



# Fish+

## In a Good Food Nation



Hosted by Seafood Scotland and Nourish Scotland

## Event Report



**SEAFOOD  
SCOTLAND**

**NOURISH**  
SCOTLAND

# Contents

<b>About the organisers</b> .....	<b>4</b>
<b>Acknowledgements</b> .....	<b>5</b>
<b>Introduction</b> .....	<b>6</b>
About the conference .....	<b>7</b>
What happened on the day .....	<b>7</b>
<b>The Stories of Fish+ in Scotland</b> .....	<b>12</b>
<b>Diets</b> .....	<b>14</b>
How we value food .....	<b>14</b>
Affordability & Class .....	<b>14</b>
Contact with other cuisines .....	<b>14</b>
Rhythm of life .....	<b>15</b>
Preferences .....	<b>15</b>
Knowledge & skills .....	<b>15</b>
Public Procurement .....	<b>15</b>
<b>Supply Chains</b> .....	<b>16</b>
The decrease in fishmongers & rise of the supermarkets .....	<b>16</b>
Lengthening & shortening supply chains .....	<b>16</b>
<b>Environment</b> .....	<b>17</b>
Impacts on the Environment .....	<b>17</b>
Fish+ populations .....	<b>17</b>
Bureaucracy .....	<b>17</b>
<b>Broader sector</b> .....	<b>18</b>
Global, national changes and local impacts .....	<b>18</b>
Growth of the catch industry .....	<b>18</b>
Workers .....	<b>19</b>

- Technology..... 19
- Fish farming ..... 19
- Impacts elsewhere ..... 19
- Nightmares and dreams ..... 20**
  - Nightmares ..... 22
  - Dreams ..... 23
- Lunch..... 25**
- Next Steps: Positive & Possible..... 26**
  - How do we get more Scottish fish+ on the public plate? ..... 28
  - How do we build consensus around data and sustainability? ..... 29
  - How can people working in the fish+ sector thrive? ..... 30
    - Existing issues..... 30
    - Possible steps forward ..... 31
  - How do we navigate the spatial squeeze collectively? ..... 32
  - How does Scotland fall in love with fish+ again? ..... 33
- Conclusion ..... 34**
- What Fish+ would participants like to eat more of in Scotland? ..... 35**
- Endnotes ..... 36**

# About the organisers

## Seafood Scotland

Seafood Scotland is the national trade and marketing body for the Scottish seafood industry. Independent and non-commercial, it is funded by the Scottish Government (Marine Directorate) and offers support to the whole industry without cost focus on engagement with the seafood supply chain rather than on direct-to-consumer activities, with a remit that includes wild caught fish, shellfish and farm raised species such as salmon & trout.

### **Event co-organisation & delivery:**

Jeni Adamson, *Industry Engagement Manager*

## Nourish Scotland

Nourish Scotland is a charity focusing on food policy and practice. We work for a fair, healthy and sustainable food system that truly values nature and people.

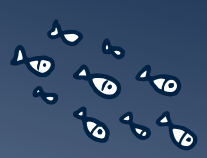


We take a systems approach to food. This means we work across a wide range of issues and levels: from production to consumption, from practice to policy, from grassroots to national. We champion integrated approach to solving the big challenges of the current food system: hunger and malnutrition, diet-related disease, exploitation, loss of biodiversity, and climate change.

### **Event co-organisation & delivery:**

Pete Ritchie, *Executive Director*

Diana Garduño Jiménez, *Senior Food Justice Officer*

Abigail McCall, *Good Food Nation Support Officer*



*Fish+ refers to the fact that we are talking about all types of aquatic food including fish, bivalves, seaweed and crustaceans from both sea and freshwater.*

# Acknowledgements

We would like to thank everyone who contributed to this event and report:

Suzy and David, *Adelaide Place Venues*

Helen Wilson, *Graphic facilitator, Envision*

Harrison Reid, *Photographer, Photograph Everything*

Marcela Terán, *Report designer and illustrator, Liberation Works*

# Introduction

**On Thursday 18th January 2024 Seafood Scotland and Nourish Scotland held the Fish+ in a Good Food Nation conference in Glasgow.**

In Scotland, the Good Food Nation Act passed in 2022 aims for Scotland to become a place where:

*'people from every walk of life take pride and pleasure in, and benefit from, the food they produce, buy, cook, serve, and eat each day.'*<sup>1</sup>

The Good Food Nation Act exists in a broader context where food systems<sup>2</sup> transformation is seen as a something that can help us work through environment, climate, biodiversity, and health crises.

Yet, in the UK seafood is rarely part of food systems conversations. This is problematic given that seafood can also play a role in dealing with these crises. For example, research has shown some types of seafood are high in micronutrients and can be produced with lower environmental impacts than some food on land. Still, in the UK an estimated 70% of seafood produced is exported and we import 65-81% of the seafood we eat<sup>3</sup>.

This cross-cutting policy gives Scotland an opportunity to place fish+ squarely within food systems transformation, ensuring these legislative building blocks support the sector.

## About the conference

Nourish Scotland and Seafood Scotland came together to bring people from across the fish+ sector to imagine what Fish+ in a Good Food Nation could look like and how we could get there. Over 60 fishers, producer organisations, public procurement representatives, businesses, environmental NGOs and community councils came together for this one-day conference. Funding was secured to encourage and support the attendance of people in the sector that might not be part of organisations that can subsidise event attendance, travel, and accommodation.

The aims of the day were:

- *To identify opportunities for Scottish seafood in a Good Food Nation*
- *To ensure that voices from the sector inform Scotland's national and local food plans*
- *To build relationships across the sector and with other stakeholders*
- *To develop broad shared aims and opportunities for collaboration*

This report tries to convey the main themes and tone of the day's conversations. We have not ascribed statements to individuals or organisations. This is because we wanted to foster a space for open dialogue. We have grouped ideas thematically and hope that by having them next to each other we can all get a better understanding of the different perspectives within the sector. We think this can help identify potential areas of consensus and ideas to work towards a Good Food Nation that includes fish+.

