the biodiversity intactness index of how human activity has impacted on nature. Out of 240 countries, Scotland is 28th from the bottom. We are not doing very well when it comes to what is happening to biodiversity.

Our "State of Nature" report has summarised very clearly the problems that many species face. Forty-nine per cent of species have decreased in abundance; 11 per cent of species are threatened with extinction; and, as other speakers have highlighted, we have very significant greenhouse gas emissions from land use, farming and our food system as a whole. We have to tackle those issues, and we need to transition quickly to farming and fishing methods that are nature and

climate friendly and that reduce those emissions and those impacts on biodiversity.

Our food system has a really big part to play in that. It is part of the problem, but it needs to be part of the solution, too. [*Inaudible.*—being in a position to help drive forward some of the transformational change that we will need, and to do that quickly in this next decade.

09:15

The Convener: Thank you. I will go back to Dr Shields with my next question. We have heard that the bill needs to do this and needs to do that, but you said that we should not assume that it will do those things. The bill, as drafted, is a framework bill. Potentially, as it sits, it will not achieve any of the ambitions that stakeholders would like it to achieve. There may therefore be an argument that the bill should not have been introduced in that way and that the Government should have fleshed it out a little more. At the moment, it looks as though it will be left to parliamentarians to lodge amendments to achieve some of those ambitions. Is that your understanding? Will the bill as drafted enable Scotland to achieve its ambitions?

Dr Shields: A lot needs to be added to the bill. Beyond a general mission statement, there need to be reporting procedures, an accountability mechanism and a clearer definition of what we mean by "good food".

There is also an opportunity to expand the commitments under section 3. As this session is about the environment, there is scope to add links to key frameworks on the environment. For instance, the guidelines from the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations and World Health Organization on sustainable healthy diets contain principles on the use of pathogens and toxins, maintaining greenhouse gas emissions, preserving biodiversity, minimising the use of antibiotics, reducing food loss and waste, and so forth. A lot more could be done to hitch the bill to international frameworks. The right to a healthy and sustainable environment, which was passed in a resolution on 8 October 2021, is also highly relevant to the bill.

There are also options such as what France has done recently. A law that came into force in January 2022 demands that 50 per cent of the products that are used in the catering of public institutions must be sustainable. It also includes things such as measures against food waste and bans on food surpluses.

There could, therefore, be a level of specificity and a level of attachment to the broader framework issues. I certainly look forward to that being built into the bill, as you have said, through discussion and amendments.

The Convener: Rachael Hamilton has a brief supplementary question, after which we will go to Alasdair Allan.

Rachael Hamilton (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con): On the point that you have just made, Dr Shields, do you believe that the Good Food Nation (Scotland) Bill is the means by which to strengthen the procurement rules in Scotland?

Dr Shields: Absolutely. Without stronger procurement rules, what are we dealing with? Procurement rules enable us to build closer connections over the source of our food supply. By doing that, we can regenerate food production across Scotland, by specifying a particular quality of produce. Procurement is where the magic happens.

The Convener: Thank you. I will go to the other panel members before I bring in Alasdair Allan, if he does not mind. Iain Gulland, what are your views on the bill as drafted?

Iain Gulland: I agree to some extent that, if the bill was more prescriptive and contained more specific actions and specific targets, a benefit could be seen from that. However, it is enabling legislation, so the power is in how the plans that are developed by the Government and, in particular, probably, local authorities could shape the future that we are talking about. That power is not just in writing plans and in looking at their own internal operations but in how all 32 local authorities and all national health service boards could work together collaboratively to shape the new food system that we have all been talking about in more sustainable, more healthy and more accessible ways for the population and for its diet.

I certainly witnessed that during Glasgow's COP26, when there was almost an awakening of cities, in particular, centred on a number of events around that agenda. Almost 99 per cent of the food in cities comes from outwith cities. It is about the influence that cities could have individually but, more importantly, by working collaboratively. It comes back to the point about procurement: that is where the ambition needs to lie if we are really serious about it. How could public bodies come together not just to address their own issues, which they absolutely need to do for the populations that they serve, but to really shape the system at a national level and collaboratively across Scotland?

We need to set out that ambition. How do agencies such as Zero Waste Scotland support those plans so that they are all aligned, joined up and moving in the same direction, and so that there are real, significant opportunities? It should not be a fragmented approach but a joined-up approach across Scotland. If that ambition were

set out, planned and taken forward by local authorities, in particular, and by the other agencies, we would see the success that we all aspire to.

The Convener: Dr Rivington, will the bill as drafted be fit for purpose? Are we assuming too much on the basis of what is in front of us?

Dr Rivington: There is good scope for additional ambition, but there is a time imperative with regard to meeting the 1.5°C target. Therefore, actions need to be taken as soon as possible. I appreciate that it takes quite a long time to get a bill through Parliament, so there is an imperative to set things in motion. There is also an understanding that bills can be amended afterwards. Therefore, it is important to get things moving as fast as possible. At this point, I would like to bring in the notion of the psychology of the population. The Good Food Nation (Scotland) Bill is an opportunity to bring everybody on board to take steps towards mitigating climate change through our choices of the food that we consume and where we buy it from. There is room for ambition within the bill, but the delay of waiting until you have something that is more ideal as a bill might mean that we miss that window of opportunity, which might fade in the coming year or two, as an immediate response to the climate emergency.

To some extent, since COP26, we have already witnessed that. After COP26, there was obviously a lot of interest, but other things that distract us in the news take us away from thinking about the climate and biodiversity crisis. Therefore, I urge that we do not wait until the bill is perfect but rather get it through on the basis that it can be used as an impetus to get the whole population on board as to the scale of the emergency and what individuals can do about it.

The Convener: Alasdair Allan has some supplementary questions.

Dr Alasdair Allan (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP): Iain Gulland, you have given us some fearful statistics about food waste and you have set out a solution. Rightly, you are advocating for more food to be grown in Scotland that can be used in Scotland. How does that relate to the problem that we were talking about last week, which is the affordability of food? It is not just about the rising cost of living. More generally, we have been talking about how to make food affordable for people on low incomes. We all want to see more food that is grown in Scotland being used in Scotland, as a solution to some of the problems that you have outlined. How do we make that happen and make it more affordable?

Iain Gulland: That is a good question. Obviously, there is the aspect of the price of food,

but there is also the fact that we waste food across all parts of society, which is a cost. We talked about the carbon emissions, but the average household is spending about £500 a year on food that we do not eat. Therefore, that is another aspect: it is not just about the price of food but about the waste, which has an impact on the amount of money that we have to spend. We need to think differently about how we buy, consume and store food. It is clear that there are behaviours that we could support at the household level in cooking and preparing food so that it is not wasted. Food can be stored properly in the fridge or the freezer, and leftovers can be used to save money, which would allow people to spend that money on food.

There are also aspects of how we can grow more food. Businesses that we work with directly, which I have talked about, are making cost savings. Food waste in production, supply or retail costs them money, and they are happy to put that cost on to the price of food or the price of their operation. Addressing the food waste issue is not only good for the climate; it is good for the economy. The almost 1 million tonnes of food that we waste throughout the supply chain is a cost to the economy of over £1 billion at the household level and within industry. I think that food waste costs the hospitality industry around £170 million a year. Particularly now, when that industry is under such pressure, that waste is impacting on its bottom line.

Obviously, there are more challenges in looking at the cost of food. Savings could be made throughout the process. If we start to onshore some of the production and growing in Scotland, there is huge potential for us to reduce those costs even further by thinking about the whole supply system and the inputs into it—particularly inorganic fertilisers, for example—and by thinking differently about, and addressing how, we grow our food in Scotland.

To go back to the point about how local authorities could influence that, they can do so by working together collaboratively to create innovative solutions to how food is grown, prepared and supplied. A big thing that I am sure that other people saw during COP26 was vertical farming. That was promoted by Intelligent Growth Solutions, which is a Scotland-based company. It looked at vertical farming as an opportunity to grow more food more sustainably in Scotland. Obviously, that would replace not the whole food market but specific food types. It looked at providing that at the local level, with reduced cost and reduced environmental impact, and less transport to people throughout Scotland. That is an opportunity for us. That innovation could be supported by the likes of local authorities, the NHS

and other partners working together to create the market pull for those reduced-cost solutions.

Vicki Swales: I want to go back to the convener's question about whether the bill as drafted will help us to achieve its ambitions. You said that it should be a framework law. Scottish Environment LINK feels that the bill is very light in ambition and content. It is a good start. We need a national food plan and local food plans, but the bill does not establish a very clear purpose around what we mean by a good food nation. High-level principles would give us the sense of direction of travel in Scotland that we need, and clear goals for our food system and the process for delivering and reporting on progress, for example.

Those principles and goals, which should be set out in the bill, would need to underpin and inform the national plans, local food plans and, indeed, future relevant legislation, regulation and policy. For example, we know that there is going to be an agriculture bill and a natural environment bill, and national planning framework 4 is currently being considered. We would very much like to see a clear purpose in the bill. We think that it should establish high-level targets, which would help to drive progress on things that we could measure.

We also think that there needs to be the establishment of an independent statutory food commission that would help to provide coherence and oversight and would look at how we monitor and evaluate progress in our food system in order to deliver all the things that we need, whether that is in relation to health, the environment, the affordability of food or access to food—all those really difficult issues that our food system faces. We might come on to that.

09:30

Dr Shields: In response to Alasdair Allan's question about the cost of a transition, I would point out that cheap food is actually extremely expensive when we consider the impact on the environment, and especially on health and non-communicable diseases. The most critical element that the bill has to build in is a budget-sharing mechanism by which we can start to look at net budget savings and long-term funding for our food system, which will offset costs in other parts of Government.

The Convener: We have a short supplementary from Jim Fairlie.

Jim Fairlie (Perthshire South and Kinross-shire) (SNP): This question is for Iain Gulland. Are you suggesting that all local authorities should work collaboratively to the same plan and that we should, in effect, have one national local plan, if that makes sense?

Iain Gulland: Not quite. I get that all local authorities will have specific issues to address in their own areas with regard to accessibility to food. However, in my view, the power of the bill lies in local authorities thinking not only about food issues in their area, which they absolutely should do, but about how they could influence the food supply chain in terms of economic development and the wider food system. For example, that might include creating a market pool for initiatives such as vertical farming or enhanced innovation in food supply through the agricultural system.

That requires collective action instead of a fragmented approach. A lot of great stuff is happening to replicate those ideas across different local authorities, but the power of the bill lies in enabling different authorities to mobilise together and think beyond their own areas about how they can shape supply chains, both in Scotland and abroad, to push further from a climate point of view and possibly to create more economic prosperity for Scotland in the agricultural and food sectors.

The bill should be about how we ensure that all the individual plans are aligned. If local authorities are going to do that type of work, the opportunities need to be identified at a national level so that local authorities can see how they can play into the whole thing. To some extent, we are trying to create the biggest impacts from a small number of interventions at national level in order to create the impact that we are all talking about.

Karen Adam (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP): I am interested in what Iain Gulland had to say about collaborative working and coming together with purpose and sustainable goals. In the past few weeks, I have been asking committee witnesses about targets, and I have realised that stakeholders have very specific targets and asks that often do not cross over with other stakeholders' ambitions. In that context, can targets be too much of a constraint on achieving our ultimate ambition for a good food nation? Could they constrain local diversity and approaches that are, as Jim Fairlie touched on, bespoke to a specific area?

How do the witnesses envisage a more collaborative and collective plan for food in Scotland? As Iain Gulland touched on, that is important. It would ensure effective action by connecting with sustainable development goals as opposed to targets, which are perhaps a problem that is part of the need for a whole culture change.

Iain Gulland: I am a great believer in targets setting a framework for action. The Scottish Government has a national target for food waste reduction of 33 per cent by 2025, and there is a United Nations target for a 50 per cent reduction by 2030. That is the ambition, but it is up to

different sectors and different parts of Scotland to understand how they can contribute to that and set their own goals, whether or not they set the same specific targets.

