

EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL

CABINET – 23 APRIL 2008

SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT DISCUSSION CHOOSING THE RIGHT INGREDIENTS

THE FUTURE FOR FOOD IN SCOTLAND

Report by Executive Director of Educational and Social Services

1. PURPOSE

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to inform Members of the discussion paper introduced by the Scottish Government, developments in East Ayrshire that are relevant and to seek approval for an opportunity for East Ayrshire to participate in a European inter-regional programme.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 Food has an important part to play in creating a wealthier Scotland and provides many jobs. Local authorities play a significant part in the purchase of food. Research shows that people believe that public procurement of food has an important role for local communities. Access to public contracts can help build the local economy.

More than a quarter of Scotland's manufacturing exports are in food and drink. The Scottish tourism industry is also a huge market for food and drink with overall spending by tourists in the region of £700 M each year. It therefore plays a vital role in supporting local suppliers, growing the local economy and helping to sustain communities.

3. CHOOSING THE RIGHT INGREDIENTS The Scottish Government's Discussion Paper

- 3.1 A response has been prepared from the perspective of the Department of Educational and Social Services and is appended to this report for approval.

The discussion paper 'Choosing the Right Ingredients' underlines that food is everyone's business. A vision of Scotland's future prosperity should include a 'well nourished population and profitable food industry'. The consultation seeks to inform a strategy which can lead to a future where food in Scotland is 'wholesome, healthy and where people understand the impact of food choices on themselves and the environment'.

A Healthier Scotland

Will result from changing individual behaviour and attitudes about diet and food choices; from improving the nutritional quality, safety and freshness of

food on offer in institutions and the catering sector; to supporting Scottish food manufacturers and retailers to take the initiative in driving forward consumer demand for more affordable, healthier food options. Communities across Scotland will enjoy better access to affordable, safe, healthy and fresh seasonal food.

A Wealthier and Fairer Scotland

Will result from sustainable economic growth of the food industry through greater co-operation and collaboration from primary production to final market, ensuring the long term viability of primary producers, and increasing export markets for Scottish produce.

A Safer and Stronger Scotland

Will result from a thriving food industry where local communities will flourish and become better places to live through improved access to amenities and services.

A Greener Scotland

Will result from reducing the environmental impact of food and drink production, processing, manufacturing and consumption by encouraging responsible behaviour throughout the supply chain through reduced emissions, unnecessary use of raw materials, waste, packaging, energy and water use.

A Smarter Scotland

Will result from highly skilled and innovative food industry with consumers that are better informed about where their food comes from, how it was grown and the wider health, environment, social and economic benefits of the choices they make.

IMPLICATIONS FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT

The public sector is a market for food in Scotland worth around £85 M. Local authorities alone count for £57 M of this. A market this big can be very influential when it comes to encouraging businesses to produce, and consumers to buy, more environmentally friendly, healthy and local foods.

The discussion paper identifies the important role of local government in:

- Encouraging Scottish suppliers to tender for public contracts
- Sharing best practice with other public bodies
- Championing a greener, healthier approach to food
- Ensuring that all school children are taught about food
- Taking responsibility for good nutrition in schools and other institutions
- Promoting local food networks and farmers markets to encourage food tourism

- Increasing the collection from food waste from households for composting

The Current Position In East Ayrshire

East Ayrshire is now regarded as a leading exemplar having developed its own sustainable food strategy for schools, adopting new procurement and supply chain practices and where food as a topic in schools throughout East Ayrshire is given significance. The objective is to produce educated consumers of tomorrow who understand the context and importance of food.

The programme places food and education at the heart of sustainable development in social, economic and environmental terms. In 30 primary schools, 30% of the food used is organic, at least 70% is sourced locally and over 90% of the food used is fresh and unprocessed.

In terms of the environment, independent research for Scottish Environmental Protection Agency into East Ayrshire's mainly local sourcing of food shows that an annual saving of 14.5 Tonnes of CO2 emissions and a carbon saving of 7.8 Tonnes is being achieved for one school alone.

The Holyrood Magazine of October, 2007 indicated "if you want to see an example of the principles underpinning the Government's muted National Food Policy in action, you could hardly do better than to visit East Ayrshire."

PROPOSAL FOR PARTICIPATION IN A EUROPEAN DEVELOPMENT

East Ayrshire has been invited to participate in an application for EU funding along with the Scottish Government's Food Policy Team. The City of Amsterdam will take the principal role in the project. The administration would be co-ordinated by Alimenterra which is a network of European organisations committed to developing practical and co-operative actions leading to the creation of a sustainable European food system. The organisation's participating in AlimenTerra come from five European countries: France; Italy; the Netherlands; Spain and the UK.

