

Senedd Cymru

Y Pwyllgor Cydraddoldeb a Chyfiawnder Cymdeithasol

Ymchwiliad: Deddf Llesiant Cenedlaethau'r Dyfodol (Cymru) 2015

Ymateb gan: Synnwyr Bwyd Cymru

Welsh Parliament

Equality and Social Justice Committee

Inquiry: Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015

Evidence from: Food Sense Wales



Food Sense Wales: Response to the ESJ Inquiry into post-legislative scrutiny of the Well-being of Future Generations Act

1. Introduction

As a practitioner in the Food System, I would like to take the opportunity to provide evidence to this inquiry based on my experience of working within Wales' Food System since 2014, as the development of the Act was entering its final stages.

There are two main areas I would like to reflect on.

- i) The first is highlighting the way in which the Act does not meet the needs of ensuring a just and resilient food system for all in Wales.
- ii) The second is reflecting on the "softer" impact the Act has had on my approach to food system work in Wales; starting with my role as Food Cardiff Co-ordinator – developing one of the first Food Partnerships in the UK and pioneering the Food and Fun model with partners – and then founding Food Sense Wales, a fund within the Cardiff & Vale Health Charity with a mission to influence and impact on how food is produced and consumed in Wales.

2. About Food Sense Wales

Founded in 2018, [Food Sense Wales](#) was established to drive forward a cross-sector approach to the food system in Wales.

Food Sense Wales works with communities, organisations, policymakers and Government across Wales to create a food and farming system that is good for people and good for the planet.

Food Sense Wales understands the sustainability challenges across the food system and works on multiple levels to co-create a food system that is good for people and the planet. It draws on consciousness practices learnt through its work with the [Conscious Food Systems Alliance](#) (such as self-awareness and presence, emotional awareness, capacity to listen deeply, empathy, openness, creativity, and resilience) and employs the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act's five ways of working. It sees building relationships as fundamental to change and works with [Local Food Partnerships](#) across Wales who play a similar role regionally and act as regional convenors and facilitators of change.

Food Sense Wales has a strategy based around three key pillars:

- 1. Building a positive food culture in Wales that invests in people, embraces our heritage, celebrates and values “the local” and puts food education front and centre**
- 2. Catalysing a revolution in local and sustainable procurement inspired through horticulture: healthy and sustainable food on the public plate should catalyse demand for the same on every plate in Wales**
- 3. Co-creating a food policy and legislative framework that enables, sets targets for and monitors the transition of agroecological production and consumption in Wales to benefit the environment and society**

Food Sense Wales aims to achieve these goals through:

- **Developing a network of cross sector food partnerships across Wales that meet local needs in order to achieve national change**
- **Piloting and scaling innovative approaches to inspire action with initiatives such as Welsh Veg in Schools**
- **Advocating for and developing good food policy building consensus with food related organisations operating in Wales and beyond through Food Policy Alliance Cymru**
- **Telling the stories of the experiences, achievements and challenges within the food system through effective communications**

3. How can Food and diets be integrated into the Well-being of Future Generations Act (WFG Act)

Wales cannot achieve the well-being goals of the WFG Act without action on improving access to healthy and sustainable diets for all current and future generations.

Despite the importance of food to well-being, the food system and diets are missing from the definitions of Wales’ well-being goals. As a result, food is largely missing from the well-being objectives which public bodies are required to set under the legislation, this results in the lack of integration of the food system and diets in policymaking at local and national level. A clear example here is the

attempted use of the act to challenge planning consents on Fast Food outlets close to schools and in an already saturated unhealthy food environment.

In a recent Community of Practice with Wales' food partnership co-ordinators, the issue of planning was raised, with co-ordinators from a number of Local Authorities citing examples of fast food outlets being granted planning permission where health was dismissed as a material consideration.

One co-ordinator said: "Despite being a Marmot region, the council aren't able to make health a 'material planning consideration'. We're finding that fast food outlets are clustering in our low socio-economic communities and near schools. Often there will be a pioneering outlet and then that will give the green light for all the others to come in....[Planning Policy Wales - Edition 12](#) has little mention of food and planners don't have national guidance to tie in with the Future Generations Act."

The case for food and diets to be integrated into the WFG Act

In 2020 the [A Welsh Food System Fit For Future Generations](#) report outlined how food and diets are critical to each of Wales' well-being goals and found that Wales urgently needs to create an integrated, sustainable and just food system fit for future generations.

[The Food \(Wales\) Bill](#) narrowly failed to progress to Stage 2 in the Senedd in 2023. The Bill proposed the development of a national food strategy for Wales and food duties for public bodies in order to create a more sustainable and coherent approach to food policy in Wales. Legal advice commissioned by [Food Policy Alliance Cymru](#) for the bill found that the WFG Act 'does not come close to providing an adequate legislative framework for improving food policy in Wales and none of the well-being goals and indicators contain any meaningful engagement with food'.

[The Future Generations Report 2025](#), produced by the Future Generations Commissioner for Wales (FGC) recommends the integration of food and diets into the WFG Act due to the:

- i) Importance of food and diets to the progress of each of Wales' well-being goals: food systems are the greatest driver of biodiversity loss and a significant contributor to climate change, while the social and economic [cost](#) of obesity to Wales is set to rise to £2.4 billion by 2050.

- ii) Growing risks to Wales' food resilience from global insecurity and climate change – risks which pose challenges for current and future generations' ability to access healthy and sustainable diets.

