

# ORGANIC AMBITIONS

Scotland's Organic Action Plan 2016 -2020

KNOWLEDGE • STRENGTH • SKILLS • RESILIENCE



The Scottish Government  
Riaghaltas na h-Alba



# Organic Ambitions

## Scotland's Organic Action Plan

### 2016-2020

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# Ministerial Foreword



We want to create a stronger Scotland, one that is fairer and more prosperous and in 2015, our Year of Food and Drink, I announced that Scotland's food and drink sector was booming, with consistent year on year growth which is strengthening the Scottish economy. Organics has an important role to play in adding to this growth so that we continue to see a sustainable increased turnover.

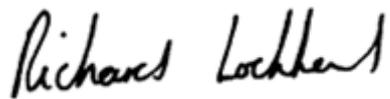
We recognise the wider public benefits of organic farming such as encouraging biodiversity, tackling climate change, improving soils and protecting our water environment. We have supported organic production under Scotland's Rural Development Programme and this new organic action plan, which I am delighted to endorse, was referred to in our discussion document '*The Future of Scottish Agriculture*', which outlines a vision for the future of Scottish agriculture.

The new action plan, which has been developed by industry in close cooperation with the Scottish Government, reflects our shared agenda for the sector, with actions being taken forward by all parties concerned with growing the organic food and drink supply chain in Scotland. The plan sets out a framework for the next five years and is a solid base on which to build. It is centred on developments in knowledge, strength, skills and resilience, as identified as priorities after extensive consultation with a wide range of stakeholders.

Partnership, through working with key players inside and outside the industry will be crucial to strengthening the organic supply chain, releasing the yield potential of organic farming, and in meeting our ambitions for the industry and our wider society. I applaud the Scottish Organic Forum, who have already encouraged partnership working throughout the organic supply chain. In order to achieve the outcomes from this ambitious new action plan, it will take more of this positive collaboration.

Since the launch of the last Scottish organic action plan in 2011 there has been continued interest in organic products. Strengthening success in the marketplace relies on a number of factors, most notably effective communication to buyers about why they should purchase Scottish organic goods, but also on the innovation, expertise and entrepreneurial spirit of organic businesses.

We want to see a strong organic sector in Scotland, one that is strategically supported and that can compete with the rest of the UK, EU and indeed the world. We also want to see a Scottish organic sector that is self-sustaining, adds value to our environment as well as the economy, and this new action plan will surely assist in realising these ambitions.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Richard Lochhead". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

**Richard Lochhead MSP**  
**Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs, Food and the Environment**

“The Organic Action Plan is a welcome tool in exploring the fantastic trade opportunities that exist for organic food and drink in Scotland. As a wholesaler we can see the demand that exists for organic produce within Scotland. The Organic Action Plan will provide a platform to ensure that in years to come, a higher proportion of the organic produce that we sell will be grown within Scotland.”

*Scott Erwin, Member Director, Greencity Wholefoods*

“Scotland’s food and drink sector is a real national success story. Scotland is developing a national identity at home and overseas as a “Land of Food & Drink”, driving the industry to become the best performing domestic sector of the economy and Scotland’s fastest growing export. The Scotland Food & Drink growth strategy is built upon finding premium markets for products that have a strong provenance story. That means real opportunities for our organic sector in the coming years and this action plan can create a foundation to grasp the clear opportunities ahead.”

*James Withers, CEO, Scotland Food and Drink*

“Scottish Organic Milk Producers fully support the new Organic Action plan as it is important that all the bodies from farmers to procurement organisations are united-and seen to be united- in their ambitions. “

*Ross Paton, Scottish Organic Milk Producers*

# What is Organic?

“Organic agriculture is a production system that sustains the health of soils, ecosystems and people. It relies on ecological processes, biodiversity and cycles adapted to local conditions, rather than the use of inputs with adverse effects. Organic agriculture combines tradition, innovation and science to benefit the shared environment and promote fair relationships and a good quality of life for all involved.”<sup>1</sup>

Organic food and drink is the only food quality label with internationally recognised standards. It is governed by a rigorous regulatory framework.<sup>2</sup>

