

October 2026

Becoming a Good Food Nation

The Impact of Scottish Food Partnerships
2024-26



SUSTAINABLE
FOOD places

food
matters

sustainable, fair food systems

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Introduction

Across the UK, a transformation is taking place. In towns, cities, islands, and rural communities, food partnerships are reshaping the way food is grown, shared, accessed, and valued through local collaboration, practical action, and long-term vision.

Food partnerships are formal mechanisms for communicating and collaborating, bringing together local authorities, health boards, public sector establishments, food growers, retailers, academia and the hospitality sector to positively change the food system.

By championing a whole system approach to food, partnerships interweave issues such as health, agriculture, food security, climate change, worker and animal welfare, and nature restoration to develop cross-sector solutions that are transforming food and farming. Food partnerships are also about people and place, putting local communities at the heart of their work, ensuring that the future of food is one that is just, equitable and fair.

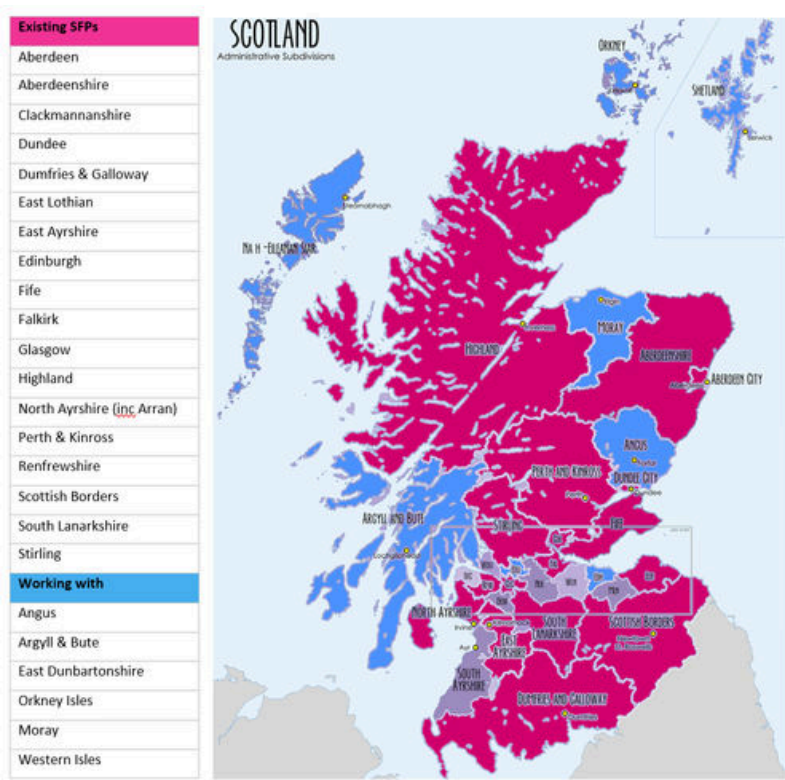
This report captures just a fraction of the activity taking place across Scottish food partnerships, drawing on interviews and reports between 2024 and 2026. It offers a window into the momentum building at a local level that is helping Scotland achieve its ‘Good Food Nation’ ambitions and already aligning with the 6 outcomes of the Act.

Sustainable Food Places

Sustainable Food Places is the UK wide network accelerating, amplifying and connecting the work of food partnerships to solve some of today’s most pressing social, environmental, and economic issues.

The network consists of 128 members, 17 of which are in Scotland, covering more than half of all Scottish local authorities and three quarters of the population.

Nourish Scotland supports the Scottish network by sharing good practice, ensuring local and national level actions align, and reporting on national progress.



Scotland's Good Food Nation Ambitions

The Good Food Nation (Scotland) Act 2022 is framework legislation designed to make food policy more coordinated and to support Scotland's vision to become a nation “where people from every walk of life take pride and pleasure in, and benefit from, the food they produce, buy, cook, serve and eat each day.”

In December 2025, Scottish Government produced its first National Good Food Nation Plan. All 32 local authorities and 14 territorial health boards must also produce their own Local Good Food Nation Plans by April 2028. This includes a statutory duty for inclusive consultation, including with children and young people.

Food Partnerships for a Good Food Nation

Transforming Scotland's food system cannot be delivered by the Scottish Government and its relevant authorities alone. Although they possess significant policy levers, such as public procurement, planning, education and public health, meaningful change relies on their ability to work alongside producers, businesses, community organisations and citizens. This calls for governance structures that enable partnership working and coordinated action across public, private and civic sectors. Food partnerships provide an excellent framework for this work.

Many authorities are already using food partnerships as an effective vehicle for engagement, coordination and to convene stakeholders. The Scottish Government's [July 2026 report](#) on relevant authority processes for Good Food Nation Plan development states that “...local food partnerships were repeatedly referenced as convening structures for collaborative development.” Furthermore, food partnerships, supported by a central ‘coordinator’, provide several benefits including:

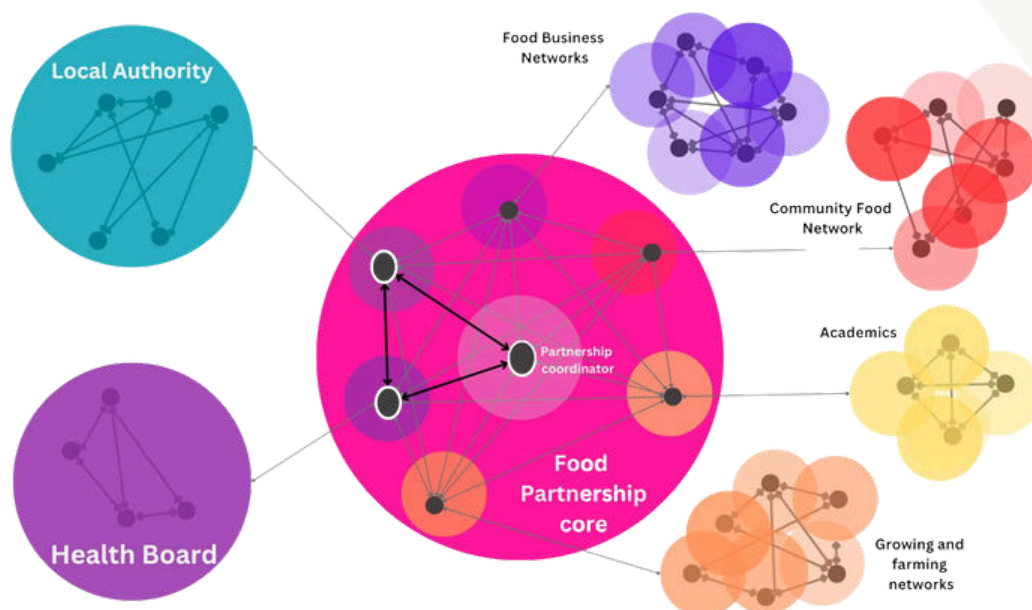
- Bringing together diverse stakeholders from across the food system.
- Enabling efficient mapping of existing assets, helping to avoid duplication of resources and identifying gaps where targeted interventions are needed.
- Supporting effective consultation with community members, organisations and businesses.
- Giving access to a well-established network for sharing good practice across Scotland.
- Providing funding opportunities that would otherwise be out of reach of public bodies (depending on the partnership model).

Ultimately, partnerships build the trust, relationships and legitimacy needed to act as a credible voice in food system governance. They support inclusive consultation by creating spaces for dialogue, connecting communities with relevant authorities, and translating diverse perspectives and forms of knowledge into decision-making processes.

**“Sustainable Food Places are well placed to...facilitate effective and engaged consultation...Together GFN ambitions are more likely to be achieved”-
The Living Good Food Nation Lab - University of Edinburgh Business School**

How do Food Partnerships Work in Practice?

Whilst partnerships can be organised differently depending on context, the graphic below outlines an example structure that could support the effective delivery of the Good Food Nation Act.



