Good Food Nation Consultation
Scottish Borders response

Background
This response is submitted by Public Health in Scottish Borders and is informed by discussions with key partners. The Joint Health Improvement Team in Scottish Borders, in partnership with Nourish Scotland, held an event to explore the Good Food Nation proposals. Invitations to the event were extended widely to a range of organisations, groups and services across Borders who shared an interest in food in its many aspects. Around 30 people attended drawn from the public and the private sector, with interests in food production and retail, growing and distribution, social enterprise, health and the environment. The event provided a forum for people to learn about the Scottish Government’s proposals and to debate the implications of these for Scotland as a whole and for Scottish Borders. The aim was to enable participants to give voice to their views, recognising that these were diverse and at times divergent.

1. How important is it that we aim to become a Good Food Nation?

Becoming a Good Food Nation is vital for Scotland’s health and wellbeing. We are very far from that currently in view of the challenges associated with obesity, nutrition related diseases and long term conditions. These health risks are strongly associated with socio economic inequalities.

Becoming a Good Food Nation is also a key component in enabling Scotland to thrive economically and to manage the environmental impact of food production, distribution and consumption ethically and sustainably. These interconnections are important considerations for local planning partnerships.

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

Access to affordable healthy food for all would be the norm
Local food would mean healthy, fresh and environmentally sound
Everyone would have the knowledge skills and confidence to eat a healthy diet
Education would support key messages relating to nutrition and health
The public sector would lead by example and use every opportunity to influence food supply and choices
The food and drink industry would prioritise health and sustainability
The food industry will be a vital feature of local and national economies
More people would adopt healthier lifestyles and intractable dietary-related disease will decline
Health outcomes would be improved and health inequalities reduced
The damaging environmental impact of food consumption will reduce

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

The holistic approach set out in the document is very welcome, in bringing together the respective contributions of different sectors and recognizing the potential convergence of interests in terms of health, economy and environment.

From a public health perspective, we are supportive of efforts to make good food accessible to people from every walk of life. We view it as important that every player is committed to making and serving good food.

The stated vision could be improved by including the following

- In terms of making good food available to all, there needs to be more reference to the role of producers and growers
- There needs to be a stronger emphasis on the environment. It would be welcome to see less attention to volumes and yields and more attention to how many people can be nourished per hectare
- Education needs to be considered as life long, recognizing the importance of family, community and culture.

4. How would your life be better?

The breadth of the vision set out provides is valuable as a platform for potential partners to come together at local and national level to find shared goals and identify overlapping interests. For example it facilitates links between economic development and public health. In our area, Scottish Borders, the vision would help balance the focus on lifestyles and healthy choices at individual level with the wider opportunities and influences that shape people’s health.

5. Other essential steps to be taken?

Develop better information gathering and intelligence sharing on nutrition and diet. We need insights into nutrition and health indicators for key population segments, by socio economic status, age, disability (including people with learning disability and those with mental health problems).

We also need to have ways to monitor and share information on performance of public sector in relation to retail, procurement and food provision.

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

From what is outlined in the discussion paper, it is not clear exactly what the Food Commission would look like. Commissions can take various forms and have a various functions. In the light of the proposed vision described for a Good Food Nation we consider it important for a Food Commission to:

- Focus on changing Scotland’s food culture to transform attitudes to food and nutrition
- Provide the drive to deliver the vision
• Set out timelines for implementation of key aspects of the vision, with realistic objectives and targets

• Determine a baseline using agreed success measures (see 2 above) and monitor progress and report routinely on this to Parliament

• Promote and disseminate best practice

It would be important to be clear how a Commission would fit into the current landscape of organizations and networks to provide a strategic lead. We would like to see the Commission made up of cross sector representatives that have the influence to initiate change and act as role models. A Food Commission should be independent.

7. Indicators

Success measures above (at 2) provide a framework for indicators.

These should include indicators relevant to each of the priority areas of action and link where appropriate to existing programmes and indicators.

It would be valuable to give further consideration to meaningful local level indicators that can enable local partnerships to monitor progress and impact in contribution to the changes desired. The development of a logic model would be useful to illustrate this and to provide a framework for contribution analysis.

8. Approaches

In seeking to implement the vision, engagement with the food industry will be essential. The government will need to make use of a range of levers for change, from the voluntary framework to more directive measures as employed in other policy areas where public health interests have been at stake, such as regulation and legislation.

9. Proposed initial focus

A children’s food policy

• Children’s food – we would like to see this refocused on family

• Schools face many demands and sometimes competing priorities. It is important that the food agenda is seen as core to the learning and development of children and young people

• Needs to include skills training and nutritional knowledge

• A policy on children’s food needs to extend beyond schools and be backed up by wider policies

Good food choices

• Adults of all life stages need training in nutrition and cooking skills.

• Affordability is a crucial consideration in view of the association with socio economic inequalities and poor health outcomes
• There may be tension between health and economic drivers
• Need to ensure healthier food available in schools and hospitals and care settings
• Need to consider how alcohol fits into our food choices and policies.

**Continued economic growth**
• Long term relationships between key stakeholders is needed to encourage long term growth
• We need to think about what sustainable high volume production is and if it is achievable
• There may be a tension between local food and continued export growth
• Need fair pricing

**Local food**
• Need to define ‘local’
• Need more focus on local food for local people, although local does not always mean affordable
• Investment needed in infrastructure to encourage local growers and producers, eg cooperatives, distribution systems, processing
• For producers to sell locally also requires adapting and developing public sector procurement processes

**10. Other areas to prioritise**

A more explicate commitment is needed to tackle food poverty, which would affirm a minimum level of sufficient nutritious food as a right.

**11. Other steps recommended**

Use a ‘health in all approach’ to proactively promote food and nutrition in all areas of public policy. A good starting would be the Integration of Health and Social Care and associated workforce development.

Guidance and support to encourage development in public sector procurement in line with the vision and aspirations of Good Food Nation.

**12. Other considerations**

**13. Steps you plan to take**

Through the consultation process in Scottish Borders, we have already begun to use the document to explore how we might promote local food through infrastructure development, further support healthy lifestyles and develop work with families and communities on food related issues that are important to them, linking to local commitments to tackle inequalities.
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