Organic food and farming makes a valuable contribution to the Scottish economy and society through revenue generation and employment. It also leads to wider environmental benefits such as encouraging biodiversity, tackling climate change through reducing greenhouse gas emissions, improving soils and protecting our air and water. These benefits are all recognised by the Scottish Government. Organic farming has been a national priority in the Scottish Rural Development Programme since 2011, and this organic plan is referred to in the 2015 – 16 Programme for Government.<sup>3</sup>

## Definition of value

The term “value” is used throughout this document in connection with the benefits delivered by organic food and farming. It is used in a much broader sense than purely financial value. Genuine public value involves achieving the best balance of cost, quality, health, and environmental sustainability (as outlined in the Scottish Government's Becoming a Good Food Nation paper).<sup>4</sup>

## Definition of produce

The term “produce” is used in its widest sense to cover not only food, but also drink, textiles, timber and other items processed from the raw materials grown on organic farms.

# Organic Ambitions - Our Vision for 2020

*A vibrant, successful, sustainable, world-renowned Scottish organic food and farming sector*

An increasing number of Scottish organic farms, smallholdings, and related businesses will produce accessible, environmentally sustainable organic food, drink, textiles, and other organic products for local, UK, EU and international markets. People all over the world will equate Scottish organic food and farming with high economic, environmental and social value, boosting national demand and exports from Scotland. Scottish organic food will form an increasing proportion of food in hospitals, schools, nursing homes and prisons. It will be available for everyone to access through all types of retailers and in cafes, restaurants and hotels. People of all ages and backgrounds will visit Scottish organic farms, deepening their connection with and understanding of organic food and its production.

The Scottish organic sector will be made up of businesses that are profitable, with fair wages and good working conditions for all. They will have access to excellent market intelligence to inform decision making. The Scottish organic sector will benefit from strong, shared, marketing initiatives. It will reap the rewards of working cooperatively, with economies of scale leading to increased resource use-efficiency and reduced risk especially in transport and processing. Investment in infrastructure throughout the Scottish supply chain will boost profitability and growth capacity. Barriers to entry and expansion within the Scottish organic sector will be reduced, adding critical mass and capacity. Increasing numbers of strong routes to market will facilitate growth.

Those working in, or wishing to enter the Scottish organic sector will have high levels of skills and knowledge about all aspects of their business. They will be supported by world class, specialist organic advisors, and have ready access to relevant and current knowledge. The universities and research institutes of Scotland will work together with producers and processors to address the key challenges faced by the Scottish organic sector, to release untapped yield potential in organic systems and to stimulate innovation. There will be a high level of engagement in producer-led research. Colleges, universities and third parties will provide training and employment schemes to keep skill levels high and bring fresh people into the organic sector.

Scottish organic farming will further improve its ability to conserve and enhance the natural capital of Scotland as organic farmers learn more about the impact of their work on biodiversity, soil, air and water, and modify their activity in response to research findings. In turn, the conservation and enhancement of natural capital will build a more resilient food system for Scotland and conserve an environment for future generations. An increase in the proportion of land managed organically in Scotland will ultimately help to reduce global greenhouse gas emissions. Scotland's organic farmers will be recognised for these services and will be fairly rewarded for the biodiversity, environmental and social benefits that they deliver.

# Steps to Achieve Organic Ambitions

- **Step one** – in consultation with a broad range of stakeholders, *identify key challenges to the development of Scottish organic food and farming, and devise appropriate actions to address these challenges* - COMPLETED

This step has been led by the Scottish Organic Forum (details in appendices i and ii), and the results are described in this document.

- **Step two** – in collaboration with a broad range of stakeholders, *building an implementation plan to deliver these actions, achieve the desired outcomes for Scotland, and fulfil our Vision for 2020* – BEGINS EARLY 2016

Construction of an implementation plan, and subsequent delivery of actions, will be undertaken by those who are interested in achieving the outcomes of this organic action plan. This step will involve:

