



# GOOD FOOD NATION PLAN

UK Centre for Animal Law  
Scottish Steering Committee Consultation Response  
April 2024



**Good Food Nation Plan consultation**  
**Response from UK Centre for Animal Law**  
**Scottish Committee**



**April 2024**

Consultation document available at <https://consult.gov.scot/agriculture-and-rural-economy/national-good-food-nation-plan/>

**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.

**Mostly agree**

**Outcome 2:** Scotland's food system is sustainable<sup>[1]</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.

**Mostly agree**

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

**Neither agree nor disagree**

**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.

**Mostly agree**

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

**Mostly agree**

**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.

Mostly agree

## Question 2

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

The Good Food Nation Outcomes as they stand are agreeable in principle but lack the actionable and rigorous measures to ensure the desired transformation envisioned by the Scottish Government. We welcome the reference to animal welfare in Outcome 2. Given that so much of the Scottish diet currently depends on animal-derived products, it is important also to acknowledge this in other Outcomes (at least in the relevant targets and indicators) if the Plan is to have regard to animal welfare, as required by the Good Food Nation (Scotland) Act 2022.

In relation to food security and equity, while the plan aims to ensure reliable access to safe and nutritious food, it does not adequately address the issues of food equity and accessibility particularly for marginalised communities. More targeted efforts are required to ensure that plant-based food options are affordable and accessible to all, regardless of socioeconomic status.

In relation to animal welfare concerns, while the plan mentions a commitment to continuous improvement in animal welfare, it does not go far enough in addressing the ethical treatment of animals within the food system. More stringent regulations and enforcement mechanisms are required to ensure high animal welfare standards across all stages of food production. Animals are sentient beings with their own specific physical, emotional and socially complex needs. Pigs and chickens are recognised as highly intelligent beings and as well as cows, are capable of experiencing feelings and sensations, happiness, joy and distress. There is a need for a holistic approach to animal welfare that integrates physical and mental health aspects. (FAWC Report 2012) <sup>(1)</sup>. Animals should not be regarded as merely “food stuffs” for human commodification but fully recognised and treated as the sentient beings that they are. Further improvements to animal welfare in the short term must be part of a wider strategy to move away from intensive farming systems to ones that respect the welfare needs of animals (for example, ensuring that they have adequate space) and which thereby also minimise the environmental impacts of intensive farming systems – see below).

In relation to environmental sustainability the plan aims for a sustainable food system, however, it does not specifically address the environmental impact of animal agriculture, which is a significant contributor to greenhouse gas emissions, deforestation, and biodiversity loss. Livestock farming is one of the most environmentally destructive industries there is and continuing with the current pattern of food production is not consistent with keeping within the 1.5°C threshold.

In relation to health and nutrition, the plan emphasises the importance of a healthy population but does not sufficiently consider plant-based diets, which have been shown to offer numerous health benefits. More explicit support and encouragement for plant-based diets in public health initiatives and educational materials would, by extension, support the requirement for the national plan to have regard to animal welfare. Reducing the demand for cheap animal-derived products would reduce the justification for intensive production, which is inherently inimical to animal welfare.

Regarding cultural and ethical values, the plan recognises the cultural value of food but does not fully consider the ethical implications of food choices. A more explicit acknowledgement of the ethical considerations surrounding animal-based foods and the promotion of ethical alternatives as part of Scotland's food culture is essential.

Additional comments on each outcome:

**Outcome 1.** This outcome aligns with the vision for inclusive access to food. However, it lacks a robust strategy for encouraging a shift toward diets that are more plant based , which would further address issues of sustainability, animal welfare and public health.

**Outcome 2.** While the commitment to sustainability and net zero ambitions is commendable, the outcome should include specific measures to reduce the environmental impact of animal agriculture by promoting plant-based alternatives. As already stated, the inclusion of animal welfare in Outcome 2 is welcome, but we would like to see more detailed targets set, and these should not be delayed to a future iteration of the Plan.

**Outcome 3.** This outcome must integrate education on the benefits of more plant-based diets and implement policies that reduce reliance on animal-derived food sources to combat diet-related conditions effectively. In the recent Nature Magazine <sup>(2)</sup> article 'Climate change anxiety and young people', it stated that "climate change is affecting mental health in all communities, especially in young people. It is critical that we consider how to support young people affected by climate change anxiety and the possibilities of looking forward to supporting them." Educating the Scottish population on the benefits of more plant-based diets and making good food choices for positive individual health outcomes as well as the good of the planet would offer an opportunity to combat this concerning sense of helplessness over climate change, while promoting improved animal welfare.

**Outcome 4.** The economic and social wellbeing of the food and drink sector must not come at the expense of environmental sustainability or animal welfare. There needs to be a stronger emphasis on transforming the food sector toward ethical and sustainable practices.

**Outcome 5.** A thriving food culture is essential, however it should also prioritise educating the Scottish population about the ethical implications of their food choices, particularly concerning animals as sentient beings.

**Outcome 6.** It is crucial to share and learn the best practices globally. This should include innovations in sustainable farming and alternative protein production. Increasing the proportion of the Scottish diet that is made up of plants could be helpful in promoting animal welfare, given that the availability of high welfare meat production may not be sufficient for existing levels of meat consumption.

