**CONSULTATION QUESTIONS**

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

   We believe it is of the utmost importance. Experiencing "good food" and developing the basic skills associated with growing and cooking are imperative not only for younger and future generations, but also for older age-groups who have never had these opportunities. Enjoying food both as an individual and with others can lead to a healthier, happier life. As well as being essential in terms of basic sustenance and nutrition, food is a great way of building community, self-confidence, independence and promoting wellbeing and good mental as well as physical health.

   However, it is vital to be clear on what "Good Food" actually means in environmental and social terms. It must describe not simply the journey from point of sale to point of consumption but include how and where food is grown and what we mean by enabling good choices, which is not the same as maximising access to everything all the time. Moreover, the vision set out for good food to be available to everyone will not be realised without an explicit and concerted effort to address health inequalities and combat food poverty.

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

   Success will be defined by a cultural shift from the attitude of "everything must be available all year round" to a more seasonal based understanding of choice, reductions in nutrition based health problems especially in the developmental and in the later stages of life, improved capacity for independent living especially amongst the most excluded, continually reducing carbon food miles and improved quality of food available from local sources.

   This will mean the delivery of initiatives that are accessible to everyone regardless of their circumstance, and an acknowledgement that there needs to be 'hands on' opportunities for individuals and community groups to inspire and be inspired. This will mean planning and financial backing along with a realisation that a range of activities should be designed for specific groups and even individuals, taking into account particular learning needs and the time associated with encouraging in individuals to take ownership of this change in their lives.

   Schools, hospitals and other community-based services will make food and meals available that are nutritious, healthy, fresh, environmentally sound and locally sourced wherever possible. There will be an emphasis on ensuring that the most vulnerable in our society have equal access to this food.

   Additionally, an increase in small, regional centres growing and selling food with access to these across different sections of society, would represent tangible progress. We should also encourage more workshops, not necessarily in formal education, such as cooking classes, involving both adults and children. Events and festivals celebrating locally-grown produce in towns and
villages across Scotland, driven by the community and schools, would strengthen the connection between individuals and where their food comes from, as well as helping local farmers and businesses.

Meaningful change will also entail improving and expanding upon the mechanisms in place, at both the supplier and customer level, to prevent food from going to waste unnecessarily.

Improvements to our food culture should be ongoing – there is no ultimate point of arrival - but we will have made significant progress when the myth has been dispelled that caring about food is only for individuals and families with a high disposable income.

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

We agree on the whole with the proposed vision, though in particular we recommend a greater commitment to tackling food poverty. Cyrenians welcomes the discussion document’s acknowledgement that Scotland needs to change its food culture, and combat the very high levels of diet-related poor health and obesity in this country. However, the document does not link these problems directly to the deprivation that continues to blight areas of Scotland, nor to glaring levels of inequality. Cyrenians has extensive experience working with individuals living below the ‘breadline’, who view food purely as a source of ‘fuel’, and are impoverished not just economically but also in their skills and understandings of basic cooking and health and nutrition. Any proposed vision for a ‘Good Food Scotland’ must acknowledge these stark realities, demonstrating a holistic understanding of food poverty, and its root causes and wider issues.

The document’s failure to mention food banks is striking at a time when these are multiplying and gaining a high public profile. While efforts must be focused on reducing the need for individuals to use services like food banks, Cyrenians nonetheless believes it is important that there are support structures in place that are accessible and not a source of stigmatisation. These must be sustainable food start-ups with well-trained staff and good connections with agencies and organisations. Further resources are necessary in terms of money and time, to better connect people to their food and where it comes from, rather than food simply being a hand-out. Volunteer-run food banks and donation drives should not be occupying the role that the welfare state should perform.

Added value would be in addressing the issues around surplus from the food industry and the extensive possibilities of ensuring that this ‘fit for purpose’ product is directed to improve the diet of people in need. Cyrenians operates a Food Redistribution project (FareShare), which provides good-quality, surplus food from the industry for organisations working with some of the most marginalised people in our communities. The project operates from four bases in Scotland and is currently working on expansion plans, and this could be a way of addressing food waste and food security. FareShare is exploring the possibility of additional centres being willing to act as hubs to improve access to food in terms of logistics and storage, and we now have a member of staff successfully sourcing food produced in Scotland. Furthermore, FareShare is currently in discussions with Edinburgh City Council to provide food for a Kids Breakfast Club before the start of school. These kind of projects would benefit
from further engagement with the food industry.

