CONSULTATION QUESTIONS

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

Very important: few people would argue against the objective of becoming a ‘Good Food Nation’. However, there needs to be both greater consensus and clarity about what is ‘good’ and what constitutes ‘food’. Although the document later acknowledges consensus over key concept areas, an early focus on what this phrase means would help to clarify its objectives.

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

In overall terms, a future scenario describing what success would look like is set out in the findings of the Nourish Scotland Conference of 2013. (Part 1: Food in Scotland 2023). As food production and land use are closely interlinked, it is likely that changes in land use would have come about to support the success of the Good Food Nation vision. In getting to this point, those longer term changes advocated by the Land Use Strategy, the findings of the Land Reform Review Group and the policies underpinning food and drink in Scotland would have become more closely aligned with each other.

As the Land Use Strategy is a requirement of the Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009, a particular success from the perspective of the Land Use Strategy pilot would be a reduction in the greenhouse gas emissions arising from agriculture.

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

The vision is robust in many ways. However, there is too much focus (both here and throughout the document) on individuals as passive consumers, rather than actively engaged citizens. Food is as much about communities and their active engagement with the land, and the public benefits of food production, as about industry and exports. It is suggested that reference be made to improving peoples’ accessibility to land to grow food, and to the potential to create more diverse regional food economies. So, key words missing from the vision are:

Access            Choice         Communities          Land                Resilience

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

In the area covered by the LUS Regional Pilot – Aberdeenshire – being a Good Food Nation would be likely to include (among other factors) a strong network of regional food hubs; a lack of food banks; a healthier population, with an improved understanding of food; as well as a reversal of biodiversity loss, a reduction in greenhouse gas emissions and improved soil and water quality.
5. Are there any other essential steps we need to take before setting out on this journey?

Yes, achieving consensus around the term ‘good food’ is a prerequisite. If this proves impossible, as it may, then perhaps the badge should be changed for credibility. Perhaps ‘A Healthier Scotland’ would be an alternative starting point – since, if the health of our country is the starting point, ‘good food’ could be identified from the priorities identified for achieving environmental and human health.

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

A Food Commission could best help if members were drawn from across different sectors, with transparency of appointments and discussions. A clarity on behalf of the Commission and the public as to who or what they report to is key, as is support in the form of budget and staff.

An early focus on the early alignment of policy goals across government would be helpful.

While the Food Commission should be pivotal in driving forward a change in food culture, there should be an acknowledgement at all levels that government itself cannot bring this about: it is very much up to communities and individuals.

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

Without wishing to over complicate the work of the Food Commission, it would seem that the Environmental Assessment (Scotland) Act 2005 is likely to require any strategy under the banner of food and drink to consider the impact of its production on the following: Air, Water, Climate, Soil, Biodiversity, Landscape, Material Assets, Population, Human Health and Cultural Heritage. It would appear that most of the benefits or disbenefits arising from food production, could be grouped under these areas; perhaps indicators could be linked to the SEA process, without inventing any parallel strands of work.

GDP should not be an indicator. This is likely to have contributed to a mistaken understanding of ‘success’ in the food sector in the past. There is scope under the ‘material assets’ of the SEA process to record improvements in the economy.

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

CommentsCelebrating all that is good and exciting about our food is a
positive starting point. However, some caution is needed in guarding against aggressive advertising from dominant suppliers – even for ‘good’ products - which tends to undermine individual and community awareness of the choice and availability of local products. The reference to ‘reformulation marketing’ is poorly understood, but if it means potential marketing of ‘common good’ products – their benefits and availability – then that may be one option e.g in communities around the Hudson Bay, Canada, posters encourage people to ‘drink water’ (not bottled water!). This is because of the obvious external costs of dealing with plastic bottles in a remote, pristine environment – not to mention those of addressing tooth decay and obesity in remote areas. Arguably, those costs are also high in Scotland – just not as visible; yet here there is little counter balance to the dominant advertising narrative of processed and packaged products, often high in food miles.

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, in broad terms – providing there could be a rebalancing of the type of economic growth, towards the growth of smaller and more diverse producers, offering shorter supply chain options. To date, there seems to have been an over emphasis on food and drink as export commodities, whilst we fail to provide for our own population. As a small country, with aspirations towards greater control of our own affairs, this needs to be addressed as a priority.

10. Which other areas would you prioritise?

The redirection of public subsidies for agriculture and farming to support the public good.

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

An examination of planning policy to facilitate the building and operation of local covered food markets, or community food hubs. To date, public open space has been identified as greenspace, as well as civic space and water. Perhaps there is an opportunity to think more widely about community infrastructure to support local engagement with food, and food availability. To this end, some re-examination of Permitted Development Rights and possibly Building Regulations may be appropriate, together with any other steps to minimise the ‘red tape’ faced by communities wishing to instigate this kind of facility.

12. What else should be considered?
As above; the resilience of communities to financial and environmental change is a key issue across Scotland, and any credible strategy on food policy can’t really afford to omit reference to this. (See ‘Vision’). The document does make reference to food security; there will be a need to link this to market structures.

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?

Progressing the work of Land Use Strategy Pilot

14. How did you hear about this Discussion Document?

Scottish Government website

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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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.