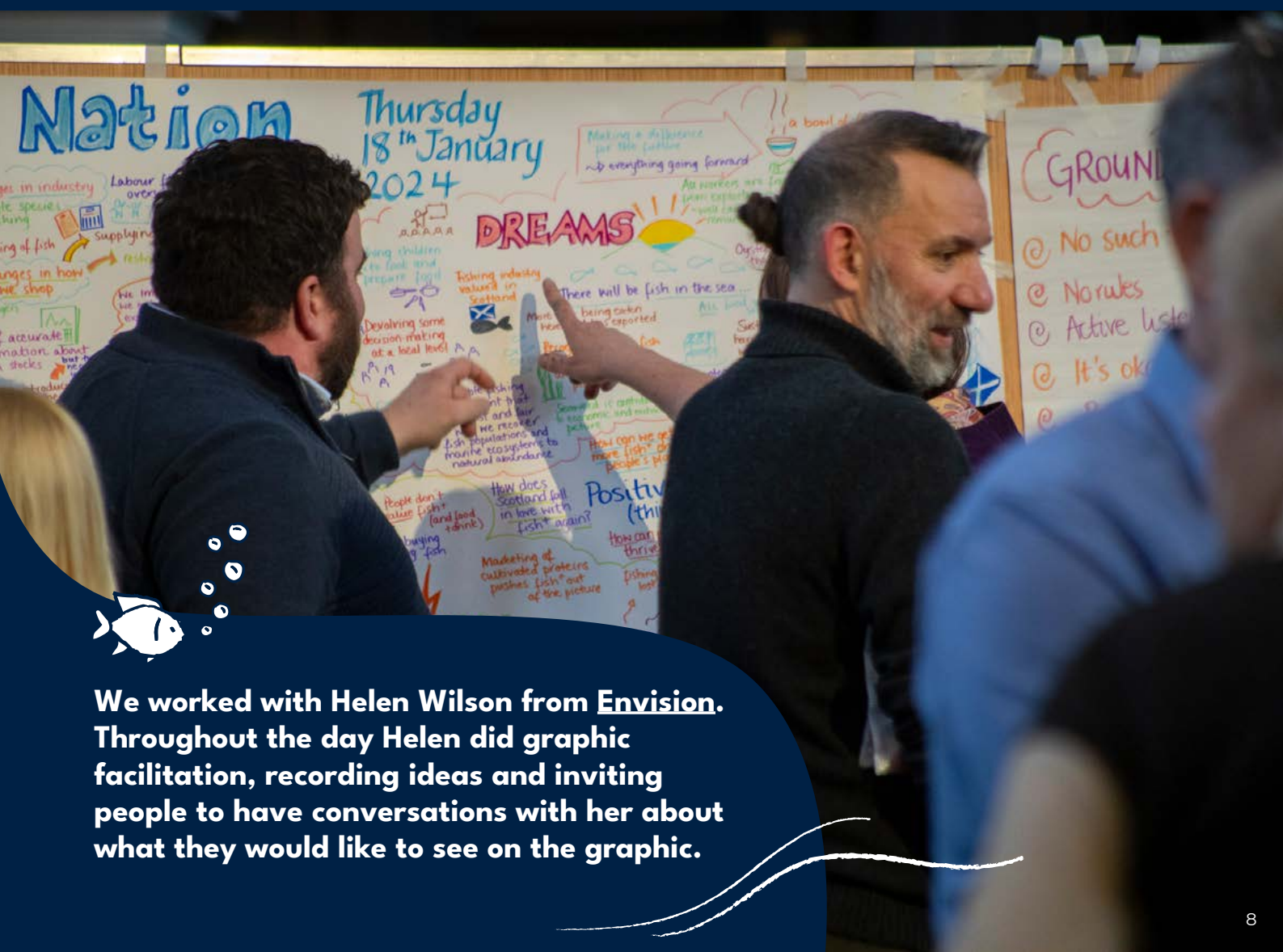
Still, we are aware not everyone was in the room, and some things will have been left out of the report simply by the fact that we were not in every single conversation, and neither should we be. We hope this report offers a good enough snapshot of conversations had on the day and is a stepping stone towards future work.

## What happened on the day

The conference began early in the morning with delicious breakfast muffins provided by Wild Rover. We then grouped people into tables of 6-8 people. On each table we tried to get a diverse cross-section of people from across the sector. We also assigned one facilitator per group, their role was to guide the conversation and try to ensure everyone's voices were heard.



*Breakfast muffins. Savoury choice: mara organic seaweed, lemons and spelt (vegan). Sweet choice: Apple and cinnamon*



  
We worked with Helen Wilson from Envision. Throughout the day Helen did graphic facilitation, recording ideas and inviting people to have conversations with her about what they would like to see on the graphic.



The conversations began with each table co-developing ground rules that would help them feel comfortable to have open discussions. These were then shared with the wider group. Next, participants on each table shared one of their earliest fish+ memories. We then asked people to talk about what changes they have seen in the way fish+ is done in Scotland. The stories were then relayed into the wider room and recorded on the graphic (p.11).

Next, everyone came around the graphic and we asked people to share their nightmares, what they feared the most for the future of fish+ in a Good Food Nation. Then we asked people to share their dreams, what they most hoped for. These were recorded on the graphic and can also be seen in more detail on pages 22 to 24.

During lunch, facilitators got together to identify some of the recurring ideas raised by participants. Based on these, we came up with six questions. Participants were invited to join one of five possible discussion groups.

People were also given the opportunity to raise their own topic to have a discussion on, but this option was not taken up.

