

Local Food for Everyone: Our Journey

January 2024

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Ministerial Foreword

On 20 August 2021, the Scottish Government published 'Local Food for Everyone: A Discussion' to consult on our draft Local Food Strategy. This strategy set out our vision for local food as a central pillar in building the wealth and vibrancy of our local communities and creating a Good Food Nation that all people can enjoy.

We published the consultation analysis on 13 July 2022 which showed broad agreement with the draft strategy as outlined in the consultation and it also provided significant insights into barriers that exist and areas where more focus is needed.

I would like to extend my sincere thanks to all who contributed to our consultation as well as those who have participated in the local food steering group which was formed as a result of the consultation.

I am delighted to share our ambitious local food strategy 'Local Food for Everyone: Our Journey', which builds upon the ideas and suggestions from the consultation and reflects some of the policy developments and actions that are already underway.



Mairi Gougeon MSP
Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs, Land Reform and Islands

Section 1 - Introduction

Making the most of the fantastic food and drink produced in Scotland has always been at the heart of the Scottish Government's food policies. We want everyone to have the opportunity to enjoy food and drink produced locally and for producers of all sizes to access the markets on their doorsteps. With this in mind, in 2021 we committed to publishing a Local Food Strategy. We published a [consultation on the draft Local Food for Everyone](#) in August 2021 to test and inform our approaches. The consultation focused on the three pillars of the Scottish Government's draft Local Food Strategy: connecting people with local food, connecting Scottish producers with buyers and harnessing public sector procurement.

The responses to the consultation reinforced our view that local production has enormous potential to enrich lives, improve diets, reduce food miles and keep value in communities. We want to make sure we continue to learn from others, adopting good practice and removing barriers that are stopping people growing, using, choosing or buying Scottish food at every opportunity.

We have worked with the public, industry and other organisations to make sure our policies deliver for the communities we serve. The Scotland Food & Drink Partnership Industry Strategy, the Good Food Nation policy and the Vision for Agriculture, which will be enabled through the new Agriculture Bill, set out our aspirations for Scotland to be a Good Food Nation.

In 2014, we set out our ambition for Scotland to become a Good Food Nation: a nation where people from every walk of life take pride and pleasure in, and benefit from, the food they produce, buy, cook, serve and eat each day. The Good Food Nation (Scotland) Act 2022 is the next step on a journey to develop a more coherent and coordinated approach to food policy, through the publication of our first national Good Food Nation Plan. Local food can, and will, play an important part in this work.

Scotland has some of the best food and drink in the world, which is enjoyed around the globe and creates jobs across the country. Since 2007, the Scottish Government has dramatically improved the landscape for food in Scotland, from free school lunches to agricultural innovation.

The agricultural sector plays an important part in our lives, both culturally and in terms of nutrition. The Scottish Government firmly believe there is no contradiction between high-quality food production and producing it in a way that delivers for the climate and nature, and we are committed to transforming Scottish agriculture. This includes continuing to promote our positive vision for Scottish food production, one in which our world-class producers thrive and contribute to our world-leading climate change agenda, and respond to the biodiversity crisis by delivering sustainable regenerative agriculture.

The people of Scotland deserve to have access to the best produce Scotland has to offer - whether they're growing it themselves, buying it directly from a local producer, choosing it at a convenience store or supermarket, being served it at school, or in any number of other settings.

A steering group was formed in December 2022 to drive forward, raise the profile of, and collaborate on the local food agenda. We recognise it cuts across many different areas of work and policy.

More and more people want to know where their food has come from: who made it, how our animals are cared for, how far it has travelled, and how it supports local jobs and investment. We believe that local food can offer a lot of the answers.

It was clear from the consultation results that 'local' food means different things to different people. We will define what we mean by local food in Section 4 - The Benefits of Local Food.

The pandemic, conflict in Ukraine and the cost crisis have accelerated the pace of change. These events have highlighted the complexity of our global supply chains for essential requirements like food and energy. They have also highlighted the domestic consequences of global events that are beyond our control. We know there is the possibility of increased risk in the future from factors like the impact of the climate and nature crises, and the likelihood of continued global supply chain shocks. Our food security and the role that locally produced food plays within that is something the Scottish Government takes very seriously, having recently established a new unit to monitor and take action on food security.

There are many benefits to encouraging greater consumption of Scottish food as part of a balanced food policy. We will never be in a position to produce the wide variety of food the nation currently enjoys, nor would we be wise to try to do so - countries that engage in trade gain significantly from doing so, and being reliant only on domestic production makes a country poorer and more exposed to risk (for example from failed harvests). In considering the future direction of Scottish food policy, we need to take into account areas of production where Scotland has particular strengths rather than aiming to meet all food needs domestically. We must consider the differences between what Scotland produces and what Scottish people enjoy eating, as well as the seasonality of Scottish production of certain products.

Local food can be seen as an opportunity to do things differently. It has the potential to enable local living and help rebuild our economy with wellbeing, sustainability and fair work at its heart, while tackling challenges around health and wellbeing, inequalities and climate change.

Where food is produced within Scotland, we can have confidence that it has been produced in a way that complies with Scotland's high standards.

Section 2 - Our Local Food Strategy

We want everyone in Scotland to know about, have access to and enjoy the excellent local food and drink that our country produces. The Scottish Government and partners will support local food and drink development via the three pillars set out below.

Connecting individuals and businesses with local food through these pillars can help us achieve a healthier population, support our local economy and jobs across the sector, and help contribute to our net zero targets by reducing food miles. More information on the motivation for the choice of our pillars and the benefits of local food to all aspects of society can be found in section 4.

The ongoing work to develop the national and, in time, the local Good Food Nation Plans will help to provide an overarching framework for clear, consistent and coherent future Scottish food policy. The work set out under each of these three pillars will help contribute to a more joined up approach, particularly in relation to local food.

	Pillar One: Connecting people with local food	Pillar Two: Connecting Scottish producers with buyers	Pillar Three: Harnessing public sector procurement
What we want to achieve	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The people of Scotland value the food they eat, know where it comes from and how to prepare it. • Greater opportunities for growing food within our local communities and local areas. • Increased access to locally produced food for those on lower incomes and investing in local economies. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Businesses to have the agility and resource to shorten supply chains and contribute to a circular economy. • Increase the amount of local food and drink sourced, served and sold across food service, wholesale and retail. • More direct connections and selling opportunities between suppliers and the public, such as markets and online sales. • More local food and drink available for visitors to taste and buy. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Drive greater use of qualitative, fresh, nutritious and seasonal food and drink across the public sector. • Food suppliers in Scotland feel enabled and are ready and able to bid for catering contracts.

