National Food Discussion

Response to the Scottish Government's
"Choosing the Right Ingredients: The Future for Food in
Scotland" discussion paper

Report from participants at the Food Discussion Seminar
held on 18 March 2008 at The Piping Centre, Glasgow
run by Community Food and Health (Scotland)

Contents

Introduction

This report is a response to the Scottish Government's discussion paper "Choosing the Right Ingredients" which invites input from all sectors to the concept of a national food policy for Scotland. A seminar was held on 18 March 2008 in the Piping Centre, Glasgow to facilitate discussion about the national food policy and this document is a report from that seminar. Community Food and Health (Scotland) funded and facilitated the seminar, but this report and the responses it contains represent solely the views and opinions of the participants.

The majority of those who attended this seminar work in voluntary and community projects dealing with food and health issues in areas of low income, or with groups experiencing exclusion. These people have direct experience of the impact that food and health inequalities have on their clients and their communities. They bring an insider's view to the areas of need, and have contributed practical proposals based on their experience of addressing those needs.

The importance of these community-based workers in delivering improvements has been recognised.

> *"Community food initiatives across Scotland reach many of the most vulnerable in our society and, as Minister for Public Health, I thank those at the front line who are supporting a range of food and health improvement projects for those most in need in our communities."*
> *Shona Robison MSP, Minister for Public Health, March 2008*

Their contribution to the strategic development of the national food policy – in this report and other responses to the discussion document – is equally worthy of recognition.

Practicalities of the Seminar

This section describes how the seminar was organised, the participants who attended and the programme for the day.

Attendance

Invitations to the seminar were circulated through the Community Food and Health (Scotland) network and promoted on their website. All those who indicated they would attend were sent a copy of the Food Discussion Paper.

The participants came mainly from the Glasgow and Edinburgh areas, but with some representation from elsewhere in Scotland.

Edinburgh and surrounding area	11
Glasgow and surrounding area, including Paisley	23
Fife	3
Central Scotland – e.g. Falkirk, Perth, Stirling, Bellshill, Lanark, etc.	7
Aberdeen	1
Isle of Lewis	1

The following sectors were represented:-

Voluntary and Community projects	30
Local Authorities and Government departments	7
NHS and Health Board	4
Commercial companies	5

From the original list of 57 who indicated they would attend, 46 attended on the day.

Programme

Two speakers from the Scottish Government, Linda Fenocchi, Food and Wider Scottish Policy Leader, from the Food Industry Unit and Elaine McGregor, of the Food and Health Team in the Public Health and Wellbeing Directorate, opened the seminar.

Linda Fenocchi introduced and summarised the discussion document. She indicated that there is a desire to change attitudes towards food, and while she recognised that there are tensions which will arise, the Government aims to give an equal voice to as many people as possible. She welcomed this seminar as one of many Food Discussions which are taking place. She was positive about the impact that discussions like this could have on the final policy.

Elaine McGregor spoke about the new funding arrangements that will give local authorities greater autonomy on the delivery of national and local outcomes. While this change may seem threatening to many local voluntary organisations in the immediate future, she affirmed that there is a real opportunity to become more

involved in helping to deliver on local and national outcomes and thereby increase the long-term sustainability of valuable voluntary sector projects. She asked the group to really think about what it is that community food projects need from the national food discussion and also from better engagement with the wider food sector across Scotland, as the opportunity to influence national policy on food should not be missed.

After the opening speeches, the participants worked in six discussion groups. Where appropriate, those working with specific target audiences were grouped together at the same table.

> Table 1 – those involved with supporting people experiencing homelessness.
> Table 2 – those involved with supporting people with mental health issues.
> Table 3 – those involved with projects supporting children and young people.
> Tables 4, 5 and 6 were mixed and included representatives from healthy eating projects, food co-ops, private companies, local authority food and health initiatives, healthy living projects etc.

