

Guide to Responding to the Good Food Nation Consultation



The Scottish Government are proposing a new law on food – a Good Food Nation Bill. We believe they have some good ideas, but this law will need to be more ambitious to make the real changes that we think are needed.

We have until the 29th of March to tell the Government what we think of their proposals. Anyone can do this by sending a response to their public consultation.

The consultation questions are not easy to understand, so we have pulled together this guide on how to respond.

This guide includes explanations of the questions and some ideas for what to include in your response. Feel free to use any of the suggestions in the guide when you are responding. If you want to add more or say something different, it can be useful and powerful to include your own words and experiences.

If you're not sure about any of the words in the questions or our guide, take a look at the 'key words' section that we've included at the end of this guide.

Once you have submitted your response – spread the word!

We need everyone's help to send a strong message to the Scottish Government that we want a fairer, healthier and more sustainable food system.

Consultation questions

1. To what extent do you agree with the framework proposals for Ministers and public authorities to prepare statements of policy, have regard to them in the exercise of relevant functions, and report on implementation, with regard to international obligations and guidance?

What is this question about?

This question is about the **responsibilities** the Government and others would have towards the whole food system. This includes making sure the right to food is respected, protected and fulfilled, and making sure we are working towards important goals, like protecting workers' rights, improving public health, animal welfare and the environmental footprint of food.

The proposals set out by the Government are a **list of common actions** that Governments take to help them plan for and deliver their human rights human rights commitments. The Government is asking if you agree with the actions they are suggesting.

They are suggesting that the Government and public authorities should:

1. Make a policy about food.
2. Have the food policy cover the whole food system, including things like growing, harvesting, processing, marketing, selling, preparing, eating food and disposing of the waste. It would also include how people access the best food for themselves and their families, and how food is managed in places like schools and hospitals.
3. Be clear about how they are going to measure progress.
4. Think about this food policy when making decisions.
5. Ask the public for their views when they are writing the policy.
6. Make the policy publicly available.
7. Look back at the policy every 5 years and update if needed.
8. Report about how well they are doing every 2 years.
9. Think about their international commitments at each stage of the process, including when they are writing the policy, carrying out their agreed actions and reporting on progress.

How you might want to answer:

Agree

It is important for Ministers and other public authorities to write strong food policies and use them to guide their ongoing work. They should make sure to measure their progress and publish honest and clear reports about this on a regular basis. These policies should relate to all parts of the food system including policies to reduce food insecurity, to make our food production environmentally friendly, support workers, improve animal welfare, provide access to growing space, and more.

It is good that the Government wants to take action to support the right to food. Their suggestions will help, but they should be clear that this Bill will put the right to food in law. Doing this will help them meet Scotland's international obligations.

It is also important that the Government and public bodies involve lots of different groups and individuals in making their plan, because food is everyone's business. They should do this in a way which makes it easy for people to understand the situation and have their voice heard.

More detail you may want to include:

These plans must be stronger than before, with more people from different sectors (health, environment, welfare, workers' rights, etc.) and different areas of Government required to work together to write and deliver them.

The Scottish Government has already written national food policies. While these have been a good start, they have not been very effective.

In 2014, the Government published Becoming a Good Food Nation - a national food and drink policy that included an inspiring vision for the future of Scotland's food. However, progress has been slow because the plan was not specific enough about who would do what. Businesses and other parts of Government could choose whether or not to follow the policy, and there was no timetable for reporting or clear indicators of success.

Rather than one overall plan for food - we have plans which focus on one issue, like the Climate Change Plan, Diet & Obesity Plan and Food and Drink Industry Plan. Without bridging the gaps between these areas then we cannot see the whole picture or solve the problems that we are facing.

The Good Food Nation plan would have been much better if more people like scientists, farmers and those forced to visit foodbanks were involved in writing it. The plan would also have been better had more people been involved in reviewing the plans, judging them and changing them if needed.

- 2. Whilst we do not plan to require all sectors to prepare statements of policy on food, they do all have a role to play in achieving our Good Food Nation ambition. To what extent do you agree that Government should encourage and enable businesses in particular to play their part?**

What is this question about?

This question is about whether businesses should have some responsibilities too, and **what the Government can to do help private businesses to be involved.**

How you might want to answer:

Strongly agree

To succeed in making Scotland a Good Food Nation, we need everyone who has a role in food to play their part. Private businesses have a big role in our food system – they grow, process, package, ship, sell and prepare our food every day. We will need their help to make the changes we need, and the Government should encourage and support private businesses to help achieve the Good Food Nation ambition.

More detail you may want to include:

The Scottish Government can do a lot to encourage businesses to help us meet these goals. For example, they can offer financial support to businesses who make changes that move us in the right direction, and they can make rule that limit business decisions and practice that make it harder to meet these goals.

Involving private business in achieving these goals should mean all businesses - small businesses, like local green grocers and farmers, as well as big businesses, like Greggs or Morrison's. They must all pitch-in to make the Good Food Nation vision a reality. The Government should lead by example and use its power to encourage positive changes in food businesses.

