Good Food Nation consultation event

Fife, 17 September 2014

Summary

Around 40 people came together in Falkland at the Centre for Stewardship to explore together the governments 'Good Food Nation' proposals. This provided a forum for people to learn about and debate how to influence the future of food in Scotland through making well-crafted responses to the government proposals.

The event was framed around 3 questions:

- What do we think about the Scottish Government's ideas for becoming a Good Food Nation?
- Is there more we need to do?
- What can we do (as people and organisations) to make this happen?

The workshop activities were carried out in small groups and this was the shape of the evening, exploring together:

- vision,
- springboard ideas on the proposals,
- priority areas,
- food commission considerations,
- closing with some practical ideas for next steps and a bit of inspiration.

We all left the workshop with a strong feeling that in order to become a Good Food Nation what we need is to reconnect to where our food comes from. There needs to be recognition that food and agriculture are indivisible. Sustainability depends on people reestablishing their connection to land and farming.

After the summary is an annex with

- Examples in support for reflecting on Food Commission
- 7 Tips for making effective responses to consultations

Vision

We started by looking at the government's vision for becoming a Good Food Nation by 2025, identifying what we like about it and what we thought is non-negotiable and definitely needs to be included in a future vision. To do this each table got a copy of the vision and people were asked to underline and write on it what they like in particular.

What do we like in the vision?

Overall people liked the vision, and they thought it has a positive tone. All tables underlined the words 'pride and pleasure' that people take in their food, and that good food should be accessible to people from every walk of life. There was strong agreement that good food must mean healthy and environmentally sound. People agreed there must be an emphasis on good food being served in hospitals and schools and that dietary-related diseases will have begun to decline by 2025. Awareness of culinary heritage was also seen as important for a future vision.

We then asked people to reflected on what is missing from the vision. People's answers were not strictly limited to improvements for the vision but they shared their thoughts on what a successful future policy needs to include. The following were the main gaps people identified:

Gaps in the vision

- Priorities are wrong: 1st priority should be health and nutrition, not business and profit
- Exports is not a priority; people in Scotland already not able to afford our own food; need focus on our own food security; reduce food imports before looking to increase food exports; self-sufficiency before profit
- Priortise food security, food sovereignty and the environment
- Mention of organic
- Prioritise children and family education
- Access to land
- Vision must have a community and family led understanding
- Equality and ability for all to access good food is essential – end food poverty and food banks

General gaps in the discussion paper

- More focus on skills development, growing, cooking, nutrition
- Re-skilling on all levels, especially social skills
- We need an ambitious scheme to provide access to land coupled with an intensive training programme, so people can grow their own food for consumption and sale
- Define Good Food; what does sustainable mean?
- Language: get rid of political speak and set out simple achievable aims which can be put to deadlines; not FSA speak

- Organic production: we already have an environmentally sustainable and healthy model of sustainable food, it's called organic. We must support and subsidise organic production to help make it more affordable and accessible
- Catch people in need: hospitals, food banks, schools
- Encourage all to consider food growing
- Shift in ownership from corporate to social
- Sugar needs particular attention – major cause of obesity
- Is it possible to promote small-scale local, sustainable food production without negatively impacting the economy? Is economic growth always good/necessary?
- Allocate subsidies to promote good food.

Springboard

We then had three springboard statements to help frame the issues and give some context for discussion in the small groups.

The first was from ***Nourish*** sharing 4 observations on

- Holistic approach: government is starting to join the dots and sees that it's remit in making policy around food goes beyond supporting economic growth and food exports. Government recognises that National Food Policy should achieve positive outcomes for people's health the environment and local and national economy.
- Various sectors, organisations and civil society joining dots and working together: Our current food system has all these adverse effects on people's health, climate, biodiversity, is part of an economy where we reduce jobs, skills, diversity etc. If we see that it becomes clear that working together for a sustainable food system will mean that all the various issues we are working on are addressed: whether we are working on poverty, health, environmental protection, nature conservation, economic development.
- Getting beyond polarized debates: It is in everybody's interest that our food is ecologically produced and healthy and enjoyable to eat and accessible to everyone. If we decide to we can create a food system that is people centred and place based and thus will be sustainable. A truly sustainable food system will not have any so called 'trade offs'.
- Change required on many levels and different areas simultaneously: We won't have a Good Food Nation without also having Good Food Streets, Good Food Schools, Good Food Households, Good Food Farms and Good Food Restaurants as well as Good Food Policies. We need these changes to be happening simultaneously and in lots of different areas.