'Sustainable Food Strategies' refers to a recent development in public policy where food is treated as a strategic area for development. The purpose of the application for European funding is to develop and disseminate good practice, transfer experience and create a model policy for eventual transfer across the EU. This will include:

- Production of good practice guides, policy recommendations and strategic guidelines
- Production of thematic surveys and studies
- Organisation of site visits and study and staff exchanges
- Organisation of thematic seminars and workshops
- Organisation of inter-regional training sessions
- Development of action plans

The Inter-regional programme is a tool to enable public administrations to exchange and develop best practice in relevant priority areas. There is an increased focus on the role of food as a multi-functional instrument that can promote, health, environmental and cultural wellbeing together with increased employment and diversity of economic activity. Food is seen increasingly in a strategic light and as such, needs to be placed in a strategic context. The Inter-regional programme will offer the opportunity for public bodies to enhance, improve and expand existing practice, whilst creating tools and mechanisms to ensure that spread and development of best practice within their partnerships, and to the wider EU.

By participating East Ayrshire has the opportunity to be recognised as a leader in this field and showcased both to the wider EU and the European Commission as well as the opportunity to implement cutting edge best practice in the retail, agricultural principally the public food sector in Scotland.

The benefits to East Ayrshire can also be seen in many of the strands of the Single Outcome Agreement related to economic development, health, education and the environment and in the Council's Community Plan.

Participation of the Scottish Government

In this regard, the Scottish Government's Food Industry team who are conducting the consultation on behalf of the Government have been introduced to this potential European development and would work in partnership with East Ayrshire although rightly taking the leading role for the wider benefit of Scotland. This would also include the Scottish Government choosing the thematic areas which will best suit the development of a food strategy in Scotland and meeting the majority of costs associated in securing EU funding for the programme.

Resources

In the project development process it is fundamental to have a contact person who can be actively involved both in project development meetings and in commenting on/revising the draft proposals. In the final project most of the budget of each partner will be allocated in the form of workshops and conferences, training, personnel exchanges, analysis and documentation of local best practice according to common criteria for transfer and adaptation elsewhere.

4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1** The potential total project budget over a three year project is of the order of three to €6 million with a partnership ranging from 10 to 20 regions/cities. The average budget per participant is €300,000 so with 75% match funding this requires a local contribution of around about €75,000 (.£50,000) spread over three years. The development of the bid to secure funding through the Inter-regional programme, will require each partner to contribute to the cost of putting the application together. This is estimated to cost each partner £5,000

in total depending on the number of participants, this would indicate that the Scotland and East Ayrshire would contribute ca. £1,000. It is anticipated that subsequently East Ayrshire may have to make some contribution if the bid for European funding is successful and a letter of agreement would be drawn up with the Scottish Government confirming share of costs.

5. POLICY/LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1** There are no legal implications arising from the discussion paper. East Ayrshire will submit a response to the consultation which may inform future policy to be developed by the Scottish Government.

At this stage the commitment is to be a partner in submitting an application for funding. There are no legal implications at this stage. The City of Amsterdam would lead the project if successful with Alimenterra coordinating activity, it may be necessary to make a legal commitment if the project application is successful.

6. COMMUNITY PLANNING IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1** Food is a cross cutting agenda which is relevant to a number of community planning themes and the Single Outcome Agreement in terms of social economic and environmental development.

7. RISK IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1** There are no significant risk implications.

8. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 8.1** Members are asked to agree:

- (i) that the Department of Educational and Social Services school meals service continues to develop its sustainable school food service presently provided in 30 schools;
- (ii) to participation in the bid for funding for the inter-regional programme which may require an initial contribution of £1,000 to develop the proposal.
- (iii) that if the bid for European funding is eventually successful, that East Ayrshire agree with the Scottish Government any future funding necessary to fully participate in the European programme;
- (iv) note the ongoing discussion initiated by the Scottish Government and the current position of East Ayrshire in relation to the objectives which they seek to incorporate into a future food policy for Scotland, and
- (v) approve the submission made on behalf the Council's Department of Educational and Social Services.

Graham R Short
Executive Director of Educational and Social Services

RG/JP
14 April 2008

LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS

1. Choosing the Right Ingredients – The Future for Food in Scotland – a discussion paper

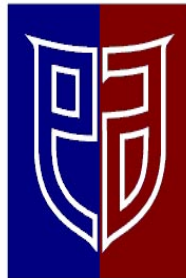
Members requiring further information should contact Robin Gourlay, Head of Facilities Management, Tel: (01563) 576089.