### Discussion groups:

- 1 *How do we get more fish+ on the public plate?*
- 2 *How do we build consensus around data and sustainability?*
- 3 *How can people working in the fish+ sector thrive?*
- 4 *How do we navigate the spatial squeeze collectively?*
- 5 *How does Scotland fall in love with fish+ again?*

The afternoon was spent focusing on topic-based positive and possible steps that could take us closer to a Good Food Nation. Afterwards, all the groups shared some of the key points from the discussions.

Before the day ended, we asked for volunteers who would like to join a meeting with food policymakers to share what we had discussed on the day. This meeting is currently being planned. We reminded participants to respond to the Good Food Nation consultation on the National Food Plan and encouraged them to get involved in upcoming work like the local food plans.

# Fish+ in a GOOD FOOD Nation

➡ Identify opportunities for Scottish seafood in a Good Food Nation.

➡ Ensure voices from the sector inform local + national plans.

➡ Build relationships across the sector and beyond.

➡ Develop shared aims and opportunities for collaboration.

Such things as  
No daft questions ~ Listen and learn ~ Respect confidentiality ~ OK to disagree ~ Focus on why we're here ~ enjoy the day ~ say if something isn't working

**GROUND RULES  
FOR THE DAY...**

**NOURISH**  
SCOTLAND

**SEAFOOD  
SCOTLAND**

## Aims and Ground Rules

Extract from live graphic by Helen Wilson



## Reflecting on the Story

Extract from live graphic by Helen Wilson

# The Stories of Fish+ in Scotland

‘What are the big changes you’ve seen in the way we do fish+ in Scotland?’

In their groups, we asked people to think about:

- *How has fishing changed in your lifetime?*
- *What fish+ have we been fishing – and what changes have there been?*
- *How has the technology changed?*
- *Who is fishing? Has this changed?*
- *Who’s buying the fish+? Has this changed?*
- *What have you felt were the most significant economic and political impacts over the period?*
- *Who has been eating the fish+? And what fish+ are being eaten?*
- *How have you seen tastes change / evolve?*
- *Has the sea changed? How?*



**We then asked all of the groups to share the main points from their discussion.**

**The aim was not to get one cohesive 'right, true' story but to render visible the multitude of perspectives present. This gave us the opportunity to learn more about where others were coming from.**

Below are the main themes that emerged from the discussion. We invite you to look at the notes taken on the day to see if you identify any more!



## Diets

### How we value food

Some people felt that food is not seen as something of value, impacting our relationship with fish+. One participant said: 'we are not willing to spend that much on food anymore' and another mentioned how the 'value of food on the public plate is less than zero'. For some people this loss of value was extended to the people working in the sector 'fishermen are looked down on'. This was compared to the perceived value given to the fish+ sector elsewhere, 'in other places they're so proud of farmers and local fish'. Someone saw this as a difference between Europe and the UK where they felt that in Europe seafood is more highly appreciated.

Still, some participants talked about COVID-19 as a period in the UK when people's 'attitudes briefly shifted towards more local food' sharing how during COVID-19 there were '200 people lining up for catch – but this has disappeared'.

### Affordability & Class

People eating fish+ was linked to affordability and class. Someone shared how foods like oysters used to be 'poor man's supper but not anymore'. It was also mentioned how 'shellfish like oysters, langoustines and scallops' have become a luxury in recent years. One person compared this to the situation in Italy where they talked about how fish+ is an available commodity and accessible to working class people and how for cod, the 'best bit is the cheeks'.

Someone talked about how wild salmon used to be common and eaten regularly across all socio-economic classes. Yet someone else mentioned salmon used to be expensive, and now it was cheap, correlating this to a decline in wild salmon and a shift to salmon farming.

### Contact with other cuisines

Some people talked about diets changing partly because of meeting people with different food practices. How 'exposure to a range of cultures' has for example introduced 'new ways of eating fish i.e. sushi'

## **Rhythm of life**

Some people talked about the lack of time available for people to cook and eat food as a barrier to people eating fish+. For one person this lack of time and preference for convenience meant that people have a 'desire for something quick and microwavable'. This was mirrored by someone else talking about a shift towards convenience in how we do fish+ , 'fish went from being eaten as a treat to now bought in frozen meals ready to serve'.

## **Preferences**

Some participants spoke about general trends they perceived in the population. For example, someone working in the emerging seaweed industry spoke about an increased demand for more plant-based food supporting the sector. Similarly, someone talked about a shift away from red meat and towards pescatarian / vegetarian options. Another person talked about more people wanting to eat locally sourced food, which from their perspective is a relatively new thing, and saw this as an opportunity to increase the consumption of fish+ in Scotland.

A barrier identified by a couple of people was that fish are 'bony' and this can both be a barrier to fish+ as a convenience food but also for 'kids who don't like bones'. Still, someone else talked about the power of advertising exemplified with a slogan – fish fingers are all the fish you need! – in shaping these preferences.

## **Knowledge & skills**

One participant talked about how 'people often don't want to eat beyond the big 5 species'<sup>4</sup> and wondered if people would have the skills and knowledge to prepare and cook other species. Someone saw the lack of knowledge stemming from the perceived separation between humans and nature 'people have lost skills and understanding of where food comes from'.

Knowledge was also talked about from the perspective of the information available when people buy fish+. Someone talked about 'conflicting information' in the public sphere around health and sustainability so 'how do you know how to make the best choice?'. Another person brought up a lack of trust in labels and even though people want to buy Scottish– sometimes fish is sold with Scottish branding, but it has not actually come from Scotland.

## **Public Procurement**

In the public sphere, participants spoke about the changes they saw in procurement. One person mentioned how '30 years ago the NHS bought fresh fish across Scotland' whereas 'now, there's no fresh fish, only haddock, only frozen'. Someone saw this change mirrored in a lack of 'cooks, education, and knowledge' in the public sector. Another participant mentioned how local procurement is restricted by available budgets leaving some fish+ options a prohibitive choice.