However, the key for me is the collaborative nature of that work. Because of the timeframe that we are all working on in relation to climate change and the necessity to scale up, we need to work together. There are lots of successful initiatives happening at a local level on food waste, but they are small. Yes, they are targeted and ambitious and they are delivering, but we need to scale some of those up. How do we ensure that local authorities, other agencies and the NHS work together to share best practice, learning and successes and how do we replicate those instead of trying to reinvent different programmes and projects? That is the key, because we need that collaboration and synergy.

There are big opportunities in relation to supply, land management and particular dietary issues that we need to address together, whether that is around a common target, common activity or a common understanding of the challenges and how they can shape those opportunities. The power of the bill is in bringing everybody together around a common purpose that everybody recognises instead of dividing up the target, because everybody then just focuses on their bit of it.

Everybody has said that this is a systems approach. You cannot look at the issue in isolation—everything is connected and, if we are serious about doing this, we all have to be at the table working together.

Vicki Swales: I absolutely agree that it is a systems approach, but we want to see some headline outcome targets in the bill, because they are important for setting the direction of travel, driving outcomes and giving clarity to everyone about what we are trying to achieve. For example, we could include an environmental target to halve the environmental impact of the food system, including food waste, by 2030. That picks up on what Iain Gulland just said about going further than the current target on food waste.

Targets require us to measure and establish baselines, work out what is possible and look at the impacts of the—[Inaudible.] We can then identify appropriate indicators and metrics by which we do that and judge whether we are making progress towards the outcomes that we are all looking for. That is important. Doing that and achieving those targets requires everybody to play their part and a lot of collaborative action and working. The process of producing the national food plan and local food plans will require the engagement of a wide range of stakeholders, individuals and actors. That brings me to a point that we may come on to about participation and

how we engage people in the processes of working out what we need to do and how we deliver against the goals that we set for ourselves, and therefore how we create a good food nation that tackles environmental issues, health issues, food waste, food inequalities and all those things that we know about.

Dr Shields: I agree that targets are problematic, and the relevant authorities will face hard choices between competing priorities. In relation to targets, there are certain gaps in our indicators; what is not counted or measured is not valued, which is an issue. If targets are included, there has to be a statement to say that there is a responsibility on the Government to assist the relevant authorities to achieve those targets. Just asking the relevant authorities to meet the targets will create very diverse outcomes.

In order to connect the plans, there should be an overarching national food strategy and mission statement. That strategy should focus on reorientating food systems to link health and the environment, and the economy will fit into that. There are a number of ways of realigning health and the environment through food—for example, by increasing production of local fruit and veg.

With the targets or any mission statements, there also has to be a platform to share common resources between the authorities and to share experience, evidence and decision support tools. That platform should also put data within reach of different authorities. If we do not have that, we will have huge disparities between areas. There are lots of models for how to do that. For instance, the Scottish centres of expertise have teams that are neutral and that can provide targeted support with issues.

Dr Rivington: Targets will be central. You can argue that, without the climate change targets, activities in that regard would not really have happened. If we have targets, we have something to aim for. If we go with the argument that we become what we measure, and if we develop appropriate monitoring, reporting and verification in relation to those targets, they can become a useful tool.

I take Kirsteen Shields's point that there will be gaps, but some targets could be linked to other objectives, such as soil health. If we have a soil health indicator that is improving, that can relate to the quality of food and the ability to provide it in the long term. A range of targets can be set for other purposes as well. It is important to include things that are perhaps seen as being beyond the food system but which are actually essential parts of it.

Jim Fairlie: I was interested in Iain Gulland's point regarding collaboration across local

authorities. My understanding is that the bill is an enabling one that will allow us to create a shift in the culture around how we use food, what food is and how people feel about their food. Certainly over the past 20 years, we have made huge strides in Scotland to improve food quality, but there is a wee dichotomy for me. It is about the coherence between the Good Food Nation (Scotland) Bill and other upcoming legislation and policy changes, such as the agriculture bill, the circular economy bill, the natural environment bill and even the human rights bill. How do we connect those things so that they work in tandem?

I will go to Iain Gulland first on that—sorry about that.

Iain Gulland: That is a challenging question, because there are a lot of bills and initiatives. To an extent, that is the challenge of our time. We have certainly seen that we cannot sort out climate change through a particular silo, because it affects all aspects of society and industry, and everything is interconnected. That applies to ourselves and our decisions, as well as to national Governments, local government and communities. We all have to be aligned if we are to make the change.

There is an opportunity, even in Scotland, to work more collaboratively. Obviously, we have the ambition around climate change, tackling poverty and all the other aspects that we want to address. To an extent, the bill creates a different platform for us all to speak about the issues and to contribute to the work, and not to see food as a matter for a particular part of society or even a particular part of the Parliament.

It is interesting that I am talking to a different committee about food waste, when I usually talk to the Net Zero, Energy and Transport Committee about it. How do we get everybody to see that food is so important and is the priority? We could argue that food is possibly the most important thing for us all in terms of sustainability, so maybe it trumps all the other things. Given the impact that the current food system has on biodiversity, land use and all the things that we have just talked about, if we can get the right approach to food—the way we grow it, distribute it and use our land to do that—we can solve some of the other issues of agriculture and the natural environment. It is about how we prioritise. What is the priority in all the bills that have been mentioned? Is it how we choose food and how we use our land to produce food and, ultimately, supply it?

09:45

I obviously think that we need to talk about food waste in relation to our climate ambitions. As I said, that issue has been understated. It is not being discussed nationally. The climate change

narrative is about reducing flying, using renewables and so on. That is all important, and we need to do that, but the impact of our food system here in Scotland and globally is the biggest contributor to climate change, and we need to do something about it.

If we are serious that, other than recovering from the pandemic and the current health crisis, climate change is the biggest challenge that we face, not just here in Scotland but globally, we need to address food waste. That needs to be one of our overarching priorities for action. All the other bills and activities that we are involved in need to feed into that.

The Convener: I ask Dr Shields for her views on policy coherence.

Dr Shields: It is always tempting to think of such policies as competing but, in fact, they are all mutually reinforcing. A healthy environment is essential for healthy diets, which are essential for the economy and for issues of equality and justice. The policies are all aiming in the same direction. We should avoid thinking of them as competing with one another. In fact, there is a circular economy, as the gains that are achieved in one area can feed into progress in another area.

If there is any doubt about what the overarching aims should be, it is time to refer to the constitution. We should think about them at that level. What is the Government here to do? What is the highest aim of Government? All the policy statements should feed into that.

The Convener: I will bring in Dr Rivington.

We seem to have lost our connection to Dr Rivington.

Does Vicki Swales want to comment on policy coherence?

Vicki Swales: Yes. We are establishing food into sets, and there are so many different areas, with some being relevant to—*[Inaudible.]*—policy and forthcoming legislation. That comes back to the need for the bill to have a clear sense of purpose and to set out direction. If we put clear targets in the bill and if an overarching body looks at policy coherence, which is key for a statutory—*[Inaudible.]*—inform lots of things that come down the line.

As Jim Fairlie said, we have an agriculture bill, a natural environment bill and a circular economy bill coming down the line. All those issues are relevant, and if the Good Food Nation (Scotland) Bill provides clarity and a clear sense of direction about how we want to improve our food system in Scotland, that will help to create policy coherence and inform future legislation and policy. That also applies to policies on the marine environment, for example.

In relation to environmental impacts, it is key that the Good Food Nation (Scotland) Bill leads the way for the agriculture bill, which will create powers for a new system of farm support. If we are serious about reducing the environmental impact of our food system, we need to transition to farming systems and practices that help us to do that and to tackle the nature and climate emergencies. We need to refocus how we spend the £650 million or thereabouts of public money that supports farming in order to better deliver the environmental and healthy food outcomes that we are looking for. The Good Food Nation (Scotland) Bill could establish various mechanisms to help to create policy coherence and give a lead in other areas of policy and legislation.

Rachael Hamilton: I want to pick up on the disagreement within the group giving evidence today. Some believe that targets are suitable and some believe that they are not. I know that there is disagreement on that in this room as well.

Yesterday, at the Health, Social Care and Sport Committee, Maree Todd said that there was a worrying increase in childhood health problems, with 15.5 per cent of primary 1 children at risk of obesity last year, which is up from 10 per cent in 2009. We know, because Karen Adam mentioned it last week, that it is a peculiarity of the modern food system that obesity sometimes coexists with hunger. Per calorie, bad diets are much cheaper than healthy diets.

I want to open that up to the panel, starting with Kirsteen Shields. In your opinion, without targets in the bill, how can those various dietary and environmental issues be dealt with? I appreciate that you have said that you do not necessarily support targets. It is important for the committee to home in on that and know why.

Dr Shields: I am glad to have the opportunity to clarify that. I agree that targets are difficult and problematic, but that does not mean that we should not use them. If they are in the bill, the responsibility for meeting the targets has to be with Government, which has to resource the relevant authorities to work towards the targets. The benefits of working towards those targets can then be realised.

I am absolutely not saying that there should not be targets in the bill. However, I am agreeing that there are problems with them. Targets done badly can create more harm, so we have to get them right. That is a lot about the content of the targets, but it is also about the accountability for them. Targets without budget are not particularly helpful.

Rachael Hamilton: May I develop my question?

The Convener: Briefly.

Rachael Hamilton: I put this question to Mike Rivington. How can diet and land use be married up in relation to the land use strategy?

Dr Rivington: One of the opportunities is to focus on more local food and veg production. A large area is put aside for grazing and livestock, and that land is now under pressure from carbon sequestration purposes, such as tree planting. Given that we import so much of our fruit and vegetables from places that may in the near future become more vulnerable to the impacts of climate change and potentially experience water shortages, we have the opportunity in Scotland to produce more of our high-nutrition food from fruit and vegetables at home.

As Iain Gulland mentioned, there are also great opportunities from vertical farming and controlled environment agriculture. There is a central place in the land use strategy for how we can best site those efforts to improve fruit and vegetable growing. As we are developing technologies, we are getting more flexibility around where that can happen, rather than being constrained in relation to things such as soil quality and climatic impact.

Looking at climate change projections for Scotland, we are likely to see an increase in opportunities for more flexible cropping systems. Having said that, there are also substantial risks in relation to loss of productivity in some years because of climate impacts. However, if Scotland is experiencing those impacts, other parts of the world are likely to be experiencing them more severely, which is a good case for making Scotland more resilient to impacts elsewhere in the world by our being able to produce the sort of foods that we would normally import. However, we need to be careful not to go down the self-sufficiency route entirely, because international trade is an important stabilisation factor, and food is a great example of that. We will also still need to look at imports in order to achieve diversity of foods and ingredients.

To answer the question, the land use strategy has to be integrated with all the other aims and targets that we have—for example, those in relation to increasing planted area and area for conservation. Within that, there is plenty of scope for increasing what I call the self-reliance of Scotland in being able to produce food products of high quality and high nutritional value.

Beatrice Wishart (Shetland Islands) (LD): We know that a key element of long-term food security is environmentally sustainable food production that will enable our food system to continue to produce food for future generations. What are the panel's views on the link between the right to food and environmental outcomes, and should the right to food be incorporated, or otherwise strengthened, in the bill?

Dr Shields: Without diversity and a healthy environment, we are not going to be able to meet food security needs, and food poverty will increase; that has very direct impacts. Likewise, the way that we are currently producing and consuming food has damaging impacts on the environment. There is a two-way process between the environment and our diets.

On the bill's content on the right to food, section 3 refers to article 11 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, which includes the right to adequate food. Reference should also be made to general comment 12 of the United Nations Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, which contains the main content on the right to food and has much more detail on the obligations on states in relation to its production, availability and affordability, and access to it. Just linking to article 11 is not enough. General comment 12 is where all the detail is, and linking to that would give the right to food a much stronger platform in the bill.

