

SDG Network Scotland's written submission to the Scottish Government's consultation on a Good Food Nation Bill

[SDG Network Scotland](#) has been formed out of a demand to increase working together and partnership on the SDGs across Scotland and beyond. The coalition is here to build awareness and engagement across civil society and with business and government. Where possible, it will support the implementation of the SDGs in Scotland and aims to ensure that the voices of those committed to sustainability are heard by key decision makers.

This response was coordinated by Daniel Yaxley, Good Food Nation Ambassador, and developed collaboratively with SDG Network Scotland. **The response is supported by:**

- **Govan Community Project**
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- **Propagate (Scotland) CIC**
- **UN Association Scotland**
- **Soroptimist International of Edinburgh**
- **Scottish Ahlul Bayt Society**
- **Climate Innovation Hub Scotland North**
- **EAUC-Scotland**
- **Learning for Sustainability Scotland**
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To what extent do you agree with the framework proposals for Ministers and public authorities to prepare statements of policy, have regard to them in exercise of relevant functions, and report on implementation, with regard to international obligations and guidance?

1. An essential step towards becoming a Good Food Nation is the enshrining of the Right to Food into Scots law. This would bring Scotland in line with international law, allowing the Government to take a rights-based approach to food policy. If food which is accessible, available and adequate is a protected right, the Government can build a framework which works for all and ensures this is protected for the future.
2. Previous national food policies have been slow to effect change because the plans were not specific enough about who would be responsible for implementation. The policy plans set forward by the Government need to be written, examined and delivered by people with experience of the food system - including farmers, scientists, and those forced to use food banks - to ensure that policies go far enough and are deliverable.
3. The Government has committed to delivering the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030, and the Good Food Nation Bill will be critical to ensuring that all of these goals are reached. The inextricable relationship between Food and the SDGs makes it necessary to consider the Good Food Nation Bill through this lens. By doing so, it must consider the interlinkages between food and other outcomes in both a trans-boundary and trans-generational sense. Food supply chains link directly to economic, social and environmental outcomes elsewhere in the world. Ensuring we reach targets related to 'Decent Work' (SDG 8) is an obvious example, but there are many others. Scotland's commitment to being a Fair Trade Nation already contributes to this outcome, but ensuring our Good Food Nation Bill is explicitly coherent with SDG framing and other internationally oriented commitments to 'do no harm' is essential to reflect SG's commitment to 'policy coherence for sustainable development' (SDG target 17.14). It is vital that policy be written with alignment to the SDGs so that our mission towards cross-sector change can be strengthened, and that our international commitments be considered at every stage.

Whilst we do not plan to require all sectors to prepare statements of policy on food, they do all have a role to play in achieving our Good Food Nation ambition. To what extent do you agree that Government should encourage and enable businesses in particular to play their part?

4. The private sector has an enormous responsibility to ensure that the food system is protected while delivering for its consumers. The Scottish food and drink industry is worth £14 billion each year and employs over 115,000 people. Key to driving change will be bringing businesses on board and ensuring they are encouraged to support a sustainable and just food system.
5. The Government should incentivise changes in business practices which make it easier to achieve a Good Food Nation, for example with financial support for those

taking positive action. Government intervention has been taken previously in an attempt to affect positive public and environmental health in conjunction with business, such as with the plastic bag charge, sugar tax and minimum pricing on alcohol. Similar powers could be used to influence further changes across the private sector.

6. The climate emergency, as the biggest threat to human and environmental life, should be taken seriously by a Good Food Nation. Not only can food policy have a direct impact on global warming, the climate emergency will create many challenges for the food system and those dependent on it. Areas which could be tackled by a Good Food Nation include restrictions on carbon emissions for food production, further legislation on fertiliser use, targets for food waste or a commitment to support research in prevention of yield decline. It is imperative that action is taken to help mitigate the effects of climate change and this would be best fought if spearheaded by industry.
7. Whilst business cooperation will be important, the public sector must lead by example when approaching food strategy. Duties should be placed on local authorities, health boards and other public bodies to ensure that policy adheres to the framework set out in the bill. For example, guaranteeing that food available in public kitchens such as schools, colleges, universities, hospitals and Government buildings is sustainable and nourishing.
8. While imperative that businesses are encouraged, it is also important that communities and individuals feel empowered to make decisions which can support the development to a Good Food Nation. This could be, for example, in the form of incentives for growing and producing food locally, an increase in the availability of allotments, and support for those sharing food within a community. This could help Scotland achieve its national outcomes by supporting a healthier population through taking a preventative approach with equality of access to good food.

To what extent do you agree with the proposed approach to accountability of Scottish Ministers and specified public authorities?

9. The current approach for accountability does not go far enough in ensuring that the plans put forward in the Good Food Nation Bill will be monitored and assessed thoroughly. The creation of an independent statutory body will be essential in providing assurances that a Good Food Nation will be achieved, and in keeping progress of the policies on track.
10. A Statutory Food Commission will not only provide expertise to the Government for input into key policy areas, but should seek public participation in the formulation of the Good Food Nation laws, scrutinise policy, report on progress and ensure coherence across Government departments.

To what extent do you agree with the proposal for targeted legislation relevant to specific policy areas as an alternative to a single piece of legislation?

11. To ensure that a Good Food Nation is achieved, both framework and targeted legislation must be created in parallel. This is to ensure that the ambitious system-wide change can be set out by the Government which is secure for future generations, whilst responding the specific needs of the food system today.
12. With the lack of a department responsible for the food system, coherent plans can be difficult to progress. The implementation of a National Food Plan will enable the Government to lead with a clear direction, allowing businesses and Government departments to work together with a common, clear goal.
13. The Good Food Nation Bill should include specific targets which could line up with the SDGs, which will be measurable and against which progress can be reviewed at regular intervals. These could include targets for, amongst others, reducing food poverty, improving the percentage of food workers earning the living wage and reducing rates of childhood obesity.