



Food Sense Wales submission to Climate Change, Environment and Rural Affairs Committee consultation 'Rethinking food in Wales'

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Introduction

Food Sense Wales is a part of Cardiff & Vale Health Charity (registered charity number 1056544). It was borne out of the work of Food Cardiff, a multi-award winning cross sector food partnership and member of the Sustainable Food Cities network, which aims to make healthy, affordable and sustainable food a defining feature of the city.

Food Sense Wales' aim is to apply the knowledge, expertise and experience gained from Food Cardiff and stakeholders across the Welsh food chain, to help shape food policy that makes sense across the whole of the food system in Wales; to the economy, the nation's health and the environment.

The scope of this inquiry is vast, ranging from local food production to Food Tourism. The evidence presented here is a series of "observations" informed by Food Cardiff/ Food Sense Wales' practical experience over the last 3 years. Particular emphasis is placed on the fact that whatever aspect of food one is considering, it should not be looked at in isolation but as part of a system.

Food Sense Wales is a member of the following organisations/networks/Programmes of work

- Food Cardiff Partnership, Sustainable Food Cities Network
 - Wales Food Poverty Alliance (see also separate submission from Oxfam Cymru)
 - Food and Drink Wales Industry Board
 - Peas Please Programme Board (Joint initiative led by Food Foundation to increase veg consumption)
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Observation 1:

There is a lack of strategic “join up” across the policy areas that link food

- The Welsh Governments “Towards Sustainable Growth Action Plan”, represents actions relating to the food industry, but other key actors and parts of the food system are under-represented.
- There is an absence of a “vision” which encompasses the whole food system from production right the way through to public health outcomes. There is a particular gap in join up between the economy and public health outcomes where there have been examples of programmes of work within Welsh Government that have not optimized the opportunity for delivering “healthy” solutions. This has also been evidenced in the apparent absence of Health input into strategic stakeholder events concerning Brexit.
- There are untapped opportunities to develop solutions to poverty through employment in the Food Industry where there is a large gap in skilled and unskilled labour, which is set to worsen with an aging population and Brexit¹
- This skills gap needs to be addressed through the education system – by inspiring a generation of “food innovators”. In particular optimizing the student numbers at Cardiff Metropolitan’s Food Industry centre and retaining graduates in Wales should be a priority. Scotland has launched a £390K fund to educate young people on food and farming careers²

Case study A – Food Cardiff - school holiday enrichment programme

Policy areas linked with – Health, education, food industry, social services, housing, Third sector

www.foodcardiff.com

Food Cardiff is a multi-award winning cross sector partnership which is co-hosted by Cardiff Council and Cardiff and Vale Local Public Health team. It works with stakeholders across the city and across multiple sectors in order to take a systems approach to support the economy, promote public health and protect the environment. It is part of a wider UK network of over 40 places taking this place based approach under the umbrella of the Sustainable Food Cities Network.

The School Holiday Enrichment Programme, Food and Fun, developed and led by Food Cardiff, is an excellent example of this place based approach. Described as an “true inequality programme” and “a perfect example of the wellbeing of future generations act in action”, this programme to reduce health inequalities, summer learning loss and social isolation has gained support and traction locally, nationally and at a UK level, informing and influencing the recent first reading of the Free school meals (Provision in school holidays) Bill. The success of the

¹ <http://foodresearch.org.uk/review-of-labour-trends-uk-food-manufacturing/>

² https://www.farminguk.com/News/Scotland-announces-390-000-to-educate-young-people-on-food-and-farming-careers_47330.html

programme is due to the relentless cross sector and partnership working at local, National and UK levels (suppliers, public sector, schools, housing associations, 3rd sector, Government, Universities) using food as the vehicle for change. In particular the dietetic led Nutrition Skills for Life Programme has been embedded into SHEP through the training of school staff to deliver key food and nutrition skills to children. This approach has seen recognition by Estyn in a recent school inspection where the benefits of the holiday programme were reflected in the school term. Evaluation from 2016³ showed that on club days:

- **35% of children reported skipping at least one main meal** on the day they did not attend compared to **19%** on the day they attended
- **67%** of children consumed more fruit and vegetables
- **66%** ate less sugary snacks
- **81%** consumed less sugary/fizzy drink

Recommendations

1.1 A fresh vision for Food in Wales should be developed with stakeholders and experts across the whole food system and all Government departments and should encompass the primary, secondary and further education system.

1.2 Funding decisions on supporting the Food Industry in Wales should take due account of the impact of that business on the economy, health and the environment – the Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act should provide a useful template.

