

Rural Affairs, Islands and Natural Environment Committee

2nd Meeting (Session 6), Wednesday 1 September 2021

The Scottish food and drink sector

Introduction

1. The Committee has agreed to hold a series of introductory evidence sessions covering key areas of the Committee's remit. The first will cover the Scottish food and drink sector.
2. The session has been designed to provide Committee members with a broad overview of the policy landscape, as well as key challenges and opportunities facing the sector. More specifically, the session will focus on:
 - Food production
 - Supply chains
 - Labour force
 - The impact of the COVID19 pandemic, climate change and Brexit on the food and drink sector
 - Good Food Nation policy and legislation and other Scottish Government commitments on food
 - Food provision in Scotland's rural areas and islands.

Supporting information

3. A SPICe paper providing context to the evidence session is provided in **Annexe A**.

Committee clerks
August 2021



Rural Affairs, Islands and Natural Environment Committee

2nd Meeting, 2021 (Session 6), Wednesday 1 September 2021

Session 6 Introductory Meetings – Food and Drink

Background

The Committee has agreed to convene a series of panels to gain a broad overview from stakeholders on the areas within its remit.

There are two panels for today, comprised of stakeholders with expertise on wider food policy, and stakeholders working within the food and drink supply chain. Suggested themes to discuss with the stakeholders are provided below. Some of these are repeated for both panels, as witnesses will be able to address these from different angles.

Further reading as a background to this session can be found in the Food Policy section of the [SPICe Land Use and Rural Affairs Subject Profile](#).

Panel 1 – Food Policy

Witnesses for this session:

Scotland Food & Drink: Scotland Food & Drink is a membership organisation with over 440 members, and leaders of the Scotland Food & Drink Partnership, a collaborative partnership of the key industry organisations and public sector agencies working in the industry in Scotland. The organisation published *Ambition 2030*, the industry growth strategy to double food exports to 2030.

- **Witness:** James Withers, CEO

Scottish Food Coalition: The Scottish Food Coalition is a diverse alliance of civil society organisations working for food justice, and includes partners from academia, environmental NGOs, health charities, trade unions, faith groups, community food organisations, social security and inclusion organisations, and animal welfare charities.

- **Witness:** Professor Mary Brennan, Chair of the Scottish Food Coalition, Chair of Food Marketing and Society, University of Edinburgh Business School

Food Standards Scotland: Scotland’s public sector food body under the Food (Scotland) Act 2015. It has three main responsibilities: To protect the public from risks to health which may arise in connection with the consumption of food; To improve the extent to which members of the public have diets which are conducive to good health; To protect the other interests of consumers in relation to food.

- **Witness:** Geoff Ogle, Chief Executive

Scotch Whisky Association: The trade body for the Scottish whisky industry.

- **Witness:** Fraser Grieve, Deputy Director for Strategy and Communications

Suggested themes to address:

1. Scottish food and drink policies, e.g.
 - a. The [Good Food Nation Bill](#) – expectations for what is to be included in new legislation;
 - b. [Ambition 2030](#) and the [Food and Drink Industry’s Recovery Plan](#);
 - c. Coherence within Scottish Government’s policies related to food (for example, healthy diets, education, social security and food poverty, food production and the environment, etc).

2. Impact of EU exit on food and drink policy and the food system, e.g.
 - a. How imports and exports are functioning 9 months on from the end of the transition period;
 - b. Any ongoing issues in particular sectors (e.g. seafood);
 - c. Access to labour within food and drink supply chains;
 - d. Impacts of EU exit on the public sector's role and operation (particularly for Food Standards Scotland).
3. Local food economies, e.g.
 - a. Role of local food economies for Scotland, in particular, for rural communities and islands;
 - b. The Scottish Government's recently published consultation on a [Local Food Strategy for Scotland](#);
 - c. Local food in public procurement;
 - d. Role of local food economies for local consumers.
4. Impact of environmental challenges on Scottish food and drink supply chains. E.g.
 - a. Climate change mitigation and emissions reduction in the food and drink sector;
 - b. Actions in the food and drink sectors to address biodiversity loss.
5. Resilience and Scotland's food systems, e.g.
 - a. Resilience issues resulting from experiences during the pandemic and anticipated due to climate change;
6. The Scottish Government's budget for food and drink, e.g.
 - a. Coherence of Scottish Government funding for food and drink-related policy with the Scottish Government's policy objectives

Panel 2 – Food and Drink Supply Chains

Witnesses for this session:

Food and Drink Federation Scotland: The membership body for food and drink manufacturers in Scotland, and a division of the UK-wide Food and Drink Federation.

- **Witness:** David Thomson, CEO

Scottish Wholesale Association: The trade association for Scotland's food and drink wholesale businesses.

- **Witness:** Colin Smith, Chief Executive

Scottish Grocer's Federation: The trade association for Scotland's convenience store businesses. The Scottish Grocer's Federation also administer the Scottish Government's 'Go Local Fund' in partnership with Scotland Food & Drink. This aims to get Scottish produce on the shelves of small shops.

- **Witnesses:** Dr John Lee, Head of Public Affairs alongside Pete Cheema, CEO

The Road Haulage Association: The trade association for road transport operators. The organisation represents haulage businesses which plays an important role in food distribution.

- **Witness:** Martin Reid, Director, Scotland & Northern Ireland

Suggested themes to address:

1. Food provision in Scotland's rural areas and islands, e.g.
 - a. Potential weaknesses in supply chains for islands and rural areas;
 - b. Infrastructure needs/gaps/issues for islands and rural areas;
2. Impact of EU exit on food supply chains, e.g.
 - a. How imports and exports are functioning 9 months on from the end of the transition period;
 - b. Needs of the food and drink industry and supply chain post-Brexit;
 - c. Any ongoing issues in particular sectors (e.g. seafood);
3. Access to labour within food and drink supply chains, including for haulage and distribution.
4. Local food economies, e.g.
 - a. Importance of local food economies for Scotland, in particular, for rural communities and islands;
 - b. The Scottish Government's recently published consultation on a [Local Food Strategy for Scotland](#);
 - c. Local food in public procurement.
 - d. Role of local food in food systems resilience;
5. Impact of environmental challenges on Scottish food supply chains including production, processing and distribution, e.g.

- a. Climate change mitigation and emissions reduction in the food and drink supply chain;
 - b. Actions in the sector to address biodiversity loss.
6. Resilience and Scotland's food supply chains, e.g.
- a. Resilience issues resulting from experiences during the pandemic;
 - b. Climate change adaptation and resilience to climatic events;
 - c. Gaps and weaknesses in supply chains and infrastructure
7. The Scottish Government's budget for food and drink, e.g.
- a. Operation of the [Food Processing, Marketing and Co-Operation Grant scheme](#) and any other food sector support;
 - b. Other grants for food sectors, such as the '[Go Local Fund](#)' administered by the Scottish Grocers' Federation in partnership with Scotland Food & Drink
 - c. Coherence of Scottish Government funding with Scottish Government's policy objectives

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August 2021