CONSULTATION QUESTIONS

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

Health Scotland welcomes the Scottish Government’s discussion paper *Recipe for Success: Scotland’s National Food & Drink Policy – Becoming a Good Food Nation*. It is good to see food recognised as a catalyst for transformational change in individuals, communities and the country as a whole. It is essential that the diet of the Scottish population improves for the future health and wellbeing of the Scottish population and note the importance of this to the economy. We recognise the complexity and multifaceted nature of this as stated in *The Review of the Scottish Diet Action Plan Progress & Impacts 1996–2005*:

‘If Scotland’s diet and food culture is to change, the quality and nutritional value of the food grown, processed, retailed and catered in Scotland will have to alter. The ‘push’, as well as ‘pull’, will have to change so that all parties – state, supply chain and civil society – are moving in the same direction.’

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

Health Scotland would wish to see improved health outcomes across the social gradient in Scotland; these are directly related to diet and nutrition across the life course. We would therefore consider that the development of an outcomes framework for this policy linked to the national outcomes is an important area for monitoring and informing progress. Health Scotland would welcome the opportunity to contribute to an outcomes framework and the identification of indicators for monitoring the success of the policy. We would suggest that information collected should be compared against other countries.

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

Health Scotland agrees with the vision set out in the document and is committed to supporting the identified actions within the vision.

Developing a shared understanding of what ‘good’ food means to all the sectors who will contribute to the success of this policy is vital. All areas
within the document are important to achieving a Good Food Nation, ensuring that each area takes account of its impact on other areas will be important in ensuring the vision is achieved.

We would welcome more recognition of the potential of food in improving wellbeing outcomes, and the critical importance of early years nutrition for lifelong health as well as for short term impact on overweight in children. References to health seem to focus on ill health, and are problem oriented and individualistic. The use of broader definitions of health to include the wider social determinants at both national and local levels would be helpful - for example addressing more of the dimensions that a good food community would require such as adequate retailing, food banks, allotments and lunch clubs.

The vision would also benefit from greater clarity around what is meant by ‘local’ and by ‘community’. A genuine enthusiasm for work in the most vulnerable communities comes across as being about local produce. Whilst many of the best food co-ops and community cafes source local produce it is not all they sell and it is not all they do. The impact of community food initiatives on everything from income maximisation to building individual confidence and community cohesion comes over as being of secondary importance to the origins of the produce.

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

Health Scotland would wish to see communities across Scotland where people have access to affordable, nutritious food which supports a reduction in health inequalities and the improvement of health outcomes for the Scottish population.

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

Engagement with stakeholders is essential and good practice should be harnessed and shared from the outset. Community Planning Partnerships and Local Authorities are already involved with local food policies and should be further utilised. Health Scotland’s Food and Health Alliance is ideally placed to offer support for this.

Health Scotland would strongly recommend a commitment to a Health Inequalities Impact Assessment of Becoming a Good Food Nation to reduce health inequalities and improve health.

Action to achieve a good food nation cuts across many sectors and policies
and it may be productive to review the links, for example in looking at health, we would draw attention to Supporting Healthy Choices and policies on maternal and infant nutrition, obesity and alcohol.

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

A Food Commission should be well placed to identify, drive and review key areas for action and to oversee an outcomes based approach to achieving the vision. It could play a role in brokering action across diverse sectors and it may be helpful to utilise the experience of the Framework Convention on Tobacco Control in this regard.

The Commission will benefit from a membership that reflects all the key stakeholders. Individual members should be responsible for championing the policy within their sector. Health Scotland’s Food and Health Alliance, Healthy Living Award and Community Food & Health Scotland are well placed to support the Food Commission in linking across sectors and with communities.

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

Evidence based indicators should be identified in all the areas of action within the document so that the policy can be effectively monitored and reviewed. NHS Health Scotland can assist in identifying health and wellbeing indicators.

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

Food is a multi-layered issue and a variety of approaches are required at individual, environmental and societal levels to achieve the vision. An outcomes focused framework would help achieve this.

We would recommend a life course approach starting before birth. Infancy and early years are an important time to establish eating patterns for the future and this should be prioritised.

We would also support taking an assets based approach within communities to support local action.
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?

An initial focus is valuable in taking the vision forwards and the public sector has a key exemplar role in the procurement, provision and promotion of healthy food.

A children’s food policy or charter has the potential to both have lifelong impact and increase public awareness and understanding of good food choices. This should include a review of the promotion of food to young children with a view to introducing regulation if necessary.

Continued economic growth is dependent on a healthy workforce, and this in turn depends on a healthy diet throughout the life course.

10. Which other areas would you prioritise?

We would encourage the recognition and development of existing work within localities and the role of local food systems to ensure effective and sustained local action.

The WHO has recently recommended revising downwards the recommended amount of free sugars from 10% of daily energy intake to 5%. Effective ways of achieving this and increasing public understanding this should be investigated

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

We recommend consideration of further work on public understanding.

12. What else should be considered?

It may be valuable to consider if the production of key healthy foods (such as fruit and vegetables) can be increased to contribute to economic growth and local sufficiency.
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?

NHS Health Scotland will continue to prioritise work on food and health in relation to reducing health inequalities. We work in partnership, for example with the FSAS and the Rowett Institute on evidence, messages and outcomes. Key areas of work in this financial year are:

- Community Food and Health Scotland
- Healthy Living Award
- The Scottish Grocer’s Federation Healthy Living Programme
- The Healthier Scotland Cooking Bus
- The Food and Health Alliance
- Direct support to groups such as the NHS Public Health Nutritionist group and the Scottish Infant Feeding Advisors
- Supporting the implementation of “Setting the Table: Nutritional guidance and food standards for early years childcare providers in Scotland”
- Supporting the development of the new guidance on children’s menus

14. How did you hear about this Discussion Document?

Health Scotland staff attended the launch of the Discussion document and were circulated with the website link.

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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