

The Food Conversation involves hundreds of people across the UK, brought together through a postcode lottery by Sortition Foundation.

They are broadly representative of their place - of different ages, ethnicities, social backgrounds and political persuasions.

During the workshops – over 20+ hours - they hear from speakers, explore case studies, and consider different proposed policy and practice changes.

More than 300 citizens have taken part in workshops in the Midlands, Cambridgeshire, Northumberland, Yorkshire, Kent, London, Cornwall, Wales, Scotland (the Lothians, Caithness, Ross, Sutherland, Orkney and Shetland) and Northern Ireland.

The Food Conversation: Scotland: Caithness, Sutherland, Ross, Orkney, Shetland

The Food Conversation is a much-needed opportunity to ask citizens what they really want from food. In September 2024, it took place in Scotland.

VIEWS ON THE FOOD SYSTEM

The was broad consensus in Scotland on some key themes:

- **Inequalities:** Healthy, sustainable food is often expensive and inaccessible, especially for low-income households, with high costs in remote areas.
- **Power:** Local farmers and crofters face unfair compensation, while supermarkets dominate the supply chain.
- **Ultra-processed food (UPFs):** UPFs are cheap, heavily marketed, and harmful, especially to children's health.
- **Farming:** Concerns over industrial farming, soil degradation, and insufficient focus on regenerative practices and animal welfare. Farming's impact on climate, biodiversity, and chemical use highlights unsustainability driven by profit motives.
- Food culture: Limited awareness of healthy eating and inadequate labelling hinder better choices, compounded by busy lifestyles.
- **Waste and packaging:** Excessive food waste and reliance on plastic packaging require attention.
- Leadership: policies take too long to be implemented, with political tensions across nations stalling meaningful progress on food, public health and climate change.

A SNAPSHOT OF WHAT WE HEARD





CONSENSUS AROUND KEY POLICIES AND ACTIONS

Health and Wellbeing: Participants across Scotland want accessible, affordable, healthy, and sustainable food for everyone. In Caithness, Sutherland, Ross, Orkney and Shetland (CSROS), participants emphasized free healthy school meals from nursery to S6, linking financial support for low-income families to food prices, and restricting unhealthy food for babies and infants.

Farming: Participants value sustainable farming and want farmers supported through incentives and payments. In CSROS, they support policies that would regulate supermarket pricing to ensure farmers are paid fairly for what they produce.

Environment: Tackling environmental harm was important in CSROS, with many participants viewing reducing food waste and plastic packaging as a key avenue for action. They would like to see measures to reduce food waste incorporated into the Good Food Nation Act.

Local: In CSROS, there is support for strengthened local food systems, with communities encouraged to grow and distribute food and more community polytunnels. They are particularly concerned about a lack of local abattoirs and the impact this has on animal welfare and cost.

Leadership: Participants in CSROS want the Scottish Government to create an engagement strategy to ensure people across Scotland can participate in policy processes. They are keen to see the Good Food Nation Act effectively link local and regional decision making into the national ambition.

Food Culture: In CSROS, participants want to see an end to marketing of unhealthy food, and food system education embedded into the school curriculum.

CONCLUSION

People in CSROS want a fairer food system, with accessible and affordable food for all and a fairer deal for farmers. They care about the resilience of communities around them and value local food systems. The public appetite for food system policy to achieve such a system is incredibly high.

For more information about The Food Conversation, including how citizens are identified to take part, emerging findings and more, visit: <u>The Food Conversation</u>