



# Feeding the five million

CONFERENCE REPORT



# Contents

Introduction	4
1. Food in Scotland, 2023	5
2. Getting there from here	7
2.1. Five key ideas	7
2.2. Six enabling approaches	9
2.3. Four areas for intervention	11
3. First steps	17
4. Where we are now	18

# Executive Summary

Nourish Scotland undertook a two day enquiry in September 2013 to explore how Scotland could feed all its people well and sustainably.

This report summarises the work of eight teams over two days. The teams in turn drew on both their own sector knowledge and the evidence from 15 expert witnesses.

The report is intended to advance the debate between national government, the NHS and local government, the farming, food and drink industry, academia and civil society about the direction of travel for Scotland's food system – and how to achieve the step-change in sustainability which is required.

The conference recognised Scotland's achievements in the last few years and that there was a great deal to build on in policy and practice. However, while the conference had a positive and can do/must do approach, the consensus from participants was that a transformation is needed in Scotland's food system.

The key **findings** from the enquiry are:

Scotland's current food production and consumption system is on balance harmful to the environment, both in Scotland and in the wider world; and at a population level it is contributing to the burden of chronic disease and early death. While Scotland's food exports are a success story, food poverty and malnutrition in Scotland are on the increase.

Market forces on their own will not deliver public goods and public health from food and farming.

The enquiry's main **recommendation** is:

As a society we should refocus our food and farming systems on feeding everyone well, and on enhancing natural capital both in Scotland and in the countries from which we import food.

Food and farming in Scotland should look and feel very different in 2023. A widespread change in food culture will be visible and tangible, for example:

There will be stronger connections between citizens and food producers; and hundreds of new small food producers, both private businesses and social enterprises, forming a much more diverse mixed economy of food. A web of social enterprises, together with well-targeted public investments, mean that there are no food banks in Scotland.

A network of community food hubs across Scotland will play a useful role as physical places where people can get information and advice on food issues, and make useful local connections.

New organic and agroecological small farms, linked to cities and communities through mutually beneficial short supply chains will diversify food and landscapes and create 'sustainable intensification' in periruban areas – making the food system more resilient. There will be more farmland birds and an increase in soil carbon stocks.

We will have seen the beginnings of a historic shift in Scotland's industrial diet towards a 'new normal' of less refined sugar, less processed food, more fruit and vegetables, less and better meat. Public food will lead the way in this change, along with a 'Manifesto for a good Scots diet' developed by leading chefs. The burden of diet-related ill-health in Scotland will start to fall.

We will have reduced the carbon footprint of our food production, and adapted to domestic and international climate change through significant investment in agroforestry, greater self-sufficiency in food production and ways to buffer global food price volatility to maintain food security for low income households.

At European level, Scotland will have played a role in developing a Common Food Policy which aligns agriculture much more closely with goals of public health, social inclusion and climate change mitigation, and where the price of food reflects externalities.

This will require sustained leadership and investment from national government, along with actions at all levels – individuals and families, communities and business, NHS and local government.

New actors, new roles and new ways of thinking are all needed to achieve a deep change over the next decade.

The change we want to see will not happen by accident. While there are already examples across Scotland of innovation in sustainable food, these need to be scaled up and to become mainstream. National and local government need to start a virtuous circle of policy support for and investment in sustainable food systems which lead to changing patterns of thinking and eating and in turn to widespread adoption of new social, cultural and market norms.

# Introduction

Nourish Scotland is a not for profit organization working for a fairer and more sustainable food system in Scotland.

In September 2013 Nourish organized a two day enquiry into Scotland's food system. Participants came from various backgrounds including primary production (farmers, growers); food wholesalers, food retailers and food service businesses; NHS and local government; community food projects and NGOs; research and academia; and interested citizens.

Over the two days, participants worked in eight mixed teams. Their brief was to imagine and describe a better food system in Scotland in 2023; to 'backcast' from this to describe the policies, initiatives and events which contributed to the change over the decade; and to sketch out some first steps for 2014.

Each team had the help of a facilitator and a notetaker to keep the conversation on track.

To inform their thinking, teams heard evidence from 15 witnesses over the two days.

Witnesses were grouped into four main areas:

- Food poverty and the wider economy
- The global food system
- Food production in Scotland
- Food and health

Some of the key points from that evidence are listed in Section 5, and the full presentations of all speakers are available at [www.nourishscotland.org](http://www.nourishscotland.org)

There were also two 'open space' sessions where participants scheduled their own topic discussions, and a debate on food poverty chaired by Lesley Riddoch with speakers Robin McAlpine from the Common Weal project and Rachelle Faroul from Just Food New York.

# 1. Food in Scotland, 2023

There's plenty more work to do, but a lot has changed in our food system in the last ten years.

After the referendum nine years ago, the constitutional convention embedded food sovereignty principles in Scotland. Scottish Government established a sustainable food nation leadership group to align policies across different sectors, advise Ministers and chase progress. Stocks and flows of natural capital were included in the national accounts.

Greater fiscal powers in Scotland led to a unique opportunity for zero-based budgeting; some of the glass walls between spending on health, welfare and food came down, bringing a much greater focus on nutrition at key life stages. The new Single Outcome Agreement with local authorities included specific targets on food and encouraged stronger local leadership and a 'co-production' approach with local communities.

In the last decade, land reform, community empowerment and land value taxation have combined to diversify and democratize land ownership and management. Local authorities and other ethical investors have worked with communities to acquire land and to support new agroecological food producers.

The countryside has changed – in lowland areas as well as the crofting counties there are more examples of small scale, co-operative, biodiverse peopled landscapes. Agroforestry has blossomed, with wood pasture becoming widespread and rows of fruit and timber trees commonplace in arable fields. We're seeing more farmland birds and cleaner water. Soil health has

improved and the amount of carbon stored in Scottish soils has increased.