## Supply Chains

### The decrease in fishmongers & rise of the supermarkets

Another factor impacting people's consumption of fish+ was linked to a decrease in fishmongers. Concern for this was raised across all 10 groups. One participant talked about how there are 'fewer fishmongers, especially in the last 2-4 years...[instead we have] big supermarkets'. Someone mentioned that in the 90s fishmongers were approached by supermarkets pre-retirement so there was no succession'. This break in intergenerational knowledge transfer meant that 'recruitment became an issue – skillsets are lacking and there's no investment in training'. One person saw this as a larger trend: '20 years ago there was no Tesco, every village had local traders'.

For some people there was a marked change between fish+ being sold at the fishmongers and the supermarket. Whereas 'fish used to be theatrical', in supermarkets 'there's fewer wet fresh counters' and it is sold as a 'sanitised product with label, price, weight, no skin'. For someone else, the shift to supermarkets meant an increase in

distrust 'there's less ability to buy as a consumer – I don't buy fish from supermarket because it can't be trusted'. Similarly, someone

mentioned how supermarkets have an 'attractive opportunity' to market fish as 'genuine Scottish, lower footprint, etc' but 'labelling is misleading'.

A couple of participants talked about supermarkets having power that fishmongers generally do not. For example, supermarkets 'can keep prices lower'. Someone else mentioned that supermarkets can 'now dictate what is caught and sold' thus 'fishmongers are cut out of the equation'.

### Lengthening & shortening supply chains

People also noted a lack of processing facilities in Scotland. Nowadays, 'it's more common to send away for processing, before, it was sent to big cities and diversified for the market'. There was more processing to add more value. It was also mentioned that COVID-19 was 'a time that allowed restaurants to connect with fishers' and how this enabled buyers to better understand the challenges fishers face.



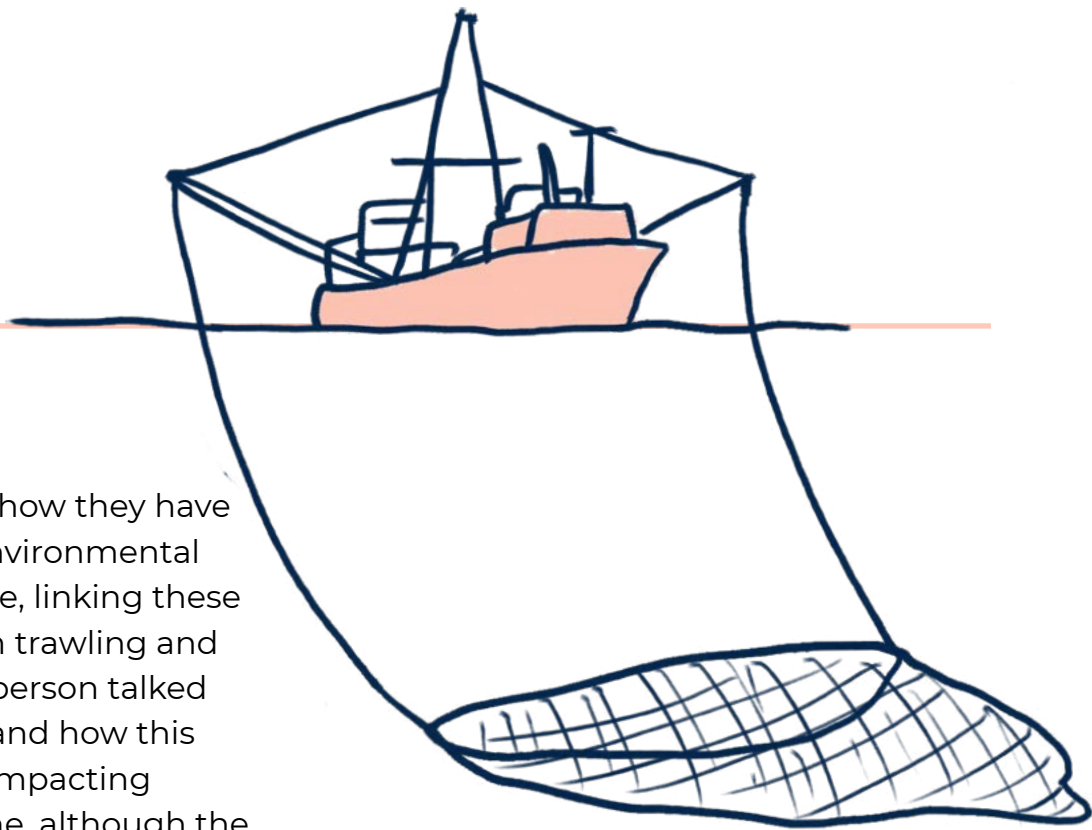
## Environment

### Impacts on the Environment

Someone spoke about how they have seen 'degradation of environmental habitats' in their lifetime, linking these to practices like bottom trawling and scallop dredging. One person talked about fertiliser run-off and how this leads to algae blooms impacting marine life. For someone, although the growth of aquaculture has increased employment, it has had negative environmental impacts.

### Fish+ populations

People noted that there have been changes in the types of fish available and where these can be found. One person talked about how 'huge fisheries disappeared on the East Coast'. Someone else mentioned that populations of fish like cod, whiting, hake and bluefin are at record levels and 'this is unprecedented'. Someone else talked about the 'shifting baseline syndrome' and how we tend to measure the state of the ocean against a previous, already negatively impacted moment in time.



### Bureaucracy

People spoke about how the impacts on the environment have led to increased bureaucratic processes. This has included ideas like delineating protected areas for fish to replenish, or to control stocks like the 1970s ban on herring fishing and ensuing quota-based system. While these actions like these have had positive and negative effects, someone noted that there is confusion with the certification and accreditation mechanisms.

