CONSULTATION QUESTIONS

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

Comments: The text of our response is set out in the attached document which addresses some of the specific questions in the Discussion Document. It also includes some general comment on the matter as a whole which is not limited to particular questions in the Discussion Document.

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?
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?

10. Which other areas would you prioritise?

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

12. What else should be considered?

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?

14. How did you hear about this Discussion Document?

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
SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT DISCUSSION DOCUMENT:
“RECIPE FOR SUCCESS: SCOTLAND'S NATIONAL FOOD &
DRINK POLICY - BECOMING A GOOD FOOD NATION”

Response by the Mission and Ministry Board
of the General Synod of the Scottish Episcopal Church

Background
This response to the above consultation is submitted on behalf of the Mission
and Ministry Board of the General Synod of the Scottish Episcopal Church
(SEC). It has been prepared on the Board's behalf by the Board's Church in
Society Committee. The Church in Society Committee has the role within the
SEC of identifying and discussing areas of current life where the mission of
the Church interacts with current societal issues. The major focus of much of
the Committee's current work relates to issues around poverty including food
poverty. The current consultation thus links to a high priority sector of our
current work. Food is in any case one of the most commonly referenced
topics within Scripture and food issues have long been of major concern to
churches.

Issues within the Good Food Nation Document
One of the members of our group was a member of the Forum whose work
led to the publication of “Recipe for Success”, Scotland’s Food and Drink
Policy. We support the need for this policy to be updated, refreshed and
revisited given the changed circumstances in which Scotland now finds itself.
We are supportive of the views that Scotland as a Nation needs to be able to
feed its people well and that all in our population need to be able to access
fresh, healthy and affordable food. We support the change in policy emphasis
away from exports and economic growth to a wider range of social and
health-related objectives. Linked to what is said in the document we think that
it is important for food to be more highly valued in our society and for the
consumption of food to resume its place as one of the things which binds
families, and communities. We consider that past developments which have
reduced food to a commodity or to a mere source of nutrients have been
detrimental to the development of Food Quality as one of the things for which
Scotland is known.

Responses to the Discussion Questions
Q1 How important do you think that it is that we aim to be a Good Food
Nation?
Food is a frequent and important theme in Scripture. Churches have long
been supportive of the idea that access to enough healthy food should be a
basic right for all in our country.
We would welcome the idea of what it means to be a good food nation being
debated more widely in our society and on an ongoing basis.
We have long seen food as an element in the glue, which holds our
communities together. It is important to the external and internal image of
Scotland that this matter is “got right”. It is important to get this right at every
level and at all points in the system. It matters that we produce quality food in Scotland and that our means of production respect the integrity of creation and our environment. At this time, this means that we need to be aware of the environmental impact of how we produce food, its impact on the release of Greenhouse Gases and the use of fossil fuels. This means that local production and the involvement of people in food production are both important.

Associated with this it is important that all of those in the food chain should be appropriately rewarded for their efforts. Food should be fairly traded. This is important both for the food we import from overseas partners and for the food we produce ourselves.

We have been aware for many years and certainly from the time of the pioneering work done in Aberdeen in the middle of the last century of the links between food, diet and health. We regret that sensitivity to this seems to have been lost and that this has resulted in poor diets for many in our population with associated health implications. Recent changes in incomes have exacerbated these issues for those with the lowest incomes within our society. We note that this was a concern for those who produced “Recipe for Success” and are concerned that the situation has deteriorated rather than improved for many in our society since the publication of the earlier document. Becoming a Good Food Nation requires us to improve access and affordability of food by the poorest in our society. Enabling such access to fresh food may require a rethink of how food is produced and of our supply chains. It matters that ways are found to involve the poorest in our country in this discussion. If we fail to do this, whatever is done will not properly address the issues for that income group. Again this is unfinished business from the previous food policy group who asked for a means of involving the food poor - a request, which it was never possible to meet.

Q2 What would success look like?
Success will not be defined just by simple criteria although some areas within the whole might be documented by factual criteria. This would include the achievement of global carbon targets, health indicators and sales of products with good nutritional profiles such as low sugar and low salt foods. However more important areas will be those harder to document such as an increased awareness in the population of the importance of quality food to a healthy lifestyle. Such awareness will have been engendered at all levels in society not just in primary schools or universities. Success will see more people involved in the food chain producing food in private or in community gardens, more people cooking and preparing food and food becoming a more commonly discussed topic within our society. If food were to become as important to us as it is to communities in some of our European partners such as Italy and France then we would know that we had succeeded.

Q3 How would you improve the proposed vision?
The elements of the vision paint a good picture but seem not to cover a large enough canvas. It is not clear that farming and fresh food production are part of the food vision. They are as much a part of the food chain as any other element. The generate much of the carbon footprint of our foods and so it matters that we have a full “plough to plate” approach in relation to the whole
food chain. The importance of people in the production of food is also underplayed in the definition.

Q5 Steps before beginning the Journey
Food is a permeating element in our society and so it is important that Scottish Government approaches food in a joined up manner. A good food nation solution must involve not just those traditionally involved in food and agriculture policies but also from the beginning those responsible for health, the environment, climate change, social policy and community planning. Getting our food policy right will involve interactions with all of the above as well as it being consistent with the evolving land use strategy.

Q6 Could a food commission help?
If a new food policy is to touch all areas of society it needs to have a way of involving all sectors within society geographically and sociologically. It will need to make use of existing bodies which bring together groups within society. The plans for more local food production and consumption will need to involve organisations that understand “local”. As this is a response from a church it seems appropriate to comment that the churches are one of the last remaining organisations to be present in almost all of our communities and that they have an unparalleled ability to talk to people in our communities. They are still held in respect as honest brokers in testing situations.

In recent years a number of approaches to managing food policy have been tried. The Forum, which produced Recipe for Success was deemed to have been generally successful although the roll-out of its plans seemed to stall. There is however value in having a standing body dealing with these issues.

Q7 In what areas should there be indicators?
See our comments on Q2

Q8 What are your views on different approaches?
See our comments on Q1

Q9 Do you agree with the initial focus?
The topics identified all have merit but fail to prioritise diet and health, the development of alternative means of getting food to market i.e. alternatives to the supermarkets, involving communities in food production and distribution, use of land not currently being used for productive purposes within cities for food production even on a temporary basis and innovative means of developing a food culture.

Q10 Which other areas would you prioritise?
See our comments on Q1 and Q9

Q13 What steps do you plan to take?
Churches have worked to maintain food as an issue being discussed. The Scottish Churches Rural Group published an analysis of how we saw food issues in Rural Theology in 2012 (Atkinson D et al (2012) Food Security: A churches together approach. Rural Theology 10, 27-42). This work is ongoing. Recently we have partnered with the Environmental Charity Eco-
Congregation Scotland to produce a document to help church and other groups discuss food issues: “Why Worry about Food?” This was launched at the Highland Show in 2014. During recent years some of our churches have been part of schemes to allow those needing food to take advantage of surplus vegetables from allotments and gardens. We are keen to see this extended to benefit many of those who currently make use of conventional food banks, which are supported by church communities across the country.

15 October 2014