

Cross-Party Group on Fair Trade

Wednesday 17 September 2025 at 6pm, online

Minute

Present

MSPs

John Mason MSP

Tim Eagle MSP

Invited guests

Simon Kenton-Lake, Nourish Scotland

Laua Muir, Scotland Excel

Jawahir Al-Mauly, Ujamaa Spice

Non-MSP Group Members

Alison Wright, Dumfries Fairtrade Group

Anne Walsh, West Lothian Fair Trade Group

Catherine Newman, Scottish Fair Trade

Charles Sim, Scottish Fair Trade

Craig Horne, Parliamentary Officer (John Mason MSP)

Karena Jarvie, Perth and Kinross Fairtrade Group

Kat Ramsay, Aberdeen City Council

Martin Carle, CFINE

Martin Meteyard

Morag Rennie, North Lanarkshire Fair Trade Group

Pam Maxwell, North Ayrshire Fair Trade Group

Richard McCready, Dundee Fair Trade Forum

Apologies

Foysol Choudhury MSP

Hilary Lawson, Inverness Fairtrade Group

Kirsty Connell, Scotmid

Russell Salton, Edinburgh Fairtrade City Steering Group

Sarah Boyack MSP

Yasmina Ferrigan, Hadeel Palcrafts

Agenda items 1 & 2: Welcome & Apologies

John Mason MSP welcomed everyone to the meeting, introduced the speakers and the meeting topic, ran through various housekeeping items and the apologies received. John Mason MSP invited the speakers to start the meeting, stating that the minutes of the last meeting on 14 May would be taken when Tim Eagle MSP was able to join.

Agenda item 3: Simon Kenton-Lake, Nourish Scotland

Simon Kenton-Lake is from Nourish Scotland and he introduced the organisation as NGO based in Edinburgh working on food systems, food policy, and food practice. And that Nourish Scotland is the secretariat for the Scottish Food Coalition, that works towards a just transition to a fair, healthy, and sustainable food system, not just in Scotland but everywhere that Scotland can have positive impact.

Simon described the food system as complicated and interconnected. A system spanning health and the environment, society and economy, and politics all of which can at times be in conflict with each other. He stressed the point that the food system is interconnected. In addition, Simon explained that governments have individual policies and make strategies that work in conflict with each other, and that policy and legislation should reflect the interconnected nature of the food system.

Simon discussed Scotland's Good Food Nation Act, the purpose of which is coherence. There is a statute of duty on Scottish Government to produce a national food plan which is currently going through Parliament. The 32 local authorities and 4,214 health boards also have a statute of duty to produce food plans. The National Good Food Nation Plan and the local authority and health board plans must involve public consultation and must interact with each other. Simon highlighted that there is an independent Food Commission that scrutinises the plans to ensure they are achieving their objectives, which is positive for civil society.

He went on to explain that within the Good Food Nation Plan there are 6 overarching Good Food Nation outcomes, a set of indicators and measures to assess progress and achievements. Simon highlighted that the Scottish Government is committed as a Fair Trade Nation, yet the National Good Food Plan has no targets and no indicators on Fair Trade.

Simon went on to suggest that at the least, there should be procurement targets set for the sustainable sourcing of food from outside Scotland or the UK. For example, if the food is not local and seasonal and is imported, it should be Fair Trade.

In conclusion, Simon stated that the Plan needs to have a commitment and mechanism for communication and collaboration with civil society and those stakeholder groups who are best placed to support across the whole Plan. He suggested it is also disappointing that the Scottish Government has not committed to revise the Catering for Change Guidance which focuses on supporting public sector food to be more sustainable and healthier, including consideration of transparency in supply chain. Simon would like to see Scotland's commitment as a Fair Trade Nation come

through in the Good Food Nation Plan because the Plan should encompass Scotland's influence and wider values around equity, justice and human rights.

Agenda item 3: Laura Muir, Scotland Excel

Laura Muir introduced herself as Strategic Procurement Manager at Scotland Excel. She went on to explain how the Good Food Nation Plan could enhance more healthy and sustainable procurement across Scotland aligned with Scotland's commitment as a Fair Trade Nation.