## Broader sector



### Global, national changes and local impacts

People identified how national and global trends had an impact at home. With globalisation and the entry to the world market, someone noted how Scotland became a big exporter, tying domestic prices with outside forces. These bigger contextual changes impacted life in Scotland, for example someone emphasised how when Scotland joined the EU in the 70s, fishing in Aberdeen moved to Peterhead. More recently, someone considered how Brexit led to a loss of EU markets, an increase in new home markets, and less control of fishing areas, impacting livelihoods. Someone else pointed out that Brexit led to higher quotas for some, but not all species and that 2026 will be an opportunity to regenerate quotas.

### Growth of the catch industry

Many people talked about an overall shift away from local production and towards consolidation of the industry. This was seen practically with a change from 'small boats to large boats' which someone saw as 'leading to a closure of fish markets'. Similarly, someone spoke about how in the North East 'fresh fish used to be landed daily now, big boats are out at sea for weeks landing in few places'. Someone noted how this led to a reduction in fishermen and boats. For example, in the pelagic fleet which currently only holds 21 boats. A person talked about how these changes reflected the strive for 'ever bigger profits and efficiency'. This was mirrored in major Scottish companies being allocated most quotas and small fishing communities not being allocated as many.

## **Workers**

A couple of participants talked about how labour has become a big issue in recent years. Someone linked this to the shift in the sector to a multinational industry. They specifically emphasised a lack of respect for workers' rights and increase in exploitation. Risks were also associated with 'rough cold environment' and the fact that many workers cannot swim. Someone mentioned how the demographic of people working on the boats has changed, with many workers coming from the Philippines and Eastern Europe. It was mentioned that overall it is very difficult to get crews for boats.

## **Technology**

People commented on technological changes shaping the industry. For example, how computers can now 'tell the size of a school before putting the net now'. And how 'catch cams allow visualisation of what is happening'. Someone wondered if with these advancements in technology 'fish even stand a chance'. Further, people talked about technology on the vessels enabling fish to be frozen on board.

In terms of the seaweed production, someone reflected how to enable mass production large factories would be needed 'but would be closed a lot of the year due to period of harvesting'. Currently it is a cottage industry, with wild harvesting and drying machines.

## **Fish farming**

Some people spoke about the repercussions on the broader sector after the introduction of fish farming and its growth to a multinational industry. For example, for some, the introduction of aquaculture meant an increase in competition over government funds. Others noted the impacts on salmon mentioning that the species used to be eaten seasonally and was expensive but it is now ubiquitous and cheap. Someone saw the industry having wide repercussions: 'salmon farming has changed the story of Scottish fish'.

## **Impacts elsewhere**

From the past to the present some people brought up how the way we do fish+ in Scotland can have impacts in other parts of the world. For example, someone shared how herring was used to feed the slave trade and Napoleonic wars in the 1800s. More recently, someone spoke about how fish is being caught in other parts of the world to produce fishmeal for farmed fish. They noted how this can impact food sovereignty in other places.

# Nightmares and dreams

We asked people to share what are their worst fears and hopes for the fish+ sector





## This is what they said:



*There will be fish in the sea and fishermen will be able to continue harvesting*

*Consensus based marine spatial planning. Marine restoration and carbon emissions decline*

*Governments have introduced in school curriculum in home economic education material that teaches children and parents about our food system and that connects them to producers*

*Eating oysters from the Forth like before*

*Diverse vessels in the fleet and these are valued by the public, society and government, contributing to healthier populations*

*Animal welfare is protected. Animal welfare is integrated into food systems and this is not seen in conflict with human interest.*

*The industry is fully sustainable and wild fish are harvested*

*Sustainable fish becoming the most affordable option*

*Everyone involved in the fishing industry, including migrants, are well remunerated and respected*



## Dreams

*Wider appreciation of the seafood industry, people want to build their careers in it*

*Aquaculture feed is sustainable and diversified*

*Seaweed sector is a sustainable part of the Scottish seafood industry*

*Able to buy fish that I can see, smell and touch, they're not wrapped in a plastic container.*

*Manage fishing sustainably so that the industry is as healthy and productive as it can be. Transition in a just way so that fishermen are not paid for bad fishers management.*

*The end of bycatch. We respect what we kill*

*Research based policies and decision making. Research aligning with industry*

*People being able to gutter fish*

*Every food offer is sustainable, it does not require certification*

*Good science with fishermen involved in science. If we've been involved we might not like it but we will take it seriously.*

# Fish+ in a Good Food Nation

## DREAMS

Making a difference for the future...  
→ everything going forward

a bowl of Cullen Skink...  
Greater understanding of both sides - so we can move forward in partnership (Sabbatical/ job-swap)

All workers are free from exploitation - well cared for and remunerated

Fish+ the most affordable nutritious protein source on the market

Oysters in the Forth

→ diversifying fish+

There will be fish in the sea...

ALL food sustainably sourced

Marine spatial planning based on consensus

Sustainable harvesting of wild sea fish

Research-based decision-making

Fish counters with fish I can see, smell, touch...

Less waste using all fish+ products

Using science - involving fishers

More fish being eaten here and less exported

Recognition that fish are sentient beings and their welfare protected

Seaweed is contributing to economic and nutritional picture

Sustainable fishing to the extent that in a just and fair way we recover fish populations and marine ecosystems to natural abundance

Teaching children how to cook and prepare food

Community Quota Scheme

Devolving some decision-making at a local level

Fishing industry valued in Scotland

Decline of public health

People don't value fish+ (and food + drink)

People stop buying and eating fish

Fish is just too expensive for people to buy

Fisherman under too much pressure

Over-regulation of fishing → people no longer able to survive

Fear of being vilified for trying to improve things in low-trophic aquaculture

## Nightmares

Being driven to small-scale artisan industry

can't get a clear picture

All fighting for the same area

Losing some species by fixating on stock levels that are too low

different perceptions/debates

fishing grounds lost for ever

sacrifice food security for energy security

Competition for space from eg. wind farms

Out of sight, out of mind... aquaculture gets lost

→ and most of population doesn't care

Collapse of food chains due to warming and acidification of the oceans

Continued poorly resourced centralised decision-making

Small businesses squeezed out

Abuse of community

Exploitative working conditions

### Nightmares and dreams

Extract from live graphic by Helen Wilson.