The six discussion groups then spent the rest of the seminar considering the following questions:-

- **What do you think?**
  Do you understand and are you clear on what the discussion paper is saying? What are your thoughts?
  In general, how could a national food policy contribute towards better health and wellbeing for low-income communities in Scotland?

- **How will we get there?**
  In detail, how could a food policy for Scotland support low-income communities to improve their access to and take up of a healthy diet?

- **What do we need to do and what do we want to say?**
  What do we want to feed back to the Scottish Government?

Each group was supported by a facilitator and a scribe. While some suggestions were provided for facilitators and scribes, each was free to conduct and record the discussion in the way most appropriate to the group.

The questions were deliberately broad and each group approached them in their own way, focussing on the issues of greatest interest to them. There was a highly practical element to many of the discussions, good projects were suggested which could be transferred to other areas, and detailed plans were developed for dealing with problems. This reflects the practical focus of many of the participants who work with low-income and vulnerable communities. They are used to problem-solving in

their work and approached this in the same way – working from practical solutions up to strategy.

Producing the Report

This collection of responses to the discussion document is from the participants of the seminar, and does not preclude other responses from the individuals who attended, or from the organisations that they represent. Indeed, all participants were encouraged to consider submitting their own individual or organisational response to the Scottish Government.

The issues which are highlighted in this report were raised and refined within the discussion groups. Sometimes this involved debate and discussion around opposing views, and sometimes there was a creative synergy in developing collective ideas. Analysis and collation of the notes and records of the discussions have formed the structure of the rest of this report. To keep this report to a manageable length, only a representative sample of the many points recorded have been included in the body of the report.

Where direct quotes from the flip chart notes taken on the day are used, they are presented in italics.

The full record of the flip chart notes from all discussion groups is available from Community Food and Health (Scotland) on request.

This report has been collated and written by an external agent[1], rather than Community Food and Health (Scotland). The external agent was present on the day and had access to all the material collected from each of the discussion groups.

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Participants

This section provides some background information which illustrates the breadth of knowledge and experience of the seminar participants, and gives a flavour of the environment within which many of them work. This will give a context for the issues and responses included in this report.

Background

The following individuals are representative of the range of people who contributed their ideas to the seminar and to this document.

A worker with a Mental Health project who oversees and trains clients in food preparation. Very interested in both food preparation as a training and employment opportunity, and as a way to improve the overall health and wellbeing of the project's clients. "*Good to be able to feed those interests into the discussion document.*"

A development worker for a project which supports groups to set up their own food growing projects. Wanted to come along today to see if the Food Discussion was something which she could have a say about – *"and it was!"*

A community food worker who is planning to hold a local Food Discussion event. She improved her own understanding of the discussion paper and how the discussion could be facilitated in the local level. *"Hopefully the Scottish Government will be really listening to the community feedback - would love to see a big difference."*

A project worker who provides support and development for low-income communities to break down barriers to, and improve access to, affordable, fresh food. She feels that the development of a national food policy is very important and much needed in Scotland, particularly around issues of legislation and planning in relation to food and food retailing i.e. how communities can access food and what types of food are sold.

A food and health education worker who would *"like to see **anything** done about improving eating habits in Scotland, as there seems to be something out of balance at the moment."*

The chief executive of a voluntary organisation that provides a grocery home delivery service for elderly, housebound and disabled people. She has a particular interest in older people and how they access food. *"Where does an aging population fit in a national food policy and how will it improve access to food for older people in Scotland? 'All our Futures' policy document was launched in Spring 2007 and included food and health priorities and actions, in particular food preparation and support. Where does 'All our Futures' fit now and where are the links to a national food policy for Scotland?"*

A chef at a homelessness project who came along *"expecting a bit more lecturing about healthy eating, but was very pleased that there was a lot more listening."* Happy to give his input as people who are homeless *"often get left out"* of strategic discussions.

The acting manager of a partnership of community food co-ops. He is interested to see how the Scottish Government envisages community and voluntary groups participation in food policy and how they can contribute to the outcomes being developed in a food policy.