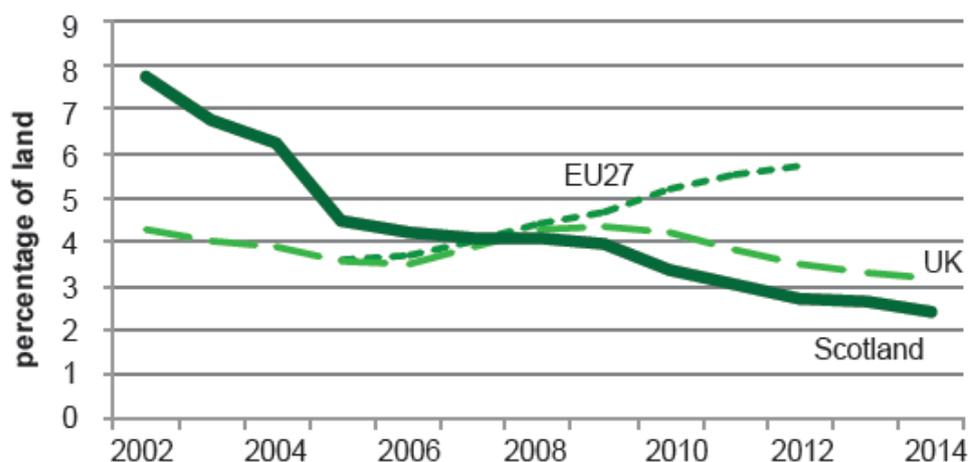
- a. Establishment of working groups who will develop detailed delivery plans, monitoring and evaluation procedures, and timescales for each action
- b. Identification of the expertise currently available to facilitate the delivery of each action
- c. Identification of the capacity (staff time and funding) currently available to achieve delivery of each action
- d. Identification and utilisation of funding opportunities to support delivery through the provision of additional expertise and capacity where gaps have been identified
- e. Delivery of the actions



# Why does Scotland need an organic action plan?

Scotland has a worldwide reputation for high quality food and drink, but we face some key challenges. Farming is a high risk business: it needs greater resilience to counter ever growing financial and climatic challenges. Scotland's natural capital (biodiversity, soil, clean air and water), upon which all food production relies, is damaged or is under threat. Improvements could be made to conserve finite Scottish resources by enhancing resource-use efficiency in food production, and by reducing waste in the food supply chain. Scotland, for all its reputation as Land of Food and Drink, has one of the poorest diet-related health records in the world. For these reasons a greater development of sustainable food production and a greater public understanding of the consequences of food choices are essential for Scotland.

These challenges apply to all farming and food production systems, but organic farming, with its core values of environmental and social wellbeing, can have a particularly strong role to play in addressing them. The environmental and societal benefits of organic food and farming are widely acknowledged by experts. These benefits help achieve multiple policy objectives such as tackling climate change, improving soils, protecting our water environment and increasing biodiversity. However, despite these benefits, and the fact that organic farming is a national priority in Scotland, the area of land managed organically in Scotland is falling and the organic sector is not showing particularly strong growth (charts 1 and 2).

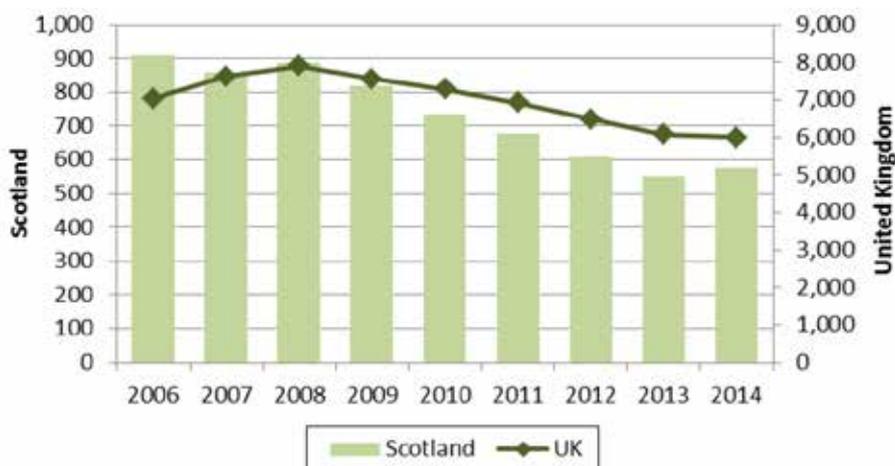


**Chart 1:**  
 Organic land (as a percentage of all agricultural land) in Scotland, UK and Europe, 2002 to 2014  
 Source: Scottish Government statistics 23<sup>rd</sup> June 2015

**Chart 2:**

Number of organic producers and processors, 2006-2014

Source: Scottish Government statistics 23<sup>rd</sup> June 2015



There needs to be more effective communication of knowledge to buyers about why they should purchase Scottish organic goods. The Scottish organic supply chain faces serious challenges with respect to infrastructure and capacity, and needs to be strengthened. There are gaps in the skills base for Scottish organic production, in terms of advice, education, practical skills and research and these are impacting on the performance of the sector. Organic farming has excellent potential to help conserve and enhance Scotland's natural capital, and to build more resilient food systems, but optimisation of this is dependent on greater understanding of the relationships between farm management and natural capital.

