About Soil Association Scotland

Soil Association Scotland is the Scottish office of the Soil Association, the UK’s leading membership charity campaigning for healthy, humane and sustainable food, farming and land use. The Soil Association was founded in 1946 by a group of farmers, scientists and nutritionists who observed a direct connection between farming practice and plant, animal, human and environmental health.

Soil Association Scotland welcomes the opportunity to respond to the Becoming a Good Food Nation consultation, and would be pleased to provide further information on any aspect of our submission should The Scottish Government request. Please note that our Food for Life Scotland and Crofting Connections programmes have also submitted individual responses to the consultation, which provide deeper insight into the questions posed from their unique perspectives and experiences.

Soil Association Scotland was set up in 2002 to bring Soil Association expertise closer to producers, consumers and policy makers in Scotland. At Soil Association Scotland we have a growing and dynamic team – currently 16 members of staff – working all over Scotland from the Shetland Islands to the Scottish Borders.

Good food for all. Food for Life Scotland – our flagship programme supported by The Scottish Government – is working in partnership across Scotland to transform food culture and food systems, so we can all eat food which is good for us, our communities and the planet.

Healthy and sustainable food served in our public institutions including schools, hospitals, nurseries, care homes and universities. We work with catering services to help them achieve the Food for Life Catering Mark, the prestigious national food award for catering services for producing menus using fresh, seasonal, local and organic ingredients.

Food education from an early age to encourage life-long positive eating habits and sustainable food choices. Our Crofting Connections project is inspiring young people in communities throughout the Highlands & Islands about crofting past, present and future, and making vital connections with health, culture, the environment and rural economy. Food for Life Scotland is working with schools to enable pupils of all ages to develop core life skills by linking culture, catering curriculum and community across Curriculum for Excellence by developing a ‘whole school’ approach to food, health and environment.

Better availability and affordability of fresh, seasonal, local and organic food for everyone, and systems which reconnect our towns and cities with local and organic food production. We work with farmers, suppliers and retailers to improve the organic supply chain, and help to support the development of Sustainable Food Cities in Scotland which puts food at the heart of delivering health, environmental, economic and social goals.

Organic and sustainable food and farming systems which reduce greenhouse gas emissions, support local jobs, businesses and communities, are better for wildlife and biodiversity and protect vital natural resources. We deliver skills development and knowledge transfer events for farmers and other land managers interested in environmentally sustainable land-use which is profitable and productive in a changing climate.

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1 Soil Association Scotland http://www.soilassociation.org/scotland (accessed 10/10/14)
2 Soil Association Scotland http://www.soilassociation.org/foodforlifescotland (accessed 10/10/14)
3 Crofting Connections http://croftingconnections.com/ (accessed 10/10/14)
Research and innovation to inform knowledge-based development of organic food and farming systems. We facilitate farmer-led research and innovation in Scotland through field labs to identify practical solutions to challenges in the field, and encourage two-way flow of information between the farming and research communities.

A vibrant and sustainable Scottish organic sector. We provide technical and business development support for Scottish organic businesses, right through the supply chain from farmers and growers to retailers and caterers.

Policies and campaigns which support local, climate-friendly farming, resilient and sustainable food production and healthy food culture. We work on these issues from a uniquely Scottish perspective, to provide workable solutions and gain widespread support for their implementation.
CONSULTATION QUESTIONS

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

1.1 It is vital that we aim for, and achieve, the vision of becoming a Good Food Nation. Scotland has been held back by poor health, sub-optimal diets and The Glasgow Effect⁴. Though much is made of our Land of Food and Drink, this can hide some of the problems we have in producing food in a way that does not affect soil and water quality, animal welfare standards and biodiversity now and in the future.

1.2 Food can be used as a catalyst to tackle a number of the greatest health, environmental and economic challenges facing us today. From obesity and diet-related ill-health to food poverty and waste, climate change and biodiversity loss to declining prosperity and social dislocation, food is not only at the heart of some of our greatest problems, but also a vital part of the solution.

