



UN HOUSE
SCOTLAND

World Food Day

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Panel Discussion Report

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This event was part of the global activities promoted by the UN 'Food and Agriculture Organization' on World Food Day 2017.

It focused on the politics of the Scottish food system.



Source: <http://www.fao.org/world-food-day/2017/events/en/>

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Preface

On the 16th of October 2017, UN House Scotland partnered with the organisation 'Nourish Scotland' and 'Food Researchers in Edinburgh' (FRIED) to celebrate World Food Day.

In that endeavour, we joined the UN 'Food and Agriculture Organization' (FAO) and more than 150 countries across the world in commemorating one of the most celebrated days in the UN calendar.

The event consisted of a presentation by Bella Crowe (Policy Officer at 'Nourish Scotland') followed by a panel discussion. The panelists were Tom Freeman (a journalist at 'Holyrood Magazine'), Anita Aggarwal (Community Development Manager at 'Pilton Community Health project'), Paul Bradley (Open Government and SDG Project Coordinator at The Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations) and Elli Kontoravdis (Policy and Campaigns Manager at 'Nourish Scotland' - Panel Chair)

The event was a chance to raise public awareness around the 'Good Food Nation' Bill and the status of Scotland's food system. And, simultaneously, promoting collective actions through the introduction of the 'Right to Food' and the 'UN Sustainable Development Goals' (SDGs) as essential working frameworks for the future.

As our executive director, Dr. Gari Donn, rightly said: "How a nation, such as Scotland, feeds and looks after its people says so much about who we are and where we are going."

The collective aim is to achieve a fairer and more sustainable food system in Scotland that will guarantee a future where everyone enjoys food security and healthy diets.

This event was an affirmative action of this must-needed collaboration.

Background

World Food Day

World Food Day falls on the 16th of October each year to commemorate the founding of the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) in 1945. It is celebrated around the world to raise global awareness about the status of hunger and food insecurity. It is an opportunity to show the international community's commitment towards **zero hunger** (Sustainable Development Goal SDG #2) and towards preserving the basic human **right to food** for all.

Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

The SDGs were announced by the UN in September 2015, underpinning a global agenda for sustainable development to be fully implemented by 2030. The 17 goals and 169 targets are motivating global actions around 5 main areas: people, planet, prosperity, peace and partnership. Food is linked to five of these goals; the main objective being encapsulated by **SDG #2: zero hunger**. The over-riding goal here is to **end hunger, achieve food security, improve nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture**. The other goals are **SDG #3** –Good Health and Well-Being- ; **SDG#12** – Responsible Consumption and Production-; **SDG#14** – Life Below Water - and **SDG#15** – Life on Land.

Right to Food

The **right to food** is a basic human right. It is stated in article 11.1 of the 'International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights', where parties should recognize **"the right of everyone to an adequate standard of living for himself and his family, including adequate food, clothing and housing, and to the continuous improvement of living conditions"**.

