

The Good Food Nation Bill

Why a Good Food Nation Bill?

The Good Food Nation Bill is recognition that legislation is necessary to deliver a food system that is fit for purpose in Scotland. Food is central to many of the issues we care about – social justice, health, the environment, and the economy. However, until now there has been little involvement from Government, or opportunities for civil society to participate, in making big decisions about how the food system works.

This is a problem because leaving it to the market means we are in a situation where many people on low incomes are unable to access a decent diet.¹ It means we have a food environment that makes it easy to eat unhealthily – with a resulting epidemic of diet-related diseases.² And it means severe damage to our environment, compromising our capacity to produce food into the future.³

The Scottish Government and communities across Scotland are picking up the pieces of our dysfunctional food system, including through the costs of treating diet-related diseases, environmental clean-up, and addressing food insecurity. The Good Food Nation Bill is about taking a more proactive approach, determining how we want our food system to work, rather than just dealing with the consequences.

The Good Food Nation Bill will not solve all our problems; however, it is an exciting opportunity to begin to set the agenda and ensure that the governance of the system reflects our values and priorities.

Where has this come from?

The proposal for legislation follows two previous Scottish Government policy documents: *Recipe for Success* (2009) and *Becoming a Good Food Nation* (2014).

The Scottish Food Coalition advocated for legislation for the food system in their report *Plenty: Food, Farming and Health in a New Scotland*, arguing that the scale of change we need to see demands substantial changes that the policy documents have not delivered.

Three of the major political parties in Scotland (SNP, Scottish Labour and Scottish Greens) committed to new legislation for the food system in the 2016 Holyrood elections. The Good Food Nation Bill appeared in the SNP's Programme for Government (both in 2016 and 2017).

¹ Independent Working Group on Food Poverty (2016), *Dignity: Ending Hunger Together in Scotland*, <http://www.gov.scot/Resource/0050/00502395.pdf>

² For example, 19% of adults in Scotland suffer from Coronary Heart Disease or Diabetes, two diseases that are intimately linked with diet. *Scottish Health Survey* (2017) <http://www.gov.scot/Resource/0052/00525366.pdf>

³ For example, the population of pollinators in Scotland has decreased by 51% since 1980, with agricultural practices noted in the key causes. <https://beta.gov.scot/news/boost-for-bees-and-butterflies/>

What stage is it at?

The Scottish Government has said that they are on track to begin consultation on the Good Food Nation Bill by the end of 2017.⁴

In September 2017, the Scottish Food Commission hosted a pre-consultation summit. It looked at seven key areas that the Good Food Nation Bill is relevant to: Food & Health, Food & Fairness, Food Poverty, Sustainable Production, Food Waste, Public Food, and Food Education & Culture. It also looked at structural issues, such as governance of the food system and how the legislation will relate to international commitments such as the Sustainable Development Goals and the Right to Food.

A report of the summit is due out in November 2017, and it is believed that this will form the basis for the consultation.

What do we want to see?

We want to see a consultation that genuinely facilitates participation in this process, that is designed to make sure people most affected by the injustices in the current food system have a voice in shaping the direction of travel.

We want to make sure the crosscutting nature of the Good Food Nation Bill is not lost, and that every MSP takes an interest because they understand its importance for a whole range of urgent issues.

We want the Good Food Nation Bill to deliver a new framework for our food system, which makes it easy for all of us to participate – whether that's through engaging with law and policy, growing food or sharing food: we know food is everyone's business.

⁴ Fergus Ewing MSP,
<http://www.parliament.scot/parliamentarybusiness/28877.aspx?SearchType=Advance&ReferenceNumbers=S5W-10864&ResultsPerPage=10>