

Scottish Food Coalition

**A Guidance Briefing for a
Good Food Nation**

ANIMAL WELFARE



Introduction

This guidance will help you understand more about how to incorporate **farmed animals' welfare** into your Local Good Food Nation Plan. This briefing is part of a series covering a range of topics. All guidance will be cross-checked against other briefings in this series for consistency.

Under the Good Food Nation (Scotland) Act 2022, relevant authorities must have regard to **the scope for food-related issues to affect outcomes in relation to animal welfare**, and the **role of a sustainable food system and supply chain in contributing to improvement in animal welfare**.

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Who should be involved and who is this guidance for?

- Procurement Services
- Catering Services
- Planning / Land Use Services
- Economic Development / Community Planning
- Education
- Public Health / Social Care



What does the National Good Food Nation Plan and other legislation say about animal welfare?

- The Draft National Good Food Nation plan creates several Primary indicators relating to animal health and welfare:
 - Proportion of Scottish consumers concerned with animal welfare.
 - Proportion of laying hens in Scotland that are either reared as free-range or organic.
 - Livestock animals inspected by local authorities every year in Scotland.
 - Herd prevalence of bovine tuberculosis (TB) in Scotland.
- The Scottish Animal Welfare Commission has been tasked with exploring the feasibility of developing further animal welfare indicators that could be added to track progress on animal welfare.
- The National Good Food Nation Plan explains that in order to promote local and sustainable produce in public procurement, public bodies have the flexibility to, among other actions: “specify food produced according to recognised assurance schemes, e.g. Quality Meat Scotland, Marine Stewardship Council (MSC), Red Tractor, RSPCA [...] specify free range and organic food [...]”.
- The Animal Health and Welfare (Scotland) Act 2006 requires anybody responsible for animals to meet their needs and avoid unnecessary suffering.
 - Guidance under the 2006 Act suggests directions of travel as well, e.g. guidance on pig welfare suggests a move away from farrowing crates.
- The Procurement Reform (Scotland) Act 2014 requires contracting authorities (as defined in that Act) to, as part of a procurement strategy, include a statement on how they plan to “promote the highest standards of animal welfare.”
- The number of local authorities that hold [Food for Life Served Here \(FFLSH\)](#) certification (see more below) for their school meals service is an indicator in the draft National Good Food Nation Plan.

The challenges and opportunities

The focus of this document is on the welfare of farmed animals. Animal welfare refers broadly to the mental (emotional) state of an animal, which is impacted by their nutrition, health, environment, and interactions with humans and other animals. Some negative experiences are unavoidable but those responsible for animals should be aiming for the animals to have mainly positive experiences - a good life.

For decades, farming policy and market pressures prioritised producing food in large quantities at the lowest cost. This created systems and practices that do not allow good animal welfare and result in significant suffering. These include keeping animals in cages or in close confinement, performing mutilations like tail docking without anesthetic or pain relief, denying animals outdoor access, and breeding or housing systems that cause severe and painful health conditions.

The Good Food Nation agenda is an opportunity to create new policy levers which support farmers to improve animal welfare. Local authorities and health boards can be part of that change.

High quality local authority and health board catering is an investment, not a cost. Investing in higher animal welfare not only gives animals opportunities for better lives, it also contributes to achieving human health and biodiversity outcomes, and to community wealth building, and farmers' well-being and job satisfaction. For example:

- Giving animals more space and less stressful living conditions reduces the likelihood of zoonotic diseases that originate in and spread via intensive units.
- Agroecological systems such as silvopasture (keeping animals amongst trees) have been demonstrated to have increased biodiversity.
- Higher welfare systems have fewer health and safety risks for their workers. Risks associated with intensive poultry units include high dust levels, toxic gases, and uncomfortable postures and movements.
- Pig farmers who have transitioned away from using farrowing crates report increased job satisfaction.

The importance of food and animal welfare to residents and local communities needs to be highlighted, especially in the context of challenging budget negotiations.

Why it matters

- The public cares: polls consistently show strong support for higher animal welfare standards in UK meat, dairy, eggs, and fish.
- Higher welfare matters to the animals as they can experience joy, comfort and contentment and fear, pain and suffering, depending on how they are bred and raised.
- Industrial animal farming drives zoonotic disease risks (e.g. avian flu), antimicrobial resistance, workers' exploitation, environmental damage, and climate change.
- Reducing animal-sourced foods and procuring only higher welfare products also supports public health, climate goals, and nature recovery.
- Shifting public procurement toward more plant-based meals can lower costs, freeing up resources to invest in higher welfare animal products.
- Local authorities and health boards can support higher-welfare farmers, and at the same time strengthen local food systems, economies, and community wealth.

