

ANNEX B

SSAC REPORT – SCOTLAND’S FOOD SYSTEMS – THE CONTRIBUTION OF LOCAL PRODUCTION

ROUNDTABLE PROGRAMME, ATTENDEES AND BREAKOUT GROUP NOTES

SSAC VIRTUAL ROUNDTABLE THE CONTRIBUTION OF LOCAL PRODUCTION IN SCOTLAND’S FOOD SYSTEMS 22 MAY 2023, 10:00-13:00

10:00 - 10:05	Background to SSAC and objectives for the day	Professor Marian Scott, SSAC Project lead
10:05 - 10:15	Initial insights from questionnaire responses	Kieran Fowler, SSAC Intern
10:15 - 10:25	Scottish Government food and drink policy overview	Tracy McCollin, Scottish Government
10:25 - 10:40	Scotland’s Good Food Nation and local food production	Professor Jennie Macdiarmid, Director, Interdisciplinary Centre for Health, Wellbeing and Nutrition, University of Aberdeen
10:40 -11:20	Breakout Group Discussion 1 – Consumption, nutrition and acceptability <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What do you consider the benefits and dis-benefits of local primary food production to be? 2. What are the priority actions needed, if any, to support the growth in local food production? 3. What should be the considerations around affordability, nutrition and accessibility of local foods? 	
11:20 - 11:40	Comfort break	
11:40 - 11:55	Innovations in primary food production in Scotland	Professor Wayne Powell, Principal, SRUC
11:55 - 12:35	Breakout Group Discussion 2 - Innovation in local food production <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What do you consider to be the most promising innovations in local primary food production- and the constraints if any to their widespread adoption? 2. Considering rural communities and specifically the Islands, could local primary food production support changes in food supply resilience? 3. Considering urban communities, could local primary food production support changes in food supply resilience? 	
12:35 - 12:55	Plenary	Professor Maggie Gill
12:55 - 13:00	Summing up and next steps	Professor Marian Scott, SSAC Project lead

FRAMEWORK FOR BREAKOUT DISCUSSION

Definitions

A reminder that for the purpose of our discussions, local food and local primary food production are defined to be:

- it is produced locally (this includes your, town, region or elsewhere in the rest of Scotland)
- it has short supply chains (there are fewer steps than global and imported food between the primary producer of the food and the person who eats the food, this could include a farm supplying a local shop or supermarket).

Breakout Groups

Attendees will be split into two pre-determined breakout groups. While each group will discuss all of the questions outlined in the programme, they will do so in a different order to ensure each question gets sufficient consideration if some groups do not get round to discussing all three.

Roundtable Attendees:

Abi Morden, Propagate
Amanda Brown, SAOS
Ana Del Valle, University of Glasgow
Andrea McColl, Highlands and Islands Enterprise
Baukje De Roos, Rowett Institute
Bethan Mead, University of Liverpool
Cesar Revoredo, SRUC
David Gally, Roslin Institute
David Watts, University of Aberdeen
Derek Stewart, James Hutton Institute
Emile Combet, University of Glasgow
Gillian Purdon, Food Standards Scotland
Isabel Fletcher, University of Edinburgh
Jennie Macdiarmid, University of Aberdeen
Judy Wilkinson, Glasgow Allotments Forum
Laura Robertson, Highlands and Islands Enterprise
Lindsay Jaacks, University of Edinburgh
Lynne Hendry, Crofting Commission
Megan Blake, University of Sheffield
Nicola Holden, SRUC
Pete Iannetta, James Hutton Institute
Pete Ritchie, Nourish
Robert Davidson, SOSE
Wayne Powell, SRUC

Roundtable Observers:

Scottish Government:

Caroline Burgess

Frederick Foxton

Lynn Horsman

Rosie Anfield

Tracy McCollin

Breakout Group Chairs

Andrew Barnes, SRUC

Liz Dinnie, James Hutton Institute

Breakout Group Scribes

Emma Henderson, Scottish Government

Kieran Fowler, James Hutton Ltd (now University of Aberdeen)

SSAC Short Life Working Group

Andrew Barnes, SRUC

David Gally, Roslin Institute

Jennie Macdiarmid, University of Aberdeen

Kieran Fowler, James Hutton Ltd (now University of Aberdeen), SSAC Intern

Liz Dinnie, James Hutton Institute

Maggie Gill, SSAC Chair

Marian Scott, SSAC Project Lead

Wayne Powell, SRUC (former SSAC member)

ROUNDTABLE BREAKOUT GROUP NOTES

Breakout Group 1 - Session One

What do you consider the benefit and disbenefits of local primary food production to be?

- Not many disbenefits. 'Scottish' brand is strong, however potential overfocus on whisky.
- Need to create a balance between local and 'not local' production.
- Presence of supermarket will affect the balance of local/not local choice available.
- Some producers producing premium quality, higher priced products, need to understand the market its dynamics.
- Technological innovations (such as vertical farming) are perhaps more accessible for larger organisations.
- Local producers potentially have smaller volumes so need to target specific markets.
- Lack of processing facilities is a known issue, producers need access to affordable, small-scale equipment which is right for the local market. Includes abattoir provision.
- Tendency to categorise/think of local food as 'one'. Consideration needs to be given to the products/market for different products.
- Higher energy costs affect SMEs more.
- Allotment growing can provide access to culturally appropriate food for new Scots.