Delivering an effective Scottish Organic Action Plan which addresses these challenges will encourage growth in the Scottish organic sector which will, in turn, help Scotland address wider social and environmental challenges. It will also add further economic value to the Scottish food and drink sector.

# ORGANIC AMBITIONS

## Scotland's Organic Action Plan 2016 - 2020

### KNOWLEDGE

Understanding the benefits that organic produce can bring to everyone and to our environment

### SKILLS

Ensuring that everyone interested in learning about innovative organic production will have access to advice and training

### STRENGTH

Building a stronger Scottish organic supply chain to increase the availability of organic produce for everyone

### RESILIENCE

Strengthening the ability of organic farming to conserve and enhance Scotland's biodiversity and natural resources, and in turn to build more resilient farms



Organic Ambitions: Scotland's Organic Action Plan 2016 - 2020 will be launched on 27th January 2016

Funded by the Scottish Government as part of its Food Marketing and Organic Farming Advisory Activity

# Headline Themes

The Scottish Organic Forum carried out an extensive consultation with over 700 stakeholders to produce 16 actions under four headline themes:

1. **KNOWLEDGE - Increase awareness of the economic, environmental and social value of Scottish organic produce** – to boost national, UK, EU and international demand and to help increase the availability of good produce for all
2. **STRENGTH - Strengthen the Scottish organic supply chain** – to create a stronger organic sector that uses market intelligence and cooperation to reduce risk, generate economies of scale and increase resource-use efficiency, and which has the infrastructure and critical mass to supply a growing demand
3. **SKILLS - Support and develop the Scottish organic sector through transfer of knowledge, information, best practice and training opportunities** – to boost productivity, profitability, innovation and competitiveness, and to ensure that there is a supply of knowledgeable, skilled people to safeguard the future growth of the organic sector
4. **RESILIENCE - Strengthen the ability of organic farming to conserve and enhance the natural capital of Scotland** – to increase the potential of Scotland to play its part in conservation of biodiversity and protection of the environment, and in turn to develop a more sustainable, resilient farming system for which Scotland's organic farmers are fairly rewarded



"We would all like to eat organic food - free of pesticides, better for birds, bugs and beasts, guaranteed high standards of animal welfare, no routine antibiotics and good for the soil. What's not to like? But as consumers, many of us don't know about the benefits or feel we can't afford it, and many of our farmers aren't sure there's a market or don't feel confident about converting to organic.

This ambitious plan charts a course for Scotland - like Germany, France, Denmark and many other countries - to develop a vibrant, co-operative, innovative and wealth-creating organic sector which produces excellent food while also helping Scotland meet its aspirations on climate change, biodiversity and water quality."

*Pete Ritchie, Director, Nourish Scotland*

"Organic agriculture has a key role to play in conserving farmland wildlife and protecting the environment. RSPB Scotland wants to see the organic sector grow and welcomes the Action Plan as a way to make this happen."

*Vicki Swales, Head of Land Use Policy, RSPB Scotland*

"Scottish Natural Heritage welcome this new Organic Action Plan. We believe it will help contribute to the vision of Scotland becoming a world leader in green farming. It can also help contribute to achieving some of the objectives for sustainable land management and farmland biodiversity in Scotland's Biodiversity Route Map 2020."

*Claudia Rowse, Head of Rural Resources Unit, Scottish Natural Heritage*

# The Actions

## **1 – KNOWLEDGE - Increase awareness of the economic, environmental and social value created by Scottish organic produce**

Many purchase decisions are driven by price and convenience, but the value of produce is more complex than these factors alone. Organic produce delivers high value for the environment, society and the economy. There needs to be more effective communication to buyers about the real value of Scottish organic produce because lack of clarity on this matter is currently a barrier to the growth of organic food and farming in Scotland. This challenge can be addressed by actions that increase public knowledge and understanding of organic production systems.