Laura explained that Scotland Excel is the centre of procurement expertise for the local government sector and a non-profit shared service funded by Scotland's 32 local authorities. The services of Scotland Excel are designed to help councils meet the challenge of reducing budgets at a time of growing demand. Through collaborative procurement, Scotland Excel tries to increase efficiency, in order to protect spending on frontline services. Scotland Excel is able to save councils in the region of 14.5 million pounds every year.

Laura went on to explain that Scotland Excel takes a strategic approach to ensure that contracts are designed to encourage innovation, facilitate policy, support local economies and generate social value for the communities. Explaining what this means, she explained that the organisation's frameworks have some impact people's day-to-day lives e.g. whether it is the bins where you dispose of waste, the lorries that empty the bins, the salt in the roads, the food that is supplied to children at school lunches, or the adaptations made in elderly people's homes to let them remain home for longer, it all comes from the Scotland Excel frameworks.

Laura explained that there a number of food frameworks that are worth about £83,000,000 a year and they help to supply products served in schools, nurseries, care homes, and community centres across the country. We work really closely with our suppliers and with our local councils to ensure that the frameworks meet the requirements of all the relevant legislation, so particularly The Nutritional Requirements for Food and Drink in Schools (Scotland) Regulations 2020 regulations that came out in 2020, and Setting the Table Guidance, Nutritional Standards and Practical Guidance for Early Learning and Childcare Providers in Scotland.

Laura proceeded to highlight that The Good Food Nation Plan will strengthen Scotland Excel's focus on sustainable and ethical sourcing, improve the food outcomes, supplier development and data and transparency. It will reinforce the organisation's commitment to using procurement as a lever for positive change across health, sustainability and community.

Scotland Excel's Food Procurement Strategy is closely aligned with the six national outcomes of the Good Food Nation Plan. Laura suggests that the Plan could strengthen procurement by setting clear targets for local and sustainable sourcing, providing some practical guidance for councils. She also suggests that there is a real opportunity to embed Fair Trade into the Good Food Nation journey, and that public procurement can lead by example, by including Fair Trade, tea, coffee, cocoa and sugar within contracts.

Laura concluded by highlighting the opportunity we have to nourish our communities and support justice beyond our borders, and she welcomed thoughts on how Scotland Excel can work together to make this vision a reality.

Agenda item 4: Jawahir Al-Mauly, Ujamaa Spice

Jawahir Al-Mauly introduced herself as the Founder of Ujamaa Spice and suggested that a true Good Food Nation cannot focus only on local produce. It must also consider the food that we import, which connects Scotland to farmers and workers thousands of miles away.

Jawahir introduced Ujamaa Spice as a Scotland based ethical spice brand working directly with smallholder farmers in Zanzibar, sourcing fully traceable, sustainably grown spices and pay premiums that reflect the true value of the people and the land. For Ujamaa Spice, it is not just about selling spices, Jawahir explained that their model ensures that farmers thrive while consumers support justice.

Jawahir highlighted that Scotland's Good Food Nation Plan, although ambitious in terms of health and sustainability, it mainly focuses on domestic growers which is important but she went on to say that most of what we eat here in Scotland is imported. She explained that every product that we see on our shelves like spices, tea, and cocoa, affects the livelihoods of farmers and workers thousands of miles away, yet this global impact is largely missing from the Plan.

Using the example of spices, Jawahir informed the meeting that in 2024, the UK imported around £128 million worth of spices, with India alone contributing £23 million to that. She highlighted that many of these spices will have been produced under low wages and very unsafe conditions, with Fair Trade offering a solution with fair wages, safer working conditions, sustainable farming and improved well-being for producer communities. She went on to explain that Scotland benefits too in terms of supporting Scottish businesses, fostering innovation and building consumer trust through traceable ethical products.

Jawahir highlighted that by recognising the global impact of our consumption, the Good Food Nation Plan could show that ethical choices at home strengthen communities abroad and make farmer stories part of Scotland's food story.

