

RFW 31

Ymateb gan : Cyngor Bwrdeistref Sirol Caerffili
Evidence from : Caerphilly County Borough Council

1. What is your vision for the future of food in Wales and what needs to be done to achieve it?

1.1.1 'For every region across Wales to have its own distinct, high quality food and drink offer, and for hospitality providers and purchasers across Wales to provide and celebrate high quality Welsh produce.'

1.1.2 In order to do this we need:

- More accessible funding needs to be made available to support innovation within the Welsh Food and Drink industry through a streamlined and dynamic finance ecosystem;
- More opportunities need to be created for Welsh businesses to access public sector procurement framework or other contracts;
- Funding needs to be made available to facilitate knowledge sharing and good practice on the value and benefits of local produce, and
- A Wales-wide marketing campaign highlighting quality Welsh produce and a 'buy local' approach.

1.1.3 Our vision for food in Wales requires a fully integrated food policy to protect the best interests of Wales; ensuring that all relevant stakeholders have input. Future policy improvements need to reflect the wider context of food delivery in Wales. We need a "farm to fork" approach; one that recognises Wales-specific issues, needs and priorities. A Wales based, intelligence led, cross-agency, whole system approach is necessary if Welsh Government's ambitions for the primary food production sector in Wales are to be delivered. We need an approach that recognises food regulation is part of a wider (devolved) regulatory and public health delivery system; a policy approach that is better informed by the views of consumers, businesses and regulators in Wales.

1.1.4 A strategic approach to Food Policy can protect and promote the long term well-being of present and future generations. Such a policy should be integrated to include food safety, food standards, food fraud, nutrition and obesity, animal movement, feed controls, primary production. A national strategic policy will benefit business and consumers through a joined up approach, strong on prevention, which recognises Wales' devolution journey and its wider policy and public protection delivery system. This would recognise and enhance the social, economic, environmental, and cultural value of food in Wales.

2. How can we rethink food so that we have:

2.1 Healthy, locally produced food that is accessible and affordable

2.1.1 Overall Welsh Government would need to map what crops are currently produced in Wales – this would highlight what is available within the Market. Local farmers could be

encouraged to produce new crops. However, this will only be an option if they know there is a local market for their goods. To encourage and promote the sector within Wales will need the support of a major retailer(s) to promote Welsh goods.

2.1.2 Work with local allotments to see if they can hold local markets to sell surplus vegetables grown on site (development of allotment shops). In addition, it should be made easier for local authorities to add local suppliers/producers so that the county borough can market its own local produce within its tourist attractions.

2.1.3 Some customers welcome the fact that we are providing Welsh produce and will pay a little more but not all. 9 times out of 10 the price margin on Welsh products is higher when compared to non-Welsh products.

2.1.4 Introduce a nutritional benefit/coupon scheme which allows recipients to buy more healthy than 'non healthy' produce from local traders participating in the scheme.

2.1.5 Provide professional, independent, locally available trader regulatory advice and guidance on how to comply with the law and take appropriate enforcement action against those who flout the law.

2.1.6 Consumer education programmes promoting healthy eating patterns should be a priority.

2.1.7 Consumer 'shopping' education programmes designed to help consumers identify foods that are healthy for their families and the environment. Food labelling is often confusing and contains lists of complex ingredients.

2.1.8 Promote school gardens and teach children how to grow and cook their own food.

2.1.9 Promote policies that support and protect community gardens.

2.1.10 Provide access to free and safe drinking water in public places.

2.1.11 Support the sale of local food across the community where farmers can sell food direct to customers e.g. provide venues for regular farmers markets, community supported agriculture operations or through local institutions such as schools and hospitals.

2.1.12 Ensure that residents can access healthy and affordable food through public transportation e.g. by realigning bus routes, providing free shuttles, free parking.

2.2 An innovative food industry sustaining high quality jobs

2.2.1 Funding from RDP sources will need replacing when we leave the EU. Their impact on developing smaller rural enterprises across the UK has been crucial to the development of business supporting local employment across Wales.

2.2.2 Introduce policies that support local businesses that manufacture and retail healthy food. Local and regional food systems create jobs and promote economic activity in the areas they serve.

2.3 Sustainably produced food with high environmental and animal welfare standards

2.3.1 Sustainable farming methods and animal welfare give added value to the products and the places they come from. This feeds into the attraction of Wales for visitors from within the UK and abroad.

2.3.2 The introduction and successful implementation of a mandatory Food Hygiene Rating Scheme in Wales is being hailed as an exemplar and has helped to make a real impact on food hygiene standards in Wales. In its 2015 report to Welsh Government, the FSA noted that since November 2013, Food hygiene ratings have continued to improve with 59% of food businesses having a rating of 5 (very good), and 94% having a rating of 3 (generally satisfactory), 4 (good) or 5. (In October 2012 the number of Welsh food businesses with a rating of 5 was 37%, with 83% having a rating of 3, 4 or 5.)

Source: Review of the Implementation and Operation of the Statutory Food Hygiene Rating Scheme in Wales and the Operation of the Appeals System, February 2015.