### **Outcomes for Scotland:**

- ✓ A strong Scottish organic sector recognised for the value of its produce, and which makes a contribution to Scotland through developing and strengthening connections between Scottish consumers, their food supply and food choices and personal wellbeing  
*Scottish Government policies 1, 2, 3, 4, 7 (appendix iii)*
- ✓ An organic sector that increasingly supports and strengthens Scotland's worldwide reputation as a source of high value, environmentally sustainable produce  
*Scottish Government policies 1, 2, 3 (appendix iii)*

### **Outcomes for the Scottish organic sector:**

- ✓ National sales growth supported by increased consumer awareness of and confidence in the value of Scottish organic produce
- ✓ UK, EU and international sales growth supported by increased consumer awareness of and confidence in the value of Scottish organic produce

## **Action 1.1) Promote awareness of and increase understanding of the value provided by organic produce across the whole of Scottish society**

The focus of this action will be:

- Working to raise awareness, understanding and recognition of the economic, social and environmental value of organic food and farming among consumers, procurement and catering teams, businesses, public, private, voluntary and third sector organisations, and with local and national policymakers
- Identifying and supporting opportunities to increase awareness and understanding of the benefits of Scottish organic food and farming across the whole of the 3-18 Curriculum for Excellence, particularly through alignment with core educational strategies such as Getting it Right for Every Child, Learning for Sustainability and Developing the Young Workforce
- Ensuring that opportunities to increase awareness and understanding of the benefits of Scottish organic food and farming are identified and supported in the tertiary, community, and life-long learning sectors
- Developing awareness, understanding and increased recognition of the economic, social and environmental benefits of Scottish organic food and



farming through dialogue with non-governmental organisations and community food initiatives

### **Action 1.2) Conduct a feasibility study for a Scottish Organic brand designed to strengthen understanding and economic value of Scottish organic produce**

The focus of this action will be:

- Undertaking a feasibility study into the merits of a Scottish organic brand, to explore costings, timescales and the factors that will determine the success of the brand and the extent to which it might strengthen both understanding and economic value of Scottish organic produce

## **2 – STRENGTH - Strengthen the Scottish organic supply chain**

To function effectively, to supply customers with produce reliably, and to deliver profits to producers consistently, a supply chain must be strong. The Scottish organic supply chain currently suffers from lack of market intelligence, less than optimal levels of cooperation, geographical isolation, under-developed infrastructure, relatively high barriers to entry and relatively few strong routes to market. These challenges all need to be addressed in order to create a strong Scottish organic supply chain that delivers real value to Scotland.

### **Outcomes for Scotland:**

- ✓ A Scottish organic supply chain that is strong, innovative and resilient, making an economic contribution to Scotland through sustainable business growth driven by increased market orientation, competitiveness, cooperation, economies of scale and resource-use efficiency  
*Scottish Government policies 1, 2, 3, 5, 7 (appendix iii)*
- ✓ A Scottish organic sector that increasingly supports and strengthens Scotland's worldwide reputation as a source of high value, environmentally sustainable produce  
*Scottish Government policies 1, 2, 3 (appendix iii)*

### **Outcomes for the Scottish organic sector:**

- ✓ A stronger, more resilient Scottish organic supply chain with a greater potential to supply a growing market
- ✓ Better business decision making throughout the Scottish organic supply chain based on high quality market intelligence
- ✓ Enhanced economies of scale and resource-use efficiencies throughout the Scottish organic supply chain
- ✓ Increased return on investment, profitability and reduced risk of loss within the organic sector
- ✓ A greater number of strong routes to market for Scottish organic produce
- ✓ Increased Scottish farm income opportunities via diversification



### **Action 2.1) Improve the collection and dissemination of market intelligence on Scottish organic food and drink throughout the Scottish supply chain**

The focus of this action will be:

- Exploring means by which market data of practical use to Scottish organic suppliers, producers and buyers can be gathered and shared on a regular basis

### **Action 2.2) Conduct a feasibility study for a cooperative Scottish organic marketing strategy linking both vertically and horizontally within the whole Scottish supply chain**

