CONSULTATION QUESTIONS

1. How important do you think it is that we aim to be a Good Food Nation?

Comments

2. How would we know when we had got there? What would success look like?

Comments

3. Do you agree with the proposed vision? How would you improve it?

Comments

4. How would your life be better? What does being a Good Food Nation mean in your locality?

Comments

5. Are there any other essential steps we need to take before setting out on this journey?

Comments

Do you agree to your response being made available to the public (in Scottish Government library and/or on the Scottish Government web site)?

Please tick as appropriate

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6. How do you think a Food Commission could best help?
7. In what areas should indicators be set to check we are on track towards our goals?

Comments

8. What are your views on the different approaches that could be taken to help us become a Good Food Nation?

Comments

9. Do you agree with the proposed initial focus on:
   • Food in the public sector
   • A children’s food policy
   • Local food
   • Good food choices and
   • Continued economic growth?

Comments

10. Which other areas would you prioritise?

Comments

11. What other steps toward achieving a Good Food Nation would you recommend?

Comments

12. What else should be considered?

Comments
13. What steps do you plan to take to help Scotland on the journey toward becoming a Good Food Nation – in the next month and in the next 12 months?

Comments

14. How did you hear about this Discussion Document?

Comments


Subject: response to consultation on Scotland becoming a Good Food Nation

I would like to respond to the consultation on the ambition for Scotland to become a Good Food Nation. I do so wearing three hats - as a private individual living in the Scottish Borders, as a local Community Councillor (although I stress that I write as an individual and my views are not necessarily those of the Community Council) and as a member of Borders Organic Gardeners, a charity that encourages an organic approach to growing with around 400 members, making it one of the largest such organisations in the UK.

I wholly endorse the ambition for Scotland to become a Good Food Nation, and in particular value the stress placed on sustainability, on helping children and young people understand where their food comes from, and on encouraging people to become more involved with food. My views can be summarised in a few short points:

1. Sustainability is central to organic food production, where organic methods preserve and promote soil health, and are not reliant on highly problematical oil and carbon intensive production methods such as oil-derived pesticides, herbicides and fertilisers. I would therefore wish the Scottish Government to champion organic food production as part of a rich mix of sustainable good food in Scotland. The Soil Association would be an excellent source of professional policy advice and they should be invited by the Scottish Government to act as advisors to develop a long term sustainable programme of soil management and sustainable food production.

2. Secondly, a part of sustainability is the need to reduce food miles, so I welcome the Government's aim to promote local food production and consumption. Examples of good practice would include looking at ways to support farmers to market their products from field to plate, such as supporting local abattoirs; in this context the recent loss of the abattoir in Galashiels has been a backward step and much lamented by local farmers. They now have to take animals to distant abattoirs, with the concomitant increase in suffering for livestock, increase in food miles, increased carbon emissions and a reduction in their ability to market food locally. Would it not be good if local sheep and beef farmers were supported to market their excellent products in their own immediate communities? This would support a greater understanding of where food comes from in local populations, as well as encourage a sense of pride in the excellent produce grown locally.

3. There is no better way for people to understand where their food comes from than growing their own. In particular, allotments are a marvellous way for local people to grow their own vegetables, improve their diet, get exercise, socialise and become more active members of their communities. I would therefore urge the Scottish Government to do all it can to promote the developments of further allotments, as in many localities - for instance in Edinburgh, the West End of Glasgow and Hawick - demand for locally accessible allotments far outstrips their availability. Furthermore, allotment growing allows for the cultivation of often unusual and rare vegetable varieties that are not grown on a commercial scale, thereby increasing genetic sustainability in the face of unpredictable climate change. The counter-charge from many local authorities that they do not have available land needs to be confronted, as often there is perfectly good land available but this has been 'earmarked' for housing or commercial development. It seems absurd that some of our very best land for growing vegetables is increasingly covered with concrete and roads.

4. While fully endorsing the aim to set strict standards for food safety and quality, care needs to be taken to prevent standardisation from disadvantaging the production of good food that does not meet aesthetic standards. For instance, apples can come in all sorts of sizes and colours, but supermarkets only stock those that conform to a very narrow set of aesthetic characters. Most apples do not conform to those standards but are nevertheless safe, healthy, tasty, nutritious and very good to eat. Similarly the need to supply supermarkets with a narrow range of sizes for potatoes can result in much of the crop that does not meet those standards of size being thrown away and wasted.

I very much hope these few comments are seen as helpful.