Dr Rivington: It is essential that we have an element of the right to food in the Good Food Nation (Scotland) Bill, because it is associated with so many other basic fundamental rights, including the right to a healthy environment. There is an opportunity to make a good link between the environment and food. We tend to think about where our food comes from, and we need to think more about that. An opportunity to link the right to food to the right to clean water would fit neatly with the sustainable development goals.

I have referred to the psychology of the population when it comes to how we view the environment. There is a strong case to be made that we have not valued the environment enough and that, in order to address the climate and biodiversity emergencies, we need to value it a lot more. One way to do that is to firm up the links between the right to food and the quality of the environment. If we are able to better value the environment and what it can do for us, that will help a lot with people's attitudes and perceptions of values. The two are neatly linked.

Therefore, I would propose the opposite view: if the bill does not have something on the right to food, that negates the right to a healthy environment.

10:00

Vicki Swales: For us, it is clear that the right to food includes the right to have food that is produced in environmentally sustainable ways, as has been indicated. The Scottish Government has described the bill as giving practical effect to the right to food. For us, it is really important that that purpose is explicitly set out in the bill. The bill must

include the environment in its definition of the right to food, and it must restate the duty on ministers to realise that right. The duties and powers that give practical effect to that right must be linked to the discussion about where the right to food sits in relation to human rights and the forthcoming human rights legislation.

With the bill, we have the opportunity to put the right to food front and centre and to ensure that it encompasses all aspects, including that everyone should have access to adequate amounts of appropriate healthy and nutritious food that is produced in environmentally sustainable ways. For us, that is a critical point. The bill must help to progress the right to food and all its component parts, especially the environmental aspects.

Iain Gulland: I echo what others have said. To go back to the question about policy cohesion, if we are serious about tackling inequalities, this feels like the right thing to do. Anything that will help to drive reductions in food waste here in Scotland and to focus people's attention on the imbalance that currently exists is a good thing. As I said earlier, globally, we grow enough food for everyone. It is the supply and distribution of food that is impacting on societies and individuals across the world. The amount of food that we waste could feed the huge part of society that is going hungry here in Scotland and around the world.

To pick up on a previous point, food waste does not have an effect only in terms of carbon emissions; important minerals and vitamins are being lost as well. We recently did a project with a primary school, which, over four weeks, wasted nearly 200 litres of milk and yoghurt. That is the equivalent of the dietary requirement for calcium of 420 children. The effect of the amount of waste that we are producing is not just climatic; it is also having nutritional and health impacts.

The Convener: Are you suggesting that the right to food should be incorporated in the bill or that it should be dealt with in other legislation? I do not think that you made that clear.

Iain Gulland: It should be incorporated in the bill.

The Convener: We will move on to our next theme, on which Ariane Burgess has questions.

Ariane Burgess (Highlands and Islands) (Green): I thank the members of the panel. It has been a really good conversation. They have opened up the discussion by bringing in issues such as soil indicators and food waste.

My questions are on the theme of participation, oversight and accountability. The first is directed at Dr Shields. Does the bill provide sufficient opportunity for meaningful participation from food

industry workers, stakeholder groups and members of the public? I am thinking, in particular, of people whose voices are seldom heard in food policy design.

Dr Shields: As it stands, I do not think that there are such provisions in the bill. There is a huge opportunity to develop food councils that could be attached to the relevant authorities as they make their good food plans. There are fantastic examples of food councils, especially in North America, in places such as Toronto and Detroit, as well as in European cities such as Amsterdam and Copenhagen. Once such councils are set up, they can create their own terms of reference with regard to how they meet and how they debate and mediate on issues. There are international examples of best practice that can be looked at.

Alongside the creation of the plans, the bill could contain more detail on setting up the councils and discuss representation on them. At present, there is not much in the bill about how the plans will be created.

Ariane Burgess: How could a Scottish food commission or other body help to ensure that the participation of stakeholders provides oversight that feeds into the drafting of the good food nation plans? Should such a body be established before the work takes place?

Dr Shields: There is huge value in establishing such a body. Establishing a commission would ensure commitment to the agenda that transcends electoral cycles. It would create a certain permanence, as the Scottish Land Commission has done.

On the representation of stakeholders on such a commission, there is a lot to learn from how the Land Commission has educated people and engaged with stakeholders through mobile road shows and discussion forums. There must be an element of shared ownership. There has to be private and public representation.

Ariane Burgess: Vicki Swales, earlier in our conversation, you mentioned establishing some kind of Scottish food commission. Will you expand on that? Dr Shields mentioned the Land Commission. Is that a good model for the Good Food Nation (Scotland) Bill?

Vicki Swales: As it stands, the bill provides for really limited consultation. How we enable active engagement and participation in the process is key. A statutory food commission would support citizen engagement and participatory democracy. There are many different ways in which we could do that.

We envisage such a body having a number of different functions alongside engagement and

participation. It would have an important role in data gathering, in helping to monitor and report on progress and in setting outcome targets and indicators. It would also provide scrutiny and evaluation of national and local food plans and relevant policies to ensure policy coherence and join-up. It is difficult to achieve that at the moment because food affects many different policy areas and ministerial portfolios that are relevant to many different committees of the Parliament. Therefore, it would be important to set up a body with that explicit purpose that could also provide advice and guidance on the issues and identify where we need to make policy changes.

In that sense, there are analogies with the way that the Scottish Land Commission was set up and with some of its functions, which are similar to what I just described. Dr Shields made an important point about permanence and going beyond electoral cycles. We need a body that builds up expertise and has staff, resources and knowledge to examine the issues.

A Scottish food commission would perform an important function. Concerns are always raised about the cost of setting up new, separate bodies, but we need to think about the benefits that it would provide in terms of driving genuine progress and giving us some coherence across all the issues that span the food system.

Iain Gulland: I agree with that. Others have asked about who is going to oversee the development of the plans. That goes back to the point that I made about the strength of the plans being in how they are aligned and support collaborative working. How will we ensure that that happens? Who will hold the various agencies to account on reporting and making progress?

It will be important to ensure that all the partners that we have talked about participate and collaborate. We have talked about local authorities. How do we ensure that the right support is there, in terms of skills and capacity, for the individual agencies to develop and deliver on the plans? Who will brigade organisations such as Zero Waste Scotland to provide the right support alongside the participants—active citizenship and so on? Establishing a commission or a similar body will be fundamental to success. We would welcome and could be part of that.

Dr Shields: Some of the international examples cite a major change that occurred through food councils or food commissions, which was a move towards looking at food issues as shared responsibilities and a move away from individualising food and diet issues. The Amsterdam programme was on a childhood obesity plan and, by sharing responsibility for that across a wide range of stakeholders, there was a cultural change. Childhood obesity was no longer

to be left to individual households to tackle; it was a community problem. That brings huge value.

Jenni Minto (Argyll and Bute) (SNP): I want to follow on from Ariane Burgess's question on participation. It is interesting that Dr Shields talked about a community taking responsibility for an issue.

The bill is giving us a fresh approach by seeking to embed food within public policy. A word that has come up throughout this morning's evidence is "coherence"—coherence across a wide range of areas to improve the food landscape for everyone and to encourage cultural change.

I am interested to hear about participation and how we get people involved. Some people—including, I think, Vicki Swales, in her evidence—proposed a citizens assembly. What do the witnesses think about that and other forms of engagement when creating food plans, including the national food plan and the plans for local authorities and other public bodies?

I was struck by Dr Rivington's earlier comments about the time imperative for getting measures introduced. Please comment on that, too.

Vicki Swales: There was a recent call for a citizens assembly model to be embedded in Scottish politics, making the principles and practice of participatory democracy a real thing. We have had some examples of that, including the climate assembly, and there has been work in the Scottish Parliament to look at something that is similar, but not quite the same. In the previous parliamentary session, for example, the Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform Committee had a citizens inquiry into land management payments. There are various models for engaging society and people in really important issues and getting their lived experiences, ideas and knowledge to inform processes.

There is scope to think about how a citizens assembly on food might work. The role of setting one up could be given to a statutory food commission, if we were to establish one. Such things take time and can have costs associated with them, but the benefits that could flow from doing that in a complex area such as food could be significant. We would support that. We need to get away from the idea that a short consultation will be sufficient to identify what are, in many cases, intractable problems and difficult issues to sort out.

10:15

Ensuring greater participation and engagement is important, and we need to use all our existing mechanisms to do that. For example, I was struck by the earlier comments on the land use strategy.

We are piloting regional land use partnerships to produce regional land use frameworks, which involves another process of engagement. We should certainly look across the piece at what we already have, but there is scope to build on that significantly and do something new that would feel quite fresh and ambitious for Scotland.

Jenni Minto: Dr Rivington, I would be interested in hearing your thoughts on the timeframe versus the importance of public engagement and getting buy-in.

Dr Rivington: The time imperative implies the need to engage with people. There is an important point to be made. Through engagement, we can glean all the necessary information to address issues around the food system, which is very complex, and how it relates to society. However, if we develop the participation process—I go back to what Vicki Swales said about the opportunities in that regard—we also need mechanisms by which information on best practice and how we achieve the range of targets or ambitions, whatever they are, can be transferred through networks and engagement processes.

We need to set up the process properly, as a two-way process. First, we can gather information from the relevant communities on various issues. To extend my previous response about issues to do with food production in Scotland, I note that affordable housing is an important aspect. If we want to increase food production in rural and urban areas, ensuring that we have affordable housing will help to provide a basis on which people are able to take up employment and opportunities that arise. If we engage with a wide and diverse range of stakeholders to identify all the different issues that relate to how we transform the food system, that will provide us with information that we can use to make decisions. We can then reverse the flow of information back through those networks on how best to implement those decisions.

Jenni Minto: Given the time, convener, do you want to move on?

The Convener: Okay. We have a supplementary question from Ariane Burgess.

Ariane Burgess: I want to pick up on the role of a Scottish food commission, or whatever oversight body we might have. In the interests of time, I will direct my question to Iain Gulland, as he might have some experience in that respect from his work at Zero Waste Scotland.

Some stakeholders have called for the proposed body to produce an annual progress report on the state of food, which would reflect how well the country was doing against objectives or targets in the good food nation plans, or possibly in the bill. Those reports could be examined by

parliamentary committees, just as the UK Climate Change Committee's reports on emissions reductions are examined by the NZET Committee. Would that be an important function for an oversight body? How could progress reports encourage and incentivise the private sector to play its part in delivering a good food nation?

Iain Gulland: The simple answer is yes—that would be very good. Reporting is critical. We need almost real-time reporting, with an annual cycle of reporting on progress on—from a Zero Waste Scotland point of view—reducing food waste, for example. That would allow us to address insufficient progress and to highlight areas in which we are getting greater traction and feel that we are learning from something, so that that can be replicated in other parts of Scotland.

The success of the Climate Change Committee is that it not only reports but provides analysis, presents scenarios for how to get back on track and highlights areas of focus. To some extent, it holds different people and different sectors to account if they are not progressing as much as other areas are. That would be a significantly beneficial function for an oversight body to have, and you are right to note that an annual cycle of reporting would be helpful.

The role of private and commercial companies is important. Again, it comes back to planning. We have talked a lot about citizens, but if the development of plans at national and local levels includes industry and local businesses as well as national bodies, they will feel as accountable to the ambition, targets and reporting as anybody else. They will be woven into that just as much as individual communities.

An oversight body that supports input from industry per se as well as from citizens would be useful. It would encourage greater participation—essential participation—by commercial enterprises and third sector enterprises in the food system that might feel a little bit excluded from the process at the moment.

The Convener: Thank you. We are rapidly running out of time, so I ask members to direct their questions to individual witnesses. However, if any of the other witnesses want to answer a specific question, they can indicate that in the chat function and I will try to bring them in.

Jim Fairlie will ask the next question.