IMPLEMENTATION OFFICER

Robin Gourlay, Head of Facilities Management

EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL
Department of Educational and Social Services
RESPONSE
to
CHOOSING THE RIGHT INGREDIENTS

Prepared by
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Department of Educational and Social Services



East Ayrshire
COUNCIL

A Perspective

Sustainable Food Strategies are emerging internationally as a critical area of public policy where food is treated as a strategic area rather than as a small element of other policy areas, like for example: business development, education, or health. A Food Strategy can place Scotland at the forefront of developments by being one of the first nations to bring coherence and integration to a range of food relevant policy issues interrelated to the economy, social justice, education, agriculture, fisheries, health and environmental stewardship which signpost;

- Support for local and regional economies
- Improved resource efficiency
- Reductions in waste
- Health Improvement, and
- Cultural and cognitive change through education developing food awareness

Examples of relevant policies in Scotland include; the Schools (Health Promotion and Nutrition) Act 2007, Choosing our Future Scotland's Sustainable Development

Strategy, A Forward Strategy for Scottish Agriculture, Scotland's Climate Change Declaration, and notably policy guidance 'Integrating Sustainable Development into Public Procurement of Food and Catering Services ' (which reflects the EU guidance) by setting out a hierarchy of key priorities which take account of the main sustainable development priorities, and the recent 2007 Review of the Scottish Diet Action Plan.

A Food Strategy which brings these policies and supplementary guidance together can produce significant benefit to the economy of Scotland and the health and well-being of its people.

A sustainable food strategy for Scotland also fits in with the priority areas given by the European Commission which are based on the Lisbon, Leipzig and Gothenburg agendas which address threats to human health, climate change, the management of natural resources, sustainable transport, and economic and social renewal and growth of jobs.

The Public Sector guided by a Food Strategy can play an important role in leading change and it is this Council's view therefore that Scotland's proposed Food Strategy is timely and welcome.

Challenges for the Public and Private Sectors

1. The ability of the public sector to implement a sustainable public food strategy in relation to procurement.
2. The ability and skill level of catering staff to deliver affordable local food.
3. The experience and capacity of producers to meet public food needs.
4. Local Authority Education and Public Health partners in promoting the consumption of unadulterated and lightly processed food from sustainable agriculture.

A Food Strategy Involving the Public Sector

The Public Sector generally and Local Authorities in particular can have a multi faceted role in promoting sustainable development, and thereby improving health, nutrition and environmental education.

In addition Local Authorities have the opportunity to encourage SME food producers and farms to engage with the needs of the market and the public sector which itself has the capacity to be a major purchaser of food produced in Scotland, to a greater extent than is currently the case.

Wealthier and Fairer

The production, distribution, preparation and eating of food should be one of the principal mechanisms for creating a more cohesive and healthy society, between rural and urban areas.

The globalisation of food culture has led to standardisation of production systems and products. There is a growing distance between food producers and consumers creating divisions between different sections of society and the growth of health problems through ignorance of the importance of a good diet. Decisions on what we consume are taken by a smaller and smaller number of companies and producers.

A Food Strategy can promote the economic value of sustainable local food production in Scotland and can produce a range of social, and environmental benefits. An increase in the diversity of food businesses can offer wider choice to suppliers and consumers, making local food more accessible and affordable, facilitating a greater retention of income within communities through increased use of locally produced food within the public sector. However it has to be recognised that local and organically produced food while offering a range of benefits for sustainable development is generally more expensive and will present funding issues that require wider understanding of whole life costs associated with food consumption and the benefits that will accrue from sustainable procurement.

Smarter

Food increasingly has a defining role in reflecting local culture allied to the realisation that without 'local' producers capable of supplying the needs of public catering, many of the wider environmental targets which governments ascribe to for 2012 and 2020 will not be achievable. At the same time there is a crisis in farming of financial viability, disappearing skills and the age profile of farmers. There is a growing understanding among governments, business, environmentalists, the agricultural community, health professionals and academics that the current model of food production and the effect on the health of the population and climate change, is unsustainable.

Safer and Stronger

At a time when it is predicted that the problem of food shortages and the rising economic cost of food rivals that of climate change, local food production can become significant in ensuring food security within Scotland while also enhancing opportunities for education and employment. Understanding the provenance of food and how it has been produced can more confidently be assured through better procurement practices in the public sector, by taking account of these aspects when specifying food in contracts and evaluating tenders. This can build confidence and approval for the quality of food provided in schools, hospitals and prisons in the general public.