More farmers are now growing food for people rather than commodities for the market. There is a new relationship between farmers and communities, with more farmers seeing themselves and being recognised as providing a valuable community and environmental service. Farming and growing are seen by schools as a valued profession and farmers have opportunities for continuing professional development.

Organic farming and food are much more mainstream, with hundreds of new organic producers having come into the sector alongside conversion of existing farms. Overall, use of pesticides and reactive nitrogen has reduced.

Lay people are involved in setting and monitoring farm animal welfare standards, which are among the highest in the world.

Our diet has changed; we're eating more local, seasonal fruit and veg; less grain-fed meat. We've cut back on sugar in drinks and snacks. As well as making us healthier, this – along with the shift towards low carbon farming – has reduced our national foodprint, helping to mitigate climate change and sustain biodiversity.

The food system has become more resilient. Despite increased consumption, Scotland is self-sufficient in the fruit and vegetables we can grow, and there is more community scale infrastructure for food processing, retailing and distribution. The option of

physical storage of staples such as grain from good harvest years helps provide food security and price stability as part of Scotland's ongoing adaptation to global climate change.

There are stronger links between urban and rural areas – not just more urban and periurban production but also close connections between city communities and farms in remote and rural areas – short supply chains facilitated by reciprocal visits as well as communications technology.

The Scottish Government's focus on wellbeing alongside GDP meant that the benefits of a fairer and more sustainable food system became more visible.

Unlike ten years ago, there are no food banks, and everyone can feed themselves and their family well. Community food hubs provide a focal point for buying affordable food, food and diet advice, sharing skills and produce, and shared meals. Eating fresh, local and seasonal has become the norm. More people shop daily on foot or by cycle and this has helped reduce food waste.

Teachers and children share meals, while some of the best food in Scotland is found in hospitals. Sustainable food is embedded in the curriculum in schools, and young people leave school with high levels of food and ecological literacy.

We've become a much healthier herd, and we stick closer together. The diet gap between richer and poorer has narrowed considerably. We spend on average more on food than ten years ago, but so does the rest of the world – and we're seeing more of what we spend get back to the producer. We've also found ways to get people on low incomes better value for their food money through investing in social enterprises and community scale infrastructure.

The urban landscape has changed too. There's a community garden available within walking distance for everyone; livestock in the city and less dead green spaces – more sheep, less lawnmowers.

There are more fresh food shops and food production units on the high street, fruit vending machines, more social spaces for people to enjoy eating together.

Tens of thousands of people have played a part in our 'doing better with food' story:

- hundreds of new small farmers and growers producing a variety of fruit, vegetables, grains and livestock products in rural, urban and periurban settings
- the new small food businesses from soup makers and micro-dairies to the community bakeries and the electric mobile veg stalls
- the new social networks that have sprung up around food – from fruit and veg co-ops to 'what's in your fridge' leftover parties, from neighbourhood cooking coaches to after school cook-ins
- the cooks in schools, hospitals, public buildings and works canteens as well as cafes, restaurants and B&Bs who've transformed everyday food
- the teachers, health workers, social care staff, community workers, parents, grandparents and children who've made changes themselves and encouraged others

What was niche or cutting edge ten years ago is universal now – it's just the way we do food in Scotland.



## 2. Getting there from here

To achieve this scale of change requires a new ambition for Scotland. Scotland has demonstrated leadership in its climate change legislation and targets and can show similar leadership in becoming a sustainable food nation.

Several factors combine to make this a good time and place:

1. The pressures on the global food system make it sensible for Scotland not just to be more self-sufficient and resilient in food production but also to tread more lightly on the rest of the planet. We will always buy in food from other countries – but this should always be sourced sustainably and fairly.
2. The paradoxes in our food system are increasingly obvious. We are earning more from food exports than we are spending on our food at home – but while we export premium products we have stubbornly high levels of malnutrition and increasing food poverty. We have plenty of land – but we have ever-growing waiting lists for allotments. We produce plenty of healthy foods – vegetables, oats, soft fruit and fish – but we eat much too much sugar and saturated fat.
3. There is growing public support for sustainable local food.
4. The economic success of food and drink exports, combined with the signing-off of the Common Agricultural Policy and Common Fisheries Policy, create an opportunity for a broader look at improving the food system in Scotland.
5. The referendum debate – whatever the outcome – presents a unique opportunity for a fresh debate about the sort of country Scotland wants to be.

The foundation of the change is a more cross-cutting approach to food policy. While Scotland will continue to produce for the export market, food and farming policy has to give equal attention to other areas – public health and nutrition, local economic development and the environment – recognizing that food production is the single biggest contributor to local and global loss of biodiversity and to climate change.

This change will require not just a wide range of measures at different levels, but also some new ways of thinking about the food system. It is a change of pattern, not a change within pattern.

### 2.1. Five key ideas

#### (1) **Citizens, not consumers**

Framing the change in the language of ‘consumers’ restricts the role envisaged for most people in Scotland to **responding** to changes in what is offered, rather than **participating** in changing the offer.

There is much talk of ‘educating consumers’ as if we are starting with a blank page, rather than engaging in a process where for more than a hundred years consumers have been ‘educated’ in their food choices by marketing campaigns.

We have to think and talk instead about engaging citizens, and about working with people, not doing things to them. Just as Scotland's world-leading climate change targets grew out of civil society, and the fair trade movement was started by a handful of committed citizens, this change will come from citizens and communities working with and supported by government.