What are the priority actions needed if any to support the growth in local food production?

- Increase access to land for allotments/community growing.
- Recognise the diversity of the F&D market in Scotland
- Increase capital investment and skills base for food processing

What should be the considerations around affordability, nutrition and accessibility of local foods?

- What do people in Scotland actually want to eat, what societal changes can cause shifts in that.
- Build diversity in the supply chain - fertilisers, seeds etc for Scottish grown food are often imported.
- Cooperatives require motivated individuals to drive forward.
- Allotments – long wait lists and large time commitment but can provide access to locally grown foods for families.
- Many retail and f&d sector jobs are low income.
- Look internationally for good examples e.g Iceland, using geothermal energy to power to become self-sufficient in cucumbers, tomatoes and mushrooms.
- Need to take a place-based approach, lots of local variances.
- Access to local land.

Breakout Group 1 - Session Two

Considering urban communities could local primary food production support changes in food supply resilience. Considering rural communities and specifically the islands, could local primary food production support changes in food supply resilience.

- Weather and climate resilience should be considered.
- Pests and diseases and zoonotic pathogens directly relate to food security.
- Need to increase economic literacy at the same time as increasing food system literacy across all communities.
- Empowerment of local areas is important, give local communities choices that were not available before.
- Consumer behaviour (i.e stock piling, panic buying) during covid was a visible shock to the food system.
- Communication with the media on how they report.
- Land use – some land is being turned over to energy production, what are the impacts on food production?
- Equity in food systems needs to be considered. Food system does not work for some.
- Place based approach, what works for rural does not necessarily work for urban and vice versa. Got to look at food chain in each of these areas.
- Local authorities are key to local systemic change.
- Food innovation hubs needed, solidify relationship between SMEs and local authority.

What do you consider the most promising innovations in local primary food production and the constraints if any of their widespread adoption.

- Cost. Reliability and sustainability of funding for projects, not just the set up but also ongoing running costs.
- Integrated systems can provide circulatory on small scale e.g P&J Live arena features anaerobic digester using venue food waste to provide power for venue.
- Innovation projects need to be considered as additional sources of food, not replacements It is not an either/or situation, it needs to be as well as, used conjunction with other production systems.
- Polycrubs. Communities can access funding to erect but ongoing revenue costs more difficult to meet, including staffing.
- Ongoing labour/skills shortage now, this could be exacerbated with innovation changes.
- Allotments – how many are for hobbyists compared to those actively growing food out of need.
- Opportunities for joint ventures between business and science/researchers.

Breakout Group 2 – Session One

What should be the considerations around affordability, nutrition and accessibility of local foods?

- An example of a shorter supply chain given, was a Food Hub in Dumfries & Galloway composed of small producers in the local area. It was stated that it was not deemed financially accessible to all, and to make it financially viable as a small network of producers meant it was extremely difficult to make it affordable.
- It was posed by one individual, “should nutrition and nutrition density of foods be a priority for research?”
- Discussed was the nutrition density of produce. A health soil microbiome = healthy gut microbiomes.
- Regenerative systems were considered to be better for people and planet. Local food in Scotland should be encouraged to be done in a regenerative way.
- It was raised that a serious lack of Fibre intake and a lack of fruit & veg are macro issues in Scotland’s diet. Also, that certain demographic groups may not have good dietary practice, historically.
- “Need less processed food in the national diet.”
- It was stated that the whole structure of supply chains in Scotland make it almost impossible for small producers to compete – need effective policy over decades to make a difference.
- One participant stated that we usually do not appreciate the scale of the odds being stacked against short-supply chains in Scotland. European countries have food systems with up to 20% of local foods in their food system. Scotland currently has around 2%. Lot of work needed to shift that fact.
- Large industry food producers & retailers spend billions trying to keep/increase the share of consumers stomachs’. Difficult for smaller producers to compete.
- Infrastructure for local food has been eliminated over the years in favour of industrial food system.
- Many participants agreed that this should be considered in a decades-long system. Especially with the big demographic shift incoming – need to be designing a food system with the future in mind.
- “It’s not about the food, it’s about the people.”
“Not just about money, it’s know-how, cultures etc.”
- Making connections within communities and groups around local food equates to a change in diets and allows people to reconnect with food.
- An example given was a fruit & veg voucher scheme in Sheffield. Supply vs. demand was discussed – one cannot exist without the other. They found out about habits with cooking and the free fruit & veg resulted in people shared food; people tried new food and new cooking; changed diets.