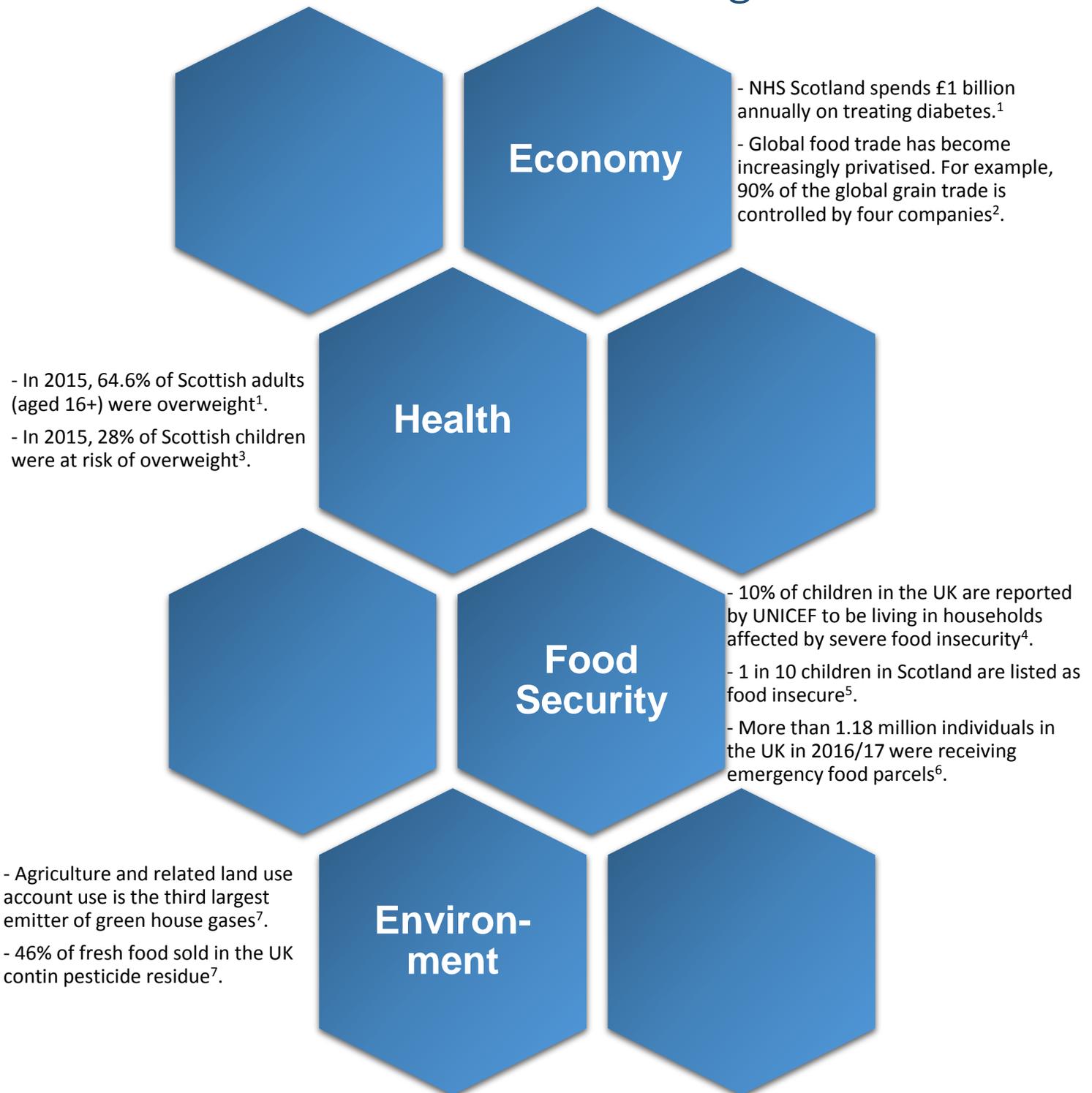
The **right to food** revolves around three core pillars: **accessibility, adequacy and availability**. **Accessibility** has both economic and physical elements, whereby adequate food is readily available and financially attainable for everyone at all times. **Adequacy** means that the quality and the quantity of food satisfies the dietary needs of a society and its cultural conditions prevail. Also, that food is free from harmful substances. Adequacy also implies that the accessibility of food can meet the present needs of individuals without jeopardizing the needs of future generations. **Availability** means the ability to feed oneself through the access to either land, natural resources or supply chain and markets systems

Good Food Nation Bill

Announced by the Scottish Government in September 2016, the Bill will follow on from Scotland's food and drink policies in 2009 and 2014. The '**Good Food Nation**' Bill aspires to revolutionise how Scotland produces, buys, serves and eats – and, thereby, lead the way for the country to become a **Good Food Nation**. This will be done by making the existing **food system fairer, healthier, resilient and sustainable**. The approach is overarching and thus address multiple stakeholders from the private sector, the public sector, civil society and within the community. Some of the key aims of the Bill will be to address the increasingly important issues of **food poverty/household food insecurity, diet related ill-health, and the** to further increase the capabilities and competitiveness of the food and drinks industry. Civil society has promoted a combination of governance structures and programmatic measurements for the fulfilment of these aims.

The Scottish Government have committed to consultation on the Bill in 2017-18 with legislation to be introduced to Parliament in 2019.

The Scottish Context – The Challenges



1- State of the Nation 2015 - The Age of Diabetes (Rep.). (2015). Diabetes Scotland

2- Behind the Brands - February 2013 (166 Oxfam Briefing Paper). Retrieved <https://www.oxfam.org/sites/www.oxfam.org/files/bp166-behind-the-brands-260213-en.pdf>

3- *Obesity Indicators: Monitoring Progress for the Prevention of Obesity Route Map - December 2016 report* (An Official Statistics publication for Scotland). (2016, December 6). Retrieved <http://www.gov.scot/Publications/2016/12/3526/1>

4- Pereira, Audrey; Handa, Sudhanshu; Holmqvist, Goran (2017). Prevalence and Correlates of Food Insecurity among Children across the Globe. *Innocenti Working Papers* no. 2017-09, UNICEF Office of Research - Innocenti, Florence

5- Nourish Scotland

6- https://www.trusselltrust.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2017/07/OU_Report_final_01_08_online2.pdf

7- Nourish Scotland, Food Atlas: 2018 to 2030 (forthcoming, 2018)

Scotland's Food System Future – What can we do?

Community Level

The consensus of the panel was that eating well can be difficult under our current food system. Yet, this differs between different areas. Deprived areas are particularly badly affected - and are the places where residents often have to go to greater lengths to maintain a proper diet.

Usually, discussions around communities' diets focuses on the residents' lack of skills and the prevailing food culture. But, as Anita Aggarwal from 'Pilton Community Health' pointed out, residents are often knowledgeable and aware of the food they are consuming. Yet, they either can't afford to eat more healthily or they are not able to access healthy food. Affordability and accessibility of healthy food in these areas is, therefore, of utmost importance. This can be achieved, for example, by allowing residents to choose what kind of shops they want in their areas and also, possibly, by regulating food prices.