In the wider debate about the transition to low carbon living, Scottish Government is using the ISM (Individual/social/material) framework. Similarly, the transition in food will require changes in infrastructure, social institutions, policy and regulation in tandem with changes in individual and family habits and values.

Food citizenship can get beyond the assumption that consumers and producers are in a zero-sum game, with both trying to get the best prices. The new food system will be based on co-production, with citizens working together with producers for mutual benefit and the benefit of the environment. Mutuality can provide the basis for sharing risk, reducing transaction costs and managing change.

This change in the relationship between farmers/growers and communities will take time – but will result in sustainable food production being seen as a valuable public service and a new sense of purpose and connectedness for many farmers.

## (2) Food as care and stewardship

Efforts over the last two centuries to make food into a profitable global business have greatly reduced the labour needed to produce food, and mechanisation has made many jobs in the sector much less physically

demanding. The hard jobs are often undertaken by migrant labourers.

At the same time, factory processing of raw ingredients and industrial additives to make an astonishing variety of processed foods has made cooking from scratch a minority activity. While we are intimately acquainted with the brands we buy, the living ingredients behind them are anonymous commodities and we know nothing about the earth or water they came from.

This industrialisation and distancing has obscured the heart of food and farming.

Stewardship of the living farm from soil to livestock is a core professional value which is eroded when the sole focus is maximising output. Ownership and management of land should bring with it an explicit duty of stewardship and external accountability for this.

Growing and sourcing some of our own food is part of being connected with the rest of the natural world. Preparing food is an act of care, and sharing food has always been about building trust and social capital. Instead, we serve and eat too many 'orphan meals'.

## (3) A mixed economy of food

We have been content to leave the supply and distribution of food to the private sector, intervening only in relation to some aspects of food safety and trading standards. It would have been very different if in 1947 we had left health care to the market and created a National Food Service. Would we have a well-established system of paying farmers as private contractors to deliver public goods?

Housing provides another useful analogy, where Housing Associations

have grown over the last 35 years to become a major player in the housing system, helping to raise design and building standards and to improve allocation systems and tenant rights.

Social enterprises and co-operatives in the food sector could develop a similar role over time, helping to improve environmental and nutritional standards. As part of the 'mixed economy' of food, this sector could provide an alternative infrastructure for making good affordable food available, promoting nutrition and preventing hunger.

#### (4) Right-sizing

We tend to assume that large food and farming businesses are more productive and efficient, and that a modern food system can only operate effectively if it is dominated by large food businesses operating 24/7.

In practice, small farms tend to be more productive per acre than large ones – and gardens and allotments more productive still – but they do use more labour per acre.

Small to medium scale food and farming businesses – which start with a focus on producing for the local market and work out from there – are not just nice to have. They generate local investment, create local employment and through the local economic multiplier they recirculate money within the local economy.

They also generate additional revenues from tourism, and typically promote craft skills and pro-environment practices. They communicate food and farming issues to customers and visitors. They diversify the food production system by creating new opportunities which are too fine-grain, marginal or risky for bigger companies to exploit.

A web of small to medium scale food and farming enterprises also provides resilience to the food system, making it less vulnerable to disruption of distribution routes by weather or to disruption of supply chains by closures or takeovers of large businesses.

Community-scale infrastructure – whether a community bakery, a community-supported farm, a neighbourhood fruit and veg shop, a covered city market, a part-time abattoir, a town micro-dairy pasteurising and bottling milk or a community buying group – can provide the focus for collective investment and action which helps individuals be part of the change.

#### (5) Investment, not subsidy

Despite cutbacks in the CAP budget, considerable public money goes into farming – and considerably more into the health service. There needs to be a clearer focus on public **investment** in creating and maintaining a sustainable and healthy food system, and on measuring the returns from this investment.

## 2.2. Six enabling approaches

Achieving change in a large, complex, contested and entrenched system like food is slow and difficult. There is no clear route map, and some well-intentioned programmes and policies will turn out to be dead ends.

Change in the food system requires action at different levels (EU, national government, local government, communities, businesses, individuals) and on different timescales. It influences and is influenced by a whole range of other policies and systems.

The conference identified six enabling approaches over the next decade:

**(1) A focus on wellbeing, not just GDP**

Scottish Government through its National Performance Framework already recognises the role of government in improving the lived experience of people in Scotland, and there is ongoing discussion about alternative approaches to GDP such as Oxfam's Humankind Index.

The long-term changes in the food system being proposed will have cross-cutting benefits in terms of good, socially useful local jobs; improving public health; building community cohesion and resilience; mitigating and adapting to climate change. We will need to invest in measuring this change over time.

**(2) Measuring natural capital, and greening Scottish agriculture**

Unsustainable intensification of food production has been driven by the externalisation of costs. For example, cleaning up agricultural pollution of drinking water, degradation of the environment and the contribution of the food system to greenhouse gas emissions are costs to society but are not borne by the food industry or reflected in the price of food.

The loss over the last forty years of topsoil, biodiversity, forest and aquifers amounts to a reduction in global natural capital worth trillions of pounds which does not appear on any company balance sheet.

This incompetent accounting tilts the playing field towards business as usual and away from organic and agroecological production methods.

Work has started in SNH on describing and measuring Scotland's natural capital. Developing this work, and bringing this measurement into the national accounts will support the environmental case for widespread greening of Scottish farming and growing.

Scotland's science community has a valuable role in helping to develop EU policy on sustainable food by measuring and costing externalities – for example as happened with the European Nitrogen Assessment.