Experience

The discussion groups spent some time exploring and sharing their experience of food within their own lives and work, including:-

Homeless people - *There is an issue around **valuing** food – food is often on the bottom of the list of the priorities of those dealing with homelessness – individuals, organisations, charities.*

Not having time and space to think about health and healthy eating when you are experiencing homelessness.

*Homeless people don't have much of a choice – 'they are **given** food', 'you have to appreciate what you get'.*

Vulnerable groups – *Healthy eating can have a positive effect on mental health (Food and Mood work). However, engagement and education can be a slow process with some vulnerable groups – and therefore changes can take more time. Need to educate workers in mental health sector too.*

Those with diet-related issues (obesity, diabetes etc), those in low-income and vulnerable groups may need particular help and support with food issues i.e. help with costs; cooking skills; more confidence building 'cooking is like learning a new language – learning a new culture'.

Children's projects - *Hungry for Success – cost of school meals to the pupils needs to be addressed, as the local chippie is very often cheaper. Local fast food outlets may undercut the school meals, giving the pupils money in their pockets, and adding to the stigmatising of those who receive free-school meals.*

A continuous process of input to children from birth onwards to adulthood. Sense that 0-5 needs are well catered for. Older children and young people not catered for in same way, e.g. older children didn't receive same Hungry for Success (H4S) messages in same way as today's children.

General – *Loss of enjoyment of food 'eat to live, not live to eat'. Food has a high focus in other countries.*

A key role for FAMILIES, including grandparents – part of the solution, not just part of the problem.

Lack of FOOD CONFIDENCE.

Reactions to the Discussion Document

Presentation and Content

The first point of discussion was the document itself. The groups were asked whether they found the document itself understandable and clear, and what their reactions and thoughts were on the presentation and content. This generated mixed reactions:-

- Positive – *'Provided new and valuable information – particularly about the size of the food industry in Scotland';* Raising interest – *'Interesting information – stimulated interest, went to look for more information on the internet';* Good illustrations – *'Loved picture on front';* Quite clear language – *'Readable', 'Community would have no problem with the language', 'Clear and concise',* and *'well structured', 'Good that all different spheres included'.*

- Less positive – *'But sketchy, wanted more depth', 'Not in-depth document, but interested in policies coming from it', 'Voluntary sector should have been more included, earlier in the process', 'Size and importance of food industry recognised in the document – is there a bias towards it?', 'Currently commercial focus – needs balancing – HEALTH, job creation'*

Several omissions were identified and it was felt they should have been included or referred to:-

- *'Nothing addressing the problems in crofting and isolated communities' 'Missing from list of actions for local authorities is planning decisions, which are key to the accessibility of food, location of supermarkets and sustainability of local shops, etc.', 'Healthy food vouchers – how would these work? This was a manifesto commitment', 'Free fruit and veg was also a commitment. How to deliver?'.*

A National Food Policy

The groups were then asked about how a national food policy could contribute towards better health and wellbeing for low-income communities in Scotland. There was general support for the development of a national food policy, for a range of reasons.

Food was seen as an **important cross-cutting theme** which could deliver improvements in health, confidence and equality –

> *Can do a lot with food – used for community engagement, different culture, social interaction, raising awareness.*

> *There is a SOCIAL DIMENSION to what community and local food initiatives offer – an antidote to increasing anonymity in the food system.*

The potential of a national food policy to **build links between government departments, organisations and across sectors** was identified as a benefit –

> *A national food policy would raise more awareness across all sectors of government departments. Potential for more holistic/consistent approach as opposed to single strand policies.*

There were also comments on **recognising and building on existing work** rather than starting afresh –

> *Build on Scottish Diet Action Plan work and SDAP Review – look at affordability, availability, aptitude, attitude.*

> *Implement best practice initiatives across the board (need to have good evaluation process).*