1.3 ‘Good Food for All’ is a core theme of Soil Association’s strategy, which highlights: “Good food can transform people’s lives. It’s not just about the health benefits of a good diet. It’s about cultural cohesion, improving life chances and tackling some of the greatest health and social inequalities in our society.” At Soil Association Scotland we believe ‘Good food is a right, not a privilege.’

1.4 Soil Association promotes solutions which make sure everyone can access food that is healthy for them, and the planet. We work to reduce inequalities so that those people who most stand to benefit from good food are not excluded on the grounds of accessibility and affordability.

1.5 To provide good food, we need a good food system, from production through processing, distribution, retail, foodservice and consumption. A good food system needs appropriate skills and knowledge at each stage, including at the very end of the chain, skills around shopping (for health, budgets, waste prevention etc), and preparing and cooking good food.

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

2.1 We believe success will come when people of all ages and from all walks of life have the opportunity and choose (and/or are encouraged and enabled) to eat good food.

2.2 Good food means fresh, minimally processed and sustainable produce which is healthy, seasonal and produced using environmentally sustainable systems e.g. this includes fish which is Marine Stewardship Council certified, food and drink which is certified organic, and locally produced food that supports lower input and higher welfare farming. It is also GM free⁵. Such food, especially if produced in Scotland or nearby, will support the nation’s economy, health and wellbeing, a thriving food

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⁵ We commend the Scottish Government’s stance opposing the cultivation of GM crops due to the damage this could cause to our rich environment and to our reputation as a land of food and drink. We firmly believe GM crops are a threat to our environment, wildlife and freedom of choice.
industry (with high levels of employment in the sector) and environmental sustainability. It is therefore good for people, places and the planet and will bring significant community benefits. It would also mean:

**Healthy people**

- Diet related diseases decreasing/non-existent
- Healthy weight/BMI
- Wellbeing/happiness index climbing
- Social inclusion and community cohesion

**Healthy, sustainable places (communities and homes)**

- Good food culture is thriving in schools, hospitals, care homes, universities, workplaces, leisure centres and community centres. Meals are enjoyed together and are very much a social occasion
- People are predominantly cooking from scratch at home, or able to access and afford freshly prepared, healthy and sustainable meals out of home
- Children, individuals and communities are confident about where food comes from, how to grow staple food and how to cook basic, nutritious and appetising meals
- Organic food is seen as the norm and is widely available in shops and restaurants
- Our cities, towns and communities are transformed by access to green, biodiversity-rich spaces and access to land for urban growing
- Independent food retail and foodservice is a key growth area
- Multiple retailers and food businesses adapt systems to enable more SMEs to participate, providing local, fresh, healthy and sustainable products to consumers, and viable and secure contracts to suppliers
- Multiple retailers take responsibility to source and promote healthy and sustainable choices as set out in the [Supporting Healthy Choices](http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/0045/00454204.pdf) framework
- Gold Food for Life Catering Mark is the norm in schools, hospitals, workplaces, leisure centres
- Public sector catering is perceived as a valued, well paid and worthwhile vocation
- Communities across Scotland are more resilient, with towns and cities reconnected to local food production, culture and heritage

**Healthy, sustainable farming and growing**

- Biodiversity on farmland increasing: greater diversity and abundance of native flora and fauna and more habitat created/managed for wildlife
- Farmland bird populations increasing thanks to improved efforts at ensuring habitats are reinstated and protected, through reduction in use of pesticides
- Pollinator populations regain healthy status

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• Soil degradation and erosion are halted and maintaining and building healthy soils are prioritised by all farmers, including using legumes as a sustainable source of nitrogen and addressing compaction issues
• Our water is no longer polluted with nitrates, nitrites, and pesticides and expensive water treatment is no longer necessary
• Organic yields are increasing thanks to investment in research and development
• More local and organic vegetable production feeding into regional supply chains to ensure efficient distribution and sales of products
• People make a viable living from farming and growing
• Jobs are diverse, interesting and skills development is supported and farming and growing is perceived as a worthwhile career

