

Scottish Food Coalition

Scottish Parliament Elections 2021

Policy Asks

Scottish
Food
Coalition

Our food system is facing existential challenges and these challenges impact all people across Scotland. It is essential for policy-makers and legislators to take an inclusive, whole-society approach to tackling these urgent problems. A socially and environmentally just food system depends on the engagement and coordination of all levels of Government. Local authorities have played a vital role in delivering the localised responses to the COVID-19 pandemic; they should continue to be supported to ensure their service provision supports affordable access to healthy, sustainable diets. In developing our food system in Scotland, we need a strong focus on equity across gender, race, religion or belief, disability and age; and equity in nutritional health and access to land.

The **Scottish Food Coalition (SFC)** asks all parties to consider the key role that far-reaching reform to the food system and becoming a Good Food Nation would have in securing a more resilient Scottish economy while delivering on their social and environmental priorities. This election briefing outlines our vision and our headline policy asks for the next Parliament. It sets out how effective food policy is fundamental to the delivery of the best possible outcomes for our land, seas, communities and people in Scotland.



1. Introduce a comprehensive Good Food Nation Bill in the first year of this parliamentary term

Whilst it is encouraging that the Scottish Government has recently committed to developing a Statement of Policy on Food, we believe the Government must introduce framework legislation on the food system in the first parliamentary term to establish the core purpose of our food system in law. This legislation must outline accompanying systems of governance that ensure progress and accountability to catalyse a transformation in how our food system works. The legislation must take a whole system approach and create a coherent framework which ensures people's fundamental human rights and the wellbeing of our nature and environment are protected and promoted today and into the future.

Policy recommendations

Introduce a Good Food Nation Bill which:

Incorporates the human right to food into Scots Law: placing the responsibility on the State to ensure everyone has dignified access to nutritious and sustainably produced food which supports producers with fair compensation, safe working conditions and access to land and markets.

Establishes an independent Scottish Food Commission to scrutinise relevant policies, report on the state of the food system against agreed indicators, and ensure coherence in decision-making across the Government. The commission would facilitate public participation in food policy and be charged with overseeing a democratic and rights-based approach to food policy and governance.

Places a statutory requirement for Ministers to produce a National Food Plan every five years. This plan should be agreed across Ministerial departments and widely consulted upon with key stakeholders in the food system, including producers, civil society, young people and people with lived experience of food insecurity. This would ensure effective action through strategic joined-up policy making. The plan should be underpinned by the right to food and link to the National Performance Framework and UN Sustainable Development Goals. The National Food Plan should ensure a thorough

consultation process, at least as inclusive and comprehensive as the consultation undertaken in development of England's National Food Strategy. Furthermore, the National Food Plan should seek to be as cross-cutting and holistic as the EU Farm to Fork Strategy.

Places duties on Local Authorities:

Statutory duties should extend to local authorities, health boards and other public bodies requiring those bodies to adhere to the right to food framework and incorporate the priorities established in the National Food Plan into their strategic decision-making, planning considerations and service provision to ensure all available levers are used to support this systemic change.

Set specific programmatic measures and statutory targets

to stimulate immediate action to tackle pressing issues. These must be aligned with the National Performance Framework and the Sustainable Development Goals:

- All food sector workers paid at least the real living wage by 2025
- Halving the environmental impact of the food system by 2030
- Halving household food insecurity within this Parliament by 2025
- Halving childhood obesity by 2030

2. Ensure the food system supports everyone to achieve dietary goals

Policy recommendations

Restrict the marketing, promotion and advertising of foods high in fat, sugar and salt and provide support to enable the marketing, advertising and sales of healthy foods.

Add a new National Indicator to the National Performance Framework to measure progress on affordable access to healthy, sustainable diet.

Improve the out-of-home food environment by regulating or limiting access to unhealthy food through improved planning and registration arrangements. This will help reduce existing inequities and ensure the food environment promotes access to affordable, nutritious food for everyone.