Observation 2:

Welsh Governments strategic direction with regards to food and wellbeing across the life-course is inadequate

- Whilst there are examples of excellent practice of public health initiatives involving food at a local level (e.g. Cardiff and Vale UHB healthy retail and restaurant standards, healthy options award, gold healthy snack award), there is currently no clear national policy or dedicated resource supporting them. Delivery of the All Wales Nutrition Skills for Life programme has been hampered since the announcement regarding Communities First. Having invested resource into developing accredited food and nutrition skills within Communities First teams, much of that human capital and capacity to deliver courses is being lost and with it the demise of developing food and nutrition skills in communities of need.
- Other programmes in Wales are focussed around the first 1000 days e.g. 10 steps to a healthy weight⁴, and whilst work on Food standards for nurseries and Care Homes is ongoing, the standards we have for school food in Wales are not being sufficiently monitored.
- There is no explicit policy direction on the Food Environment. At a local level Food Cardiff has been working on a number of different initiatives to improve the Food Environment together

³ <http://www.wlga.wales/SharedFiles/Download.aspx?pageid=62&mid=665&fileid=718>

⁴ <http://www.wales.nhs.uk/sitesplus/888/page/84909>

with stakeholders but these are often hampered by Wales policy. England has established a set of comprehensive evidence and tools, provided by Public Health England⁵.

For example: Cardiff Council is developing supplementary Planning Guidance to support the Local Development Plan however Planning Policy at a Wales level is restricting what is possible locally. One example of this is the classification of business use. In Wales the A3 use includes Fast Food takeaways in the same category as restaurants, cafes etc making it more challenging to restrict Fast Food takeaways. In England these categories are separated out. This research from Cambridge university⁶ demonstrates the scale of the issue in England and we are in the process of looking at some local analysis on this in Cardiff.

Case study B Peas please

The [Peas Please initiative](#) is about getting people in the UK to eat more veg by changing the system. The Food Foundation has teamed up with [Food Cardiff](#), [Nourish Scotland](#) and [WWF](#) for this initiative.

The challenge

In the UK, our diets now pose the greatest threat to our health and well-being and the food environment urgently needs to change to support us to eat healthier.

The latest government dietary guidance suggests we should be eating 7 portions of fruit and veg a day, yet a recent report by the Food Foundation revealed that 80% of adults and 95.5% of children 11-16 years are not eating enough. To decrease the risk of diet related diseases, we need to be eating, on average, one more portion of veg per day.

It's not just our health that will benefit but the environment and farmers can potentially benefit from more veg too. The report also showed that if we all eat an extra portion of veg and a little less meat we would reduce the UK's diet-related greenhouse gas emissions by 17%.

Initiatives such as 5-a-day have had little impact on veg consumption and consumer behaviour change so the Peas Please initiative has been set up with a difference. We recognise that it is the food system that needs to change to support consumers to make healthier choices. We have collaborated with over 150 organisations including growers, wholesalers, manufacturers, retailers, restaurateurs, fast food chains, experts and government to identify the food system challenges to veg consumption and find ways in which these barriers can be overcome.

On 25th July the Cabinet Secretary for Environment and Rural Affairs gave an address to actors across the Welsh supply chain, supporting the Peas Please approach to work across the food system.

In Wales we are only consuming [7.1% of our basket as veg](#) (Kantar) when we should be consuming 20% (Eatwell Guide). Only 24% of adults reported eating 5 a day the previous day and in the most deprived areas of Wales this reduced to 20% (Wales National Survey 2017). In fact 8% of adults in

⁵ <https://publichealthmatters.blog.gov.uk/2017/03/31/health-matters-obesity-and-the-food-environment/>

⁶ <https://www.theguardian.com/inequality/2017/jul/25/large-rise-takeaway-shops-highlights-dominance-fast-food-deprived-areas-england>

Wales surveyed reported consuming no fruit or vegetables the day before. Research commissioned for Peas Please showed the 72% of those surveyed in Wales⁷ would like to be eating more veg (You Gov plc 2017).

On the 24th October, summits held in London, Cardiff and Edinburgh simultaneously, will invite actors from across the supply chain to come together and [pledge commitments](#).

The Cardiff summit, to be held at the Pierhead in Cardiff Bay, will be attended by around 100 people representing organisations from across the supply chain. Engagement with news and trade journalists has already had coverage with BBC Wales, Daily Mail, Telegraph and Independent with the launch of the [retailer toolkit](#) to help support increasing sales of veg.

As part of this work are engaging with Welsh Government and some of the major food companies in Wales to look at opportunities for including more veg in the supply chain. We have also been working on a Cities campaign for cities to become “Urban Veg Pioneers”

Recommendations

2.1 The forthcoming obesity strategy should consider the whole of the food system across the life-course and map links across all Government departments. Particular efforts should be made to shift the Food environment through public sector standards, purchasing and commissioning of services (e.g. Leisure centres and funded programmes).

2.2 School Food Standards should be comprehensively and regularly monitored to ensure compliance and the impact of the length of school lunchtimes on pupils health and wellbeing revisited.

2.3 Consideration should be given to piloting the Food For Life (Soil Association) whole school approach in schools by building on the work schools currently deliver through the Welsh Network of Health schools and Eco schools.