Healthy supply chain

• More successful co-operatives and community enterprises for farming and growing, and an efficient supply chain with good distribution allows small independent businesses better access to supply public sector contracts, independents and multiples, both locally and nationally
• Flexibility to sell more local and sustainable products through public sector, local and national retail and restaurant chains, connecting with local producers and stories
• Big distribution organisations able to source and amalgamate volumes from small scale producers
• Supply chains are shorter, transparent, traceable and more resilient
• Businesses have a choice of where and how to sell their produce because there are multiple, viable, routes to market (local, regional, national)

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

3.1 The vision is clear and ambitious but it should also include a vision for Scottish farming, as the first link in our food system and acknowledge the positive environmental impacts that low input farming has. We suggest: Scottish farmers and growers will improve their environmental impact on soils, water quality and GHG emissions, and increase biodiversity by encouraging pollinators and other wildlife. The vision should also acknowledge how different farming systems can affect the quality of our food and impact adversely on human health. (Details are provided in section 11.)

3.2 To be inclusive the vision should lead with how it will positively impact Scottish people and communities and not with such a strong emphasis on exports and industry (although we acknowledge this is an important part of the vision). It should incorporate a vision of how affordable access to good food will encourage and enable positive behaviours and change at all levels of society and benefit everyone.
3.3 It should go beyond an information only model i.e. it is not enough to suggest that everyone ‘knows what constitutes good food and why’ and instead should reflect the importance that people should be supported, encouraged and enabled to make positive food choices. Being a true Good Food Nation will require engaged citizens who feel empowered to participate and indeed are the driving force for positive change.

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

4.1 For Soil Association Scotland it means farming in ways which have a positive effect on our communities and biodiversity; increased wildlife, improving and conserving soil structures and water quality and minimising environmental impact.

4.2 It means ‘good food for all’ and the consistent provision of nutritious, sustainable food in nurseries, schools, Higher/FE institutions, workplaces, hospitals and care settings as well as leisure centres and tourist attractions and the education and engagement of service users (pupils, employees, patients, residents), their families and the wider community to enable and inspire them to eat well.

4.3 It means a positive food culture - celebrating good food and where mealtimes are an important and valued part of the day where everyone comes together to share and enjoy good food and where conversations about the provenance and seasonality of ingredients are everyday topics.

4.4 It means a skilled workforce across the whole food system with careers in farming, growing, crofting and the food sector perceived as a worthwhile, well paid, interesting and attractive option for our young people.

4.5 It means communities across Scotland are more resilient and strengthened economically by having greater local food provision from and contact with nearby farms, suppliers and retailers. Our cities, towns and communities would look very different too with growing spaces and urban farms bringing food growing closer to home.

4.6 This would be supported by a thriving retail sector with a diversity of food choices on offer and consistent messaging across all platforms (including the media and advertising) so that the production, retail, serving and consumption of fresh, healthy and sustainable food is the norm.

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

5.1 Preventative spend (Christie Review) needs to be prioritised both for health of people and health of planet, therefore refocusing ‘best value’ towards locally and sustainably produced food where possible.
5.2 Procurement systems need to ensure that sourcing healthy, sustainable and local food is logical, consistent and easy and we should build on the initial work of Catering for Change\(^7\). For example, the UK Government’s new Plan for Public Procurement\(^8\) in England promotes the use of a Balanced Scorecard\(^9\) (see diagram below) to make the procurement process for healthy and sustainable food clearer and simpler. The guidance for use of the scorecard cites the Food for Life Catering Mark as a tool for caterers who wish to guarantee a good or excellent performance against the award criteria in the balanced scorecard.

The scorecard brings a consistent buying approach across the public sector which embraces the key elements required for excellent procurement of food including price, production, health and wellbeing, resource efficiency, environmental and socio-economic factors and quality of service - achieved in a way that is fully compliant with European Procurement Law and delivers best value per pound spent.

