CONSULTATION QUESTIONS

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

Zero Waste Scotland believes the aim of becoming a Good Food Nation is very important.

Zero Waste Scotland is Scotland’s change programme for resource efficiency. It helps individuals and organisations to reduce waste, increase energy efficiency and use water responsibly – all as part of a journey towards a sustainable low-carbon economy.

In our response we will focus primarily on those areas which are directly relevant to our expertise in waste reduction and sustainable resource use and our role in informing and supporting the delivery of Scottish Government policies in these areas. However, we do recognise that food, and in particular the cultural dimension of our food system, is a complex area with many inter-connected drivers and constraining factors, so we welcome and support the broad and holistic focus of the vision and associated priority areas.

In particular we welcome the recognition that economic growth and a sustainable food culture are not mutually exclusive, and indeed that making progress in the areas of sustainability and becoming a society which values food, can positively impact on productivity and employment.

More efficient use of resources in the food and drink sector has a major role to play in achieving national and international sustainability goals. For example:

- Food is responsible for nearly one-third of consumption-based greenhouse gas emissions within the EU across its full lifecycle.\(^1\)
- For each tonne of food wasted in manufacture at a UK level, there is a cost of c£900, made up of the cost of food, energy and water costs, disposal costs and lost profit.\(^2\) So resource efficiency is an important route to improved profitability, as well as increased sales and export growth.
- Scottish households end up wasting around one-fifth of the food they buy, most of which could have been avoided and which costs an average of £470 per household per year. This also accounts for greenhouse gas emissions of 1.7 million tonnes CO\(_2\) equivalent per

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Food security is at risk from a ‘perfect storm’ of a rapidly increasing population, a shift towards more resource-intensive diets, and there being less land available for food production globally due to climate change, soil degradation and reduced global availability of nutrients required for high crop yields.

The water ‘footprint’ of avoidable food waste in Scotland is 520 million m3/year, representing 6% of Scotland’s total water requirement. At a UK-level, 62% of the water footprint of agricultural products is overseas, often in water-stressed regions.

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

Thoughts on specific indicators relevant to our areas of expertise are included in response to Q7.

More broadly, our view of a Good Food Nation would be one in which:

- GVA and export values of the food and drink sector continue to grow sustainably, creating jobs and enabling surpluses to be reinvested in continual productivity gains.
- Sustainability is, with strong justification, a cornerstone of the brand values associated with world-class Scottish produce, both at home and abroad.
- Resources (energy, water and raw materials) are used efficiently across the food and drink supply chain, from farm to fork, through widespread implementation of practical resource efficiency measures, and through investing in innovations which design waste out of the food system.
- Avoidable food waste is minimised and unavoidable food waste is captured and processed in ways which retain value and ensure nutrients are returned to food production where possible.
- People in Scotland are able to articulate a more positive relationship with food, with an understanding of the food system, its environmental impacts and how they can help to minimise them, including by buying more Scottish produce.
- Retailers and brands play a proactive role in reducing impacts along their supply chain, including helping their customers make more sustainable food choices.
- The carbon footprint of food consumption in Scotland is reduced.

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

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The proposed vision is inclusive, credible and appropriately ambitious.

One area which could be drawn out more is the global dimension around food security and the development of resilient, resource efficient supply chains. This is an important factor in tying together economic and broader cultural/environmental drivers.

This would require adding an outward-looking vision statement around how Scotland’s influence is heard globally and how it acts as an exemplar for a more sustainable food system, beyond just using this for brand advantage in export markets.

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

n/a

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

The complexity of behavioural influences on food culture is a key barrier to achieving the Good Food Nation vision and needs to be understood as fully as possible. Zero Waste Scotland has extensive insight into the behavioural causes of food waste, but our experience in this area does suggest that attitudes and behaviours around food are cross-cutting (i.e. waste behaviours are a function of wider cultural practice on food).

There is also a need to ensure the whole supply chain is fully engaged, including ‘post-gate’ logistics providers and food retailers as these sectors have the potential to radically change how we consume food and how we manage the environmental impacts associated with it.

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

We welcome the idea of a Commission to provide coordinated, high-profile leadership on this complex issue.

Importantly its focus should be broader than that of Scotland Food and Drink (SF&D) and must complement but not duplicate work already underway by SF&D and its members.

The proposed inclusion of a Commissioner(s) with expertise in sustainability is welcome. We consider that should include individuals with a detailed understanding of issues around food security, climate change and resource use, and an ability to influence on these matters. Zero Waste Scotland would be happy to propose Commissioner(s) to satisfy this remit.
Appropriate consideration should also be given in the make-up of the Commission to SMEs, which make up over 90% of Scotland’s food and drink businesses, and who could benefit extensively by improving their resource efficiency.

There is also an important consideration about the ability of the Commissioners to engage and influence at UK, EU and global levels.