Jim Fairlie: I will direct my question to Iain Gulland and Kirsteen Shields, if that is okay. You might have covered this, but what are your views on the practical role of public authorities in securing environmental outcomes in relation to the good food nation?

Iain Gulland: They can certainly impact on the procurement of food and the supply chain, as I have mentioned. They can support the delivery of local initiatives to their citizens; there is a real role for them there. However, it is not just about their own food supply. They can shape wider activity on the ground with their citizens and businesses by supporting economic development and innovation around the local food system and by working collectively on distribution and supply.

More importantly, public authorities can provide strategic support for the wider change that we are trying to create here in Scotland. They can do a lot outwith supplying food to schools and so on, although that is obviously very important and could be used as a driver to support and facilitate other action on the ground. Planning is another example.

Dr Shields: I absolutely agree with that. Local authorities' powers are limited to the powers that they currently have. They cannot effectively tackle being flooded with processed foods and the issue of the high street being the main food provider. Their focus will be on places of public food.

There are great examples in Europe. For example, the Italians have case del popolo, which are community food hubs. There is no stigma attached to them. People go there to read the papers. They have very close ties with local and regional farms, and they have a sense of seasonality about their food system, food culture and food processing. Those centres provide a lot of education about food. They stem from the second world war era. We could pick up ideas from them about addressing the food culture in the UK. We could go back and look at what has been lost since then and see how we can again cultivate a sense of community around food. Local authorities are well placed to do that.

There are also examples from France, where the Mouans-Sartoux municipality bought land in order to supply schools with food. That model, which uses "BioCanteens", has now been replicated in other municipalities and small regions around Europe. It does not just involve a new form of farming; the whole food system is affected.

Beatrice Wishart: The bill sets out that the Scottish ministers and relevant authorities must have regard to the good food nation plans when exercising their specified functions. Will you share your views on who should be designated as a relevant authority under the bill?

Dr Shields: I am sorry, but what was the question?

Beatrice Wishart: Who do you think should be designated as a relevant authority under the bill?

Dr Shields: Councils.

Beatrice Wishart: Local authorities.

Dr Shields: Yes.

Beatrice Wishart: Does anybody else want to comment on that?

The Convener: I suppose that the question is about where the limit is. Should it be only local authorities and health boards or are there other public bodies that should be described as relevant authorities?

Iain Gulland: I could go through all the different agencies and authorities in the public realm. We would hope that everybody will recognise the national plan and the local plan, become part of them and set their own ambitions, voluntarily or otherwise. I am thinking about prisons, for instance, which are obviously great users of food.

The issue comes down to the collaborative nature of procurement. If we are serious about changing some of the systems of food supply in Scotland, we need all public agencies to be involved and accountable, not only health boards and local authorities. A whole range of other agencies could be part of it.

The Convener: Should there be a list of relevant authorities in the bill?

Vicki Swales: Health boards and local authorities are some of the main relevant authorities. However, I am thinking about the previous question and public authorities and bodies that own land. There may be scope to do an assessment of how public land is managed in various ways in relation to reducing our environmental footprint. That would involve thinking about how the public land is used in relation to our food system in general, as well as about obvious functions to do with roles in procurement, the shortening of supply chains, and stimulating and encouraging food production in local areas. Other bodies that own land, albeit not explicitly for food production purposes at present, could be looked at in this context as they could have a role to play.

Dr Rivington: I note the important roles that organisations such as NatureScot and the Scottish Environment Protection Agency have to play from the perspective of maintaining sustainable food supplies and environmental quality in Scotland.

Rachael Hamilton: I am interested in what—I think—Mike Rivington said about changing people's minds, behaviours and psychology. Out of 66 consultees on the bill, 21 said that food education is an important part of a good food nation. Food education is in the curriculum, but it is not core; it is deemed, possibly, a secondary subject. Should food education be in the bill?

10:30

Dr Rivington: Yes, I think that it should be. As I said, there are good opportunities to make the link between food, food education and environmental education. If we are trying to foster a culture of care in our society, we need people to have an understanding of where food comes from, how best to prepare it and the consequences of our choices for the environment.

There are good opportunities for the bill to make a connection to the curriculum and how we educate our young people about the value of the environment, how ecosystems function and, most important, the threats to food security if they do not function. There is a neat multiway link between those issues. There are good opportunities to embed education about food in the bill and then to broaden that to include wider educational issues.

The Climate Change Committee has made it clear that some of the solutions to climate change are about behaviour change, and that some of the best ways that we can achieve behaviour change are through the education of young people and influence on parents. There is absolutely scope in the bill for firmer education.

Rachael Hamilton: That is a great answer.

Vicki Swales: Scottish Environment LINK does not have a particular position on that, so this is more of a personal view, but I fully endorse what Mike Rivington has just said. It would absolutely be valuable to do that and to tie it in with an understanding of the environment and where the impacts on the environment come from, given what we have said about the critical role that our food system plays in that.

Thinking about the future and solutions, I also totally agree with Mike that young people will determine the future and are the future, and that their views on the issue will be really important. We are already seeing quite a lot of concern among young people about biodiversity loss and climate change. Young people are making some of those connections. However, embedding the issues in the national curriculum would clearly be beneficial.

Iain Gulland: We should not avoid the importance of education. We have done quite a bit of work with Education Scotland to develop curriculum materials on food waste and we have had a really positive response. We continue to work with schools individually and collectively. On a practical level, supporting such programmes is another role for local authorities.

We know from survey work that we did in the run-up to COP26 that there is very low awareness in the population generally about the climate change impacts of food waste. We have seen a

huge shift in people's awareness on plastics, but food waste at home has three times the environmental impact of plastic waste at home. It is therefore hugely important to get simple messages across to people and to target schools and education so that people understand the wider impacts at an early stage, as well as the opportunities for change, whether that relates to diet, access to food, how we consume food, or how we waste or do not waste it. That is absolutely critical to the success of the bill.

Jenni Minto: My question follows on from what Iain Gulland has just said. Last week, we took evidence from Shetland Food and Drink about the impact of supermarkets opening up on local suppliers of food. What are your thoughts on the private sector's role in a good food nation? I find that I walk round supermarkets and try to avoid buying things with plastic. How can the bill help to change decision making not only in local authorities but in the private sector?

Iain Gulland: This has already been touched on, but there is a huge opportunity here, certainly for local authorities. If a more participative and collaborative approach can be taken with the private sector, including retail, at both national and local levels, you will find willing partners. That is certainly the sense that we have had from our conversations at a strategic level with some operators. They understand that they have a role to play, but they know that they cannot do it alone and they want to work with local authorities, local agencies on the ground and local communities.

Returning to the point about influence, I note that, if we had all 32 local authorities collaborating, working together on supply and changing the way in which food is distributed both formally and informally through the Scottish supply chain, they could start to influence things. At COP26, I saw almost an awakening of not just Scottish cities, but global cities as they understood that, because they pull in 99 per cent of their food from outwith their areas, they could start collectively to influence what the big corporates do.

Everybody thinks that the big corporates are to some extent the barrier and that we have to get them on side, but if local authorities can get together and collaborate, they could start to influence the situation more directly, instead of each of them individually trying to change how the big supermarkets act. If they can do that in Scotland and make partnerships in other parts of the world, the real change that we want could happen.

Dr Shields: Given what has been said about our not necessarily being able to rely on change through individual choice, I think that procuring and providing for sustainable grazings for communal food is a really good way of pump

priming local production, which can then be scaled up and become the preferred choice. That is a good way of increasing the availability of local food.

The good food nation plan presents a huge opportunity to change the messaging around food and make the healthy environmental choice the easy and preferred choice. That will mean greater availability of local produce on the high street, in farm shops and in markets. However, we definitely need greater diversity. Supermarkets have kind of got us into this situation. We need to look at more farm-direct sources of food.

Dr Rivington: The issue highlights some uncomfortable truths about how the food system operates and, in effect, where the money goes. In a previous evidence session, Jonnie Hall of NFU Scotland made a good point about farmers and producers being squeezed at one end and consumers being squeezed at the other. He basically asked where the money goes. That implies that the imperative is profit orientation. What we need in a transformation of the food system is a shift to having a sustainability and resilience orientation to ensure environmental quality and food security, but also the profit motivation. It is a matter of blending the two things together.

The private sector therefore has a key role to play, but we sometimes have a David and Goliath situation because of the food system's power and influence. Globally, about 110 key buyers influence where food comes from, how it is grown and where it goes. It is absolutely essential that we influence them in the direction of increasing levels of sustainability. As I said, the private sector will play a key role, but a lot of influence needs to be asserted through the bill in order to steer the profit motivation towards sustainability.

Vicki Swales: There are two ways in which we can do this. First, the private sector clearly has a big role to play in making Scotland a good food nation, but the stronger the bill's clarity of purpose is in defining that, in setting targets and in putting in place scrutiny, accounting and reporting mechanisms, the more it will help the sector to understand where we are going, what the responsibilities are and what needs to be done. Some food businesses and many others are making progress in that respect—arguably, they are ahead of the public sector on some fronts—but we need that clear direction of travel. That is one way in which the bill can help.

Secondly—this point picks up on comments from the other panellists—we need to think about our current food supply chains, which are very long and involve some big corporations. How do we create shorter supply chains? How can we connect primary producers to consumers? How

can farmers, crofters and fishers make a better living from the food that they produce? What economic and environmental benefits can flow from having a more localised food system? That will require some local processing capacity, and we need to think about grants, public money and so on that can support some of that work.

A lot of work is being carried out on the benefits of shorter supply chains at the European Union level as well as, for example, through the farm to fork strategy. There will be some real benefits for Scotland in creating a food system that is not only environmentally sustainable but resilient, and which connects consumers and producers at a local level. Other benefits will flow from that for, say, people who come to Scotland to consume food and for Scotland's tourism industry, which will have a high-quality, local and sustainably produced food offer. In order to get to that, the national and local food plans will allow us to identify where the opportunities are, how those things can be achieved and how we can make progress on that front.

The Convener: Thank you for giving evidence this morning. Your evidence is very much appreciated and it will certainly help us to form our report on the bill.

I will suspend the meeting until 10.50 to allow a changeover of witnesses.

10:41

Meeting suspended.

10:51

On resuming—

The Convener: Our second panel on the Good Food Nation (Scotland) Bill will focus on policy outcomes relating to public health. I welcome Dr Isabel Fletcher, a senior research fellow at the University of Edinburgh; Claire Hislop, the organisational lead for diet, physical activity and healthy weight at Public Health Scotland; Jill Muirie, the public health programme manager at Glasgow Centre for Population Health; and Jo Teece, a project manager at the British Dietetic Association.

We have until approximately 12:10 for questions. I will kick off. What is your understanding of what is meant when we talk about a good food nation? Do you agree that the bill as drafted will enable Scotland to achieve that ambition?

Dr Isabel Fletcher (University of Edinburgh): I thank the committee for giving me the opportunity to speak to it.

I have a really simple definition of a good food nation. It is one in which everyone has access to nutritious and sustainably produced food at prices that they can afford, and they do not have to worry about that access. It would involve everyone working in the food industry—in manufacturing, retailing and catering—being paid a decent wage for the work that they do. I know that that is a simple definition that covers a lot of complex policy issues.

When we talk about Scotland as a good food nation, we focus on production and exports, and we do not focus enough on our domestic consumption. We need to think more about the day-to-day effects of what Food Standards Scotland calls bad diets—about the fact that everybody eats badly in Scotland, which is reflected in our health statistics, and that the least well-off eat worst of all. We need to reverse that historical pattern. Food Standards Scotland has been reporting on that for 15 years, and it has not changed significantly. I will leave others who have more expertise in the area to fill in the detail of the public health aspects of a good food nation.

As the bill stands, it is a start, but there are gaps in it on targets, implementation and participation. We need a statutory body to fill in some of those gaps.

Claire Hislop (Public Health Scotland): Thank you for inviting me.