# Lunch

This was provided by Wild Rover with a focus on seafood, including vegetarian and vegan options.

Top right: Wild Rover Team. Middle left: St Monan's smoked mackerel pate. Middle right: Naturally oak-smoked haddock and wild mushroom tart, Anster cheese and thyme tart. Bottom: Participants choosing food from the buffet table.



# Next Steps: Positive & Possible

In the afternoon, facilitators pulled out five topics that kept coming up in morning discussions and turned them into discussion questions.

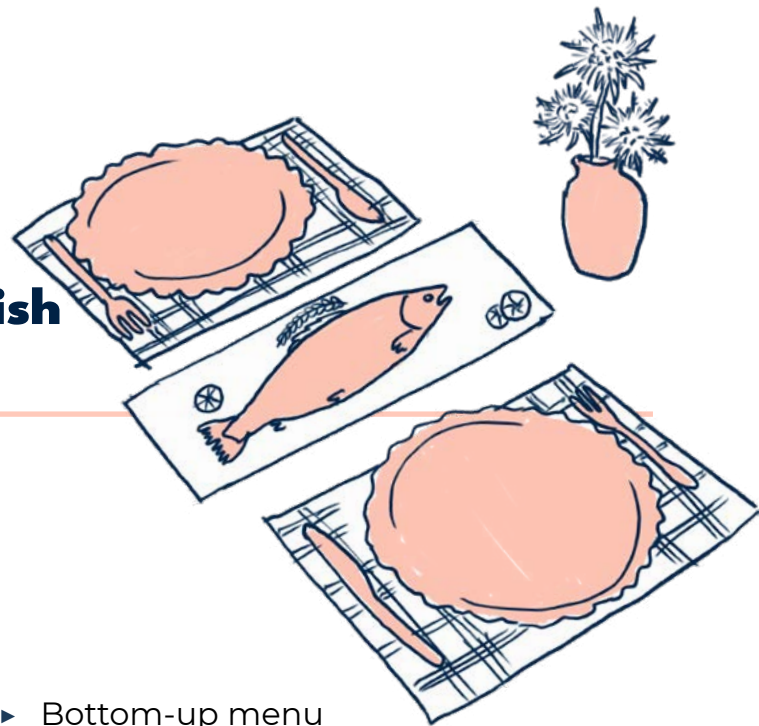
People were invited to join one of these discussion groups. They were also given the option to start their own discussion group, but everyone decided to join the existing ones.

The topics were:

- 1 How do we get more fish+ on the public plate?*
- 2 How do we build consensus around data and sustainability?*
- 3 How can people working in the fish+ sector thrive?*
- 4 How do we navigate the spatial squeeze collectively?*
- 5 How does Scotland fall in love with fish+ again?*



# 1 How do we get more Scottish fish+ on the public plate?



The group discussed how building connections between the public sector and suppliers would be key to getting Scottish fish+ on the public plate. They suggested that a helpful next step would be for Seafood Scotland to host an event bringing together key stakeholders to identify opportunities for public procurement. This could be an opportunity to ‘take procurers to processors and vice versa to understand and unlock the potential’ of working together. The group proposed inviting Soil Association, Brakes, Scotland X, NHS Scotland, and others. Conversations between the NHS Scotland and Seafood Scotland to take this forward have started.

While the group noted how policy and legislation can sometimes prevent progress, they identified other things that would help get more fish+ on the public plate, these included:

- ▶ Infrastructure development for processing, transport, and cooking of fish+. People thought that if fish+ became embedded in public procurement this could act as a lever for infrastructure development.
- ▶ Increased knowledge across the public sector on what fish+ is available and where, prices, species, seasonality, and potential swap outs. This could be supported with a regionally specific fish+ guide.

- ▶ Bottom-up menu development, ensuring an increase in fish+ comes as an outcome of working with people rather than people being told what to eat. Menus should also use language that makes fish+ sound delicious so that hospital and school menus sound as good as if you were in a restaurant.
- ▶ The NHS could go back to buying fresh fish, or frozen, if need be, but to ensure it is of Scottish origin. To trial this an idea could be to have days when certain seafood types are trialled. For example, on a salmon day, Scottish trout could be used as a replacement. This could be accompanied with information on sustainability and animal welfare. Then, discussions could be had to see what people eating the fish think.
- ▶ Collating examples of good practice, especially within contract design, to help get more Scottish food into frameworks.

The group suggested that baseline data would be necessary so we can see whether progress is being made on the uptake of fish+ in various settings.

## 2 How do we build consensus around data and sustainability?



One of the first things the group stumbled upon was lack of consensus around the definition of sustainability. People spoke about sustainability encompassing ecosystem, jobs, energy, communities, and health. Some people suggested looking into the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) definition and others suggested sustainability was about:

- ▶ Bringing together biological, social, and economic factors
- ▶ Not going backwards at a minimum
- ▶ Reimagining nature back to life

It was also mentioned that given existing ecosystem depletion, it is important to think about what the baseline for sustainability is - to consider what is it that we are trying to recover or sustain.

When talking about data, the group identified a need to agree what data and data gaps need to be looked at, while recognising that data collection and investment can be challenging. Some people felt that data is sometimes made out to be more open to interpretation than it is and wondered if there was a case of 'shooting the messenger'.

