

Scottish Food Coalition

BRIEFING: The proposed National Good Food Nation Plan

The [Scottish Food Coalition](#) is a diverse alliance of 70+ organisations working since 2016 for a just transition to a fair, healthy, sustainable food system. Our membership encompasses, food production, health and social care, academia, animal welfare, worker rights, international development, climate and nature restoration.

Background

[The Good Food Nation \(Scotland\) Act 2022](#) is a groundbreaking piece of legislation that requires the Scottish Government to think about food as an interconnected system, meaning an action or omission in one part will have repercussions across the entire system.

The legislation places a requirement on the Scottish Government to develop and implement a National Good Food Nation (GFN) Plan and also requires other relevant authorities (32 local authorities and 14 health boards) to develop and implement their own Local GFN Plans. All Plans must set out the main outcomes to be achieved, the indicators (or other measures) by which progress may be assessed, and the policies they intend to pursue to achieve the stated outcomes.

The Act also established an independent Scottish Food Commission to ensure that all Plans are fit for purpose and deliver on Scotland's Good Food Nation ambitions.

Why is a cross-party debate needed?

The National Good Food Nation Plan is by law required to read across multiple areas of work and political portfolios and as such we feel that the scrutiny process thus far has been too narrow to be wholly effective.

It is essential that this first Plan has the most comprehensive level of scrutiny and that democratic accountability is adhered to. Given the cross-cutting nature of Plan and the Good Food Nation (Scotland) Act 2022 receiving cross-party support, it is only right that all parties have a chance to scrutinise Scotland's first National GFN Plan.

When passed, the Act was considered a world-leading approach precisely because it legally connects different sectors and levels of government. We were disappointed to see that the Plan merely summarises existing policies and does not propose any actions or areas of policy development. It's clear that food is not given a high enough profile within policymaking. Without adequate parliamentary scrutiny, the Plan and the Act itself is set to fail at the first hurdle.

Food is everyone's business and increasingly so in the context of the cost-of-living crisis and food security within climate and nature emergencies, and global political unrest. An open and engaging national conversation about the future of the food system in Scotland is crucial.

What's missing from the Plan?

1. **Partnership approach** – We'd like for the Scottish Government to set out in the Plan clear mechanisms for effective communication and collaboration between Scottish Government, relevant authorities and with those other organisations best placed to support delivery of the Plans at a food systems level, e.g. business, civil society, academia and the communities it will impact.

We'd also like the Scottish Food Commission to commit to this process by including participatory mechanisms for engaging with stakeholders from across the whole food system.

At a local level, we'd like to see relevant authorities be encouraged to work collaboratively and collectively with their local communities, and with organisations best placed to support the development and delivery of their Plans. Good practice should be taken from existing food partnership models such as [Sustainable Food Places](#) which is already working across more than half of the 32 LA areas in Scotland.

2. **Public Health lead** – The Plan would benefit from taking a more explicit '[One Health](#)' / '[One Welfare](#)' approach that acknowledges the intrinsic links between human, animal, and environmental health and wellbeing. This integrated approach aligns with Scotland's Good Food Nation ambitions for sustainable public health, social well-being, animal welfare, fair work and environmental stewardship, ensuring that policies and services work together to protect and improve the health of current and future generations.

Given this alignment in systemic perspectives, and the fact that poor diets are one of the main causes of preventable ill health and death in Scotland, we believe the Population Health Directorate is best placed to lead the Good Food Nation work.

3. **The right to food and the right to a healthy environment** – Whilst we welcome the clear language in the Plan around the recognition of food as a human right, for this to be fully attained we need legislation to ensure universal access to high quality and nutritious food, produced in a way that is equitable for people and the planet. We hope this will be realised in a future Scottish Human Rights Bill which should also include the right to live in a clean, healthy and sustainable environment.

More information

For more detail on the content of this briefing or to find out more about the work of the Scottish Food Coalition please email info@foodcoalition.scot