**(3) A food sovereignty approach to food security**

Food security is more than ensuring that Scotland physically has enough food in the country – it is about ensuring that everyone has access to affordable nutritious food. Food sovereignty is an approach to food security which has been developed in the Global South. It argues that the way to achieve genuine and lasting food security is to:

- Strengthen democratic control over the food system, including land, seeds and technology
- Establish every citizen's right to food
- Give priority to production for local markets and bring citizens and food producers closer together
- Value, respect and protect the rights of food producers, including migrant workers and women
- Encourage agroecological production methods – and resist the introduction of genetically modified organisms

**(4) Co-production**

It is easy for food policy discussions to slip into identifying people as the problem. Calls for resources are accompanied by lists of diseases and diet statistics, and interventions are often framed in terms of doing things to others – in particular ‘us’ educating ‘them’. Investment may be seen as preventing future costs to society rather than in terms of helping people flourish.

Changing the food system demands an asset-based community development approach which looks for and works with people’s capacity, knowledge, skills and commitment. This thread of asset-based community development runs through Scottish society – for example in the credit unions, the community-based housing associations and the development trusts. These organisations can have a significant role in improving the food system.

Change in the food system will come from people working with people, not from doing things to them.

**(5) Crosscutting and mainstreaming**

Food touches on and is influenced by many other aspects of government policy – health and social care, education, planning, and buildings, climate change mitigation and adaptation, waste, water, transport, agriculture and land use, biodiversity, early years, skills and employability, tourism, and so on.

Just as with other crosscutting issues like equalities and climate change, food has to be an agenda item in many different policy discussions. We need to find ways to ask ‘where’s food in this decision?’ And there should be opportunities for people working in these other policy areas both at national and local government to come together

around the food issue to see where a joined-up approach is possible. Currently, food and drink policy is led by food and drink industry division and there is not a wider leadership forum looking at food in the round.

Crosscutting work at city and local authority level is one way to connect and enhance public, private, university and third sector efforts on health, inequality, community growing, land use planning, early years work, social enterprise, local economic regeneration, skills and knowledge and community cohesion. Edible Edinburgh is an example of this approach, linked into the wider community planning framework while engaging a wide range of stakeholders.

Like climate change, changing the food system means changes in people’s beliefs, values, habits, jobs and patterns of living. **Dialogue** is an essential part of this change – it’s a change that can be encouraged, supported and led by government but in the end it’s about working with people, not doing to them. The quality of this dialogue is vital – we need better food conversations, with the whole system in the room.

The voice of people living with food poverty needs to be heard in discussions of food policy, and farmers need to be part of the conversation about building healthier communities.

**(6) A living wage**

The squeeze in living standards over the last five years – caused by static wages and rising prices (especially food) – has led to many people in Scotland reducing consumption of fruit and vegetables and economising on good food. Many people in work are finding it hard to make ends meet and are concerned about the price of food.

The Scottish Government is already committed to the Living Wage campaign (currently £7.45 per hour) and widespread adoption of this standard by private, public and third sector employers would help many households to be more food secure.

## 2.3. Four areas for intervention

### (1) Taxation, regulation and pricing

The witness from the Poverty Truth Commission challenged the conference to explain why for £1 (the same price as a melon) she could buy 50 frozen mini sausage rolls (which are 25% saturated fat and would provide the whole guideline daily amount of saturated fat for 20p).

The transformation of our food system will require a rebalancing of prices towards unprocessed local and seasonal food to make better choices easier. Without this, we are trying to persuade people to make individual behavioural changes without paying attention to the accompanying social and material changes.

Some teams proposed a **national tax on sugar and/or fat** which could reduce consumption and generate resources to support healthy food. Such taxes may be seen as regressive – another tax on poverty – and have generated considerable resistance in other jurisdictions. The evidence on France's soda tax is not yet definitive.

Other schemes have been shown to have a positive effect on consumption of healthier food – such as non-stigmatising '2 for 1' vouchers for people on low income buying fruit and veg at farmers' markets, supporting buying groups in low income communities, and GPs **prescribing fruit and veg**.

**Restrictions on advertising junk food to children** was also proposed: despite Ofcom banning the promotion of junk food during childrens' TV in 2007, research from 2012 suggests that children are seeing more junk food advertising than before the ban.

The ubiquity and relative cheapness of sugary drinks, confectionery and fatty foods makes it easy for people in Scotland to eat more sugar and fat than is good for their health. **Restricting access** to these foods in public buildings and in the vicinity of schools and providing healthier alternatives – including free fresh water – would be an achievable goal.

Teams also suggested **taxes on pesticide, carbon and fertilizer** – 'pricing in' the environmental costs of these materials to the cost of conventionally produced food. This is more likely to be achievable at EU level.

**Land value taxation** was proposed by some teams, and this is now back on the political agenda in Scotland and the UK. Essentially, this would bring down the price of peri-urban land by taxing the development gain which makes building houses much more profitable than growing food.

Along with other measures, it could help rural development and the break-up of very large landholdings, which as well as being historically and culturally anomalous tend to hold back investment and innovation in rural areas.

As part of land reform, some teams argued for the **extension of crofting tenure** to the whole of Scotland as a way of diversifying the pattern of land holdings and encouraging new entrants to farming and growing. Other suggestions included 'unpacking' larger

farms and estates into clusters of smaller food enterprises.

Teams argued for **stronger competition law** to allow fairer competition between independent retailers and the supermarkets, with thresholds for intervention being triggered on a local basis rather than at national or EU level. There would be scope for some national action on this if competition law became a competence of the Scottish Parliament, although this would be within the wider framework of EU competition law.

Similarly, there was a suggestion that **food containing pesticide residues should be labelled**, and that farmers who use pesticides and soluble fertiliser should have to be certified rather than organic farmers.

