CONSULTATION QUESTIONS

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

10. Which other areas would you prioritise?

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

12. What else should be considered?

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?

14. How did you hear about this Discussion Document?
Bread Matters’ Response to
Scotland’s National Food and Drink Policy:
Becoming a Good Food Nation

Bread Matters Limited is a small enterprise in the Scottish Borders. Our breadmaking courses, established in 2003, bring visitors from across Scotland, the UK and throughout the world. Throughout our activities, we promote the social, economic, cultural and health benefits of making bread using slow fermentation and grain grown and milled in the local region.

Campaigning for more nutritious bread, a more socially just food system, organic production and ‘more jobs per loaf’ are integral parts of our work. We are currently developing a new organisation Scotland The Bread that brings together our programme of research with the development of community action, infrastructure and artisan skills needed to make nutritious bread available to all Scottish citizens.

Bread Matters is pleased to have this opportunity to comment on the Scottish Government’s paper ‘Becoming a Good Food Nation’ and we set out our comments below.

1 The Proposed Vision

1.1 We acknowledge the development of a more joined-up food and drink policy in Scotland and the progress in many areas since the publication of ‘Recipe for Success’. Particularly welcome are the greater emphasis on feeding people well and a shift of focus away from exports as the principal way to prosper as a nation.

1.2 By its nature, a vision must be generalist and this one includes many of the important elements that we need to consider. However, it fails to address the fundamental issues of the way our food is grown and produced and how Scotland values, utilises and preserves its natural capital.

1.3 To the phrase ‘People from every walk of life…’ we suggest adding ‘and at every stage of life…’ This would include adults and particularly older people who, like the very young, often have their food chosen for them, have small appetites and specific nutritional and health requirements. Older people are also likely to suffer the ill-effects of the poor nutritional quality and unappetising nature of the ‘catered’ meal.

2 The Focus, Scope and Ingredients

2.1 Retailing and manufacturing receive significant attention in the policy, whereas farming and agriculture do not. The policy is silent on the matter of how Scotland is to establish a body of knowledge and explicit values that define ‘good’, ‘healthy’ and ‘sustainably-produced’ food.

2.2 We regard it as essential that the Scottish Government adduces robustly independent evidence and uses it to develop strategy. Setting specific goals and targets for organic...
production and a policy on genetically-modified food are needed to ensure that terms such as ‘sustainable’ and ‘local’ are not usurped by vested commercial interests. *Local food* certainly merits the priority given to it in the policy, but has none of the social, environmental or health attributes it suggests when it describes locally-produced meat fed on GM crops from ghost-fields in the global South.

2.3 The primary production, the growing of our food, is the point at which it is connected inextricably to the land and to the environment. It is also the point at which reliable access to (and sovereignty over) vital resources can be understood as an entitlement and a human right. Access to land on which to grow sufficient, nourishing food is an essential component of the right to food.

2.4 We support an approach that includes health, environmental impact, economic activity and land use in one coherent system. The inclusion of land use in our approach to bread that is made by, with and for communities draws together the concepts of fairness, health, ecology and food sovereignty.

3 A Food Commission

3.1 We welcome the intention to appoint a Scottish Food Commission. The most important characteristics of a commission are that it should have true independence and the ability to implement its proposals or to make findings on whether, for example, a principle that it upholds has been breached. Advocating for the individual’s or the community’s right to sufficient, nutritious food, would seem to be an appropriate task for a commission. The description of a commission ‘advocating for the importance of food….to identify…and champion those measures’ seems weak by comparison. If a commission is in effect another forum for vested interests to decide the nation’s food policy, then we would not support it.

3.2 Local food champions would similarly need to be analytical and knowledgeable, representing the social goods and values by which we can evaluate both the benefits and the ‘true cost’ of our food.

4 A Children’s Food Policy and the International Context

4.1 Development of a food policy that has the wellbeing of all its citizens as its central concern seems a more valid focus than a policy relating to children alone. We recognise the significance of children’s food and the need for services and sectors (health, education, social care) to coalesce around food.

4.2 An approach that regards children as people, with all of the human rights and entitlements of other citizens under Scottish, UK, European and international statutes is more likely to build meaningful change. We suggest a shift of focus, for example, to children’s entitlements under the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child - to optimal health, to be properly informed, to be represented in issues relating to their welfare and to be protected from misinformation (food propaganda).

*Veronica Burke* on behalf of Bread Matters
Scotland The Bread
building a home-grown grain economy

What is it?
A project to re-establish a Scottish flour and bread supply that is healthy, equitable, locally-controlled and sustainable. Combining participatory research and action, it links plant breeders, farmers, millers, bakers, public health nutritionists and citizens. It will develop better grain in Scotland, grow and process it for lowest environmental impact and maximum nutritional benefit, support local economies with more jobs per loaf and help combat diet-related ill-health by making sure that this revitalised staple can be enjoyed by everyone.

Why is it needed?
Very little Scottish wheat goes directly into Scottish bread. Farmers, locked into a commoditised system over which they have little control, need ever higher yields in order to survive. Plant breeders and agrichemical input suppliers dance to this tune, ignoring grain quality (from the perspective of the human consumer) as much as the biological limits to growth. Climate change (and the need to de-carbonise the food system), the volatility of global markets in the face of population growth and financial speculation, and the public cost of highly processed food based on a narrow selection of commoditised ingredients all suggest the urgent need for change – from the ground up.

What is needed is a grain resilience, responsive justice and sovereignty healthy citizens. To achieve these societal gains requires new plant varieties attuned to agro-ecological land management and the dietary needs of people, especially those with limited appetite and no say in what they eat. Community-scale bakeries will require more skilful bakers using long fermentation which brings the best out of local flour. New distribution systems and public procurement priorities will ensure equitable access to good bread for all.
What will it do?

There are three main strands to the project: plant breeding for traits that prioritise human needs; establishing new (or adapting existing) mills and bakeries for primarily local distribution and conservation of nutritional quality; and community-level access to ensure that the new flour and baked products make a genuine contribution to improved diet and health. At each stage, the involvement of public health nutritionists will be important in setting standards and evaluating impact.

The project started on the ground in March 2013, by planting small samples of 19th century Scottish wheats on four organic farms to see what contribution they might make to developing new crosses, mixtures or landraces. Developments in non-hybrid grains (emmer, einkorn, spelt) and ‘heritage’ wheat varieties in several European countries provide further potential genetic resources. Recent work in Nordic countries with similar climatic challenges to Scotland’s are proving instructive.

As new candidate varieties appear we will define, with broad participation, new standards for the nutritional density and digestibility of Scottish breadmaking wheat, including the transmission of these characteristics through the milling and baking stages. Other grains that Scotland grows well – barley, oats and rye – will be part of the mix.

In parallel with work on cereal varieties, an appropriate processing infrastructure will be researched and stimulated. Small to medium scale, local reach and community-ownership will be significant features. ‘Fair trade’ arrangements are needed between farmers, millers and bakers to ensure equitable rewards and honest prices that also allow for the variability of the weather and grain quality. Local bakeries, rooted in their communities, can supply fresh, properly fermented bread to nearby customers, conserving nutritional value without recourse to the synthetic additives that are deemed essential for long-distance loaves. Product development and dissemination of new skills based on the science of long fermentation will be important to the success of an emerging Scottish-supplied bread sector.

To complete the chain, innovative new trading structures and distribution mechanisms will be researched and supported. There is a big need – and opportunity – in the ‘catered’ sector: schools, hospitals, prisons, care homes etc. where decisions on bread quality affect people and public health on a big scale.

Project collaborators (to date, July 2014)


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