3. Ensure workers in the food sector are recognised and fairly compensated

Working in the food and farming sector should be rewarding – returning fair wages for workers and fair prices for producers whilst enjoying good workplace conditions. This will attract more domestic labour and increase the self-sufficiency and resilience of our food sector.

Policy recommendations

Regulate precarious employment practices and ensure that all workers are aware of and feel empowered to exercise their rights in full.

Ensure access to safe and dignified working conditions for all food workers, farm and croft workers – including migrant labourers and those engaged in more informal or seasonal work.

End zero-hours contracts.

Set minimum requirements for all public tenders to be awarded to businesses which are living wage employers and / or adhere to union negotiated rates of pay - including those negotiated through the Scottish Agricultural Wages Board.

4. Public subsidy spending in the food system should be prioritised for delivering public good

Food systems – agriculture, fishing, processing, wholesale, retail and eating out – all benefit from public subsidy. As we seek to recover from the COVID-19 pandemic, some sectors will need help to rebound, and the overall amount of support available will have to be constrained due to public debt and limitations to the Scottish Government’s borrowing powers. Therefore, it is vital that the amount of subsidy – whether grants, tax reliefs, or other financial stimuli – is used in a targeted way that will support attainment of human health, nature and climate goals.

Policy recommendations

Ensure public kitchens lead by example, serving healthy, sustainable menus in our schools, hospitals, care homes, prisons and government buildings.

Invest in the widespread adoption of greener farming techniques like organics, agro-forestry or agro-ecology, as defined by the UN Food and Agriculture Organisation

5. Pivot towards the local food economy and short supply chains

There are opportunities for Scottish businesses to capture more of the £20bn spend in Scotland’s food economy and the £220bn spend in the UK - not by competing on price but by competing on sustainability, fairness, animal welfare and health. We must take a local wealth building approach to the economic impact of food.

The local food sector can strengthen the Scottish economy through: supporting new micro-businesses and SMEs; attracting tourism; and retaining higher profit margins for local food businesses by connecting directly with consumers. Increasing local spending leads to a “multiplier effect” - an increase in income from additional rounds of spending. Other benefits include: greater food security through building a resilient, and self-sufficient food system; more local and diverse jobs, particularly in rural areas; food waste reduction through shorter supply chains; improved environmental performance, particularly on smaller farms, through agroecology or organics; and improved animal welfare through less intensive systems on smaller farms and elimination of live transport.

Policy recommendations

Establish a local food development fund designed to strengthen the local food economy and create new jobs in local food. It would be built in partnership with producers, food businesses and communities to, for example, enable community land ownership and connect urban populations with Scottish rural producers.

Strengthen transparency and accountability in the local planning system to enhance the vitality and diversity of town centres and safeguard land for growing food. Individuals must be empowered to be involved in planning decisions which affect their community. Transparency and accountability must be given a greater focus in the planning system to ensure that decisions better serve the wellbeing of the local food economy and promote access to a sustainable and healthy diet.

Make prime spots available in town and city centres to facilitate farmers’ markets, drop-off points for buying groups and other models for supporting and facilitating short food supply chains, increasing public awareness of local producers, and outlining a strong commitment to all food offers in public services being nutritious, sustainable and supporting local food economies.

Break down public procurement food tenders to a more manageable size thus enabling many more domestic businesses to compete. Use public procurement to drive up social and environmental standards and provide a secure market for agro-ecological food production.

6. Ensure public policy promotes welfare of animals and the natural world

We need to ensure our public policy does not overlook the importance of looking after animal wellbeing – both in the wider ecosystem and on our farms. Raising animal welfare standards is an ethical imperative and crucially, it is important for safeguarding human health. Better product labelling would provide consumers with the information they deserve, level the playing field for higher welfare products and grow this important market – enabling and encouraging more farmers to shift from focusing on volume to focusing on higher quality production.

