

Welsh Assembly Government

Consultation Document

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Food for Wales food from Wales

Consultation on a Food Strategy for Wales

Date of issue: **06 July 2010**
Responses by: **28 September 2010**

Overview

This consultation seeks views on a proposed food strategy for Wales – *Food for Wales*, *Food from Wales*. The strategy sets out a wide ranging vision of the place of food in Wales, and seeks to provide a means whereby a broad range of food-related issues may be addressed. It is founded on principles of sustainable development, which include economic, social and environmental aspects of the production and consumption of food.

The strategy aims to develop a clear direction for the Welsh food industry to grow in a sustainable and profitable manner. It takes into consideration cross-cutting issues such as health, food culture and education, food security, environmental sustainability and community development to provide the basis for an integrated approach to food policy in Wales. Such an integrated approach is also intended to build resilience in the food system, to encourage a stronger food economy in Wales and, hence, to enhance the capabilities and capacities of food businesses to compete effectively both at home and abroad.

Although the new Food Strategy sits within the market development aspects of our 'Food Farming and Countryside' policy, it by necessity addresses the wider role of food across many other areas that need to be acknowledged if we are to develop these markets.

Following the consultation, it is envisaged that a revised document will be published (circa Dec 2010). This will act as a common framework to inform any arising or already existing action plans, such as those for horticulture, red meat, organic, dairy, and fisheries.

How to respond

You may respond in a variety of ways – by sending your written response to the address below or by email to the email address provided.

There will also be a series of regional events held throughout Wales in September.

Further information and related documents

Large print, Braille and alternate language versions of this document are available on request.

For further information about the consultation process and related events, please visit the Welsh Assembly Government website:

www.wales.gov.uk/food

Contact Details

For further information:

Name: Lisa Penny

Address: Food Policy & Strategy Unit
Welsh Assembly Government
Rhodfa Padarn
Llanbadarn Fawr, Aberystwyth,
Ceredigion SY23 3UR

Email: foodpolicy@wales.gsi.gov.uk

Data Protection

How the views and information you give us will be used

Any response you send us will be seen in full by Welsh Assembly Government staff dealing with the issues which this consultation is about. It may also be seen by other Welsh Assembly Government staff to help them plan future consultations.

The Welsh Assembly Government intends to publish a summary of the responses to this document. We may also publish responses in full. Normally, the name and address (or part of the address) of the person or organisation who sent the response are published with the response. This helps to show that the consultation was carried out properly. If you do not want your name or address published, please tell us this in writing when you send your response. We will then blank them out.

Names or addresses we blank out might still get published later, though we do not think this would happen very often. The Freedom of Information Act 2000 and the Environmental Information Regulations 2004 allow the public to ask to see information held by many public bodies, including the Welsh Assembly Government. This includes information which has not been published. However, the law also allows us to withhold information in some circumstances. If anyone asks to see information we have withheld, we will have to decide whether to release it or not. If someone has asked for their name and address not to be published, that is an important fact we would take into account. However, there might sometimes be important reasons why we would have to reveal someone's name and address, even though they have asked for them not to be published. We would get in touch with the person and ask their views before we finally decided to reveal the information.

Foreword from Welsh Assembly Government Minister for Rural Affairs, Elin Jones AM

Food is a basic necessity for us all, as well as a key industry. It is a source of robust health and a celebration of culture. Wales is rapidly gaining a credible, national and international reputation for its innovative food and drink and hospitality sector. Thanks to our producers, our unique geography, climate and farming practices, Wales can boast of a range of high quality foods, from our iconic Welsh lamb and beef to cheeses and Welsh seafood. The food and drink industry is important to the economy and the people of Wales; the UK agri-food sector contributes up to 7 per cent (£79.4 billion) of UK GVA. Through careful informed planning and working together it is vital that we increase this and I have every confidence that we can build on our success achieved so far to ensure a thriving, developing industry in the years to come.

There are complex and cross cutting issues around food such as making sure everyone continues to have access to the food they need, which means having an economically and environmentally sustainable industry capable of withstanding global pressures and meeting the challenges that climate change presents us with. Food issues are key to us all as consumers, throughout the industry, and as a Government. Reconnecting with food and how it's produced is a fundamental message that reaches out to all those engaged in the future of food supply in Wales. This Strategy sets the overall direction – it cannot deal in detail with every area of policy it will affect. As Minister for Rural Affairs for the Welsh Assembly Government I am keen for Wales to do the best we can to ensure a sustainable food system which meets our economic and ecological priorities. To achieve this we need to reach out to all parts of Government to ensure we work together to share agendas and make better connections.

The food chain accounts for 31% of greenhouse gas emissions within the EU, and we all have a part to play in addressing these issues. Working together, we can look to readdress these imbalances – by looking to source food locally, eat seasonally, and reduce food miles to consequently reducing carbon emissions. We also need to look to reduce our food packaging which contributes to waste and landfill and increase the creation of biodiversity habitats for insects and wildlife.