> *DON'T RE-INVENT THE WHEEL!*

And some **scepticism** was expressed about the aspirations –

> *How much power does the NHS and local government have in procurement?*

> *Market dominance by supermarkets may work against national food policy aspirations.*

Hopes and Aspirations

The discussion then turned to how a food policy for Scotland could support low-income communities to improve their access and take up of a healthy diet. There were many aspirations and hopes expressed, including:-

> *The challenge is to **get (good, healthy) food valued** in circumstances where an unhealthy diet is easier, cheaper and less stressful.*

> *Engagement – through local food forums which include communities, local government, NHS, industry, agriculture.*

> ***Local application of national aspirations** – community food initiatives and related projects (drugs, youth work, etc) have a role in sustaining effective initiatives.*

> *Government needs to tell manufacturers what they should be doing e.g. reformulating fat, sugar and salt content; environmental impacts; more stringent labelling etc. MUST put responsibility on the manufacturer, legislation needs to be firmer.*

Key Issues

This section collates the key issues which the discussion groups identified as priorities to feed into the national food policy discussion.

Positive Change

The main focus of all the discussions and all the issues prioritised was how a positive change can be supported - in behaviour and culture around food, health and diet, and particularly among low-income and excluded groups and communities.

Important within any food policy to recognise attitudes, skills, confidence and knowledge of the population – the FOOD CULTURE, the level of FOOD LITERACY.

Helping communities find their own solutions, encouraging participation in food related activities.

Encourage people to take responsibility for themselves by education and awareness-raising, and participating in local food projects.

Priorities

Each group was asked to identify and prioritise key issues that they wished to see addressed in the food policy. Some groups whittled a long list down to three or four key priorities, while others recorded many more.

There was no opportunity at the seminar for the groups to discuss the issues and suggestions collectively, however there was a great deal of overlap between the six discussion groups. The key issues have been grouped under the following seven headings:-

1. **Equal Access to Healthy Food** – including the economic and physical barriers which can be addressed through services and funding, and the essential role of the food industry in reducing food and health inequality.

2. **Community Enterprise Opportunities** – training and employment initiatives which could be developed around food production and distribution. Also includes the redistribution of surplus food through initiatives such as FareShare.

3. **Information** – consistent and understandable food labelling was identified as a key issue in five of the six discussion groups. Also suggested was a more connected presentation of food and health messages, with healthy eating information delivered in an exciting way for a range of target groups.

4. **Education and Schools** – many issues were identified focussing on the key role of schools as learning centres AND as community buildings AND as food providers.

5. **Food Growing Projects** - providing opportunities for all ages to experience the food cycle – from ground to pot. Five out of six discussion groups suggested that these types of projects should be encouraged and be more widely available.

6. **Role of the voluntary sector** in developing and delivering a national food policy.

7. **Consistency and commitment** – a consistent message about healthy eating across ALL sectors, and a commitment to ensuring health and social justice is placed at the centre of any food policy.

These seven priorities are expanded and illustrated in the following sections.

1. Equal Access to Healthy Food

One of the main discussion topics was the food and health inequalities that are experienced in many low-income communities and groups. How a national food policy could support the reduction and eradication of these inequalities was a key issue in all groups.

Some of the proposals are about direct intervention by public services and government funding to address these barriers – 1A. But the majority of the proposals and suggestions focussed on the role of the food industry, both production and retail, and the opportunities for constructive partnerships – 1B.

1A. Addressing barriers

There were many comments, suggestions and opinions around the issue of equal access to healthy food. This first set of quotes focuses on proposals for addressing economic, physical and other barriers to equal access.

Improving economic access to healthy food for those on low incomes:-

5 A Day [5 portions of fruit/veg per day] messages need to equate with income levels (affordability).

'Healthy Start' Vouchers – expand what you can buy with them.

Everyone should have access to free school meals AND breakfasts – good food, choices and locally procured.

Same standards across public services relating to meals/money spent.

Improving physical access to healthy food:-

Improve access and transport to shops (for those without a car).