Where food cannot be redistributed for human consumption, innovative ways of preventing it reaching landfill sites should be explored. In Germany commercial food producers are legally required to ensure their food waste is recycled. This complicated but wholly worthwhile process extracts the basic materials needed to produce biodiesel as well as environmentally-friendly energy. During the recycling process, electricity and heat for 26,000 households is created, and organic fertilizer for agricultural use is also produced. It would be a bold and commendable statement of intent if the Scottish Government pursued similarly visionary solutions.

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

Our experience in working with a client group who are finding it difficult to survive has demonstrated that at this point people are often totally disconnected from food and diet and the focus is on ‘getting through the next crisis’.

Access to local, reasonably priced food is important, but in addition we need to ensure as a nation that we capture the imagination of individuals who have little or no familiarity with basic cooking skills, growing food, shopping, budgets, nor basic nutrition and food hygiene knowledge. It is imperative to build people’s confidence in cooking and growing food, to provide essential ‘hands on’ experience for individuals and small groups, with skilled tutors making the whole experience inspirational. Indeed, we regularly see first-hand how much pride people with little prior knowledge take in things like preparing a meal for themselves and others.

For many years, Cyrenians has run or supported cooking and food education classes. For example, through our FareShare project, we provide food for a Chef school for unemployed young people in Livingston, as well as for Living Well North Edinburgh, a community mental health organisation. As well as getting together to have lunch, Living Well runs basic cooking classes. A year after food was introduced to their sessions, we visited Living Well and were told of the huge difference sharing meals and cooking together had made, leading to raised noise and banter levels in the class, and fostering a new cohesiveness and camaraderie in the group. Our ‘From Crop to Pot’ programme has also been a brilliant success, and could be a model for future initiatives. NHS Community Gardens and our Good Food Project team up to use food grown at the Gardens for cooking classes at FareShare’s base in Leith. This model of ‘virtuous circles’ have an impact beyond the increased capacity for nutritional independence as they raise a real awareness of the issues of food source and the environmental cycle that are culture changing.

Our courses do a lot to help in these areas but we can only work with so many, and we recommend that Food Education should be a key priority in ‘Becoming a Good Food Nation’.

5. Are there any other essential steps we need to take before setting out on this journey?
In working towards a fairer and healthier Scotland, it will be essential to secure the involvement of local food and growing initiatives, ensuring that caring about food is for everyone regardless of their circumstances and budgets. Moreover, we should ensure that the food available to hospital patients and staff, schools and other social care services is fresh, healthy and environmentally sound.

The promotion of organic farming, which is absent from the document, would also be welcome. An estimated 20% to 40% of UK fruit and vegetables are rejected before they even reach the shops – mostly because they do not match the supermarkets’ excessively strict cosmetic standards. We must end our overdependence on poor quality, mass-produced supermarket meals, and the often misleading advertising and branding that promotes them. More control is therefore needed over advertising that goes against our key messages.

We must also reiterate the reality of the way that some of Scotland’s poorest communities relate to food, and the need to be mindful of this going forward. For people wondering where their next meal is going to come from, health and nutrition is not a consideration. Improved access to quality food would mean those key core health and wellbeing objectives could become part of their lifestyle choices.

The somewhat idealised images in the document suggest a remoteness from food poverty and do not demonstrate a willingness to reach out to all sections of society. It is right to be visionary and think big, but these images must connect tangibly and explicitly with how they can be realised across society. Moreover, much of the document is targeted towards retail and manufacturers. More attention should be given to consumers, and to recognition of differences in income-levels.

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

A Food Commission could help by engaging at an early stage with local food initiatives which are currently making a significant difference in their communities, acknowledging that this has often been a challenging journey with little or no financial support. It should be a catalyst for change not an arbiter of failure. Drawing from what has been learnt in existing projects would benefit new initiatives setting out on this challenging journey. A practical support network would also enhance the work of the Commission, but this takes time and financial support for community groups and the voluntary sector and this should be acknowledged.

Furthermore, the Food Commission should be transparent in all of its actions and appointments. The board should have representation from the third sector, as well as from all the different sectors, communities, authorities, and organisations impacted by its decisions. The Commission will require rigorous processes of evaluation and accountability, on how it will report back. What mechanisms will be in place for delivering key messages? It is crucial to avoid a top-down approach that would undermine the aspiration for increased localism expressed in the document’s priority areas.