Other suggested measures which would be easier to implement – for example through the new Rural Development Plan for Scotland – were to require farms applying for funds to prepare a **carbon reduction plan** and to provide wholehearted support for **agroecological and organic methods of production** – which have demonstrable benefits in reducing emissions and increasing soil carbon.

## (2) Public sector leading

As with the climate change legislation, there should be duties on public bodies to promote sustainable food.

One place to start is with food procurement, where some progress has been made on the nutritional content and ingredient sourcing for school meals. The original work on this in East Ayrshire showed a social return on investment of almost 6:1, and more recent research through the Food

for Life programme have also shown considerable public benefits. However, the situation is still patchy in school and hospital food, and little work has been done in care services for older people and other vulnerable groups.

The procurement reform legislation going through Parliament in the current session offers an opportunity to add weight to the social (including health) and environmental benefits to be taken into account in procurement decisions.

There is scope to establish 4-5 city-region joint procurement initiatives which bring together food procurement staff from councils, universities, NHS and other public bodies. These joint initiatives would lead on nutritious, low carbon, high welfare food procurement, developing short supply chains and the supplier base, encouraging co-operatives and social enterprises, and improving skills in the public kitchen.

For example, they could commission joint training and change management programmes for catering staff, helping them to control costs while using more fresh, local and organic ingredients by redesigning menus and reducing waste. The House of Food in Copenhagen is a great example of using the change to organic ingredients as a spur to improve skills, morale and food quality in the public kitchen. A similar approach to change management would be valuable in Scotland in driving forward a new approach to the provision of public meals.

The NHS has a particular role in promoting sustainable food and in putting nutrition at the heart of health policy. It could do much more to become a 'good food' NHS – not just through food sold and served in hospital (which should be exemplary both in

the quality of the meals and the way patients are served). The NHS should be making public health investments in the food system, and giving nutrition a higher profile in staff training and organisational culture.

Local authorities and their community planning partners have many other ways to promote the transition to a more sustainable food system, for example:

*Supporting food social enterprises and co-operatives*

There is growing interest in the co-operative economy, with both Edinburgh and Glasgow becoming 'co-operative cities'. Local economic development efforts can pay attention to the potential for new non-profit food businesses (the food sector employs one in seven people in Scotland, and for the same turnover an independent retailer employs three times as many people as a supermarket).

*Making more land available for allotments and community growing.*

Waiting lists for allotments are high in most parts of Scotland, and the proportion of the population with an allotment is far lower than in more densely populated England. There is plenty of derelict and vacant land as well as small pockets of dead green space. The conference heard great examples of communities taking on and transforming pockets of urban land.

The new Community Empowerment and Renewal Act should include the provision of a 'community right to grow' – the presumption that community groups can take on unused land provided they leave it better than they find it. Local authorities can both support this principle during the passage of the Bill and support

communities to make the best of this opportunity. The target should be for everyone to have access to a growing space within walking distance. Every new house built should have a growing space attached to it – if not physically, then a designated link to a nearby site – and this should be part of the planning application process.

*Acquiring land in the periurban area and making it available to new farmers*

Land is a good investment, and rents for horticulture can readily generate a return of 3%. Local authorities can encourage co-operation and co-location between new small businesses.

*Planning for sustainable food*

Town planners can support independent food retailers which meet sustainability criteria by making high street retail units available on favourable terms (as with charity shops). Small food production units on the high street can also diversify the appearance of town centres and attract more footfall. It is much easier for people to buy local food and support local food businesses if they are visible every day.

Currently, there are no cities in Scotland with covered sites for produce markets (while Bolton has just spent £4.5m upgrading its market which is open four days a week with 300 stalls and an in-house demonstration kitchen). Another example of promoting the local food economy is the joint development in Truro between Waitrose and Taste of Cornwall.

*Developing sustainable food partnerships*

Local authorities can use the community planning framework to bring together stakeholders from public, private and third sector as well as community groups and churches. There



is a growing network of 'sustainable food cities' in the UK and EU.

These partnerships can link and add value to existing efforts; and provide the leadership and context for new developments, for example the 'community food hubs' described below.

Sustainable food contributes to many of the goals set out in community plans, and food should be seen as a distinct policy area within the community planning process and single outcome agreements.

### **(3) Investing in the community food sector**

There are many examples of community food projects in Scotland. Some focus on providing cooking skills, some distribute affordable healthy food, some are involved in growing food –and some do all this and more.

However, there is a need to scale up the community food sector to increase its reach and impact, and to provide part of the alternative to the growing number of food banks. Staff working in the sector would also benefit from structured professional development opportunities.

A network of *Community food hubs* could be set up across Scotland, providing a physical base for distributing, selling, cooking and eating sustainable food. These would be of different shapes and sizes but would be places where people could get information and support on buying, cooking and growing affordable sustainable food; could get together to set up food co-ops and community gardens.

Many could be based in existing premises, some would work closely

with local health care services or community groups involved in related issues. They would build capacity and confidence in local communities and try out new ideas from 'what's in your fridge' evenings cooking with leftovers to volunteer food coaches supporting young parents. Some would teach baking, some would have 'street ovens' for people to use, some would act as incubation units for new food enterprises. Some would have storage space for bulk deliveries from farms.

They would share core values – an asset-based, inclusive approach to food and community development, and an appreciation and respect for food and the people who grow, make and cook it.

There is a clear parallel with the network of 'community sports hubs' being developed in partnership with Sports Scotland to provide a focal point for sport in local communities and encourage more people to get involved.

Alongside this, there would be value in inviting bids for 'food towns' from communities in the 3,000 to 20,000 range of population – similar to the 'zero waste town' concept from Zero Waste Scotland. Development Trusts and similar bodies could use a devolved budget to help them make sustainable food innovations.

