

GFN 101: A Beginners Guide to the Good Food Nation

“ A good food nation, where people from every walk of life take pride and pleasure in, and benefit from, the food they produce, buy, cook, serve, and eat each day.

The First National Good Food Nation Plan, p.6

Quick Read

- The Good Food Nation (Scotland) Act 2022 is a new piece of Scottish Government legislation which aims to improve Scottish food from production to consumption, and all the stages in between.
- It requires Scottish Ministers to produce a National Good Food Nation Plan (the first plan was published on 17th Dec 2025) and Local Authorities and Health Boards (referred to collectively as Relevant Authorities) to produce Local Good Food Nation Plans (the first local plans are due to be published by 1st April 2028). Progress must be reported every 2 years with all plans reviewed and revised every 5 years.
- This legislation also created the Scottish Food Commission a new independent public body that will oversee this process and scrutinise the National and Local Plans.
- This will enable us to better understand the different parts of the Scottish food system – the success stories as well as the challenges – and develop local partnerships to monitor progress towards delivering better outcomes across a range of areas including social and economic wellbeing, the environment, health, economic development, animal welfare, and education, with aim of implementing potential solutions.

Longer Read

In June 2022, the Scottish Parliament unanimously passed groundbreaking food systems legislation. Built on a clear vision, clarity of purpose, and common set of principles and outcomes, the Good Food Nation (Scotland) Act 2022 is an innovative piece of framework legislation designed to foster a fairer, healthier, and more sustainable Scottish food system for all.

As a way of driving food systems transformation in Scotland, the Good Food Nation Act places new statutory requirements on Scottish Ministers and Relevant Authorities (defined as Scotland's 32 Local Authorities and 14 territorial Health Boards) for the production, publication and evaluation of National and Local Good Food Nation Plans. It requires Scottish Ministers and Relevant Authorities to 'have regard to' a series of food-related issues and to a set of specific principles when developing their Good Food Nation Plans. The Scottish Government published the first National Good Food Nation Plan in December 2025. All 46 Relevant Authorities are required to produce local Good Food Nation Plans within 12 months of the commencement of Section 10 of the Act. They were given notice on 1st April 2026 that the formal planning period will start on 1st April 2027 and with the Local Plans due to be published by 1st April 2028. At the time of writing (September 2026) the secondary legislation spelling which specific duties and functions Scottish Government and Relevant Authorities must 'have regard to' when undertaking this work is being revised.

National and Local Good Food Nation Plans are required to set out:

- (a) the main outcomes in relation to food-related issues, which Scottish Ministers and Relevant Authorities want to achieve;
- (b) the indicators, or other measures by which progress towards achieving the outcomes, will be measured;
- (c) the policies Scottish Ministers and Relevant Authorities intend to pursue to deliver the outcomes, and measure progress; and
- (d) their plans for ensuring that implementation of the policies is informed by the food business sector.

The Good Food Nation Act also requires that Scottish Ministers and Relevant Authorities must have regard to the scope for food-related issues to affect outcomes in relation to a number of issues when developing their Good Food Nation Plans, in particular:

1. Social and Economic Wellbeing;
2. Environment (including Climate Change and the Natural Environment);
3. Health and Physical and Mental Wellbeing;
4. Economic Development;
5. Animal Welfare;
6. Education;
7. Child Poverty.



Finally, the legislation also places a duty on Scottish Ministers and Relevant Authorities to have regard to a set of high-level principles when developing their Plans and discharging allied duties (e.g. school food provision)

- The fact that each part of the food system and supply chain plays an important role in the provision of food;
- The role of a sustainable food system and supply chain in contributing to the mitigation of climate change, halting and reversing loss of biodiversity, and improving animal welfare;
- The ability of high quality, nutritious, and culturally appropriate food to improve the health and physical and mental wellbeing of people;
- The fact that adequate food is a human right and essential to the realisation of other human rights; and
- The importance of the food business sector to be a thriving part of the Scottish economy, having resilient supply chains, operating with fair work standards, and contributing to resilient local economics across Scotland.

Critically, the legislation also makes formal provision for the establishment, staffing, and resourcing of a new independent, statutory Scottish Food Commission, as well as essential parliamentary scrutiny and other forms of consultation. These provisions should remove the political jeopardy that has beset previous Scottish food policy attempts: by making National and Local Good Food Nation plans a legal requirement, they reduce ministerial discretion over how food policy is planned, delivered, and evaluated in Scotland.

For more information, see this short article: "[Food Systems Transformation in Scotland—The Journey to, Vision of, and Challenges Facing the New Good Food Nation \(Scotland\) Act](#)".