



National Good Food Nation Plan

Scottish Youth Parliament consultation response

Who we are

Vision

SYP is the democratic voice of Scotland's young people. Our vision for Scotland is of a nation that actively listens to and values the meaningful participation of its young people. Our goal is to make this vision a reality, in order to ensure young people in Scotland grow up loved, safe and respected, and able to realise their full potential.

Mission

SYP's mission is to provide a national platform for young people to discuss the issues that are important to them, and campaign for changes to the nation that they live in. We support our members in their work by training them, supporting their personal development and empowering them, using a youth work ethos. MSYPs listen to and recognise the issues that are most important to young people in every community across the country and ensure that decision-makers listen to their voices.

Values

- **Democracy** - We are youth-led and accountable to young people aged 14 to 25. Our democratic structure and the scale of our engagement across Scotland gives us a mandate that sets us apart from other organisations.
- **Rights** - We are a rights-based organisation. We are passionate about making young people aware of their rights and ensuring that local and national

governments uphold their rights.

- **Inclusion and Diversity** - We are committed to being truly inclusive and work tirelessly to ensure policymakers and politicians hear the voices of young people from every community and background in Scotland.
- **Political Impartiality** - We are independent from all political parties. By working with all stakeholders, groups, and individuals who share our values, we deliver the policies that are most important to young people.

Our approach

As a youth-led organisation, we are constantly seeking the views of our MSYPs and other young people to ensure our policy positions represent their views as clearly as possible. This means that we have numerous opportunities to collect qualitative and quantitative data on a variety of issues underneath the umbrella of education. To ensure our response can accurately reflect the views of our members and the young people they represent, we pulled our information from various sources.

SYP's 2021-2026 Manifesto

The calls in SYP's 2021-2026 Manifesto ([available here](#)) came directly from young people aged 12-25 across Scotland. The consultation was led by MSYPs and supported by the staff team. Due to the innovative and multifaceted approach we took to this manifesto, we do not have the exact number of young people engaged throughout this process. However, we estimate this to be around 10,000. One of the recommendations that came out of the Manifesto was on the right to food, and the importance of upholding this right through a fair, healthy and sustainable food system that is accessible to everyone.

SYP Policy passed as a Members' Motion

At SYP Sittings, the membership gets together and MSYPs have the opportunity to propose Member Motions that will become SYP policy statements. To submit a motion, they will have consulted with young people in their constituencies to demonstrate it is an issue important to young people. At the Sitting, the membership then votes on whether the motion should pass, again based on consultation of the proposed Motions with their constituents. By way of example, at the last SYP Sitting, SYP79 in July 2023, nearly 5000 young people were consulted before MSYPs voted on Members' Motions.

Previous responses and consultations

Young people have previously shared their views with SYP on the changes they would like to see in relation to healthy and sustainable food systems and strengthening the commitment to reducing food insecurity. In our response we reference previous responses and reports produced by SYP and our partners.

Consultation response

Does each individual Good Food Nation Outcome describe the kind of Scottish food system you would like to see?

Outcome 1: Everyone in Scotland eats well with reliable access to safe, nutritious, affordable, sustainable, and age and culturally appropriate food.

X Strongly agree
Mostly agree
Neither agree nor disagree
Mostly disagree
Strongly disagree

Outcome 2: Scotland's food system is sustainable and contributes to a flourishing natural environment. It supports our net zero ambitions and plays an important role in maintaining and improving animal welfare and in restoring and regenerating biodiversity.

X Strongly agree
Mostly agree
Neither agree nor disagree
Mostly disagree
Strongly disagree

Outcome 3: Scotland's food system encourages a physically and mentally healthy population, leading to a reduction in diet-related conditions.

X Strongly agree
Mostly agree
Neither agree nor disagree
Mostly disagree
Strongly disagree

Outcome 4: Our food and drink sector is prosperous, diverse, innovative, and vital to national and local economic and social wellbeing. It is key to making Scotland food secure and food resilient, and creates and sustains jobs and businesses underpinned by fair work standards.

X Strongly agree
Mostly agree
Neither agree nor disagree
Mostly disagree
Strongly disagree

Outcome 5: Scotland has a thriving food culture with a population who are interested in and educated about good and sustainable food.