	Pillar One: Connecting people with local food	Pillar Two: Connecting Scottish producers with buyers	Pillar Three: Harnessing public sector procurement
How we will get there	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encouraging learning about food production through organisations such as the Royal Highland Education Trust. • Making land available and providing support for local community growing. • Continuing to tackle food poverty and investing in local communities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supporting businesses and suppliers to foster short and circular supply chains. • Encouraging retailers to stock local produce and encouraging consumers to buy local food. • Supporting producers to obtain Geographical Indication status for their products which offers market recognition and product differentiation. • Working with industry to improve access to local markets through the Scotland Food & Drink Partnership Industry Strategy. • Helping to deliver tourism plans to ensure people can enjoy local produce out of home. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We plan to update Catering for Change, which will set out principles in relation to sustainable procurement of food and catering services in the public sector, to align public procurement behind sustainable, low carbon farming and food. • Building on the links made between the national and local Good Food Nation Plans to support wider consideration of food policy when considering best practice in public procurement. • Support schemes such as the Food for Life Scotland programme to help local authorities and the wider public sector increase local food on the table, which delivers a vital boost to local economies.

Section 3 - Scottish Government and Partner Activity

In the next pages we will set out a range of activities already underway or planned.

Pillar One: Connecting people with local food

We want to connect people with their food as this can help us achieve a healthier population, and when people eat food that has not travelled far it helps to mitigate its climate impact.

Making land available for growing

The Scottish Government is helping communities access land for food growing purposes through:

- The Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015, which places a number of duties on local authorities in relation to allotments, including the requirement to prepare a Food Growing Strategy. The Scottish Government is working with local authorities to support the implementation of the Act and the development of Food Growing Strategies;
- National Planning Framework 4, which is clear that local development plans should include opportunities for community food growing and allotments. The policy supports development proposals that will have positive effects on health which could include opportunity for community food growing or allotments;
- Tools that support the identification and delivery of food growing opportunities; these include the Place Standard Tool, with a climate lens which covers discussion prompts on local food and community growing.

Grow Your Own

The Scottish Government are also committed to support community growing projects at grassroots level.

Over the last 11 years, over £1.2 million has been awarded to Green Action Trust to support community growing organisations. The 'Growing Food Together' grant provides funds to help establish growing sites, particularly in areas of social deprivation, actively increasing the land available for community food growing. The grant helps to improve food growing skills, empowering communities and individuals to grow their own food in their local area.

In addition to this, since 2016, around £580,000 has been allocated to various community growing organisations in Scotland, helping to maximise local growing opportunities out with the traditional setting of allotments.

The Scottish Government provides funding to:

- Trellis Scotland who deliver the 'Growing Good Health' project which will enable more people to improve their health and wellbeing through 'Grow Your Own' initiatives, as well as helping to improve the support and resources offered in a range of care settings. This will help to increase the area of land

under cultivation and support more individuals and communities to gain the necessary skills and knowledge to grow their own food;

- Social Farms and Gardens, which represents over 300 organisations, works directly with grassroots community groups across Scotland to deliver actions to increase the land available for community food growing. This project also aims to empower and support organisations and individuals to grow food within their local community;
- GrowGreen Scotland, who support communities and people to participate in growing food and taking care of nature in their local area, deliver a community growing advisory service, manage and update the Get Growing Scotland online portal and coordinate the Community Growing Forum Scotland;
- Rural communities (Community Led Local Development) programme to trial new, streamlined approaches to delivering community led projects and to revitalise the structure of the volunteer LEADER Local Action Group network. In 2022-23 we invested £11.6 million in Community Led Local Development, including £8.6 million via the LEADER Local Action Group network and £3 million via a single external delivery partner (Inspiring Scotland). Over 380 community-led projects have been funded across rural Scotland in 2022-23 which are delivering local actions towards our national net zero and just transition goals, helping communities to address rural poverty and supporting economic growth and Covid recovery.

Learning about food

The Scottish Government encourages learning about food through making food education an integral part of the national educational curriculum, meaning that all schools are expected to deliver on this subject in line with the experiences and outcomes detailed in [Curriculum for Excellence](#). The food and health experiences and outcomes are designed to ensure children and young people are taught about food in its widest sense and to understand the impact their choices have on their health and wellbeing, the environment and the economy. This learning includes exploring where food comes from and career opportunities in the food and farming industry.

To support this, the Scottish Government has provided funding for a number of years to both Education Scotland and the Royal Highland Education Trust (RHET), as follows:

- Education Scotland have received £307,000 in funding for 2023-24 to distribute grants as part of the Food for Thought fund. Now in its 10th year, educational settings were able to apply for grants of up to £3000 for projects which contribute to achieving Good Food Nation outcomes;
- RHET receive funding for the delivery of in-person farm visits and event days for school children, with accompanying digital classroom resources. This year will see RHET provide some form of rural/farm experience for up to 80,000 school pupils across Scotland.

Improving access to food

The Scottish Government seeks to improve access to locally produced food through:

- Allocating almost £3 billion in 2023-24 to support policies which tackle poverty and protect people, as far as possible, during the ongoing cost of living crisis. This follows on from the £3 billion invested to support low income households during the previous financial year. Maximising income and reducing the cost of living enables households to better access food that meets their needs and preferences. Our prioritisation of cash-first responses to financial hardship helps to boost income and prevent future crises;
- Over £140 million that was invested in tackling food insecurity during the pandemic, as well as partnership working at pace between different sectors and services, ensured that people were able to access food and other essentials. We continue to work with local partners to build on these relationships and support action that boosts household income alongside help to access food where needed;
- Supporting Public Health Scotland to run Community Food and Health (Scotland) which provides capacity building, resource and evaluation support to local initiatives. Their aim is to ensure that everyone in Scotland has the opportunity, ability and confidence to access a healthy and acceptable diet for themselves, their families and their communities. This work can include local growing initiatives and agreements with local producers;
- Our commitment to supporting the health and wellbeing of our children and young people by ensuring they can access balanced and nutritious food, drink and meals as part of their school day, including free school meals and school milk provision. This is further reinforced in our 2023 Programme for Government stating that “we remain committed to ensuring that school meals meet the highest standards of nutrition, recognising that this is vital to our children’s effective learning”;
- All local authorities are under a statutory duty to consider the principles of sustainable development when providing food or drink, or catering services in schools. Local authorities, supported by Scotland Excel, remain committed to using local and sustainable produce in school catering wherever possible. For example, 100% of milk and fresh bread and rolls core spend procured through the Scotland Excel framework is produced or manufactured in Scotland (as at June 2023);
- The Scottish Milk and Healthy Snack Scheme (SMHSS) that was launched in August 2021 and linked to our 2021-22 Programme for Government. It is a universal, demand-led policy open to all pre-school children in receipt of two or more hours of regulated childcare that provides a daily portion of milk or non-dairy alternative (NDA) and a healthy snack of fresh fruit or vegetables. Scottish Ministers provide funding to local authorities who administer the scheme and provide payments to participating childcare settings. This supports actions to deliver our national mission to tackle poverty, as set out in the Programme for Government 2023-24, by removing the cost of the milk, NDAs and healthy snacks from parent’s pockets and promoting positive health outcomes for children through improved nutrition, thus embedding healthy eating habits from an early age. It also supports our ambitions to reduce childhood obesity and increase fruit and vegetable consumption amongst children through early education and awareness of the nutritious value of

