The Dairy Council response to ‘Becoming a Good Food Nation’

We welcome this discussion document and support Scotland becoming a ‘Good Food Nation’. Key elements addressed in the discussion document of importance to the remit of The Dairy Council are:

1. Nutritious diet for health, conscious of food waste and environmental sustainability
2. Nutrition diet with accessibility and affordability for all
3. Knowledge for all about what constitutes good food and why

1. Nutritious Diet for Health

The Dairy Council recommends that Scotland as a Good Food Nation recognises and places importance on milk and dairy as nutritious foods integral to the Scottish diet.

At each stage of the life-cycle milk and dairy foods contribute to macronutrient and key micronutrient intakes for health. The National Diet and Nutrition Survey (NDNS) Rolling Programme shows that, in Scotland, milk and dairy foods contribute 8-15% of energy, 13-23% of protein, 12-20% of fat, 34-48% of calcium, 33-55% of iodine, 29-44% of riboflavin and 33-52% of vitamin B12, among other nutrients, to the diets of children from 4 years of age and adults\(^1\). Milk and dairy foods support growth and development of young children and adolescents, add nutrition quality to the diets of older people at risk of undernutrition, and are currently of interest in research for potential benefits in non-communicable chronic diseases such as obesity\(^2\), cardiovascular disease\(^3\) and type 2 diabetes\(^4\).

The NDNS\(^1\) indicates that the 5-a-day target for fruit and vegetable consumption is not being met in Scotland, with average consumption of 2.7, 3.8 and 4.4 portions per day amongst consumers aged 11-18 years, 19-64 years and 65 years and over, respectively. Oily fish consumption is below the recommendation of 140g/week, it is estimated to be 46g/week for those aged 19-64 and 66g/week for those aged 65 and over. Intakes of salt and saturated fat are higher than recommended for both children and adults. Milk and yogurt are low in sodium (salt) and the some of the saturated fats unique to milk and dairy products have generated interest for protective effects against coronary events\(^5\). The NDNS\(^1\) notes that intakes of non-milk extrinsic sugars exceed current recommendations of no more than 11% food energy, with intakes ranging from means of 11.5-14.8% across ages groups from 4 years upwards. Milk and dairy foods are excellent alternatives for some of the sweet and confectionary foods and drinks that contribute to the excessive quantities of NMES in the Scottish diet.

The Dairy Council welcomes the initiatives for improving the nutritional quality of the Scottish diet, and sees the promotion of milk and dairy foods as central to achieving that. The Dairy Council also strongly recommends supporting an increase in fruit and, particularly, vegetable consumption among Scottish children and adults. Oily fish consumption should be promoted and considering the Protected Food Name granted to Scottish farmed salmon in 2004, this is another example of what Richard Lochhead refers to as ‘the paradox’ of the Scottish larder, the ‘uneasy relationship’ between Scotland as a producer of excellent, nutritious food and yet home to one of the poorest diet-related health records.

2. Food Waste and Environmental Sustainability

The Dairy Council also welcomes the focus that this discussion document has on reducing food waste and environmental sustainability of the diet. The FAO defines a sustainable diet as one that has a low environmental impact yet contributes to food and nutrition security and to a healthy life...
for present and future generations. Sustainable diets should be respectful of biodiversity and ecosystems and be culturally acceptable, accessible, economically fair and affordable, nutritionally adequate, safe and healthy - whilst optimising natural and human resources. To produce dairy foods there are inevitable environmental trade-offs. There is an urgent need to identify and reduce those trade-offs, and these are major priorities of the dairy industry.

*The Dairy Council, in collaboration with DairyCo and Dairy UK, is supporting research from the University of Reading on environmental impact of dairy in a healthy and nutritious diet for the UK. This work will be published in peer-reviewed journals in coming months and The Dairy Council would refer the Scottish National Food and Drink Policy towards that research.*

3. Accessibility and Affordability
The importance placed on accessibility and affordability of a nutritious diet for health, that is conscious of food waste and environmental sustainability, in this discussion document is welcomed by The Dairy Council. This will, however, be a challenge. Research indicates that healthy and sustainable food choices are more expensive, and the most disadvantaged in society would spend proportionately more (30% more in the case of a recent Australian study) if food choices deemed healthy and sustainable were made[6].

4. Knowledge
A key feature of the success of this initiative will be creating and disseminating information on nutrition and health, food waste and environmental sustainability, connection between consumer and food supply. The Dairy Council provides a range of written resources for consumers on nutritious and sustainable diet for health, and the benefits of dairy for health throughout life stages. *The Dairy Council recommends that these resources be consulted and promoted for knowledge transfer on what constitutes good food and why.* The discussion document also highlights disconnect between the consumer and food supply. *The Dairy Council recommends that the dairy chain, including producers, processors and promoters, would be key partners for redressing this disconnect in Scottish Society.*

References: