

# Right to Food (Scotland) Bill

## Introduction

A proposal for a Bill to incorporate the right to food into Scots law.

The consultation runs from 25 November 2021 to 16 February 2022.

All those wishing to respond to the consultation are strongly encouraged to enter their responses electronically through this survey. This makes collation of responses much simpler and quicker. However, the option also exists of sending in a separate response (in hard copy or by other electronic means such as e-mail), and details of how to do so are included in the member's consultation document.

Questions marked with an asterisk (\*) require an answer.

All responses must include a name and contact details. Names will only be published if you give us permission, and contact details are never published – but we may use them to contact you if there is a query about your response. If you do not include a name and/or contact details, we may have to disregard your response.

Please note that you must complete the survey in order for your response to be accepted. If you don't wish to complete the survey in a single session, you can choose "Save and Continue later" at any point. Whilst you have the option to skip particular questions, you must continue to the end of the survey and press "Submit" to have your response fully recorded.

Please ensure you have read the consultation document before responding to any of the questions that follow. In particular, you should read the information contained in the document about how your response will be handled. The consultation document is available here:

[Consultation Document](#)

[Privacy Notice](#)

I confirm that I have read and understood the Privacy Notice which explains how my personal data will be used.

On the previous page we asked you if you are UNDER 12 YEARS old, and you responded Yes to this question.

If this is the case, we will have to contact your parent or guardian for consent.

If you are under 12 years of age, please put your contact details into the textbox. This can be your email address or phone number. We will then contact you and your parents to receive consent.

Otherwise please confirm that you are or are not under 12 years old.

*No Response*

## About you

Please choose whether you are responding as an individual or on behalf of an organisation.  
Note: If you choose "individual" and consent to have the response published, it will appear under your own name. If you choose "on behalf of an organisation" and consent to have the response published, it will be published under the organisation's name.

on behalf of an organisation

Which of the following best describes you? (If you are a professional or academic, but not in a subject relevant to the consultation, please choose "Member of the public".)

*No Response*

Please select the category which best describes your organisation

Third sector (charitable, campaigning, social enterprise, voluntary, non-profit)

Please choose one of the following:

I am content for this response to be published and attributed to me or my organisation

Please provide your Full Name or the name of your organisation. (Note: the name will not be published if you have asked for the response to be anonymous or "not for publication". Otherwise this is the name that will be published with your response).

Govan Community Project

Please provide details of a way in which we can contact you if there are queries regarding your response. Email is preferred but you can also provide a postal address or phone number.

We will not publish these details.

## **Aim and Approach - Note: All answers to the questions in this section may be published (unless your response is "not for publication").**

Q1. Which of the following best expresses your view of the proposal to incorporate the right to food into Scots law?

Fully supportive

**Please explain the reasons for your response.**

The government has a duty to make sure everyone can afford and enjoy a healthy and sustainable diet, the people producing the food have safe working conditions and receive a fair wage, and food is produced

Q1. Which of the following best expresses your view of the proposal to incorporate the right to food into Scots law?

in a way that respects animals and the environment. Putting the right to food into Scots law would make it more likely that the Scottish Government prioritises wellbeing of people & environment in decisions on the food system.

Q2. Do you think legislation is required, or are there other ways in which the proposed Bill's aims could be achieved more effectively? Please explain the reasons for your response.

Legislation is required. It helps to maintain progress and prevent going backwards. Delivering on the commitments laid down by legislation will be the same no matter which political party is in power, or if Ministers and Scottish Government officials change. Legislation can help to establish the core purpose of the food system in law, track progress across the whole food system and hold the Government to account if they are not delivering the right to food.

Q3. Which of the following best expresses your view on an independent statutory body being given responsibility for overseeing and reporting on progress towards realising the right to food?

Fully supportive

**Please explain the reasons for your response.**

The food system is complicated and made up of many parts of Government, as well as individuals and companies. Everyone involved in the food system has different goals and priorities, and at the moment, we do not have a good picture of how well the problems facing the food system are being tackled. An independent statutory body would recognise that food insecurity, climate change, public health, biodiversity, workers' rights, animal welfare, access to land, and waste are all part of the food system and that a systems-wide approach is essential to protecting everyone's right to food and making sure the Government keeps its promises.