Healthier

Food is a critical issue in preventing the rise in obesity, cardiovascular disease, and diabetes. Diet-related diseases burden the NHS in the UK, with obesity alone costing an estimated £7.4 billion a year. The Government investment in free fruit schemes in primary schools and nurseries, and the Schools (Nutrition and Health Promotion) Act are to be applauded and must be maintained.

Greener

Food production, harvest, transportation, preparation, consumption and waste, account for the production of 30 % of green house gases which cause global warming and this underlines why there is a need for a Food Strategy within which 'Green Issues' are addressed.

The use of food produced in an efficient sustainable way which is sensitive to the energy required in its production should lead logically towards greater use of seasonal and unprocessed or lightly processed food. Reliability of supply for large contracts is a key reason why the public sector currently buy on open tender and do not generally consider, as a priority, sustainable food production or local procurement. Establishing local supply chains that have the capacity to meet local demand will be challenging but essential to consider in the development of a Food Strategy.

Organically grown crops require around 50% less energy input per unit area than do conventional crops, benefiting climate change as well as significantly enhancing farmland

Biodiversity however increasing the amount of organically produced food in Scotland would require a sea change and may have to be incentivized to achieve.

Work in East Ayrshire Council

Since 2004, by a phased programme, the School Meals service has linked Hungry for Success (the Scottish Government's initiative to introduce a Whole School Approach for school meals) to the Council's Community Plan, to national policy through Scotland's Sustainable Development Strategy, and Scottish executive guidance on local procurement in the public sector; to create programme of work that contributes directly to the environment, economic regeneration and local employment as well as the health and education of children.

The approach is characterised by local sourcing of innovative menus and recipes which have removed processed food, and is underpinned by strong partnerships involving; pupils, school staff, parents, public health practitioners, dieticians, food suppliers, catering staff and food campaigners.

The school meals services are able to work through Hungry for Success and take an active role in supporting pupils to become educated consumers of tomorrow who will understand the health and environmental impacts of their food choices.

- 30 schools throughout East Ayrshire purchase all of their fresh produce within 30 miles of Kilmarnock. This includes fresh meat from Aftonglen Farm in New Cumnock, poultry from Auchincruive, artisan cheese from Dunlop Dairy in Stewarton, organic milk from Clyde Organics in Lanark, free range eggs from Mauchline, locally grown vegetables from Stair, fruit and fresh fish.
- The food provided in school dining rooms is currently 35% organic, 75% locally produced, and 90% is fresh and unprocessed and the service subsequently adopted the Soil Association's Food for Life scheme as a framework for the initiative that has been developed.

- While it is true to say East Ayrshire's producers do not make huge profits from their contracts with schools it is nevertheless significant that ca. £250,000 is now repatriated into the local economy.
- Food education is emerging as a key issue in East Ayrshire's ambition to produce knowledgeable consumers of tomorrow who understand the importance of making good food choices and understanding the impact on the environment.

Costs/Environmental Benefits

- In addition to creating a local food market East Ayrshire's school meals service is contributing to environmental sustainability switching to local suppliers has reduced the average distance food travels by at least a third, the savings calculated for one school alone are.
- Reduction of 3.1 Tonnes of CO₂ emissions in one school, in one month, with a forecasted annual saving of 14.5 Tonnes.
- Carbon saving of 0.82 Tonnes in one school, in one month, with a forecasted annual saving of 7.8 Tonnes.
- A cost increase of 15 pence per two-course meal provided in the school, equating to an annual increase in expenditure of approximately 10%.

Conclusion

Scotland can be at the forefront of countries in practical and conceptual terms through the development of a Food Strategy which promotes a system of sustainable food production and agriculture within Scotland linking this to the interrelated issues of the economy, social justice, education, agriculture, fisheries, health and environmental stewardship.

Access to good food and a healthy diet is at the core of Sustainable Development and should be prioritised by the correlation of national and local health improvement with the proposed Food Policy. In particular effecting cultural change through food education in schools and elsewhere and embedding this message into community is a strategy where Scotland is already leading.

The role of the public sector in leading change can be considered a key factor in the way forward. Introducing change in diet, food production and farming, has to be led. In order to change public opinion and demonstrate that another food system is possible, the public sector generally, and in particular local authorities who have clear community regeneration and well-being responsibilities, should be held up as leading actors for change.

The Public Sector guided by a Food Strategy can play an important role in leading change and it is this Council's view therefore that Scotland's proposed Food Strategy is timely and welcome.