milk/NDAs and healthy snacks. The SMHSS is unique compared to the rest of the UK because, unlike other UK administrations' schemes, it is the only scheme that offers children a healthy snack and an alternative for children who cannot drink cow's, goat's or sheep's milk for medical, ethical or religious reasons. The SMHSS encourages the use of locally sourced food and drink as part of our ambition to improve access to, and understanding the benefits of, healthy local foods.

The Scottish Government provides funding through:

- Four community food networks (£100,000) (Lanarkshire Community Food & Health Partnership, Glasgow Community Food Network, Community Food Initiatives North East and Edinburgh Community Food). Their activities increase access to affordable, healthy food for members of their local communities. This will include community growing and agreements with local producers;
- The Investing in Communities Fund, which commenced a second round of multi-year grants from 1 April 2023 and will provide three years of support until 2025-26. Awards have been made to 105 community-based organisations delivering activities that tackle locally identified challenges related to poverty, inequality and disadvantage. Many of the supported projects have an element of delivery that is food-related, including cooking healthy meals on a budget, growing projects and combating the food crisis through food pantries and larders.

The community funds above are designed to identify and address local issues associated with poverty and disadvantage while supporting a range of community goals including local economy, local production, environment and climate objectives. These funds are community-led, recognising that communities themselves know best what they need, to address their local challenges and identify local solutions.

Maxwell Centre

An example of a community-led initiative which is working to improve access to locally grown food is The Maxwell Centre and Garden. The Maxwell has been at the heart of the Coldside area in Dundee for over 15 years. This thriving project has an average monthly footfall of over 2,400 each month. The well-established garden provides the whole community with the skills and confidence to grow food, and the equipment and resources to do so. It also allows food and locally grown produce to be central to the way the project successfully connects with so many people. They provide access to fresh garden produce via harvest boxes, 'harvest your own' sessions, cooking workshops, a community cupboard and shared lunches with staff, volunteers and project participants. It allows a broad spectrum of people of all ages, genders, ethnicities, religions etc. in the area to come together and breaks down barriers in an environment that promotes interaction and integration, and empowers them to improve their lives and the place they live in.

Since 2019, the Scottish Government has provided £203,000 of funding to the Maxwell Centre via the Investing in Community Fund, with a further £244,000 funding to be issued over the next three years.

Tourism

We established the tourism and hospitality Industry Leadership Group (ILG) to work with industry, public agencies and the Scottish Government, to help drive recovery and sustainable growth in the long-term. The ILG will champion the national tourism strategy, Scotland Outlook 2030, a key component of [National Strategy for Economic Transformation](#).

The industry-led [Food Tourism Scotland Action Plan](#) was launched in 2018 to maximise the potential of two of Scotland's most successful sectors – tourism, and food and drink. The plan has been developed by Scotland Food & Drink and Scottish Tourism Alliance and supported by the Scottish Government, Visit Scotland and other partners. A number of actions are currently underway, including:

- The creation of a National Food Charter
- Communications plan
- Experience development framework
- Online resource to aid food tourism and business support

The Scotland Food & Drink [Regional Food Tourism Ambassadors](#) programme (September 2021-23) delivered a series of projects from 22 regional food tourism ambassadors to raise Scotland's profile as a global food tourism destination. Funding was awarded for the delivery of local projects such as creating experience tours, local produce directories, food trails, skills campaigns and podcasts. Given the successful pilot, further ambassador programmes are being considered.

Pillar Two: Connecting Scottish producers with buyers

We want to support Scottish producers to connect with buyers in creating shorter supply chains and establishing efficient distribution networks, to help manage the spread of food production across Scotland.

Launched in July 2023, The Scotland Food & Drink Partnership Industry Strategy [Sustaining Scotland. Supplying The World](#) builds on the previous industry-led Recovery Plan and earlier strategy - Ambition 2030. Brexit, Covid and the conflict in Ukraine have changed the landscape considerably since, and the industry needs to recover and rebuild from the resulting disruption and economic shocks. Many of the same market opportunities remain - Scotland's food and drink sector is still ideally placed to realise those opportunities.

The new strategy will help the sector to fulfil its ambition and outlines a bold industry-led plan which seeks to address the issues that have hindered growth, while helping the industry grasp the market opportunities that remain out there. The strategy is broader in scope than Ambition 2030 and the subsequent Recovery Plan, but remains ambitious in setting out the challenges and how the industry wants to react and make the most of those opportunities. Specifically, through the strategy delivery plan, there are a number of actions to help connect Scottish producers with buyers to increase purchases of local food and drink which will be led by Scotland Food & Drink:

- Support 19 Regional Food Groups so they can help local producers promote their products and region to visitors, local consumers, and beyond;
- Reviewing the national approach to supporting regional and local producers and retailers;
- Progress key areas of the Food Tourism Action Plan, including investigating the potential development of a National Food Charter which encourages venues and tourist attractions to source more local products;
- Placing graduates into the buying teams of retail and food service businesses to develop the trading capabilities of suppliers to gain new listings;
- Delivering a series of 'meet-the-buyer' trade events under the Sourcing Scotland brand to showcase Scottish suppliers and facilitate new listings;
- Develop new sector branding, brand guidelines and a full toolkit of assets, and make sure the branding is applied consistently across domestic markets.

