



# The Church of Scotland

## Official Response

**Subject:** Consultation on the national Good Food Nation plan  
**Requested by:** The Scottish Government  
**Date:** 23 April 2024  
**Prepared on behalf of:** The Public Life and Social Justice Programme Group

### Consultation on the national Good Food Nation Plan<sup>1</sup>

#### Question 1

**Does each individual Good Food Nation Outcome describe the kind of Scottish food system you would like to see?**

**Outcome 1:** Everyone in Scotland eats well with reliable access to safe, nutritious, affordable, sustainable, and age and culturally appropriate food.

- Strongly agree
- Mostly agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Mostly disagree
- Strongly disagree

**Outcome 2:** Scotland's food system is sustainable<sup>2</sup> and contributes to a flourishing natural environment. It supports our net zero ambitions, and plays an important role in maintaining and improving animal welfare and in restoring and regenerating biodiversity.

- Strongly agree
- Mostly agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Mostly disagree
- Strongly disagree

**Outcome 3:** Scotland's food system encourages a physically and mentally healthy population, leading to a reduction in diet-related conditions.

- Strongly agree
- Mostly agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Mostly disagree
- Strongly disagree

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<sup>1</sup> NB no response / comment was made in relation to Questions 8, 10, 11, 13, 15, 16, 17, 19 & 20.

<sup>2</sup> According to the [Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations](#) a “sustainable food system is one that delivers food security and nutrition for all in such a way that the economic, social and environmental bases to generate food security and nutrition for future generation is not compromised.”

**Outcome 4:** Our food and drink sector is prosperous, diverse, innovative, and vital to national and local economic and social wellbeing. It is key to making Scotland food secure and food resilient, and creates and sustains jobs and businesses underpinned by fair work standards.

- Strongly agree
- Mostly agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Mostly disagree
- Strongly disagree

**Outcome 5:** Scotland has a thriving food culture with a population who are interested in and educated about good and sustainable food.

- Strongly agree
- Mostly agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Mostly disagree
- Strongly disagree

**Outcome 6:** Scotland has a global reputation for high-quality food that we want to continue to grow. Decisions we make in Scotland contribute positively to local and global food systems transformation. We share and learn from best practice internationally.

- Strongly agree
- Mostly agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Mostly disagree
- Strongly disagree

## Question 2

**What, if anything, would you change about the Good Food Nation Outcomes and why?**

In general, the overarching outcomes which are aspired to are to be applauded. However, while we appreciate that a document of this type must be broad-brush, we are nonetheless frustrated that much of what is aspired to remains very vague and lacks a sharpness of definition at times.

We are also concerned that there is no mention of fair trade. Again, while we appreciate that this document mainly addresses issues that the Scottish Government has control over, it must be recognised that most food supply chains have an international dimension. In considering fair trade as part of the picture, we express a concern for the health and wellbeing of all involved in food production.

A related concern is that there appears to be no specific mention of the importance of supporting local food production. This may sometimes differ from healthy and sustainable eating. For example, due to the accessibility of global food chains through supermarkets and other suppliers, Scottish farmers may not be able to compete in terms of scale of production or on price with those from other countries or producers who may have more lax safety standards for both agricultural workers or the animals being farmed, or in terms of the use of hormones and other chemicals. A

consideration of where food comes from, and an aspiration for that to be as local as possible, needs in our view to be part of the equation

### Question 3

**Do you think that these targets will contribute to achieving the overall Good Food Nation Outcomes?**

- Strongly agree
- Mostly agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Mostly disagree
- Strongly disagree
- I don't know

### Question 4

**Would achieving these targets contribute to making the kind of Scottish food system you would like to see?**

- Strongly agree
- Mostly agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Mostly disagree
- Strongly disagree
- I don't know

### Question 5

**If you have other comments on the suggested Good Food Nation targets, please comment:**

A greater emphasis needs to be placed on issues such as food insecurity and access to a healthy, affordable balanced diet for all. For too many in our more deprived communities they are faced effectively with a “healthy food desert”. While food may be available locally, this may generally be highly processed, high calorie and of low nutritional value.

We are frustrated that, while some of the measures have specific targets attached to them (“fewer than 10%” or “halve the rate of ....”), others remain very vague, with no attempt to measure or define success. For example, we would have liked to have seen specific targets in relation to the reduction of food insecurity and diet- related health inequalities, rather than simply saying these would be “reduced”.

### Question 6

**Do you think these indicators will be useful for measuring progress towards the Good Food Nation Outcomes?**

- Strongly agree
- Mostly agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Mostly disagree
- Strongly disagree
- I don't know

### Why or why not?

Many of the indicators referred to are inevitably very complex, and we do not feel qualified to make specific comments on the effectiveness or reliability of these. We would however be concerned that some of these may descend into little more than box-ticking exercises, having little or no impact on the realities of life for most people in Scotland.