Moving on to the challenges of ethical small businesses in Scotland, Jawahir expressed that running an ethical food business is very tough. Enterprises such as Ujamaa Spice are competing with big brands that chase margins, often using cheap labour while Ujamaa Spice's prices reflect real social and environmental values. Small ethical brands get little funding and little attention, and retailers, for example, or even wholesalers rarely stock brands such as Ujamaa Spice. She explained that her business faces the same complex rules as multinationals such as food safety, labelling, import, sustainability, leaving little time to innovate, work with farmers or educate consumers. For Jawahir, education is vital, and is not something that multinationals do. Whereas Fair Trade businesses try to show people where food comes from and why ethics matter. Despite these hurdles, she says that small ethical businesses, drive transparency, innovation and sustainability, proving that fair,

traceable food is both possible and essential for Scotland's health and global responsibility.

Jawahir was asked to highlight what is possible and she gave the example of a collaboration between Diageo and Ujamaa Spice where Ujamaa Spice created a spiced hot toddy which Diageo is selling alongside their whiskies. This she says proves that innovation and Fair Trade can go hand in hand.

Ujamaa Spice's asks are that as well as Scotland's Good Food Nation Plan supporting local producers, it should also support ethical businesses that import goods; and use the Fair Trade principles as measurable commitments, including fairness, traceability and sustainability; and increase the available business support.

In conclusion, Jawahir stated that Scotland can be a Good Food Nation, and a Fair Trade Nation at the same time, but that the Good Food Nation Plan or vision should be bold, encompassing fairness and global connectedness. She asks that ethical sourcing be embedded into the Plan through procurement targets, incentives and clear reporting.

Agenda item 5: Approval of Minutes

John Mason MSP asked for approval of the minutes and as there were no issues raised, Martin Carle moved the minutes, seconded by John Mason himself.

Agenda item 6: Discussion

Karena Jarvie thanked the three speakers and asked Laura Muir, if Scotland Excel has any advice about how primary schools could procure, just as one example, Fairtrade Mark bananas. Laura replied by expressing the pressure councils are under to deliver best value while meeting sustainable and ethical goals but that there is a fruit and vegetable framework that Tayside Contracts participates in and that a check should be done as to whether Fairtrade bananas are offered. She went on to suggest that aggregating across councils could be a way forward although it requires buy-in from councils. Laura highlighted that some targeted funding or incentives for pilots could be another option. Simon Kenton-Lake added that food budgets and school budgets are not ring-fenced and it comes down to the value a particular local authority places on good food.

Kat Ramsay of Aberdeen City Council asked how to reduce the barrier of non-legislative constraints in council procurement to enable more transparent and ethical spending, especially when legislation does not prohibit, but simply does not require ethical considerations. That is, if best value is a consideration that is not only about selecting the cheapest option.

Laura answers that it is about balancing quality and price, and that there is no legislation related to Fair Trade procurement. Ethically sourced is the term used in order not to favour one brand [certification] over another.

Simon went on to mention the principles behind Fair Trade and to question what value and price mean, mentioning the associated externalities and the bigger picture in terms of the impact on global producers and the environment. He suggested it as a conversation to be had.

Richard McCready of Dundee Fair Trade Forum suggested that there is a need to address the competition that exists between price, and ethical and sustainable procurement (even Fair Trade procurement as the default where possible).

Laura Muir comments that this is a big issue, mentioning a discussion paper that was worked on a few years ago by herself and Simon and others about food in schools being seen as an investment and not a cost, and the wider picture of what school meals can do to enrich the lives of children. She said that Fair Trade could play a big role in this but that it comes back to the significant pressure to deliver best value.

Simon commented that the Good Food Nation Plan offers an opportunity going forward to consider how Scotland is seen on a world stage, and in a Fair Trade Nation, to integrate Fair Trade into the Plan.

John Mason MSP what MSPs could be doing by way of support.

Simon commented that he is hopeful that there will be cross party debate in Parliament during the scrutiny process. Tim Eagle MSP confirmed that there will not be a debate in the Chamber.

John Mason MSP asked Jawahir Al-Mauly if Ujamaa Spice has had any success selling to bigger purchasers or councils.

Jawahir confirmed that they have not had success in this area and stated that margins are the focus for buyers, not where the spices are from, and who grew them. For Ujamaa Spice being a Fair Trade business is a struggle.

John Mason MSP concluded the discussion.

Agenda item 7: Next meeting

John Mason confirmed that the next meeting would be on the 3rd December and that any suggestion for topics should be sent to Louise at Scottish Fair Trade.

The meeting closed at 7:20pm.