Constructing a dynamic database of local and national socio-economic indicators and outcomes related to the Scottish food systems.



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Background

Scottish food systems are facing increasingly severe, frequent and interconnected pressures and shocks. The multiple challenges of the nature and climate emergency, economic uncertainty, growing inequalities and diet-related ill-health require policy coherence to drive transition into fairer and more sustainable food production and consumption. The 2022 Good Food Nation (Scotland) Act provides a legislative base to tie together national and local interventions.

However, aligning the numerous activities, outcomes and drivers that affect both policy and practice is difficult. This is further complicated by variations in stakeholders' understanding and prioritisation of food -related issues, based on often conflicting values, relationships and powers. To create spaces where possible pathways for change can be negotiated, it is essential to identify the connections and barriers that may be leveraged. This research aims to uncover such levers through a broad yet in-depth examination of Scottish food policy governance.

Methods

The essential role of local authorities in food policy quickly emerged from a wider exploration of food-related outcomes across Scotland. To compare their respective profiles, a database of key socio-economic data was set up based on secondary sources and official statistics. Existing metrics were complemented by new indicators derived from thematic analysis of local strategies and activities related to food.



The Iceberg Model in Systems Thinking

Further to the figures themselves, the quality, range and relevance of data were examined through a Systems Thinking lens. This approach pays particular attention to the changing boundaries, relationships, layered systems and multiple perspectives that are behind the ways different stakeholders engage with food-related issues.

Results

Below are selected *examples* of the existing connections (+) and missing links (-) identified during the construction of the database:

- Variable geographies: (+) coverage across scales for flexibility: *islands data dashboard; local research teams and resources.* (-) inconsistent boundaries limit comparisons: *obesity measured for NHS boards, not councils; agricultural regions from parishes*
- Production vs. consumption: (+) open data: *Food Data Transparency Partnerships* (-) dominance of agricultural OR manufacturing data and economic measures: *Growth Sectors Statistics incomplete for food, social or wellbeing not covered*
- Changing context: (+) API & real time updates: *Performance Networks* (-) Obsolete data & definitions: *hunger vs food poverty*

The database now covers 100+ metrics ranging from free school meals expenditure to food-sector businesses' prevalence, and spans from 2017 to present day. It is intended as a living and dynamic document that can continue to be updated and improved thanks to detailed methodological metadata. It will provide a strong basis for discussions around the development and monitoring of national and local plans under the Good Food Nation (Scotland) Act.



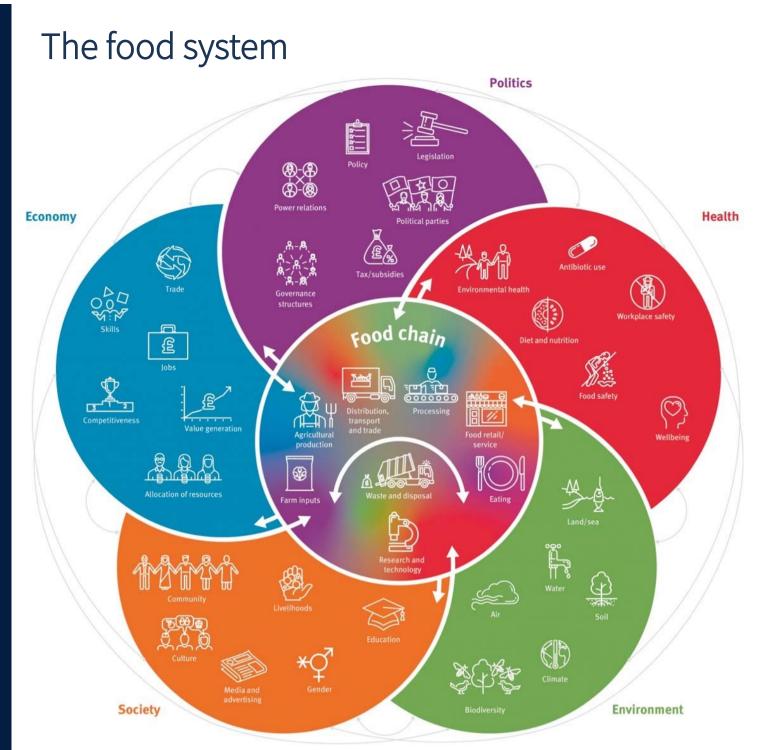
National and local data on the Scottish food systems is like a patchwork.

A few scraps are **missing**, some are **misshapen**, others are already **pieced together**.

The **Good Food Nation Act** is an opportunity to **tie it all in.**



Want to see how this work is helping inform policy? Scan this code to download the 2022 report of the Scottish Food Coalition, which I contributed to.



Hawkes, C., Parsons, K. and Wells, R. (2019). *Understanding the food system: Why it matters for food policy*. City University of London: Centre for Food Policy.

Food policy in Scotland quaculture: farm consents, monitor sheries: registration, fish health, quot quality standards, animal & plant welf Trade & investment support nd landing Marine environment: conservati areas, renewable energies owing strategy), National Islands Pl ployment and skills Cities and Regional growth deal (inc. Aberdeen food and drink lucation & healt Scottish hool meals nutritional Government uidance to councils) cience and research funding Directorates (overseen by **Scottish Ministers**) Human Rights: incorporation of right Human improvement: diet & healthy weigh delivery plan, chronic diseases, maternal & child health (healthy start vouchers, milk & food into law Planning (inc. food business licence ocal government reform healthy snack scheme) Alcohol & substances misuse Third sector support Environment protection: biodiversi beatland, soil framework, pollution Waste management: Food Waste Benefits (inc. welfare foods) Cash first approach to food poverty and dignity (Scottish Welfare Fund) Reduction Action Plan, deposit eturn scheme Overall control of spending across public Strategic alignment and coherence services (inc. local authorities) of the government overall programme Timeline Food safety & crime compliance evv collection Labelling regulations & enforcement Quality assurance & Diets monitoring & improvement licensing, protected geo **O** 2009 Quality Mea Scotland Market & industry suppor Recipe for success: national strategy Promotion of croft and land National Environmenta Scottish rights & responsibilitie 2014 regulator Research & advice nvestigations Advice to minister Public services complia **Public Bodies** Becoming a Good scrutiny Food Nation (GFN) 2018 Public Healt Scotland **GFN** Programme of Data on production Health improvement & protection Official statistics on health consumption, waste Policy evaluation and advice Research & advice measures + proposals for legislation innovation **O** 2019 **Reserved matters / UK-wide remit** GFN Bill announced in Programme for Gov. /eterinary profession & medicine iseases & pests surveillance Industry support 2020 Trade facilitation - Marketing - Research & advice Bill delayed due to Coronavirus UK 2021 Labour and skill Governmen Immigration (inc. seasona workers) dustrial Strategy departments GFN Bill introduced to & bodies Parliament 2022 Overall control of fisca Research cound Energy Transport Health & safety and monetary policy (VAT, tariffs, Good Food Nation sugar levy) (Scotland) Act



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