CONSULTATION QUESTIONS

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

Very important. Scotland is a land of contrasts. The romantic deserted Highlands provides the backdrop for its traditional foods which celebrate a bygone era – whisky, shortbread, haggis.

The urban centres are a world away from natural food production. The urban notion of food is convenience foods – pizzas, curries, pies, sausages, confectionery, crisps and pop – which fed an industrial culture that is also but a memory. Except for the legacies of alcohol abuse and over-indulgence of high sugar, fat and salt based foods which the lifestyle no longer requires.

Our food system is in many ways broken being dependent on industrial farming & external processing & retailing interests and the health of our citizens is worsening. To learn from France, a vibrant food culture has to protect the localness of food processing, food retailing (and banking) or it risks its loss. We are needing to rebuild that culture from the ground up and no less than a revolution will suffice.

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

Local SME food & drink companies selling locally in great number and quantity. And not just easily sourced products such as meat and eggs but also prepared convenience products.

Our story is of a healthy modestly priced Scottish berry juice designed for schools and with a marketing plan to engage with schools and local authorities and their suppliers. The response has been apathetic and shows a lack of understanding of the gains to be had and that to change behaviour of children then substantial time and effort in educational terms is required. The ball is firmly back in our court to come up with an advertising budget to guarantee sales. While funding might be possible from various sources (albeit difficult to justify with respect to the ROI from this venture) standard above the line advertising is not likely to have much impact on this audience. Instead a pioneering social media plan over a significant period is required before our product may be permitted in front of children. Most companies would just say too difficult.

Our basic premise is that it makes no sense to import inferior juice concentrate based drinks for a market which needs both the dietary vitamin and micronutrient benefits offered by Scottish berry juices and needs to reduce the calories it derives from soft drinks.

We need several things to change:
Local authorities & their suppliers need an incentive to change their attitude. Currently lip service is shown to the healthy local alternatives. Staff at local authorities are also in dire need of education about food, health and local
economies. The approach should be to work together on products which increase the amount of fruit & vegetables consumed by children. Education of children needs to work hand in hand with local companies so benefits are understood. This is a prerequisite to a change in behaviour & attitudes. Ditto the NHS of which we have a similar experience. Lack of investment of time and resource to making it happen with local companies.

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

I agree with the vision. I would improve it by changing the emphasis on exports. Exports are mentioned too early in the vision. They are a good by-product of success in changing Scotland. Exports are a not very sustainable aspect of food culture despite their value in growing the industry. Also it hardly befits a healthy product to be trying to export when home sales are poor.

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

Success for our business in supplying good food to more customers. In our locality we want more successful businesses adding value to our great produce. At the moment the quantum of innovation and quality in meeting class-neutral demand for fruit & veg products is mediocre.

Beware of over playing the supermarkets role in supplying local food. It is generally PR nonsense when their true interests are shareholders.

A recent market survey revealed that 5 energy drinks were launched in Scotland aimed at teenagers in the last 2 years. While we have the recent finding that an increase in iron deficiency among teenage girls could be linked to the energy drinks they consume. This is dangerous social change.

We also seek greater investment in our berry raw material. The processing market potential remains huge on the back of the reputation for flavour of Scottish raspberries, both at home and in England.

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

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

1. Secure much higher levels of investment in produce marketing and research & development so as to develop higher value added and better paid jobs within agriculture and food processing.
2. Procure harm reduction proposals from supermarkets. There is a view that the losses from our communities have been greater than the benefits brought by centralised distribution operators such as supermarkets and fast food operators. The decimation of the local food sector is a disaster for our health, for the economy and for the environment. To try to redress some of the losses, can we ask them to

- ensure all fresh food and processed food produced in Scotland is not sent to depots south of the border only to be distributed back into Scottish stores.

- our junk food diets are overwhelmingly to do with the trend to convenience products with high fat, sugar and salt content which line the shelves of supermarkets eg breakfast cereals, ready meals and snacks, soft drinks and confectionery. Why not take a ‘harm reduction’ approach (as per cigarettes) and have the layout, merchandising and promotion of supermarkets altered to encourage quality meal planning/ healthy food choices? Hence to reduce visibility of junk/valueless products (to a healthy diet) and increase access to healthy products.

- The tax system could be used to encourage purchase of healthy products using the FSA’s model which attributes points according to fat sugar and salt levels. You could ask the supermarkets to price or promote to these guidelines?

- Healthy local products invariably find dealing with supermarkets difficult not because of the often quoted health and safety requirements but because brand for brand, the local brand will not have the salience or marketing resources to create awareness and trial; the local brand will be consigned to a small presence with real difficulty in encouraging trial and building a sales rate which matches the mass market competitor (an unrealistic aspiration anyway). This works against the natural order of allowing valuable products reach their market and DISCOURAGES NEW PRODUCT AND BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT IN SCOTLAND.

- This is not beyond the wit of the supermarket operators to fix; it is just they don’t give it priority. They will point to regional successes such as commodity alternatives in meat, processed meats, fish etc but not in these unhealthy categories mentioned. Before the days of supermarket dominance and the demise of the large number of independent shops and chains it was possible for regional brands to build loyalty with its customer base before making the transition to national distribution.

- If stores really want local products why not work with local companies to fill a fixture where local producers take 75% of the consumer price?
7. In what areas should indicators be set to check we are on track towards our goals?

- Fruit (including berry) & veg consumption
- New products launched meeting guidelines of food charter/non HFSS
- Measure how changed is the local food industry (new companies, access/availability, less fat/sugar consumed)
- We reckon that there is much over claiming about the amount of products of Scottish origin sold in Scottish supermarkets. The government needs an annual survey to check this out

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

I agree about the celebration and education approach since too much stick is self-defeating with consumers. However woolly guidelines are no use for local authorities and NHS. Food education is crucial for community decision makers and leaders of change

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

10. Which other areas would you prioritise?

Add to these: fruit & veg sector, pregnant and nursing mothers, key meal occasions such as breakfast & lunch and the attitudes of staff in education, local authorities, NHS, sport so that they practice what they preach

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

- Use of demonstration projects to show how change can be made to happen For example to change health outcome through dietary change.
- Dedicate resource to enabling fruit & veg sector to encourage greater collaboration between growers, processors and routes to market to capitalise on new product & market development opportunities.

12. What else should be considered?

Quango aggregation (pool cash from councils, SE, SDI, SAOS, SF&D, etc)
etc.; broad fruit & veg promotion, subsidize/tax healthy/unhealthy foods; train lay leaders of change/engagement within local communities

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?

Next 12 months- We would like to demonstrate the ability to change behaviour of consuming inferior imported products to that of better quality Scottish products in a key target group- teenagers. Next month- I aim to become a lay leader of change by speaking to children in local schools.

14. How did you hear about this Discussion Document?

Was at the launch.

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.