CONSULTATION QUESTIONS

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

   In the area of Greater Pilton, Edinburgh (Drylaw, Muirhouse, Royston Wardieburn, West Granton and West Pilton) participants in the Food for Thought Forum are already working towards our own vision where food is a right and a essential part of our thriving community.

   This response has been prepared by Pilton Community Health Project on behalf of the Food for Thought Forum. The Forum exists to bring together community food and growing initiatives, organisations, projects and individuals within the area of Greater Pilton, Edinburgh; and to support, promote, link and increase local community food activity.

   Representatives from Granton Community Gardeners, Pilton Community Gardeners, Pilton Equalities Project, Edinburgh Community Food and Pilton Community Health Project took part in a discussion that informs this response.

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

   The Food for Thought Forum’s vision is

   We believe everyone in North Edinburgh should have access to a tasty, enjoyable, nutritious diet. We want food to be a central part of our thriving community, bringing people together to grow, bake, cook and eat.

   We want to see our community skilled and empowered to grow and cook good quality food for their families, friends and neighbours, and to see more local employment opportunities created in the production, distribution and preparation of the food we eat.

   Our members are working towards aspects of this shared vision, and we believe that by working together we are stronger and better able to contribute to the flourishing of North Edinburgh.

   Success would be when the above is achieved.

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

   We liked that it included ‘everyone will know what constitutes good food and why’.
However,
- The vision should include the right to a nutritious meal everyday for everyone who lives in Scotland.
- We wanted the focus of the vision to be around people that live in Scotland. We think we grow, cook and serve food in Scotland to be eaten by people who live in Scotland in order to sustain and improve our lives, and this is the primary concern. The economic value of food production and the food industry is secondary to this.
- We felt that the language was passive – that food was something that happened to you, rather than something that could be used as a tool for empowerment of communities (as it has been in the Pilton area). We believe that food is something that people who live in Scotland are engaged and involved with.
- We felt it was important to include small and urban growers in the vision, whether they be market gardens or allotment holders – this growing activity also contributes to the wellbeing of people and, in the case of market gardens, economic activity.

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

It means the development of local food economies that bring sustainable employment opportunities and the ability of the local community to feed itself.

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
The food commission and the policy should support us to achieve our vision for food in north Edinburgh (as above).

We think with a strong and powerful Commission Scotland could lead in the provision of good food for its population. We would like to see it
- supporting the promotion of healthy/good/whole food – for example through support for the Egg and Potato Councils. We think where regulation of food advertising (see below) imposes fines, these should be used to finance promotion of healthy (non-branded) foods e.g. apples.
- Developing and enforcing regulation around the advertising of ‘unhealthy’ foods – including on-line advertising
- Have the power to challenge the power of the supermarkets where
this impacts negatively on the delivery of the vision of a ‘Good Food Nation’ e.g. on market share, on their relationships with producers, the impact on independent retailers of new stores – particularly when this could result in one supermarket being a monopoly food provider in an area

We feel that it is important that the Commission’s membership should be representative of society i.e. include young people, ethnic minorities, women etc.

We think the following types of people should be represented in the Food Commission
- Independent, registered nutritionist or dietician
- Public health specialist
- Poverty Alliance or similar
- Community sector e.g. Community Food and Health (Scotland) or Community Health Exchange
- Environmental campaigners e.g. Friends of the Earth Scotland
- Organic farmers
- Someone who has a good understanding of ‘good food culture’ for all, or how the cultures, customs and physical design of a place influence how we eat e.g. Lesley Riddoch
- Behavioural change specialists/advertising specialists

We also felt, given the suggested remit of the group, that the role and influence of the food industry should be limited.

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?

We do hope that a wide range of groups and individuals, including the community and voluntary sector, are involved with the ongoing development of the strategy and its implementation. However, if community and voluntary sector partners are being invited to contribute to the achievement of these goals, it MUST be recognised that this input needs to be adequately resourced.

The vast amount of work around food that happens in the area relies on a dedicated network of community activists who rarely receive any kind of regular income for their work (although they may pick up sessional work as a result of the connections they make). Time to attend meetings, contribute to consultation responses etc. is not paid and may take them away from their regular paid work (self-employed or otherwise).

The contribution of these highly skilled and knowledgeable individuals is
vital, and deserves to be recognised financially – particularly in areas of low income such as this one.

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?

**Food in the public sector**
Generally we agree with this priority as a way to lead by example.

While we are aware that there are minimum nutritional standards in schools and hospitals, our experience, this didn’t equate with food we wanted our children to be eating. We liked the approach taken by the Food for Life model used by the Soil Association (Scotland).

We thought a lot of the problems with food in schools were because of the bulk contacts and we would like individual schools to be able chose their suppliers. However, we think it is important that there are minimum nutritional and environmental standards in place that means there is an improvement in the food served. We also thought HOW food is served and the environment in which it is served in schools is important, so the views of pupils should be taken into account (particularly in secondary schools) – for example, canteen layout and décor.

We want much more breaking down of contract size to enable small producers to supply to local authority caterers.

We think schools and hospitals should have and use kitchens to prepare fresh local food. When they are not in use these should be available for others to use for things like cooking classes or to cater community events.

If schools can be linked with local community gardens and cooking projects (where there are not home economics classes taking place) this would enhance education about food for children and support local groups.

