

Why do we need Legislation?

In advance of the 2021 Senedd elections Food Policy Alliance Cymru launched a paper with the title “Priorities for a Food System Fit for Future Generations”. At that time it stressed the urgency of responding with an integrated, collaborative and long term approach to the mounting challenges posed by a food system failing our communities in terms of climate and nature, nutrition and health, community prosperity and basic food security. It has been less than 18 months since that piece of work was published and in that short time we have seen the scale of those challenges escalate at an alarming rate that few could have imagined. Meanwhile, moves towards a comprehensive policy response have only crept along with no clear picture yet emerging as to what shape that response might take.

We could spend almost limitless time here laying out the evidence that piles up on a daily basis of the need for wholesale transformative change in the way we feed ourselves. Our food system globally is responsible for around 30% of greenhouse gas emissions and food production is the single biggest factor in the tragic decline in biodiversity. Whilst we acknowledge that Welsh farming systems are far removed from the super-intensive farming systems prevalent across the globe – we mustn’t forget that 1 in 6 wildlife species in Wales is at risk of disappearing altogether, with numerous national and UK reports identifying unsustainable farming and land use as a key driver of environmental degradation. Furthermore, we face alarming increases in diet-related disease and health inequalities - almost 60% of adults in Wales are living with overweight or obesity (Public Health Wales) and the full social cost of obesity to Wales is around £3 billion a year (Frontier Economics). A fragile global food supply system is manifesting its vulnerability to disruption on multiple fronts and is now spectacularly failing in that most basic of requirements, the very ability to feed ourselves affordably.

In the absence of a consensus on a collective vision for our food system in Wales, policy continues to emerge from silos where food sits in the backseat of other policy areas when it demands to be put in the driving seat. The consequences of this however could not be more serious. What seems like a good idea in one policy area can have dire outcomes in another and it is this failure that has arguably been responsible for endowing us with a modern food system that has become highly reliant on intensity and the concentration of production, with geographical specialisation increasingly being the norm. In general, we source food from where it is (superficially) cheapest, but the impact of that system has been to generate enormous costs elsewhere for the environment, health and in the economic wellbeing of our communities.

The challenges we face in Wales in relation to food are enormous, but the opportunities are equally great if we find the will to take control of the levers available to us and be proactive in designing a food future that works for all. A future where we spend fewer resources dealing with the symptoms of a dysfunctional system and begin to reap long term benefits by dealing with the causes now. A future in which the ballooning bills for diet-related disease are slashed by investment now in school food and food education. A future in which the food served in schools, and the public plate in general, plays its part in catalysing a just transition to nature-friendly farming. A transition that also secures financial stability for farmers and the rural economy through shorter supply chains and the retention of the added value that currently flows out of Wales. Where the need for productive agriculture for example does not take second place to the very necessary initiatives to plant trees, but where both are considered in a coherent plan for land use in Wales.

In this context, we welcome both the Bill and this consultation. The former because it brings forward a meaningful framework and accountability measures to enable a proactive approach, determining how we want our food system to work, rather than just dealing with the consequences. And the latter because it offers the opportunity to strengthen that proposed framework in ways which are essential if it is to result in coherent and comprehensive policy that will achieve the goal of delivering a food system fit for future generations.

The following provides a more detailed response to the proposals outlined and in particular emphasizes the need to consider further integration of the key elements of the Bill within Welsh Government's existing legislature.

The consultation document references the Social Values and Procurement Bill, The Agriculture Bill and the Community Food Strategy. However, it has omitted reference to how it would interface with the Environment (Wales) Act, the Public Health (Wales) Act, national and local planning policies, and to provide sufficient detail on the relationship between the Food Bill and the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act. A key reason why this Bill is important is because to date policy incoherence has often led to mixed messages, missed opportunities and contradictory approaches. For Example the strategic direction of growth and industrialisation of the food manufacturing sector versus a clear policy direction of 'sustainable agriculture'; Minimum alcohol pricing as part of the Public Health (Wales) Act vs Welsh Government's Drink Strategy; planning policies that allow farms to pollute water courses whilst assets key to building food security (whether land or infrastructure) held in public ownership are lost to other sectors; and missed opportunities to connect Welsh Government's Food and Drink Retail Plan with opportunities within the Healthy Weight Healthy Wales (obesity strategy) - in particular around ambitions for a Healthy Food Environment.