Observation 3:

Food Poverty is a growing concern and there is no cohesive policy for monitoring or addressing it

- Whilst there has been some progress with addressing food poverty; the setting up of the Wales Food Poverty Alliance and school holiday food provision through the School Holiday enrichment programme for example; many of the initiatives that Welsh Government initiated to support access to healthy affordable food are no longer gaining Welsh Government core support (for example the Rural Regeneration Unit’s fruit and veg co-op scheme and more recently the impending loss of Community First teams which support communities vulnerable to food insecurity).
- Over a third of our children in Wales are living in poverty. A Poverty and Child health survey which shows that **87% of paediatricians across the UK, observed that Food Insecurity contributes to some extent to ill health among the children they treat.** This is backed up by

⁷ YouGov Plc. Total sample size was 2,156 adults, of which 112 were from Wales. Fieldwork was undertaken between 9th-10th August 2017. The survey was carried out online. The figures have been weighted and are representative of all UK adults (aged 18+).

figures that show **67,506 three day emergency food supplies were provided to children by The Trussell Trust’s foodbank network in July and August 2016 – 47% of these were primary aged children.** The situation is worsening.

- There is mounting pressure on consumers as a result of poor wage growth, inflation and welfare reform.

Case study C – Scotland’s Fair Food Fund

The Fair Food Transformation Fund aims to help Scotland become a [‘Good Food Nation’](#) - a country where everyone has access to healthy, nutritious food without needing emergency food aid⁸

Eradicate the need for food banks from Scotland and shift from delivering food charity to food justice where everyone has access to healthy affordable, nutritious food

- **Build a community Food movement** that promotes the social value of food and supports people at risk of poverty in dignified settings where they can access wider community based activities and support.

To achieve this, the Scottish government has developed a **“Fair Food Fund”** for around £1m 2016/17-2017/18 to support projects that give people opportunities to access fresh, healthy food.

Recommendations:

- 3.1 Food insecurity should be routinely measured in Wales (and the UK) to bench mark progress and gain a better understanding of those who is affected which in turn will support a more effective targeted policy development and resources on prevention, thereby avoiding unnecessary increases in health and social care costs. The 3 questions in the National survey should be replaced with the well-tested, internationally recommended way to measure household food insecurity⁹
- 3.2 Support an independent inquiry into childhood food insecurity which hears directly from children. November 2017 will see the launch of an all nation Children’s Inquiry into Food Insecurity. The Future Food inquiry has received cross-party support including all major parties in the UK Parliament in both the Commons and the Lords, which extends to representation from across the four home nations and the support of all four UK Children’s Commissioners. It will focus on the views, ideas and experiences of children and young people on Food Insecurity and will ask them to make no more than eight recommendations for future food policy. This inquiry will be run in four stages, including online debate and discussions, a literature review of available information on this issue as it stands now, youth led evidence hearings in each home nation and a series of policy shaping debates. The project is being administered by the Food Foundation think tank and it is expected to last approximately 18 months.

⁸ <http://www.gov.scot/Topics/People/fairerscotland/tacklingpovertyinScotland/food-poverty>

⁹ <http://foodfoundation.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/MeasuringHouseholdFoodInsecurity.pdf>

3.3 Develop a menu of policy measures to tackle the problem (as part of a new vision for food and drink in Wales): food provision in school holidays, increasing uptake and value of Healthy Start, factoring the cost of a healthy diet in benefit system, employment opportunities and addressing skills gaps in the food industry and more that could be supported through an annual “Fair food fund” and co-ordinated through a network of multi-sectoral Food Poverty Alliances. The policies should be reviewed regularly and updated based on measurement of food insecurity progress

Observation 4:

There is no established Wales wide network or organisation bringing the shared experience of the Food System together to help inform policy

- There are a number of organisations in England and Scotland that either work on food policy, advocacy, or campaigning (e.g. Soil Association, Sustain, Food Foundation, Nourish Scotland). We do not have a pan Wales organisation that represents the interests of stakeholders or a “think tank”. There are two emerging bodies that could support Wales to become a leader in the world of Food:
 - The Wales Food Network – a Wales wide network of stakeholders from across the food system with a shared Food Manifesto
 - Food Sense Wales, a fledging charity that is applying its knowledge, expertise and experience gained from Food Cardiff and stakeholders across the Welsh food chain, to help shape food policy that makes sense across the whole of the food system in Wales; to the economy, the nation’s health and the environment

Recommendations

4.1 Welsh Government to consider how it could value and support wider stakeholder engagement to inform and test policy by supporting organisations which “cascade networks” across the food system and into other sectors to add value, make efficiencies and drive innovative solutions.

Observation 5:

Brexit is fraught with challenges but Wales has the opportunity to develop a unique brand

- Wales is fortunate to have a wealth of natural resource (land, water), a unique cultural heritage and the legislative framework (Wellbeing of Future Generations) to enable Welsh food to become a “green” and “trusted” brand.

Recommendations

5.1 In considering a future vision for Food in Wales, Wales could capitalise on its natural assets through developing a “green” brand which reflects the heritage and origin of the food whilst supporting the economy, the nation’s health and protecting the environment.

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