The balanced scorecard describes an evaluation approach where straightforward criteria, such as cost, are ‘balanced’ against more complex criteria, such as health and wellbeing, resource efficiency and quality of service. By using a balanced scorecard, priority themes such as farm assurance, food waste management, and engagement with SMEs can be built into procurement decisions, alongside well-established criteria, such as animal welfare, environment, nutrition, and energy management.

5.3 Serving fresh, healthy and sustainable food needs to be incentivised and in particular the public sector needs to be supported to serve such food by ensuring procurement systems are flexible enough to support innovation. We’d also advocate ring fencing of budgets on food spend and catering staff as well as performance related targets which have to be reported on regularly.

5.4 Development of regional supply chains needs to be supported to allow micro and small producers to distribute and market their seasonal and fresh produce, within the right time window, and to deal with shortages/gluts in the market.

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5.5 Organic farming systems need to be recognised and promoted as both desirable and sensible. Future farming in a resource-tight world will be low input, and increasingly self-sufficient, and therefore much closer to an organic model. Now is the time to learn from and increase production capacity by working with nature, in common with many of our neighbours in Europe and America.

5.6 Skills training across the foodservice sector is key, but in particular craft skills for cooks and awareness raising and training for procurement teams and decision makers to help them understand the links between food, health, economy and the environment and encourage and enable them to innovate.

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

6.1 A Food Commission could help take a high level overview of the food system and ensure that activity and targets across public health, food and drink, environment and economy - and across the public, private and third sector - is joined up and consistent.

6.2 Membership is key to this group functioning well and Soil Association Scotland would suggest that it’s vital that a strong strategic focus is supported by those involved in delivering activity on the ground to ensure joined up activity and bolster informed decision making. As well as recognised ‘experts’ it would be good to see practitioner expertise being called on and some new voices would be welcome.

6.3 It is vital that a Food Commission acts in an open and inclusive manner; inviting contributions and expertise from those delivering on the ground rather than just operating as an expert group ‘behind closed doors’.

6.4 A Food Commission should report publicly on a regular basis against clear targets.

6.5 Food Policy Councils at a city level are in the early stages of development in both Edinburgh and Glasgow, and well refined models exist in different countries, and it is important to consider how a Food Commission might link with these Food Policy Councils.

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

7.1 We would like to see the role of sustainable and healthy food built properly into the National Performance Framework (NPF) to reflect its importance in delivering the National Outcomes, especially for a healthier Scotland. Diet and nutrition do not feature under the healthier outcome or in the NPF.

7.2 It is vital that the existing Scottish Government policies around all aspects of food (often split across different departments/divisions) are articulated and joined-up. We
would like to see a strategic and overarching ambition which unites policy and action on public health, wellbeing, food and farming, procurement, environment and economy in pursuit of a shared aim. We hope the Becoming a Good Food Nation indicators share targets with and link to all relevant policies and action plans including:

**Health and nutrition**
- Preventing Overweight and Obesity in Scotland: A Route Map Towards Healthy Weight (2010)
- Revised Scottish Dietary Goals (2013)
- Beyond the School Gate – Improving Food Choices in the School Community (2014)
- The Schools (Health Promotion & Nutrition) (Scotland) Act (2007)

**Public sector**
- Procurement Reform (Scotland) Bill (2014)
- Catering for Change: Buying Food Sustainably in the Public Sector (2011)
- Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009
- Community Planning Partnership Plans and Single Outcome Agreements

**Environment**
- Scottish Rural Development Programme 2013-2020
- Climate Ready Scotland: Scottish Climate Change Adaptation Programme (2014)
- 2020 Challenge for Scotland’s Biodiversity – A strategy for the conservation and enhancement of biodiversity in Scotland (2013)
- Getting the best from our land – a land use strategy for Scotland (2011)
- The Scottish Soil Framework (2009)

**People and society**
- Community Empowerment (Scotland) Bill (2014)
- Getting it right for every child (GIRFEC)

**Education**
- Curriculum for Excellence
- Better Eating Better Learning – A New Context for School Food (2014)
- How good is our school (HGIOS)
- Learning for Sustainability

**Economy**
- Scottish Rural Development Programme 2013-2020
- Scotland’s Cities: Delivering for Scotland (2011)
- The National Strategy: Tourism Scotland 2020
In addition, we suggest the following indicators/areas for measuring success.