7. In what areas should indicators be set to check we are on track towards our goals?
• Committed involvement from every sector. A Food Commission that represents the cross-section of interests and priorities would help in this respect

• Reduction in health challenges related to poor diet

• Reduction in food miles of food for sale

• Development of community asset models with multiple health and well-being impacts

• Increased community gardens, access to allotments and use of brownfield sites for community growing

• Increased community food outlets connected to community growing projects

• Cultural changes in social attitude surveys about choice, access and alignment to seasons

• Statistical information on reduction of food to landfill

• Statistical information on food diverted from landfill to improve the diet of the most marginalised section of our communities. This is a central concern of Cyrenians’ FareShare project; we are constantly exploring new and innovative ways to reduce surplus and improve access to food, and it would be an added help to be able to track wider trends in the industry

• Increased access to Farmers Markets for small local growers with the introduction of stall pricing

• Increase in individuals achieving the Elementary Cooking Skills qualification

• Increase in shopping/budgeting/cooking/growing initiatives delivered by local community organisations, such as Royal Environmental Health Institute of Scotland (REHIS) approved courses. These include sessions in Secondary Schools using leftovers to makes healthy meals from scratch

• Wider public participation in ‘Becoming a Good Food Nation’ through a pledge campaign or other response to marketing. Indeed, there is significant potential here, as discussion groups on ‘Becoming a Good Food Nation’ have been very well attended, with a wide range of people represented and lots of engaging questions and perspectives. Some kind of marketing campaign would help to build upon this interest

• Addressing the special needs of groups who have no aspirations in respect of food and diet issues

• Setting targets for the proportion of local, fresh, healthy and environmentally sound food that is served in hospitals, schools and other social care services
8. What are your views on the different approaches that could be taken to help us become a Good Food Nation?

The different approaches are positive, but the challenge will be linking them to ensure a total understanding of each and every area of work and where expertise and resources can be shared, enhancing the journey towards becoming 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?

- Local Food and Food in the public sector

We welcome the prioritising of Local Food generally as well as the pledge to champion fresh, seasonal, local and sustainable produce in the public sector, with an emphasis on ethical sourcing.

Our Cyrenians Community Gardens Project with the NHS would be an appropriate model to implement more widely in hospitals and schools across Scotland.

- A children’s food policy

Cyrenians welcomes the attention devoted to the interconnected issues of health, eating habits, and wellbeing of children in Scotland. However, we wonder whether it is necessary to have specific policies for children and not other age-groups or sections of society, as this might miss out on mutual benefits across age-groups. It might be preferable to have age-specific targets within one cohesive framework.

- Good food choices

Reduction of inequalities and food poverty must be at the heart of efforts to create long-lasting behavioural change. A shared agenda must be developed, which is as representative as possible. Education, system change and legislation must combine in their efforts to support behaviour change. Change in choice will come through the opportunity to experience the alternatives. That means the campaign of choice needs to linked to the development of the kinds of locally based, easily accessible community growing and retail assets outlined above.

- Continued economic growth

Cyrenians favours a long-term future vision which emphasises economic sustainability and resilience rather than growth. In the long-run, economic prosperity is interconnected with environmental sustainability. The creativity and enterprise in the success stories detailed in the document are encouraging, but it must be recognised that economic
growth itself does not combat food poverty or poor dietary habits. There must be nationwide recognition that food (growing, eating, sharing, shopping) has never been a priority for a large number of people who are living on the margins of our communities, and that engagement with this group must take the form of ‘hands on’ community-led activity.

10. Which other areas would you prioritise?

- Food Poverty
- Community growing and learning initiatives
- Surplus food from the industry that can be diverted to improve the diet of the most vulnerable members of our community
- Continuing to build on current initiatives focusing on food available in schools, hospitals and other social care services

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

Engagement across all sectors with the aim of developing an understanding of the challenges, and acknowledgement that there will be differing priorities but also a sharing of the journey with mutual support. A clear articulation that this is a cultural, health and economic change that can be achieved by small changes in choice and activity by many people as well as the larger infrastructure and policy decisions involved.

12. What else should be considered?

The question of how this aspirational journey will be funded to ensure success and also ensure that the work is sustainable.

The implementation of the Living Wage in the Food Sector, where low wages and zero hour contracts are too common.

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?