Planning of high street shops - restrictions and support.

Encouraging neighbourhood shops scheme, particularly in low-income areas. Local authorities need to think about who they give planning permission to – shops need to be accessible other than by car.

Addressing additional barriers to healthy food for people who are experiencing homelessness, addiction, mental and physical health issues etc.

Need to be more prescriptive/supporting around food and health depending on what stage you are at in the 'homelessness journey' e.g. food parcels for the homeless should be made as healthy as possible.

Those with diet-related issues – obesity, diabetes etc – those in low-income and vulnerable groups may need particular help and support with food issues – help with costs; cooking skills; more confidence building.

All initiatives should have no stigma attached – (in reference to vouchers, free school meals etc).

1B – Role of Food Industry

How can a national food policy encourage the Scottish food industry to become equal partners in the drive to address food and health inequalities? Will they participate with the voluntary and public sectors in delivering social and environmental benefits to low-income communities? Can food retailers and producers assist those on a low income to access healthy, local options while maintaining profitability?

The majority of the discussion groups recognised that improving access to healthy food will involve low-income communities working with food retailers and producers. An extensive list of suggestions and proposals around partnerships and links were produced from the discussions.

Support was suggested for commercial food retailers who are constructive and creative in providing healthy food in areas of low-income:-

Recognise that there is pressure on producers from consumers - weekly spend needs to represent best value on low income.

Business rates rebates for local shops which are promoting and providing healthy options.

Local shops could come together to increase purchasing power, or perhaps a subsidy to assist and support local shops.

Partnerships and collaborative initiatives were also suggested:-

*Supporting and involving **local projects, producers and retailers** by making links and building local engagement, e.g. commitment from local growers that fresh produce is brought into food co-ops, cooked and tasted. Part of process of education.*

Farmer type markets in communities/ food vans; food co-ops; local food businesses/small shops (butcher, baker, fishmonger greengrocer etc.); easier access to affordable fruit and veg – vans, small shops.

Local food – encourage farmers and local producers – sold locally and affordable.

2. Community Enterprise Opportunities

As outlined in the discussion document, the food industry is an important contributor to Scotland's economy. This information confirmed the opinion of many of the participants that addressing food inequalities could provide opportunities for community enterprise – both in production, preparation and distribution. Suggestions included:-

Food retail as a potential social enterprise.

Communities connecting to industry – employment, consumption, marketing.

Scottish Enterprise - encouraging and supporting healthy food and healthy eating enterprises.

Need to link food co-ops to local farmers and producers. The whole food chain is about linking the food cycle.

2A. Distribution of Surplus Foods

One of the potential community enterprise initiatives raised was the redistribution of surplus food, which was mentioned in five of the discussion groups, but with very different points of view.

Three groups suggested food redistribution as an initiative that should be encouraged and expanded. They identified the environmental and social benefits - that it was a good way of ensuring that less food was thrown out while there were people in need, and it provided training, volunteering and employment opportunities. Comments included:-

All food shops should be legally required to take part in FareShare programme, rather that it being voluntary.

Make retailers give away waste to vulnerable groups.

Two other groups expressed negative feelings about food redistribution/donation:-

> *Distributing surplus food to disadvantaged – this takes us back years – perceived stigma.*

> *No control over what you get through projects like FareShare or donated food. (It should be noted that "FareShare" is perhaps being used here as a generic term for food redistribution/donation, rather than referring directly to FareShare.)*

These opposing opinions perhaps indicate that while there is support for food redistribution initiatives which are committed to developing good practice and improving standards – such as FareShare – there is still a degree of negativity and mistrust to overcome. Promotion and roll out of good practice in food redistribution projects should be included in the food policy, while bad practice should be discouraged.

3. Information

Consistent and understandable food labelling was identified as a key issue in five of the six discussion groups.