To outline my commitment to this over-arching Food Strategy for Wales, I tasked Dr Haydn Edwards, Chair of the Food and Drink Advisory Partnership, and officials from my own department and across the Assembly Government, to address how best to balance the challenges of increased food production and energy needs with the need to protect our environment for the immediate and long term future.

This Strategy sets out the Welsh Assembly Government's vision for the future of food *for* Wales and *from* Wales and outlines our clear commitment to the key basic principles of Sustainability, Resilience, Competitiveness and Profitability.

Co-operation, collaboration and industry involvement will be key to the success of our vision, which is why we have engaged closely across all Ministerial portfolios, working with colleagues in health, education and sustainability to develop a cohesive approach that is integrated across all areas of work. .

This agenda cannot be driven by Government alone, there is already an enviable record of partnership working in the Welsh food and drink sector. It is my firm belief that through continued cooperation the industry has a bright future and the capacity to drive forward fundamental changes that will secure improvement in the industry, as well as safeguarding the sustainable production of food for the people of Wales today, and for generations to come.

I hope that you will engage with us on this consultation to make sure that the final strategy is one that represents the best possible way forward.

Elin Jones AM, Minister for Rural Affairs

Why do we need a Food Strategy?

Expectations of the food system have in the past been largely addressed by focusing on the provision of bulk quality foods at a reasonable price to as many people as possible. However, the environmental, health and social impacts of our food system have become increasingly evident and concerns about the security of our food supply have grown.

Resource pressures on land, water, energy, population and biodiversity are further exacerbated by the enormous challenges of climate change adaptation and mitigation, and competition for resources. Whilst these issues may appear largely removed from domestic food issues in Wales, our food sector must account for and respond to these developments in order to maximise its own vitality, as well as remain relevant to its lifeblood consumers, both in Wales and beyond.

The health impacts of food will continue to grow in importance and provide opportunities for all parts of the Welsh food sector. At the same time, the sensual and social enjoyment of food products will remain important to the ways that we consume food.

This Food Strategy aims to account for these pressures and complexities to promote the development of a sector over the next 10 years, and to maximise the opportunities that will benefit Wales in economic, environmental and social terms.

Current knowledge about the Welsh food system

The Welsh food system is highly integrated and dependent on the UK and European systems and is profoundly influenced by a wider global context. The combination of characteristics that makes it distinctive calls for an integrated policy approach that we can all contribute to developing a successful and vibrant industry to enhance the well-being of all our citizens, the economy and our natural environment.

Three production categories: beef, lamb and dairy, continue to dominate. Whilst these sectors provide three quarters of Welsh agricultural output there are further opportunities for development, for different food supply combinations and for alternative agricultural production. Local systems of production, processing and distribution co-exist with an export-led sector dominated by large firms that control substantial processing facilities. How these are integrated into the local economy can be important in developing further markets for producers and in improving the supply of raw materials to processors.

What is known about the differing components of the Welsh food system varies. There is considerable amount of experience in analysing the agricultural sector but other areas, which form important aspects of the food system, such as the retail, food service, public procurement, social, cultural, health and community components of the food system have not been fully analysed on a Welsh basis.

The Basis of the Strategy

The Food Strategy aims to account for the pressures and complexities to which the food system is subject, to promote the development of a sector over the next 10 years, and to maximise the opportunities that will benefit Wales in economic, environmental and social terms.

The strategy is set out to reflect and promotes the distinctiveness of Wales in terms of its food production base, natural assets and cultural heritage, consumer demands and social priorities. At the same time, a specifically Welsh food strategy provides a focus on the powers for policy development and legislation that can be deployed in Wales to promote the strategy's vision and goals in a coordinated and effective manner.

This Strategy is founded on the belief that the food system requires a holistic approach that extends to all aspects of food production and consumption. It is presented as a strategic approach applicable across government rather than being confined to departmental portfolios and responsibilities, and is based on building an inclusive and collaborative relationship with all parts of the food sector¹.

Drivers for change and recommendations for action

Delivery of the Food Strategy is centred on an overarching theme of building connections and capacities. This theme is developed through five key drivers for change. These are listed as follows along with the main focus of the recommendations for each driver:

- Market Development
 - Improved marketing to develop domestic and export markets
 - Develop stronger Welsh branding
 - Improving market access and stimulating local and regional markets
 - Promoting entrepreneurial initiative
- Food Culture
 - Enhance citizen and consumer empowerment through better knowledge
 - Promote sustainable demand management
 - Link food culture and marketing
- Sustainability
 - Develop ecologically efficient production and supply chains
 - Reducing the impact of food waste
 - Investment in R&D for sustainable technologies and waste management

¹ Note that the food system is distinguished from the food sector. The food sector refers to the commercial sector that encompasses economic activities of production, manufacturing, distribution, food preparation, retail and food service. The food system includes the food sector and the impacts of various components of the sector on the natural environment and society.

