

To the Committee,

Thanks to yourselves and the whole Committee for having us along to the roundtable. It is good for Scotland Food & Drink to be part of these discussions, and the roundtable format seems to work well to explore important issues in some depth.

I mentioned during the session the various member state's CAP Strategic Plans and it may be useful for the committee to see, if they haven't already, the summary of these produced for a conference last week called EU Agri-Food Days (I didn't attend but registered and received the materials). The summary report includes some useful insights into how EU states are planning to implement the CAP for their own agricultural sectors.

[Link to the summary report](#)

Highlights include that: "financial support to guarantee farmers a fair standard of living remains a key element of the CAP" and "the income tools contribute to food security and to maintaining agricultural activity in all geographical areas, tackling long-term challenges such as maintaining jobs in remote rural areas, supporting sectors and farming practices that sustain livelihoods and landscapes, and slowing down land abandonment and rural depopulation."

There are also relevant sections on the role of cooperation and the targets being set for organic production.

The report also refers to the efforts to join the CAP Strategic Plans with the EU Farm to Fork and Biodiversity strategies, which feels similar to our own efforts to ensure the Agricultural and Rural Communities (Scotland) Bill aligns with Good Food Nation and wider biodiversity and Just Transition plans, which also came up in the roundtable. Joining these together will require a collective approach underpinned by clear principles and agreed actions. If we get this right we will be much more able to achieve the ambitious strategic objectives of the Scotland Food & Drink Partnership, which does of course include the Scottish Government as a key partner and which at its heart wants to make Scotland the best country in the world to own, run or work for a food and drink business as we sustain Scotland, and supply the world.

Lastly, I received the attached letter from Deputy First Minister Shona Robison in response to our Scottish Budget Submission, and it may be useful for the Committee to have sight of this as it makes clear that budgetary decisions are restrained, but also that support will continue, and that is very welcome, albeit we don't yet know what that will look like.

I'm unsure how best to pass such information to the Committee, so if you can possibly advise if this suffices or if we should write formally.

Best wishes,

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Your Reference: Scottish Budget Submission from Scotland Food & Drink

14 December 2023

Dear Joe Hind,

Thank you for your email of 24 November setting out Scotland Food & Drink's perspective and views on the forthcoming Scottish Budget and the sector's wishes around that.

Firstly, I would like to assure you of The Scottish Government's commitment to the food and drink sector which is absolutely vital to Scotland's economy. Our food and drink is a success story and the value of Scotland's food and drink industry, and the significant contribution it makes to our national and local economies and to our communities cannot be overstated. That is why this Government has been delighted this year to provide £5m towards Year 1 delivery of the new food and drink industry strategy - *Sustaining Scotland: Supplying the World*. That support comes on top of more than £20m funding support provided since 2017 for the sector to support delivery of the previous *Ambition 2030* strategy and the sectoral Recovery Plan work. This support has been fundamental in ensuring the sector was able to navigate the twin challenges posed by the Pandemic and the impact of Brexit. I know that support has been welcomed and put to good use by the Scotland Food & Drink Partnership.

That being said, the publication of the 2024-25 Scottish Budget will follow a series of difficult choices. Representing the industry, you will be aware that the 2024-25 financial year will be extremely challenging, with high inflation, economic uncertainty and the ongoing cost of living crisis. Unfortunately, the funding we have received from the UK Government through the Autumn Statement has not matched the scale of these challenges, with inflation eroding our spending power. We will nonetheless be using all levers at our disposal to maximise investment and to support the economy including the food and drink sector as best we can.



Please be assured that our support for the sector will continue and I know that you are in active discussion with the Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs, Land Reform and Islands as well as her policy officials on how support can be provided for future years of the strategy.

Yours sincerely



SHONA ROBISON