### **(4) Short supply chains**

Short supply chains (where the end buyer buys direct from the producer or from someone (like a wholesaler, baker, butcher, cheesemaker or miller) who knows the producer bring many benefits.

The food itself will be less highly processed. Fewer steps in the chain allows for a better farmgate price which in turn can support organic and human

scale production. Just as importantly, these supply chains can create trust and mutuality with citizens and producers relying on each other – and can help to reconnect individuals, communities and cities to the land, livestock and seasons.

These short supply chains do not have to be geographically short. Someone in Glasgow buying coffee from a fairtrade co-op in Ethiopia, oranges from an organic grove in Spain or lamb from a farm in Uist can still be in a relationship with the producer.

There is also great value in sourcing some fruit and veg as locally as possible, whether that's people in Islay buying from the Islay market garden or people in Edinburgh buying from the community garden in the Royal Edinburgh Hospital grounds.

In between are the city-region suppliers of grains, milk, potatoes, field scale vegetables, eggs and meat where the capacity already exists within each of Scotland's city regions to meet all the demand for staple foods.

However, in practice these short supply chains are not widespread or robust, with most farms selling through wholesalers into the multiple retailers.

Farmers markets, farm shops and box schemes have a small and static market share of food sales and tend to reach only a small section of the population. While more than 30% of people asked say that they would like to buy local food, the total volume sold through these channels is nearer 1%.

(Re)developing these supply chains needs investment in co-operatives and social enterprises, community retailing, community supported agriculture, buying groups, small-scale processing, low carbon distribution, and e-commerce – and this should form a strategic component of the new Rural Development Programme and of the 'Co-operative City' programmes, for example in Edinburgh and Glasgow.

While all of these components of short supply chains exist already, more demonstration, testing and modelling is needed to scale up. Ethical financial intermediaries such as credit unions may be needed, along with equity investments from local government, community share issues and so on.

Community food brokers could provide a service linking community groups to groups of farms, negotiating fair prices and sorting out logistics.

# 3. First steps

The National Food and Drink Policy has provided a foundation for change. It now needs to broaden its scope for Scotland to become a fair and sustainable food nation.

The enquiry identified some first steps to get this process under way in 2014. Nourish Scotland would be keen to discuss how to refine and progress these proposals over the next 12 months.

## Policy development

A sustainable food nation policy forum should be set up at national level, with representation from local authorities, the NHS, civil society and academia.

A suitable academic body (such as the Edinburgh Centre for Carbon Innovation) should be charged with developing a cross-cutting 'sustainable food index' which can be used at both national and city level to provide a baseline, measure change and benchmark Scotland internationally.

## Making best use of new legislation and funding streams

The *Procurement Reform (Scotland) Act* is an opportunity to raise our game with sustainable food procurement. It should lead to the development of joint regional approaches to improving public food and should set targets for procurement of organic food as part of the low carbon agenda.

The *Community Empowerment and Renewal Act* is an opportunity to establish the community right to grow on unused land. More broadly it should encourage community ownership of land and the creation of community-scale infrastructure from community bakeries to onshore fish farms.

The *2014-2020 Rural Development Programme* and associated European funding streams should have a clear focus on sustainable food production and consumption alongside a commitment to social inclusion.

## Early investments

A 'House of Food' along the lines of the Copenhagen 'Madhus' should be established to support cultural change in the public kitchen. While the model would be adapted for the Scottish context and stage of development, the underlying ethos would be preserved, and close links established with the ongoing work in Denmark.

Funding and support is needed for Nourish Scotland's '*new farmer programme*' which will provide accredited training and work-based learning for the cohort of new farmers, growers and artisan food producers. This programme will provide skills development, help to access land and start-up capital, support with business planning and co-operative marketing. It is essential both to bring new entrants into the sector from outside existing farming families and to raise the skills base of small producers, both rural and urban.

Investment is also needed in the national network of 'community food hubs' described above. These will provide the incubation space and encouragement for many of the broader changes in culture and practice described above. £1.5m has been invested through Sport Scotland in developing 150 local sports hubs and a similar or larger investment is needed in the community food sector.

A 'sustainable food towns' fund should be established along the lines of the 'zero waste' towns fund to support a handful of pioneering communities to show what can be achieved at local level.

## Manifesto for a New Scots Diet

The manifesto for a new Nordic diet played an important symbolic and practical role in 'naming the change' in Nordic countries. We call on leading Scots chefs to write, adopt and promote a manifesto for the Guid Scots Diet.

# 4. Where we are now

Summary of evidence from conference witnesses setting out the challenges related to health, environment, poverty, and economy.

## Health

### Witnesses:

- **Annie Anderson, Centre for Public Health and Nutrition Research, University of Dundee**
- **Julia Wright, Centre for Agroecology and Food Security**

