

Proposed Right to Food (Scotland) Bill

Member's Bill

September 2020

A proposal for a Bill to incorporate the human right to food into Scots Law

Aim and approach

1. Which of the following best expresses your view on enshrining the human right to food in Scots law?

Fully supportive

2. Which of the following best describes your view on the creation of an independent statutory body with responsibility for the right to food?

Fully supportive

3. What do you think would be the main practical advantages and disadvantages of the proposed Bill?

Practical Advantages

Age Scotland is supportive of the principles behind the Right to Food Bill and of the work of Nourish Scotland.

Food should be accessible, both financially and in its availability, to everyone and enshrining this right into Scots law will ensure that human rights are at the centre of all of the Scottish Government's decisions on the food system.

Access to food is not about lowering the price of food but is about lifting people out of poverty so that everyone is able to afford healthy food and ensuring that no matter where you live in Scotland, you should not have any barriers which make it harder for you to access nutritious food. This Bill will, therefore, have wide implications across different Scottish Government departments, such as ensuring social security benefits are sufficient to meet the cost of food that is nutritious.

The challenges facing the food system are urgent, and the COVID-19 pandemic has exposed and worsened many of these challenges. One of the main topics older people,

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their carers, and families told us they were concerned about was access to food, with many struggling to access basic supplies, and others anxious about how to safely acquire them. A survey of older people conducted by Age Scotland during this crisis found that 32% of respondents struggled to get food from a supermarket in person and 39% struggled to get online delivery.

Practical Disadvantages

The consultation is mostly focused on food insecurity. This is a very important part of the right to food, but equal consideration should be given to other important aspects of the right such as the fair treatment of people producing the food, maintaining high food standards, fair access to land, and the impact of the food system on animals and the environment.

4. Which of the following expresses your view of enshrining a right to food into Scots law as a priority in advance of any further Scottish Government legislation on wider human rights?

Neutral

5. What advantages or disadvantages would there be to establishing a statutory body with responsibility for the right to food?

The food system is complicated and made up of many parts of the Scottish Government, UK Government, as well as individuals and companies. Everyone involved in the food system has different goals and priorities, and currently there is not a clear understanding of the problems facing the food system and how these should be addressed. An independent statutory body would recognise that food insecurity, climate change, public health, biodiversity, workers' rights, animal welfare, access to land, and waste are all part of the food system and that a systems-wide approach is essential to protecting everyone's right to food and holding the Scottish Government accountable to its responsibilities.

Advantages of establishing a statutory body:

- Hold the Scottish Government to account on its responsibilities, as well as review and report on its actions.
- Ensure decisions made about our food system are made by a diverse range of people.
- Ensure that the Scottish Government works across the whole food system and recognises the links between, for example, food insecurity, low wages, and poor health.
- Provide guidance and research to ensure the right to food is at the centre of relevant Scottish Government decision making.

6. Which of the following best describes your view of placing responsibility for guaranteeing the right to food on the Scottish Government?

Fully supportive

7. What impact do you believe bringing the right to food into law would have on:

a) Reducing food insecurity

Significant impact

b) Improving people's health

Significant impact

8. Taking account of both costs and potential savings, what financial impact would you expect the proposed Bill to have on:

a) Government and the public sector: Some increase in cost

b) Businesses: Some increase in cost

c) Individuals: Some reduction in cost

9. Are there ways in which the Bill could achieve its aim more cost-effectively? (e.g. by reducing costs or increasing savings)?

No, the purpose of the Bill is long term investment in the food system. This requires ambition and big changes across the whole food system. The focus of any Bill on the right to food should be about improving people's health and well-being, strong social security, fair employment, protecting animals, the environment and the impact on climate change. .

10. What overall impact is the proposed Bill likely to have on equality, taking account of the following protected characteristics (under the Equality Act 2010): age, disability, gender, re-assignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation?

Positive

11. In what ways could any negative impact of the Bill on equality be minimised or avoided?

To ensure there are no equality issues we believe it is essential that communications regarding the Bill, and as a result of it, must be accessible to everyone. This means there should be various channels used to communicate information that is not reliant on solely digital channels. Instead variety is key, ensuring that information is available in plain

English that can be accessed face to face, by telephone, paper copies, as well as providing information in other languages, BSL, braille and that is dementia friendly.

It is also important that the independent statutory body includes representation from a diverse group of people.

12. Do you consider that the proposed bill can be delivered sustainably, i.e. without having likely future disproportionate economic, social and/or environmental impacts?

Yes

Want to find out more?

As Scotland's national charity supporting people over the age of 50, Age Scotland works to improve older people's lives and promote their rights and interests. We aim to help people love later life, whatever their circumstances. We want Scotland to be the best place in the world to grow older.

Our Policy, Communications and Campaigns team research, analyse and comment on a wide range of public policy issues affecting older people in Scotland.

Further information

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