

Maree Todd MSP
Minister for Public Health, Women's Health, and Sport
The Scottish Government
St Andrew's House
Regent Road
Edinburgh
EH1 3DG

26 May 2022

Dear Minister,

We are writing to you regarding the Good Food Nation Bill which is coming back to Parliament shortly. We urge you to establish an independent statutory Food Commission as part of this Bill.

Responsibility for food policy rests with many different government departments and agencies. An independent Food Commission will provide assistance in the development and delivery of cross-cutting food plans at both a national and local level. It will assist Parliament in its scrutiny of progress by providing timely evidence on all aspects of the food system.

The food system has power to worsen or improve national health – at the moment the impact has been largely detrimental. Diet in Scotland is poor and access to good nutritious food is becoming more difficult. A poor diet, both eating too much and not eating enough, is linked to many health issues including underweight malnutrition, obesity, type 2 diabetes, cancer, falls and dementia.

Two-thirds of Scottish adults are either overweight or obese and over a quarter of our children are at risk of becoming overweight or obese, the consequences of which are still to come. At least 1 in 10 older people are at risk of or suffering from underweight malnutrition in the UK. This equates to approximately 103,000 older people in Scotland, with data from Eat Well Age Well suggesting this figure could be higher at up to 30%.

Obesity and underweight malnutrition are 2 examples of how people's health in Scotland are affected by the food system. It is important to invest in a Food Commission to guide progress towards a food system that enables the short and long-term health of Scotland's population.

Your Government has shown leadership by introducing the Good Food Nation Bill which will help us to create a food system that is good for people, communities, animals, businesses and the natural environment. This Bill – and the proposal for a Food Commission – has widespread support from civil society, MSPs and local authorities.

Your Government has, commendably, established Commissions to address similarly complex issues, such as the Scottish Land Commission, Social Security Commission, Poverty and Inequality Commission and the Just Transition Commission.

We urge you to take a similar approach to food, and establish a Scottish Food Commission.

Yours sincerely,

Andy Burman CMgr FCMI FRSA FIAM, Chief Executive, BDA The Association of UK Dieticians

Carmel Berke- Programme Director, GM Nutrition and Hydration

Claire Stevens, Chief Executive, Voluntary Health Scotland

David McColgan, Senior Policy and Public Affairs Manager, British Heart Foundation

Dr Ada Garcia, Senior Lecturer in Public Health Nutrition, Human Nutrition, School of Medicine, Dentistry and Nursing, College of Medical, Veterinary and Life Sciences, University of Glasgow

Dr Donald Macaskill – Chief Executive Officer, Scottish Care

Dr Megan Blake, Expert in Household Food Security, Senior Lecturer in Human Geography, University of Sheffield

Lorraine Tulloch, Programme Lead, Obesity Action Scotland

Michelle Carruthers MBE, Chief Executive, Food Train

Professor Ailsa Welch, Professor of Nutritional Epidemiology, Department of Public Health and Primary Care, University of East Anglia

Professor Andrew Elder, President of the Royal College of Physicians of Edinburgh

Professor Jane Murphy, Professor of Nutrition, Deputy Dean for Research, Faculty of Health and Social Sciences, Bournemouth University

Professor Mike Griffin OBE, President of the Royal College of Surgeons of Edinburgh

Professor Mike McKirdy, President of Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Glasgow

Professor Shona Hilton, Professor of Public Health Policy, Deputy Director, MRC/CSO Social and Public Health Sciences Unit, University of Glasgow

Professor Wendy Wills, Professor of Food and Public Health; Director, Centre for Research in Public Health and Community Care (CRIPACC) and NIHR ARC East of England Prevention & Early Detection in Health and Social Care theme lead, University of Hertfordshire

Sara Redmond, Chief Officer of Development, Health and Social Care Alliance Scotland (the ALLIANCE)

Vittoria Romano, Chair, British Dietetic Association's Older People Specialist Group