- While the mainstream debate in food security focuses on the need to increase food production, due to predicted population increase and change of diet habits, the reality is that currently, global food production amounts to 4,600 kcal of edible food per person per day. This is enough to feed 14 billion people.
- Despite this overproduction in food calories 1 billion people globally are under-nourished, including many in industrialised countries with high levels of income equality such as the US and UK. At the same time 1.6 billion people are over-nourished.
- The widespread consumption of highly processed food with high sugar, salt and saturated fat contents and which is low in nutrients, has led to an increase in dietary related illnesses: high cholesterol, heart disease, diabetes, osteoporosis, cancer, addiction (to sugar), Alzheimers (vitamin A&C), Parkinsons (vitamin E & Zinc) and obesity.
- In 2011, just under two-thirds (64.3per cent) of Scottish adults aged 16 and over were overweight or obese while over a quarter (27.7per cent) were obese. Amongst the consequences are a range of medical complications for example during pregnancy and when giving birth.
- The total cost to Scottish society of obesity in 2007/8 was in excess of £457 million.
- Obesity is far and away the most important avoidable cause of cancer in non-smokers.
- People living in more deprived areas in Scotland develop multimorbidity 10 years before those living in the most affluent areas.
- 3 factors lead to the prevalence of unhealthy diet: 1. Supply of cheap, palatable and energy dense food; 2. The distribution system of food with the attributes of access and convenience; and 3. Persuasive and pervasive marketing.
- The nutritional value of food is not only altered through food processing but our natural food has also declined in mineral content over the last decades. In vegetables the decline per mineral is: Sodium – 49%, Potassium – 16%, Magnesium – 24%, Calcium – 46%, Iron – 27%, Copper – 76% and Zinc – 59%. This decline is a result of soil degradation – the application of chemical fertilizers and pesticides – and seed breeding that focuses primarily on yield and pesticide resistance rather than nutritional content.

- Pesticides inhibit the release of plant secondary metabolites which are the plant's self defence against pests and diseases. Organic foods contain 10-50% higher concentrations of antioxidants than industrial foods. Antioxidants are our self defence against cancer and other illnesses.
- Industrially produced foods show no health advantages over organically produced foods. Organically produced plant foods show trend for higher vitamin C, certain minerals, antioxidants, essential amino acids, dry matter content. Animal feeding trials with organic foods show significant improvements in growth, reproductive health & recovery from illness.
- The vitamin, mineral and supplement market in the UK was worth £364 million in 2011. Who benefits from that? Agribusinesses produce agrochemicals and high yielding varieties which decrease the nutrient levels and health of crops and livestock resulting in less healthy humans. Pharmaceuticals including vitamins and mineral supplements are used to counter ill-health. These products are often made by the same companies that produce agrochemicals.
- Separation of crops and livestock breaks nutrient cycle thus requiring chemical fertilizer on the one side and creating toxic waste in the form of slurry on the other side.

#### **Soil degradation:**

- Soil degradation in England and Wales takes the form of loss of organic matter (45%), compaction (39%) and erosion (13%). This is due to the application of chemical fertilizer rather than organic fertilizer (lack of nutrient cycling), frequent use of heavy machinery for several sprayings of fertilizers and pesticides, inappropriate cropping or livestock regimes, and bad management practices.

#### **Biodiversity:**

- Farmland biodiversity has declined dramatically due to the intensification or abandonment of management practices, and the simplification of agricultural landscapes.
- Industrial agriculture is accountable for 75% decline in species diversity.

#### **Water use**

- Agricultural production consumes a high amount of water and Scotland imports a lot of 'virtual water' in the form of food such as tomatoes. This is particularly problematic when they are produced in dry regions such as Almeria in Spain. Here an area the size of the Isle of Wight is covered in polythene to grow vegetables for export using up a lot of water. To produce 1kg of tomatoes 214 litres of water are required.

## Environment

### **Witnesses**

- **Julia Wright, Centre for Agroecology and Food Security**
- **Christine Watson, SRUC**

### **Waste:**

- It is estimated that 30–50% (or 1.2–2 billion tonnes) of all food produced on the planet is wasted at various stages in the supply chain.

### **Global food and dietary change:**

- Growth in poultry and pig meat consumption is the major driver behind increased plant protein imports.

### **GHGs**

- Agriculture causes 9% of the UK's greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. This is made up of: 1. nitrous oxide (around 55%), which is produced by the use of synthetic and organic fertilisers; 2. methane (around 36%), which is created through the digestion processes in livestock animals and

the production and use of manure and slurry; and 3. carbon dioxide (around 9%) from energy used for fuel and heating.

- The bulk of agricultural research funding goes towards simplistic ‘more of the same’, technological fix projects. There is only little funding for agroecological research which aims to produce holistic and generational studies. The current scientific paradigms and belief systems constitute a barrier.

## Poverty

### Witnesses:

- **Katherine Trebeck, Oxfam UK Programme**
  - **Davy Milligan, Poverty Truth Commission**
  - **Poverty Truth Commissioner**
- Despite decades of economic growth, Scotland’s poverty has not been addressed and inequalities have deepened.
  - Many Scots face a life characterised by high mortality, economic inactivity, mental and physical ill-health, poor educational attainment, and increasing exclusion. But anti-poverty policy in Scotland (and the UK) has tended to prioritise only narrow economic growth policies, emphasising employment and physical regeneration, not social goals such as community cohesion, strong relationships between people, a sense of empowerment, and sustainability.
  - The UK is the seventh richest country in the world yet half a million people need to turn to food banks and four million people are in food poverty. Many people who turn to food banks are in paid work.
  - For example, the bail out of the banks was a socialisation by society of the risk taken by a few wealthy. This will be the first generation where the children are poorer than their parents because of the spending cuts.
  - To get an idea about what it means to live in poverty a Poverty Truth Commissioner shared her personal story: Due to a chronic illness she cannot work and as a consequence fell into poverty. She does not go to food banks because of the stigma. Although she knows the processed food is unhealthy, she has to buy it because it is cheaper than fresh vegetables. She asked how it is possible that simple vegetables are more expensive than processed food. She can get 50 sausage rolls for £1. She is skipping meals and tells her family that she has already eaten when they sit down for a meal. She would want to grow some of her own food, but she does not have the money to get the tools and seeds she would need.
  - The current emphasis on consumption-led growth has not benefited the poorest and most vulnerable people in society, and pays little heed to its impact on the environment, communities, and relationships. Status anxiety and its implications (material comparison, incessant consumption, and resulting debt) are embedded in the economic growth agenda. The focus needs to shift to the quality and distribution of the proceeds of growth.
  - Inequality exacerbates poverty and undermines cohesive communities. Equality is vital in reversing the status competition and materialism that intensifies the stigmatisation of people experiencing poverty.
  - People’s livelihoods need to be strengthened to withstand shocks and build assets. This requires actions that enhance the environment, foster community relationships, and contribute to learning and skill development.