The second statement was given by the ***Fife Diet***
Whilst they don't necessarily agree with the five priorities that the government proposes the Fife Diet thinks that the proposal for a Food Commission is a good idea. The 3 main points with regard to a Food Commission are:

- The best way to make good food accessible to everyone is to help people grow their own food. To this end the Food Commission should take responsibility for supporting the set up of allotments and community growing.
- A Food Commission should define what sustainable food is and make the links to climate change, environmental stewardship and local economies. Based on this a benchmark for sustainable food needs to be developed and government needs to help all in society to reach sustainable food criteria.
- Food Commission needs to be set up in a way that assures that there are no tensions between private business interests and those of the general public/community.

The third statement was given by the ***Falkland Centre for Stewardship***
Ninian Stewart's theme was based on the question: How did we become so disconnected from our food? We now all go to supermarkets to buy our food and we lack the understanding on the various implications of our way of dealing with food. There is value in looking at what food was for our ancestors, how food was produced, processed and retailed. With reference to the referendum Ninian asked how we can become an ALL and what would our shared vision for a good food nation be. Fife is an amazing place with land and sea, urban and rural, poverty and wealth. It's a great place to test a good food nation where everyone is included.

Priorities

The government proposed 5 priority areas for becoming a Good Food Nation. We looked at these starting by looking across all areas and reflecting whether these are the right priorities. We tried to identify gaps across the areas and within the proposed ones.
The documents sets out the following 5 priority areas:

- Food in the public sector
- A Children's food policy
- Local food
- Good food choices
- Continued economic growth

What priorities are missing?

- Linking the priorities should be a priority
- Food security
- Food production: diversity in farming, support for smaller farmers
- Organic farming
- Access to land
- Alternative roots to market
- Cross cutting themes in all priority areas should be: celebration, seasonality, sharing.
- Food justice / food sovereignty

- Sustainability: how is food grown (integrated management of resources to ensure sustainability and equality), land availability, allocation of subsidies
- Climate change and carbon cost
- Grow your own: in schools and communities; take 'incredible edible' as a model
- Affordability of good food for all
- Processes and behaviour change, cultural change: A felt connection with food needed, currently many of those producing and serving food lack passion for food; in general an awareness for culinary heritage requires us to understand where we have come from; what social aspects underpin the way we value food? For example we are very time poor, does this lead to us being food poor?
- Allotments act
- Community education: what is good and healthy food, supporting nutritionally vulnerable groups
- Reduce sugar consumption
- Advertising: promote fresh food, reduce junk

Reflections on the proposed priorities

A children's food policy

- Should be a family/community policy
- Should include promotion of eating together, celebration of seasonality
- Education in growing and cooking food, this should be part of curriculum for excellence
- Teach the teachers
- Children to 'educate' parents

Good food choices

- Making good choices easier
- Product rather than processing
- Enable people to take ownership of what they eat
- Campaign on the effects of sugar
- Could be renamed into 'food culture'
- Working on food culture takes time and imagination
- The role of advertising
- Enable people to make good food choices through support for organic, no GMOs, subsidise good food versus bad food

Continued economic growth

- New measures of wealth such as a happiness index
- Skills and social skills need to grow
- Start with growing local food rather then exports
- Is in conflict with access and affordability: economic export versus feeding population
- Sustainable economic development

- Locally established co-ops, support cooperation rather than competition

Local food

- Needs to be networked to make up for regional differences/difficulties
- Farmers supplying people not markets
- Access to local food: markets can help this (more often, more affordable)
- Make sure people can appreciate value of local food and support it

Food in the public sector

- Unbundle and introduce local specialities
- Eliminate/reduce sugar from public diet
- More power to individual organisations such as hospital managers working with caterers
- Too complex and expensive to implement?