### Question 7

#### What other indicators, if any, would you like to see included?

As previously stated, we feel that a greater consideration needs to be given to the importance of locally produced food in the ordinary diet of all people in Scotland. Too often what is marketed as local is seen as “high end”, niche and expensive.

No mention is made of the power that supermarkets have in this area. It must be recognised that a few big supermarkets dominate the weekly shop for most people. They have huge influence over the food market, including an ability and willingness to put pressure on the farmers who supply them.

### Question 9

#### Snapshot Box: As a child in a Good Food Nation

- I have access to healthy and nutritious food that is appropriate for my age and developmental stage
- Eating and enjoying a healthy diet is the norm for me
- I have the opportunity to participate in a variety of food-related educational experiences on a regular basis
- I will never experience hunger

#### Does this reflect what you think life should look like for a child in Scotland as a Good Food Nation?

- Strongly agree
- Mostly agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Mostly disagree
- Strongly disagree
- Not applicable

#### What changes, if any, would you make?

In this (and indeed in all these snapshot boxes), it must be emphasised that food needs to not only be healthy and nutritious, but that it is also affordable. In addition, where possible, food should be locally sourced. There is little point in having good food physically accessible (i.e. within their local area) if the price which must be paid for this makes it unaffordable.

We recognise that these requirements present additional challenges, but if we seek to be aspirational, we must aspire to the best possible scenario.

### Question 12

#### Snapshot Box: As a public caterer in a Good Food Nation

- **I procure healthy, fresh, in-season, and nutritious food to meet the needs of the people using my services**
- **I recognise the role that food can play in strengthening community ties. I promote and provide healthy, enjoyable, and sustainable options as the norm on my menus**
- **My procurement choices help to support a variety of producers**
- **I have reduced avoidable food waste as much as possible, and I ensure that unavoidable food waste is disposed of in a sustainable manner**

**Does this reflect what you would like your life to look like, as a public caterer in a Good Food Nation?**

- Strongly agree
- Mostly agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Mostly disagree
- Strongly disagree
- Not applicable

**What changes, if any, would you make?**

The Church has previously expressed concerns about issues around food in schools, hospitals, care homes and prisons. Catering in institutions such as these is a huge business in which the nutritional quality or the origins of the food are too often seen as secondary to price. In schools, the lunch offered may be the main opportunity for a healthy, balanced nutritious meal that is available to the student. In residential settings such as hospitals and schools, the meals provided are the ONLY source of such nutrition. It must be incumbent on procurement managers and caterers to ensure that good quality food is served.

#### **Question 14**

**Snapshot Box: As a restaurant owner in a Good Food Nation**

- **I celebrate fresh, seasonal produce and integrate it into my menu. I have an active role in supporting my local food economy**
- **I share my passion for good food with my customers so that they become more informed about its provenance, how it's prepared and its nutritional value**
- **As an employer, I meet Fair Work First criteria. I create a rewarding work environment for my employees**
- **I am creative with my menu. This can help me to minimise food waste for the benefit of my business, people, and the environment**

**Does this reflect what you would like your life to look like, as a restaurant owner in a Good Food Nation?**

- Strongly agree
- Mostly agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Mostly disagree
- Strongly disagree
- Not applicable

### **What changes, if any, would you make?**

Consideration should be given to seeking to ensure that portion size takes account of recommended daily calorific requirements, especially in takeaways. With the advent of easy ordering systems such as Just Eat, and due to habits developed as a consequence of the Covid pandemic, many more takeaways are now ordered. Many unnecessary calories are (over)consumed as a result.

Although it is not directly a food issue, the related amount of single use plastic which is utilised in delivering food is also a major concern- especially when there are alternative containers made of compostable materials available in most cases.

### **Question 18**

**If you have any further comments on the national Good Food Nation Plan, please comment here**

As people of faith, we recognise daily that food is a gift from God. Food must be seen as more than just fuel: it is a gift and a blessing upon which we all depend. Yet many of us shop in supermarkets for our food and never give a second thought about where it comes from or how it is produced. What we eat and how it is grown should mean much more to us than this. We therefore commend the Scottish Government for raising many of the issues addressed here in this consultation.

Food waste remains a huge problem: Scottish households throw away over half a million tonnes of food waste every year. Wasted food is not only a waste of money, it is also an environmental issue.

Although these will inevitably be a small part of the overall picture, consideration should be given to opportunities to grow some of our own food. Many churches and other organisations recognise that its not necessary to be completely dependent on supermarkets for food. Growing food is a most satisfying local alternative, and can be an exercise that sustains both health and spirit. Church and other similar projects can help people learn to grow food plants and reconnect to nature. This can offer not only fresh food in season, but also new skills, companionship, and a healthier lifestyle.