A. Interface Between Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act and the Draft Food (Wales Bill)

We welcome the commitment of the Food Bill to support the Welsh Government and public bodies to meet their duties as outlined in the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 (WFGA) 'to facilitate a more coherent approach to the development of food policy in Wales'. However, we feel consideration should be given to outlining greater alignment of the provisions and aims of the food bill with the provisions and duties of the WFGA as follows:

A.1 National and local food goals:

The proposed food goals should be integrated into the well-being objectives, assessments and duties which Public Bodies (PBs) and Public Service Boards (PSBs) are required to establish and work towards under the WFGA. For example, PB and PSBs should incorporate food goals into their well-being plans, in order to ensure food goals are integrated into the actions of PBs and PSBs to work towards the seven national well-being goals, adhering to the five ways of working. In addition, guidance on how to undertake this alignment should be produced by the Food Commission in collaboration with the Future Generations Commissioner - an example of this is where guidance on equalities policy was provided to public bodies through the Future Generations Commissioner to support the integration of updated equalities policy into PB and PSBs plans.

A.2 Food Commission and National Food Strategy:

In order to support the alignment with the WFGA as set out in the introduction of the proposed bill, the proposed food commission and national food strategy should outline that it will align to the principles and goals of the Well-Being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015. This includes the:

- Welsh Government's Well-Being Objectives;
- Five Ways of Working; and,

- Sustainable Development Principle.

In addition, the Bill proposes that the Food Commission provides advice, scrutiny and reviews the performance of public bodies and the Welsh Government in relation to food goals. The Bill should go further and outline that it will consult with the Auditor General and Future Generations Commissioner to ensure alignment with their advisory, monitoring and accountability functions in relation to the WFGA. For example, the Food Commission should coordinate advice, scrutiny, monitoring and accountability for public bodies around food goals with the work of the Auditor General and Future Generations Commissioner in relation to their functions to support and monitor public bodies' well-being plans.

In light of the five ways of working (integration, involvement, collaboration, prevention and long-term thinking) in particular, involvement, integration and collaboration, there is a legal mandate to engage with as wide a range of actors within the food system as possible to build the National Food Strategy. Therefore, a set of principles that guide the actions of the Commission is needed. As everyone is a consumer, this means engaging with the wider public in the process, for example through citizen assemblies, and ensuring that the resulting vision reflects the identified priorities and builds upon their lived experiences. In this way we also support the development of food citizens and the need to build stronger and more empowered communities and to ensure a Wales Food System Strategy that is co-produced.

The Bill has fallen short of suggesting a dedicated Food Commissioner for Wales. We feel that a Food Commissioner, together with the Food Commission, **should** hold responsibility for carrying out the process of coproduction (collaboration and involvement) to develop the Wales National Food Strategy, from the ground up. The Commission would present a draft Strategy, based on coproduction principles, to Welsh Ministers for approval. The Commission leading on this process will help ensure that the strategy is integrated across WG departmental priorities.

The requirement for integration and collaboration means that public bodies and Ministers need to work together to seek synergies and align policy across departments in support of its vision of well-being for current and future generations— this is what the Food Bill should seek to do for food-related policies, based on the co-produced Wales National Food Strategy. The Food Commission's role should be to navigate the process of integration of food-related policies across Ministers' portfolio. A Food Commissioner, rather than a Chair of the Food Commission, would carry the responsibility for navigating this process, as it requires a strong lead to negotiate integration of policies. A clearly articulated overarching National Food Strategy needs similarly to connect with policy across departments that can support its delivery. A National Food Strategy and strong food goals are necessary not least because of the existence of the WBFG Act, which proposes seven key interconnected principles to which public policies should collaboratively contribute. A food systems approach provides an ideal opportunity to integrate sectors and demonstrate a system that can deliver a wide range of benefits under each of the WBFG Act's seven well-being goals, and apply the sustainable development principle when thinking of the long term, prevention, integration, collaboration and involvement as set out in the Act. In particular the Commissioner would ensure continuity of approach beyond political cycles.