In this example, as duty bearers, both the local authority and the health board would have dedicated resource to deliver on their Good Food Nation responsibilities, helping to ensure activity is coordinated and joined up internally. Alongside these roles, a food partnership coordinator, hosted by a third sector organisation, would provide an independent convening structure, ensuring the partnership is not perceived solely as a public sector initiative. This could enable wider participation and access to external funding. These roles would work closely together, creating a joined up approach to food across an entire area.

On the right of the graphic are examples of food system partners that are key to developing and delivering Local Good Food Nation Plans, but are often difficult for the public sector to engage with. A dedicated food partnership facilitates collaborative working and strong relationships with these organisations, as well as serving as a conduit between sectors, bringing organisations together to build long lasting food system change.

Scotland's Gold Sustainable Food Places Award member, Granite City Good Food, operates a similar model "a network of networks" where stakeholders come together and solve issues that impact their specific area, but also connecting at a city wide level through the partnership. Regardless of the model chosen, food partnerships tend to deliver change through five main types of activity:

- **Delivering** their own projects and programmes, directly involving themselves in local food action.
- **Coordinating** action across the food system, sharing knowledge, and connecting stakeholders.
- **Influencing** local food decision making, helping to make local food policies, strategies and plans representative. They also influence local people through campaigning and public engagement.
- **Instigating** work by sharing good practice and facilitating stakeholder collaboration.
- **Amplifying** and promoting the work of others, helping to build a local good food movement.

Outcome 1

The food environment in Scotland enables people to eat well. Everyone benefits from reliable and dignified access to safe, nutritious, affordable, enjoyable, sustainable and age-appropriate food.

Food partnerships are showing that access to good food is central to improving health and wellbeing. Across the country, alliances are embedding nutritious, dignified and affordable food into their communities; tackling inequality, promoting healthier lives and helping people eat well.



[East Ayrshire's food partnership](#) launched a new community benefits initiative requiring all council suppliers to contribute toward tackling food insecurity. Managed by the partnership, this effort supported the launch of a new community larder van, fostered stronger links between stakeholders and improved the delivery of school lunches helping to reduce food waste, improve uptake, support children during the holidays and save families hundreds of pounds a year.



East Lothian's [Friendly Food Network](#) delivered festive food support to over 9000 people, ensuring dignified access to meals over the holiday period through targeted funding from the Lintel Trust.



[Granite City Good Food](#) led the adoption of Dr Megan Blake's Food Ladders, a joined-up approach to tackling food poverty, in Aberdeen. The place-based framework enables local projects to catch those in crisis, help build capacity to enable change and support self-organised community action. The approach is now embedded into the 'Food Poverty Action Aberdeen' Action Plan.



The [North Ayrshire Food Forum's](#) network of community larders supports 600 households a week. The community larders are an example of a more sustainable approach to food support, requiring a small membership fee, helping community members access healthy food at an affordable rate.



[Glasgow Food Policy Partnership](#) developed and oversees the delivery of the Glasgow City Food Plan (2021-31), a holistic 10-year plan created collaboratively with multi-sector partners. The plan aims for Glasgow to be recognised for its good food and as a city where tasty, healthy, affordable food is accessible to everyone. The plan provides a framework for food work in the city and has led to several collaborative projects.

These examples reflect a shift across Scotland: treating food not just as a service or commodity, but as a foundation for good health, dignity, and connection. Whether through city wide policy, public health, or community-led initiatives, food partnerships are helping embed health, equality and wellbeing into everyday life — in ways that are practical, inclusive, and built to last.

Outcome 2

Scotland's food system is sustainable and contributes to a flourishing natural environment on our land and in our waters. It supports our net zero and climate adaptation ambitions and plays an important role in protecting and improving animal health and welfare and in restoring and regenerating biodiversity.

Food partnerships are embedding sustainability and climate action into local food systems. From growing initiatives, innovative practices, institutional procurement, promoting local produce and peer to peer learning, they are demonstrating how climate and environmental goals can be advanced through practical and participatory place-based action.