Good work already underway

Procurers can stimulate supply chains and markets for plant-based foods and higher welfare animal products by sourcing this produce for their own public outlets such as schools and hospitals. They can also facilitate animal welfare improvements via other policies, such as planning and education. Here are some examples:

Glasgow City Council's [Full of Beans](#) campaign won The Special Award at the Scottish School Food Awards. Full of Beans aimed to promote the consumption of beans and pulses as part of a tasty, healthy, cost effective, planet-friendly diet in Glasgow. The council's catering team feeds 37,000 children every day. The campaign team and Soil Association Scotland, amongst other things, ran training sessions showcasing recipes, tasting sessions with pupils, bean planting workshops, and asked local restaurants to put beans on the menu.

In 2021, [Mossgiel Organic Dairy](#), who operate a cow with calf Pasture for Life system on their home farm, won the four-year tender to supply the Nurseries and Primary Schools of East Ayrshire with the first zero-waste, zero-emissions deliveries, 100% Organic Milk contract in the UK.



“Even things as simple as shuffling the meals around so that the meat-based and plant-based meals are mixed up and not having meat-based meals appear at the top of our menu, have helped to encourage our pupils to take the plant-based choice a little more often than they would have usually.”

Menu Development Team, H4S, Fife Council

What to look out for

Table 1: ‘Animal Welfare Standards’ below highlights UK animal welfare certification schemes and legally protected terms for each of the most common animal products served in public sector catering. The columns represent increasing standards for animal welfare for each individual species. The standards assure that the food you are buying comes from animals who have been raised, grown, treated, handled, transported, and slaughtered according to certain specifications.

The recommendations below are to provide ways of making potential improvements to animal welfare. We do not imply that the recommended better methods necessarily lead to better welfare in all specific cases.

First step: Labels that at least meet the minimum UK animal welfare standards

Note that animal welfare standards around animal products from other countries can be lower.

How to move to this: For caterers purchasing products that are not certified by any UK animal welfare schemes, this is a recommended first step to be taken in the short term. Products certified to these schemes are widely available for purchase by Scotland’s public sector.

Next steps: Standards that provide improved welfare potential

Generally, higher welfare scheme standards require greater outdoor access, more space for each animal, the ability to express natural behaviours, and more enrichment. However, each scheme manifests itself differently, especially when they apply to different animal species. More information can be found at [Your Higher Welfare Shopping Guide for Compassionate Food Choices](#).

How to move to this: Caterers and procurement teams should enquire with suppliers about availability of the products that are assured by these schemes.

Further steps: Standards that provide further improved welfare potential

Animals reared in systems with these certifications are more likely to experience higher animal welfare and a good life. These are the highest certification standards currently available in the UK.

How to move to this: Caterers and procurement teams should ask suppliers if these products are available and, where possible, add these certifications into procurement contracts to ensure they are on the frameworks (i.e. the lists of products that suppliers are asked to supply as part of the contract).



Table 1: Animal Welfare Standards

	First step	Next steps	Further steps
	Labels that at least meet the minimum UK animal welfare standards	Standards that provide improved welfare potential	Standards that provide further improved welfare potential
Meat chickens	Red tractor	RSPCA Assured Red Tractor Enhanced Welfare	Free range Organic
Pigs	Specially Selected Pork (Quality Meat Scotland)	RSPCA Assured Outdoor Reared Outdoor Bred	Free range Organic
Beef cattle	Scotch Beef (Quality Meat Scotland) AHDB Beef	RSPCA Assured	Organic Pasture for Life
Sheep	Scotch Lamb (Quality Meat Scotland) AHDB Lamb	RSPCA Assured	Organic Pasture for Life
Laying hens	British Lion Free Range Eggs	Organic	Soil Association Organic
Dairy cows	Scottish or British milk	RSPCA Assured Pasture Promise Free range	Organic Pasture for Life

A note on salmon and venison

For farmed salmon, RSPCA Assured is a first step that assures minimum legal UK welfare standards, with Soil Association Organic offering a higher standard of animal welfare. Salmon is also available from wild caught sources, and, whilst wild salmon undoubtedly have the potential for higher welfare than farmed salmon, there is no scheme that assesses wild salmon's welfare, nor, for example, the methods by which they are killed.

For farmed deer, the British Deer Farms & Parks Association Farm Quality Assurance scheme is a first step, with organic offering a higher standard of animal welfare. Venison is also available from wild sources.

What else could you do?

The last section of this document contains more information and support.

Quick wins

There may already be things that you have thought of yourself, but if you are looking for ideas there are a range of NGOs and other advisory groups who can help. A couple of better-known examples are the following.