The focus of this action will be:

- Identifying the benefits that would be provided by a joint marketing strategy for Scottish organic produce
- Assessing potential delivery options for a Scottish organic marketing strategy

### **Action 2.3) Strengthen the infrastructure throughout the Scottish organic supply chain**

The focus of this action will be:

- Exploring solutions for critical gaps in infrastructure, particularly organically certified abattoirs, grain mills and other processing facilities
- Identifying how difficulties regarding access to Scottish organic land and organic certification of rented land can be resolved
- Investigating the need for, and cost of, re-commissioning public sector kitchen infrastructure and associated staffing to enable greater public-sector catering use of Scottish organic produce
- Exploring the benefits and costs of establishing and operating a Scottish organic sales-hub network

### **Action 2.4) Reduce the barriers to entry into and expansion within the Scottish organic sector**

The focus of this action will be:

- Exploring options that might lead to reduced input costs relative to income
- Exploring the merits of modifying aspects of the organic certification process and its fees to ease the financial, administrative and learning burdens for small businesses and new entrants to the organic sector

### **Action 2.5) Develop new, and strengthen existing routes to the domestic market**

The focus of this action will be:

- Encouraging public bodies to make further commitments to purchasing Scottish organic produce
- Engaging effectively with multiple retailers through regional contacts to secure Scottish organic product listings

- Engaging more closely with independent retailers, tourism and hospitality sectors to secure organic product listings
- Developing new routes to market through developing new products, lines or ranges
- Developing new routes to market by encouraging Scottish organic businesses to enter food or innovation awards
- Promoting training opportunities for business development to the Scottish organic sector

### Action 2.6) Increase support for Scottish organic exports

The focus of this action will be:

- Collecting and disseminating market intelligence about Scottish organic exports
- Supporting the Scottish organic sector in finding and fulfilling export markets
- Encouraging an annual Scottish Government and Scottish organic business presence at Biofach, the annual international organic trade fair, and other key international trade fairs

## 3 – SKILLS - Support and develop the Scottish organic sector through exchange of knowledge, information, best practice and training opportunities

A vibrant economy and society result from a skilled population who are highly educated and who benefit from world class advice, innovative research and timely development opportunities. At present, Scottish organic food and farming has no dedicated one-to-one organic advisory service, and the availability of organic advice within the new Scottish Farming Advisory Service (FAS) is currently unclear. Historically there have been low levels of interaction between the organic sector and Scotland's main research providers, limiting development and uptake of innovative new techniques. Optimisation of organic-related knowledge and skill development courses has challenges related to the remoteness of many Scottish organic businesses in relation to the location of some courses, and difficulties in relation to leaving farms unattended during a training course. These challenges all need to be addressed in order for the organic sector to realise its potential.

#### Outcome for Scotland:

- ✓ A world class, innovative Scottish organic sector that makes a contribution to Scotland by being profitable, sustainable, resource-use efficient and resilient through high levels of training, education and skills development, and through engagement with world class research  
*Scottish Government policies 1, 2, 7 (appendix iii)*

#### Outcomes for the Scottish organic sector:

- ✓ Improved production and resource-use efficiencies, greater profitability and sustainability throughout the Scottish organic supply chain
- ✓ Increased resilience of Scottish organic production systems and the wider agri-food supply chain buffering against an increasingly variable climate, input and output price volatility, and future changes resulting from CAP reform
- ✓ Reduced skills shortages throughout the Scottish organic supply chain

### **Action 3.1) Provide dedicated, specialist advice for everyone interested in the Scottish organic sector**

The focus of this action will be:

- Exploring the potential to establish an accessible, specialist, effective one-to-one organic advisory service that can provide expertise for those with interests in all Scottish organic supply chain sectors
- Furthering development of one-to-many advisory opportunities for Scottish organic businesses, both within the FAS and in events provided by independent suppliers
- Ensuring that those giving organic advice are sufficiently trained and knowledgeable to provide clients with robust information that complies with EU organic regulations and which will be effective in producing positive change

### **Action 3.2) Develop an accessible online hub for Scottish organic farming and agroecological research and advice for Scottish organic producers, processors and researchers**

The focus of this action will be:

- Participating in the creation of an online knowledge hub, and ensuring the available information is pertinent to the Scottish organic sector