Others thought that there is work to be done in how data and methodologies used are communicated. This came from an example of fishers carrying out fish population surveys where they

fish and consequently thinking populations are high or stable. On the other hand, someone argued that these numbers will not be representative of a broader area because fishers will inherently go where there is fish so they can catch something. Thus, people suggested that relationship and trust building between fishers and researchers is key so that everyone involved understands the context of data collection and methodologies used.

The group also recognised that decisions are being made in an uncertain world, as definitions and understanding keeps changing. Some people suggested that devolved decision-making on a regional basis could be more fruitful.

The group discussed the need to bring around the table rural community, government, fisherfolk, aquaculture, supermarkets, and scientists in mediated conversations. The Annual Fisheries Convention was seen as an event that already does some of this work, and that 'they determine the big agendas and narratives'. Yet someone else thought that more consensus-building work would be useful. Still, it was recognised that consensus-building processes have existed in the past but that a lack of 'what's next' have made them difficult to follow through.

## 3 How can people working in the fish+ sector thrive?



### Existing issues

The group first identified some of the issues related to this topic faced in the sector including:

- ▶ Difficulty in recruiting local labour
- ▶ Local youth turning down job opportunities, jobs and careers in fish are locally perceived to be of poor quality
- ▶ Local labour is often not physically fit for work in this sector
- ▶ Little labour protection (the work is perceived to be dangerous - high risk, many injuries at sea – and widespread use of meaningless contracts).
- ▶ Consequently, a high turnover

People talked about social welfare for seafarers and raised concerns of modern slavery. This was specifically raised in relation to the immigration system and the visas available which are 'not fit for purpose'. The group mentioned how the current system impacted training, contracts, insurance, working conditions and racism. It was mentioned that migrant workers commonly get Transit visas which allow them to enter at Heathrow and travel to their boats (in Aberdeenshire). Yet, sometimes when they challenge their employers about contractual agreements (sometimes months pass at sea without them being paid, or they are badly injured at sea), they are dropped and abandoned in

ports. The police then pick them up and workers get deported for being in the UK illegally on the wrong visa.

They identified the role of unions in bringing seafarers together to ensure workers' voices are part of decision-making. Nevertheless, for international workers this can be quite hard for fear of work permissions being withdrawn. The group suggested that if we need to rely on foreign labour, it needs to be made 'fair and just'.

More broadly, people thought that workers face similar issues to those in rural agriculture. They face busy daily chores and work far away from each other making it harder for them to organise.



## Possible steps forward

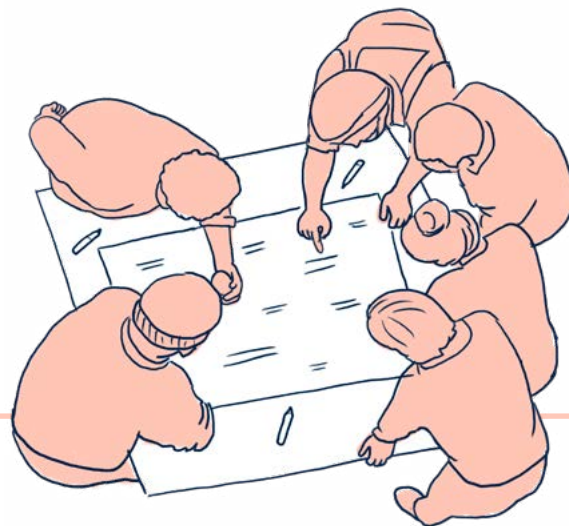
To work through these issues, the group thought that co-development of the sector is key. Some proposed holding local conversations on what a 'well-being economy' would look like. This could include using the '[blue doughnut](#)' decision-making framework and asking workers in the sector what they want for their livelihoods. This was proposed as a process that could build trust and manage expectations of everyone involved.

Current research could also be part of these conversations, but funding for developing it and implementing recommendations would be crucial. They specifically talked about a need to support workers financially so that they could participate in research activities like interviews. This could elevate 'unheard voices'. Further, research should involve a phase of public engagement with research findings. This work should then be taken to conversations with decision-makers to further steer action towards tackling root causes.

The group also suggested developing local and national fish+ partnerships. These could come from a national framework that could then be adopted locally. The partnerships could co-ordinate work in the sector and scale up where appropriate. Their work could include supporting product

traceability, engaging young people through specific training roles and apprenticeships and new career structures. They could also play a role in engaging coastal communities and connecting them with supply chains. Further, they could be part of celebrating local areas / businesses doing good fish+ work and supporting livelihoods. Overall, they could build community resilience.

## 4 How do we navigate the spatial squeeze collectively?



To navigate the spatial squeeze collectively, this group called for more transparency and involvement in marine spatial planning. There was concern that decision-making is happening ‘in private and others have no input’. Some felt that NGOs can ‘parachute in’ while community interests are not as highly represented. It was also mentioned that it is hard for new players, like the seaweed industry, to get involved as there is a long history of others using the space. There was also frustration that some of the plans are taking years to be developed. People in this group felt that they had ‘no agency in the marine environment’ and ‘want to have our voices heard’.

People expressed a desire for more collective decision-making based on modelling and open discussion. One suggestion was for this to be done with communities of place and involving community councils. Someone had an idea to use the University of St Andrew’s marine simulator. This tool enables you to input data for a particular region and see a visualisation. Community groups could be taken to the simulator, run an activity and jointly tease out consequences. Another person thought that modelling and open discussions could be used to better understand how different industries impact on each other. Overall, the group felt decision-making could be improved by building

collective understandings of current situations with a diverse group of stakeholders.

The group also thought that breaking down polarisation is key to work collectively. They suggested actions to build consensus. These included setting up secondments across the industry. Someone talked about how this currently happens in the Marine Conservation Society and has helped build relationships and reach compromise. Another suggestion was for people working in the fish+ sector – from NGOs to researchers to procurement, to pay primary producers to be taken out on their boats and get closer to better understanding fishers’ realities. They also suggested away days and residentials focusing on consensus building.

