

## **Food and nature: Roundtable statement of common ground and agreed actions.**

### **A shared vision for nature and food**

Throughout 2024 and 2025, a group-from across Scotland interested in nature recovery and food production came together in search of common ground and a shared vision for food and nature. Meeting in a roundtable format, the group discussed a vision for Scotland that produces healthy food from ecologically healthy natural environments on land and at sea. We agreed that this must enable thriving livelihoods and personal wellbeing, shared across Scotland. The Roundtable recognised that change brings challenge, and that public policy should give confidence and support to those asked to deliver that change. To ensure fairness, it is vitally important that the seldom heard in rural, island and urban communities are listened to and supported.

The need to act urgently is well understood. Scotland must of course play its part in meeting net zero obligations, whilst at the same invest in its resilience if we are all to withstand the impacts of a rapidly warming climate. We believe that resilient ecosystems and food systems on land and on sea determined by the way that we work in those environments is the surest route to supporting a thriving economy and healthy society in Scotland.

### **Common Ground**

The Roundtable agreed the following statements, they are its common ground.

#### **Statement 1 [Agreed]**

Scotland's long-term resilience to the impacts of the climate and nature emergency and prospects for sustained economic growth, including in farming, fishing and aquaculture sectors is secured by rebuilding a functioning, healthy natural environment with the benefits shared fairly.

#### **Statement 2 [Agreed]**

People who are marginalised and excluded in our society are often unheard and can be most impacted by climate change, biodiversity loss and the actions needed to tackle those. They are currently also the least likely to benefit from nature-based solutions.

### Statement 3 [Agreed]

A healthy environment is key to food security, commercial resilience in farming, crofting, fishing and aquaculture, and to high-quality food production across Scotland.

### Statement 4

The move towards healthy food and healthy ecosystems can pose short term commercial risk for some producers, for example, with yields potentially reduced temporarily on land and at sea, whilst not moving at all poses much greater commercial risk in the long term. Retailers and investors are central to securing support for this transition.

### Statement 5

Sustainable seafood can be both nature and climate positive if wild capture fisheries operate responsibly, by following scientifically robust limits whilst minimising impacts, and striking an ideal balance between conservation and sustainable use. This will allow fish stocks to replenish and fishing communities to thrive.

### Statement 6

Competition for space on land and sea is currently coming from food producers, forestry, low carbon energy providers and nature restorers. This will from time to time require trade-offs to secure nature recovery, timber production, low-cost fossil free energy provision and adequate, high quality food supply. Tackling those trade-offs must be framed by a strategic long-term approach to land and sea use. Given the necessity for balance, we need to be open about our appetite for the risk this poses to achieving effective outcomes over realistic timescales in each of our areas of interest. However, sharing space through regenerative, nature friendly practices are key to long term sustainability for future generations.

### Statement 7

We need renewed partnerships across all sectors, working towards common goals and incentives to deliver our vision for healthy food and nature recovery across Scotland. That requires a safe space for open dialogue with interests prepared to evolve their point of view.

## **Taking action**

These statements prompt six actions, agreed by the Roundtable.

### **Action 1**

An urgent facilitated discussion to clarify needs with and between communities to take the opportunities that come with the transition to regenerative agriculture and enhanced protection and sustainable management of our seas. This will enable effective policy delivery and investment decisions and help achieve long term sustainability.

### **Action 2**

Establish a renewed partnership of the willing to work towards the goal of healthy food and healthy nature. Built on trust, this alliance would oversee the actions set out here and develop new ones. These would be in line with agreed national and international policies, plans, strategies, and objectives.

### **Action 3**

Continue to build data and evidence on the relationship between soil health and food quality to promote a shift to regenerative farming practice. This includes peer to peer engagement, knowledge exchange and the celebration of success.

### **Action 4**

Recognising the benefits and risks of transition in farming and to rural communities, ensure policy and secondary legislation maximise the benefits and mitigate the impacts.

### **Action 5**

Recognising the benefits and risks of transition to the fishing and aquaculture sectors and to coastal communities, ensure policy and regulation maximise the benefits and mitigate the impacts.

### **Action 6**

Engage with retailers, food processors and investors so that they are better placed to support the shift to regenerative farming and sustainable aquaculture and fishing while minimising food waste.

## **Conclusion**

No hesitation, we must act now. We are amid a global nature loss and climate impacts crisis, but we know that we can take action to help nature recover, to tackle climate change, to modernise the economy and to contribute to the

wellbeing of people across Scotland. Working together is key, and the need to act quickly to secure healthy food systems through nature recovery is clear.

This supports three outcomes:

- The long-term prosperity of food producers.
- The long-term resilience and wellbeing of people across Scotland, in our towns and cities, across our countryside and along our coasts and on our islands.
- The health and long-term resilience of the natural systems on which our food producers rely.

The links underpinning public health, healthy natural environments and healthy food is not only of vital importance but are abundantly clear. These things exist not in a vacuum but in a living interdependent ecosystem. The actions above will not secure all of it, but if we can move forward together based on agreed common ground then we will all be better for it.

### **Roundtable organisations**

NatureScot
Environment & Forestry Directorate, Scottish Government
Agriculture and Rural Economy Directorate, Scottish Government
Marine Directorate, Scottish Government
Scottish Food Commission
Just Transition Commission
SE Link x3
Salmon Scotland
Scottish Fishermen's Federation
Scottish Gamekeepers Association
Nature Friendly Farming Network Scotland
Prosper
NFU Scotland
Scottish Land & Estates