Developing a national food strategy – call for evidence

The National Federation of Young Farmers' Clubs (NFYFC) represents a diverse group of young people who share an interest in a vibrant and sustainable countryside and the food and farming industries. YFC members have a keen interest in food production, farming and land management, as well as future career opportunities within these and allied industries. With over 21,000 members and 615 clubs, the National Federation of Young Farmers' Clubs (NFYFC) is one of the largest rural youth organisations in the UK.

We hope that a future national food strategy will take note of existing projects and schemes that help communicate positive and necessary messages about nutrition, local sourcing, production and food schemes. The NFYFC Agriculture and Rural Issues steering group, made up of regional representatives within England and Wales, are responding on behalf of the YFC members they represent.

Objective

We have been tasked with providing views to help Defra discover actions and policies both big and small to help transform the food system:

- **Innovations you have seen work in your home, your neighbourhood or business, in this country or beyond**
- **ideas that help citizens make informed decisions about the food they eat, or which increase access to and affordability of high-quality food**
- **ideas that make food production more environmentally sustainable, creating a flourishing countryside rich in wildlife**
- **ideas that help farming, fishing and food businesses and communities thrive, benefitting employees and the wider community**
- **or that promote the highest standards of animal health and welfare**
- **or that could put England at the forefront of innovation and reshape our food system in the coming years.**

Response from NFYFC AGRI

Practical skills for sourcing and understanding food nutrition and cooking

NFYFC creates and delivers a diverse national competitions programme for its 21,000 competition-aged members with an age range of 10-26. This enables YFC members to learn and practice life skills. Cookery is a constant within the competitions programme which includes a mix of traditional rural and agricultural activities, sport, art, life and vocational skills.

Reflecting YFC's place in modern society and the changing needs of young people in rural areas, the programme constantly evolves to equip members with knowledge and abilities that are relevant to their lives and careers, and promote good citizenship.

This year, in partnership with the Rare Breeds Survival Trust, the national cookery competition tasked teams with preparing and cooking a nutritional meal and adhering to food hygiene and H&S rules and regulations. The

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teams prepare and cook the task using two gas rings. Learning outcomes include: cooking skills including knowledge of local food provenance, native breeds, use of implements, understanding recipes, food safety, hygiene, nutrition, presentation and time management - incorporating a key message of valuing food not just by financial cost, but carbon cost. The results are clearly highlighted in this video. (https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=501642900391950)

This is something our YFC members do in their spare time at a club, county, area and national level. It's fun, effective and inspirational, and also provides valuable public engagement at county shows and educational events.

The programme compares favourably with feedback from a YFC member regarding her own school experience on understanding diet, nutrition and food:

"My main comments would centre around increasing actually cooking in school. When I was at school in primary I learnt to make fairy cakes, in secondary how to do a stir fry, make royal icing and basically ice a fruit cake and wash up.

"If that's what we are sending kids away from school with how can we expect them to make smart choices about what to eat to be healthy, let alone educated choices about where food comes from and food standards?

"I am now old enough to say a lot of my friends who had the same or similar education to me now have kids. Some of them have gone and done their own research about food, many haven't so are unable to make these choices in an educated way. They then pass this attitude on to their kids.

"I don't have the answer but somehow we have to break this cycle to tackle the obesity crisis and the problem of people understanding why what British producers do is so important, and why we believe in the standards we produce to. I think there is definitely something in the work that NFYFC and LEAF Education produced (Future Farming Curve module) last year and a pilot session with Homewood School was brilliant, the feedback was amazing and the engagement from the kids was fantastic."

Could this very simple example be introduced to a future national school curriculum (with appropriate industry/government support to ensure ingredients are available/affordable) and for FE and higher education? If our fundamental knowledge of food, its production and value is not understood, there is little hope for a sustainable society and we should take every opportunity within the education process to address this.

The NFYFC national cookery final is held at a time of year that naturally lends itself to celebrating harvest festivals and of course Love British Food and its campaigning ambition for the promotion of food, nutrition and procurement of British food for both public and private sectors. Whilst there are a variety of commendable food campaigns including Back British Farming, practical cooking is a sure way to help young people learn skills, apply these skills to making meals with an awareness of sourcing nutritious but affordable ingredients.

National schemes of note that help to source local food and take carbon footprint into consideration include**:** Big Barn, Sustain - Local and sustainable food and drink producers. Many organisations take an active part in public

engagement by contributing to or holding events including*:* Open Farm Sunday- exhibiting at county shows, food and farm educational events and/or contributing resources for Countryside Classroom.

Regional food and farming planned and existing projects

Birmingham Food for Thought (BFFT) - a planned pilot project with a mission to educate the next generation of Birmingham. To inspire children living in low socio-economic areas in Birmingham to explore their opportunities for future employment with the food and drink sector of the city. Sophie Dixon is in the process of finalising a project management plan to deliver the BFFT pilot in March 2020-contact Sophie.Dixon@kpmg.co.uk for further details.

A pioneering travel grant scheme has been launched by Tuppenny Barn to enable more school children to visit the fruit and vegetable plots to learn more about the food chain, biodiversity and the therapeutic value of the "great outdoors".

Key Questions

- What lessons were learnt from the 2007 Year of Food and Farming?
- What happened to the legacy work of Think Food and Farming?
- What was the impact of both national initiatives that so many organisations took part in?
- NFYFC Great British Food for Great British Athletes project. NFYFC and many other organisations incorporated projects into their programme of events to demonstrate many aspects of food production – what were the impacts of these projects and should something similar be repeated?

(897 words)

NFYFC AGRI
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