

## Consultation Response - Proposed Right to Food (Scotland) Bill

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

We are writing in response to the public consultation on the Proposed Right to Food (Scotland) Bill. We are a group of 14 individuals from a variety of different backgrounds, including Scottish civil society & Scottish charity sector, community food groups and other members of the Scottish General Public. In our group, we have 7 people from the Glasgow region, 2 from Central Scotland East, 2 from Central Scotland West, 1 from the Lothian region, 1 from North East Scotland and 1 person from elsewhere in the UK.

As a group we thought that one of the biggest advantages of having the right to food in Scots Law is that it would empower people. One of the people in our group said “I think people who face food insecurity would be more empowered in all aspects of their life and would have less worries if food was more guaranteed.” Another person thought “It would remove the charity element of feeding people [from foodbanks] and would empower people.” The idea of empowering people was also mentioned by someone in our group who works closely with those facing food insecurity. They said having the right to food in law “would benefit the individuals I work with physically and mentally, removing the stigma of food poverty as a ‘personal failure’.”

Another advantage that we talked about was how the right to food could possibly improve the overall health and wellbeing of the Scottish people. Having access to and being able to choose food which is healthy, fresh, culturally appropriate and affordable could mean people making healthier choices and having a more nutritious diet, therefore contributing to good health and lifestyles. Someone in our group pointed out that having the right to food in law would mean that “people would be guaranteed access to healthy, nourishing food and this would improve their physical and mental wellbeing.” Someone else added that as a result of this “we would have a stronger community.”

The final advantage we believe would come from having the right to food in law is that “we would have a strong legal basis for creating and assessing policies that touch on any of the elements of the right to food.” Our group all agreed that it would be very beneficial to have some sort of way to hold the government accountable to ensure they are meeting the needs of the Scottish people. Someone else added that the enshrining of the right to food in law would provide “a platform to shift the power dynamic around food” and that “we would have a language for joining up social and environmental justice.”

While our group was strongly in favour of the right to food being enshrined in law, we did consider some potential disadvantages and problems that may occur.

One potential disadvantage that we came up with was related to cost. Some people in our group wondered if food prices would be pushed up as a result and if the cost of living would become more expensive. Someone else raised the concern that certain culturally appropriate foods would become more expensive to buy and that availability may be reduced.

Another point that we considered was the difficulties that could come from introducing a right to food in law. Someone in our group said “If the right to food was in Scots law, but not properly implemented and realised it might make people lose faith in its meaning.” They also added however that “a framework law, enforcement and accountability is important.” Another person added that there was “potential for getting stuck in long legal battles/not being able to engage in them at all, [the right to food] is not supported appropriately.”

Others in our group had questions about how this change would affect those people working in the food industry. Someone pointed out that Scotland “would need a just transition for workers in unsustainable or undesirable food sectors” while another person in our group added “Potentially that there may be so many competing interests that farmers would be extremely restricted in how they produce food. Or farmers may need a lot more training which could be costly.” One of the individuals who works for a community food hub also raised the concern that “We might have more restrictions on the meals we serve at community meals.”

Although these concerns are valid, our group agreed that despite these potential problems, they believed the advantages of enshrining the RTF outweighed the disadvantages. Overall, as a group, we unanimously agreed that there was a strong argument to be made for including the RTF within Scots Law.