### **Action 3.3) Work alongside universities and research institutes to identify and address the key technical and practical challenges of Scottish organic production and distribution**

The focus of this action will be:

- Advocating inclusion of organic sector issues in Scotland's strategic research programme
- Developing relationships between the Scottish organic sector and research groups in order to develop projects that address key challenges identified by the Scottish organic sector
- Developing ways to better engage and involve Scottish organic producers in on-farm research programmes

### **Action 3.4) Provide a range of training and employment schemes for those working in, or wanting to enter, the Scottish organic supply chain**

The focus of this action will be:

- Promoting existing training programmes that are of relevance to the Scottish organic supply chain
- Determining the critical areas in which further skills training is required in order to develop the whole Scottish organic supply chain, and exploring means by which this can be delivered in a way that overcomes the particular challenges of remote locations and time-bound producers



## **4 – RESILIENCE- Strengthen the ability of Scottish organic farming to conserve and enhance the natural capital of Scotland**

Sustainable, resilient, production of food depends entirely on natural capital (biodiversity, soil, air and water). Food production systems can have a deleterious effect on natural capital and contribute to climate change, leading to a progressive decline in sustainability. Organic food production is based on ecological principles and has the potential to help conserve and enhance the natural capital of Scotland and moderate climate change. There is, however, a need to improve understanding of what natural capital exists on farms, and how rural development programme scheme options and organic farm management choices can be optimised to protect it while at the same time increasing farm output. These issues need to be addressed in order to strengthen the ability of Scottish organic farming to conserve and enhance the natural capital of Scotland, reduce climate change challenges, and in turn to build greater resilience into our food system.

### **Outcome for Scotland:**

- ✓ A Scottish organic sector that maximises its contribution to the conservation and enrichment of the natural environment, which underpins rural development and contributes to the sustainable growth of Scotland  
*Scottish Government policies 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 (appendix iii)*

### **Outcomes for the Scottish organic sector:**

- ✓ Increased natural capital and more resilient farm ecosystems leading to increased farm productivity and profitability for organic producers
- ✓ Recognition and financial reward for enhanced environmental stewardship by Scottish organic producers

### **Action 4.1) Strengthen working relationships between the Scottish organic farming sector and organisations that protect and enhance Scotland's natural capital**

The focus of this action will be:

- Maximising the exchange of relevant knowledge, and optimising research, development and funding opportunities by strengthening established relationships, and making new connections between Scotland's organic farming sector and organisations with interests in conservation of natural capital and climate change mitigation



**Action 4.2) Develop understanding, and promote implementation of those organic farming practices which make a positive contribution to Scotland's natural capital, address climate change challenges, and add resilience to Scottish food production systems**

The focus of this action will be:

- Improving the understanding of how organic farm management practices impact on Scotland's natural capital, climate and food production, and how they may be further developed to achieve the multiple goals of productivity, profitability, resilience and environmental sustainability
- Ensuring that Scottish organic farmers are rewarded for any additional contribution that organic farm management makes to the conservation and enhancement of Scotland's natural capital and climate change mitigation above conventional greening measures, or which entail a yield penalty

**Action 4.3) Ensure that organic farming and Agri-Environment Climate Scheme (AECS) options can be undertaken together in a way that ensures maximum environmental benefit**

The focus this action will be:

