CONSULTATION RESPONSE

I see a fundamental contradiction in this paper based on the lack of a coherent definition of sustainability, the context in which much of the paper has been cast (and indeed the paper itself recognizes a confusion over the use of the word and its implications). It deals with economic sustainability and refers to environmental sustainability, and one might take the aim of improving diet as an aspect of social sustainability, but these are in conflict within the paper.

Page 24 (on Continued Economic Growth) contains these three paragraphs (amongst others) when referring to steps that need to be taken:

- Implementing the new, more ambitious export strategy developed in partnership with the industry, including new dedicated resources overseas.

- Ensuring that the exciting new market opportunities feed through to confidence in primary production, especially beef, dairy, poultry, and seafood. This will include the implementation of an ambitious beef improvement scheme, designed to secure a sustainable future for Scotland’s beef sector following reform of the Common Agricultural Policy.

- Strengthening the local food economy and shortening supply chains.

The intention to expand exports to more diverse parts of the world is in exact contradiction to the aim of encouraging local production and shortening supply chains. Increased exports means increased food and drink miles for consumers abroad, whilst we in Scotland wish to reduce the food miles associated with the food that we consume. Sauce that is good for the goose should also be good for the gander. “Up exports” may be good for the Scottish economy but it will not be good for the environment. This is like riding two horses at once that are moving in opposite directions, and undermines the strength of argument throughout the document.

There is another fundamental problem for Scotland in the dominance of livestock production in its agriculture. Ruminants are very bad news environmentally because of their methane emissions; and only animal production systems based on grass alone or the use of by-products or arable wastes can realistically even start to be considered sustainable in the long term. All livestock-consumed arable crops are ultimately in competition with direct human food production. That is a double challenge to the pretence that Scottish livestock production is anything like sustainable.

The problem of malnutrition in Scotland is real and needs urgent attention. There is an integral link between food and nutrition – but not necessarily between drink and nutrition. The paper recognizes the dominant position in the food and drink economy of the whisky industry, yet this has no relevance at all to meeting the challenge of poor diet amongst so many Scots. Much in the paper about inculcating food and nutrition sense into children, getting publicly funded institutions to lead the way in a nutritious food revolution, and “eating local” seem entirely sensible, but all of that sits uncomfortably with the drive for increased production and export for economic gain. The rise of the Scottish cold-pressed rape seed oil brands may be good for the economy and have implications for olive oil
consumption here, but no-one surely expects the chips in schools and hospitals to be cooked in these locally produced oils. They are far too expensive!

My feeling is that this paper simply does not hang together because the brand banner “Good Food Nation” is embracing patently conflicting objectives without reaching any resolution.

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

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.

The Scottish Government has an email alert system for consultations, http://register.scotland.gov.uk. This system allows stakeholder individuals and organisations to register and receive a weekly email containing details of all new consultations (including web links). It complements, but in no way replaces Scottish Government distribution lists, and is designed to allow stakeholders to keep up to date with all Scottish Government consultation activity, and therefore be alerted at the earliest opportunity to those of most interest. We would encourage you to register.

Handling your response
We need to know how you wish your response to be handled and, in particular, whether you are happy for your response to be made public. Please complete and return the Respondent Information Form which forms part of the consultation questionnaire attached an annex as this will ensure that we treat your response appropriately. If you ask for your response not to be published we will regard it as confidential, and we will treat it accordingly.