Foster short and circular supply chains

In order to foster short and circular supply chains:

- The Scottish Government developed and published the Retail Strategy for Scotland in March 2022 to support the sector through to the following five years and beyond. This will link in with work across government to support local businesses and suppliers;
- The Scottish Government is exploring the opportunities offered by vertical farming, including offering a grant to Scotland's Rural College to support the development of a vertical farm at their Edinburgh campus. As we look to produce more food locally, vertical farming could help Scotland grow more of its own fruit and vegetables;
- Co-operative Development Scotland (CDS), on behalf of Scotland's enterprise agencies (Scottish Enterprise, Highlands & Islands Enterprise and South of Scotland Enterprise), supports local food production by supporting companies and community groups across Scotland that want to adopt employee ownership or a co-operative business model. CDS helps the sector grow by offering a range of advice and services, including free masterclasses and one-to-one support. CDS also raises awareness of the benefits of employee ownership and co-operatives through events and the media;
- The Scottish Agricultural Association Society Ltd (SAOS) are Scotland's experts on farmer co-ops and food industry collaboration and provide a range of specialist information and development services to help businesses work together more effectively;
- Community Wealth Building economic development actions can support the development of local supply chains through the spending pillar, by encouraging local anchor organisations to engage with local suppliers as part of their procurement process.

Support for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs)

Over the last six years, the Scottish Government has provided over £500,000 to Food and Drink Federation (FDF) Scotland to deliver the [Reformulation for Health Programme](#).

- The reformulation team support Scottish SMEs manufacturers to adapt their existing recipes to increase the health properties of their products;
- The programme is contributing to improving our dietary health by removing hundreds of millions of calories from the Scottish diet;
- Earlier this year, Food Standards Scotland provided £50,000 to FDF Scotland to provide a Healthier Bakery Fund. Thirteen bakery businesses have won funding through the Fund to support reformulation projects.

Encourage retailers to stock Scottish food

Retailers are encouraged to stock Scottish food through:

- Frequent ministerial-level engagement with major retailers to encourage them to source and promote Scottish produce in their stores;
- Facilitation of new regional showcase trade events to bring together more suppliers and buyers to drive local sales.

The Scottish Government provides additional support through a range of measures:

- Providing over £700,000 funding to the Scottish Grocers Federation's 'Go Local' programme since 2020, to transform Scotland's convenience store sector to maximise local promotion and purchase of fresh, healthy Scottish produce;
- Creation of new posts in major UK retailers' buying teams and food service companies, to broker more sourcing of Scottish produce with graduates, hosted in partnership with Scotland Food & Drink;
- Supporting SMEs via Scotland Food & Drink to obtain Safe and Local Supplier Accreditation or British Retail Consortium food safety accreditation, to help them access more markets;
- Delivering a programme in partnership with key retailers and food service customers to increase listings of Scottish products in Scottish outlets. This is led by Scotland Food & Drink who are working closely with major retailers and food service companies.

Encourage consumers to buy Scottish food

Consumers are encouraged to buy Scottish food through:

- The annual Scottish Food & Drink Fortnight campaign co-ordinated by Scotland Food & Drink showcases and highlights the strength of the local food and drink offering;
- Supporting producers to obtain Geographical Indication (GI) status for their products, offering them protection from imitation as well as market differentiation in the UK, and abroad. This is accompanied by promotion activity for GI products, that included the Quality Meat Scotland 'Make it Scotch' campaign.

The Scottish Government provides funding to:

- Support Scottish agritourism to ensure a long-term sustainable future that delivers a high-quality, authentic visitor experience with agriculture, and food and drink at its core. A growing and thriving sector encourages more farms to add value to their businesses through agritourism. That will then give visitors and locals alike more opportunities to learn about, and appreciate, local food production. We are providing £443,000 to Scottish Enterprise to establish a new Agritourism Monitor Farm Programme over the 2023-24 and 2024-25 period. In addition, we have provided £35,000 to Scottish Agritourism to deliver activities like Regional Agritourism Roadshows, engaging with Local Authorities and developing bookable online experiences involving food and drink;
- Support Scotland's Town Partnership to deliver the 'Scotland Loves Local' programme, including the 'Scotland Loves Local' Gift Card, which remains a major opportunity to support local economies. Effectively creating a local currency, it provides a means for companies and individuals to reward and incentivise in a way that ensures that the value of that spending stays local and recirculates round the local economy;
- The Regional Food Fund, which provides grants of up to £5,000 per application to a variety of projects promoting local food. The most recent funding round completed in January 2024 means that, over 2018-24, the fund has now received over £750,000, benefitting more than 160 creative, innovative and collaborative local food and drink projects across the regions of Scotland;
- Joint Scotland Food & Drink/Local Authority posts to support regional food groups. These groups champion their area's food and drink sector. From Shetland and Orkney to East Lothian; Angus and Fife to Ayrshire and Arran, and the Outer Hebrides; the current network of 19 groups work to help grow their local businesses, develop their regional identities, drive spend on local food and develop food tourism;
- Following the closure of the Small Farm Grants Scheme, the Small Producer Pilot Fund (SPPF) started in December 2023 and will bring a range of business, community, sectoral and climate change benefits for small producers across Scotland. The key outcomes of the pilot have been developed in partnership with the industry-led Small Producers Pilot Steering Group. The pilot will offer training and supply chain solutions and opportunities as well as tackling frequent national barriers to small producer participation, including solutions to the issues highlighted in the SPPF survey on abattoirs. The fund will also contribute to the twin crises of climate change and biodiversity loss by supporting activities that encourage adaptive and sustainable, regenerative, climate and environmentally friendly practices. The pilot aims to lead to more adaptive activity by small producers to adjust to a changing climate and future sustainability, thus indirectly facilitating both a diverse, resilient, food and drink industry and the support of Scotland's most remote rural communities, who are reliant on small producers.

Encourage use of Scottish products as inputs

The Scottish Government has provided funding:

- To facilitate a joint Scotland Food & Drink, Scottish Wholesale Association and SAOS supply chain study on logistics and fulfilment for small and micro businesses, to help educate both sides of the supply chain – wholesalers about benefits of sourcing Scottish and producers on how to sell into wholesale. Over 100 producers have already benefited from participation, learning how to best access and supply the local wholesale market;
- To the Scottish Wholesale Association to deliver a training programme to create up to 40 “Local Food Champions”, designed to help grow the share of locally sourced products listed and sold by Scotland’s wholesalers.

Pillar Three: Harnessing public sector procurement

We want to prioritise and harness the power of public sector procurement and encourage better access to it for local food producers.

Leverage public sector buying power to support Scottish producers

To encourage better access to public sector procurement for local food producers:

- The Scottish Government’s ‘Better Eating, Better Learning’ guidance provides a framework for sustainable food and drink for educational settings;
- Local authorities, supported by Scotland Excel, remain committed to using fresh, seasonal and sustainable produce in school catering wherever possible, as they have done for many years, recognising the wide-ranging benefits of doing so;
- The Scottish Government will use feedback gathered via this strategy consultation and engagement with local authorities and public sector procurement groups to inform an update of ‘Catering for Change: buying food sustainably in the public sector’, providing guidance for anyone involved in the procurement of food or catering services in the public sector.