The group also talked about land. Currently, the Scottish Government maps areas based on viability of different uses. It was mentioned that there was a need to better understand who owns the land and a suggestion that local authorities should have their commons mapped. It was also noted that Natural Resource Wales have done some spatial mapping /modelling of different uses of land at sea, a next step could be to find out more about this work and learn any lessons for Scotland.



## 5 How does Scotland fall in love with fish+ again?



For Scotland to fall in love with fish+ again, people in this group felt that connections between people and producers could be strengthened in various ways.

The public sector was seen as having a key role to play by committing to buy Scottish fish+ and making it more prominent in our food environments. It was suggested that workplace canteens could have a designated 'fish day', like the current 'special meals' day.

Someone highlighted the opportunity to learn from the agricultural sector. For example, the industry could hold 'open port' days. They could also mimic #FARM24, a digital campaign agricultural workers showcase what a typical day in agriculture can look like.

Others focused on the education system, suggesting that fishers could call into classrooms from their boats, creating an opportunity for students to have conversations with them. Others added that connecting children to fish+ should start from nursery and that opportunities for them to taste the produce are key. The need to teach children about the environmental impact of our food was also mentioned, talking about being 'consumers for tomorrow'. Yet, it was noted that funding commitment to schools for this work is essential, and a 15-year minimum funding commitment was suggested.

People also spoke about a role for community, arguing that there should be funding for communities to organise tasters, share recipes, run community cooking lessons, share ideas on using cheaper varieties and opportunities to learn how to fish and gut.

Marketing was also seen as an avenue to increase pride in fish+ as a Scottish product. Some thought there was a strong opportunity to focus on provenance, for example by highlighting this in restaurant menus. It was suggested that Seafish should work with DEFRA on labelling sources. Other ways to do this included using social media, TV advertising and working with Scottish supermarkets on demonstrations, providing tasters for customers and perhaps accompanied with special offers on the products. Someone even thought there was space to hold 'Strictly Come Fishing!' – Where celebrities join fishers and put their skills to the test.

Further, participants were keen to hold fishing festivals to draw communities into the conversation. People talked about having fish vans and pondered on the need for recipe development and if and what a role for fish+ in fast food could look like. It was also mentioned that Scotland could learn from how other countries, like Norway, have promoted fish+.

# Conclusion

## The day brought together diverse perspectives from across the fish+ sector

There was room for lively conversations and honest discussions, reflecting the passion people have for the work they do. Hearing participants' perspectives on the story of fish+ in Scotland gave a snapshot of how people present perceive the industry and gave room to more nuanced conversations. Listening to people's dreams and nightmares allowed us to identify some areas of agreement and common goals. Discussing positive and possible steps in groups gave us opportunities to imagine different futures where the fish+ sector can thrive. It also allowed some very practical steps to emerge such as Seafood Scotland and NHS Scotland working together to take forward ideas for bringing together public sector and suppliers together.

People in the sector are keen to be involved in upcoming Good Food Nation work and we must make sure fish+ is not left off the table. We are confident that the Good Food nation Act is an opportunity that can support the fish+ sector and in turn the fish+ sector can take us closer to realising Good Food Nation ambitions



# What Fish+ would participants like to eat more of in Scotland?

We asked this question to attendees when registering for the event. They said:

- Anything caught without use of dredge or trawls
- All fish/seafood from our own waters and less of the imported stuff.
- Seaweed
- Prawns
- Herring, scallops
- Rarer species with less onus on haddock, cod, salmon- how about seaweed?
- Langoustine
- All of it
- Hand dived scallops
- All.
- Megrim
- Rollmops
- Prawns
- Crab
- Flatfish species and squat lobster
- White tuna
- All seafood
- All of our locally sourced seafood
- Seaweed
- All of it
- Herring
- Halibut
- Halibut
- Explore ways to produce sustainable salmon
- Haddock
- Seaweed
- Haddock
- Shellfish
- Monk fish, trout
- Scottish shellfish
- Wild caught. Sustainable fish and shellfish. Wild salmon. Fresh mackerel. Local caught and sold - ie less consolidated supply chain.
- All fish and seafood
- Locally sourced, oily fish, sustainable.
- More fish in general especially less "known" species and fish derived products.
- Herring
- Salmon
- Local, caught on day boats with low impact gear and/or farmed with minimal inputs in systems that promote good animal welfare
- Mackerel
- Sole
- Plaice, gurnard and razor clams
- Trout
- Any fresh seafood
- Fresh fish
- All - so long as it's sustainable!
- Mackerel
- Squat Lobster
- Anything fresh on the west coast
- Crustaceans/ shellfish
- Crab
- Seaweed
- Oily fish
- Rope grown mussels from East Coast
- Shellfish
- Langoustines
- Shellfish
- Any sustainable and ethically sourced Scottish seafood
- Langoustines, scallops, whitefish
- Langoustines
- Nothing - I'm vegetarian!
- All domestically caught produce
- Bivalves
- Scottish shellfish and seafood

# Endnotes

1. www.gov.scot. (n.d.). Food and drink: Good Food Nation policy - gov.scot. [online] Available at: <https://www.gov.scot/policies/food-and-drink/good-food-nation/>.
2. The web of activities, policies, social, economic, and physical structures involved in the production, processing, transportation, consumption, and disposal of food
3. Nicolini G., Bladon, A., Clarke J., Ducros A., Guarin, A. (2024) Working Paper: What About Seafood? The role of seafood in UK food systems transformation [online]. Available at: [www.iied.org/22301iied](http://www.iied.org/22301iied)
4. The big 5 are cod, haddock, salmon, tuna and prawns.



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