- Public sector procurement targets relating to uptake of the Food for Life Catering Mark and sustainable supply chains e.g. in Denmark, France and Finland, the public sector has an organic target
- Health and wellbeing
- Nutrition – using the Scottish Dietary Goals\(^{11}\)
- Environmental impact:
  - water pollution
  - soil quality
  - GHG emissions originating from the food system
  - levels of biodiversity (key species: pollinators, birds, hedgehogs...)
  - area of organically certified land, or volume/sales of organically certified products in retail and foodservice
  - volume/sales of certified sustainable seafood produced from our waters
  - land use balance (woodland creation/forestry, food production, leisure)
  - reduced waste throughout the supply chain
- Skills and lifelong learning
- Employability: number of people working in food production and foodservice and earning at least the living wage
- Food poverty and health inequalities
- Affordability of healthy foods and diets

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

8.1 Investment in skills throughout the food system (farming, distribution, retail, foodservice, consumer skills and education provision) to encourage and support an economy and society more geared towards wholesome and unprocessed food production and consumption.

8.2 Using the Food for Life Scotland evidence-based model – and celebratory approach – to transform food culture and promote healthy and sustainable food behaviours in a site, a setting and across a geographical area in the public and private sectors. This includes by promoting the uptake of:

- Food for Life Catering Mark\(^{12}\)
- Food for Life Scotland Education and Engagement Framework\(^{13}\)
- Sustainable Food Cities Model\(^{14}\)

8.3 Food education from an early age is vital to encourage life-long positive eating habits and sustainable food choices. Our Crofting Connections project is inspiring young people in communities throughout the Highlands & Islands about crofting

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\(^{12}\) Soil Association: [http://www.sacert.org/catering](http://www.sacert.org/catering) (accessed 10/10/14)

\(^{13}\) Food for Life Scotland: [http://www.foodforlifescotland.org/](http://www.foodforlifescotland.org/) (accessed 10/10/14)

past, present and future, and making vital connections with health, culture, the environment and rural economy.

Food for Life Scotland is developing and testing an Education and Engagement Framework for schools (the majority of which) serve Food for Life Catering Mark certified meals, with a view to replicating the framework in other sectors for example HE & FE institutions and early years settings. The framework for schools helps them to develop, embed and celebrate a holistic approach to food through four key action areas: Culture, Catering, Curriculum, and Community.

8.4 As a key foundation of a Good Food Nation, Scottish Government needs to incentivise and support the production of healthy, sustainable food e.g. public sector procurement targets for Scottish organic food to drive production and consumption as Denmark have done.

8.5 Ring fencing budgets for food provision and staffing (cooks) within public sector.

8.6 Ensuring knowledge exchange and innovation in farming and growing occurs between farmers, growers, researchers – both locally, nationally and internationally.

8.7 Positive choice editing in retail and foodservice for more environmentally sustainable foods such as MSC certified seafood, organic certified food and drink, backed up with great consumer messaging to promote engagement and investment in the long term health of people and planet.

8.8 For public sector to be encouraged and supported to make decisions based on ‘preventative’ spend rather than ‘bottom’ line priorities.

8.9 Investment in developing and building capacity in sustainable local supply chains and ensuring farmers, producers and SMEs are supported to maximise opportunities in the short and long term.

8.10 It is essential that if we are to effect a cultural shift there needs to be clear and consistent messaging and policy across all aspects of local and Scottish government to ensure we do not disempower people.

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?

9.1 Soil Association Scotland agrees with the first priority, though it needs to be linked to food production and intersect with policies and support towards sustainable production and supply chains.