Our vision for a good food nation is probably similar to what you have heard in a lot of the other evidence. It is about having acceptable and easy access to affordable food that promotes nutrition for everybody. We also need to focus on reducing inequalities. We want people to be informed about the food that they eat and where it comes from. A good food nation would also look much more widely than that, at issues such as environmental impacts and how we can maximise income for our food businesses and for the workforce.

We welcome the bill. It is a good opportunity to strengthen policies across Scotland. Food policy across Scotland is complex, but there are also lots of wider policies that impact on our ability to achieve the ambitions of acceptable, affordable, nutritious and sustainable food.

One way in which we want the bill to be strengthened is so that it has a clearer purpose and outlines what we need to do to achieve that. We all know about the increasingly poor statistics on Scotland's diet, including those on people who live with a higher body weight. That is often exacerbated by inequalities. We know that our diets affect not just our physical health but our mental health, and that that has massive knock-on effects on budgets for our NHS and our workforce.

Earlier in the session, there was mention of the recent publication of statistics on the body mass index of primary 1 children. Just in this past year, there has been a stark increase in the number of children who are experiencing risk of being overweight and of obesity. That brings to the forefront the impact that the pandemic has had on our food systems and on people's health outcomes.

The bill is an opportunity to change things, but we believe that public health needs to be at the heart of that and that prevention is absolutely key. People's weight is not just an individual thing; we need to think about it much more holistically. It is not simply about eating less and moving more; we need to change our current food environment in order to have easy access to the acceptable and affordable food that we need. We hope that the bill has a role to play in that.

Jill Muirie (Glasgow Centre for Population Health): Thank you for inviting me. I speak on behalf of the Glasgow Centre for Population Health but also for the Glasgow Food Policy Partnership. Over the past seven or eight years, we have been developing a Glasgow city food plan, which was recently launched. I speak from my experience in both those areas.

A vision for our good food nation would support our ambitions for an inclusive, sustainable, healthy, resilient and fair Scotland. Our food system should support all our aspirations for the country. As Claire Hislop said, we have a number of pressing public health issues that relate to our food system. We have significant diet-related illness, including people being overweight and obesity, but going beyond that to other chronic illnesses, and there are significant inequalities in that. Unfortunately, those inequalities are increasing, as Claire also said.

We also have significant food insecurity. That existed before the pandemic but has been exacerbated by it. The poorest in our country therefore experience a double burden of not only being unable to eat healthily and in a way that supports their health but struggling daily to afford adequate food. That burden falls particularly on lone parents and the children they live with, as well as on people who live with disabilities and ill health; they are significantly more likely to be food insecure.

The other public health issue, which has come up in the committee's other evidence sessions, is the climate emergency. The climate and nature emergencies are probably the greatest public health issue that we face, and our food system is central to addressing that.

11:00

We welcome the Good Food Nation (Scotland) Bill, and we think that it is a great opportunity. In particular, we welcome the framework approach, as it gives us a real opportunity to build greater coherence and co-ordination across the whole food system, which, as the committee will know, is complex.

We very much agree with other witnesses about the gaps. There must be a much clearer purpose, direction and ambition in the bill to give everybody a route map for where we are trying to get to and what we, collectively, want to see in future for our food system in Scotland. We would like a statutory body to oversee that, as well as having clearer targets and participation built into the bill.

Jo Teece (British Dietetic Association): Good morning, and thank you to the committee. I am a registered dietician and I work in the NHS as a project manager, supporting the implementation of the framework for the prevention and remission of type 2 diabetes. I am here on behalf of the British Dietetic Association, representing the views of the approximately 1,000 dieticians in Scotland. I am also a member of the Allied Health Professions Federation Scotland.

Dieticians work across health, social care, justice and housing. We provide evidence-based nutrition and dietetic advice, and we are regulated by the Health and Care Professions Council. I very much echo Claire Hislop's comments and her definition of a good food nation. As a professional body, the BDA supports the bill. We feel that it is ambitious and—again, to echo much of what has been said this morning—that it will rely strongly on partnership and co-production.

The Convener: We will move to questions from Alasdair Allan.

Dr Allan: My question is for Dr Fletcher and Claire Hislop. You mentioned the important issue of the food environment in Scotland, which I think we would all agree needs to be changed. However, I am sure that you would also agree—although I do not want to put words in your mouth—that we cannot divorce that issue from the issue of incomes. Although I appreciate that some of the levers for determining incomes, whether through wages or benefits, are reserved, perhaps you can say a little about what you think a good food nation should be with regard to incomes.

The Convener: Who would like to kick off on that?

Claire Hislop: I am happy to come in on that. The two aspects can be disjointed. As I mentioned, there is a whole issue around looking at wider policy areas and not, through the Good

Food Nation (Scotland) Bill, focusing only on food policy. We need to look into the wider aspects.

As you say, there is an issue, which the pandemic has exacerbated, with people's ability to purchase food with dignity: to purchase the food that they want to purchase, in the way that they choose. I do not know whether I have the answer to that, but we certainly need to look at how we work with our industries on issues such as the living wage and how we maximise incomes, for example, to people in low-income communities.

Some of the work that we do with community groups is important—even, for example, the provision of advice to people, when they attend things such as lunch clubs, on how to maximise benefits and ensuring that they claim everything to which they are entitled. We need to look at the situation holistically and link up with our colleagues in trying to maximise income to ensure that people have access to healthier food.

We should not think about food in isolation—we need to look at our wider policies. In the planning framework, for example, we need to ensure that people have access to food locally so that they do not have additional costs for transport. It is also important that we look at the increasing cost of energy bills, and how that will impact on the wider population as prices begin to rise. We need to take all those things into account as the bill progresses through Parliament.

Dr Fletcher: I echo most of those comments. Affordability is largely an issue of incomes, which is not easy to solve and is not necessarily in the Scottish Government's power. Historically, agricultural workers and workers in catering and retail have been among the lowest paid, so the people who work in the food system are often the ones who can afford the food least. As the previous witness said, we need to think systemically and holistically about how we change that.

I realise that I do not have any answers. I am sorry.

Karen Adam: I will ask about target setting. We had a discussion with the previous panel of witnesses about collaboration, the fragmentation that might happen if there is no agreed prioritised view for goal setting and the danger of gaps.

For example, Rachael Hamilton asked about obesity targets and mentioned how obesity is not only a food issue but is also attributed to access to certain food quality and other variables in our environments, such as precarious socioeconomic conditions that cause poverty and health-related inequalities. We know that child poverty is a driver of obesity in children. Much like the poverty-related attainment gap, when one goes up, the other follows.

To use obesity as an example, would we not be setting ourselves up to fail if we had a target for obesity in the plan that was highly dependent on welfare reforms and mitigations? Is there a danger that that would shift focus? Rather than being led by the nose by targets, which might take us off course, should we not take a more holistic view that addresses culture change, embeds good food into our public services and takes account of levers, performance, monitoring and all the natural consequences of that?

Jo Teece: That is a challenging question and I do not have a position on it—[*Interruption.*] Sorry, I can see Jill Muirie on my screen so I thought that she was speaking, but it is me. However, I can come back to the committee with a position from our professional association.

On food poverty, dieticians see many examples across the public health spectrum. The issue is not only food poverty but food sustainability.

I will defer to the other experts on the panel first. Feel free to come back to me.

Jill Muirie: I agree that targets can be problematic, but I also agree with some of the speakers from previous sessions that they are important for bringing people together with a common purpose. They are an important part of the bill, but they are not the only thing. For example, we need independent scrutiny to consider regularly progress towards the targets and get underneath it using participative approaches to understand what is happening on implementation.

Sometimes, the reason why targets are not hit is not that the target is wrong but that the implementation has failed in some way or for some reason. That could be due to external factors, such as prevailing economic issues, a pandemic or Government policy from elsewhere, or it could be because something happened that stopped the correct implementation within something over which the Government has more control.

We need to set targets and work towards them. We need to collaborate in agreeing them, and they must be linked vertically through our governance system to the national performance framework and our Scottish dietary goals. They must also be considered not in isolation but as part of the good food nation approach and how we are making progress towards it.

They need to be linked to indicators that show our progress over the short, medium and long term so that, through our scrutiny process, we can identify whether we are hitting a particular target, whether there is some perverse incentive on the way or whether the target is not challenging enough. We need the targets, but other things

need to be built in so that we can scrutinise, review and evolve the approach that we take over time to make sure that we are being as ambitious as possible, while taking into account any challenges that we might meet along the way.

Claire Hislop: There is sometimes an issue with the terminology that people use. The ambitions and aspirations that we have often seem quite remote. We need to recognise that we are talking about long-term goals. For example, we are not going to change obesity levels in Scotland overnight. Having really ambitious targets can mean that we do not achieve the successes that we want to achieve, which we see as a failure, when it is not, because we have moved a long way in the right direction.

I will give an example. I have been heavily involved in the school food agenda over the past 20 years. We have done a huge amount of work with caterers, education bodies, parents and young people to take school food away from a position where it was simply a case of chips with everything to one where healthy balanced meals are provided. We have also done work to increase the provision of free school meals, and we have the best start scheme. However, despite the fact that we have a lot of highly ambitious and well-thought-through policies, the obesity figures are still rising. That is because we do not have policy cohesion elsewhere.

Therefore, although we need high-level ambitions, we also need targets for implementation, so that we have dates to work to and can see how things come together. We need to be able to share good practice and look for unintended consequences in other policy areas so that we can better align what we do.

We need to outline what we want to do in the bill and to provide clear indicators of how we will measure implementation and longer-term goals. We need to set those out in the national plan, which we hope that the local plans will echo, although flexibility will have to be allowed, depending on local circumstances.

There is a real opportunity to drive forward change with targets and ambitions for implementation, but we also need clear indicators so that we can track progress and make sure that the change that we need to happen across Scotland actually happens.

Dr Fletcher: I would mostly echo what everyone else has said. The key thing is that targets are important for co-ordinating activities across policy areas. They are the basis for shared implementation and monitoring. Without targets, it is hard to see how we could achieve the policy coherence that is necessary to drive change in the area.

We have a lot of targets already; what we need to do is monitor progress towards the ones that we have, not create new ones. I am referring to the Scottish dietary goals, the food waste targets and the childhood obesity rates. We are not talking about creating a whole new set of targets; we are talking about monitoring progress towards important sets of targets that we have already agreed.

Karen Adam: That was helpful. I agree that we already have many targets. All the stakeholders that have a part to play in the process already have targets. We need to think about how we work that in with the bill without setting new targets and having to prioritise those in the bill. That will involve everybody having a collaborative approach.

Rachael Hamilton: Dr Fletcher has identified that there are existing policies that could run in parallel with the Good Food Nation (Scotland) Bill. Are there policies or areas that forthcoming legislation will deal with that you would like the bill to address, notwithstanding the comments that have been made about the need for targets? Would you like the bill to contain new policies that could change dietary habits? I will start with Claire Hislop.

11:15

Claire Hislop: We talked earlier about that kind of policy coherence, and we already have lots of good policies out there. I echo what people said earlier about the targets that we already have. We need to continue to work towards the Scottish dietary goals. The national planning framework 4 is coming through and that is a key area that we need to link to public health and the good food nation idea with regard to our ability to take decisions locally. The framework can give cognisance to some of the targets. For example, there are issues around how planning decisions can affect moves towards the Scottish dietary goals. We want to set that in train.

We have a lot of other policies—for example, the Scottish Government published its out of home action plan last September, and we want to see that and the work that we plan to do on that included in the bill. The other thing is the forthcoming public health bill, which will link to things such as restrictions on promotions of high-fat, high-salt and high-sugar foods. We would also like to see that area included in the bill.

I cannot echo enough the wider aspects of all the other policy areas that need to be included as well, including environmental issues and maximising income. Our whole focus is on reducing the kind of inequalities that we have in Scotland. We would like to see that strengthened

in the bill, and we want everything that we do and everything that we link up to to focus on reducing those inequalities.

