

Scottish Food Coalition event report

Gearing up for the Good Food Nation Bill

Unison House, Glasgow, 9th of December 2016

Welcome – Vicky Swales, RSPB

- The Scottish Food Coalition (SFC) was born 18 months ago
- It produced [Plenty: Food, Farming & Health in a New Scotland](#) in Spring 2016, which called for a Food, Farming and Health Act. This idea was taken up in party manifestos of the SNP, Greens and Labour and a 'Good Food Nation Bill' was announced in the new programme of government in September 2016.

About the SFC – Pete Ritchie, Nourish Scotland

- The SFC engages a wide range of organisations. It's "hard in the middle (core group) but soft on the outside"; all organisations with an interest in food are invited to contribute.
- Because of its diverse make-up, the coalition will not always be able to speak with one voice, organisations have different priorities, but collectively we are working together for a **just transition** to a fair, healthy and sustainable food system.
- The coalition has put together a **series of discussion documents** on different food system issues of relevance to the GFN Bill, which are now available on the [Coalition website](#). These documents are a starting point for discussion about what the SFC wants to see in the GFN Bill. They will inform, and be informed by, a **series of parliamentary events in the first half of 2017**, inviting contributions from food policy experts from the UK and beyond, with parallel public events taking place at the University of Edinburgh.
- By working through the membership of all of the different organisations involved in the SFC, the coalition has a wide reach and aims to make sure **many voices are represented** in the development of the Bill.

The Good Food Nation Bill – Amanda Fox, Scottish Government

- Has the oversight of the whole Bill's passage through Parliament
- The Bill is at an early stage, "we have a **completely blank canvas** to work with"
- Policy context:
 - 2009 "Recipe for Success": first National Food & Drink Policy document in Europe
 - 2014 Discussion document: "Becoming a Good Food Nation". It acknowledged tensions and challenges but lacked a focus on food poverty
 - 2015 establishment of Food Commission
 - SNP commitment in their election manifesto to a Good Food Nation Bill, including food standards, procurement and waste
- Time table:
 - The public consultation will start "late in 2017"
 - The Bill should be finalised by January 2019, but the new Scottish Parliament has 20 Bills in the pipeline so this timeline may slip
 - Consultation process:
 - Amanda and her colleagues are currently scoping out mechanisms for consultation and are open to suggestions. They want the consultation to be inclusive and "not a dry exercise". They'll be

submitting a proposal to the Food Commission on the 15th of December.

- They're looking to work through pre-existing networks and are keen to learn from tried mechanisms and methods to consult with different groups, especially those who are harder to reach.
- Amanda has previously worked on the Community Empowerment Bill and hopes to use a similar consultation model, which sought to empower citizens, had an exceptionally broad remit and tried to speak to as many people as early as we can ("As a coalition you're already ahead of the game!")
- The Scottish Government will liaise with the Rowett Institute and other research institutions to make sure the GFN Bill is evidence-based

Short contributions from organisations in the SFC

Aoife Behan, Soil Association

- We want to see organic and agroecological production systems; a transition toward climate friendly farming; healthier soils; high animal welfare; less antibiotics; investment in innovation; a greener, healthier food chain; a transformation of Scotland's diet; better distribution and direct sales; more small farms; more new farmers; leadership in public procurement; sustainable food cities; better food education; continuous professional development for farmers.

Lorraine Tulloch, Obesity Action Scotland

- In Scotland we've been missing the dietary goals for the past 15 years, which has had its impact on our health and on the NHS
- The GFN Bill needs to make it easier for people in Scotland to make healthy food choices. This requires tackling the practices of the multiple retailers and big food companies (e.g. price promotions on unhealthy foods), advertising controls, taxes and balancing public procurement.

Jackson Cullinane, Unison

- Unison represents people right across the food chain, all of whom are under pressure, including workers in abattoirs and farm workers affected by organophosphate pesticides
- We need, amongst other things, to change public procurement, to protect the Agricultural Wages Board and improve health and safety standards in the food sector

Suggestions from attendees of issues that the GFN Bill (and/or other policy mechanisms) should seek to address:

- Improving animal welfare and reducing antibiotic use
- The right to food, with specific attention paid to child poverty and children's rights
- Trade deals and their impact on food
- Food supply chains and what we want to support our farmers to do
- The role of planning in making it easier for people to access healthy food
- Ensuring food is free from chemicals, including reducing the use of glyphosate by local authorities

- The huge climate impact of our food production systems
- Public procurement (as the “biggest consumer in Scotland”)
- Breaking the dominance and power of the multiple retailers
- Labeling regulations
- Community growing and access to land
- Geographical access to food (one study found the same basket of food costing 55% more in poorer areas)

It was also put forward that we need to see food as a solution to many crosscutting issues, not as a problem. The Bill should be about repurposing the food system, which means changes in both production and consumption.

The scope of the Bill:

- To ensure the Bill is truly crosscutting, a cross-departmental governmental working group is established, which includes health, environment, education, human rights, and agriculture.
- Fergus Ewing has asked the Food Commission about the scope of the Bill
- In response to a question on whether this Bill is merely a “tidying up exercise”, connecting different departments, or aiming to be transformative, Amanda replied that she’s keen to go over and beyond the SNP manifesto commitment and make sure the **Bill is aspirational and transformational** – working towards a food system that works for everybody.
- Amanda: Legislation is used as a last resort, the government can promote good practice in other ways and consumers can do a lot, if offered education
 - In response, it was suggested by the Rowett Institute that we need a more sophisticated understanding of “consumers” and how our **choices are responsive to our food environment**. The individual behavioural change approach that seeks to empower people to make better food choices is not held up by evidence.
- **Climate change** – Amanda will be liaising with Scottish Government colleagues leading on the forth-coming climate change RPP3, the new Climate Bill and the Circular Economy Bill to make sure food production and climate change is taken into account and the policies cross-reference.
- **Supply chains and public procurement** – A new task force on supply chains is set up. According to Amanda, the government knows it needs to lead by example in terms of procurement and already tries to support equity between stakeholders.

Targets and performance:

- Amanda’s team will be working with the key indicators identified by the Food Commission: Social Justice, Health, Environmental Sustainability, Prosperity and Knowledge.
- Amanda suggested that we look at the National Performance Framework (NPF) and the Single Outcome Agreements (SOA’s) for local authorities and the indicators in these documents that relate to food
- It was raised that these outcomes are currently poor in relation to food
- The NPF is being reviewed, and the SOA’s will be reviewed as well after the Local Authority elections next year.
- It was suggested by the RSPB that we need a formalised, statutory Food Commission with powers of scrutiny and a Food and Farming Strategy that is reviewed by Parliament every 5 years.