Food for Life Served Here (FFLSH) certification

Food for Life Scotland is a programme run by the Soil Association Scotland which works in partnership with public sector settings to support healthy and sustainable diets through their catering services. Scottish Government funding covers a free benchmarking exercise that will assess how close your catering service is to achieving the *Food for Life Served Here* (FFLSH) certification.

The FFLSH certification has three award levels: **Bronze**, **Silver**, and **Gold**. At Bronze, all meat served is UK farm assured with minimum UK animal welfare and all eggs served are free range. At Silver and Gold, caterers are rewarded for serving higher welfare meat, fish, eggs, and dairy, including RSPCA Assured and organic certified products. In 2025, 16 local authorities held an FFLSH certification for the school meals service, 1 at Gold and 2 at Silver. Over 100,000 school meals served daily across Scotland in more than 1,500 schools are already certified to FFLSH standards. The programme offers funded support for menu- and supply chain development, and for staff training.

Proveg International support

Proveg International offers free workshops and training, menu consultation, recipes and recipe development, and climate, health and budget analysis to support [school](#) and [hospital](#) caterers to serve healthy, climate-friendly meals by increasing the quality, quantity and uptake of plant-based foods on menus. Their website contains a lot of useful information on animal welfare that explains common production practices and standards for different animal product sectors; on plant-based nutrition; and on country-specific (UK) and international policy initiatives.

Priorities in the first 2 years (and on-going)

1. Participate in and champion local and ethical food systems

Two Regional Councils that have been especially active on promoting local food initiatives in interesting ways are Fife and Dumfries & Galloway. While the focus is not specifically on animal welfare improvements, these are good sources of information and ideas on a range of local initiatives that promote sustainable food and plant-based diets in particular. More information is on their websites as follows:

A good summary that explains the activities, aims and operations of [Dumfries & Galloway's Local Good Food](#) with links to the [South of Scotland Local Food Growth Plan](#) is on [Propagate's website](#).

Fife has been working on a [Food4Fife Strategy](#). There is a lot of activity on expanding the local good food economy. A summary of what they are doing in *Catering and Procurement* is found on p20 of their Strategy pdf.

2. Alongside current practice of limiting the amount of red meat that is served (e.g. following nutritional guidelines to local authorities), there may be other ways of **increasing focus on plant-based foods** in public sector catering menus, which may at the same time also help to balance budgets. Examples are:

- Including beans, pulses and veg into composite meat dishes such as steak pie, mince, spaghetti bolognese.
- Offering at least one daily plant-based (containing no animal products) option on menus in catered public settings, such as workplaces, leisure centres, and cultural venues.

- Introducing nudges that are known to increase uptake of plant-based options (e.g. repositioning dishes on menus). Eating Better has lots of [good advice](#) on what works well and less well.
- Auditing and reviewing current spend on food and outlining the proportion of foods sourced from animals vs from plants (to form a baseline).
- Working with staff and clients (e.g. students in schools and colleges) on the value of plant-based foods.
- Providing recipe development and training for catering staff on plant-based cooking and how to minimise waste (e.g. through using the whole carcass).

3. Many in the sector have already taken the first steps in sourcing higher welfare certified animal products (e.g. by serving QMS Assured red meat products). This can be built on, following Table 1 above, by:

- Talking to suppliers about higher welfare certified products available on product frameworks, in time for when public procurement contracts come up for renewal. For example, when procuring centrally from Scotland Excel, ask for animal welfare certified products on Product Framework 0322: Fresh meats, cooked meats, and fresh fish ([current framework period is 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2027](#)).
- Wherever possible, shift to higher welfare chicken and pork first because of the prevalence of more intensive, lower welfare systems in those two sectors. This is especially important in the context of school meals, for example, where the passage of the *Nutritional Requirements for Food and Drink in Schools (Scotland) Regulations 2020* set a maximum of red and red processed meat that can be served, and for a range of other reasons also, this caused a general shift to chicken products.
- Work with your economic development teams to map out local producers who are farming with higher animal welfare (as per Table 1).
- Encourage local producers with animal welfare scheme certifications to pilot supply chain projects into public meals. Contact *Food for Life Scotland* to discuss how they might be able to support you.
- Work with [Food for Life Scotland](#) to achieve *Food for Life Served Here* (FFLSH) certification. The team can offer free, bespoke support with menu and recipe development, data analysis and supply chain development for settings on a FFLSH journey

4. Inform citizens, specifically for a better understanding of farmed animal welfare. There are good sources of information and materials that can be used, and organisations that can support this. The final section in this document lists some of these.