B. The Bills overarching principles and the Food Goals

B.1 The overarching principles of the Bill

We understand the overarching principles to be:

"The proposed legislation seeks to establish a more sustainable food system in Wales to strengthen food security, and improve Wales's socio-economic well-being, and enhance consumer choice".

We agree that improving socio-economic well-being is a worthy target, but this needs to be considered in tandem with environmental well-being. FPAC is very concerned that the overarching principles of the Bill are not strong enough on Health or the Environment. Firstly, aiming to establish a **more** sustainable food system, as opposed to establishing a sustainable food system, could essentially imply ongoing (if reduced) unsustainable activity. We would suggest that the wording for the principles in the Bill is more explicit on the need to both restore nature and mitigate and tackle climate change in Wales. Instead of just reducing harm to the environment, Wales' food system should contribute positively to the environment through promoting agroecological approaches.

We note that food security is a key overarching principle of the bill. We believe that the concept of food security does not distinguish where food comes from or how it is produced and distributed. Contrary to the concept of food security, how and where food is produced and consumed matters to the concept of food sovereignty. Food sovereignty emphasizes ecologically appropriate production, distribution and consumption, social-economic justice and local food systems as ways to tackle hunger and poverty and guarantee sustainable food security for all peoples. We believe that food sovereignty is a more helpful concept and political ambition for Wales' current needs. The concept of food sovereignty aligns well with the principles of agroecology. The Bill should be supporting a series of measures that strengthen local agroecological supply chains, increase diversity of domestic crops and livestock, and balance production capability with population needs for a healthy (Eatwell Guide), affordable and culturally appropriate diet. It should not be about increasing production per se and certainly not at any cost. And whilst improving consumer choice through diversifying supply chains is desirable - increasing consumer choice which may lead to unhealthy or environmentally or socially damaging food choices is undesirable.

B.2 Primary Food Goal Scope

FPAC are supportive of the idea of having a primary food goal, however we feel the goal is open to interpretation (an overarching goal of providing affordable, healthy, and economically and environmentally sustainable food for the people of Wales). **It's FPAC's view that the Wales Food Bill's primary aim should be to provide a legislative framework that enables policy coherence across the food system guided by agroecological principles.** Further we would recommend including a "purpose clause" to ensure the Bill takes account of the many aspects of the food system; for example: *The Food (Wales) Bill is designed to create a new system of governance that drives a food system approach to achieving a healthier, sustainable and just food system for **current and future generations** in Wales by strengthening food sovereignty, restoring and maintaining biodiversity, mitigating and adapting to climate change and improving Wales's environmental, social and economic well-being. A National Food Commission, led by a Commissioner is tasked to oversee and deliver a **co-produced** National Food System strategy that aligns with agroecological principles and includes an action plan for achieving set targets. The Food Commission will collaborate with Ministers to ensure that new strategies and policies align and are integrated with established policies and strategies to provide that every person has access, in a dignified and culturally appropriate manner, to nutritious, sustainable and safe food at all times (prevention). In doing so, the Food (Wales) Bill integrates the five ways of working mandated by the WFGA.*

B.3 Secondary Food Goals

We believe that Food Goals should appear on the face of the Bill and be aligned with the Well-being goals of the Future Generations Act to help stimulate immediate action and help in measuring progress (e.g. through setting of Wellbeing Objectives - see A.1). Consideration to aligning targets to duties already laid out in Legislation, such as those contained in the Environment (Wales) Act would be pragmatic.

The secondary food goals outlined in the consultation are sectoral and work against the need to take an integrated approach to the food system. FPAC have suggested alternative Food Goals, targets for which would be set by the Commission:

1. Food for all

Wales becomes the first nation to eliminate the need for food banks. Everyone in Wales has access to the food they need in a dignified way, in order to live a healthy life.

Target: Zero food banks in Wales by 2030 -see paragraph on

2. Food for public health

Increased consumption of vegetables, which are produced sustainably in Wales for Wales.