> *Provide healthy food, well-labelled, so that consumer finds it easy to choose healthy option.*

> *More information for individuals, education on what existing food labels mean, food content, - could also simplify food labelling quite a bit, and make sure it is accurate.*

> *Need better labelling and consistency so that all shops and manufacturers use it.*

In a few groups, the role of the EU in regulating labelling was raised, but this did not change the general opinion that improved and clearer labelling should be included in the national food policy.

Also suggested was **better connection between food and health messages**, with healthy eating information delivered in an exciting way for a range of target groups.

> *Need to link health information, information about foods and information about diseases together.*

> *Ensure that people have the right information, and that the right information goes to the right groups – need to motivate people to take up a healthy lifestyle – food and mood.*

> *The format of the information must be easy to read, understandable and exciting.*

One group gave a detailed description of what 'easy to read, understandable, exciting food information' might look like:-

> *For individuals – easy format, no jargon. Too much information can put people off, signpost websites and other sources for specific groups. Need to find a balance between a big, jargon-filled document and something which could be used with primary age children. Food policies are usually too long-winded, too many graphs. Make it fun and relevant, with pictures, and Scottish celebrities – use the culture that is already there in a positive way. Football clubs promoting healthy options e.g. 'Greens for Celtic supporters'.*

4. Education and Schools

Several groups highlighted education as the main factor in changing behaviour towards food, and the multiple roles of schools.

> *Key role of SCHOOLS - the importance of endorsing school meals, the role of the Home Economics staff, encouraging the social aspect of food within schools.*

> *School dining area could be more community-orientated to cater to pupils as consumers; better resource to community; less stigma about school meals; separate building for catering; pre-order food through discussion of menu in class (less wastage); Breakfast Clubs - good example of an approach already used which focuses on social aspect of eating as opposed to pure breakfast provision.*

There were suggestions for improvement on all the different facets of schools' services - **schools as learning centres for children**:-

> *See Home Economics as a legitimate subject and life skill – RENAME.*

> *Education – cooking skills, how to motivate ALL.*

> *Because changes will take a long time – need to start early in school. Involve children in cooking (and keep them involved).*

Schools as resources for the whole community:-

> *Schools and home/school link – a vector for cooking skills and the economics/affordability of healthy foods.*

> *Cook and eat sessions in schools; importance of educating/working with parents and children.*

> *[Policy could lead to] opportunity to build and sustain capacity/skills of community as well as individuals who can deliver and provide support to others.*

Schools as food providers, balancing commercial pressures with the responsibility to provide healthy food:-

Cost of school meals (to pupils) needs to be addressed, issues of quality and best value spend, for example, local chippie often has lunch specials cheaper than the healthy school meal.

Access to fruit and veg/healthier choices [some areas have no other accessible shops selling fruit and veg/healthier choices].

Procurement (for school catering) which supports policy aspiration – though tension with current purchasing culture.

A national food policy which supports equality of provision of local, healthy food may help schools to better address this range of responsibilities.

5. Food Growing Projects

Five out of six discussion groups suggested that **food growing projects** should be encouraged and be more widely available.

Growing Food *– making the process easier and more inclusive for everyone.*

Reconnect where food comes from with the skills and confidence to prepare it.

Encouraging individuals and communities to grow and develop their own food where possible.

Local Authority planning to include more growing facilities, allotments, greenspaces, community gardens etc. Growing your own food to be promoted and facilitated more widely.

Linking 'grow your own' projects with cooking workshops and peer education, with free crèches provided – interaction of all these elements to promote health within the community.

Projects which provide opportunities for all ages to experience the food cycle – from ground to pot – were seen to offer a range of benefits:-

See where food comes from, cook with it, improve community spirit, social aspect to this activity, families working together, [physical] exercise, self sustaining, community ownership, education, further education, employability, communal garden/space, composting [less wastage/ recycling].

A perceived barrier to this type of project was the direct experience of some of the participants of over-zealous enforcement of Health and Safety and Environmental Health legislation. While it was recognised that safety and health legislation is vital, the groups who discussed this felt that legislation sometimes overruled common sense, and this was used as an excuse not to start or continue these types of projects.