The Scottish Government provides funding for:

- The [Food for Life \(FFL\) Scotland](#) programme, which now operates across 17 local authorities in Scotland, supporting the provision of more locally sourced, healthier food being served in schools. Food for Life accreditation ensures that at least 75% of school food is fresh and unprocessed, as well as greatly increasing the amount of fresh fruit (including berries) and vegetables, fish and wholegrains on the menu. In addition, any red meat served by accredited councils is high-quality and farm assured. A pilot programme within the Glasgow area is focusing on how the FFL Scotland approach can best be expanded into other areas of the public sector. It is now in its second year of operation and Baxter Storey have recently become the first non-local authority award-holder for their Scottish Government and Scottish Courts Service sites. In 2023-24 we will provide £490,000 of funding to target unaccredited councils, support those who are already accredited, and to continue the pilot

programme. The programme also has the wider benefit of educating young people on food culture and the importance of health and nutrition, thus helping to improve health outcomes out with the school setting;

- The Supplier Development Programme, which delivers free training and guidance on how to submit and win public procurement bids. The Supplier Development Programme also delivers free 'Meet the Buyer' events to put suppliers in touch with public sector buyers to learn more about upcoming contracts, in addition to running early engagement activities with public bodies to inform suppliers and ensure they have adequate time to prepare for specific contracting opportunities. In 2023-24, we will provide up to £150,000 to support this programme of work.

Scotland Excel – an example of innovation in public procurement

Scotland Excel, the Centre of Procurement Expertise for the local government sector, play a pivotal role in public procurement through collaborative procurement frameworks.

Scotland Excel have worked hard to make sure public sector food contracts are as accessible as possible to Scottish businesses, including SMEs.

One example of innovation within public procurement was giving manufacturers in the frozen food sector the opportunity to bid to supply food only, without also having to distribute it and without having to enter into a second-tier contract through a distributor to supply through their framework. This created opportunities for smaller companies that didn't have national delivery logistics in place and achieved competitive pricing for Scottish councils.

This was the first time in Scotland a collaborative frozen food contract for the public sector had taken the supply only approach, so it was a ground-breaking step for the national public food procurement landscape.

As a result of this approach, an Aberdeenshire-based fish supplier secured a place on the contract to supply Scottish haddock, which has created the potential for £1 million of new business for this small, family-owned company. This approach was so successful that they followed it for their groceries framework, resulting in five SMEs being awarded a place on the framework, and have implemented on a new generation frozen foods framework.

Leading by example – Scottish Government provision of catering services framework

The Scottish Government is demonstrating commitment to fresh, healthy and seasonal produce through our catering framework for staff canteens.

The Scottish Government awarded a new contract for our catering services in August 2022. The contract is for three years with the option for a further three one-year extensions.

Staff and visitors enjoy a menu cycle based on fresh seasonal produce; vegan options are also provided, with sandwiches, seasonal fruit, soups and hot vegan dishes served daily. Furthermore, bakery, dairy and meat products are provided by Scottish suppliers. We are working with the catering contractor to increase the Scottish supply base through initiatives such as 'Meet the Buyer' events.

A member of staff said: "I love that there are different seasonal options and plenty of delicious choices on offer. I can plan what I am going to eat by looking at the menu in advance and can think about nutrition and calories".

Scottish Government has also demonstrated a commitment to reduction of waste in this framework. Food spoilage is recorded and a reduction in food waste has been seen since the contract commenced. Moreover, all takeaway containers and cutlery can be disposed of in food waste bins and are then turned into compost.

Section 4 - The Benefits of Local Food

What we mean by 'local food'

Local food is generally used to describe the connection between food producers and consumers within a given geographical area. For the purposes of the strategy, local food will mean anything that is crafted, grown, raised, harvested or manufactured in Scotland.

Local food will have some, or all, of the following features:

- It is produced locally - this includes people's own town, region or elsewhere in Scotland;
- It has short supply chains, meaning there are fewer steps between the primary producer of the food, such as a farmer, and the consumer
- It is sustainably produced (i.e. produced in a way that is better for the natural environment);
- It is produced in a way that places an emphasis on building better relationships of trust, information, fairness and support between local food producers and the people buying and consuming their food.

This definition reflects the fact that local food means different things to different people. In the minds of Scottish consumers, there is no single interpretation of what is meant by 'local' (my region: 40%, Scotland: 39%, my town or city: 18%, UK: 3%)¹. This opinion was also echoed in the Local Food Strategy [consultation analysis](#).

The Scottish Government celebrates this diversity of views and aims to make sure people can enjoy local food, whether that means it was produced in their garden, their town, their region, or elsewhere in Scotland.

Reducing barriers to food

Designing and empowering local food systems so they are accessible to those facing the greatest barriers will maximise the benefits for all. Access to local food systems aligns with the Scottish Government's ambition for local living and 20-minute neighbourhoods, thus creating thriving, positive places that help tackle the structural inequalities underpinning poverty, as well as having a positive impact on living costs. Partnership working across sectors and services can help to overcome barriers through a shared and coherent ambition to make good food accessible locally. The knowledge and experience of community food organisations and social enterprises are a valued part of our local food landscape. Employment in local food can provide households with sustainable and secure incomes, preventing poverty and hardship.

No one should have to compromise on food or other essentials, and low income should not be a barrier to a healthy, balanced diet. We take a human rights approach to household food insecurity which is why we promote cash-first responses, as outlined in our Cash-First Plan towards ending the need for food banks.

¹ An online survey conducted by Scotland Food & Drink where a total of 1,010 interviews were undertaken with a nationally representative sample of adults (aged 18+) living in Scotland between 10th and 16th February 2021.

We also continue to invest in responses that maximise dignity and integrate help to reduce future need, and we see many community organisations finding ways to link households with local food as part of a coordinated response to this issue.

Scotland's geography and the specific needs of rural and island areas

The geography of Scotland means that there is enormous diversity in how easy it is to produce or obtain food. Islands and rural areas, for example, face acute challenges including higher costs for food, predominantly because of transport costs. This means that the cost of a standard basket of goods on an island can be substantially higher than on parts of the mainland. This situation can be further impacted by reliance on fragile transport links and dependence on ferries to get main supplies. The unavoidable breakdowns, bad weather and capacity issues on ferries can also heighten these challenges. Delays can impact not only quality and freshness but also on basic supply. Encouraging and supporting local production through the concept of local living, where different settlements work as coordinated networks, is a potential mitigation for this.