X Strongly agree
Mostly agree
Neither agree nor disagree
Mostly disagree
Strongly disagree

Outcome 6: Scotland has a global reputation for high-quality food that we want to continue to grow. Decisions we make in Scotland contribute positively to local and global food systems transformation. We share and learn from best practice internationally.

X Strongly agree
Mostly agree

Neither agree nor disagree
Mostly disagree
Strongly disagree

What, if anything, would you change about the Good Food Nation Outcomes and why?

SYP's From Scotland's Young People manifesto, developed in 2020 consulted 10,000 young people on the issues that matter most to them. Overall, 90.4% of respondents agreed that: *'The right to food should be upheld in Scotland by creating a fair, healthy and sustainable food system that is accessible to everyone'*.

Based on the above manifesto policy, in March 2023, Scottish Youth Parliament (SYP) launched the campaign 'Right to Food', aimed at improving young people's knowledge of and access to the right to food in Scotland. As part of this campaign, we consulted over 850 young people across Scotland, aged 12 - 25, to find out their experiences in accessing food and gather opinions on different solutions to problems within our food systems.

A key recommendation from this consultation was that:

"Schools and local authorities should meaningfully involve young people in decision-making about the content and quality of school meals, and in making improvements to the eating environment".

More needs to be done not only to include young people's voices in the conversation moving forward, but to ensure that current initiatives meet young people where they are, not where we think they should be. The Good Food Nation Outcomes must address this gap, highlighting the ways that educational institutions and local authorities can meaningfully engage young people in decision-making about the content and quality of school meals, and in making improvements to the eating environment.

Furthermore, the consulted young people also identified the stigma that still exists in asking for help when accessing food. Whilst the outcomes listed in the Good Food plan are high-level aspirations for an ideal country and healthy, sustainable food system - they should also reflect the current reality of lived experiences, which include stigma, particularly around food assistance and free school meals. When asked 'do you feel there is a stigma in asking for help to access food?' almost half of the respondents (47.4%) said there is stigma associated with asking for help to access food. One young person said:

"People find it embarrassing to ask for food as it is something they feel they should be easily able to afford/access for both them and their family, of which they may also feel they are letting down".

Outcomes, therefore, should be amended to ensure they seek an environment of acceptance, ease in asking for support, and a normalisation of inclusive language for everyone.

Good Food Nation Measures

Do you think that these targets will contribute to achieving the overall Good Food Nation Outcomes?

Strongly agree
X Mostly agree
Neither agree nor disagree

Mostly disagree
Strongly disagree
I don't know

Would achieving these targets contribute to making the kind of Scottish food system you would like to see?

Strongly agree
X Mostly agree
Neither agree nor disagree
Mostly disagree
Strongly disagree
I don't know

If you have other comments on the suggested Good Food Nation targets, please comment:

Albeit the indicators of outcome 1 (everyone in Scotland eats well) discuss the number of pupils taking school meals (free or paid for), there is not an accompanying, quantifiable target for ensuring that children and young people across schools in Scotland have access to free school meals. 26% of young people who responded to the SYP survey said they do or did receive a free school meal whilst at school, with the majority having received it until Primary 3 or 4. 86% of young people agreed that providing all secondary school pupils with a free school meal at lunch is a good way to uphold young people's right to food; with one person stating:

"Every child should be given free meals at school at university. Do not distinguish between lower and higher income at the end of the month everyone is struggling to make ends meet."

We cannot also ignore the links between accessing good food and other services, which are often denied or harder to reach for young people living in poverty. For example, to improve access to safe, nutritious and affordable food, the Scottish government should provide funding to support initiatives that make it easier, cheaper, and safer for young people to use active and sustainable travel options. One young person responding to our survey said:

"To get affordable food I would have to travel 10 miles to another town as my town has 1 supermarket and it is not very affordable".

Another young person said: *"I can't access shops that sell affordable or healthy food easily because I can't access any shops easily. Most aren't disability friendly, and my health restricts my travel."*

The Good Food Nation targets should be developed alongside improvements for sustainable travel to reduce barriers to food accessibility, in addition to supporting other aims for reducing carbon emissions. Introduced alongside this should be targets on investing in environmental education and wider community awareness, to better empower young people to understand that decisions about food are part of a wider environmental and climate cycle.