Jo Teece: As Claire Hislop clearly articulated, there is already policy out there on dietary habits. As dieticians and as a professional association, we align a lot of our work with the work of the diet and healthy weight team at the Scottish Government, including its work on childhood obesity, the draft malnutrition policy, the “A healthier future” plan and the prevention and remission of type 2 diabetes. We support public health priority 6, and we hope that the bill will align closely with that.

Claire Hislop alluded to the whole-system approach and the potential forthcoming legislation around outdoor advertising of high-fat and high-sugar foods. We hope that all of that is included in the bill.

Rachael Hamilton: I will develop the question and go to Jill Muirie. In Glasgow, where you run your programme, how difficult or how achievable would it be to put your goals in parallel alongside the Good Food Nation (Scotland) Bill and deliver them locally as part of a multistrategy ambition?

Jill Muirie: That would not be difficult, because we were set up with a view to the bill coming along. We will review our approach in line with what comes out of the bill. We started with the recognition that loads of brilliant work was happening and lots of good policies were in place, but they were happening in isolation. The approach was disjointed and some of that good work was often happening despite national and local policy rather than because of it, so we have tried to build a coherent citywide approach that brings together stakeholders in a collaborative way to achieve a more coherent and synergistic approach.

We find that, when people get involved, it becomes more beneficial and we make faster progress. For example, our child healthy weight programme received funding because of its extensive collaborative approach. We have found that collaborative and coherent approach really helpful.

On how easy it is to do what you suggest, to go back to the target-setting approach, we pulled together all the policies and policy areas that intersected with the food system and asked what targets all our stakeholders were committed to achieving and where the coherence was. We have not set new targets. We have drawn on the existing targets that are set out in lots of different policy documents, pulled them together in our plan and set out a range of short, medium and long-term actions over the next 10 years. Progress towards those actions will be reviewed regularly,

taking into account how our partnership and policy evolve over that time. We will have regular, two-yearly scrutiny of that approach.

It is important to have that vertical integration and it is not difficult. The way that we are doing it in Glasgow is by having a partnership, which is an independent group. We report to the public health scrutiny committee, which reports into the community planning process, so collaborative governance is built into our approach. We have found that to be really helpful.

We also have community food partners round the table, which gives us the opportunity to hear from the range of people who are doing really interesting, joined-up work with a whole-systems approach at an ultra-local level. We can learn from them what works, what does not work and where the policies work in conflict on the ground. Often, a policy in one part of the system can look good at city level but, when you try to implement it along with another policy—perhaps in health—at a super-local level, you find that it is difficult to do that in an integrated way. We get that feedback from our community partners, which means that we are in a position to address some of the challenges at a city level.

It would be really helpful to have such support nationally. As a city, we can achieve only so much. We are trying to do stuff as part of our city region approach, which brings together the partners around Glasgow, where there might be more food production. That is helpful, but taking a Scotland-wide approach and having direction from that level would provide more levers and give us a stronger direction.

In other parts of Scotland, sustainable food places partnerships are working. We are part of a sustainable food place approach, which is a UK-wide scheme. There are a number of such partnerships in Scotland, and we regularly meet the sustainable food places groups to try to bring coherence to the approach and share our learning between the different areas. If the whole country were doing that, that would give us even more opportunity to share learning and resources so that we do not duplicate work, and it would bring greater coherence to everything that we do.

Karen Adam: Children and young people throughout Scotland have stated how food insecurity affects them. In 2016, one child pointed out:

“When you’re hungry all you can think about is food.”

Another spoke about the impact of food insecurity on learning, stating:

“It’s really hard to concentrate.”

Children also talked about the potential impact of financial insecurity and not having enough to eat,

stating that they felt upset, distressed, worried and scared.

That is absolutely heartbreaking. Who could not fail to be moved by it? However, the factors in those statements are not exclusive to good or bad food but are about a raft of measures that are needed to ensure food security, which would all be covered in the proposed human rights bill. How would the panel address the potential for conflict with, and duplication of, existing legislation and work streams if we implemented the right to food in the Good Food Nation (Scotland) Bill?

Dr Fletcher: Some of that is beyond my expertise. I agree that there is the potential for duplication. I would hope that the legislation would be drafted so as to avoid conflicts.

I will make two higher-level points about including the right to food in the bill. First, it would be a way of ensuring that the Scottish Government meets international obligations, such as those under the sustainable development goals. That is important.

The other point is that including a right to food would be of huge symbolic value. It would show that the Government values food—and good food—signalling a change in our national approach to food. Symbolically, that would be really important.

As a researcher, I am inclined to leave the duplication and inconsistent approach in the bill to the people drafting the legislation, because that is not my area of expertise.

Claire Hislop: On a right to food, we believe that the bill should set a standard for what people should expect and that it should be at the centre of what we do to become a good food nation.

We support a right to food being enshrined in Scottish law, so that people can access acceptable, affordable and nutritious food with dignity. Implementing a rights-based approach to food, particularly around food poverty, could influence or affect household insecurity and food insecurity, and it could reduce nutrition-related inequalities. It could also improve health.

We would leave to others the route for achieving that, whether that be through the forthcoming human rights legislation or through the Good Food Nation (Scotland) Bill. However, on timing, we want there to be swift movement on a right to food, with the bill alongside; we would not want there to be any delay. We would also want to look at where the right would have most impact and at the levers that are in place in both those pieces of legislation to ensure that the good food nation idea is implemented effectively and that people are held to account for that.

Our position is to support the inclusion of a right to food wherever that would be most impactful, and consideration should be given to whether that would be in the Good Food Nation (Scotland) Bill.

Jo Teece: I have a couple of points to make. Some of the question is outwith the scope of my expertise. However, the British Dietetic Association made a position statement in March 2020, in which it said that nobody should live in food poverty and that the UK Government and local authorities must take urgent action to lift people out of, and prevent others from falling into, food poverty. It very much supported enshrining a right to food in UK law.

During Covid, we have seen on the ground nutrition-related inequalities widening. A couple of examples that link back to food poverty and the need for a right to food are the pressures that people faced during home schooling and holiday hunger.

Jill Muirie: I absolutely agree that the scale of food insecurity and the experience of our children, in particular, are unacceptable for a country such as Scotland. We need to address that.

We think that incorporating a right to food in the bill is really important. As others have said, that would send a message. It would also help to ensure that our food system is rooted in and coherent with the environmental and social justice agendas. Incorporation would also mean that all policies must ensure that they do not negatively impact on people's right to food.

Incorporating the right would bring important checks and balances into the system. It would go beyond children's experience of food insecurity and ensure that all policies maximise people's ability to access affordable, healthy and sustainable food. Incorporation would also help us to meet our international obligations on SDGs.

On where the right sits, my understanding is that the Good Food Nation (Scotland) Bill, as framework legislation, would set out the right and that other legislation would go into more detail, and that both pieces of legislation should be coherent and co-ordinated. The really important bit is making sure that the two pieces of legislation are linked; where the detail lies is probably up for debate.

The Convener: We move to our next theme, with questions from Jenni Minto.

11:30

Jenni Minto: I have a question about participation. Is the bill strong enough to ensure that we get the right participation in the creation of the good food plans? Both Jill Muirie and Claire Hislop have given examples of such work.

Perhaps you could expand on that in connection with the bill.

Dr Fletcher, you mentioned that there were gaps in the bill with regard to participation. Can you expand on that, please?

We will start with Dr Fletcher.

Dr Fletcher: The work that Jill Muirie outlined is impressive and provides a good model for the sort of participation that we need in order to make the bill successful and change the food environment.

With regard to citizen participation, I think that it was Nourish Scotland that said that we need to go out and talk to the groups that are most affected by the problems in the food system, and I would echo that. Witnesses have highlighted those who are living with food insecurity, and farmers are another key group. We cannot rely on people responding to consultations; we have to go out—I use the royal we, because I am talking about the Government and researchers—and actively engage people in those conversations, as we need to hear about their lived experience. As Mary Brennan said, in the committee's first evidence session on the bill, we will "learn so much from" them.

I have done a little bit of research in rural areas of Scotland and England, talking to people about their food shopping. People are very engaged on the topic of food, and they have experiences and knowledge that they want to share. Engagement is important.

There are interesting models for engagement. In the previous session, Vicki Swale talked about citizens assemblies. We have expertise in the University of Edinburgh around citizen participation, and there are a lot of models that we can draw on. I would not want to set down a particular model at this stage, but the process needs to be more of a roadshow that goes out to people and organisations and learns from them.

Jenni Minto: In the previous session, we also heard comments about the timeframe and the need to ensure that there is an iterative process so that we learn from everything.

I am interested to hear more from Jill Muirie on participation and how we can ensure that the plans are covered in that regard.

Jill Muirie: Participation is vital. As many witnesses have said in the committee's evidence sessions, people have a real interest in food and a lot of experience to share. People in different parts of the country are living in different circumstances and have quite different experiences with food, and it is important that we hear from them. The bill could do much more to strengthen the participation side. A statutory food commission could oversee that, which would be an excellent

role for it. Taking different approaches, rather than relying on one particular approach, will be important.

A citizens assembly is a good model to consider. It takes time and resource, but if we are talking about food as an urgent priority that is central to so many parts of what we are trying to achieve as a country, careful consideration should be given to that method. However, we should not lose sight of the fact that a tremendous range of participative approaches already exist across Scotland, and we need to draw on the expertise around those existing structures. In local authorities and community networks, there is a tremendous amount of expertise in supporting engagement and participation from local people, and we need to draw on that.

Over the past couple of years in particular, there has been some amazingly innovative practice that has been driven by the need to do things differently because of the pandemic. Talking to the Scottish Community Development Centre and other specialists in engaging people, as well as talking to community food networks and our third sector partners, would be helpful. There is a lot to draw on, so we do not need to reinvent the wheel.

We need to draw on different methods for different stakeholder groups. Although it is important that we hear about the lived experience of people in different communities, it is also important that we get views from different stakeholders, and there will be different approaches for that. For example, we would take quite a different approach to engaging with private sector colleagues. It is also important to build relationships with chambers of commerce and other small business organisations. Similarly, we need to engage with food producers and farmers, and there will be different approaches to that across the country.

In addition, local authorities are increasingly building up their participative approaches to developing and reviewing local authority-wide policies. There are opportunities for building in deliberation about the good food nation in some of those approaches.

As I said, we do not need to set up everything from scratch, although—as I mentioned—the idea of a citizens assembly should be given careful consideration. We can draw on the range of fantastic things that are already under way, and on the expertise of people who are skilled in engaging and empowering people and supporting their participation. That is really important.

Jenni Minto: Claire Hislop, do you have anything to add?

Claire Hislop: Jill Muirie covered quite a lot.

Jenni Minto: Yes, she did.

Claire Hislop: Public Health Scotland would echo what Jill said about strengthening the level of identification in the bill of what needs to be done. Having worked in the sector for more than 20 years, I am always amazed by people's passion and commitment, and by how much they want to tell us about what they want to do and how much they want to see the changes happen. We undoubtedly need to think about how we engage those people, and at what level.

As Jill Muirie said, we need to engage at both stakeholder and local levels, but our third sector colleagues and our businesses are also extremely important. The bill is about making cohesive policy, so we need to ensure that we do not engage with only one set of people—our engagement needs to be coherent.

As has been said, there are many ways in which we can engage. Jill Muirie mentioned the Scottish Community Development Centre, which has standards for community engagement that can be built on. I mentioned citizens assemblies, and there is also community-led research, which involves giving local people the skills to speak to those with whom they work and so on. There are real opportunities, through the bill, to outline what we want from people and how engagement would be undertaken.

