



The Scottish Parliament
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

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Dear Convener,

Good Food Nation (Scotland) Bill

1. I am writing further to your letter of 21 January 2022 in which you draw attention to the suggestion in a number of responses to your Committee's call for views that, together with certain other subject committees, the Health, Social Care and Sport Committee should consider providing input to your Committee's Stage 1 scrutiny of the Good Food Nation (Scotland) Bill.
2. First of all, I wish to underline the Health, Social Care and Sport Committee's strong support for the principles underlying the Bill and the important role it can potentially play in tackling key food-related public health challenges in Scotland such as obesity, cancer and heart disease, food insecurity and poor nutrition.
3. The Committee has carefully considered stakeholder responses to the call for views and wishes to highlight the following conclusions:

Parliamentary scrutiny and stakeholder participation

4. Since the Bill delegates authority to Scottish Ministers to produce national Good Food Nation Plans and contains limited detail as to what those plans will contain, the Committee would ask what scope there will be for the Scottish Parliament to undertake follow-up scrutiny of the detail of those plans prior to their publication.
5. Many responses to the call for evidence have raised similar concerns about the role of stakeholders and the public at large in providing input to the drafting of local and national Good Food Nation Plans. The Committee is sympathetic to these concerns and

would wish to see stakeholder and public participation given due attention in the process of drafting these plans.

6. A number of stakeholders have suggested that public participation could follow the example of Scotland's Climate Assembly although the Committee itself takes no view on this point.

Related food legislation

7. Since a stated policy intention of the Bill is to join up existing legislation with an impact on developing Scotland as a Good Food Nation, it would be helpful for such legislation to be listed on the face of the Bill.

Purpose and outcomes

8. The Bill would benefit from greater clarity in setting out the overarching purpose and objectives of national Good Food Nation Plans as well as making reference to relevant targets for the delivery of defined outcomes under those Plans.

Right to food

9. While not necessarily taking a view on whether the Good Food Nation Bill is itself the correct legislative vehicle for full incorporation of the right to food, the Committee is sympathetic to views expressed by many stakeholders that there should be more robust alignment of the Bill with the right to food.

Public sector procurement

10. The Committee notes the important role of public sector procurement in driving progress towards Scotland becoming a Good Food Nation, as highlighted by many stakeholders. As well as being reflected in a clearer purpose, targets and outcomes on the face of the Bill, the Committee would expect to see the role of public sector procurement given appropriate prominence in the development of national and local Good Food Nation Plans.

'Specified functions'

11. The Committee recognises the wide-ranging and cross-cutting impacts of food policy and the objective of Scotland becoming a Good Food Nation on a broad range of other policy areas. On this basis, it is supportive of the view that the list of 'specified functions' that must have regard to Good Food Nation Plans should be similarly broad so as to reflect the extent of those impacts.

Oversight

12. The Committee is also sympathetic to the view expressed in many responses to the call for evidence that there is a need for reinforced independent oversight of the duties conferred by the Bill beyond its existing provisions on review and reporting.

Policy coherence

13. Lastly, the Committee recognises the important inter-relationships between this Bill and a range of other forthcoming legislation and policies including some that are likely to fall within its own policy remit. It therefore commits itself to give due consideration to these inter-relationships and to the specific role and purpose of national and local Good Food Nation Plans when undertaking scrutiny of these in the future.

14. I hope these conclusions on behalf of the Health, Social Care and Sport Committee are useful to your Committee's ongoing scrutiny of the Good Food Nation (Scotland) Bill.

Yours sincerely,

Gillian Martin MSP
Convener, Health, Social Care and Sport Committee