Agriculture also faces challenges in these areas - getting food supplies on, and food products and animals for slaughter off the islands, as well as having limited access to specialist help for things like machinery repairs is a challenge at times, particularly in winter.

However, 'produced on an island' has the potential to enhance the appeal of a product, adding something special to its story. Of the 14 Scottish products protected under the EU protected names scheme, five are from our islands, demonstrating the importance of these areas to the Scottish food landscape.

Shetland Islands Council – local food story

Shetland Islands Council (SIC) spend over £650,000 annually and serve over 2500 meals to the people of Shetland each day. SIC have achieved the [Food for Life Award](#) across all education settings.

Using local suppliers helps reduce Shetland's fragility at the end of the supply chain and increases resilience. Covid showed that long and complex supply chains are fragile - by supporting local growers and producers, resilience can be built and can encourage local skills like farming, butchery and bakery.

The Catering team currently buys:

- All milk directly from Shetland Farm Dairies, who deliver to all of their schools;
- All the fish (except tuna) is landed in Shetland and delivered fresh across the islands;
- Shetland Lamb which is used on the school menu;
- All bread and rolls that are supplied by local bakeries;
- Locally grown carrots, neeps, broccoli, cauliflower, cabbage and tatties, which are becoming more available now as the local route to market becomes established;

- Local free-range eggs, which are the latest addition to the locally produced list for Shetland schools.

By encouraging local suppliers to engage with the Council, SIC are providing a potential route to market. Reliable, long-term contracts also help them grow resilience and plan their business. By supporting local farmers, growers and producers, the Council can help to ensure that they will be here in the future. This is vital for Shetland's long-term food security.

Many of the schools in Shetland also grow vegetables in polytunnels. This is a wonderful way to help children learn about food, seasonality and creates a sense of excitement and pride.

SIC's efforts have won many awards for their work, including 'Sustainable School of the Year' award in 2023 from the Scottish School Food Awards and the ASSIST FM award for 'Outstanding Contribution to Catering 2023'.

Crofting

A significant amount of crofting activity revolves around livestock production and, in many areas, this is associated with low-intensity systems of high nature value. This helps to provide a natural balance between food production and the environment, creating a rich diversity of wildlife habitats that are home to many species.

The Scottish Government's vision for common grazings is to continue to support food production, and peatland and habitat restoration by working with crofters, grazing committees and other stakeholders to promote collaborative efforts and deliver these priorities.

With 10% of Scotland's land under crofting tenure, including many areas rich in biodiversity and with potential for carbon sequestration, it is vital that crofting is supported to play its part in helping address climate change and biodiversity loss. Through legislation, we will aim to make it easier for grazing committees in collaboration with the owner of the common grazing, to use the common for purposes other than agriculture, such as for renewable energy developments, peatland restoration, woodland creation and agritourism.

The Scottish Government published its 'National Development Plan for Crofting' in March 2021. It highlights the core elements necessary to ensure that crofting remains at the heart of our rural and island communities, and forms a critical part of the support this Government will be offering to crofters and crofting communities.

The Plan considers how climate change and the loss of biodiversity will affect crofting and how crofting activities can be undertaken in a way that further contributes to the enhancement of the environment, landscapes and biodiversity. It also encourages croft diversification into agritourism, woodland regeneration, the restoration of our degraded peatland and creation of local food networks.

The Plan contains a list of priorities which aim to encourage crofters to work collaboratively to develop their businesses, share knowledge, access new markets

and connect with others in the food and drink sector. The Scottish Government is working with the Scottish Crofting Federation to connect crofters with local food networks and Regional Food Groups, as well as exploring the possibility of a crofting food network and crofting brand. This will help reduce food miles and contribute to food security in our often fragile rural and island areas.

Organic

Organic is one method of sustainable production and will play an important part in helping us realising our vision of Scotland becoming a leader in sustainable and regenerative farming. We are committed to doubling the land under organic management in Scotland by 2026. We will support this by working with the organic sector and industry to create a Scottish organic food and farming action plan, helping to create opportunities for more Scottish grown organic produce to be available to people locally.

Health

The act of growing food brings multiple health benefits. Increased access to greenspace for the purposes of growing food, and more generally, has positive impacts on health and wellbeing, as well as the benefits from consuming the food produced. Increased visibility of food growing initiatives within communities contribute to the place quality, can increase interest and awareness, and opportunities for education, and therefore the health benefits can be felt more widely. Scottish qualitative research with people who have engaged in urban farms reports health benefits in the form of increased physical activity, greater intake of fruit and vegetables, as well as the ability to grow a greater variety of vegetables which are fresher than those available in shops². Community gardening projects across Scotland have been associated with mental health benefits³.

The opportunity to buy good quality and healthy food locally has benefits for our places and communities. Where local food is available, it can increase social cohesion through forging community and commercial relationships and enhance the sense of loyalty and pride within a place, whilst increasing resilience.

National Strategy for Economic Transformation (NSET)

The [National Strategy for Economic Transformation](#) sets bold and ambitious actions to deliver fairer, greener prosperity for all of Scotland's people and places, and to make our economy more sustainable and resilient in the longer term. Scotland has extraordinary economic potential through our natural resources, talent, creativity, academic institutions and business base. However, Scotland also has areas where significant improvement in performance is needed. The strategy's six programmes of action focus on stimulating entrepreneurship, opening new markets, increasing productivity, developing the skills we need for the decade ahead, ensuring fairer and more equal economic opportunities and creating a new culture of delivery.

² Dinnie, L., Bourke, A. J., Kyle, C., & Wilson, R. Public perceptions on the role and value of locally grown food.

³ Crossan, J., Shaw, D., Cumbers, A., McMaster, R, Glasgow's Community Gardens: Sustainable Communities of Care (2015) [Media_622132_smx.pdf \(gla.ac.uk\)](#)

NSET has a sharp focus on those policies and actions with the greatest potential to grow and change Scotland's economy, maximising Scotland's strengths and natural assets. Scotland already occupies a position of global leadership in the design, development and operationalisation of a range of current and future key industries. This includes Scotland's long-standing strengths in premium food and drink products, a key export market, and the transition to technologies of the future, including vertical farming.

Community Wealth Building

Community Wealth Building (CWB) is the practical means through which we can achieve our wellbeing economy vision as outlined in our NSET, by fundamentally transforming what our economy is for and how it operates locally, regionally and nationally. CWB considers ways in which wealth is generated, circulated and distributed, encouraging actions that can create a fully functioning and sustainable wellbeing economy.

Increasing the proportion of food that is grown, processed and consumed locally will keep value within local, regional and national economies, supporting jobs across agriculture, retail, tourism, manufacture and hospitality.