But the challenge, in this case, is enabling these voices to be heard - and then transforming them into actions and opportunities for residents. Anita pointed out that, even though many residents say they do have a voice, due to specific everyday challenges, they can't engage with the Scottish government or be involved in vital discussions around the future of food systems, which would enable them to get their messages across.

National Level

Scotland has sometimes been referred to as "the sick man of Europe". While the government has in place initiatives like 'Food for Life' that focus on local sourcing for public sector establishments (eg, schools), these often do not translate the aspirations and strategies initially conceived into targets and programmes for action. As Tom Freeman pointed out, the government is committed to change but there are yet to be suitable practical actions towards it. The 'Obesity and Diet Strategy' is one example. The strategy was supposed to be enacted last year, but consultation has yet to be finalised. Integrated food policies are needed to change the choices customers make when buying food. It is estimated that more than 40% of all calories bought in Scotland are bought using price promotions. Customers operating on a very tight budget often can't afford to buy in bulk - even though this may represent better value for money. Financial decisions regarding everyday food waste plays an important element in decision making, as well as the time spent cooking the food.

But there is a precedence for successful health bills in Scotland, notably when the Scottish government imposed a ban on alcohol promotions – which subsequently generally resulted in lower alcohol consumption across the nation. Strategies such as this should be considered in the food sector. Government initiatives such as this also tie in with what Bella Crowe highlighted about the risk of leaving the food system to be controlled solely by the private sector. The challenge is, thus, to talk politically in order to transform ideas and local initiatives into actual legislation and, thereby, have cross-cutting food policies. As Bella pointed out at the panel, we need to build a new social contract for our food system.

International Level

As Scotland seeks to gain recognition internationally for the efforts surrounding national performance and meeting the SDGs, it is important to acknowledge the role the food system plays in delivering the SDGs. As Paul Bradley pointed out, the SDGs are the closest we have to a comprehensive and cross-cutting approach to tackle these challenges. Linking the SDGs to the 'Good Food Nation Bill' is vital to move forward.

Therefore, developing the SDGs within a Scottish context has to be the responsibility of different governmental bodies and departments and not only one developed by actors in the 'International Development' department. Effecting a change needs to involve cross-cutting throughout all government sectors.

The challenge is to have greater transparency and information when it comes to these government actions. The role of open governance is vital in allowing that. This needs to be achieved by greater cooperation and collaboration between the different actors.

Concluding Remarks

A sustainable and fair food system will require a change in our existing food infrastructure, recognition of cultural ownership of food choices and greater political participation. These changes are anticipated to lead to economic, social and health benefits in the long term.

For this to be achieved, we need to foster a culture of collaboration, trust, transparency and accountability. A new social contract must be developed, and democratisation of food governance should be an essential part of this change.

Facing the challenges already mentioned is of utmost importance to Scotland's health. The first step is to recognise these challenges - and then act to tackle them systematically.

Besides having the resources needed, Scotland has a great opportunity to build a framework for a progressive food system that is in the benefit of all the members of the society.

The starting point for change is the incorporation of two international frameworks: the Right to Food and the SDGs. Both frameworks should have a larger presence than in the existing policy-making process, as well as in policy - implementation.

A number of opportunities can be grasped. The 'Community Empowerment Act' and the 'Obesity and Diet' Strategy both can feed directly into the 'Good Food Nation' Bill. The 'Good Food Nation' Bill should thus build upon the existing structure in order to drive future change.

To drive transformation regarding the Bill, civil society should cooperate to assure that everyone has a voice in this process and that the voices of everyone are heard. Furthermore, work needs to be done on giving these voices a political element.

The changes highlighted can help to support local food economies and business – and, additionally, enhance communication channels so to transform urgent needs into actual legislation.

The crowdfunding campaign launched by 'Nourish Scotland' aims precisely to include all the voices that are affected by Scotland's food system.

A fairer cross-cutting food system is not easy to achieve but it is attainable. Implementing the 'Good Food Nation' Bill will be the first step necessary to achieve that.

The role of the UN House is to foster these discussions and work on strengthening and building awareness about the importance of food in Scotland through different projects.

If you are interested in getting involved with any of the organisations mentioned or in any of the future events at the UN House, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Recommendations

This reports recommends the following:

- 1- Establish regular and systematic collaborations between civil society organizations in Scotland so that similar events will become commonplace. This will increase public awareness of and political pressure around the many issues related to the food system.
- 2- Develop the opportunity for UN House to work as a link between civil society and the government and also between UN Associations and UN Agencies within the UK and Europe.
- 3- Explore the possibility of policy learning and policy transfer from other countries tackling similar problems. This should be done while keeping in mind the context specificities.
- 4- Support initiatives that innovate with communication mechanisms between government, civil society, private sector and communities.
- 5- Work on a holistic approach to link individual policies and legislation into a broader and holistic framework¹.
- 6- Support initiatives that develop mechanisms to challenge existing and future policies.

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¹ Barling et al. (2003) Joined-Up Food Policy? Ed. E. Dowler and CJ Finer in The Welfare of Food. Blackwell Publishing. Oxford.