Becoming a Good Food Nation

Response to the Scottish Government’s Consultation Document

The Committee of Orkney Fair Trade Group has discussed the Consultation Document at a recent meeting. We are broadly supportive of the vision, priorities and proposals outlined in the document. However, we are disappointed to note that while there is a reference to “ethical procurement” there is no mention that Scotland is already a “Fair Trade Nation” and that the Scottish Government and Scottish people have a responsibility to consider the sourcing of food imports (which will always remain necessary) as well as the promotion of high quality food exports. The same principles that are seen as important in Scottish food production – quality, sustainability, social and economic impact – should also be applied to our trade with the rest of the world, both in commodities used as ingredients in Scottish food and drink products, and in consumer goods for direct sale.

Orkney Fair Trade Group is keen to support the promotion of local produce alongside imported Fairtrade products, and its major sponsored events in Fairtrade Fortnight this year and at subsequent public events have strongly featured quality local food and the product ranges offered by small Orkney-based businesses, alongside Fairtrade products or using Fairtrade ingredients. Since achieving Fairtrade Zone status in February 2014, we have launched our “Buy Fair and Buy Local” campaign, incorporating this promotion into our logo. In other UK areas, similar partnerships have produced “Local and Fair” trade directories, websites and marketing events.

As NFU Scotland President Jim McLaren said, “NFU Scotland and the Scottish Fair Trade Forum share key common values. We both work to ensure food is produced in a manner that promotes and enhances the sustainability of agriculture and the well-being of families who rely on it. We both want a ‘Fair Deal’ for producers, whether for farmers in Scotland or places like Malawi, (18.08.2013, www.fairtadetowns.org.uk).

In order to change social attitudes and buying habits in the way described so powerfully in the consultation document, it is essential, alongside very concrete and local illustrations and actions, to make connections with a broader vision for the planet, and with Scotland’s place in the world.