

Recipe for Success: Scotland's National Food and Drink Policy

Becoming a Good Food Nation

Discussion Document

Submission by the GRYOWG (Draft)

In June 2009, the Scottish Government published *Recipe for Success*, a national food and drink policy. The Grow Your Own Working Group (GYOWG) was formed later in 2009, to take forward two recommendations in *Recipe for Success* relating to growing your own food:

- Ensure that allotments and “grow your own” projects are strategically supported.
- Produce practical advice and best practice guidance that will appeal to public bodies, communities and individuals to help them develop local “grow your own” initiatives.

The GYOWG has responded to several policy consultations, notably the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Bill and consultation on Permitted Development. The group has also produced guidance documents, and will shortly be launching the Soil Contamination Guide for grow your own groups. A full report of our activities from 2009 – 2013, including recommendations for further work and membership of the group is available.

The GYOWG welcomes the opportunity to respond to this discussion document. Individual members of the GYOWG, including Scottish Allotments and Gardens Society (SAGS), Greenspace Scotland, and the Federation of City Farms and Community Gardens (FCFCG), are submitting their own responses to the consultation.

1. How important do you think it is that we aim to be a Good Food Nation

Aiming to be a Good Food Nation is very important to the GYOWG. ‘Good food’ can have several positive impacts on an individual’s well-being, from immediate and long-term health, to skills development, confidence and empowerment. ‘Good food’ should also mean food that has been grown, cooked and eaten together - it is food that creates connections between people, celebrates the diversity of produce and food cultures that we have in Scotland, and helps to build stronger communities.

2. What would success look like?

A Good Food nation would offer opportunities to any citizen who wanted to grow their own food, be it through community gardens, allotments, orchards, growing activities at schools, hospitals, municipal buildings and in parks and greenspaces. Success is when everyone who wants to grow their own food has access to land, and has the confidence and skills to grow. Success is also when communities come together to grow and share food, and share their knowledge and skills around food.

3. Do you agree with the proposed initial focus? Which other areas would you prioritise?

The GYOWG agrees with the proposed initial focus, but would also like to see an additional focus on Community Food and Grow Your Own Food. Community Food encompasses a broad range of things from community run shops and community cafes to community gardens and allotments. In the last few years there has been a rapid expansion in initiatives and projects aimed at tackling the demand

for community gardening and food growing. This is in part due to an upsurge in interest in 'growing your own', as well as an awareness of other issues such as health and well-being and climate change. Community gardens, allotments, community orchards and other similar initiatives for Grow Your Own can provide a broad range of positive benefits¹ which contribute to a range of Scottish Government policy priorities. They can:

- Provide productive, creative, safe, high quality open spaces.
- Produce fresh fruit, vegetables, eggs, honey and more.
- Improve physical and mental health in their communities.
- Offer opportunities for people to learn new skills and abilities in a range of skills including food growing and cooking, either informally or on formal accredited training courses.
- Re-establish the connection between consumers and producers of food by increasing knowledge of what is available in Scotland and in what season.
- Plants and animals can be used to engage a wide range of individuals and instill a sense of responsibility and engagement.
- Provide a valuable tool for bringing people together of different abilities, ages and cultures, thereby aiding in community cohesion and community development.
- Attract visitors and regular users to an area.
- Support local economies and provide strong social return on investment².

4. Are there any other essential steps we need to take before setting out on this journey? What steps do you plan to take?

In April 2011, greenspace scotland published "Community Growing in Scotland - towards a framework for action"³. This presented the findings of national research on the scale and range of community growing in Scotland.

- people in the most deprived areas of Scotland are significantly less likely to grow their own veg - at just 14%
- of those not currently involved in growing around a quarter (26%) would like to grow their own vegetables
- lack of a garden (39%), or access to allotments (4%) are some of the main barriers.

In order to enable people and communities to grow their own food, the GYOWG intends to:

Promote GYO in disadvantaged areas. We recommend exploring the relationship between GYO initiatives and disadvantaged areas, and, once more is understood about this, taking steps to tackle barriers to GYO in these areas so that everyone in Scotland can share the benefits of health, wellbeing, the environment, community and economy, of fresh, local produce. Our suggested actions in this area are:

- Map the incidence of GYO initiatives in disadvantaged (SIMD) areas
- Extend the existing Scottish Allotments and Gardens Society analysis of GYO and disadvantaged areas
- Promote GYO activities in areas where there gaps are found, in partnership with others

¹ "The true value of community farms and gardens: social, environmental, health and economic" Quayle, H, 2008

² "Gorgie City Farm: Social Return on Investment Report", FCFCG, <https://www.farmgarden.org.uk/farms-gardens/your-region/scotland>

³ <http://www.greenspacescotland.org.uk/SharedFiles/Download.aspx?pageid=133&mid=129&fileid=50>

Promote GYO to Community Planning Partnerships: Neighbourhood plans are mostly concerned with issues surrounding litter, parks, pavements, roads, dog fouling and local authority services. There is very little mention of local food, despite the many and varied benefits GYO could bring to local communities, in terms of improved health and wellbeing, better local environments, more robust local economies and more resilient communities. We will promote these benefits to Community Planning Partnerships, with the aim of GYO initiatives being incorporated into local plans and Single Outcome Agreements across Scotland. The GYOWG will also seek to provide advice to individuals and community groups on getting involved and engaging with Community Planning Partnerships.

Promote GYO to planners: Community growing projects often find the Planning system in Scotland challenging. This could be at a strategic level, for example, councils not having open space audits, adequately protecting greenfield sites or demanding greenspace as part of new developments. Or it could be at a more practical level, for example, receiving conflicting advice, or advice that makes a group's plans prohibitively complex or expensive, about whether planning permission is required to change the use of land, erect polytunnels/sheds or build car parking spaces. There is also a lack of consistency between local authority areas, with some promoting very good practice, and some being more risk averse. The GYOWG considers Planning to be of such importance that we once again make the following recommendations, to help make the planning system more favourable for community growing. We will seek to:

- Promote the benefits of and good practice in GYO to planners at a strategic level (eg: Heads of Planning)
- Promote the benefits of and good practice in GYO to planners at an officer level

5. How do you think a Food Commission could best help?

GYOWG supports the proposal to establish a Food Commission. Such a body could help to coordinate activities amongst different umbrella organisations, and highlight areas of best practice. The Commission could also run high profile national campaigns, which are often harder to manage for small or regional scale organisations. We would like to see that the food commission:

- include Third Sector intermediaries and/or community organisations involved in local / community food in its membership
- have a clear remit and action plan
- operates democratically and in a clear way that enables individuals and organisations to understand its work
- clearly articulate the ways in which this remit relates to other Scottish Government strategies, policies and reforms such as the Community Empowerment Bill, Land Use reform, Scottish Planning Policy, key Public Health strategies, allotments legislation etc. - and have mechanisms in place to ensure that synergies are strengthened and potential conflicts avoided