[Clacks Good Food](#) initiated a pilot programme introducing hydroponic growing towers into vacant land as part of the “Growing a New Future” project. These installations are sparking conversations about food, climate, and technology, and could serve as a catalyst for more inclusive, accessible growing strategies in areas where traditional methods face limitations.



[Eat and Drink Dundee](#) worked with Zero Waste Scotland, Abertay University, and the City of Glasgow College to develop a food waste and sustainability module for students.



The [Highland Good Food Partnership](#) piloted community composting schemes and convened cross-region learning exchanges with partners Dumfries & Galloway. These exchanges support the spread of regenerative food production practices in some of Scotland's most rural areas.



[Fair Food Aberdeenshire](#) has been supporting [Home | Foodlink NE](#) to develop shared markets, strengthen local supply chains, and create practical ways for people to learn about locally grown food. Whether through the producer network, the four Food Hubs (3 in Aberdeenshire, 1 in the city) or community gatherings like ‘A Taste of Place’, change is happening to make it easier for people to engage with and influence their local food system.



[Dumfries & Galloway Sustainable Food Partnership](#) established the South West Soil Health Group which has grown into Propagate's Scotland-wide Regenerative Farming Network (390 members). The Network hosts the Farm Cluster Connections project and the South West Group continues to support farmers to transition to nature friendly practices through peer learning.

These efforts highlight how Scotland's food partnerships are helping to deliver joined-up, climate and nature conscious change. From infrastructure and supply chains to education and policy, environmental sustainability is being integrated into the fabric of local food systems.

Outcome 3

Scotland's food environment and wider food system enables and promotes a physically and mentally healthy population. This leads to the prevention of, and a reduction in, diet-related conditions.

Food partnerships equip communities, organisations and businesses with the skills, connections and knowledge to deliver good food to the public plate. From schools to catering kitchens and health care settings, initiatives are creating a better food environment, increasing the availability of healthy food and strengthening connections between people, land, and economies to support a healthy population.



[Fair Food Renfrewshire's](#) Thrive Under Five programme supports families with young children, at risk of food insecurity, through a package of coordinated activities. Developed with local health and community partners, the programme includes weekly meal kits, cooking classes, community pantries, and support with debt and energy advice.



The [Glasgow Food Policy Partnership's Full of Beans campaign](#) promoted beans as an affordable, healthy and climate-friendly source of protein. The campaign involved chefs, caterers, growers, schools, and community organisations, encouraging uptake of healthy, sustainable food across the city. Nutritious bean-based meals now feature in all council schools and University of Glasgow venues.



In Aberdeen, [Granite City Good Food](#) initiated the Healthy Families on a Budget programme, a year-long project exploring food insecurity, budgeting, and cooking. Pupils created household budgets, developed and tested recipes, and compiled them into a recipe book. The project combined practical skills with a deeper understanding of the social and economic issues surrounding food.



Collaboration between Stirling Council, Forth Valley College, and Start Up Stirling strengthened the provision of school holiday food support for children and young people. Through this partnership, lunch bags are being distributed to organisations delivering summer activity programmes in some of the area's most disadvantaged communities. The programme supported 600 people to eat a nutritious lunch in Summer 2025 alone.

Whether through education, kitchens or campaigns, partnerships are supporting people to eat nutritious food, learn new skills and socialise to improve their health. Importantly, these initiatives adopt a collaborative approach that recognises the range of barriers that prevent access to healthy food and creates holistic solutions to overcome them.

Outcome 4

Our food and drink sector is prosperous, diverse, innovative, and vital to national and local economic and social wellbeing. It is key to making Scotland food secure and food resilient, and creates and sustains jobs and businesses underpinned by fair work standards throughout food supply chains.

Food partnerships across Scotland are playing a growing role in shaping local economies. They are supporting enterprise, expanding market access, and embedding food into economic development plans, supply chains, and investment decisions.



