CONSULTATION QUESTIONS

1. How important do you think it is that we aim to be a Good Food Nation?
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We believe that becoming a Good Food Nation is an absolute imperative and that organisations in the public sector have a vital role to play. As such, we fully support and endorse Scottish Government's ambition in this regard. We believe the public sector has a key role to play in demonstrating leadership with regards to procurement, children’s food and good food choices, and this is a journey, which we have already begun and made significant progress with in our provision of award winning primary school meals. It is critical that we do this in order to address the growing health concerns and the cost to the population and economy.

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

We believe that success will come when people of all ages and from all walks of life have a knowledge of good food the opportunity to eat good food and choose to do so.

When the culture changes. Good food means fresh, minimally processed and sustainable produce which is healthy, seasonal and produced using environmentally sustainable systems (e.g. fish which is Marine Stewardship Council certified, food and drink which is certified, or from lower input farming). Such food, especially if produced in Scotland or nearby, will support the nation’s health, a thriving food industry (with high levels of employment in the sector) and environmental sustainability. It is therefore good for people, places and the planet and will bring significant benefits to Scotland’s economy, its environment and the health and wellbeing of its people.

Within the public sector specifically, we believe there is a key role for school meals to lead by example, serving increasing levels of sustainable, locally sourced, freshly prepared and healthy food to our service users, pupils, staff and other customers as well as taking a lead role - in conjunction with our education colleagues - in developing a positive food culture within a school by linking catering and education. This will in turn help people to make healthy, sustainable choices when using our services as well as encouraging good food choices at home.

We believe success for the public sector centres around three key elements:

1. The nature of food and drink procurement.
   The public sector must have the resources and capability to source
the best of Scotland’s food and drink. This means sustainable, healthy produce that is good for the economy, with significant social and economic returns on the investment made. We recognise that, as set out in the Scottish Government’s Assessment of Regional Cross Sectoral Collaborative Approach (2012)

“… of all the products that the public sector purchases, food is the one that can generate benefits not only to the organisation, but also to society, the economy and the environment. Food is very important to the health of Scotland’s economy but more importantly to the health of its people. Food is different from other products procured by the public sector in that it can deliver additional benefits and therefore should be treated differently.”

By changing what we buy, cook and serve in the public sector we have an enormous opportunity to boost Scotland’s health and wellbeing, our economy and our environment. We believe that, to achieve this, food and drink should be better recognised as being different to other goods and services in terms of procurement policy.

It is different because food is essential for life. It connects all of us to the land and sea which we depend on to produce it. The food system directly impacts biodiversity, soil and water quality, as well as the quality and diversity of jobs through production, processing, retail and foodservice. The food system therefore has a direct impact on the health of people and planet. We have a tremendous opportunity to positively influence this impact but this requires change and support at a national level.

2. The quality and consistency of the service we provide.
Cooks, catering staff and management throughout the public sector must be equipped with the tools they need and trained sufficiently to use those tools to produce high quality meals using the best Scottish ingredients in facilities that are fit for purpose. They should be able to tell consumers about the food and where it comes from, and inspire enjoyment of, and engagement with, the food on the plate.

3. The relationship we establish with those who use our services and eat our food.
There must be trust and understanding from the public in terms of the food we provide. We must become the default option for people when in our care or using our services, because they recognise that, firstly, we all benefit from using Scottish and sustainable produce and, secondly, the quality of the food served is second to none.

To achieve these three key elements of success requires transformative change in public food and drink procurement policy but also the full breadth of national and local policies and activities concerning all aspects of food provision in the public sector - from producers, along the supply chain, into the kitchens and onto peoples’ plates
3. Do you agree with the proposed vision? How would you improve it?

We agree broadly with the proposed vision but would suggest:

- The vision should emphasize as a starting point food produced, served and available in Scotland rather than leading with an economic emphasis on exports.

- Changing “All players in Scottish life – from schools to hospitals, retailers, restaurants and food manufacturers – will be committed to serving such food”
  
  To “All players in Scottish life – from our food producers, suppliers and manufacturers to places that serve food such as nurseries, schools, colleges, universities, hospitals, care homes, retailers, cafes and restaurants, staff canteens and all other food providers in Scotland – will procure and provide sustainable, healthy and local food and be supported to do so through clear national and local policies and related activities. And to ensure that all children are equipped with knowledge and practical skills in basic cookery by the time they leave school”

- Relocate the second sentence, which begins with: “An increase in Scottish food exports…” to the end of the vision. In order to create a Good Food Nation against the backdrop of poor diet, increasing levels of obesity, raft of negative environmental impacts, and disconnection from food highlighted on p 17 of the Discussion Document, there needs to be a break from current perceptions – a re-framing of what good Scottish food is for. The main emphasis must surely be on what we do within our country to produce and consume quality products ourselves, not simply on exporting them for the benefit of others. Whilst an important element of the Vision, the export and overseas enjoyment of Scottish produce must be seen as secondary to building a strong, national food culture.

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

Across our primary schools in Stirling Council we are committed to serving school meals which use:

- freshly prepared food using unprocessed ingredients
- no undesirable food additives, hydrogenated fats or GM ingredients
- meat from farms which satisfy UK farm assurance standards
- eggs from cage free hens
- seasonal produce
• do not contain any endangered fish
• organic milk

In Stirling it also means ensuring a highly skilled, and motivated, workforce who take pride in what they do and where the production of school meals and good food is perceived as being a valued service.

