

The Food Discussion
Room 256, Pentland House
47 Robb's Loan
Edinburgh EH14 1TY

Dear Sirs,

“Choosing the Right Ingredients: the Future for Food in Scotland”

The Scottish Allotments and Gardens Society (SAGS) works for ploholders throughout Scotland promoting, preserving and protecting allotments. We welcome the launch of a national discussion of food policy. Whilst the document contains many positive references to environmental aspirations, it is surprising to us that it does not refer to the contributions which growing your own food can make.

There are a good many arguments for growing your own food which clearly fit into the subject of food policy which we have already highlighted in our “Growing Scotland” advocacy paper presented to the Scottish Government last September. However, we would like to take this opportunity in commenting on “Choosing the Right Ingredients” to refer again to the importance which should be given to growing your own food, the contribution which allotment gardening can make to the future of food in Scotland and to the Government’s vision generally in striving for a healthier, wealthier, fairer, stronger and greener Scotland. Gardening is one way people can actively contribute to the debate on food in Scotland, sharing their knowledge and helping to change attitudes.

The current desire for people to grow their own food is demonstrated by the demand for allotments as shown in SAGS’ publication: “Finding Scotland’s Allotments”. It shows how allotment gardening cuts across all social boundaries and government policy agenda, involving communities, health and well-being, the environment and education. There are about 6300 plots in Scotland and more than 3000 people on waiting lists. Latent demand for plots is expected to be considerably higher.

By definition, food grown on allotments is local. In addition to offering a reduction in personal carbon footprint through reduced food miles, it is healthy, fresh, pesticide-free and seasonal. Home grown food does not have the same reliance on chemical fertilisers and pesticides as commercial enterprises. Whilst plot-holders cannot grow all their own food, they are aware of where food comes from, the growing cycle and seasons. SAGS is currently carrying out a survey of how much home grown food is produced in allotments and gardens. The results of this “Growing Survey” will be available next year.

Allotment gardeners make a vital contribution to waste reduction. The quantity of food produced on an allotment can be tailor-made to an individual’s requirements and there is no packaging and very little wastage. Such vegetable waste as there is can be composted on site and returned to the land.

We recommend that future policy on food production in Scotland should include the contribution which growing your own food can make. Recognition of this will need policy changes at national and local level including setting targets aimed at increasing the provision of allotment land to meet the current and future demand. We recommend that gardening skills should be part of the national curriculum, increased provision of cookery classes in schools and communities, and education as to the rich variety of fruit and vegetables which can flourish in Scotland.

Yours faithfully,

Jenny Mollison
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