

Land in the 1st national Good Food Nation plan

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Why land?

- ‘Transformation’ of food systems: too ambitious?
- Land reform instruments can support change
- But need to be explicitly harnessed through specific policies!
- A way forward for a land/food connection that sustains more local/democratic/universal provisioning?
- Now is the time to think this through...



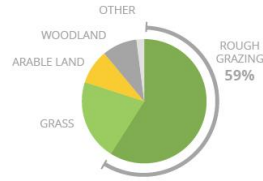
You say land?



Land as a
social
relation

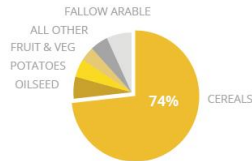
Land uses
(primary,
secondary)

WE ARE NOT MAKING THE BEST USE OF OUR LAND



Only 9% of our agricultural land is suitable for growing crops, ~~and we~~ use very little of it for human nutrition.

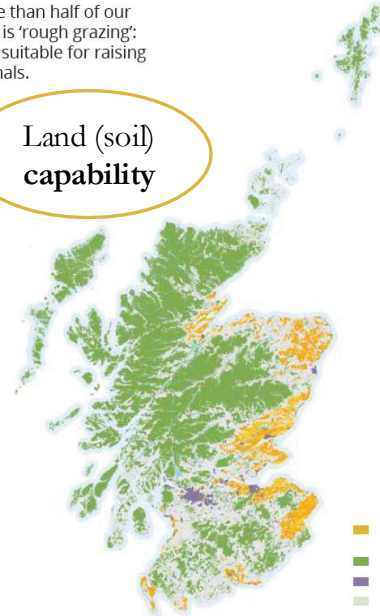
We use 3/4 of our good land to grow cereals, of which around 1/2 goes to livestock feed and almost 1/3 to beer and whisky.



100 calories of feed are needed to produce only 17-30 calories in meat.

More than half of our land is 'rough grazing': only suitable for raising animals.

Land (soil)
capability



Map created using data James Hutton Institute Land Capability for Agriculture, and the Historic Land Classification datasets.

Foodprint in
global land ha



The UK imports more than half of its food and animal feed. As a consequence, around 2/3 of the environmental impacts driven by our diets are located abroad, caused by intensive agriculture and land use change (including deforestation).

And land is a
commodity

Land area
(geographical)



“For all the international reputation of its natural landscapes, Scotland’s people have an uneasy relationship with their land.” (Ritchie 2026: 18)

GFN legislation and planning

- Good Food Nation (Scotland) Act 2022 unanimously passed by Scottish Parliament in June 2022, after years of policy and legislative consultation (2009-2022)
- GFN Act places statutory requirements on the Scottish Government and all relevant authorities (defined as the 32 Scottish local authorities and 14 territorial health boards), including *the requirement to produce **National and Local Good Food Nation Plans*** respectively.
- First National Plan finally adopted in December 2025.
- Local Plans: Section 10 of the Act pronounces a 'requirement to produce GFN plans'. The **timeline** for local authorities and health boards runs between April 2027 (launch of the planning process) to April 2028 (submission of the plans).
- Excellent history of how the GFN act came about and where it is at in Pete Ritchie's new book, *Nourishing Scotland* (2026, Earthscan) – CHAPTER 6.

1st National GFN Plan Overview

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The vision 'Farming and **land management practices** are designed to **reduce environmental impact**, increase biodiversity, and ensure high standards of animal welfare'.

'Outcome 2: Scotland's food system is sustainable and contributes to a flourishing natural environment on our land and in our waters...'

Inequalities 'Issues (for rural based industries) range from childcare challenges, to the **limited availability of land** and housing for those working, or wishing to work, in rural food-based industries'...'

(Existing) Food-related Policies: **Increasing Access to Land for Communities**

(Existing) Food-related Policies: position Scotland as a global leader in sustainable and regenerative agriculture ...financial support to farmers and crofters who wish to start or continue to **manage their land under organic standards**

Link to overarching policies:

'Land Reform; Vision for Agriculture; National Planning Framework (NPF4); Community wealth building'

Indicators 2B.3: Total hectares under **organic land management**

4C.2: Total agricultural **land area used to produce fruit and vegetables** for human consumption

5A.1: **Availability** of allotments and community growing in local areas



- Increasing land access for community 'benefit'?
- Not just a question of availability – Land markets and competition from 'developers'

Organic management – risk of 'technofix' for regenerative agriculture?



- More fruit and veg production and 'access to markets'
- How do we make sure this is for universalised consumption rather than niche farmers markets?

Questions to our panellists:

1. Why does land matter in food system transformation?
2. What can the history of land in Scotland help us think about for the future of our food system?
3. Can we hear about the current land policy context? Perhaps about land reform, land market regulation, increasing diverse access?
4. What policy, or other, opportunities are there for making land more central, more impactful to local GFN plans?
5. What opportunities are there for joined up work by relevant authorities together with their community/grassroots/NGO partners to lobby, advocate, push for reforms at a higher level, and for these to be supportively implemented? Could this be part of the GFN process?

Wider Q&A!