- It was stated that you cannot expect people to automatically shift diets. Need to facilitate transition to healthier practices through building capability and capacity.
- Supporting people to make those transitions through connections etc. cannot be patronising and must be dignified.
- Groups & projects working in deprived communities around food can only scratch the surface – tragically underinvested sector. Local canteens can help get healthier produce out to communities but are underinvested and there is a serious lack of funding for groups in the food space.

What are the priority actions needed, if any, to support the growth in local food production?

- “We do not value the sector of small-scale producers. Do not think it is significant, do not think it’s a proper job. More viewed as a lifestyle and therefore all subsidy passes small-producers and goes to bigger producers.”
- Not enough smaller local producers in large geographical areas which are “conventional” farming dense.
- Need pathways for people to get into sector, more access to land and training.
- Need more land for local producers especially urban and peri-urban.
- Processing is scaled to an unsustainable level – no small processing – needs more investment.
- Barriers to rural small producers in Scotland:
Access to affordable land. Limited accommodation. High initial investment & high uncertainty with embedded risk. Hard to access markets. Insecure tenancies. Lack of access to any form of subsidy. Lack of grants available due to land classification & size of production. Limited opportunity to expand physical production.
- “Supermarkets won’t support local producers as much.”
“Need to grow the independent and alternative retailers to oppose supermarkets.”
“Supermarkets are not interested in food systems ultimately. Need investment to create better routes to market”
- Decision making in supermarkets is slow because economies of scale. Morrisons used a different style in Scotland with de-centralised regional decision making and thus stocked more locally sourced produce – more practices like this will improve local food. An example stated was Walmart in USA which procure 30% of goods state-by-state as opposed to national decision making. China was also given as an example, with their fragmented procurement across differing regions of the country.
- East Ayrshire Council Procurement strategy was discussed and encouraged. Long-term investment needed to make it successful.

What do you consider the benefits and dis-benefits of local primary food production to be?

- Co-benefits – health & wellbeing, building community and building resilience. Sharing knowledge and resource.

- “Can build better systems if we build them together.”
- CSA models help to build better connections and improve food sovereignty in the immediate local areas.
- Think of producers and consumers as a whole as opposed to separate.
- An interesting point was raised – what will it take to move away from local food as “alternative”? How do we place global food systems as the alternative source of Scotland’s food.
- Have not made a strong case to include small producers in the national conversation.
- Give the CAP payments to Local Authorities to investment in their own food system – long term funding stream for food systems. Examples were given around SNAP payments in the US.

Breakout Group Two - Session Two

Considering urban communities, could local primary food production support changes in food supply resilience?

- Storage of food – UK does not store food anymore.
Good idea to increase storage capacity for resilience when we currently operate a 9-meals-ahead JIT model.
Food storage is still practiced in other cultures around the world.
- Cities – could utilise more rooftop gardening. Could utilise Vertical Farming.
- A lot of investment in VF – better to utilise funding for greenhouses and land use in Scotland.
Scotland should increase glasshouse production and example was given in Glasgow, with glasshouses not being utilised currently.
- Public Procurement is a driver / lever that should be exercised for improving local food. Needs to be integrated with new building planning.
When building new large public spaces (hospitals etc.) provision of food should be considered from the start.
- Urban production is sometimes classed as a “lesser” production method as opposed to large farms in countryside.
- A one-size-fits all approach for Scotland’s towns and cities will not work. More localised the better.
- Must socialise any technological innovations.
- Ageing population will create a differing demand in urban areas in future.

Considering rural communities and specifically the Islands, could local primary food production support changes in food supply resilience?

- Each island group is different from any others. And it will differ across implications around logistics and what is available locally.
- Need to be heavily subsidised to grow fresh food at small scale.
- Selling things off-island incurs cost and adds complexity.
- Fresh produce takes a long time to get to remote islands.
- The Islands act – allowing deregulation at an island level. Currently not being utilised for food however.

- Western isles looking to increase their resilience – can they utilise more greenhouses?
- Examples given around Arran & Lismore – trying to make their own local food system.
- Needs to be a clear transition route from subsidised community growing projects into enterprise-focussed food producers.
- Using agroecological practices and integrated food systems (livestock in arable rotations etc.) can help to sequester carbon methane etc.
- Require innovation in land ownership – community ownership and different legal frameworks to improve land access.
Require innovation in business models and different economic models.
Require innovation in governance.
All these innovations will help realise a new rural food system.

What do you consider to be the most promising innovations in local primary food production and the constraints if any to their widespread adoption?

- High Capex for new projects (VF, glasshouses etc.) means a need to reclaim the money invested. High Capex projects often become high-end production and ends up not being affordable with the produce being targeted at large retailers.
- Institutional innovation is needed to enable Local Authority and communities etc. to equally benefit from innovations in food production.
- Surplus energy – is there any opportunities to put that to good use? We need place-based business models to encourage innovation in this space.
- Communities (rural) need a lot of support to find and implement solutions that work locally.
- Constraints – funding. Capital grant start up. Small producers cannot fund improvements in infrastructure – small producers need to be able to access funding.
- Reshaping future farm subsidies and future farm support.