- Supply Chain Efficiency
 - Supporting entrepreneurship
 - Skill development throughout the food supply chain
 - Investment in food chain R&D and to promote efficient knowledge sharing
 - Support for innovation and niche product development
 - Supporting collaborative partnership
- Integration
 - Making the Food Strategy work across all levels of government
 - Contributing to changing in the regulatory frameworks
 - Employ 'Soft' approaches to change
- Implementation
 - Developing a robust and transparent evidence base
 - Work closely with other indicator development processes
 - Institute a strategy renewal process

Summary of the direction of the Food Strategy

- *Local and locality branded foods from Wales will be developed and promoted to markets in Wales, the rest of the UK, and the world.*
- *The identity of Welsh foods will be strengthened through a distinct set of provenance indicators that convey confidence in the qualities of Welsh food.*
- *The public sector will use the power of purchasing to support the strategic development of the food sector.*
- *Welsh food culture will be strengthened and used to develop a steady demand for quality food that contributes to a healthy balanced diet. This is one of the most important ingredients of a sustainable food system.*
- *Tourism will play a major role in marketing and promoting Welsh food products.*
- *The Food Strategy emphasises and accepts that sustainable food chains need to have ecological efficiency at their heart.*
- *The food sector will be encouraged to take responsibility to maximise its contribution to domestic climate change mitigation and adaptation.*
- *The Food Strategy recognises Wales' moral responsibilities in a globalised food system. This will include addressing the challenge of ensuring that everyone, whatever their income, has access to the healthy balanced diet that they need.*

- *It is accepted that supply chains that work together in open and equitable partnerships are the basis of a sustainable food system.*
- *Collaborative action will be fostered across supply chains, and the principles outlined in the Strategy will be widely promoted across the food supply chain.*
- *Supply chain efficiency will be interpreted beyond economic cost-and-benefit to include social and environmental considerations.*
- *Capabilities throughout the supply chain should be enhanced so that the sector may deliver products that are competitive, match consumer needs and are produced in a sustainable manner.*
- *Food policy will be integrated into related policy areas as a key element in the successful operation of the Strategy.*
- *Food policy will be integrated at different levels of governance so that they are coherent with each other and so that the principles outlined in this document and promoted in the Strategy are embraced throughout the policy context.*

**Consultation
Response Form**

Your name:

Organisation (if applicable):

Email / telephone number:

Your address:

Questions to consider in responding to the Food Strategy

1. The Strategy sets out a vision for food in Wales in 10 years time. Do you share this vision and how will you help deliver it? How would you or your organisation be involved?
2. Do you think the 10 year time span is appropriate?
3. Do you agree with the Food Strategy's direction to make food a more central element in the wider economic and social agenda?
4. In relation to your answer to Question 3, if you agree, to what extent should our existing food industry action and delivery plans, e.g. red meat, local sourcing, food tourism, horticulture, organic, dairy, fisheries, be changed to reflect this wider agenda?
5. This strategy includes supply chain elements of production, processing and market development. Do you think we have said enough on processing and market development? Does this have sufficient capacity to engage with primary producers looking to add value to their products?
6. In your view, what is the best way to integrate the different parts of the food sector to work toward a common vision? What could you or your organisation gain from engaging with this common direction, and how will you /could you contribute to its delivery? Please say if you have particular bodies or organisations in mind that should be more involved in this debate.
7. From the issues raised, what do you see as the immediate priority for the food sector? What issues do you think could be more crucial in the longer term? Who do you see as having the capacity to (a) enable and (b) deliver the actions that will be needed?
8. This strategy identifies the need for sustainability in the food sector – economically, environmentally and socially. Do you consider you have enough information on market performance, on health messages, on recycling and environmental needs of the food system? Are you clear

enough on what is required of you from your part of the supply chain? Is this information appropriate and accessible in your view?

9. Are the five key drivers outlined in the Strategy sufficient to develop the goals that have been set out?
10. This Strategy acknowledges the wider role of food. Given the focus on developing the food sector, would it have been appropriate to have gone further in addressing the wider issues of health and nutrition, climate change, rising energy prices, addressing the needs of those on low incomes?
11. What are the short term and long term priority areas for skills and training in the food sector? What are the short term and long term priority areas for Research & Development in the food sector?
12. The food sector as an employer has a potential role in breaking down cultural, age, ethnic, and gender barriers. Do you see a role for yourself in working with policy makers to deliver this?
13. The strategy uses the theme of 'Building Connections; Building Capacities' to underline the importance of co-operative working and integration. How can we best change the system of policy making and consultation to make it more streamlined? Would you be prepared to enter in partnership with colleagues and the government on the issues that matter most to you?
14. We have asked a number of specific questions. If you have any related issues which we have not specifically addressed, please use this space to report them:

Please enter here:

Responses to consultations may be made public – on the internet or in a report. If you would prefer your response to be kept confidential, please tick here: