National Food Strategy for Wales

The issue

We lack a consensus vision for the food system in Wales. Government policy tools sit in departmental silos. Coordinated action is needed to integrate food policy across all areas of government including health, education, climate change, agriculture, food production and the economy at a local level. This requires a National Food Strategy centred on agroecological production and community food, delivered through accessible and robust governance.

Why it matters to Wales

- Food delivers outcomes – positive and negative - for the economy, public health, nature and climate
- Food policy making is not joined up: the Sustainable Farming Scheme (SFS), food and drink industry strategy and public health agendas are not aligned
- Demand for a food system that connects local producers with consumers is growing in Wales[1]
- Wales grows only 2% of the fruit and veg it consumes, relying heavily on imports from elsewhere in the UK and from some of the most climate-vulnerable countries abroad.[2]

Alignment with Welsh policy context

- Recent food policies reflect the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 principles, but the Act does not mention food
- The Social Partnership and Public Procurement (Wales) Act 2023 provides a framework for socially responsible supply chains, but does not require public bodies to buy food produced to higher environmental standards, unlike England's incoming procurement regulations. We want this introduced through secondary legislation.
- The 2021 Vision for the Food and Drink Industry aims for "one of the most environmentally and socially responsible supply chains in the world" but set no indicators or targets to steer delivery
- The previous Welsh Government introduced the Community Food Strategy, which focuses on local supply chains and community food projects.

Our perspective

- Without an integrated, long-term approach, health inequalities, nature and climate impacts, and food system resilience will all worsen
- Strengthening local and regional supply chains, supported by community initiatives and Local Food Partnerships, reduces vulnerability to global shocks
- Agroecological systems, such as organic farming, build healthy, resilient soils and support biodiversity, improving resilience to extreme weather
- The SFS and Local Food Partnerships show promising, joined-up progress on sustainability, local supply chains and food access, but this remains spread across policies rather than set out in one coordinated, targeted framework.

Evidence/References

1. Cynnal Cymru: Building a resilient food system for Wales
2. Food Sense Wales: Adaptation and Resilience

Contact/further information

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What we're doing about it

- We have long advocated for a National Food Strategy, directly[3] and as members of Food Policy Alliance Cymru[4]
- We engaged with the Sixth Senedd as part of the run-up to the strategy and gave oral evidence to the Senedd's Economy, Trade and Rural Affairs Committee on the Food (Wales) Bill
- Soil Association co-leads the Sustainable Food Places network with Food Matters and Sustain. Food Sense Wales is our national partner in Wales, supporting community food partnerships across the country.

What we want Welsh policy makers to do:

The National Food Strategy for Wales must enable decisive action across the whole of the food system in Wales. This requires the strategy to:

- set measurable targets for public health, environment, economy and food security
- include a vision for the Welsh food system and land/marine use in 2050, with robust definitions for production systems (e.g. regenerative, agroecological) and key terms ("national food security", "food justice", "food system resilience") for Welsh Government and public bodies
- include independent scrutiny mechanisms to assess progress, foster cross government coherence, and ensure accountability
- make recommendations on the role of legislation in supporting long-term delivery of the strategy's goals, such as an amendment to the Well-being of Future Generations Act, informed by input from relevant legal and constitutional expertise, including the Future Generations Commissioner's office.

and include:

- priority actions for key sectors, including a Horticulture Action Plan and an Organic Action Plan
- recommendations for public procurement targets for food produced to higher environmental standards
- recommend that clear Welsh Government guidelines for farm-level environmental/natural capital data be developed, building on existing approaches such as the Global Farm Metric
- recommendations on food system spatial data to inform a future land and marine use framework, considering dependencies on global ecosystems.

In turn Welsh Government must commit to:

- allocate clear ministerial responsibilities (health, economy, culture, education) for an integrated, cross-departmental approach to food
- develop ERAMMP (or equivalent) as the Welsh food system's integrated evidence function, extending its remit to farm-level and non-farm data (health, food poverty, food economy, school food), to track the Strategy's progress using a single evidence base
- develop clear guidelines for monitoring farm-level and food-system sustainability, building on approaches such as the Global Farm Metric, to build investor confidence and diversify funding for nature-friendly farming - interoperable with UK-wide standards (e.g. BSI, TNFD) rather than creating a separate reporting burden
- introduce annual progress reporting against outcomes and targets and a strategy review process
- publish an updated 'Food Matters' (2029) showing greater policy integration
- maintain financial support for community food partnerships.

Evidence/References

3. Soil Association Cymru: 2026 Cymru election manifesto
4. Food Sense Wales: Food Policy Alliance Cymru

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