We need an independent organisation which is not the Government to review and question the Government's plans, provide guidance, gather evidence, and report on how well the Government is delivering on its duties. It is important that the Government is held to account over its obligations and an independent statutory body is an important part of ensuring this happens.

Q4. Should an independent body be given responsibility for overseeing and reporting on the right to food, do you think it should be:

A newly created body

**Please explain the reasons for your response.**

The challenges facing the food system have not yet been adequately addressed by any existing body, and we have seen many of these issues worsening. Rather than adding additional responsibilities to an existing body that has an established agenda and staff already committed to delivering a specific work plan, it is necessary to establish a newly created body. This body's sole focus is on taking 'food systems' approach, recognising the need for joined-up policy across departments and between local and national government. This body could:

Undertake research and make recommendations

Report on the state of Scotland's food system and progress made on realising the right to food

Facilitate and support partnership working to drive food systems change

Enable people across Scotland to input into plans that will shape their food system

Q5. Which of the following best expresses your view of enshrining a right to food into Scots law as a priority in advance of, and in a manner which is compatible with, any further Scottish Government legislation on wider human rights?

Fully supportive

**Please explain the reasons for your response.**

It is encouraging that the Scottish Government has made a wider commitment to human rights in the future. However, we do not know when this will happen. There is also a concern that the right to food, which has been overlooked in the past, will continue to be overlooked if made part of a bigger package of rights. The challenges facing the food system are urgent, and the Covid-19 pandemic has exposed and worsened many of these challenges. It is essential that right to food is put into Scots law as a priority, so the Scottish Government puts the wellbeing of people and the planet at the heart of its plans for recovery of the food system.

Q6. Which of the following best expresses your view of placing responsibility for guaranteeing the right to food on the Scottish Government?

Fully supportive

**Please explain the reasons for your response.**

The right to food recognises that it is the Government that has the responsibility to deliver the right to food for everyone in Scotland. Charities have been filling the gaps left by Government when it comes to addressing the growing levels of food insecurity; this has led to more reliance on food banks. Workers in the food sector suffer high levels of job insecurity and poor wages. The way we produce food is harmful to animals and the environment.

The right to food recognises that these problems are Government failures as it is their responsibility to ensure everyone has enough money to afford nutritious food, through fair wages or adequate benefits, and our food system promotes the wellbeing of people, animals and our environment.

## Covid-19 Pandemic

Q7. What impact do you consider the effects of, and response to, the Covid-19 pandemic has had on the need for a right to food to be incorporated into Scots law?

No significant impact

**Please explain the reasons for your response.**

The pandemic has exacerbated some of the challenges that have long plagued the food system. Long and complex supply chains have weakened Scotland's resilience, and left the country vulnerable to disruptions in global supply. Scotland is dependent on imports such as fertiliser and animal feeds. In the meantime, producing food for export has been given precedence over producing food to eat. Local food chains are limited. Jobs in this sector remain amongst the least well paid and the most precarious.

The current crisis has exposed the vulnerability of these individuals - and the families who depend on their wages - with hundreds of thousands facing job losses, low levels of statutory sick pay and unfair compensation. Relatedly, there has been a significant rise in demand for food banks. Poor diet, and dietary inequalities, are a major cause of ill health in Scotland. Obesity has been found to be a risk factor in COVID-19 severity and outcomes - there is an increased need to address the unhealthy food environment we currently live in.

The right to food makes it clear that it is the Government's responsibility to ensure that everyone can access food that is of good quality, nutritious, safe to eat and available with dignity. Charities and food banks should not be responsible for dealing with these issues. Putting the right to food

Q7. What impact do you consider the effects of, and response to, the Covid-19 pandemic has had on the need for a right to food to be incorporated into Scots law?

into Scots law will ensure more Government resources go towards finding better alternatives to addressing food insecurity than charity and food banks, for example, ensuring a compassionate benefits system which enables people to eat well and access food with dignity. It is important that we have more than words on paper; putting the right to food into law will not end food banks overnight, and we need additional measures like an independent statutory body to monitor the Government's plans and decisions and make sure that it is taking appropriate actions.