We need some flexibility, because people will want to engage in different ways, both locally and nationally. Nonetheless, we need to be clear that engagement must be undertaken at every level. That includes stakeholders, local communities and businesses—through trade bodies, for example. We have a lot of ways to engage. As Jill Muirie said, we have been doing it very well for years, so we need to look at what we have out there, rather than trying to reinvent the wheel.

There are a lot of opportunities to engage with the sector, and we should, in and around trying to develop policy, certainly take up those opportunities to ensure that whatever comes out of the bill is informed by those on whom policies will impact and who know more than us about these things.

The Convener: Does Jo Teece want to add anything?

Jo Teece: I do not have anything to add, convener.

The Convener: Grand—thank you. I will bring in Alasdair Allan.

Dr Allan: This question is perhaps for Claire Hislop and Jo Teece. In previous meetings, we have considered whether a new body is needed to ensure—I do not want to use the word “enforce”—that what is outlined in the bill and the envisaged

plan works. Do we need a new body in this area? Can we develop existing bodies that work around food in Scotland so that they can fulfil that function?

Claire Hislop: The need for scrutiny of what is envisaged in the bill is clear. We spoke earlier about indicators and so on that we need to outline and use to show how we are making improvements. The landscape around food policy in Scotland is cluttered, and we absolutely need some sort of oversight to ensure that we are making the progress that we need to see and that people are reporting in.

The question is whether that requires another food body. There needs to be some kind of level where there are resources that enable that oversight to happen, but the question is whether that requires an individual food body to be set up or whether that function should be attached to current food bodies, which already have tasks relating to scrutiny of diet, for example. We need to consider the costs and benefits of setting up a new body versus putting the function into another body.

The other possibility is a group that could come together to oversee the scrutiny of the policy area. However, in any body that oversees that scrutiny, there will need to be people who understand the complexity of the environment and have the skills to be able to undertake that scrutiny. The body will also need to be sufficiently resourced to enable the scrutiny to happen.

Dr Allan: Will you elaborate on what you mean by the world of food being a “cluttered” environment? Will you explain what you were thinking?

Claire Hislop: Look at how many people the committee has taken evidence from and the number of people who have made written submissions. There are bodies for all the different aspects that the bill covers—for example, Scotland Food & Drink, Public Health Scotland, Food Standards Scotland and Zero Waste Scotland. There is a huge number of bodies that already have an agenda on food and, if we were to add yet another body, we would need to ensure that all those bodies would feed into it. Alternatively, is there a current body where that work and oversight could sit, ensuring that it is fair and equal and that there is scrutiny?

Establishing another body would need to be debated further, but our view is that there are lots of people doing really good jobs who could take on the oversight role, supported by people coming together from other bodies.

Dr Allan: Does Jo Teece have a view on that or on the more general point that I made about whether a new body is needed?

Jo Teece: The British Dietetic Association’s view is that there is no need for a new body. I am putting Claire Hislop on the spot, but we feel that Public Health Scotland would be ideally placed for the work because it already has strategic objectives on food poverty and health inequalities and works alongside the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities on priority 6 of the public health framework.

Ariane Burgess: I will ask about the themes of public and private sector roles. We heard from previous panels about the role of public authorities in a good food nation. What responsibilities should public authorities take on in relation to procurement, health promotion and education about food and the food system? To what extent does the bill enable and support them to fulfil that role? We have started to touch on those topics, but I would like to have a bit more thinking on them.

Jill Muirie: The public sector roles are wide ranging. That highlights the importance of having an integrated food policy that is vertically and horizontally aligned with other policies.

The public sector roles include, as you say, health promotion. They also include food provision and planning. For example, how do people access affordable, nutritious food within a 20-minute neighbourhood? How do we ensure that children are not bombarded with high-fat, high-sugar, low-cost food in the areas around schools?

11:45

There is also an education role. I am not thinking about just the curriculum. The curriculum is important, but it must align with the circumstances in which the school environment exists. I am thinking about the area around the school, the food that is provided in the school, the education that is provided outwith it in community education and further education, and how we support and develop future business leaders and innovators in the food sector. There is a huge amount that the public sector can get involved in.

The public sector can also get involved in developing partnerships and leading partnerships locally. For example, in Glasgow, we are in the process of setting up a sustainable procurement group that cuts across private and public sector procurers across the city, thinks about some of the challenges and opportunities for collaboration, and thinks through what the challenges are in getting smaller bundles that smaller businesses can bid for in public procurement. Some of the universities and some local small businesses are involved in that.

There is huge number of potential roles for the public sector. That highlights the importance of

having an integrated food policy that brings together quite a lot of those issues.

I have not mentioned how we support and incentivise the private sector through things that the public sector does. For example, around COP26 in Glasgow, we thought about how we highlight and promote cities that are forward thinking on the sustainability of their food provision and how we support them to market what they are doing for the increasing numbers of tourists they will have who are interested in spending their money in sustainable ways.

As I have said, there are a range of public sector roles. That is why a collaborative approach is needed and why we take our papers to different committees in the city council and have discussions with different councillors and conveners about different aspects of our approach. We have a partnership that has representation from a wide range of bodies in the city so that different perspectives, opportunities and challenges can be raised.

Ariane Burgess: It is great to hear about the full-on work that you are doing to ensure that there is a woven, holistic approach by going to the different committees.

My next question, which is a two-part one, is addressed to Claire Hislop but, if anyone else wants to come in on it or the previous question that I asked, that would be great. First, the bill lists three types of relevant authorities that will be tasked with producing a good food nation plan: local authorities, health boards and any other specified public authorities. Would you recommend any other specific bodies to include in that list?

Secondly, last week, several witnesses suggested groups that those authorities should consult in drafting their plans. The suggestions have included integration joint boards, which are responsible for ensuring that good food gets to those who receive social care. I would like to hear your thoughts on that suggestion and whether you would recommend any other bodies or groups that should be consulted during the production of plans.

Claire Hislop can start. If anyone else wants to come in, they should type R in the chat box.

Claire Hislop: Obviously, we want to see the public bodies leading by example. The bill highlights the need for NHS boards and local authorities to have plans. However, Jill Muirie talked about the collective nature of plans and the ability to influence locally. It is important that we also think much wider than that, perhaps by area, for example. As in Jill Muirie's work, we can look at how we can maximise how our public bodies provide food in a sustainable, healthy and

nutritious way. That is very important. We need to look at the issue across the board and consider integration joint boards and the Scottish Prison Service, for example. Basically, we need to ensure that anybody who is responsible for procuring food and serving it to others is included.

In addition, we must not forget that we need to think about the role of our third and private sector partners. It would be naive to think that we can formulate plans without consulting and working with them because, fundamentally, they will influence the types of food that we can buy, what food is on offer and how food is promoted right across the board. Jill Muirie mentioned all the good work that is being done in schools through education, school meals and so on, but we need to think about what happens when young people leave the school gate and we need to work with, for example, the community retail sector and wider bodies to enable all this to happen.

Ultimately, we need to consult and work with those organisations that have plans in the public sector, but we also need to widen that out. There are good examples of that happening across Scotland. We are looking at whole-systems approaches to obesity and are evaluating projects that take such an approach. It has been great to see the extent to which local areas have been keen to take a systems working approach, which involves looking at a wide range of local stakeholders that drive the elements of diet and obesity. They have identified a shared understanding and shared actions so that they can tackle the issue. That is a bit like the work that Jill Muirie is doing. It is important that we take a more holistic approach when we are doing this work.

Ariane Burgess: Would anyone else like to come in on that?

Dr Fletcher: I have a brief comment to make. We have heard rich and interesting examples of the work that is going on, which highlights the need for some kind of body to co-ordinate that activity. Collaboration does not happen without work being put in to make it happen and to co-ordinate it. The fact that we are talking about sharing best practice and collecting evidence is an argument for having some kind of statutory body to perform that role.

Jill Muirie has talked about the amazing work that has been done in Glasgow. She says that she would like a national steer to be given and national strategies to be provided in order to advance that work. It is a fairly straightforward point. We need a statutory body to do that. A lot is happening in lots of different places, but to make that work more effective and to join up those activities, there is a need for a co-ordinating role.

Ariane Burgess: That is a good point. I know a lot about community development and co-ordinating things on a community level. Do you think that we need to have a Scottish food commission, along the lines of a Scottish Land Commission, as some people have called for, or do you think that, as Jo Teece said, the role could be performed by Public Health Scotland?

Dr Fletcher: My preference would be for some kind of Scottish food commission. Public Health Scotland is doing great work in this area, but food covers a great many different departments and policy areas and, historically, we have not been good at working across areas in that way. For example, I know from research that I have been doing on another topic that, within the Scottish Government, health and environment do not talk to each other very well. Therefore, if we were to use one of the existing bodies, we might not be able to achieve the joined-up approach that we need.

Ariane Burgess: Thank you very much for that perspective.

The Convener: Rachael Hamilton has a supplementary.

Rachael Hamilton: I will make it quick. Do you think that food education should be on the face of the bill?

Jo Teece: I must apologise—I am not 100 per cent sure what you mean by

“on the face of the bill”.

However, as dietitians, our profession strongly advocates nutrition education as being core. Claire Hislop mentioned the work in schools. We have dietitians in Education Scotland who advise on school meals. Nutrition education goes across the lifespan. As dietitians working in public health, we are well placed to educate almost from the cradle to the grave. I support the view that education is key in the bill.

Claire Hislop: Absolutely, education is important. We need it to be embedded in the bill, and we already have things in place that could be strengthened. Fundamentally, however, it is only part of what we need to do, and it will not change the behaviour that we see. In my previous role as a school inspector, I found that many children could tell me what they should be eating, but whether they could access it locally at an affordable price was a completely different matter. Therefore, although it is important that children learn about not just how to keep their bodies healthy but where their food comes from as well as the complexities of what they eat and how it gets to the stage of being in front of them on the table, we also need to ensure that, on the wider

aspects, we have policy coherence so that children can implement what they learn in class.

It is not just about children; it is about education more widely. Where possible, we need to ensure that people are as informed as possible about the types of food that they eat. That will help to change the way we eat and how we view food. Education is important, but it is only part of the picture.

Jill Muirie: Education is important. Again, it depends on what we mean by education, but it is important and necessary. However, it is not sufficient to make the changes that we want. With all the major public health achievements in Scotland, education was not sufficient; we needed substantial changes in the circumstances in which people lived or legislation that supported that.

Education is important, and it should go beyond nutrition education. The curriculum in schools needs to reflect the whole food system so that young people learn about that. In particular, they need to understand the role that food plays in the climate emergency. If you like, they need to be food literate and understand the impact of their food choices in different countries and on a range of issues such as workers' rights. It is about the ethics of food and sustainability. Lots of work is being done through Learning for Sustainability Scotland to put food in a sustainability context in school-based education, and the University of Strathclyde has been doing good work on that, too. It would be helpful to learn from that.

It is important that we build on the good work that has been done and embed food and a holistic approach to it in the curriculum. I know that loads of schools have done brilliant stuff, particularly at primary level. It becomes much more of a challenge in secondary, but there are opportunities to build debates on food in modern studies, for example. It is important for young people to grapple with and understand the real issues in the food system. Going beyond that, there is an opportunity to build young people's skills so that they can become innovative leaders in a new food system. That is important. We are struggling to employ young people in our agriculture and sustainable food sectors who understand and can grapple with the new technologies that we need to build. There are opportunities to work with our further education and higher education colleagues and through apprenticeships and training opportunities to build that workforce.

In Glasgow, we are building in sustainability to the chef and catering courses at college so that new chefs understand not just the nutritional principles that they should think about but how to build sustainability into the food provision that they plan. This is going on a bit of a tangent, but we have found from speaking to our procurement

colleagues that, ultimately, they are not the ones with the power; the ones with the power are the people who decide on the menus and who then set the procurement requirements in line with that. We need to think about how we build healthy sustainable foods and seasonality into our meal and menu planning. We then need to think about how we support the development of a local food system that meets those needs so that the money that is invested in procurement stays within the local economy.