Food Commission

The government has announced to appoint a Food Commission and asks us how a Food Commission could best help to become a Good Food Nation. Nourish explained that from what's outlined in the government paper, it is not clear exactly what the Food Commission would look like. There are a lot of different things that are called 'commission'. Nothing is decided yet about what the Food Commission will be and thus we can all make suggestions. Helpful in making suggestions for the Food Commission are reflections along the following lines (see also the annex at the end of this document):

- What would its remit be? (Why does it exist? Who does it exist for?)
- What would its tasks be?
- Who would be involved and how?
- What would its powers be? How democratic would it be?
- How independent would it be?
- Who would it report to?

People reflected on 2 questions:

1. What is the most important thing for the commission to do?
2. What is the most important thing in how it is run and set up?

What is the most important thing for the commission to do?

- Have a clear remit
- It has power to deliver the vision and its actions; prioritization; integration
- Set the strategic direction and priorities in terms of healthy eating and sustainable economic growth- particularly resolving the tension between the two
- Prioritize the growth of local, affordable food accessible for all, of a recognized 'food standard'
- Ensure that every decision made about food secures the greater good of society

- Set and monitor standards, indicators and deadlines; assess policy efficacy
- Universal coding of food to determine "healthy" easily understood by all
- Focus on outcome which is 'good food for all'
- Keep asking hard questions
- Help joined up communication about food
- Encourage people to take responsibility for their choices and help them to do so
- Research incl. social change
- Work towards making big businesses accountable

The most important thing in how it is run and set up

- Ensure wide representation
- Fair representation: consumers, growers (large + small), amateur, professional, geographical representation
- Nomination should be a democratic progress
- Well facilitated to allow voices to be heard equally
- Its powers should be written into legislation
- Regular revision of commission members
- Will it be involved in or ensure educational initiatives?
- It should have the power to take things forward and enforce
- Needs to have power, be accountable, representative, and work towards measurable outcomes
- Truly independent of corporate interests
- Possibility of subgroups to focus on priorities

END of summary of event.

ANNEX

Examples in support for reflecting on Food Commission

	Bristol Food Policy Council	Commissioner for Children and Young People
Who nominates	Set up upon and according to recommendation in Who Feeds Bristol report (commissioned by city council and NHS)	Parliament is nominating one person as commissioner
Who is involved	High-level strategic grouping: members represent Production; Wholesale; Business development; Local Government; Catering Green Capital; Non-governmental food organization; Retail; Health; Community; Education/Training. Chair: professor from Cardiff University Administrative support: Bristol City Council	1 paid commissioner and a small staff team
Function/remit	Influencing and advocating for national, regional and local policies that support development of healthy, sustainable, resilient food systems	- promote rights of children and young people - assess the adequacy and effectiveness of law, policy and practice; - promote best practice by service providers - commission, undertake and publish research on matters relating to the rights of children
responsibilities	- To support and champion the Good Food Plan through working with others - Delegating specific tasks and programmes and overseeing the progress made - Facilitating co-ordination of the different elements of the Bristol Food Policy	- The Commissioner must encourage the involvement of children - consult children on the work to be undertaken - consult organisations working with and for children on the work to be undertaken - The Commissioner may carry out an investigation into a service provider
		The Commissioner may require any person: - to give evidence on any matter within the terms of reference of an investigation - to produce documents in the custody or control of that person which have a bearing on any such matter

7 Tips for making effective responses to consultations

1 Read and follow the instructions. Some consultations give specific instructions on how to submit a response, for example, the length of responses, deadlines for responding and instructions on formats. Use them.

2 Introduce yourself. Explain concisely who you are, whether you represent any group or organisation and what you do. It helps set the scene.

3 Don't feel you have to comment on everything.
It's OK to just make one or two points. Don't feel daunted if you feel you have limited expertise or experience. Everyone's opinion is legitimate and valid.

4 Be clear. Think about what you want to say before you start writing and identify the most important issues to you.

5 Be brief and direct. Ideally no more than 2-4 pages. If you can answer any specific questions posed by the consultation, then do. If you have complicated diagrams or detailed information, think about whether these can go in an appendix to keep things uncluttered.

6 Be constructive and accurate. If you don't like what is proposed, explain why. Suggest alternative options and be prepared to look for compromise. Make sure you have your facts right.

7 Structure it logically. Try and tell a story. Have a beginning (introduction and headline topics) a middle (an explanation of your key points) and an end (conclusion or summary).