

RFW 33

Ymateb gan : Food Ethics Council

Evidence from : Food Ethics Council

This is a short response to the Climate Change, Environment and Rural Affairs Committee, National Assembly for Wales, inquiry into what we can do to enhance the food and drink sector and our relationship with the food we eat – addressing the question “**What is your vision for the future of food in Wales and what needs to be done to achieve it?**” We welcome the consultation and the strategic nature of the inquiry question.

Summary

1. The Food Ethics Council’s vision is of a world – and a Wales – “**where everyone can enjoy healthy food that is produced and traded fairly, sustainably and humanely.**” Many people in Wales – and beyond – are disconnected with where their food comes from and feel disempowered to act on issues like climate change, environmental degradation and long-term health concerns such as obesity. We believe that a **Food Citizenship** mindset is a powerful and exciting lens for Wales to use to set, and deliver on, a vision. Adopting such a mindset would bring people in Wales together to tackle key socio-environmental challenges relating to food, and would help positively differentiate Welsh food systems from others. We do not mandate an approach for achieving such a vision – we simply encourage an open, inclusive approach that considers the needs of all key stakeholders, including (but not limited to) citizens, food and farming businesses, the environment, animals and future generations. Now is a critical juncture for Wales. We urge you to use the opportunities that Brexit presents to shape a better food future for all.

Who we are

2. The Food Ethics Council is a registered charity whose mission is to catalyse fair, sustainable and humane food systems by helping businesses, government and civil society navigate ethical challenges surrounding food and farming.
3. We are considered by stakeholders to be experts on fairness and sustainability in food and farming, and the leader on ethical food issues. Our role is three-fold:
- (i) Hold the UK Government and other key UK food system actors to account
 - (ii) Convene key decision-makers and experts, equipping them with the research, information, tools and safe space to explore ethical questions themselves, allowing them to reach practical solutions
 - (iii) Advocate and promote ethical considerations surrounding food and farming, in particular to those in positions of influence. We challenge policies and business models promoting unhealthy, unfair and unsustainable practices and products – and promote alternative, fair ways forward.

4. The Food Ethics Council is an expert body consisting of 16 Council members, leaders in their fields, bringing extensive networks and a range of expertise, from academic research and ethics through to practical knowledge of farming, business and policy.

Our vision

5. Our vision is of “a food system where everyone can enjoy healthy food that is produced and traded fairly, sustainably and humanely”.
6. Most of our work is at a UK level, but our vision is not country-specific. Our vision for the future of food in Wales would be the same, i.e. “**where everyone can enjoy healthy food that is produced and traded fairly, sustainably and humanely.**”

What needs to be done to achieve it

7. We want food systems where everyone has a fair share, a fair say and where there is fair play. See our report, [Food Justice: the report of the Food and Fairness Inquiry](#) for further details. We support an open and inclusive approach to policymaking, with fairness and sustainability at the centre of policy decisions around food.
8. We believe strongly in the concept of **Food Citizenship**. Most people feel disempowered to act on issues like climate change and environmental degradation – and other issues associated with our food systems. Adopting a Food Citizenship mindset equips individuals and organisations as food citizens, so that together we can tackle key socio-environmental challenges. Wales can, and should be, at the forefront of a Food Citizenship revolution. We have recently worked with the New Citizenship Project to explore what could happen if all the key players in the food system switched from a Consumer to a Citizen Mindset; generating ideas and testing new approaches to Food Citizenship; going beyond engagement to involve people, and recognising the multiple roles citizens can have in the food system. We believe that encouraging a Food Citizenship mindset will open up lots of opportunities for all involved in shaping the future of food systems in Wales (and beyond). See [www.foodcitizenship.info](#) for further information.
9. Within a Brexit context, we encourage Wales (and the wider UK) to pursue a path of quality and high standards, building on the strong foundations it already has – including on environmental protection, animal welfare and workers’ rights. We urge the Welsh Government to do its utmost to influence the UK Government to pursue a ‘race to the top’ strategy, rather than risk falling into the trap of striking trade deals with other countries, at any cost (including to animals, the environment and future generations).
10. We strongly support the recent Wellbeing of Future Generations Act and believe this has potential to ensure a much-needed long-term approach is taken to food systems in Wales. We were also supportive of the idea of ‘The Wales We Want’ national conversations, and encourage the Committee to revisit materials from those to see what insights remain relevant – albeit of course noting the changed context, now after the EU Referendum vote.

11. We welcome a place-based approach to delivering on the vision and are encouraged by the early work of Food Network Wales and its 'reconnecting through values' work, which we feel is very important. We encourage Committee members to tap into the local expertise of Food Network Wales.

Further information and support

12. We have a wealth of resources on our website www.foodethicscouncil.org. This includes a toolkit developed a few years ago (with Organic Centre Wales), but still highly relevant – a toolkit for Welsh organic businesses, which is available in both English and Welsh language here: <http://www.foodethicscouncil.org/getinvolved/ethicaltools.html>.

13. We would be happy to talk to the Committee members further, including bringing in relevant expertise from our Council members and from our extensive and well-established networks across the UK.