In terms of the Commission’s priority-setting role it will be important to agree shared goals from the outset to build the right partnerships.

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

The overall Good Food Nation vision will need to be underpinned by a number of high-level indicators which in turn can inform specific and measurable sub targets.

For example, with regard to food sustainability, a suitable high level indicator could be a measure of footprinting (carbon or multi-resource based) or resource productivity (e.g. resource inputs per unit of GDP, as proposed in the recent European Commission circular economy package). This in turn could inform more specific targets such as:

- Energy efficiency, decarbonisation and heat recovery with the F&D industry
- Household and Commercial (inc. supply chain) food waste reduction and recycling
- Packaging impact reduction targets
- Supply chain resilience targets (reduction in critical resource inputs)
- Displacement of inorganic fertilisers / more efficient use of plant nutrients / increase in nutrients recovered from food waste that return to food production.

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

We agree with the proposed approaches in respect of making this an energetic and positive engagement process, and about ensuring equity and social cohesion throughout.

We would also make some additional points with regard to the overall approach, specifically that it should be:

1. **Evidence-led**
Zero Waste Scotland has considerable evidence on the causes and impacts of waste and resource use in the Food and Drink sector and the onward impacts for householders and the supply chain. We know these are
complex and interrelated issues and it is important to understand these issues in some detail in order to avoid any unintended consequences.

2. **Solutions-focused**
Zero Waste Scotland, through both its consumer- and business- facing activity, is focused on removing barriers that prevent adoption of resource efficient behaviours, be that providing kitchen skills training at community level, providing affordable finance to SMEs to make energy efficiency improvements, or pump-priming innovative technologies to recover nutrients from food waste. We consider that a strong, practical, ‘hands on’ approach is important in addressing issues around food culture and sustainability.

3. **Voluntary-first**
The Good Food Nation vision is right to highlight the importance of collective action to achieve goals. Zero Waste Scotland supports a number of collaborative programmes designed to improve resource efficiency across key sectors, including the Courtauld Commitment, the Hospitality and Food Service Agreement, and the Product Sustainability Forum. We believe voluntary agreements of this nature can be a powerful catalyst for change. However, there is also a pragmatic role for legislative approaches where change is required over a short timescale or where ‘laggards’ are needed to catch up with ‘leaders’. The Waste (Scotland) Regulations 2012 are a good example of proportionate regulation being used to catalyse a transformation in the use of food waste as a resource.

4. **Delivered by ‘Team Scotland’**
The collaborative approach to delivering the vision should in particular foster closer working between Scotland’s key public agencies, delivery bodies and industry groups. Zero Waste Scotland is part of a similar approach to progressing the Scottish Government's circular economy programme, which includes a focus on the food and drink industry, and we have previously funded the development of the first industry-wide Sustainability Strategy (Making the Link) within SF&D.

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?

Yes we agree these are priority areas for focus

10. Which other areas would you prioritise?

Food security and food sustainability are cross-cutting themes across the five priorities, and while this is appropriate, it would be helpful that there is a coordinating narrative or common understanding across all.
Within the economic growth priority there could be greater consideration to the benefits of a more circular economy approach that 'cycles' nutrients and other resources effectively within the food system and wider economy, thereby increasing resilience and mitigating resource input risks, e.g. for phosphorus which is a critical resource.

There are also opportunities for immediate productivity improvements within the food and drink sector through implementing resource efficiency measures through the supply chain, enabling increased profits through means other than sales and export growth.

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

Building on our response to Q8 we would recommend using voluntary approaches to catalyse change within specific industry segments and across supply chains (or supply ‘loops’).

We would highlight successful measures like the Courtaulds Commitment and the Product Sustainability Forum. These approaches can build on those already taken in specific sub-sectors e.g. the Dairy Sector Roadmap or Ambition 2025: the Scottish Whisky Sector Strategy.

Within this we recommend taking a ‘hotspots’ approach to identify the interventions within a supply chain where the greatest impacts can be achieved.

We would also support the use of behaviour change initiatives, blending communications and grassroots engagement activities, such as our Love Food Hate Waste initiative. There are undoubted opportunities to align messaging and communications to consumers around issues of food sustainability and we would support Scottish Government and other partners in this task.

12. What else should be considered?

The global dimension, especially links to international efforts focused on food sustainability e.g. UK, EU, UNEP and FAO.

Social justice considerations and the impact of resource availability /constraints on communities, especially in the developing world.

Land management and measures to mitigate the impact of soil degradation and promote healthy soils rich in soil carbon and plant uptake nutrients.

Promoting seasonality and discouraging high-impact out-of-season produce.

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 ensure our programmes align and support the aims outlined in Becoming a Good Food Nation.

14. How did you hear about this Discussion Document?

We attended the launch event in Edinburgh