CONSULTATION QUESTIONS

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

The Poverty Alliance is supportive of this ambition but believes that a commitment to address food poverty in Scotland must but be made central in order to ensure that everyone is able to equally participate in, and benefit from living in a Good Food Nation. Recent research into the growth of food poverty and the rise of food banks in the UK has concluded that the UK Government is in breach of its international legal obligations in respect of the right to food. Protecting and promoting the human right to food should be embedded within Scotland’s food policy and should be fundamental to the vision of a Good Food Nation.

We support the statement on p.20 which recognises that to achieve success will require efforts; ‘to counter the perception that caring about food should only be for those that can afford to do so. Healthy, sustainable, delicious food should be accessible to everyone.’ The current growth of food banks in Scotland is a clear indicator of the levels of efforts which will be required to achieve this.

Scotland's food policy cannot be considered in isolation from its social, health and economic policies. A coordinated approach, informed by the human right to food, is required in order to ensure food security for all within a sustainable food system.

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

A Good Food Nation would be recognised as one in which everyone has access to affordable, healthy food. People should be able to access food which meets their dietary needs and preferences in culturally acceptable ways. While the Poverty Alliance recognises that some level of emergency food aid provision should be available for people in crisis, the rise of food banks in Scotland is a clear indication of growing inequalities and of the failure of both state benefits and paid work to provide adequate income to meet people’s basic needs. A Good Food Nation would be one in which no one has to rely on food banks in order to feed themselves.

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

The Poverty Alliance is concerned at the lack of attention paid by the proposed vision to social justice issues in food. A vision of a Good Food Nation should be one which recognises food as a matter of human rights. Therefore it should state, not only that; ‘Everyone will know what constitutes

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good food and why’, but crucially that everyone will – to echo the definition of food security - ‘at all times, have physical and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life’ (World Food Summit 2006).

The realities of the growth of food poverty in Scotland over recent years are stark. In the 12 month period to March 2014, 71,428 people were served by Trussell Trust food banks in Scotland, up from 5,726 two years previously. It is necessary that the proposed vision recognises this current context of growing food poverty and its impacts at an individual, family, community, and national level. The Poverty Alliance believes that food banks are an indication of both the erosion of welfare system as an adequate safety net, and of the state’s failure to protect the right to food. We recommend that the proposed vision sets out clear aims to reverse the rise of food banks in Scotland. In order to ensure the vision stated on p.18 that; ‘By 2025, people from all walks of life will take pride and pleasure in the food served day by day in Scotland’, there must be explicit steps taken to address the structural factors which currently exclude significant proportions of Scotland’s population from sharing in this vision. The vision should also acknowledge the drivers of food poverty – specifically low wages and the current changes to the social security system (the punitive sanctions regime in particular) – and that without efforts to address these at a UK and Scottish Government level, Scotland will not become a Good Food Nation. As is stated on page 19 of this document; ‘Food impacts on every aspect of our daily lives’. Therefore the proposed vision for a Good Food Nation should recognise not only the importance of food for health, but also for social, civic and cultural participation. In a Good Food Nation everyone should be able to participate in the country’s rich and diverse food culture.

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

The Poverty Alliance is a network of community, voluntary, statutory and other organisations whose vision is of a sustainable Scotland based on social and economic justice, with dignity for all, where poverty and inequalities are not tolerated and are challenged. Within this context, being a Good Food Nation would mean a guarantee that those currently living in, or threatened by, food poverty have the necessary support and resources to access the food which meets their needs and preferences in ways which promote dignity and equality.

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

Steps should be taken to engage with current research on food poverty in Scotland, the UK, and elsewhere. There should also be engagement with those with direct experience of food poverty, and the agencies and organisations supporting and advocating for them. An understanding of the factors influencing food access and food choices of people living in poverty
would help develop a vision of a more inclusive Good Food Nation. It would also help shape the indicators of success and development of an action plan to ensure everyone has full access to and participation in a Good Food Nation.

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

The Food Commission should include the voice of people with lived experience of food poverty. It should seek to better understand the drivers and impacts of food poverty across Scotland through commissioned research. It should work closely with other public bodies, including local government and the NHS, as well as the voluntary and community sector, to ensure coordination of efforts to address food poverty in Scotland.

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

Specific indicators (both qualitative and quantitative) on food poverty levels should be included. These indicators should be developed with the involvement of those with knowledge of the issues – specifically people with direct experience of food poverty.

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

The Poverty Alliance believes that a lack of attention to the structural causes of health inequalities and food poverty has limited the effectiveness of previous efforts to improve Scotland’s relationship with its food. As stated above, we welcome a commitment to approaches which recognise that healthy, sustainable and delicious food should be accessible to everyone. Approaches should involve collaboration with public, voluntary and community sector agencies to effectively address these structural barriers.

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?

As stated above, the Poverty Alliance believes that Scotland’s Food Policy should prioritise the social justice issue of access to sustainable food. Regarding the proposed areas for action, we have a number of comments:

- The Poverty Alliance welcomes the proposed focus on food in the public sector and agrees that public expenditure on food must achieve its potential to impact on community health, wellbeing and social justice through access to quality, sustainable food.
With more than half a children in the UK now living in families who are unable to afford a minimum acceptable diet\textsuperscript{2}, a focus on developing a children’s food policy has potential to contribute to addressing growing levels of child poverty in Scotland. Commitment to working across a range of sectors to ensuring every child has access to healthy, sustainable food will be essential.

In focusing on local food, the Poverty Alliance believes that Scotland’s poorest communities should be prioritised so that they are not shut out of this local food movement. We welcome the recognition of the need to extend its reach beyond the more advantaged communities. In relation to the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Bill and the local food growing strategies it outlines, we would like to see more provision aimed at narrowing inequalities between those communities which are already empowered to take advantage of such opportunities and initiatives, and those which will require more support.

We would like to see more attention paid to the structural, environmental, economic and social factors which shape individual food choices and behaviours. People living in poverty face complex barriers to making healthy food choices and these need to be better understood. By only considering food issues in terms of individual behaviours and consumer choices, we risk side-lining discussions of structural and material inequalities which drive food poverty. As Lambie-Mumford, a key academic commentator on the current context of food poverty in the UK, suggests; ‘Responses to food poverty in the United Kingdom have consistently been framed by a behavioural, consumerist interpretations: the issue is seen to be down to budgeting, food and cooking ignorance, and responses are directed through promoting knowledge and skills.’\textsuperscript{3} It is important that becoming a Good Food Nation does not restrict the location of solutions to the individual level, and looks to identify and influence both downstream and the upstream determinants of food choices for poor households.

The ambition for continued economic growth should be reviewed within a context of environment and social justice. Efforts to address social and economic inequalities should be prioritised.

10. Which other areas would you prioritise?

It is vital that a concerted effort is made to coordinate across food, public health, social and economic policy areas in order to bring an end to food poverty in Scotland. Work to achieve this joined up approach should be prioritised. As stated above, we believe that taking a preventative approach to food poverty and the growth of food banks in Scotland should be an


explicit priority area for action.

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

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?

The Poverty Alliance is currently carrying out Scottish Government commissioned research on emergency food aid provision in Scotland. This research will be published in January 2015. The findings will improve knowledge of the roles which emergency food aid providers play and how they connect clients to other services. The final outcomes will help emergency food aid providers to better link clients to mainstream services, and will make recommendations on addressing the growth of food poverty in Scotland. We will look to share these outcomes as widely as possible and to work with other to continue to better understand and campaign for change to tackle food poverty in Scotland.

14. How did you hear about this Discussion Document?

Comments