

Response to the Public Consultation on the Proposed Right to Food (Scotland) Bill

What do you think would be the main practical advantages and disadvantages of the proposed Bill?

This document has been produced in response to the public consultation on the Proposed Right to Food (Scotland) Bill. Our group is made up of 12 individuals from the Glasgow region, Central Scotland East, Central Scotland West, Lothian region, South of Scotland and elsewhere in the UK. The people in our group come from a range of backgrounds including Scottish civil society and the charity sector, academia, community food groups and other concerned members of the public.

One of the advantages that we think having the right to food in Scots Law would lead to is making it easier for people to access food; “if the right to food was in Scots Law, there would be no need for foodbanks (or at least the need would be drastically reduced).” Someone else also added “Nutritious food would be easier to get” and that we would all have “access to safe, sustainable, cost effective food.”

As a group, we also thought that having a right to food in Scots Law would help improve the health and wellbeing of people in Scotland. One group member stated that having this right would lead to “increased wellbeing among those in society, increasing productivity, wellbeing and social cohesion.” We also agreed that it would help provide “a greater understanding of where food comes from, what constitutes a healthy diet and supper and information for those seeking change with their choices.”

A few people in our group had experience in food production and they pointed out that having the right to food would hopefully benefit “small scale ecological producers” through more targeted funding. Another person stated that the right to food would provide “affordable good food for local people - so I don't need to charge so much to make a living from growing.” We also thought another advantage would be the “joined up local food plans/strategies with different sectors working together” as this could “achieve hyper local food systems that are equitable, healthy and resilient.”

Finally, we all agreed that one major advantage of having the right to food enshrined in law would be the obligations it would place on the government and the accountability mechanisms it would provide for the people in Scotland. We concluded, “it would obligate our government to properly address food insecurity in our community through work and benefit reform. It would obligate them to properly plan our communities’ local food access and availability so people had affordable access to healthy food.”

Although when discussing potential disadvantages or difficulties associated with introducing the right to food, a large number of our group couldn't think of any, some concerns were mentioned.

The first potential issue would be the costs associated. What would the initial costs be to deliver on this? How would the economy be impacted by reducing the input from large scale producers? Would small scale producers be able to fulfil market demands? We also recognised that many multinational corporations would be potentially unwilling to make the changes needed as it could have an economic impact on them.

The second issue we identified was more to do with compliance. One group member stated “many in the community would be opposed to public health regulations around food, sugar and saturated fat taxes, etc.” It is possible that the government may face some resistance if members of the community felt their food consumption and choices were being monitored or even restricted.

Although as a group, we did identify some possible issues, the overwhelming consensus was that having a right to food enshrined in Scotland’s Law would be massively beneficial and that the advantages undoubtedly outweigh the possible disadvantages.