9.2 We believe that 'A Children's Food Policy' should be widened to become a 'A Food Policy for Children, Families and Communities', acknowledging the importance of
improving our children’s’ diet, but strengthening its potential for change by including the wider contexts in which our children grow up.

9.3 The third priority should recognise that local food is not always the most environmentally sustainable option and therefore reference should be made to ‘local and environmentally sustainable’ as being the ideal.

9.4 The fourth priority needs to recognise that many people need to supported, encouraged and enabled to make good food choices and so we’d suggest amending to ‘Enabling Good Food Choices’. Furthermore in this section people are referred to as consumers - engaged citizens rather than consumers should be at the core of such an important strategy. Our power to eat well should not be only through what we can ‘buy’ from a company.

9.5 We further believe that “continued economic growth” should be changed to: "Sustainable development - aligning social, environmental and economic growth” in recognition of the fact that some kinds of economic growth are not compatible with sustainability. Care for the environment should form an important part of at least one of the priorities and this is where we believe it fits best. (See 11.3)

10. Which other areas would you prioritise?

N/A

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

11.1 Independent evaluation\textsuperscript{15} of the Fife Local School Meals pilot – a partnership project between Soil Association Scotland, Fife Council and the Fife Diet – concluded "The pilot project delivered significant improvements to the sustainability of school meals”. It also demonstrated it was viable to ‘reverse engineer’ a school lunch menu by designing a menu based on the availability of local and seasonal produce.

11.2 This should become the norm within the constraints of current procurement law as it was demonstrated to deliver a number of early benefits including: business security for participating local businesses, additional employment opportunities, high sustainability attributes, increased pride and job satisfaction from the cooks.

11.3 In addition to the work already underway in Edinburgh and Glasgow on ‘Sustainable Food Cities’, we recommend building and consolidating the work already started by the Food for Life Scotland team by further developing a number of place based ‘exemplars’ in cities or Local Authorities who are already demonstrating leadership through the Food for Life Catering Mark and Food for Life Scotland’s ‘whole settings’ approach. These exemplars could be supported to become beacons of good practice where a strategic (top down) and grassroots (bottom up) approach works in harmony to drive real and positive change to food culture and food systems across an area.

12. What else should be considered?

**How we produce our food**

12.1 Food cannot be considered separately to farming and growing. Scientific evidence clearly demonstrates that how we farm affects not only the environment but the quality of our food and human and animal health.

A landmark paper published in the *British Journal of Nutrition*\(^\text{16}\) in July 2014 concludes that organically grown crops contain significantly higher concentrations of nutritionally desirable antioxidants and lower levels of undesirable cadmium – a toxic heavy metal – and pesticide residues. The peer-reviewed scientific study is the most extensive analysis of the nutrient content of organic and non-organic foods ever undertaken, synthesising the results of many more studies than previous analyses.

This analysis is a valuable and timely addition to the ongoing scientific discussion about the benefits of organic food, and makes an important contribution to the information currently available to policy makers and consumers. (The research is available in a summary [format]\(^\text{17}\).) Antibiotic resistance in farm animals is a growing problem, with far-reaching implications for human health. This fact has been established by decades of [research]\(^\text{18}\) and is acknowledged by organisations including WHO and the European Food Safety Authority.

Nearly 50% of all antibiotics are used in farming, primarily in intensive livestock production to compensate for crowded and unnatural conditions on factory farms. Most pigs, poultry and dairy cows receive antibiotics routinely, whether or not they are unwell, and in recent years entirely new E.coli and MRSA superbugs have become major problems on European farms.

We suggest a vision that promotes organic and sustainable food and farming systems which:

- Help reduce greenhouse gas emissions, increase wildlife and biodiversity and protect vital ecosystem services – soil, water and air.
- Produce high quality food with more antioxidants and less undesirable chemical agents including pesticide residue.
- Do not rely routinely on the use of antibiotics and related drugs.

Organic production is an example of a regulated farming system which promotes high animal welfare standards and less intensive farming systems, significantly reducing the need for antibiotics. High Nature Value farming, including organic, also offers advantages of low input methods that favour biodiversity.


