

## **Climate Change, Environment and Rural Affairs Committee Inquiry: Rethinking Food in Wales**

Written evidence submitted by Sustain: the alliance for Better Food and Farming. Sustain advocates food and agriculture policies and practices that enhance the health and welfare of people and animals, improve the working and living environment, enrich society and culture and promote equity. We represent around 100 national public interest organisations working at international, national, regional and local level. Amongst our influential projects and campaigns are:

- **Children's Food Campaign:** which aims to improve young people's health and well-being through: Good food education in every school; protecting children from junk food marketing; clear food labelling. We initiated and led the successful campaign for a sugary drinks levy.
- **Sustainable Food Cities:** a network of local food partnerships improving local food systems by bringing together local government, community groups and businesses taking a joined up approach to food issues locally. It is run nationally by Sustain, the Soil Association and Food Matters and involves over 30 cities across the UK. One of our campaigns has been to increase sustainable fish purchased by caterers, with Food Cardiff helping NHS Wales to commit to only using sustainable fish, and with other pledges to our campaign, 20% of fish eaten out of home in Wales is sustainable.
- **Beyond the Food Bank:** working to alleviate food poverty by calling on governments across the four nations to tackle the root causes such as low pay and gaps in the safety net, as well as to improve and protect publicly-funded nutrition programmes. We are launching a UK-wide related programme to support local food poverty alliances, and will be working with groups across Wales.
- Through our various projects and networks we support a variety of projects and enterprises in Wales, including bakeries, food coops, and helping improve children's access to water.

This submission does not represent the detailed views of all of Sustain's member organisations, some of whom we understand have put in their own submissions.

---

### **1. Our vision for the future of food in Wales**

We support the four themes suggested, and believe these are a good basis for the vision. Whether directly defined by Welsh Government, or through the Welsh Government's influence on UK wide policy – we believe that there must be acceptance of the responsibility to ensure that good food (i.e. safe, traceable, healthy, ethical and sustainably produced) is as affordable, accessible and as well marketed as poor food (i.e. unsafe, poorly traceable, unhealthy, unethical and unsustainably produced). Only when this premise is put at the heart of policy making will we see a more sustainable food and farming system become a reality.

Beyond the crucial issues covered in the call for evidence, relating to healthy diets and an environmentally and economically sound food system, there are a few points that we would want to see recognised that are not currently mentioned, or could be elaborated when the vision is fleshed out:

- 1.1 Ensuring that food safety standards both for food produced in Wales and imports are maintained, and that the levels of staff to carry out the inspections and enforcement of the standards that stem from them are maintained or increased particularly in the changing circumstances following Brexit.
- 1.2 Additionally, with Brexit there is the need to use whatever powers you have to influence UK Government to secure legal principles that underpin good environmental protection, such as the precautionary principle, the principle that preventive action should be taken, that environmental damage should be rectified at source and that the polluter should pay; also that animals are sentient beings.
- 1.3 Ensuring that due support is given to food, farming and fishing businesses, whether through payments or training, to ensure they can meet the high standards (particularly environmental and animal welfare) that will help. This should also support a diversity of scales of food businesses, with many smaller farms e.g. Welsh hill farms, and food enterprises at risk. We would draw attention to our separate documents on a post-Brexit proposal for a new farm policy<sup>i</sup> and for a new fisheries policy<sup>ii</sup>. We would be keen to explore how this could work specifically in Wales with Welsh Government.
- 1.4 The final point on creating a destination for food lovers should be expanded to include embedding a love of Good Food amongst the Welsh people. This should include education and skills that will help, for example, improve diets, reduce food waste and consumer attitudes to food and underpin a good food culture. This would be improved by a greater role for food governance at a local level, to increase the buy-in and responsibility of local stakeholders in defining their food system. Food Cardiff is a successful example of this.
- 1.5 On a related point, ensuring a recognition of the importance of, and support for, community food initiatives, from city farms, local, independent Real Bread bakeries, coops, community kitchens, gardens and shops - where food is the cement of the local community providing social cohesion as well as the benefits of encouraging a good food culture mentioned in 1.3.
- 1.6 Building on Welsh progress in monitoring food insecurity, Welsh Government can champion the UK-wide measurement of household food insecurity adopting the Food Insecurity Experience Scale (FEIS) and encouraging the UK Government to work in partnership with devolved administrations to adopt one consistent system.<sup>iii</sup>

## **2. How to achieve this vision**

From this premise stems many areas of policy making that need to improve, a few of which are detailed below. We appreciate that some of this may be outside of the current powers of Welsh Government, in which case we would encourage you to use whatever powers you have to influence UK Government.

- 2.1 *Reviewing taxation*, to promote more sustainable food. The Soft Drinks Industry Levy and the initial proposal to ring-fence this for children's health is a welcome first step, and we would encourage further examination of how fiscal instruments can be used to incentivise good food and farming, whether by encouraging improvement of practices or through redistribution of levies raised from bad practice.
- 2.2 *Public procurement*: public money should be used to ensure the highest standards. There has been progress in recent years in the creation of standards, which now apply across

much of the public sector, but some areas are still exempt e.g. academies established before June 2014, which constitute almost half of secondary schools. And even the standards already adopted do not go far enough, for example with little guidance on encouraging less (but better) meat consumption - arguably the most neglected aspect of the UK's contribution to climate change. In most cases existing standards are not effectively monitored and carry no penalties if breached.

2.3 *Planning policies* which need to be reviewed to ensure that at the very least local government has greater powers to shut down existing fast food outlets in areas where there are too many, and to prioritise provision of healthy, affordable food, such as local street markets.

2.4 *Changes in farming policy* and wider policy which directly affect farming could include shifting away from the old direct payments CAP scheme to the introduction of a new Land Management Support scheme whereby farmers and land managers access support in return for delivering a range of public goods including, but not exclusively, for conservation or rural economy outcomes. Any programme should also help to back sustainable enterprise including new entrants into farming, smaller and diverse farms, agro-forestry, pasture based farm systems, organic and vital sectors like fruit and vegetable. New farmer-centred training and advice should ensure they access the tools they need for future challenges. In tandem, it would be crucial to adopt wider measures across government, such as extending the Grocery Code Adjudicator's powers to ensure fair trading practices from all supermarkets and intermediaries, keeping high standards in trade deals, and requiring an increase in the purchase of local and sustainable food for public-sector organisations such as schools and hospitals.

---

<sup>i</sup> *Beyond 2020 - New farm policy*. May 2017. Sustain

[https://www.sustainweb.org/publications/beyond\\_2020\\_new\\_farm\\_policy/](https://www.sustainweb.org/publications/beyond_2020_new_farm_policy/)

<sup>ii</sup> *What a Sustainable Fisheries Bill could look like*. May 2017.

Sustain [https://www.sustainweb.org/resources/files/other\\_docs/Sustainable\\_Fisheries\\_Policy.pdf](https://www.sustainweb.org/resources/files/other_docs/Sustainable_Fisheries_Policy.pdf)

<sup>iii</sup> *Time to Count the Hungry: the case for a standard UK measure of household food insecurity*. April 2016. Sustain, Oxfam, Food Foundation, Oxford University and the Food Research Collaboration.

[https://www.sustainweb.org/publications/time\\_to\\_count\\_the\\_hungry/](https://www.sustainweb.org/publications/time_to_count_the_hungry/)