

# 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.

an individual

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".)

Academic with expertise in a relevant subject

**Optional: You may wish to explain briefly what expertise or experience you have that is relevant to the subject-matter of the consultation:**

Through my research at the University of Sheffield, I work to amplify the voices of community organisations and the people they serve and to find ways to address the issues they face in ways that are dignified, durable and transformative. I am an expert specifically on food security.

Please select the category which best describes your organisation

*No Response*

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).

Dr. Megan Blake, University of Sheffield

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.**

Enshrining the right to food into law brings it into focus. But I would argue that this is not specifically a single solution issue solved only by addressing the poverty aspects of food insecurity. Poverty itself needs solutions that are more than just better benefits, just as food security needs more than just free food. Food security is the ability to afford food, certainly, but according to the UN and as demonstrated by my research, food insecurity is also the ability to access the food you need to live a healthy life in the place where you live (e.g., not having to live in a food desert and cope with the disadvantages that that imposes). It is also about the capability to use the food available to you. For example by being able to cook it, to know what it is and how to cook it. To be physically and mentally well enough to do what has to be done to ensure healthy meals are part of everyday life. The right to food, therefore, includes a demand for planning reform to ensure suitable market spaces are available that provide healthy food in peoples neighbourhoods and also ensures that the people there can afford it, know what it is and how to use it.

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 creates mandates and requires that change be measured. This is absolutely needed because if we don't measure a problem it is easy to dismiss. I would also point out that our current scale of measurement, at the national or regional level, is inadequate. It is inadequate because firstly we also need effective policies that operate at the local scale as well. It is inadequate because people think that the problem is something that happens elsewhere, not in the places where they live. When we published our estimates of local food insecurity (see map link below--It includes Scotland), it made politicians realise this was a problem for their constituencies that needed to be addressed. Regional and national scale figures, while also important, unfortunately, do to demonstrate the depth of difficulty experienced in some places because of the ways that variation is evened out through averaging. Once again, through the scale of the data, a situation arises whereby the experiences of the wealthy are undermining the depth of difficulty so many people are having.

<https://shefuni.maps.arcgis.com/apps/instant/interactivelegend/index.html?appid=8be0cd9e18904c258afd3c959d6fc4d7>

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.**

It is easy to ignore or politicise an issue if the body is not independent. But it must be given the leavers and resources it needs to do so. There must also be penalties for failing to report and respond. There must also be adequate resources at the Local Level such that this does not become something that gets imposed upon the most vulnerable communities as something they are individually responsible for fixing. We have seen how this can be the case, for example in reducing greenhouse gas emissions. It is a national responsibility that is devolved to households to implement. Those who fail to do so are painted as solely responsible. We cannot have a system whereby local areas are required to address the issues of food insecurity on their own. It is a multi-scalar problem requiring multi-scalar responses. A process whereby a poverty and food security assessment underpins every policy is needed. Just like value for money or environmental assessments. If the policy is thought to make the issue worse, then the policy must be reviewed.

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

Either option

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

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.**

But please see my comments previously about this being a multi-scalar problem.

## 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?

Increased the need for the Bill

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

This is an issue that is further exacerbated by Brexit and the cost of living increases that people are seeing. It is not wholly a COVID issue. COVID highlighted and deepened the local access and utilisation problems people faced, but they have always been there. The cost of living rises are going to squeeze more and more people. Many of whom are still trying to recover from the damage done by COVID.

## 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:

don't know

**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.**

This is hard to respond to. Food security is a political choice and the cost is born by different groups of people in different ways. For those who are struggling the cost manifests itself as hunger, low self-esteem, stress, and poor health. It is an unbearable price. These folk are also more likely to face health problems

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:

that require medical interventions. This is a cost we all bear. Being stressed and the mental and physical health issues that go along with that also result in a loss of productivity, which has further implications for the productivity of firms and the value of tax contributions. So while delivering the cost of the policies will certainly be new spending, the potential they have to offset costs we are already paying elsewhere as I've outlined suggests to me there will be an overall saving. We don't have sufficient evidence to quantify this in terms of £ saved, though as the research has not been done.

## 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.**

Health inequalities exist and these are linked to food security. Women are often likely to skip meals to feed their families, though parents are more likely to ensure that their children are fed. We also know that people who are disabled are also more likely--by a factor of 5--to be food insecure compared to people with no disability. I have more figures on this should you want them.

## 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.**

Sustainably is linked to the social, economic and environmental spheres. Research in economically poor countries demonstrates that unless you consider all three in the ways policies and programmes are developed the problems only get worse. Paying attention to economic development without considering the environmental limits and vice versa does not solve the problem. Just as ignoring the burden that different groups bear does not create a more socially just context. The sustainable development goals apply to the UK just as they do countries elsewhere in the world.

## 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)?

I think any response must listen to the voices of people who are on the front line and do so in meaningful ways. I know Scotland has done this and I commend you for that.