\(^{17}\) Soil Association: *Organic versus Non-organic* (2014) [http://www.soilassociation.org/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=VtYm9tPwIPb%3d&tabid=2301](http://www.soilassociation.org/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=VtYm9tPwIPb%3d&tabid=2301)

\(^{18}\) The Alliance to Save Our Antibiotics: *Antimicrobial resistance - why the irresponsible use of antibiotics in agriculture must stop* - A briefing from the Alliance to Save Our Antibiotics (2014) [http://www.soilassociation.org/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=G9g4ueB5deJ%3d&tabid=1841](http://www.soilassociation.org/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=G9g4ueB5deJ%3d&tabid=1841)
12.2 From learnings across Europe, we know that other governments (eg France, Finland, Denmark\textsuperscript{19}) have dedicated significant resources to nurturing and encouraging small organic sectors to grow. In Scotland and the UK, our organic sector has been contracting, therefore we have lost out on economic opportunities as well as environmental, health and social benefits which are intrinsic to this recognised system of production.

12.3 Evidence of recent years reaffirms that organic production has the potential to be a profitable way forward for many farmers. Financial comparisons\textsuperscript{20} published by the Soil Association show that organic farm businesses in England were slightly more profitable and less exposed to volatility than their comparable non-organic businesses between 2006 and 2012. As input prices continue to rise for all farmers, the business advantage of lower input organic farming is likely to strengthen further.

**Economics of local and sustainable food**

12.4 Various studies also demonstrate how local and organic food promotes short supply chains, which help to keep spend in the local economy and support local employment. For example, a recent SROI study\textsuperscript{21} by nef (new economics foundation) of procurement by two English county council school meals services showed that for every £1 spent on local and seasonal food, over £3 in economic, environmental and social value was created, mostly in the form of new jobs and enhanced job-security.

A national UK study\textsuperscript{22} found that organic farming provides around 30% more jobs per farm than equivalent non-organic farms, and that organic farms are more likely to have undergone diversification and be involved in on-farm processing and direct marketing and retailing, creating additional local jobs.

As well as providing employment, various studies\textsuperscript{23} looking at organic farming across Europe, show that organic enterprises and associated activities – such as farm open days and food heritage trails – help to attract visitors and increase local spend, contributing to the wider rural economy.

**Supporting healthy and sustainable public food procurement**

12.5 From feedback received, and our learning to date, the Food for Life Scotland programme has demonstrated that the public sector are facing increasingly tough financial times and catering teams are subsequently having to make very difficult decisions about ingredient spend, staffing and kitchens. As a result we are losing skilled catering staff and budgets are being reduced for food provision and capital costs.

\textsuperscript{19} Soil Association Scotland: Organic food and farming A driver for sustainable development in Scotland with learning from Denmark (2013) \url{http://www.soilassociation.org/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=3JrEn2Saxxg%3d&tabid=313}

\textsuperscript{20} Soil Association: Organic farming: how it stacks up (2014) \url{http://www.soilassociation.org/farmeconomics}


\textsuperscript{22} Soil Association: Organic Works (2006) [p8] \url{http://www.soilassociation.org/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=60CVIT1Nw0U%3d&tabid=387}

12.6 This means that the current good practice as exemplified by the Food for Life Catering Mark award holders is under very real threat. It is incompatible with a national policy and vision of being a ‘Good Food Nation’ if the public sector food and their systems do not reflect these values and principles. Serious consideration needs to be given to how to protect this current good practice, and enable the benefits that are intrinsic to providing good food.

12.7 We need to strike a better balance in food procurement to ensure that better quality and more sustainable food is not always the most expensive option. It remains to be seen how the new Procurement Bill will help support innovation and build more resilient local supply chains and we need to ensure that current procurement frameworks are flexible enough to support caterers who wish to serve fresh, healthy and sustainable food and at the same time provide opportunities and support to local producers to encourage them to bid for contracts.