Research locally has shown that there is a desire from people from ethnic minorities for halal options (not just veggie) in schools and hospitals.

**Children’s food policy**
See above also.

The issues of child poverty need to be raised here. How will this policy ensure that children get a proper meal everyday. The universal introduction of free school meals will help this however we need to look at what happens over school holidays and at weekends.
See good examples from Pilton below.

**Local food**
We welcome the recognition of the good work of community food work in Scotland and the suggestion that there may be significant increases in funding for these. We would suggest that existing projects that work well have their funding enhanced, rather than invent new projects. The scale of the issues and therefore the time required to solve them – particularly in areas of low income where the issues are compounded by poverty – needs to be recognised and appropriate funding regimes put in place i.e. 5 year funding and LEAP reporting.

We want to see access to land in urban areas for growing made easier and more support for urban growers.

We welcome the recognition that local food is not only important for the more affluent middle classes.

We want to see an increase in support to grow a wider diversity of crops e.g. more varieties of potatoes and other crops that are easy to grow and appropriate for the conditions in Scotland – as well as being interesting and great to eat!

**Good Food Choices**
In any discussion around Good Food Choices we need to be aware of the barriers many face in making them.

In our experience this includes

- Poverty, many can’t afford a decent meal for everyone in their family every day. This needs to be addressed through this policy and others.

- A lack of food education. Food education is important and needs to be for all sectors of society, not just children. Parents often need education as much as children. Within school we want to see more home economics classes to restore lost cooking skills. We feel that community food projects are well placed to deliver other food education but that this does need to be resourced and have the flexibility to be creative and respond to what people want to know, as well as what others want to teach them. This would (and does already) include education on budgeting, shopping, cooking skills, food waste and basic nutrition.

- The lack of basic facilities for people to cook and store food. Participants in bringing together this response talked about working with people in temporary accommodation where they only had access to a kettle to prepare food, and one organisation is now developing healthy microwave and kettle as they see so many households without proper cooking facilities. We also regularly have participants in our cooking groups who do not have access to a fridge or freezer.

- The heavy influence of store layout and offers on our choices e.g.
sweets near the checkout (STILL!), Buy one get one free which often exclude smaller households in taking advantage and lead to an increase in food waste.
- Difficulties in buying small quantities of food because so much comes pre-packed. We want more options to buy one egg and 2 potatoes.
- Difficulties getting to shops. There are still areas that bus routes don’t get to and where shops only sell a small range of more expensive and less healthy foods.
- The food commission should take the FSA’s recommendations on food labelling and make them compulsory so that we can all be informed enough to make good food choices.
- In some situations we are not able to make the food choices we want to e.g. to purchase raw milk.

Efforts need to be made to overcome the issues above. We suggest:
- Introduce a basic living wage and better benefits payments. Stop sanctioning people in poverty if this means they will go without food.
- The cost of energy needs to be taken into consideration and higher cost energy (through meter charging) needs to be addressed.
- Local authorities be given the duty to provide white goods where this restricts people’s ability to feed themselves.

**Continued economic growth**

We want to see the importance of food reflected in living wages for food ‘industry workers’.

We want to see more focus on local food economies.

10. Which other areas would you prioritise?

We would prioritise the alleviation of food poverty.

While we recognise some of the issues involved in this i.e. living wages and benefits decisions may be outside the remit of this consultation, it is difficult to discuss food policy in the current climate without discussing food poverty and its most extreme symptom – the use of emergency food provision.

There is lots of good work going on across Scotland to alleviate food poverty, including breakfast clubs, food banks, cooking and budgeting groups etc. In north Edinburgh we have a number of more innovative examples and we would welcome further support for them – they include:
- The Gardeners Café – weekly meal cooked from surplus produce from Granton Community Gardeners and the Fareshare scheme. Meals are nutritious and free and served in a friendly environment. Anyone can have a free meal, removing any stigma, and the café also serves as a useful meeting place for other community conversations that are going on. All that attend are given the opportunity to help out as a contribution to the café.
- Foot-tea – a group set up by The Spartans Community Football Academy as a response to the number of local children who were
obviously hungry when they arrived for football coaching. The club is free and all participants get a meal at the end of the football coaching session.

- Big increases in the amount of land available for community growing after many years of discussion with the local authority about the use of small plots of urban land for growing. The local authority eventually agreed to ‘let’ the land on peppercorn rents and this has led to many more and much more land being used to grow food.

In all the examples above and in much more of the work that happens in the area, the benefits extend much beyond that people are eating more healthily into improved fitness, community relations and other social capital outcomes.

We want to see more support for locally developed interventions that support people to get affordable nutritious food in a non-judgemental way. These need to be properly resourced and not just reliant on the good will of volunteers.

Other interventions we suggest to alleviate food poverty are
- Support for fruit and veg markets (not just farmers markets – which are often very expensive and take up a large amount of time for small producers)
- More support for farmers to sell directly to consumers thus cutting out the middle man.

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?

Participants in the Food for Thought Forum will continue to work towards achieving its vision.

We would hope that this document leads to increased funding, resources and political will to support us to deliver more of it!

14. How did you hear about this Discussion Document?

Multiple paths, direct from Scottish Government, via Community Food and Health Scotland, Edible Edinburgh and Nourish. We have also shared it
widely with participants in the Food for Thought Forum.