Education is required in that regard, too. We need to think about how we educate the public on what a healthy and sustainable diet looks like. We also need to educate our food retailers and producers on how to meet that need. Education is needed more widely. It is necessary but not sufficient. We need to think about the circumstances, the context and the structures that are in place to support the new knowledge that people have.

12:00

The Convener: I have some questions for Claire Hislop about Public Health Scotland's views. Under section 7, health boards will be required to consult on and publish a good food nation plan. They will also be required to "have regard to" the plans when exercising specific functions, but we do not yet know what those functions will be because they are not laid out in the bill. What are your views on that?

There will also be resource implications relating to the costs of consulting on and publishing a good food nation plan. The Scottish Government suggests that any such costs will be "negligible". Do you agree that the costs involved in pulling everything together will be "negligible"?

Claire Hislop: It is quite difficult to answer that question because the functions of the bill have not been outlined, so it is not clear to me what health boards will be required to do. As we have talked about during this evidence session, the requirements need to be outlined more succinctly, so that people know what is expected of them.

On the question about budgets, I cannot comment on the costs. Resource will be needed to deliver a good food nation plan, and people will need to think about how to facilitate such a plan across the health board, which will then need to link up with local authorities, businesses, procurement and so on. That will all take time. We have all agreed that there needs to be a level of participation with others, and that will obviously come at a cost.

Significant resource will therefore be needed—whether it is financial or linked to people—so the budget will need to be considered. However, until

what is in the bill is more clearly outlined, it will be hard for anybody to reflect on the costs. I am sorry that I cannot be of more help.

The Convener: You have given your opinion on what the bill should deliver and aspire to, and on what its ambitions should be, so Public Health Scotland should have an idea of what a plan might look like. We have taken evidence on that over the past few weeks, and we have had the consultation responses, so there should be a good indication of what will be in such plans. Therefore, there should be an indication to health boards of the costs and resource implications of pulling the plans together. That is really important. Do the specified functions need to be laid out in the bill, so that we are certain about what the plans for each health board will deliver? In that way, it will not be down to costs and resource implications, and it will not be based on the position of individual health boards.

Claire Hislop: I agree that we have to lay out what we want to happen. Local health boards will be looking to the national plan, which has to have substance so that we can align with it, but we have spoken about the need for local flexibility to adapt the plans. Fundamentally, we need to be clearer about the bill's purpose, so that people know what we should be striving to achieve. Earlier, we spoke about ambitions, targets for implementation and other things. Those issues need to be considered before we can realistically assess the cost. Even just putting plans together will use resource, and I do not have any idea how much implementing the plans will cost.

Public Health Scotland is obviously a special board, not a local board, so we need to be more inclusive and think about how other people might be required to write a plan, to support others in writing their plan or to at least be involved with the national plan, for example.

Jim Fairlie: This has been a fascinating session, folks. Thank you very much for your input. I have really enjoyed it and have taken a lot out of it.

I would like to explore the role and responsibility of the private sector in a good food nation with regard to delivering the public health outcomes and whether the bill and the plans under it can support and enable the private sector to play a positive role. I would include food producers in that.

One of the things that I have had difficulty with in all our sessions is the fact that there seems to be a dichotomy—we want to have environmental protections, we want to protect biodiversity and we want farmers to be able to continue to produce food locally with short supply chains, but we also have massive food inequalities in this country. How do we get everyone in the private sector to

recognise that dichotomy and work together so that they can be part of a good food nation?

Isabel—can we start with you, if that is okay? Sorry about that.

Dr Fletcher: Thank you.

Jim Fairlie: Do you mean that? [*Laughter.*]

Dr Fletcher: I will start with the hard question. Some of it is about looking at what the Government does and developing more coherence so that we incentivise the private sector. As I said, I did some work in upland rural areas, a lot of which involved talking about the environmental impact of livestock farming. We talk about public money for public goods, and that is about supporting farmers and other food producers to produce food in the most environmentally benign manner possible, rather than having perverse incentives to produce food in ways that are environmentally damaging. I know that that is slightly off the public health question.

We also need to think about small and medium-sized enterprises. A lot of people want to set up food businesses—to grow and sell food, to cook, to set up small catering businesses and so on. It is a difficult thing to do and I think that the Government could support people more, partly by providing better infrastructure. I did research on Skye—it has bad roads, bad broadband, and, if you are talking about meat, a lack of abattoirs, all of which make it very difficult to set up small food businesses on the island.

There are opportunities for win-win situations, which I think are rare in public policy. Tim Lang did a report about five years ago on British horticulture. I know that the issue came up in the last session. There is a gap between what we produce and what we eat, and we could close that gap by supporting small-scale producers to grow more fruit and vegetables. We cannot grow peppers and tomatoes in the UK, but we can grow potatoes, turnips, onions and cabbages. We could grow a lot more of what we eat, which is one way in which the private sector could contribute to the goals of a good food nation.

Jim Fairlie: Thank you very much.

I will go to Jo Teece next. We heard earlier from some of the other panel members about the national planning framework. We can have all the education we like but, ultimately, we need the availability of the kind of foods that you, as a dietician, would want to see our young people eating. How can the private sector play its role?

Jo Teece: That is a great question that links into one of our reflections, which is that perhaps more engagement is needed with private partners around the bill. Food sustainability is a key factor. I know that the aim of the bill is to get rid of the

need for food banks, but, as dieticians, we see that the food that is provided in food banks is not always nutritionally balanced or nutritionally appropriate, so there is work to do there as well. It comes back to food poverty and food sustainability. It is also about making sure that people are educated on what makes up a healthy, balanced diet. I would be more than happy to provide more evidence on that if it would be helpful.

Jim Fairlie: Claire Hislop, what are your thoughts?

Claire Hislop: As I have said before, the private sector has a key role in helping us to be a good food nation. We want businesses to flourish, to boost our economy and to be able to pay our workforce sufficiently, which also improves public health.

We have an opportunity to shift policy and co-ordinate it better. We hope that there will be more of a requirement for people to have nutritionally balanced and sustainable food, and we can support businesses to do that locally. There is a real opportunity to support their ambitions to flourish. I know that businesses in many sectors are quite reticent at the moment because of the impact of the pandemic but, through the bill, we can look at ways of supporting businesses to flourish and boost our economy, workforce and so on, in addition to looking at wider aspects such as improving the type of food that our retailers offer, what we produce locally and so on.

We have a real opportunity to harness all of that in a positive way through working together with the private sector to enable it all to happen.

Jim Fairlie: Jill Muirie will probably remember that, when the hungry for success approach was implemented, East Ayrshire went at it hammer and tongs and created a gold standard. Can the private sector be encouraged to get involved in that way in your area?

Jill Muirie: One of the differences between us and Ayrshire is the fact that there is not a huge amount of food grown within Glasgow's boundaries. We have therefore been looking at how we use what we can learn from Ayrshire, and we have been trying to work with the city region to look at the opportunities in that regard.

We have also been working with the inclusive growth work that the city region is doing to think through how we might develop a project that looks at one foodstuff or one small bit of public sector procurement within the city region, build shorter supply chains and bring in more local produce. Those discussions are on-going; we are not there yet. It is a challenge.

Public procurement has an important role to play. We need to think about how to align the products that our public sector colleagues are looking for with what is produced locally and, if there are gaps, how to stimulate and support the local economy to develop production of those foodstuffs. That would then stimulate an incentive for more producers to start producing what is needed.

For example, I spoke to a private business that needs grated cheese for its sandwiches, which it then sells to supermarkets. It got its cheese from Dumfries, but it could not find anywhere that would grate it. The cheese therefore went to Wales to be grated and then came back.

There are examples like that all over the place, so perhaps we could think in a little bit more detail about the supply processes and where we can support Scottish businesses to intervene or develop processes or facilities to do their bit, so that we can reduce those food miles and keep the business in Scotland. We are in the process of thinking about that in Glasgow.

The other thing that we are thinking about is how to use our vacant and derelict land, and how to use more innovative processes in Glasgow, including vertical farming and suchlike, to build more food production within the city boundaries. Again, those discussions are in relatively early stages and involve thinking through where we can get funding from. Having a collaborative approach in the city helps us when bidding for funding to try out pilot processes for new or innovative approaches to food production.

12:15

We need to think about seasonality, what we can produce and adapting our menu plans so that we are looking for food that is more easily produced. We need to support small local businesses to develop the production processes for the food that we need and is in demand in the public sector.

We also need to support the local more generally—encouraging retailers and the public to think about buying local. Some shops, outlets, retail establishments and restaurants do that really well, but others do not, and more could be done around encouraging and highlighting to people the benefit to the local economy of using more local produce.

The Convener: That brings us to the end of the evidence session. I thank Dr Isabel Fletcher, Claire Hislop, Jill Muirie and Jo Teece. We very much appreciate your time this morning.

Subordinate Legislation

Phytosanitary Conditions (Amendment) Regulations 2022 (PH/36)

Milk and Milk Products (Pupils in Educational Establishments) Aid Applications (England and Scotland) Regulations 2022 (AGS/10)

12:16

The Convener: We move on to item 3, which is consideration of two consent notifications from Scottish ministers. I refer members to paper 3.

Under the protocol between the Scottish Parliament and the Scottish Government, the two consent notifications have been categorised as type 1, meaning that the Scottish Parliament's agreement is sought before the Scottish Government gives consent to the UK Government making secondary legislation in an area of devolved competence.

We will consider the two notifications separately.

Does any member have any comment on the consent notification on the Phytosanitary Conditions (Amendment) Regulations 2022? Please raise your hand or type R in the chat box if participating remotely.

No member has indicated that they wish to comment.

Is the committee content that the provisions set out in the notification should be included in the proposed UK statutory instrument? Please raise your hand or type N in the chat box if you do not agree, otherwise I will presume that members are content.

As no member has disagreed, the committee is content.

Does any member have any comment on the milk and milk products consent notification?

No member has indicated that they wish to comment.

Is the committee content that the provisions set out in the notification should be included in the proposed UK SI? Please raise your hand or type N in the chat box if you do not agree, otherwise I will presume members are content.

As no member has disagreed, the committee is content.

Finally, is the committee content to delegate authority to me to sign off a letter to the Scottish Government, informing it of our decision today?

As no member has disagreed, the committee is content.

**Private Storage Aid Scheme (Pigmeat)
(Scotland) Amendment Regulations 2021
(SSI 2021/492)**

12:18

The Convener: Item 4 is consideration of a negative instrument. I refer members to paper 4. No motion to annul the instrument has been lodged.

Members will note that the instrument breaches the rule that requires Scottish statutory instruments to be laid at least 28 days before they come into effect. The Scottish Government's letter to the Presiding Officer states that the breach is

"due to the need to act urgently to avoid an economic loss to farmers by not accepting additional cuts of pigmeat into the scheme."

I note that we wrote to the Scottish Government with questions when we originally considered the pigmeat scheme instrument, but we have yet to receive a response.

Does any member have any comment on the instrument?

Rachael Hamilton: Why were loins not included in the pigmeat private storage aid scheme in the first place?

The Convener: We can write to the Scottish Government to ask it for clarification on that.

Rachael Hamilton: Thank you.

The Convener: Are members content to note the instrument?

As no member has disagreed, the committee is content.

That concludes our public business. We now move into private session to continue our agenda.

12:19

Meeting continued in private until 12:57.

This is the final edition of the *Official Report* of this meeting. It is part of the Scottish Parliament *Official Report* archive and has been sent for legal deposit.

Published in Edinburgh by the Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body, the Scottish Parliament, Edinburgh, EH99 1SP

All documents are available on
the Scottish Parliament website at:

www.parliament.scot

Information on non-endorsed print suppliers
is available here:

www.parliament.scot/documents

For information on the Scottish Parliament contact
Public Information on:

Telephone: 0131 348 5000

Textphone: 0800 092 7100

Email: sp.info@parliament.scot

