

**Response by the SLA to the Scottish Governments Consultation
*Local Food for Everyone: a discussion: 2.12.2021***

The SLA welcome the introduction of a more holistic and sustainable food strategy for Scotland. We are broadly supportive of the discussion document *Local Food for Everyone* and believe it could be taken a step further towards how lives across Scotland could be transformed by viewing landscape as a key enabler to deliver on the Scottish Governments ambitions towards a cleaner, greener, healthier Scotland.

We make the following comments to contribute positively to its further refinement and welcome the opportunity to continue to collaborate and would be happy to take part in any future workshops.

Q1. Do you agree with the Scottish Government definition of local food as set out above?

Produced locally – we believe the definition should be developed further and encompass macro to micro in the context of Scotland. This means delivering at different scales – rural and urban farms, market gardens, peri-urban to door step. The micro scale - **on your doorstep** would require public/private land set aside for food growing within a 20 minute neighbourhood concept.

Landscape is a great enabler and local food production could form part of accessible quality and multifunctional landscape and greenspace, delivering multiple benefits, not just food production

Sustainably produced – This definition would have more impact if it was expanded to ensure health for both people and nature if it was expanded to mean - *a method of production using processes and systems that are non-polluting, conserve non-renewable energy and natural resources, are economically efficient, are safe for nature and biodiversity, workers, communities and consumers, and do not compromise the needs of future generations*

Emphasis on better relationships – local food producers must include those within the 20 minute neighbourhood concept such as individuals. There is need to make all producers form the individual to the large scale farmers part of an integrated food system. The Place Principle is essential to ensure public/private/community sectors are working together for land availability, training/ awareness and food networks

Q2 Do you agree with the benefits associated with local food as set out in the strategy?

We welcome the inclusion of the benefits outlined of local food and have the following important additions .

Integrated and multiple benefits

Weaving food production into the framework of multifunctional landscapes in both rural and urban Scotland means it can help deliver multiple benefits – food security, place and community, energy supply (ground and water source renewables) climate and biodiversity resilience (air quality, flooding, heat and integrated nature networks), outdoor education for all ages, health and wellbeing, healthy transport networks and an improved local economy

This requires an integrated and aligned approach at cross sectoral level into our policies and strategies at local, regional and national scale.

Community cohesion and resilience – Diverse growing can reflect cultural identity and also food security through climate resilience and is an opportunity to engage with all voices as well as hard to reach members of the community which can engender community cohesion.

Scotland's rural communities and Islands – creating island / local brands are very positive for local economies but the fundamental issues of local food security described in this consultation need to be addressed as a priority through this strategy. Support mechanisms are good through legislation such as the Community Empowerment Act but joining up small funding and training packages available may attract further private / community investment to help deliver more.

Creating greater access to land to new farmers and growers – looking at mechanisms possibly through pilots to help young farmers move beyond bank loans or waiting to inherit. For example a farmer, without heirs, could offer up their land to new comers but with the right to live out the rest of their lives on the farm. Simple, humane and low cost. And meaning Scotland is repopulated.

Reduced Food Waste - also means reduced carbon footprint by reduced food miles and an added benefit towards climate change mitigation

Q3. Are you aware of any disadvantages of local food?

No. The only disadvantage to promoting the Local Food Strategy is that it is not integrated at a national, regional and local level and there are not the appropriate support mechanisms to enable it to be implemented.

Q4. Do you have any comments on the first pillar of the Scottish Government's local food strategy: connecting people with food?

The aim should be to ensure the population of Scotland have access to safe, local, diverse, fair healthy and nutrient rich food. Food production presents opportunities for biodiverse environments, eco systems services as well as the benefit to human well-being. Food policy overlaps with many challenges such as poverty, health, hygiene and sanitation, land use planning, transport and commerce, energy, education and disaster preparation. Therefore it is essential to adopt an approach that is comprehensive, interdisciplinary and inter-institutional.

An integrated and sustainable Healthy Food Policy as the overarching vision that is cross sectoral would ensure consistency of approach across Scotland from local authority areas to regions helping deliver the vision in conjunction with all stakeholders. At the moment it is fragmented and localised or focussed on high end produce for export.

Support mechanisms are good through legislation such as the Community Empowerment Act but joining up small funding packages available may attract further private / community investment to help deliver more. Eg for rural or island communities

Q5. Do you have any comments on the second pillar of the Scottish Government's local food strategy: connecting Scottish producers with buyers?

There is a need to prioritise increasing the range and scale of food suppliers. Access to land for farming could be more universal and affordable. Scotland is missing out on a range of young, educated and committed farmers who cannot access land through existing mechanisms such as the Community Empowerment Act. Scales of access to land 20-100ha could be created through models around Government buy out and sell on (Swedish model)

Encouraging large scale producers to set aside a proportion of their land for local population markets to diversify from the animal and drinks industry.

Making it easier for local producers to sell locally. Individuals currently need to be part of a community garden group shop to be able to sell on excess produce. Develop community led co-operatives, hubs and processing as part of food networks.

Creating a co-ordinator role between local growers and land managers / owners as part of RLUP's and local authorities.

Q6. you have any comments on the third pillar of the Scottish Governments local food strategy: harnessing public sector procurement?

The SLA believe that this should not be restricted to local authority education environments but all public sector buildings or services receiving public funding such as NHS Scotland, universities and FE colleges and leisure centres as Question 16.