2.3.3 Local authorities have worked hard, in partnership with the FSA, to establish the key characteristics of the scheme: visibility, profile, consistency, independence & objectivity, transparency and openness. The success of the scheme is dependent on timely inspection by independent Local Authority enforcement officers. Furthermore, consistency in application of the scheme in Wales is vital and this has been key to its success. This cannot be achieved if independent third party bodies are accredited to issue ratings.

2.3.4 Any move away from independent Local Authority regulation of food safety and food standards should be approached with caution. Access to third party audit reports have limited benefit, as the auditors only audit to a specified audit framework/matrix and are paid by industry to do so. They are not always independent reports.

2.3.5 In the South Wales Outbreak of E. coli O157 in September 2005, a total of 157 cases were identified, 31 people were admitted to hospital and tragically one boy, aged 5, died. The lessons from the Inquiry must not be forgotten.

2.3.6 Experience shows that many food business operators set up businesses without notifying or registering with their local authority; they often have no experience or indeed training in relation to food hygiene, safety or standards. Replacing the existing registration scheme for a licensing regime (with some potential exceptions) is supported. Pre-licensing engagement with food business operators, with the use of appropriate conditions and permissioning, would ensure the production of safe food from day one of trading. This is good for business and good for the consumer.

2.3.7 Sustainably produced food with high environmental and animal welfare standards requires the integration of environmental health, economic profitability and social and economic equity. It is the responsibility of all participants in the system including policymakers & enforcers, food producers, processors, distributors, retailers and marketers, consumers and waste recovery.

2.3.8 There is a need to develop strategies that broaden consumer perspectives so that environmental quality, resource use and social equity issues are also considered in shopping decisions.

2.3.9 Encouraged consumers to buy higher welfare animal products. Buying them will encourage investment in higher welfare farming which is smaller scale and poses fewer risks to animals, people and the planet.

2.3.10 To ensure Food/Feed in Wales is safe the future regulation of Food, Feed and Animal Health needs to be well resourced and enforced by professional independent regulators at a local level.

2.3.11 Provide businesses with free advice on regulatory issues, investigate alleged breaches of consumer criminal law and take appropriate enforcement action against those that break it. Support and commit to those businesses wishing to enter a Primary/Home Authority partnership.

2.3.12 Engage with local businesses to reduce the amount of food waste. Take steps to increase the amount of surplus food/feed redistributed.

2.3.13 Encourage businesses to reduce food packaging which will reduce waste, save money and deliver environmental benefits.

2.4 An internationally renowned destination for food lovers

2.4.1 A clear link needs to be established between the high quality of Welsh food and drink with traditional values and the high standards of Welsh hospitality. The quality of our hospitality in the food and drink we provide for visitors has its roots in these 10th century laws. The link between two of the most prominent aspects of modern Wales – its farming and its heritage, which attracts millions of visitors a year, is crucial.

2.4.2 Farming over the millennia has given us the ‘Face of Wales’ and determined much of how our countryside and uplands look. These are some of the primary reasons why people come to Wales. ‘Taste of Wales’- regional specialities link in closely to the ‘visitor offer’ available in all parts of Wales. This is a national campaign that needs support across Wales.

2.4.3 Support from Visit Wales/WAG and local authorities is vital for the food festivals across the country, from larger ones like the Abergavenny Food Festival to the smaller ones happening around the country.

2.4.4 Further work is needed to maximise the potential of local produce for the Welsh economy and culture. Barriers include a perception that local people will not be willing to pay (for what are sometimes perceived to be higher) prices for such products. Also, many purchasers source produce from wholesale suppliers who may not necessarily stock local produce.

2.4.5 CCBC are rolling out a programme of ‘Meet the Producer’ events. Research has shown that regular highlighting and working with producers and purchasers can create behavioral change, by reinforcing the availability and addressing some of the perceived and existing barriers. We are also facilitating events whereby purchasers travel to other areas to see how successful local supply chains and business partnership can be, and how presentation and basic information, such as highlighting provenance in menus and on marketing and promotion, can make a real difference. Additionally, these will hopefully show that people, be they local or visitors, are interested in where produce comes from and are often happy to pay a premium for good quality local produce.

2.4.6 CCBC will also be identifying wholesale suppliers and facilitating ‘Meet the Producer’ events in order to increase awareness within this part of the supply chain. This will then enable individuals who simply do not have the time to source alternative suppliers, to access local produce through their supplier.

2.4.9 CCBC are looking to increase our 'Ask for Local' campaign encouraging people to ask what local produce is available. We are aware that many purchasers already supply local produce, but do not actively promote this. By delivering a multi-track approach, we hope that the various barriers, experienced by both producers and purchasers can be addressed.

2.4.10 Cwm a Mynydd is facilitating conversations with our Procurement department to ensure that local producers have access to framework supply contracts and are available at Council premises.

2.4.11 Cwm a Mynydd is a key partner in developing a collaborative regional food supply chain project, working with farmers and other primary producers to create shorter supply chains with purchasers.