We will continue to deliver positive outcomes on the journey to ensure that the people we work with have a positive ‘food experience’ including:

- Growing food at NHS Community Gardens and Cyrenians Farm and increasing the availability of this food to patients, staff, project participants and visitors, as well as the sale of this food to the local community with greater involvement from local volunteers and interest groups who have very little experience of growing food.
- Developing the availability of secondary produce from Cyrenians Farm
- Development of Cyrenians FareShare Project by engaging with the food industry to ensure that surplus ‘fit for purpose’ food is diverted from
landfill, taking account of all the issues around food safety. An established system within FareShare facilitates the delivery of food to organisations offering services to people with complex needs. This ensures that this food is ‘a hand up and not a hand out’ as the food provision is being delivered by a range of organisations working with individuals offering support on the journey to a settled lifestyle.

- Input to the development plans for FareShare Scotland.
- Development of REHIS (Royal Environment Health Institute of Scotland) approved courses including the new Elementary Cooking Skills Course which has been piloted by Cyrenians and has now been accredited. This new qualification will for some individuals offer a qualification and possible steps to further learning and employment within the industry.
- Subject to funding an increase in the ‘Crop to Pot’ initiative which involves growing and cooking.

14. How did you hear about this Discussion Document?
RESPONSE FROM CYRENIANS

RECIPE FOR SUCCESS: Scotland’s National Food and Drink Policy – Becoming a Good Food Nation

Background information

Cyrenians is an independent Scottish Charity working in the field of homelessness and social exclusion. We have a track record in pioneering creative solutions to the challenges faced by individuals living on the margins of our communities.

We also have an environmental brief, seeing the connection between valuing people and valuing our planet as part of the solution to a sustainable and happy future for society.

We currently deliver a range of services with the specific services noted below, having a particular interest in feeding back information which we trust will be a helpful response to the Recipe for Success documentation.

Cyrenians Farm - Cyrenians Farm is a Social Enterprise located just west of Edinburgh. This project has a focus on ‘growing food and growing people’. As well as a working farm producing local fruit and vegetables and creating secondary products such as jams, chutneys etc., Cyrenians Farm is also home to a community of vulnerable young people, many with backgrounds of homelessness and complex needs issues. The Farm grows food and helps the Community to grow people, providing a range of opportunities for individuals, including young trainees, to develop skills and confidence as a step towards a settled lifestyle.

We enjoy the help and support of volunteers from many and varied backgrounds and cultures, who come to help on the farm. There is the opportunity of working alongside some of our residents and trainees and this can be a most rewarding experience and a ‘hands on’ learning experience in relation to from ‘crop to plate’.

Over 80% of our young people say their experience at Cyrenians Farm improved their self-confidence, self-esteem, motivation and ability to manage their own lives.

The Farm has a regular stall at local Farmers Markets and also supplies Retailers.

www.cyreniansfarm.org.uk

Cyrenians Good Food - The Good Food Project’s services include:

- A Food Redistribution Project (FareShare) which collects good food that would otherwise be wasted, and redistributes it to member organisations.
Cooking Classes and a range of 'hands on' activities which encourage healthy eating, and promote social inclusion. These new skills also help participants increase their confidence and understanding of food.

Practical opportunities for training and work experience through a range of social enterprise activities relating to food.

Advice and support for those trying to improve the lives of others through the provision of good food and good health.

REHIS accredited training centre offering courses in food hygiene, food and health; and training in the delivery of practical cooking sessions along with the newly accredited Elementary Cooking Skills Course.

www.cyreniansgoodfood.org.uk

**NHS Community Gardens Project** - The Community Gardens is an NHS Lothian initiative with a mission to support patient recovery and create opportunities for good food and healthy lifestyles for the local communities in which NHS Lothian hospitals are based. The gardens have a particular focus on welcoming people who are experiencing mental or physical health problems, disadvantage, isolation or poverty and linking local communities to local hospitals.

Service delivery includes:

- Gardening: growing and eating local food while building community and developing skills.
- Support to hospital patients and staff and other community-based participants on their journey of recovery, gaining therapeutic benefit from being in outdoor biodiversity greenspaces, including horticulture, volunteering, employability and independent living skills.
- Supporting all participants to develop their skills in growing and eating food produced at the garden, increasing their awareness and enjoyment of this process and how it can contribute to increased health and wellbeing.
- Walks, workshops, accredited learning programmes, open days, sales of produce including local farmers market, restaurant and greengrocer, hospital events, and a range of 'hands on' activities which encourage healthy eating and promote social inclusion.
- Advice and support for those trying to improve their lives or the lives of others through the provision of good food and good health.

www.royaledinburghcommunitygardens.org.uk
https://www.facebook.com/rehcg/info
https://www.facebook.com/MidlothianCommunityHospitalGarden

**Response to questions:**

As you will note from the above information, Cyrenians continue to have an active input into 'Becoming a Good Food Nation’. In the days ahead we hope it will be possible to increase our involvement and play a significant role in the delivery of this initiative, and also to share our learning from projects that have been operational for more than fifteen years.