• The challenge is competition on the high street particularly high school sector. Free school meals go a long way to sorting out a lot of this challenge.

Better also means cultural change – knowing and being able to cook

For individuals, it would mean a re-discovery of the wide range of good quality ingredients that can be grown locally; a re-imagining of what products can be combined into healthy, tasty meals; a move away from the emphasis on overseas food as the best eating out experience; easy access to healthy, non-fattening fast food and snacking alternatives; and a renaissance of Scottish cuisine, as has been taking place in some other northern European countries.

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

Consideration should also be given to:
• the fact that Local Authorities are working to improve the health and sustainability of their schools’ food whilst at the same time secondary schools are directly competing with (often unhealthy) food outlets on Scottish high streets. These are growing at a rapid rate

• Schools need to re-introduce at least one year compulsory home economics (cookery skills) for young people, basic but a real issue for generations.

• The budgetary pressures facing local authorities make the provision of good food prepared by skilled staff increasingly difficult. The inequity across Scotland on ticket price is also a challenge – an affordable universal price or free?

• Ensuring a balance within school food provision between providing food that children want to eat and providing food that we as a society agree our children should be eating and educating them sufficiently for them to accept and enjoy that food when it is on offer.

• Engaging parents and pupils across Scotland so they recognise that, school food which meets nutritional guidelines, and certainly if it holds the Soil Association’s Food for Life Catering Mark award, is not only healthy but sustainable and will benefit people, places and our environment.

• How best to maximise the engagement, interaction and joint working
of education teams in schools (and across the local authorities as a whole) with colleagues in catering to ensure a joined up approach to improving food culture and food engagement.

Recognise that we have parents/grandparents now who do not know about food or how to prepare – BIG CHALLENGE!

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

1. By listening to and acting on input from all those on the ground delivering front line services
2. Recommendations from the Food Commission should be heard at the highest levels of government across health, education, procurement and food and drink.
3. A Food Commission should report publicly on a regular basis against clear targets & objectives.
4. By identifying the current state accurately – identifying challenges and being pragmatic and innovative about solutions.

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

We suggest the following areas should be included in a list of indicators, and have offered a non-exhaustive selection of examples within each as to what might specifically be measured:

- **Health and wellbeing** - improving over time including reduced levels of obesity, diabetes, heart disease, cancer. Greater consumption of fruit, vegetables and other nutritious foods such as fresh meat, milk, bread and cheese.

- **Public attitudes and awareness** – e.g. towards fresh, local food - increasing over time.

- **Public procurement** - uptake of Food for Life Catering Mark (which encourages freshly prepared, seasonal food which is free from additives and increasingly local and ethical).

- **Environmental sustainability** – water, land use and emissions reducing over time, greater levels of biodiversity, certified sustainable seafood and reduced waste throughout the supply chain.

**Changes in consumer behaviour** – supermarkets could assist with this to track change in % sales mix for healthier items.
8. What are your views on the different approaches that could be taken to help us become a Good Food Nation?

We believe that becoming a Good Food Nation will necessarily involve multiple activities across many sectors of society.

As a provider of public sector catering we need:

- the resources and strategic backing to enable greater flexibility in the purchase of healthy, local and sustainable produce.
- investment and support to ensure local supply chains have the interest, capacity and infrastructure required to service their local area
- to ensure there is a skilled and motivated workforce
- strong team working across all departments in local and national government.
- High profile campaign to raise awareness amongst general population – hard hitting, appropriate and “out there” fronted by someone influential – celebrity figure?
- Need industry support from restaurants food outlets, shops etc as cultural change will be challenging!
- Could include school meals as part of the school day with no charge?

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?

We believe the focus is correct with the exception of “continued economic growth” which we believe should be changed to: “Sustainable development – aligning, health, social, environmental issues with economic growth.”

10. Which other areas would you prioritise?

Agricultural practices, with an emphasis on low-input production, greater self-sufficiency / food security, and more environmentally benign alternatives to over-stocking in the uplands.

Children’s Policy to incorporate a review of what is sold on the high street and how we get retail sector on board to operate responsibly.
11. What other steps toward achieving a Good Food Nation would you recommend?

Re-introduce Home Economics in schools, make learning practical skills compulsory.

12. What else should be considered?

The fact that we have a huge number of parents, grandparents who do not have knowledge or skills on food and cooking and health and wellbeing correlation and are therefore not passing these down to future generation.

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?

We are working with Food for Life Scotland and have achieved the Soil Association’s Food for Life Catering Mark silver award – the first local authority in Scotland to achieve this.

As well as working to improve food served on the plate, and create a positive food culture in our schools, we are working hard to develop more sustainable supply chains, continuously improve the skills and knowledge of our cooks, deliver positive food education completing the curriculum in a vast array of initiatives, broker positive relationships with school teaching staff and identify where opportunities to influence eating habits through offering advice, support and practical training for children and parents is possible.

In addition to this we are also trialling Food for Life Scotland’s Education and Engagement Framework in nine ‘pathfinder’ schools across Stirling. Working in partnership with Soil Association Scotland we hope this pilot will help deliver a best practice model for linking culture, catering, curriculum and community that will deliver maximum benefits for the people of Stirling and beyond.

Really keen to Find out more about the proposed Food Commission and to get involved.

14. How did you hear about this Discussion Document?

From various sources including email to work address and the Soil Association Scotland.

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