**Infrastructure and supply chains**

12.8 The recent collapse of Scottish produced chicken, including higher welfare production, highlights the inherent contradiction of an aspiration to be a Good Food Nation if we are wholly reliant on imported, mass produced meat. This is not consistent with the values and ethos of a Good Food Nation and will disempower consumers as a result and therefore a large scale supply chain project designed to support and increase the skills and capacity of our domestic food industry is vital.

This should also encapsulate essential infrastructure needs such as a network of abattoirs for red meat. Remaining abattoirs are increasingly under pressure of closure, meaning livestock have longer distances to travel, producers are finding it hard to organise private kills and local and organic supply chains are being closed down.

**Affordability**

12.9 Healthy food needs to be more affordable. Eating healthy food now costs three times as much as consuming unhealthy food according to a new study published by Cambridge University – the first study to use UK data to examine price trends by the nutrient composition of foods. The results also show that the absolute price gap between healthy and less healthy foods has widened over the period 2002-2012.

Analyses of UK food spending data by the Institute for Fiscal Studies has shown that, in recent years, all socio-economic groups have changed their purchasing habits to both spend less on food and purchase calories which are both cheaper and less healthy. The Cambridge study concludes that the increase in the price difference between healthy and less healthy foods is a factor that may contribute towards growing food insecurity, increasing health inequalities, and deterioration in the health of the population.

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http://www.plosone.org/article/info%3Adoi%2F10.1371%2Fjournal.pone.0109343

25 Griffith R, Connell MO, Smith K: *Food purchases and nutrition over the recession* (Institute for Fiscal Studies, 2012)

“To help achieve long-term improvements in eating habits, we need to address the high and rising prices of healthier foods, which is likely to be influenced by a number of factors including agricultural policy and production, food distribution, and retail pricing strategies. Additionally, there is growing evidence that targeted subsidies can promote healthy eating for people on low incomes.”

Senior study author, Dr. Pablo Monsivais, Centre for Diet and Activity Research (Cambridge)

Furthermore, the Cambridge study shows that there could well be merit in public health bodies monitoring food prices in relation to nutrient content, to provide a deeper insight into how price differs between healthy and less healthy food and better inform public health and nutrition policy. (No such monitoring system currently exists in the UK.)

Continuity of good practice

12.10 It's important to consolidate the existing good work which is happening on the ground in communities and the third sector; helping these groups and organisations build on their achievements and widen their influence using an existing knowledge and skill base and developing stronger partnerships rather than necessarily starting 'new' projects which take time to bed in.

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?

13.1 The Soil Association seeks solutions that balance the needs of all: society, consumers, business, the natural environment and farm animals, both in the UK and globally. We work with those businesses and community initiatives which are putting organic principles into practice. We help policy makers both with pragmatic next steps and with adjusting the economic and legal framework to ensure that the right incentives are in place to encourage best practice to become the norm, not the exception.

13.2 We will continue to support organic farming through our advocacy work and role within the Scottish Organic Forum. We are working through the forum to develop the next organic action plan to take us through the next 5 years. This will need commitment and resources from a wide group of organisations across farming, growing, the supply chain and NGO community.

13.3 We will continue to support innovation, best practice and knowledge sharing between farmers and the wider community through our well regarded SRDP supported farming programmes.

13.4 We will continue to work in partnership to transform food culture and food systems through our successful Food for Life Scotland and Crofting Connections programmes and look to expand the reach of these.

27 Soil Association: http://www.soilassociation.org/innovativefarming/futurefarminginscotland
13.5 We are undertaking an independent evaluation of the Food for Life Scotland programme to help us build an evidence base for this approach and understand better what works best in practice.

14. How did you hear about this Discussion Document?

We were delighted that the discussion paper has been produced, as it responds to several of our concerns raised over the last few years about the ongoing application of the food policy, including the lack of ongoing expertise and ability to adapt to changing needs and opportunities (Food Commission) and the focus of resources and energy on export economics, rather than health of people and planet in Scotland (much better reflected in the vision and priorities outlined).