In relation to the health and wellbeing of the Scottish population and our current reliance on animal agriculture, the changes that are required to happen to create a Good Food Nation means that we need to do things differently and we need to do different things. What got us here is not going to get us to where we want to be in the future. In order to effect meaningful change the Outcomes should reflect a greater commitment to reducing the reliance on animal agriculture, which is incongruent with the urgent need for

**environmental sustainability and animal welfare. The Outcomes should explicitly promote plant-based diets and food systems as a cornerstone of achieving these outcomes.**

### Question 3

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

Neither agree nor disagree

### Question 4

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

Neither agree nor disagree

### Question 5

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

**The targets must be measurable and ambitious enough to prompt a significant reduction in animal agriculture, aligned with Scotland's carbon neutrality goals and ethical responsibilities towards animal welfare. Targets for animal welfare should be broader, more ambitious and longer term than scheduling consultations on specific issues, even though these consultations are welcome. In the shorter term, we strongly support a target based on the recommendations of the Farm Animal Welfare Council in 2012 that every farmed animal should have at least a life worth living, with as many as possible enjoying a good life.**

### Question 6

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

Neither agree nor disagree

Why or why not?

**Without clear indicators for the promotion of animal welfare, reduction of animal agriculture and the promotion of plant-based diets to steer away from intensive production methods, the current indicators fall short of providing a comprehensive measure of progress towards truly sustainable and ethical food outcomes.**

### Question 7

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

**Outcome 2 could usefully incorporate indicators to measure progress towards its declared target of playing an important role in maintaining and improving animal welfare.**



**This could include, for example, the monitoring of progress in reforming current agricultural practices such as confinement, mutilations, and welfare at slaughter.**

**Indicators for the consumption of plant-based food, reduction in meat and dairy production, increased availability of vegan options, and education on veganism in schools and public institutions would complement these aims.**

### Question 8

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

**The indicators should include environmental impact assessments of food sources, focusing on the carbon footprint and land use of animal vs plant-based foods, to transparently inform policy and consumer choice.**

### 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**

What changes, if any, would you make?

**Life for a child in Scotland as a Good Food Nation should include a vision for the future where animal welfare is paramount, the environmental impact of food production is minimised and plant-based diets are normalised. These are all aspects of the healthy food to which children are entitled.**

### Question 10

#### Snapshot Box: As a parent/carer in a Good Food Nation

- I am knowledgeable about how to prepare healthy and nutritious meals for those in my care and empowered to do so
- I know where to go for support should I experience difficulties that prevent me from purchasing food or preparing hot food at home

- I am confident that childcare settings and schools are providing healthy, nutritious and culturally appropriate food and that they are educating children about the food system
- If I am pregnant I know where to go for support and can make fully informed choices on how to feed myself and my baby

Does this reflect what you would like your life to look like, as a parent/carer in a Good Food Nation?

**Neither agree nor disagree**

What changes, if any, would you make?

**In relation to parents and carers in a Good Food Nation, it is critical that the plan ensures parents and carers are supported not just in making healthy choices but also in understanding the ethical and environmental implications of those choices. Encouragement for plant-based diets should be included, given their benefits for health, animal welfare and the environment.**

### Question 11

#### Snapshot Box: As an adult in a Good Food Nation

- I can easily access food that I enjoy and that keeps me healthy and well
- I know where to go if I experience financial difficulties, and the response is fast, coordinated and meets my needs with dignity and respect
- Healthy and sustainable options are easy to find wherever I eat and buy food
- I can easily access information about the environmental, social, and nutritional impacts of my food and its provenance that helps me to make informed decisions

Does this reflect what you would like your life to look like, as an adult in a Good Food Nation?

**Mostly agree**

What changes, if any, would you make?

**The description for adults in a Good Food Nation should expand to encourage not only access to healthy and sustainable options but also active participation in a food system that respects animals as sentient beings and strives for a reduction in animal product consumption. An adult in a Good Food Nation should be someone who is aware of the environmental costs of their food choices and who has the means to choose a diet that minimises harm to animals and the planet.**

### 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?

**Mostly agree**

What changes, if any, would you make?

**Public caterers should be supported to be leaders in the food industry by demonstrating how meals can be both nutritious and aligned with Scotland's net-zero ambitions contributing positively to animal welfare and the environment.**

### Question 13

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

- As an employer, I meet Fair Work First criteria. I ensure that all procurement contracts I enter into are fair and equitable for producers
- I create a store environment that makes healthy and nutritious options affordable and appealing for everyone. I help consumers to better understand the nutritional quality and provenance of the food I sell
- Decisions I make in store and through procurement help Scotland to achieve its net zero ambitions, for example by minimising food waste.
- I play an important role in supporting a stronger local food economy and increasing food security in Scotland

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

**Mostly agree**

What changes, if any, would you make?