The Government has used its power to support and encourage the business sector to change in the past, and it has been very helpful. For example, in 2014 the Government established the carrier bag charge, which requires all shops in Scotland to charge a minimum of 5p for each single-use carrier bag. This led to an 80% reduction in the number of bags that shops have handed out, many of which would have ended up polluting the environment and threatening wildlife. This is just one example. The Government has also used its powers to introduce a minimum price on alcohol and a tax on sugary drinks to tackle health issues.

Many businesses have already realised the need for change. With support from the Government, more businesses will join together to tackle the problems facing our food system.

3. To what extent do you agree with the proposed approach to accountability of Scottish Ministers and specified public authorities?

What is this question about?

This question is about **who the Government and other public agencies should report to** when they are explaining the progress they have made on delivering their food plans. In other words, who are they 'accountable' to?

The Government is suggesting that their plans and reports about their progress only need to be sent to the Parliament, and the plans and reports of other public bodies should just be sent to the Ministers. They do not think it would be helpful or a good use of money to have a separate group of experts and representatives from other parts of the food system to look over their work and progress. A group like this is called an ‘independent statutory body’.

How you might want to answer:

Strongly disagree

Reporting only to the Parliament and Scottish Ministers is not a strong enough way of making sure we make Scotland a Good Food Nation. It is really important for the Government’s plans and reports to be read by a group of people who are not part of the Government and who – as a group - have the power to review and demand progress. This group would be an independent statutory body.

An independent statutory body would recognise that food insecurity, climate change, public health, biodiversity, workers’ rights, animal welfare, access to land and waste are all part of the food system and that a systems-wide approach is essential to protecting everyone’s right to food and making sure the Government keeps its promises. They would also provide the expertise needed to achieve our ambitious Good Food Nation vision.

More detail you may want to include:

The food system is complicated and made up of many parts of Government, as well as individuals and companies. Everyone involved in the food system has different goals and priorities, and at the moment, we do not have a full view of how well the problems facing the food system are being tackled.

We need an independent organisation which is not the Government to look at and ask questions about the Government’s plans, provide guidance, gather evidence, and report on how well the Government is delivering on its plan.

This is not a new idea.

Other important laws have included setting up independent statutory bodies to make sure the Government is delivering its promises. For example, the Scottish Land Commission was set-up by the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2016. It has the power to review the impact and effectiveness of any Government plans on ownership of land and land rights, recommend changes to these plans and to provide information and guidance. The Poverty and Inequality Commission is another good example. It was set up by the Child Poverty (Scotland) Act 2017 to provide independent advice to Government on reducing poverty and inequality in Scotland and to examine progress that is being made. Food is important and complex enough to need a commission like these.

4. To what extent do you agree with the proposal for targeted legislation relevant to specific policy areas as an alternative to a single piece of legislation?

What is this question about?

This question is about the type of law we need to transform the food system, but it's not written clearly.

'Targeted legislation' means laws that are focussed on specific issues, like health or education. There are a lot of laws like this now that include some parts about food, but they do not need to relate to each other. The 'single piece of legislation' they are talking about in this question is what is sometimes called 'framework legislation'. Framework legislation puts important structures in place for how the Government and other public bodies should do their work. If passed, this would also guide how food issues were included in specific ('targeted') laws about things like health and education.

How you might want to answer:

Neither agree nor disagree

The Good Food Nation Bill should be framework legislation. It is important to get the framework legislation right, so it does a good job of guiding targeted legislation in the future. Framework legislation needs to have a strong commitment to addressing the problems of across the whole food system, from farm to fork to waste. This includes establishing the right to food, so all future targeted legislation takes full account of human rights, tackling the environmental footprint of food, and fairness in the food system for workers, consumers, growers and producers, and livestock.

More detail you may want to include:

Both framework legislation and targeted legislation are required to realise the Good Food Nation ambition, and they should work together and strengthen each other. Framework legislation is also needed to set up the principles, structures and guidelines that shape the whole food system.

Targeted legislation will, following the guidelines set out in the framework legislation, tackle specific issues like reduction of food waste or recycling.

This is not a new idea; the Scottish Government has supported system-wide approaches before: they signed up to the UN's Sustainability Development Goals (SDGs) in 2015. The SDGs are a set of 17 goals that provide a plan to address global challenges related to poverty, inequality, climate, environmental degradation, peace and justice. The SDGs are connected to make sure no one is left behind and the approach to tackling issues is joined-up.

The Good Food Nation Bill should also include statutory targets to drive change in key areas, like the targets in the Climate Change Act. We believe targets should include:

- Halving of moderate to severe household food insecurity by 2030
- Halving childhood and adult obesity by 2030
- Halving the environmental impact of the food system, including halving food waste by 2030
- All workers in the food sector paid at least the living wage and included in collective bargaining agreements by 2025

KEY WORDS:

- **Ministers** are the leaders of each Government department – as a group, they are called ‘the Government’.
- **Public authorities** are agencies and organisations that deliver public services, like local councils and NHS health boards.
- **Statements of policy** are plans that the Government and other public authorities would make to help guide their decision-making for a set period of time (for example, 5 years).
- **Sectors** are parts of society.
- **Independent statutory body** means an organisation established by legislation with specific duties and responsibilities in relation to an area of policy.
- **Statutory targets** are targets that the Government is required by law to meet.