A thriving and accessible local food and drink sector can contribute to wider public priorities such as national and household food security and our diet and healthy weight objectives.

Local economy and employment

Sourcing food locally can provide better returns for local communities. For example, FFL Scotland encourages local authorities to use healthy, locally sourced ingredients and estimates that every £1 invested by FFL Scotland certified local authorities over three years can yield social return on investment of £4.41 in value in the local economy⁴. A UK case study from 2002 indicated that £10 spent on a locally sourced organic produce box scheme generated £25 for the local economy (24km from the farm), compared with £14 generated for the local economy if that £10 had been spent in the supermarket⁵.

Aquaculture and seafood trade

Aquaculture is an increasingly important industry for Scotland - it helps to sustain economic growth in the rural and island communities of the north and west and produces nutritious food, with a greenhouse gas emissions profile that is lower than many other farmed sources of animal protein.

⁴ Jones M, Pitt H, Oxford L, Orme J, Gray S, Salmon D, Means R, Weitkamp E, Kimberlee R & Powell J (2016) Food for Life: a Social Return on Investment Analysis of the Locally Commissioned Programme. Full Report. UWE Bristol.

⁵ New Economics Foundation (2002), Plugging the Leaks: Making the most of every pound that enters your local economy [2891 NEF handbook redone \(neweconomics.org\)](https://www.neweconomics.org/publications/plugging-the-leaks)

We recently published our [Vision for Sustainable Aquaculture](#) which sets out our long-term aspirations for the finfish, shellfish and seaweed farming sectors. The nine-point Vision outlines our support for the sustainable development of a sector that produces high-quality healthy foods and delivers significant economic benefits to Scotland. The Scottish Government supports the development of a sustainable aquaculture sector, operating within environmental limits, and recognises the considerable social and economic benefits the sector delivers today and can deliver in the future.

The Scottish seafood industry is hugely integral to the success of the Scottish economy, which ultimately feeds into the strength of the overall UK economy. We retained our commitment to Scotland's seafood sector with the publication of the [Seafood Strategy](#) in October 2022, which affirms the importance of the seafood sector and sets out how we are supporting industry to contribute to achieving our Blue Economy aspirations.

Seafood has a hugely important role in domestic food security and providing a high-quality, low-carbon, healthy food source; this is a priority of the Scottish Government, as set out in the [Blue Economy Vision](#). Our marine environment contributes significantly to our commitment to being a Good Food Nation, with locally sourced seafood also forming part of a healthy sustainable diet.

Nearly 300,000 tonnes of seafood was landed into Scotland in 2021 (Peterhead in Aberdeenshire is the largest fishing port in the UK), much of which needs to be processed. Seafood production is critical to the wider sector supply chain and local economies.

The seafood sector remains the lifeblood of many rural, island and coastal communities around Scotland. The socio-economic impacts of the marine sectors in Scotland, through both domestic and international lenses, can therefore not be overstated.

Tourism

Food is a key part of Scotland's tourism and hospitality offer. Tourism and hospitality should benefit every person who lives in, visits and works in Scotland - we are seeking to make Scotland a world leader in 21st century tourism. Our Tourism Strategy, [Scotland Outlook 2030](#), is focused on four key priorities to realise this ambition: our passionate people, our thriving places, our diverse businesses and our memorable experiences. Each of these strands will enhance Scotland's international reputation for high-quality food and a world-leading approach to food systems.

Visitors to Scotland already spend around £1 billion a year on food and drink with sector ambitions to unlock the growth potential and secure extra spend on local food and drink.

Climate

There is a close link between climate change, the food we produce and the food we eat. Food production is likely to be impacted by changes in climate at a time when global demand for food is increasing.

Scottish Ministers have a statutory requirement to meet the economy wide emissions reductions targets set out in the Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2019. These include a 75% reduction in emissions (from a 1990 baseline) by 2030 and net zero by 2045. Simultaneously, the Scottish Government recognises that more needs to be done to build resilience to the impacts that climate change is having and will increasingly have on communities and businesses. We also recognise that agriculture and food production relies on natural processes and so will always cause some degree of emissions.

It is therefore important that we continue to work together to support our farmers, crofters, producers and the supply chain to meet our environmental goals including our requirements under the Climate Change Act. In doing this, Scotland's food production sector can be confident in its world-leading environmental credentials and enhance the reputation we have for high-quality food, both here and abroad.

The new Agriculture and Rural Communities Bill will be a key driver to help reduce agriculture climate emissions. From 2025, support payments will be linked to the contribution farmers and crofters make in delivering our climate and nature objectives, while continuing to produce high-quality food.

The Scottish Government values Scotland's agriculture sector for their part in cutting emissions and addressing climate change in ways that actively benefit both the climate and nature. Many of our farmers and crofters are already taking positive action to produce food sustainably and help mitigate climate change.

Scottish Ministers remain clear in their commitment to support farmers and crofters to produce our food more sustainably, while making sure that agriculture continues to play its part in cutting emissions, mitigating climate, and restoring and enhancing nature and biodiversity. Delivered through a range of initiatives, the Scottish Government will continue to encourage the uptake of low carbon farming practices and invest in our farmers and crofters, by:

- Offering financial support;
- Providing practical advice and guidance;
- Offering skill development opportunities;
- Demonstrating the climate and business benefits of taking action.

The Scottish Government is also committed to a just transition to net zero by 2045. This is about supporting a net zero and climate resilient Scotland in a way that delivers fairness and tackles inequality and injustice. As part of this commitment, this year we are co-developing Just Transition Plans for key sectors, including one for Land Use and Agriculture.

Food waste

Zero Waste Scotland recently published the [2021 Scottish Food Waste Estimate](#). They estimate over 1 million tonnes of food waste was disposed of in 2021, with 59% coming from households, 27% from food and drink manufacturing and 14% from other sectors. Per capita, this is equivalent to 189 kg per person, per year, an increase of 2% from the 2013 baseline of 185 kg per person, per year. In absolute terms, 1.038 million tonnes of food waste was a 5% increase against the 2013 baseline.

Food waste in Scotland accounted for 30% of household waste carbon impacts, based on [The Carbon Footprint of Scotland's Household Waste 2021](#). Reducing food waste will decrease greenhouse gas emissions and help our climate. To inform our future approach to tackle food waste, we reviewed our food waste reduction progress following the publication of our [Food Waste Reduction Action Plan](#) in 2019. The [review](#) provides context to the 2021 increase in food levels and reveals where there are gaps, challenges and opportunities for action on food waste. The findings in the review have helped inform proposals on the second [consultation](#) on the Circular Economy and Waste Route Map. This includes proposals to prioritise action with businesses and households to help us meet our 2030 50% food waste reduction target.