> *Tackle barriers to effective food growing (Health and Safety, Environmental Health).*

> *Health and Safety and Environmental Health legislation can be used to stop these kinds of projects (food growing).*

If food growing projects were given backing and support as part of the national food policy, this might overcome this tendency, and build understanding and collaboration on safety issues.

6. Role of Voluntary Sector

The majority of the participants at the seminar were directly involved in running community and voluntary projects, working to address food and health inequalities in low-income communities and with excluded groups. Therefore, the essential role of the voluntary sector in both developing and delivering a national food policy was assumed in all of the discussion groups.

The main thrust of the comments was the **voluntary sector's vital involvement in developing strategic approaches**:-

> *Want the voluntary sector and community groups to be closely involved in developing policy. This sector needs to have a voice, like the professional lobbyists.*

> *Voluntary sector needs to work with funders to agree priorities.*

> *Voluntary sector [needs to be] embedded as part of the process …*

And the need for **funding commitment for the long-term work** in communities necessary to create any lasting change:-

> *Learn from examples of best practice and build from their experience - it can take years to engage with communities and for communities, and for work to flourish. When funding is pulled or becomes insecure all this work and trust can start to teeter.*

> *Greater longevity of support for the voluntary sector and their partners – LONGER THAN 3 YEARS!*

Ensure that community level contribution to national policy is resourced, invested in, and on an appropriate scale considering the size of the problem(s).

LONG TERM VISION - Continuity, with robust monitoring.

7. Consistency and Commitment

Many of the discussions highlighted the need for **a consistent message about healthy eating** across all sectors.

Make sure messages and policies are consistent – e.g. less unhealthy snacks in vending machines in school and sports centres, no unhealthy food at kids' height in cafés etc, leaflets and healthy eating info at GP's surgeries.

Need to be consistent from cradle to grave. Starts off well with weaning classes, but other initiatives patchy for different ages and stages. Need to work consistently across all ages to make people food confident.

The groups also highlighted the need for those involved in making and implementing the national food policy to be **committed to giving health equal status** with other priorities.

Procurement which supports policy aspiration – though tension with current purchasing culture.

Currently [the discussion document has a] commercial focus – needs balancing – HEALTH, job creation.

Consistency and commitment were identified as essential ingredients of a national food policy which would start to redress some of the food and health inequalities in Scotland.

Summary

The majority of those who attended the seminar and contributed their energy and ideas to this report are part of the community and voluntary sector, which will be involved in delivering a national food policy in low-income areas and among groups experiencing exclusion. Their response to the Scottish Government's discussion document reflects their eagerness to be involved in the framing and development of the policy to ensure it addresses the issues of food and health inequalities which they deal with daily.

Two key aims for the policy were identified:-

- **Support a positive change in behaviour and culture around food, health and diet,** particularly among low-income and excluded groups and communities in Scotland.

- **Reduce the current inequalities in food and health in Scotland's disadvantaged communities** by building positive collaboration between a range of policies, different levels of government and all sectors of society.

To support these aims, the seminar suggested the actions and recommendations outlined in this report are considered for inclusion in the final policy document. Some of the key recommended actions are:-

- Support for the voluntary and community sector to work with the food industry in low-income communities to improve access to healthy food.

- Support for community enterprise initiatives within the food industry, and ongoing support for current community food projects.

- Consistent and coherent labelling of foods to support healthy choices – though it was recognised that this may be outside the scope of a Scottish policy.

- Recognition and support for schools in their varied and essential roles in improving 'food confidence'.

- Support for, and increase in the number of, food growing and preparation projects – from ground to pot. The policy should also address the Health and Safety and Environmental Health issues which might hinder the implementation of these types of projects.

- Support the development of a consistent message about healthy eating across ALL sectors.

The seminar's hope was that the Scottish Government will demonstrate a commitment to putting health and social justice at the heart of food policy in Scotland.