Q7. Are there any areas related to local food where Scottish Government involvement could bring further benefits or reduce disadvantages?

As previously stated the SLA are broadly supportive of the discussion document *Local Food for Everyone* and believe it could be taken a step further towards how lives across Scotland could be transformed by viewing landscape as a key enabler to deliver on the Scottish Governments ambitions towards a cleaner, greener, healthier Scotland.

The following present opportunities where the Scottish Government could provide the vision and support to reduce disadvantage and bring further benefits.

Access to Land

At the moment this is a major issue for new and young farmers. There is an opportunity to develop pilots to assess different models of creating opportunities for access to land at different scales for growing in both rural, peri urban and urban areas.

Planning Policy Review (NPF4, RLUP and Frameworks)

- Food production is a priority. There is an opportunity to integrate the new food strategy at local, regional and national scale into our open / green space /climate/ biodiversity policies to create multifunctional landscapes that deliver multiple benefits – food security, place and community, energy supply climate and biodiversity resilience, education, health and wellbeing and an improved local economy.
- Re-use old infrastructure (V&DL, Unused buildings) and public sector buildings and managed open spaces should be available for food production and energy creation from ground / water heat source for food production or to help reduce food poverty
- Create a duty for local authorities to assess food growing and renewable energy creation capabilities within their public open space estate.
- RLUP's to define food growing capabilities within Frameworks
- A planning requirement for all new developments to include an area suitable for food production and a need to connect with a local group or community to manage the area for that purpose
- Remove the change of use requirement for food growing
- Reduce fast food outlets in deprived areas

Data and Monitoring

- Develop a National Food Data System working across sectors – on land, food production, distribution and environmental / health impacts of food
- Develop simple food labelling – carbon, biodiversity and climate change
- Set targets for access to growing and supply of local food for areas of deprivation and all community sectors
- Set a national target to improve diet related health linked to local food supply or growing

Place Principle and Best Practice

Reinforce the Place Principle approach by providing best practice examples of collaborative working and promoting success stories to demonstrate what can be done and what we should be doing more of in Scotland

Q8-13 – for Individuals to complete

Q14. Do you have any further comments on improvements that could be made to allow for everyone living in Scotland to have better access to healthy, affordable and locally sourced food?

Raising community awareness and education through public campaigns of the multifunctional benefits of local food growing and consumption (Food security, climate resilience, health and wellbeing etc). Share success stories to help change food habits and give confidence around growing and cooking fresh produce.

Growing and cooking locally produced food on the curriculum from primary school age – children should be able to leave school with the ability to grow and cook healthy food.

Q15. What changes you think could be made to improve access to healthy, locally sourced food within schools, hospitals or other public institutions

The SLA believe the public sector should lead by example:-

- Land holdings within public institutions should be available for food production and energy creation for food production. The primary consumers would be the institute but excess could be sold locally and managed by the estate or a co-ordinating organisation
- All new buildings should be designed or existing buildings assessed for their capability for vertical and rooftop growing.
- All food provided should have clear standardised food labelling to enable people to make healthy choices

Q17. Has your attitude to local food changed at all due to the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic and related restrictions?

Yes. Inequalities heightened by Covid around food security for many of our most deprived communities

Q18. Are you aware of any organisations or schemes that have been particularly effective in providing local food during the COVID-19 pandemic?

No

Q19. Are you aware of any organisations or schemes that have been particularly effective in developing a strong sense of local food culture and community?

Yes – The Federation of City Farms and Community Gardens have reported on a number of success stories inspiring multi-ethnic involvement at community gardens and farms across the UK One example is the Coriander Club, Spitalfilelds City Farm, London

Q20. Are you aware of any organisations or schemes that have been particularly effective in reducing the distance that food travels from being grown or produced to being eaten (the number of 'food miles' travelled)?

BigBarn - reconnect consumers with their local food producers. They created an online marketplace where small-scale farms and food businesses can offer their produce directly to consumers, reducing food miles and increasing the sustainability and accountability of the food system.

Q21. Are you aware of any organisations or schemes that have been particularly effective in the increasing availability of locally produced food? See Question 20

Q22. Have you considered using vertical farming technologies? -N/A

Q23. What effect would increased usage of vertical farming have on food imports to Scotland? -Multiple choice question

Q24. Would vertical farming cause an increase, decrease or have no effect on the following concerns compared with conventional production? -Multiple choice question

Q25. What barriers do you see to the uptake of vertical farming in Scotland?

- Costs – unless with incentives or private investment linked to creation of energy
- Range of typology of buildings – no one size fits all
- Current planning policies
- Legal rights

Q26. Are you aware of any other technologies, other than vertical farming, which would help Scotland produce more of its own food?

Aquaponics

- Soil-less system – integrating, water plants and fish. Opportunity to create organic agricultural products close to consumers
- Integrating renewable energy systems. Production yields as high as 10x per m² than traditional agricultural methods.

Embedding food production with the by products of the city's processes and systems - residual heat, water run off and food waste and benefit of reduced food miles.

Agroforestry

- Increased resilience from extreme weather variations
- Crops grown beneath trees to provide heat and rainfall protection
- 40% increase in yield. Increases biodiversity of mono-crop methods and can be used at a city scale

Hydroponics – soil-less system