

Senedd Cymru

Pwyllgor yr Economi, Masnach a Materion Gwledig

Ymchwiliad: Prosesu Bwyd

Cyf: FP07

Ymateb gan: Ffermydd a Gerddi Cymdeithasol, a Our Food 1200

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Welsh Parliament

Economy, Trade, and Rural Affairs Committee

Inquiry: Food Processing

Ref: FP07

Evidence from: Social Farms and Gardens, and Our Food 1200



Food Processing Consultation June 2025

Social Farms & Gardens Response

Social Farms & Gardens is a UK wide charity supporting communities to farm, garden and grow together. Of specific relevance to this consultation is:

- Lead body for [Future Farms pilot in Sarn, Powys](#)
- Establishment and ongoing running of [Carmarthenshire Machinery Ring](#)
- Involvement in [Bremenda Isaf County Farm](#) via Bwyd Sir Gâr Food
- Co-lead in [Procurement 4 Good](#) UKRI research project with Coventry University
- [Sustainable Procurement Food Hubs](#) – EU/WG Funded project (2021-2023)

Is the Vision Fit for Purpose?

The Vision sets out an ambitious post-Covid vision for the nation's food industry. It remains relevant and the support it offers to enable this vision is embedded.

The vision should first aim to provide nutritious, sustainably produced and tasty food that is accessible for, and accessed by, Wales' citizens as a priority, and then to export.

Food is integral to all of our lives everyday through land use, health, education, culture, economy, etc. We call for food to be better integrated across Government departments ideally through a National Food Plan that protects future generations. Repositioning the vision to acknowledge the now-published Community Food Strategy and Future Generation Officer's Cymru Can vision would seem appropriate.

Food Resilience

We would also advocate for a short supply focus. More recently, food resilience has become a buzzword but it is important, and it delivers benefits that we, and others, have been advocating for many years (benefits that strengthen the local circular economy, deliver higher nutritional value of food locally, and that reduce environmental impact), and it includes processing and storage capabilities. Local producers can offer short supply chain options to their communities but for longer term and broader resilience, the ability to process locally is also essential. A simple case in point is we recently purchased a barrel washer, as part of our machinery ring, which was then able to be used so that schools could accept carrots from local growers.

Currently many public settings rely on ready-prepped veg (due to lack of time, staff and kitchen facilities), so there is a tendency for meals to be centred around a limited variety of veg, with a

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reliance on a small number of varieties grown for uniformity and ease of processing rather than taste, nutrition and other positive qualities such as climate resilience and cultural value. More local processing would allow more sustainable seasonal eating that naturally brings more variety to the public plate.

Processing Requirements for Horticulture

There is both a “value-added product” element of processing, and a “fit for consumer” element. For small horticulture enterprises, this latter area can prove a barrier – particularly for accessing large markets such as public sector.

We need investment in localised primary processing and storage equipment such as washing, dicing and, cold storage and packing equipment. This doesn’t have to be expensive, but it does have to be joined up and the financial burden cannot be placed on individual growers/farmers. There is a clear case for the benefit of relatively low levels of investment in shared equipment and infrastructure for delivering diversified primary production, processing, aggregation and distribution to strengthen short supply chains.

The horticulture infrastructure grants are positive but still require up-front finance which is out of reach to many growers working on fine margins. Through our experience of setting up the Machinery Ring in Carmarthenshire, growers are very keen to pay for shared machinery – particularly where it is connected to other opportunities (such as supplying into Welsh Veg in Schools), but are unable/unwilling to take on the responsibility for management of that operation. So, intermediaries can help to ensure use of machines/tools/processing equipment whilst also reducing the risk for growers.

The other area where support is important is around the need for accreditation, particularly for public procurement. For example, growers supplying into the Welsh Veg In Schools project must have Organic status or be working towards accreditation. The cost of this accreditation can be prohibitive for smaller growers, so help towards this would be a positive step.

Through his Written Statement last December and the new Community Food Strategy, the Deputy First Minister has signalled his support for a review of Planning Policy Wales, to help develop more horticulture in Wales. It is vital that any changes to planning include support for horticultural enterprises to build the necessary onsite infrastructure – washing and packing facilities and so on.

We also need investment in storage solutions that ensure less on-farm and end-user waste. There is growing demand within public procurement for Individually Quick Frozen (IQF) fruit and veg, which both taste and looks better than conventional blast-frozen produce and can be used in precise amounts, straight from the freezer.

Increasing Consumption

Distressingly Wales still lags behind other nations in the UK and Europe when it comes to a healthy population and levels of poverty – particularly among children¹. Processing Welsh food should be focused on making the food we produce accessible to the local population and maintaining a high level of nutrition. We believe a target of 75% of recommended vegetable consumption produced sustainably in Wales by 2030 is achievable and should be prioritised – and activity should also be focused on assuring a local market for this produce.

This will involve localised processing facilities allowing food to get to plates quicker. It also means continuing to push for high standards within the food processing industry – fair wages, high animal welfare, environmental protection, and connections to the local community so that workers in the sector can afford to enjoy their Taste of Wales and local people seek out their local produce. These investments will enable public procurers to access local produce so it can feed the most vulnerable people in our society. Investment in procurement workforce skills and status is essential for maximising purchasing power for social, environmental, and economic benefit.

Low veg consumption (associated with multiple health issues including heart disease and cancer) is a problem in both urban and rural areas: deprived urban areas are often flooded with fast food outlets and chain convenience stores offering only Ultra Processed Food, while more remote rural areas, despite producing food, are often fresh-food deserts for local people.

We have a vision of a food system that eliminates the need for food banks and ensures good jobs – reflecting the belief that the food system should be socially just. No one in Wales should go hungry or be unable to afford healthy food.

We need to acknowledge that much of Wales is extremely rural and local supply chains cannot benefit from economies of scale. Innovation in localised processing and distribution networks – combining these two elements – could provide opportunity to reduce costs and connect along supply chains. Again, the burden cannot be with growers to take the risk on this.

Further Information

We would encourage the Committee to review the following research and recommendations in which we were involved.

- NICRE – [Developing the Infrastructure for Short Supply Chains](#)
- Local Food Plan - www.localfoodplan.org/

We are looking forward to participating in the Round Table at the Royal Welsh Agricultural Show on Tuesday 22nd July.

This response is supported by Our Food 1200. <https://ourfood1200.wales/>

ⁱ cms.trussell.org.uk/sites/default/files/wp-assets/2023-Hunger-in-Wales-report.pdf
www.peopleshealthtrust.org.uk/health-inequalities/the-national-picture/wales