**QUESTION SUMMARY**

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

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not only for younger and future generations, but also for older age-groups who have never had these opportunities. Enjoying food both as an individual and with others can lead to a healthier, happier life. As well as being essential in terms of basic sustenance and nutrition, food is a great way of building community, self-confidence, independence and promoting wellbeing and good mental as well as physical health.

However, it is vital to be clear on what “Good Food” actually means in environmental and social terms. It must describe not simply the journey from point of sale to point of consumption but include how and where food is grown and what we mean by enabling good choices, which is not the same as maximising access to everything all the time. Moreover, the vision set out for good food to be available to everyone will not be realised without an explicit and concerted effort to address health inequalities and combat food poverty.

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Additionally, an increase in small, regional centres growing and selling food with access to these across different sections of society, would represent tangible progress. We should also encourage more workshops, not necessarily in formal education, such as cooking classes, involving both adults and children. Events and festivals celebrating locally-grown produce in towns and villages across Scotland, driven by the community and schools, would strengthen the connection between individuals and where their food comes from, as well as helping local farmers and businesses.

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4. How would your life be better? What does being a Good Food Nation mean in your locality?
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- Cultural changes in social attitude surveys about choice, access and alignment to seasons
- Statistical information on reduction of food to landfill
- Statistical information on food diverted from landfill to improve the diet of the most marginalised section of our communities. This is a central concern of Cyrenians’ FareShare project; we are constantly exploring new and innovative ways to reduce surplus and improve access to food, and it would be an added help to be able to track wider trends in the industry
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linked to the development of the kinds of locally based, easily accessible community growing and retail assets outlined above

- Continued economic growth?

Cyrenians favours a long-term future vision which emphasises economic sustainability and resilience rather than growth. In the long-run, economic prosperity is interconnected with environmental sustainability. The creativity and enterprise in the success stories detailed in the document are encouraging, but it must be recognised that economic growth itself does not combat food poverty or poor dietary habits. There must be nationwide recognition that food (growing, eating, sharing, shopping) has never been a priority for a large number of people who are living on the margins of our communities, and that engagement with this group must take the form of ‘hands on’ community-led activity.

10. Which other areas would you prioritise?

- Food Poverty
- Community growing and learning initiatives
- Surplus food from the industry that can be diverted to improve the diet of the most vulnerable members of our community
- Continuing to build on current initiatives focusing on food available in schools, hospitals and other social care services

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

Engagement across all sectors with the aim of developing an understanding of the challenges, and acknowledgement that there will be differing priorities but also a sharing of the journey with mutual support. A clear articulation that this is a cultural, health and economic change that can be achieved by small changes in choice and activity by many people as well as the larger infrastructure and policy decisions involved.

12. What else should be considered?

The question of how this aspirational journey will be funded to ensure success and also ensure that the work is sustainable.

The implementation of the Living Wage in the Food Sector, where low wages and zero hour contracts are too common.

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?

We will continue to deliver positive outcomes on the journey to ensure that the people we work with have a positive ‘food experience’ including:

- Growing food at NHS Community Gardens and Cyrenians Farm and increasing the availability of this food to patients, staff, project participants and visitors, as well as the sale of this food to the local community with greater involvement from local volunteers and interest groups who have very little experience of growing food.
- Developing the availability of secondary produce from Cyrenians Farm
- Development of Cyrenians FareShare Project by engaging with the food industry to ensure that surplus ‘fit for purpose’ food is diverted from
landfill, taking account of all the issues around food safety. An established system within FareShare facilitates the delivery of food to organisations offering services to people with complex needs. This ensures that this food is ‘a hand up and not a hand out’ as the food provision is being delivered by a range of organisations working with individuals offering support on the journey to a settled lifestyle.

- Input to the development plans for FareShare Scotland.
- Development of REHIS (Royal Environment Health Institute of Scotland) approved courses including the new Elementary Cooking Skills Course which has been piloted by Cyrenians and has now been accredited. This new qualification will for some individuals offer a qualification and possible steps to further learning and employment within the industry.
- Subject to funding an increase in the ‘Crop to Pot’ initiative which involves growing and cooking.

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