# Economy

## Witness

- **Jo Hunt, Knockfarrel Produce**

### The market for local food in Scotland

- In Scotland at present, approximately 1-2% of all food sales are of local food.
- There are approximately 1,000 local food producers in Scotland at present. Most are small in scale, with an average turnover of around £100k per year. This gives a total turnover for local food in Scotland of around £100M per year.
- Consumer research shows that around 50% of consumers in Scotland would like to increase the proportion of food they consume that comes from local producers. Rural consumers are the most likely to buy local food at present. There is a large latent and currently unfulfilled demand for local food in urban centres.
- Local food sales in Scotland have grown at 15-20% per year since 2009, with an approximate doubling of sales in the past 5 years. This growth has taken place even against a background of economic recession and rising world food prices.
- Consumer demand for local food in Scotland is not currently being met. There are significant barriers that prevent consumer demand being satisfied within the existing market for food. Existing supermarkets stock very little local food; and the prices paid to producers are too low to encourage them to supply. Instead producers seek to supply direct to consumers via farm shops, farmers markets and so on; but these routes to the market are small scale and are not widely spread across Scotland.

### The economic impact of local food

- Research findings from the New Economics Foundation show that spending £10 in a local food outlet is actually worth £25 to the local economy, as it gets re-spent locally several times (a local multiplier of 2.5). By comparison, every £10 spent in a supermarket leads to only £2.40 being spent in the local area. Locally produced food bought from a local retailer is worth almost 10 times as much to the local economy as the same food from a long distant producer, purchased in a supermarket.
- Most money spent with local businesses typically gets re-spent in the local economy, not just on wages and local suppliers, but also on services like accountants, marketing, printing, insurance, distribution, cleaning and so on. However, large chains tend to only re-spend locally on wages, as they generally have central contracts with national suppliers and service providers that can meet their needs at the required scale.
- In the current supermarket economy producers often get only as little as 20% of the retail price for their produce. Farmers are increasingly looking for alternative routes to market and Jo Hunt calculated what share of the retail price in selling cucumbers he could retain. He looked into the following different options:
  - farmers market 100%
  - box scheme 100%
  - chef deliveries 60%,
  - independent retailers 50%
  - organic wholesaler 39%
  - wholefood supermarket 29%
  - conventional wholesaler 23%.

- This share of the retail price going to the producer is the main reason why local food producers do not use existing conventional supply chains to sell their produce.

### **The social impacts of local food**

- In the current economic system the common goods (clean environment, carbon storage, etc.) that small-scale local food producers preserve or the socio-economic benefits their activity creates are not reflected in the price they get for their produce. Knockfarrel farm produces 80 different crops and provides its community not just with food but produces energy, creates jobs and adds to community well being. Jo Hunt calculated the value of the following three services his farm delivers:
  - Carbon lock up = 90T worth £100/T CO<sub>2</sub>E
  - Small enterprise = 2 jobs worth £7,000 per job FTE
  - Community benefit = local economic multiplier of 4.1; or £700 per 5-a-day for a year for high risk health groups, or £3400 per trained apprentice
- However, the local food producer is not paid for any of these real environmental, economic and social benefits they deliver. If the price they receive reflected the real benefits to society then local food production would be viable; local food producers would be able to pay their staff properly; and other conventional producers would be attracted to switch to local food supply, and help meet the un-met demand from consumers.
- Instead, currently those who can produce the cheapest food get the highest margins. Prices for food do not internalize the real costs of food production (CO<sub>2</sub>, animal welfare, soil erosion, etc.), and do not reward the real services that food delivers (health, environment, local jobs, etc.). This enables those that have the cheapest production methods to sell advantageously; even though they create large disbenefits that they do not pay for. And then the costs of cleaning up pollution, work to re-establish and protect habitats, health care, climate change mitigation and adaptation etc. are borne by society.

### **Looking 10 years ahead**

- There is both the consumer demand and the production potential to increase the proportion of local food sales in Scotland from 1-2% of all food sales to 10% by 2023.
- As most local food businesses prefer to be small scale, this would require a ten-fold increase in the number of local food producers and retailers. This is likely to involve both existing producers switching to serve their local market, and new entrants to food production entering the sector.
- Existing market structure is unlikely to enable this expansion of the local food economy in Scotland. Widespread application of short supply chain structures to link consumers to producers will be needed, across all parts of Scotland. Significant investment in new infrastructure will also be needed, to enable the local food market to function effectively.



- Existing pricing and reward systems are also unlikely to deliver the expansion of local food. Methods to both help communicate consumer demand, and to connect the benefits of local food to fiscal reward are needed. Although some aspects of pricing are set at WTO and EU level, Scotland would have the ability to:
  - Internalize real costs in prices - e.g. pesticide taxes
  - Pay for the real benefits - e.g. paying Single farm payment based on tonnes of CO2 sequestered
  - Create a fairer market – e.g. applying competition policy at a local authority rather than UK level.





Published October 2013 by:

**Nourish Scotland**

54 Manor Place  
Edinburgh  
EH3 7EH

Tel: 0131 226 1497

[info@nourishscotland.org.uk](mailto:info@nourishscotland.org.uk)  
[www.nourishscotland.org.uk](http://www.nourishscotland.org.uk)