[Dumfries & Galloway Sustainable Food Partnership](#) supported farmers and growers to create the Galloway Food Hub, which now supports 35 local food producers to sell to local communities. Through the hub and the educational film “[Rooted: Growing a Local Food Ecosystem](#)” (reaching 8000+ views) they have helped increase local fruit and veg production.



The Western Isles community formed a strategic alliance with the Coop Group, creating a bespoke island store model to improve essential goods availability across 8 Outer Hebridean islands. Right to Food research, with 24 community researchers found an island premium, with basic fruit and veg costing 28%+ more than on the mainland. Coop responded with 150+ new product lines, expanding frozen and pantry ranges, launching the first home delivery service, and stockpiling essentials on island for Winter.



[Highland Good Food Partnership](#), through their work as a Scotland Regional Food Group, supported businesses to build connections and routes to market. Including working with Visit Inverness and Loch Ness to develop a local food and drink trail. As well as, producing ‘Why I buy Local’ videos to encourage Highland Hospitality businesses to buy local produce.



[Falkirk Food Futures](#) contributed to an innovative social and environmental audit of small food businesses, developed through the Forth Valley Food & Drink Network, which has deepened understanding of local impact and catalysed national recognition. A pilot participant, Forth Valley College, won a Green Gown Award for best Campus Food & Drink after showcasing their sustainable food practices through the new tool.



[Food 4 Fife](#), in collaboration with the local authority, launched a new food strategy 2024-29, with the partnership engaging in early work to link school vegetable procurement to local supply and distribution. The strategy reflects a broader commitment to connecting food policy with education, climate, and economic priorities.

Together, these examples show how Scotland’s food partnerships are helping to build regionally rooted food economies. They are connecting producers to markets, aligning public procurement with local values, and positioning food as a strategic lever for inclusive economic growth.

Outcome 5

People and communities are empowered to participate in, and shape, their food system. Scotland has a thriving food culture with a population who are educated about good and sustainable food.

Food partnerships across Scotland are ensuring that dignity, equity, and lived experience guide how food systems are shaped, through lived experience panels, community conversations and co-designed projects. They are also creating space for local people to learn about, engage with and talk about food through community events, workshops and shared meals.



East Lothian's [Friendly Food Network](#) initiated a new youth-led group exploring food insecurity and how young people can shape a sustainable and inclusive food future. The reflections were central to the area's recent food summit, ensuring young voices influence local planning and policy.



In Clackmannanshire, [Clacks Good Food](#), engaged in “dignity dialogues” with local communities, using facilitated conversations to better understand lived experiences of food insecurity. These dialogues helped shape more inclusive and responsive food support systems, including the creation of a network of community larders.



The [Highland Good Food Partnership](#) developed a “FEAST” toolkit to support communities in organising local food festivals, promoting celebration, enterprise, and connection through food. The toolkit is already inspiring events across the Black Isle, Skye, and Caithness and Sutherland.



[Granite City Good Food](#) has delivered a vibrant mix of intergenerational activities and peer-led training. The latest cohort of Food Champions launched through a new round of Connect, supported local leaders in advocating for better and fairer food systems.



[Stirling Food Partnership's](#) Good Food Fortnight brought together residents, growers, producers, community groups and local businesses. The programme featured events, conversations and activities designed to explore what “good food” means for Stirling and to support the development of the local Good Food Nation plan.

Scottish food partnerships are encouraging people to engage with, celebrate and learn about their local food systems. They are ensuring that those impacted by inequality in the food system have a say in decisions that impact them, so that local policy and projects work for their communities.

Outcome 6

Decisions we make in Scotland contribute positively to local and global food systems transformation. Scotland actively engages in learning and exchanging knowledge and best practice internationally.

Scottish food partnerships, learn, collaborate and share best practice through regional partnerships and national networks. These connections help strengthen local and national food systems by enabling knowledge exchange, supporting innovative solutions, and ensuring decision-making aligns with wider policies and initiatives.