Policy recommendations

Ensure future farming policy champions

action for biodiversity, nature, climate and sustainable food production. Agricultural payments must have. Purpose. Public spending should be tied to measures farmers take to deliver nature and climate-friendly farming - encouraging sustainable food production.

Invest in developing higher animal

welfare systems to raise minimum standards, and support farmers and crofters who are already demonstrating high welfare – for example through subsidies. This is both a moral and health imperative. We should treat our animals well and in turn, this will play a role in avoiding human health crises including zoonotic diseases and antibiotic resistance.

Introduce mandatory method-of-production labelling on all animal

products to raise standards of farm animal welfare as well as providing due recognition and support to farmers and crofters who rear animals under higher welfare production systems.

Ban live animal exports.

End the use of cages, specifically farrowing crates and enriched cages for hens, with a longer term goal of eliminating all intensive animal farming system

7. Ensure international trade contributes to building just, sustainable and healthy food systems at home and abroad

Policy recommendations

Build on Scotland's status as a Fair-

Trade Nation and as a signatory to the UN Sustainable Development Goals, by implementing a 'do no harm' ethical food policy, which requires that the food we import has been produced in ways that are socially and environmentally just, while guaranteeing this for the food that we export.

Call for a robust, democratic and accountable process for scrutinising

and passing trade deals giving Scottish MPs and MSPs a meaningful say on any aspect of a trade deal that impacts on devolved legislation.

Oppose any trade deal that will put downward pressure on Scotland's food,

farming, animal welfare, workers' and environmental standards, or that rejects or undermines the precautionary principle. Oppose any Investor State Dispute Settlement mechanism.

Background

The Scottish Food Coalition is an alliance of small-scale farmers and growers, academics, workers' unions and charities focused on the environment, health, poverty and animal welfare. We know that the challenges facing our food system - including those exacerbated by the COVID-19 crisis - are connected, and we need to work across the whole system to achieve a fair, healthy and sustainable future.

The coalition has over 35 members including RSPB Scotland, WWF Scotland, STUC, UNISON Scotland, Unite, Nourish Scotland, Trussell Trust, Scottish Crofting Federation, Health and Social Care Alliance Scotland, Obesity Action Scotland, Scottish Care and Leith Crops in Pots. <http://www.foodcoalition.scot>

SFC Vision

Scotland's food system has many challenges: poor quality diets and diet-related illnesses; high levels of food waste and rising food insecurity; damage to our environment and our natural eco-systems; and low pay in the workforce and poor working conditions. All of these challenges are urgent and must be addressed to create a resilient food system which also delivers real economic benefit to Scotland and its people. The Scottish Food Coalition is calling for a just transition to a Scottish food system which contributes to everyone's health and wellbeing, values the work to put food on our plates, supports high animal welfare, and sustains our natural resources and environment for generations to come.

We want to see a Scotland where:

1. Food production is fair to people, animals and the planet
 - Our agriculture and fishing systems are resilient and contribute to a more sustainable food system in Scotland. Producers prevent air and water pollution; mitigate climate change and take measures for nature and climate
 - Farmed animals live well and die well - husbandry practices promote healthy and happy lives
 - Workers have safe and fair working conditions, earn at least the real living wage and feel empowered to realise their rights.
 - The food we produce is safe to eat, with minimal pesticides/antibiotics or other chemicals, and nutrition is a priority in food production
2. Healthy and sustainable food is universally accessible:
 - A nutritious and sustainable diet is easily accessible and affordable for everyone
 - The food environment provided by businesses and public kitchens makes it easy for everyone to access a nutritious and sustainable diet
3. Everyone has the opportunity to get involved in influencing the decisions that affect our food system
 - A participatory food system would see that individuals are empowered to get involved in growing food.

Want to know more?

If you would like to discuss the Scottish Food Coalition Manifesto Asks further, please get in touch: stephanie@nourishscotland.org.uk

We hope that you have found this briefing informative, that you will consider action on our recommendations, and that we may count on your support in making Scotland's food system fairer, healthier and more sustainable, whatever the outcome of the election.