Educational provision on food related issues in each key stage in all schools.

Target: 75% of Eatwell's recommended vegetable consumption is produced sustainably in Wales by 2030

Target: 100% of schools including food in Key stage 1-3 curriculum

3. Net zero food system

A net zero food system for Wales.

Target: Net zero emissions from Wales' food system by 2035.

4. Farming for nature and climate

Increased amount of agroecological production.

Measure the environmental footprint of food and set a target to reduce the environmental footprint of food production and consumption.

Target: 100% agroecological production by 2035

Target: 75% reduction in environmental footprint of food production and consumption at home and overseas by 2035.

5. Sustainable food procurement

Increased public procurement of food from organic or agroecological Welsh producers. Strategies for ensuring adequate supply and fit-for-purpose dynamic procurement tools should be addressed in the roadmap.

Target: 30% of public procurement of food is from organic or agroecological Welsh producers by 2030

6. Sustainable food sector jobs and livelihoods

Those who earn their living within the food system receive, or are enabled to receive, at least the living wage or a fair return for their work. Work, whether on land or sea, is free from exploitative practices, and is varied, engaging and empowering. Achieving cannot be achieved by focussing solely on individual businesses or by simply mandating higher wages, but requires analysis of the market structure in the food system that leads to low wages in farming and the food sector.

Target: 100% of food sector jobs paid the real living wage by 2030

Each of the above goals represents an integrative piece of work and relies on collaboration between Ministers and government departments to achieve a coordinated approach. This coordinated approach will be overseen and mediated by the Food Commission, whereas each Minister will have a duty to collaborate to work to reach targets.

B.4 Local Food Plans

These targets could then be built into Wellbeing Objectives (see A.1) and delivered through local food plans overseen at a local level by Food Partnerships working in conjunction with Public Service Boards. Examples of where this practice is already developing can be seen through the emerging Network of

Sustainable Food Partnerships and in particular Blaenau Gwent Food, Bwyd Sir Gar, Food Cardiff, Monmouthshire Food and Food Vale. Food Cardiff's Good Food Strategy for the city which sets out five food goals - a healthy Cardiff; an environmentally sustainable Cardiff; a thriving local economy; a fair and connected food system; and an empowering food movement. This strategy was co-produced by almost 2,500 individuals and organisations in Cardiff and the results from the Cardiff citizen survey. Cardiff Council and Cardiff & Vale UHB. Cardiff Council became one of the first UK local authorities to publish its own Food Strategy in 2019. Recognising the need to work across portfolios, Cardiff Council have appointed a dedicated Food Officer and host a cross-departmental Steering Group. The Move More, Eat Well Plan led by Cardiff & Vale University Health Board and approved by both PSBs includes a health communities' priority area, committing to the continued development of sustainable food partnerships.[PC(HW-FSW1)]. Providing adequate resourcing for training within public bodies and co-ordination of food partnerships would be key for successful implementation - work which could be progressed through the Community Food Strategy.

Other policies developed by local authorities, NRW and other PSB members, including planning, procurement, education and others should be reviewed to ensure coherency with the Local Food Plans. For example, local development plans and planning policy should be amended to ensure they support sustainable local food production; but prevent ecologically harmful agricultural development. These need to be revised in order to support sustainable food production, particularly local production of fruit & vegetables which will otherwise be held back - whilst environmentally destructive food production continues.

The following members of Food Policy Alliance Cymru have contributed to this response:

Food Sense Wales

Social Farms & Gardens

Landworkers' Alliance Cymru

Urban Agriculture Consortium

Nature Friendly Farming Network Cymru

WWF Cymru

RSPB Cymru

Dr Angelina Sanderson Bellamy, Association Professor of Food Systems, UWE Bristol

Prof Terry Marsden, Cardiff University

Simon Wright, Director of Food and Rural Economy, University of Wales Trinity Saint David

This consultation may be published and will also be published on <https://www.foodsensewales.org.uk/good-food-advocacy/food-policy-alliance-cymru/>

Any queries can be directed to foodsensewales@wales.nhs.uk