Putting the right to food into law will ensure the Government acts to change the food system so that it promotes better public health – both physically and mentally. Fairer wages, more secure employment and adequate social security benefits will mean that people are better able to afford nutritious food for them and their families. This will likely have a positive impact on mental health as stress, anxiety and depression associated with financial worries will lessen. Diet-related illnesses are a longstanding issue and enshrining the right to food into Scots law will ensure that policy and law makers treat the food system as a health priority.

## Financial Implications

Q8. Taking into account all those likely to be affected (including public sector bodies, businesses and individuals etc), is the proposed Bill likely to lead to:

some increase in costs

**Please indicate where you would expect the impact identified to fall (including public sector bodies, businesses and individuals etc). You may also wish to suggest ways in which the aims of the Bill could be delivered more cost-effectively.**

It will cost the Government and the public-sector some money to make the necessary changes as it is underinvestment which has led to the failings we have long seen in our food system. For example, establishing an independent statutory body will be an investment. Currently, diet-related illnesses place huge avoidable costs on our health service, ensuring the food system improves public health will put less strain on the NHS.

Businesses may have some increases in cost due to pay raises for staff whose wages are too low to afford nutritious food for them and their families. However, there are also savings for businesses by changing these unfair practices. For example, there are likely to be fewer sick-days for staff who are mentally and physically healthier. A healthier workforce will be a more productive workforce and this will benefit the businesses. The food sector has struggled with job retention, but better conditions and fairer wages will attract more people into the sector providing more financial stability for businesses.

However, individuals that are unable to afford nutritious food for themselves and their families will see a reduction to their costs. Putting the right to food into law will place the responsibility on the Government to ensure everyone can afford nutritious food, for example, through fair wages or adequate benefits. Though this is not about making food cheaper; it is about making sure everyone in Scotland can access healthy food with dignity. So, individuals and families would see a reduction in their costs relative to their income.

The purpose of the Bill is long term investment in the food system. This requires ambition and big changes across the whole food system. The focus of any Bill on the right to food should be about strong social security, fair employment, protecting animals and the planet, and improving people's lives. This is worth our investment.

## Equalities

Q9. What overall impact is the proposed Bill likely to have on equality, taking account of the following protected characteristics (under the Equality Act 2010): age, disability, gender re-assignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation?

Positive

**Please explain the reasons for your response. Where any negative impacts are identified, you may also wish to suggest ways in which these could be minimised or avoided.**

The right to food is about improving the food system for the benefit of everyone in Scotland. Equality is at the heart of the right to food. We know that certain groups in society are more vulnerable to things like unfair employment practices, low wages or reliance on inadequate social security benefits. Improving these issues will have a positive impact on vulnerable people that suffer the most from these inequalities.

## Sustainability

Q10. In terms of assessing the proposed Bill's potential impact on sustainable development, you may wish to consider how it relates to the following principles:

- living within environmental limits
- ensuring a strong, healthy and just society
- achieving a sustainable economy
- promoting effective, participative systems of governance
- ensuring policy is developed on the basis of strong scientific evidence.

With these principles in mind, do you consider that the Bill can be delivered sustainably?

Yes

**Please explain the reasons for your response.**

The impact of the bill will have positive sustainable development. Making farming and fishing less wasteful and less polluting will have a positive environmental impact. Improving wages and social security so that individuals and families can afford a healthy diet will have a positive social impact. And improving business employment practices may come at an initial cost increase, but the benefit of job retention, a healthier workforce, and better public perception of those businesses should have a long term positive economic impact. This Bill's proposal to establish a body to oversee the food system could enable people across Scotland to input into plans that will shape their food system, and ensure that policy is developed on the basis of evidence.

## General

Q11. Do you have any other additional comments or suggestions on the proposed Bill (which have not already been covered in any of your responses to earlier questions)?

Every opportunity should be taken to progress the right to food in law, so that we, as a country, move closer towards making it a reality for everyone - and by everyone, this means everyone - people with NRPF, asylum seekers, and undocumented migrants. Currently the Scottish Parliament are considering the Good Food Nation Bill - a new law which can change our food system by working across the whole food supply chain and looking after people and the planet. As the Good Food Nation Bill should clearly state that its purpose is to deliver the right to food - so human rights are at the centre of our food system.