While it may be possible to reduce food waste by adopting short and local supply chains, there is no Scottish-specific evidence and very limited external evidence to support the idea that adopting short and local supply chains will always result in reductions in food waste. There are other benefits beyond food waste that can be associated with short and local supply chains that should be considered when addressing how to restructure our relationship with food and the infrastructure that provides it.

Food Loss

Food loss is the decrease of quantity and quality of food resulting from decisions and actions by primary producers, whereas food waste is the decrease in the quantity or quality of food resulting from decisions and actions by manufacturers, retailers, food service providers and consumers.

In Scotland, we want to produce more of our own food more sustainably, in line with our Vision for Agriculture and Vision for Sustainable Aquaculture.

We seek to make sure that more of the local food that is produced by our farmers, fishers and crofters is eaten – for the benefit of the businesses, consumers and the environment, and that waste is incorporated into the circular economy where possible. Measures being developed as part of the Agricultural Reform Programme will help do this by increasing the efficiency and sustainability of the sector, therefore increasing profitability at the same time. Relevant outcome themes in the Vision for Sustainable Aquaculture include Climate Change and Circular Economy, Community and Productivity, Supply Chain and Infrastructure.

Section 5 - Food and Drink Industry Overview

The food and drink industry is a major contributor to Scotland's economy, with latest figures showing that the sector generates turnover of around £15 billion and adding close to £5.4 billion in Gross Value Added (GVA). It is made up of over 17,000 businesses, which employ around 129,000 people, many in economically fragile rural and island communities.

Scotland is a nation producing high-quality, rather than high-volume, food and drink products. Our targets for increasing turnover will only be achieved by strengthening the supply chain. This can be achieved by adding value to the many high-quality food and drink products that we produce in this country and by looking to expand domestic production and processing of our high-quality primary produce, as well as encouraging efficiencies in production.

We have a clear Vision for Agriculture to be a leader in sustainable and regenerative farming. To deliver this, we must build a sustainable food production sector for future generations, whilst reducing emissions, increasing carbon sequestration and helping to improve biodiversity, air, soil, and water quality. A [Route Map](#) has been published which provides further clarity on how we intend to deliver the ambitions set out in the Vision. A phased transition approach to the new Future Support Framework is outlined in the Route Map, as well as what information and guidance the sector can expect and when it will be available.

To enable the delivery of the Vision for Agriculture, the Agriculture and Rural Communities Bill was introduced to Parliament in September 2023. It is a significant milestone in reforming our agricultural and wider rural support systems. The Bill aims to provide Scotland with a future framework that will support farmers and crofters to meet more of our food needs sustainably and to farm and croft with nature, and will assist in efforts to meet our climate change targets. Scotland's farmers, crofters and land managers are vital to our ambition to make our nation fairer and greener, and to enable us to produce more of our own food more sustainably. The Bill will be the platform for measures focused on the Scottish Government key outcomes: high-quality food production, climate mitigation and adaptation, nature restoration and wider rural development. Collectively, this will form a framework of support for agriculture, forestry and rural communities more generally.

In 2021, the marine economy, which includes fishing, processing, and aquaculture sectors, generated £4.5 billion in GVA, 3% of the overall Scottish economy. Around 14,000 people were employed in fishing, seafood processing and aquaculture in Scotland, contributing 0.5% to total Scottish employment and 20% to total marine economy employment in Scotland. Scotland has a high prevalence of seafood industry-dependent communities - in 2019, 77% of Scotland's seafood employees were in areas that included just 1.6% of Scotland's population. In 2018, the Scottish aquaculture sector and its supply chain supported an estimated 11,700 jobs in the Scottish economy and generated £885 million GVA in 2018. Farmed Atlantic salmon is the UK's most valuable food export.

Section 6 - Scottish Government Overarching Policy and Principles

Scotland - a Good Food Nation

The Good Food Nation (Scotland) Act 2022 requires Scottish Ministers to produce a Good Food Nation (GFN) Plan. The Plan will set out the main outcomes, as well as outlining the measures used to assess progress against these, to be achieved in relation to food-related issues and the policies that contribute to them.

Our forthcoming national GFN Plan will provide a clear direction for our future food strategy that will benefit the wellbeing and health of the people of Scotland. It will be wide-ranging and cross-cutting and Local Food for Everyone will help contribute to, and deliver, many of its aims. This work will be ongoing and, following the consultation process on the national Plan, it will be assessed to ensure alignment with the statutory aims of the GFN and with the final agreed main outcomes.

Relevant authorities, currently defined in the Act as local authorities and health boards, will also be required to produce their own GFN Plans - these will help to shape food policy at a local level. These Plans have the potential to bring together different food system activities and policies that are pursued at a local level. We expect that the first Plans will be published by relevant authorities in 2026.

Scottish Ministers and relevant authorities must also have regard to a wide range of food-related issues when preparing the Plans, that contribute to: our nation's social and economic wellbeing, the environment, people's health, and physical and mental wellbeing, economic development, animal welfare, education and child poverty.

The GFN Plans will set in motion a genuine transformation in our food system, with local food, and our attitudes towards it, playing an important role in that transformation.

Research and evidence approach

We will continue to work in collaboration across sectors and with academia to develop our policy in relation to local food, and learn from best practice. The Scottish Government is committed to supporting research that is relevant, respected and responsive to Scotland's environment, communities, its people and to the rural economy. Principal amongst this is the [Strategic Research Programme 2022-27](#), a £175 million programme of strategic research delivered over five years, providing science and evidence to support policymakers and partners across a [broad range of topics](#), including the multiple facets of local food.

Place Principle

The Scottish Government Place Principle is one where people, location and resources combine to create a sense of identity and purpose, and is at the heart of addressing the needs and realising the full potential of communities. It recognises that different locations have distinct needs and we must take into account the physical, social and economic elements of places. This includes our islands and rural communities, as well as in urban and suburban centres. Attractive and flourishing

places where people can come together are vibrant, social, creative, interesting and resilient. Strengthening the retail experience can therefore enrich communities while delivering economic benefits.

It is also important that we encourage new businesses, who wish to be key economic agents in localities by reducing barriers to securing their first physical outlet, with pop-up or demonstrator stores being an excellent way of engaging with local places and communities. Through developing a place-based approach, local people and businesses have a genuine stake in producing, owning and enjoying the wealth they create and, in doing so, move us closer to the more just, equitable and sustainable society we want to see in all of Scotland.

Communities the length and breadth of Scotland have established thriving local food initiatives, and food businesses have been launched and grown, providing quality produce direct to consumers or to other businesses.



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