



# National Food Debate

Wed 8<sup>th</sup> April, 6.30 - 8.30pm, Augustine United Church, Edinburgh & ONLINE

On Wednesday 8<sup>th</sup> April the Scottish Food Coalition held a sold-out food hustling in-person from Augustine United Church in Edinburgh and online. With the publication of Scotland's first National Good Food Nation Plan, continued pressure on household budgets, uncertainty around food security, significant public health challenges and a farming sector under severe strain, food is a defining issue for the 2026 Scottish elections on 7<sup>th</sup> May.

This hustings event covered key areas of food policy including diet and health, food poverty, the agricultural subsidy system, worker rights, animal welfare, marine and aquatics, land use, and food security.

This short paper summarises the topics covered across the 300+ questions submitted in advance and by the audience on the night. We thank all panellists for taking the time to attend this event and hope that this report will provide a snapshot of some of the most pressing issues for Scotland's voters at this election.

A recording of Scotland's National Food Debate 2026 can be [found on YouTube](#) and more information on the Scottish Food Coalition and our own [manifesto asks](#) can be found at the end of this report.

Chair: Vicky Allan, Environment Correspondent for The Herald.

The panel:

**Ariane Burgess**, Scottish Greens candidate for the Highlands and Islands region

**Eleanor Ryan-Saha**, Scottish Labour candidate for Edinburgh Northern

**Julie Pirone**, Scottish Conservative candidate for Clydesdale.

**Paul McLennan**, SNP candidate for the East Lothian Coast and Lammermuirs

**Ray Georgeson**, Scottish Lib Dem candidate for Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire

**Steven Grant**, Reform UK candidate for Cumbernauld and Kilsyth

## KEY TOPICS:

### **Farming subsidies & agroecological transition**

Reforming farm subsidies to reward climate and nature-friendly farming, supporting farmers to transition away from high-emission animal agriculture, and investing in local food infrastructure and processing.

### **Plant-based diets & dietary transition**

Shifting toward more plant-based food systems for health and climate reasons, supporting farmers and consumers through that transition, and aligning public sector catering with plant-based goals.

### **Food poverty, affordability & the right to food**

Enshrining the right to food in law, ending the need for food banks and charitable food aid, a cash-first approach to food support, and addressing food deserts and holiday hunger.

### **Ultra-Processed food & the food environment**

Restricting Ultra Processed Food availability, regulating (High Fat Salt and Sugar food, advertising and fast-food outlet proliferation, and using tobacco/alcohol-style controls to protect children from unhealthy food environments.

### **Good Food Nation delivery & joined-up government**

Ensuring joined-up cross-departmental policy implementation, year on year for funding local authorities and health boards to implement Local Good Food Nation Plans, and breaking down siloed policy across health, environment and food.

### **Salmon farming & fisheries**

Regulation and potential pause of open-net salmon farming expansion, more unannounced independent inspections of salmon farms, ecological recovery in Scottish waters, and sustainable seafood traceability.

### **Rural & island communities**

Addressing the rural cost premium, inadequacy of Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation in capturing rural poverty, food supply chain fragility in remote areas, seasonal labour for harvests, and local abattoir provision.

### **Land ownership & food sovereignty**

Diversifying land ownership away from large estates, land value taxation, growing more food domestically including pulses and legumes, seed sovereignty, and supporting local food cooperatives.

### **Public sector food & school meals**

Improving food in schools, hospitals and care settings, Universal Free School Meals uprating, and public procurement reform to allow for much more local and sustainable sourcing.

### **Animal welfare**

Improving welfare standards for farmed animals, aligning procurement with welfare standards, local abattoir capacity, and the ethics of animal agriculture more broadly.

### **Food system workers & fair supply chains**

Fair pay and conditions for agricultural and seafood workers, fair prices for farmers, supermarket power over pricing, and Fair-Trade global supply chains.

### **Food within communities**

Importance of food literacy, urban and community growing, allotment access, and reconnecting people with food production.

### **Climate, biodiversity & food system resilience**

Aligning food policy with net zero, soil health, agroecology and increasing organics, national food security against global shocks, and concerns over PFAS (Per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances or "forever chemicals") contamination in food and water.

# Scottish Food Coalition



## Who we are

The Scottish Food Coalition is a diverse alliance of 70+ organisations working for a just transition to a fair, healthy, sustainable food system. Our members come from across the food system including those concerned with poverty, health, biodiversity, climate change and animal welfare, as well as trade unions, food producers and retailers, international development organisations and faith groups.

Established in 2015, we were instrumental in securing Scotland's Good Food Nation Act and provide support and expertise to Scottish Government, local authorities and health boards during the journey to achieve our Good Food Nation ambitions.

## Our key asks

The Scottish Food Coalition have four key asks of Scottish Government to ensure Scotland truly becomes a Good Food Nation:



### 1 The right to food and the right to a healthy environment must be enshrined in Scots law.

Scotland's civil society provides the food systems expertise, practical experience and connections to wider society needed to make National and Local Good Food Nation Plans both ambitious and deliverable.

The Scottish Food Commission's 'Corporate Plan' must commit to this process by including participatory mechanisms for engaging with civil society stakeholders from across the whole food system.

### 2 The Scottish Food Commission must engage meaningfully with civil society when carrying out its duties.

Legislation must ensure universal access to high quality and nutritious food, produced in a way that is equitable for people and the planet. This includes the right to live in a clean, healthy and sustainable environment.

### 3 Scottish Government must adequately support and resource the development and long-term delivery of Local Good Food Nation Plans.

Local Authorities and Health Boards must have sufficient guidance, staffing and other resources to ensure that Plans create meaningful change at a food systems level, cutting across all relevant service areas. This is in line with duties as laid out in the Act.

### 4 Local Good Food Nation Plans must be developed and delivered as part of fully collaborative partnerships.

Local Authorities and Health Boards must work collaboratively and collectively with their local communities, and with those organisations best placed to support delivery of the Plans at a food systems level. Good practice should be taken from existing partnership models such as [Sustainable Food Places](#).

# Our members




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