CONSULTATION QUESTIONS

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

I think it is crucial for several reasons. The economic success of a country is necessarily bound up with the health of the population – a healthy population is fitter, both physically and mentally. It is therefore more able to work happily, efficiently and more productively, to benefit more from educational opportunities, and to help ensure that the population remains fitter and healthier into old age, thus reducing the financial demands on the health and social services. Another reason to be a Good Food Nation is that Scotland is rich in natural resources, such as fertile land, clean air and water, a reasonable climate (most of the time!), and is therefore able to produce a wide range of healthy food, both animal and vegetable. Such food production can provide sustainable nourishment both for the population and for export, which of course provides added economic benefits including substantial employment opportunities. It is now recognised that many of the foods that Scotland at present imports can be successfully produced here: tomatoes, salad crops, peppers, garlic, a wide range of fruits, herbs, etc. etc. Lastly, one of the most important reasons to be a Good Food Nation is to ensure the best possible healthy start in life for our children; this would include greatly increased rates of breast-feeding, (the best possible start in life for babies, as recognised by The World Health Organisation, but with regrettable low rates in Scotland), reduced dependence on processed food when weaning, improved education on healthy eating, ensuring healthy food (and where possible locally sourced) food in nurseries and schools, school gardens, and childrens’ involvement in community gardens. Please also see my answers to some of the questions below, for further comments and suggestions, which will necessarily be repetitive.

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

My long-term criteria for success would include the following:

It would be the norm for every baby, including premature babies, to be breast-fed for at least 6 months, as per the WHO guidelines. All children would be weaned onto a properly balanced, healthy diet, preferably using fresh Scottish produce. Such a diet would continue in nurseries and schools, in conjunction with education, both theoretical and practical, in producing and cooking healthy food. Every family who wished would have the opportunity to produce at least some their own food, either in an allotment or a community garden. Taxes would be levied on mass produced food containing high levels of fat, sugar, salt, and unnecessary pesticides, preservatives, colourings, and
flavourings.
Levels of obesity, both in children and adults, would have declined.
Levels of heart disease, strokes, cancers and digestive disorders would have declined.
There would be a much greater knowledge in the general population, of the benefits of a healthy diet.
Imports of foods that could sustainably and economically be produced in Scotland would have decreased.
Exports of healthy food produced in Scotland would have increased.

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

I agree with the proposed vision, but consider two omissions to be have made. Firstly in disregarding the importance of breast-feeding. Milk is the first food of every child, and the main food for several months. There is an enormous amount of scientific research evidence on the benefits to health of breast-feeding babies, preferably exclusively until the age of 6 months, and thereafter if the mother wishes. These benefits include: fewer infantile infections; less infant and childhood obesity; statistical evidence of reduced blood pressure and heart disease in later life; fewer allergies to various foods; reduced incidence of cancers in mothers who have breastfed their babies. There are also economic and environmental benefits – breastmilk is free, and has no detrimental environmental impact on non-renewal resources. In spite of all these advantages, Scotland has one of the lowest breastfeeding rates in the world.

I would improve this situation by education, in primary and secondary schools; by better training of health professionals; better facilities for breastfeeding mothers who return to work; and if necessary by financial or other incentives to pregnant women, to encourage them to at least try to breastfeed. Breast-feeding should be the norm, as it is in several Scandinavian countries, rather than the exception, as it is at present in Scotland.

Secondly, I can find no mention in the consultation document of food waste. Large quantities of food either produced in Scotland, or imported, are wasted, generally going into landfill with environmental disadvantages. I do recognise the efforts of the Scottish Government to reduce this waste, in particular the efforts made to collect and compost it. A Good Food Nation will produce and use what is required, with minimum waste, and any waste should ideally be composted locally to produce more local food.

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

I am fortunate in being able to say that, in general, my personal life would not be significantly improved. I am able to afford healthy, organic, locally produced food. I have an allotment which, while not ensuring total self-
sufficiency, allows me to grow most of the vegetables and fruit I choose. However, I would welcome the opportunity to buy more locally produced food.

Also, the problems that I have mentioned in previous answers are very evident on my immediate locality. Child and adult obesity, a proliferation of ‘fast-food’ outlets, very low rates of breastfeeding, very few people growing fruit or vegetables. There are now some community gardens, so this may improve. However, demand for local allotments exceeds supply, with little effort by the local authority to meet this demand. I would suggest that the phrase ‘Good Food Nation’ means very little to most people in my locality.

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

Support for local producers; increased provision for allotments; more support for breast-feeding;

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?

Rates of breastfeeding.
Reduction in childhood and adult obesity
Reduction in heart disease, strokes, cancers, digestive diseases
Decrease in unnecessarily imported produce
Increase in sustainably and economically produced Scottish food products.
Reduction in food waste.

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 economic growth should not be at the expense of environmental
10. Which other areas would you prioritise?

See comments on breastfeeding

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

Better provision by local authorities for allotments and training for new plot holders.

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?

Volunteer with community garden; continue to lobby my local authority to provide more allotments;

14. How did you hear about this Discussion Document?

SG Consultation web-site

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:
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If you have any queries please contact Eugenia Christie at 0131 244 9574.

This consultation, and all other Scottish Government consultation exercises, can be viewed online on the consultation web pages of the Scottish Government website at http://www.scotland.gov.uk/consultations.