CONSULTATION QUESTIONS

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

Comments

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

Comments

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

Comments

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

Comments

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

Comments

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

Comments

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

Comments

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

Comments
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?

Comments

10. Which other areas would you prioritise?

Comments

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

Comments

12. What else should be considered?

Comments

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?

Comments

14. How did you hear about this Discussion Document?

Comments

**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
QMU MSc Gastronomy
Response to ‘Becoming a Good Food Nation’
13th October, 2014
(Contributors: Charlotte Maberly, Ana Tominc, Phil Lyon, Donald Reid, Lois White)

The QMU MSc Gastronomy is the first programme of its kind in the UK. The aim of the programme is to cultivate a fully integrated and holistic understanding of food. We study topics as diverse as economics and agriculture, aesthetics and nutrition, with the aim of illustrating the complexity of something we have vastly oversimplified, commoditised and taken for granted to our, and the planet’s, detriment.

We are very pleased to read the Scottish Government’s newest iteration of the food policy for Scotland, as it signifies this most fundamental, but often misused and misunderstood, part of our lives is being taken seriously.

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to this document. We would be more than happy to expand further on our approaches and understanding.

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

   It is important for every country to tend to the realm of food as an essential component of being a nation that cares for its citizens. For this reason, Scotland should also aim to do so. However, by headlining the phrase ‘Good Food Nation’, there is a risk of identifying food as a discrete issue when, in fact, it is an integral part of what makes a society and nation run well as a whole. We should aim to be a good nation first, and food is fundamental in this.

   The core philosophy of the MSc Gastronomy is that to achieve real success in cultivating positive food culture, and sound food systems, food must be considered holistically and in the context of wider societal, environmental and political issues. Ultimately, a nation confident enough about their food would not need to use a slogan in order to claim such. So, we would say that the principle is sound but the use of this slogan brings the danger of distraction from problems in the underpinning structures and processes of Scottish society.

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

   When being able to eat, enjoy and have ready access to simple, good food – ideally from local sources – is normal, and equally available to everyone in Scotland.
When people will willingly choose to purchase the ingredients of a meal, rather than the processed ready-made version. When people in other countries recognize the high quality of what is on offer and are impressed by how widely accessible it is to the population. UNESCO World Heritage Status would be a convincing statement of excellence in this area.

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

It is hard to disagree with this vision. It conjures a utopian ideal that any country could aspire to. However, we question if this is really tailored to Scotland? Our comment would be that the vision needs to be rendered in terms of concrete achievable targets; that way progress can be readily audited.

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

The study of gastronomy would be widely recognized as crucial in helping communities, and the nation as a whole, to thrive. Within our field, being a GFN would make Scotland an exemplar; a recognized center for progressive thinking and expertise in food, farming and the social, political and economic underpinnings that sustain that excellence.

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

We see the need for substantial research into specific areas of food justice and equality, especially in areas of Scotland where access to good quality food and problematic relationships with food are a known issue. While the Scottish Government’s proposal offers solutions to perceived food problems, little attention is paid to the reasons behind those issues: these may illuminate broader systemic and structural inequalities. Any efforts to change food habits should begin with an attempt at understanding the reasons for that behaviour. Practically, this could be through a systematic review and statement of the existing evidence to underpin the initiative, in conjunction with ongoing data collection from those effected by inequalities in the food system. Such a review would shed light on the challenges that individuals and communities face in their everyday lives and would serve to highlight some of the complex and interrelated social, environmental and psychological factors that underpin Scotland’s food culture. Scottish universities and their researchers are among those best qualified to carry out such research. However, results then need to be politically implemented – preferably on a cross-party basis. This would strengthen the much needed communication between researchers (how and why things are as they are) and politics (what we can do to improve our situation, based on research findings). We endorse the notion of evidence-led political action and intervention to improve lives.

6. How do you think a Food Commission could best help?
We remain critical of the idea of a Food Commission, as it could create vulnerability to vested-interest bias and compromise. However, if it is to be established, then the individuals comprising the Commission must be broadly representative of the nation, including those from poorer backgrounds, rural areas and small-scale agriculture, rather than simply representatives of industry and ‘experts’. The Commission should be considered the ‘custodian of the vision’ and held accountable.

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

Considerable research and monitoring needs to be supported by the Scottish Government into issues such as food deserts (areas where food of adequate quality, variety and nutritional value is not readily available or affordable), public perceptions of food, and the extent of preparation and provisioning skills.

8. **What are your views on the different approaches that could be taken to help us become a good food nation?**

The MSc Gastronomy team believes it is imperative that the government actively supports and collaborates with NGOs, communities and other bodies who are forwarding the aims of this policy in their own right. It is essential that Scotland cultivate a rich and diverse network of groups working to promote a positive food future in whatever way they perceive as being effective for where they are situated. Encouraging growth of such a strong and resilient ‘food movement’ will help place the responsibility and desire for change firmly in the hands of the Scottish people, rather than it being an imposed ‘top down’ action. The approach needs Government support but ownership of the change process needs to be broadly based.

9. **Do you agree with the proposed initial foci outlined?**

We suggest that the priority of continued economic growth be reconsidered, as this is not ultimately sustainable. Perhaps placing value in sufficiency before productivity is something that should be considered.

We are also wary of the ‘children’s food policy’. Taking care of children’s dietary health, culinary skills and food education should be fully integrated into the central principles of food policy. Isolating it makes this important area vulnerable to being commoditized and meaningless – becoming an attractive idea rather than a reality.

We also have observed that the central role played by public sector food providers has been somewhat omitted from the document. Care homes, hospitals, schools, etc. should be expected to uphold the principles and practice of good food on an everyday basis. Supply contracts that facilitate and encourage locally-sourced food materials would help considerably, not only in terms of food quality, but also for the environment. Not everything needs to be locally sourced (nor could it be) but encouraging a much higher proportion of local products is vital. If the public sector can become
an example aspired to, then the private sector must also respond. Given that the Scottish Government has more influence (direct and indirect) over public sector organisations, it seems that this would be an obvious starting point.

10. Which other areas would you prioritize?

First, greater support for research into understanding Scotland’s food situation. Second, cultivating support for broader food education beyond primary and secondary school. People should be able to, and encouraged to, learn about food provision and production in different ways outside of the school system. For example, through community farms and growing projects, or free-to-the-participant cooking lessons.

We would also suggest cultivating a philosophy within the Scottish Government, which acknowledges the need for an interdisciplinary approach to food matters. Adopting a more holistic and collaborative attitude in this (and other) sector(s) will foster a much more democratic and people-led change concerning food issues. This extends to regarding Scotland not as an isolated entity, but fundamentally interlinked with the rest of the UK, the EU and beyond, especially in matters related to food.

11. What other steps towards achieving a GFN would you recommend?

To help support this ambitious initiative, we would be delighted to offer a workshop on the principles of gastronomy to representatives of the Scottish Government if they wished.

13. What steps do you plan to take to help Scotland on the journey to becoming a GFN?

We will continue to develop the MSc Gastronomy, making the subject more widely understood and recognized in Scotland and beyond. We aim to work collaboratively with other educational and community programmes to encourage an interdisciplinary approach to understanding food.

We believe it is imperative that more people are consciously aware of their food, and that food matters cease to be approached in the compartmentalized manner commonly employed across industry and education. Once it is more widely acknowledged that food-related issues are interconnected - as well as implicitly connected with wider political, economic, environmental and social issues, - making positive good food choices in the kitchen, field, factory, or in policy, will become much more practicable.