Priorities in the first 5 years

1. Catering Menu Planning and Public Procurement

Incorporating more plant-based dishes, and plants into meat-based dishes:

- Allow for regular review and enhancing of food and procurement policy to further incorporate and increase uptake of plant-based dishes.
- Set ambitious targets, along with clear measures to both realise these and evaluate progress along the way. Examples of targets are at least 50% of main meals offered are based on plant-based foods; at least 75% of total ingredient spend is on plant-based products.

Increasing the volume of higher welfare animal products on the menu:

- Procure only animal derived products that meet the standards in the next steps column of table 1, as much as this is possible
- Commit to carrying out a gap analysis to identify where improvements can be made, costing plans that would address gaps, and liaising with others who have already taken the steps that would need to be taken, for peer knowledge exchange and support.
- Move towards a 15% target in organic public procurement. This may involve allocating staff time on mapping sources, and/or working with facilitators in the sector who can identify and liaise with producers, resolve processing bottlenecks and other similar background work.
- Current *Food for Life Scotland* Award Holders can continue working with the support team on upgrading their *Food for Life Served Here* certification.

2. Planning Permissions

Incorporate animal welfare impact assessments into all planning and other policy or project decisions. For example, policies that enable the provision of local abattoirs and associated processing facilities are important for improving animal welfare as they reduce animals' journeys. They also boost local economies and can cater better to smaller farms and crofts.

The introduction of new industrial-size intensive animal production plants (chickens

and pigs especially) can create new or exacerbate existing sources of pollution, and other local conflicts.

It is preferable that animals are farmed with outdoor access, providing opportunities for natural behaviours, greater enrichment, and improved health and welfare. However, where animals are farmed indoors, planning permission should not be a barrier to farmers updating buildings to give animals more space and improve their environment.



Longer term goals to work towards

- Source products from the 'Further steps' column in the Table above.
- Embed improvements to animal welfare into all food and farming policy.
- Shift to a predominantly plant-based public food system.
- Support a just transition for farmers and fishers that enables higher welfare systems and production of animal free foods.
- Ban or phase out the use of public land for low-welfare farming and fishing, and intensive animal farming (including fish farming) for their polluting impacts.

Support and resources

The organisations in the list below are not all members of the Scottish Food Coalition and as such may not be aligned with its vision and key principles. They have been included as they may be a useful starting point for the reasons listed for each below.

[Eating Better](#) is a UK campaigning organisation that works towards a fairer and more sustainable food system in which people eat 'less but better' meat and dairy. Its website has lists of actions it recommends e.g. for [governments](#) with a good range of case studies from across the UK and EU.

[Farm Animal Welfare](#) is a website of the University of Edinburgh Royal (Dick) School of Veterinary Studies with detailed information about welfare issues around the most commonly farmed animals (sheep, pigs, dairy cows, beef cows, chickens (broilers a layers)). It explains models of welfare assessment and contains research-based discussion about what opportunities there are to improve farmed animals' welfare.

[Food for Life Scotland](#) is a programme funded by The Scottish Government run by The Soil Association Scotland. The *Food for Life Scotland* webpages explain the *Food For Life Served Here* (FFLSH) scheme and provide examples. Contact the team for specific support.

[FOUR PAWS](#) is a global animal welfare campaigning organisation for animals under direct human influence, which reveals suffering, rescues animals in need and protects them. Its website contains useful information on current campaigns, with a section on [farmed animals](#), [climate change](#) and [nutrition](#).

[OneKind](#) is a Scottish charity that promotes animal protection through campaigns, political lobbying, investigations, public education, and promoting compassionate living. Its website is full of useful information, including a [report](#) on farmed animal welfare, and [resources](#) to support plant-based eating.

[ProVeg International](#) has lots of useful information on plant-based nutrition, alternatives (including recipes) and policy initiatives, both international and UK. It has a [section on animal welfare](#) with information on common production practices and standards for different sectors.

[Quality Meat Scotland](#) (QMS) is a public body ‘responsible for helping the Scottish red meat sector improve its efficiency, sustainability, integrity, and profitability and maximise its contribution to Scotland's economy.’ Its website has a [Health and Education section](#) that links to teachers’ resources and [this page](#) lists the *Animal Welfare and Wellbeing Charter* with *The Five Freedoms*, a set of minimum principles that are embedded in QMS’s Quality Assurance Schemes and found referenced across the sector.

[Scottish Organic Producers Association](#) (SOPA) is an organisation that certifies Scottish organic standards and supports conversion to organic practice. What this means for livestock is defined on their [homepage](#) in the section Environmentally Friendly Farming.

[Soil Association Certification](#) is the UK’s leading organic certification body. Licensees must meet strict European laws about the production of organic food. The Soil Association has higher organic standards than required by the EU Organic Regulation in key areas: delivering higher levels of animal welfare, protecting human and animal health, safeguarding the environment and protecting the interests of organic consumers.



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