Regionally, the food partnerships in [Stirling](#), [Clackmannanshire](#), and [Falkirk](#) are working together through [Forth Valley Food Futures](#), to align food priorities with economic and climate strategies. Their work focuses on changing the food system; improving health, economic development and protecting the environment. Whilst working to align with and provide information on the Good Food Nation Act.



At a national level, Scottish food partnerships collaborate through a network led by Sustainable Food Places partner [Nourish Scotland](#). The network supports partnerships by campaigning at a national level, sharing best practices, creating strategic connections and demonstrating impact. Nourish also works Internationally, as part of the South Asian Nitrogen Hub, working to reduce excess nitrogen from farming in India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal, Afghanistan, Sri Lanka, Bhutan and the Maldives.

Beyond Scotland, food partnerships are plugged into the UK wide [Sustainable Food Places \(SFP\)](#) programme, a network of 120+ food partnerships, connecting, sharing best practice and coordinating at a regional and national level.

The programme is coordinated by and benefits from the expertise of five charities— [Food Matters](#), [The Soil Association](#), [Sustain](#), [Food Sense Wales](#) and [Nourish Scotland](#).

SFP also leads on national campaigns and drives change at a policy level, aiming to transform the UK's food system for the better and make healthy, sustainable food a defining characteristic of where people live.



Recommendations

This report outlines how food partnerships are already creating positive change across Scotland's food system. The following recommendations are intended to strengthen this work and help Scotland realise its ambitions to become a Good Food Nation.

A Food Partnership in Every Local Authority Area

Local Good Food Nation plans can only deliver lasting change if they are developed and delivered collaboratively as a partnership with local people, organisations and businesses. Sustainable Food Places provides a tailor-made model for this. Therefore, to ensure Scotland can truly realise its ambitions, Scottish Government should fund a food partnership in every local authority area - one of the 4 key asks of the [Scottish Food Coalition](#) who have campaigned for the Good Food Nation Act since 2016.

The Welsh Government have already identified the effectiveness of food partnerships in tackling food insecurity and increasing local public procurement, and since 2024 have committed to year on year support for food partnerships across Wales. Scotland should follow in their footsteps to help deliver long lasting change through the Good Food Nation act.

Food Partnerships to Advance Public Health Priorities

Food partnerships should be recognised as practical and effective mechanisms to support the implementation of the [Population Health Framework](#) and approaches like Cash First. Through their work improving access to healthy food, reducing food insecurity and creating a flourishing food environment partnerships are already tackling the root causes of health inequalities, one of the desired outcomes of the Scottish Government's [Public Service Reform Strategy](#) which places 'prevention' at its heart.

The Sustainable Food Places Awards as a Framework for Decision Making

Sustainable Food Places runs an [awards programme](#) to recognise and celebrate the success of places taking a joined up, holistic approach to food and achieving significant positive change. Aberdeen recently received Scotland's first Gold Sustainable Food Places award, with Glasgow hot on their heels and many others already achieving Silver and Bronze awards.

In England, Defra recently provided £755k in funding to local authorities with Gold awards to improve procurement. This is as a direct result of successful cross-sector partnership working and highlights how the awards are increasingly being seen as a quality assurance tool, showcasing how prepared and equipped an area is to implement innovative solutions. This approach could be replicated in Scotland.

food matters

sustainable, fair food systems

Food Matters was set up in 2004 to combat inequalities in our food system.

Our vision: Healthy, sustainable, fair food is a reality for everybody, every day.

Our mission: We work with people and organisations to create a fairer, sustainable food system, where everyone has a voice and access to good food.

Our Core Values:

- **Participation-** We put people at the heart of everything we do, ensuring communities shape the changes that affect them.
- **Collaboration-** We bring together diverse voices- from communities, organisations, and policymakers, to create lasting, shared solutions.
- **Equity-** We centre fairness in all our work, amplifying the voices and experiences of those most often excluded from decisions about food.
- **Innovation-** We test new ideas, pilot bold approaches, and help the most promising ones grow and take root.
- **Integrity-** We act with honesty, openness, and care, building trust through relationships and delivering on what we say.

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