CONSULTATION QUESTIONS

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

Very!

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

It will be a journey not a destination. Important goals will be that everyone in Scotland has access to enough healthy food, regardless of location, level of income and level in education. That food production in Scotland is environmentally sustainable and financially sustainable for those who are producing it. Scotland should aim to be neither a net importer nor a net exporter of food.

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

I would remove the emphasis on food exports. Exporting and importing large amounts of food is not environmentally sustainable. Reliance on export income creates an industry that has little security - and places a lot of control outside Scotland. In my vision Scotland would be neither a net imports and nor exporter. Whilst it will import and export food - it makes little sense to try and grow pineapples in Scotland for example - this would account for a small minority of foodstuffs. (There should be some kind of measure of balancing different food and drinks ‘sectors’ so, as noted, the massive exports of Whiskey don’t skew any statistics.) As a guiding principle this would help achieve many of the other aims e.g. It makes little sense educating children about local farming when the supermarkets are full of frozen chicken from Brazil. The reason that we should aim for a balance is that what builds a good food nation in Scotland applies equally to the rest of the world. If we are aiming for a situation where the majority of our food is ‘homegrown’ this should be encouraged in other countries. If Scotland, as one of the worlds richest countries with significant political and financial clout uses that to aggressively export our food production it damages other ‘good food nations’ from also growing.

To be economically sustainably good food must be affordable, as well as available, yet producers must be able to make a living from food production. As at present many people are unable to afford any food, let alone good food, and most producers earn very little - it will be a challenge to meet these two outcomes.

It is clear that the food industry needs to be environmentally sustainable - this means massively reducing the reliance on fossil fuel inputs - like oil and fertiliser. It also has to be globally environmentally sustainable i.e. the environmental impacts (including production and transport) of imported foods should also be included in any assessment of the sustainability of Scotland’s food. The plant doesn’t care who, for example, produces the CO2!
4. How would your life be better? What does being a Good Food Nation mean in your locality?

Despite living in a rural area with a history of food production we lack access to any affordable food and very little local food. Food producers survive on grants, exports or other employment producing food just for personal consumption. The rural location means that access to food is limited and costs are high.

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

The Scottish Government needs to confront the vested interests that profit from the current system. These include the big supermarket chains, large agri-businesses, global commodities traders and international oil, fertilizer and seed companies. Whilst I am aware that we are starting from the position we are in, am aware that the Scottish Government will have to work with these interests and am aware that many of these are trans-national corporations, the Scottish Government needs to acknowledges the barriers that these vested interests place in front of Scotland becoming a good food nation on a National (and International) level but also on a local level.

6. How do you think a Food Commission could best help?

Conduct an enquiry into how these vested interests currently hinder the development of a good food nation.

7. In what areas should indicators be set to check we are on track towards our goals?

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

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?
Yes, but the details will be important.
1 - food in the public - in this the proposed vision has much that I would support (yet those same vested interested will also need to be confronted). There is also the issue of funding in the public sector.
2 - children’s food policy. The fact that 200000 (?) children in Scotland still live in poverty would need to be addressed in tandem with the education policies.
3 - Agree. Again it would have to address the financial sustainability for producers. Energy and resources needs also to be invested in alternative crops. This needs to involve education of both consumer and producers as to what crops can return a yield locally - which may include crops that are new to both producers and consumers. Local growers should be funded to trial new crops. (one specific policy could be the removal of barriers to growing hemp as a commercial crop - currently onerous regulation and expensive licenses make growing on a small scale as a trial impossible)
4 - Whilst I would agree with this the above vested interests have as much, if not greater role than the "farmers, fishermen, food processors and producers, public bodies, caterers” mentioned.
5 - Whilst I would support some of this I don’t think a policy of growth for growths sake is a worthwhile aim. As above I indicate the lack of sustainability (both environmentally and economically) of exports which I would reiterate.
The growth, for example, of low cost low quality meat or high fat high salt processed foods may be the easiest way to show a growth in the food sector but would hardly constitute a good food nation.

10. Which other areas would you prioritise?

Environmentally sustainable food production.

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

Recognising that meat consumption is damaging to both health and the environment. It would be inappropriate for the commission to, for example, extol the virtues of vegetarianism, it would be appropriate to educate people of the benefits of producing high quality meat in small quantities rather than consuming large quantities of low cost low quality meat.

12. What else should be considered?

Land ownership - if Scotland is to produce a larger quantity of it’s food land more land needs to be cultivated. Studies have shown that diverse small scale producers provide greater social, economic and environmental benefits than large scale mono-producers. (I can provide links). However current landownership in Scotland makes getting land for small scale production difficult and is a barrier to new producers entering the market. A book could be written on why this is (in fact many have!) but this is an issue the commission should explore alongside the Scottish Governments Land Review Group. (Whether this is “partnership working” or an “holistic approach” I’m not sure but it is eminently sensible!). Different method of production/economics - The commission should ensure it’s net is cast wider than conventional producers and economic systems. Organic production, Permaculture and Forest Gardening should be explored as well as zero-growth economics and local currencies are all ideas that could be explored in order to
promote a Good Food Nation. The overriding question the commission should be asking is why are we not currently living in a good food nation, and challenging the assumptions that underpin the current system would be a good place to start.

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?

Growing more of my own food, reducing meat consumption, getting involved with a local food initiative.

14. How did you hear about this Discussion Document?

Local food initiative/Nourish

Responding to this Consultation Paper

We are inviting written responses to this consultation paper by 17th October 2014. Please send your response with the completed Respondent Information Form (see "Handling your Response" below) to:

goodfoodnation@scotland.gsi.gov.uk

Or by post to:
Good Food Nation
Food and Drink Division
B1 Spur
Saughton House
Edinburgh
EH11 3XD