Do you think these indicators will be useful for measuring progress towards the Good Food Nation Outcomes?

Strongly agree
X Mostly agree
Neither agree nor disagree
Mostly disagree
Strongly disagree
I don't know

Why or why not?

During SYP's survey of young people's experiences with food, 7.6% respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed with that statement that their family could afford food without having to sacrifice on other basic needs (such as heating or housing). In order to measure that Scotland is moving forward in improving security, affordability and accessibility, the indicators and communications around them need to recognise the current reality for many young people in Scotland, and this includes the sacrificial choices they are often forced to make for whether they can eat or not.

This works in tandem with households experiencing food insecurity, but it is not the same and is an important, specific indicator to address and resolve. In the SYP Manifesto (2021 - 2026), which inspired our Right to Food survey and report, one young parent said:

"I stay in a flat by myself with my son and I'm on universal credit because I can't work. There have been times where I've went a week without having stuff to eat because I could only afford to feed my son".

In addition, our survey called attention to the number of young people who did not know where to go for help in accessing food. The indicators do not consider the current demand for support, help and advice - or what a tangible reduction in those needing emergency food provisions would look like. Less than half, 40.4%, of the young people who responded indicated that they do know what help and support is available in their local community if they need help in accessing food. Their comments largely focused on a lack of available information, difficulty in finding the relevant information, lack of awareness on what support is out there and, finally, that not all the support and emergency provisions help with specific needs:

"I currently would be unsure where to go to find my local foodbank, or any other food related help."

More mechanisms and help need to be put in place for people signing up to access emergency provisions, not just signposting to resources but comprehensive guidance for what the process entails and the information required.

Funding for food education and community food projects, as an indicator for outcome 5 (having a thriving food culture), is critical; our young people have said that they would like to see decision-makers set an increased budget for school food provision, as well as more investment into food budgeting and financial lessons in school. Healthier food options should cost less and be available for all in schools, and education across the community should include understanding the climate impacts of food waste.

One person said "empowerment and education of young people so they have the skills and knowledge to cook healthy/sustainable food for themselves, so they can uphold their right to food. And making such food affordable."

Improved food education would, moreover, benefit other outcomes and necessary measures, such as reducing stigma when asking for help and demonstrating the importance of a healthy diet.

Life in a Good Food Nation

Part Three of the Good Food Nation Plan focuses on policies that are already underway and are moving us closer to a Good Food Nation. Text boxes across the chapter highlight what life will be like for different groups of people in a Good Food Nation.

These groups were selected to reflect a broad range of roles across the food system, but we cannot capture every role and experience. We would like to hear your views on these examples of what life in a Good Food Nation could look like for different groups. Please only respond if you have relevant experience of this group.

As a child in a Good Food Nation

- I have access to healthy and nutritious food that is appropriate for my age and developmental stage
- Eating and enjoying a healthy diet is the norm for me
- I have the opportunity to participate in a variety of food-related educational experiences on a regular basis
- I will never experience hunger

Does this reflect what you think life should look like for a child in Scotland as a Good Food Nation?

X Strongly agree

Mostly agree

Neither agree nor disagree

Mostly disagree

Strongly disagree

Not applicable

What changes, if any, would you make?

For a healthy, sustainable and accessible food system to thrive, communities and individuals from across Scotland must be involved in the planning and delivery. This includes young people. A life for a young person in Scotland as a Good Food Nation would include their participation in the decision making from start to end, including them as meaningful agents for change and providing a genuine platform to uplift their voices. 69.9% of young people said that having young people involved in planning meals would make them more likely to eat lunch at school. This extends, also, to engaging with young people who are home-educated to ensure they have a say and equitable access to their right to food. All young people should know they have the right to food and the right to access it, as well as where to go at all times to access it. This is fundamental for Scotland continuing to uphold the rights of children under the UNCRC, with particular attention given to Article 24 (the Right to health and health services) and Article 12 (respect for views of the child).