The [Wales Net Zero 2035 Challenge Group on Food Security](#) has outlined how progress towards Wales' net zero commitments must include actions to improve the sustainability of the food system. Recommendations from the group include the integration of food into the WFG Act.

Food is largely missing from the well-being objectives which public bodies are required by the WFG Act to set, and work towards. [Research in 2023 commissioned by Food Sense Wales and the FGC](#) found that only eight local authorities and only two health boards have integrated food into their well-being plans. The research also found that the lack of a national food resilience plan and the omission of food and diets from the WFG Act contributes to this gap.

Since its creation, the WFG Act has shaped all new legislation and Welsh Government policy frameworks. For Wales to address the complex challenges of public health, land use, planning and the climate and nature emergencies – we require a WFG Act that integrates food and diets in policy-making and supports the public sector to develop the holistic approaches required for Wales to achieve the Act's vision.

The [Social Partnership & Public Procurement Act in 2023](#) amended the definition of the Prosperous Wales goal to include 'fair work', this has supported the Welsh Government's efforts to embed fair work approaches across the public sector. A similar approach could be taken to integrating food and diets into the WFG Act.

Since the creation of the WFG Act, food has risen up the political and public policy agenda in Wales and across the UK and it is welcome that the Commissioner has picked food up as an area of focus for [Cymru Can](#) (following the outgoing Commissioner's statement that given her time again she would look at the food system). This has led to collaboration between the Future Generations office and Food Sense Wales in building advice to public bodies on food, and in partnership with [Welsh Government's Community Food Strategy](#) and their support of [Local Food Partnerships](#) – both through the Food Division and Tackling Poverty team. This triangulation of support has been facilitated through the WFG Act but the impact of the efforts on the ground is hampered by local decision making within public bodies due to the lack of requirement for them to consider food seriously as part of their statutory duties under the Act.

The UK Government is currently drafting a UK Food Strategy, and the Scottish Parliament passed the [Good Food Act in 2022](#) which places a duty on Scottish Government and public bodies in Scotland to produce good food plans. The Welsh Government has published [Food Matters](#) (an outline of its current food related programmes) and the [Community Food Strategy](#). These are important developments but have their limitations as described above. Wales currently has no overarching long-term national food resilience plan and food is missing from the WFG Act.

We believe that Wales requires a comprehensive national food resilience plan to enable local and regional actors to deliver actions to improve access to healthy and sustainable diets for all. Amending the WFG Act to include food will not be sufficient in addressing Wales' food challenges, however it will support the integration of food within the duties of the WFG Act and would complement future developments around a comprehensive approach to food governance in Wales.

4. The WFG Act: culture change and the ways of working

I would consider myself "generation Future Generations Act" as I came into post in 2014, just as the suite of indicators for the Act were being consulted upon. I recognised at this point that the proposed indicators were not sufficient to direct public bodies to consider the food system however I was inspired by the spirit of the Act and the framework it provided to think holistically about interventions.

In 2015 I was part of a team that developed the pilot for [Food and Fun](#), guided in part by the framework of the WFG Act. Food and Fun (the School Holiday enrichment programme) would have been one of the first pilots to demonstrate how the Act could work in Action. It considered all of the Wellbeing Goals and generated a model that leaned into the ways of working. Through evaluating the Programme and demonstrating how it met the spirit of the Act it was a programme that gained cross-governmental support and became a programme for Government Commitment.

A further example of another way in which Food Sense Wales has worked within the spirit of the WFG Act is through developing support for [local food partnerships](#) across Wales; developing a community of food leaders who are all working to improve their local food systems for current and future generations.

You can learn more about Local Food Partnerships by reading the [Status Report here](#).

You can also read some [case studies here](#) or watch the [explainer video here](#).

Building on the work of local food partnerships, Food Sense Wales has also been exploring the development of the horticulture sector in Wales through its [Welsh Veg in Schools](#) project. Welsh Veg in Schools is a pilot project co-ordinated by [Food Sense Wales](#) that aims to get more organically produced Welsh veg into primary school meals across Wales.

Working with partners that include [Castell Howell](#), [Farming Connect Horticulture](#) as well as a host of enthusiastic growers, the **Welsh Veg in Schools** project is helping to get more locally produced organic vegetables into school lunches.

By leveraging the market opportunity that the Welsh Government's Universal Free school meal policy creates, and by supporting public bodies to meet their statutory requirements, **Welsh Veg in Schools** is catalysing organic veg production in Wales and building resilience for the future. This work is crucial if public bodies are serious about meeting their obligations under the WFG Act whilst supporting local communities and building resilience against future shocks and climate change.

Our recent [Tonnes of Change report](#) noted key learnings to date and they include the importance of building connections, relationships and trust across the supply chain in order to overcome the many challenges experienced, and to share risk and reward across all stakeholders. Putting into practice the WFG Act's ways of working has been key in the success of the pilot building momentum.

Our experience has found that much of the good work that the Act has inspired in the food system isn't necessarily documented through the current reporting mechanisms. This was reflected in our research with the FGC Office into food and public bodies – public bodies often weren't even aware (or didn't report) on the work being developed in their area through wellbeing plans.

In summary I think it is important for the committee to consider:

- How the Act has provided inspiration and a framework for change that isn't necessarily measured through well-being plans.
- It should consider how amending the Act to include food could facilitate and catalyse positive actions that public bodies and their partners are capable of delivering and
- Whether expanding and developing the guidance to public bodies on the Ways of Working would amplify the impacts of the Act.

To find out more about the work of Food Sense Wales, please visit our [website](#).
You can also contact me directly with the email addresses below.

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