**In relation to retailers in a Good Food Nation, sustainability should extend to activity reducing the sale and promotion of animal products, thereby supporting Scotland's net-zero emissions targets and, given that the majority of Scots consume animal-derived products, fostering a market for higher welfare items,**

**We support the statement about helping consumers to better understand the nutritional quality and provenance of the food on sale. As noted in the current DEFRA/Scottish Government consultation on food labelling, the majority (98%) of UK consumers value animal welfare and most (72 – 84%) are prepared to pay more for it. This highlights the need for retailers to offer transparency regarding the supply chain of all products,**

**highlighting the ethical and environmental standards upheld. Ensuring plant-based options are available and promoted will maximise consumer choice.**

#### 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?

**Mostly agree**

What changes, if any, would you make?

**Restaurant owners in a Good Food Nation should be encouraged to prioritise menu options that are not only seasonal and fresh but also align with environmental and ethical goals, including the promotion of high animal welfare. Self-evidently this is achieved by the provision of plant-based choices, but could also be met by procurement of animal products from non-intensive farming systems.**

#### Question 15

##### **Snapshot Box: As a farmer/crofter in a Good Food Nation**

- I feel that my work is respected and that I am able to get a fair price for my produce. I can easily sell my produce locally should I wish to do so
- My farming and land management practices reduce my environmental impact, increase biodiversity and ensure high animal welfare standards on my farm or croft
- I benefit from a variety of support, including training and advice, to help me run a successful and sustainable farm or croft
- I help to build resilient supply chains and contribute to food security in Scotland

Does this reflect what you would like your life to look like, as a farmer/crofter in a Good Food Nation?

## Neither agree nor disagree

What changes, if any, would you make?

**For farmers and crofters, the plan must facilitate a transition towards more sustainable plant-based agriculture and higher welfare (non-intensive farming systems), providing support and training for those moving away from animal farming. The vision for a Good Food Nation should include the goal of a predominantly plant-based agricultural system with high animal welfare standards for remaining animal agriculture practices.**

### Question 16

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

- I feel that my work is respected and that I am able to get a fair price for my catch
- I support the marine environment and ecosystem with sustainable fishing practices
- I benefit from and enable a fair and safe working environment
- I seek opportunities to bring my product to a wider market in Scotland, and to promote its contribution to a healthy diet
- I can access a variety of support to help me to run a sustainable fishing business

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

## Strongly disagree

What changes, if any, would you make?

**Fishing practices should not only be sustainable but also be part of a broader strategy towards diets with reduced fish consumption, recognising the environmental stress on marine ecosystems and the environmental and welfare impacts of farmed fisheries. The vision should include education on the impact of fishing and support for fishers transitioning to alternative livelihoods that do not over-exploit marine life. The animal welfare costs of commercial fishing, such as leaving fish to suffocate in air as a means of slaughter, should be addressed as a matter of urgency.**

### Question 17

#### Snapshot Box: As a food processor in a Good Food Nation

- I work with producers, wholesalers, retailers and out of home food providers to ensure resilience along the whole supply chain while meeting demand and minimising waste
- I make my products healthier and more sustainable, using fresh, seasonal ingredients where possible, and can access support to do this.
- I invest in and develop my workforce, ensuring they can enjoy opportunities to enhance their skills whilst benefiting from a safe working environment

- I contribute to the important role that the food and drink sector has in Scotland's economy

Does this reflect what you would like your life to look like, as a food processor in a Good Food Nation?

**Mostly agree**

What changes, if any, would you make?

**Food processors play a vital role in a Good Food Nation by adapting their practices to support the production of sustainable plant-based foods. The plan should encourage processors to innovate in creating plant-based alternatives, minimising the environmental impact and improving the health outcomes of the nation's diet.**

### **Question 18**

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

**The Good Food Nation Plan must have a stronger emphasis on the welfare of animals and how more plant-based diets can promote welfare as well as the health of citizens, and the environment. This includes a more detailed legislative framework to guide the transition, support for farmers and businesses during this transition and public education campaigns about the benefits of plant-based diets.**

### **Question 19**

Please let us know if we have missed any function falling within a specified description or relevant specified functions in the list.

**Missed function(s) falling within a specified description or relevant specified functions in the list, would be the incorporation of clear guidelines and support systems for plant-based food diets for those who see the benefit of these diets for animal health and welfare, human health and the environment.**

### **Question 20**

Why do you think this specified function/function falling within a specified description should be added?

**Such a function should be added because it aligns with the ethical responsibility towards animal welfare, meets the legislative goals of emission reduction, and addresses the environmental imperative to shift towards truly sustainable food systems.**

REFERENCES

1. Farm Animal Welfare Committee (FAWC) (2012) Farm Animal Welfare: Health and Disease [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5a7dbb7740f0b65d8b4e32a3/FAWC\\_report\\_on\\_farm\\_animal\\_welfare\\_-\\_health\\_and\\_disease.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5a7dbb7740f0b65d8b4e32a3/FAWC_report_on_farm_animal_welfare_-_health_and_disease.pdf)

2. Nature Magazine (2023). Author Janis Whitlock, Article: Climate change anxiety in young people. <https://www.nature.com/articles/s44220-023-00059-3> [accessed 11 April 2024]





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