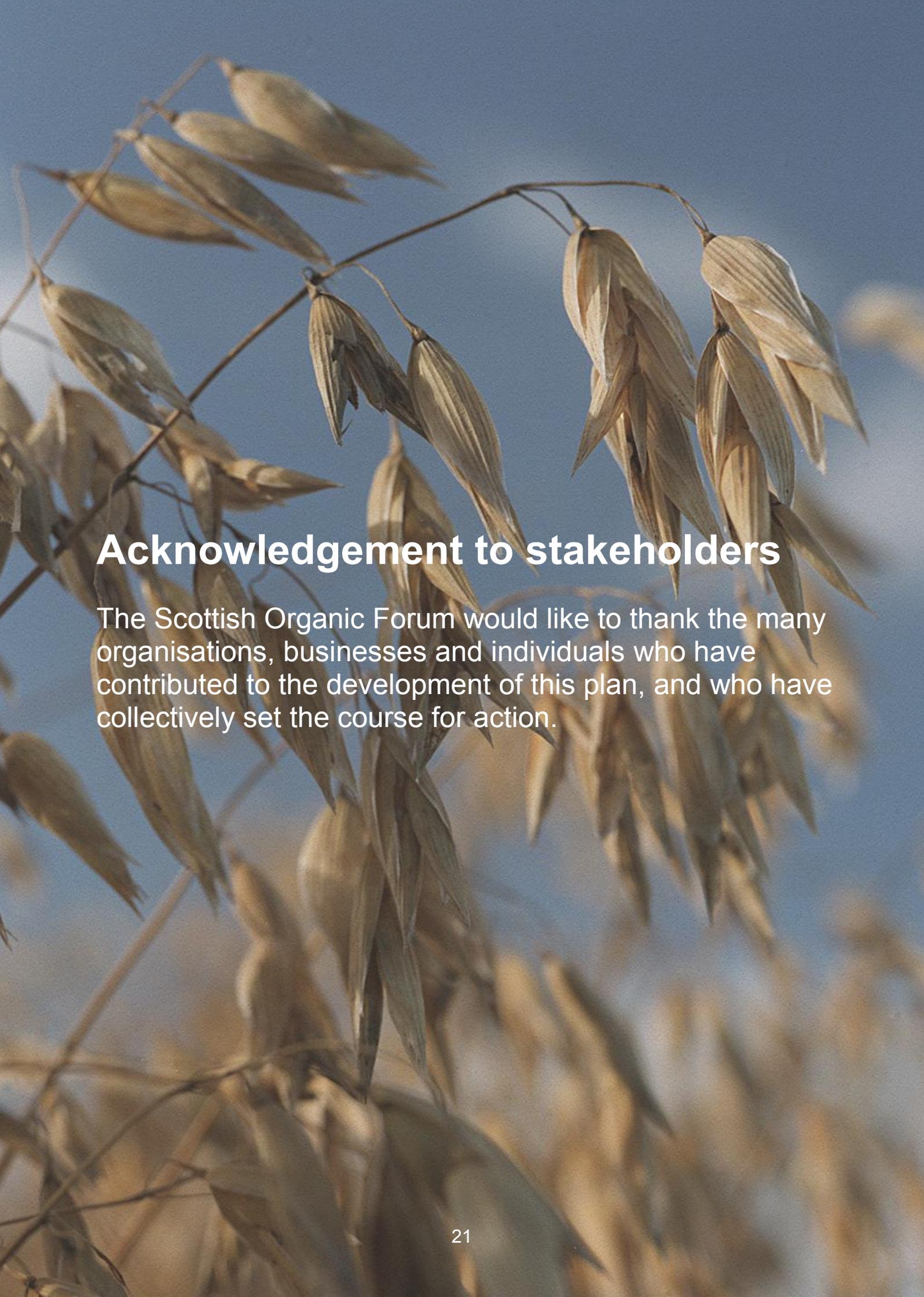
- Ensuring that AECS can be used to deliver maximum environmental benefit on organic farms and remain compliant with EU organic regulations

**Action 4.4) Provide base level financial support for organic production and for conversion to organic farming**

The focus of this action will be:

- Exploring ways to ensure that base level support for Scottish organic farmers, in terms of conversion and maintenance payments, is in line with the national priority status of organic farming





## **Acknowledgement to stakeholders**

The Scottish Organic Forum would like to thank the many organisations, businesses and individuals who have contributed to the development of this plan, and who have collectively set the course for action.

# Appendices

## Appendix i. The consultation and stakeholder groups

This organic action plan is the result of the following work undertaken during the summer of 2015:

- a public online consultation to which over 700 people contributed
- a series of stakeholder meetings with producers and those involved in the supply chain and the natural environment, attended by almost 100 people
- a series of one-to-one interviews conducted on a wide range of farms
- one-to-one interviews during organic sector, and public food and farming events
- feedback from a number of public and non-governmental organisations and commercial bodies

### Survey

An online survey collected data and comments from people who identified their primary interest in food being one of the following groups:

1. Farming or growing
2. Eating
3. Food processing
4. Retailing or wholesaling
5. Food service/catering
6. Public procurement of food
7. Policy making concerning food, farming or environment
8. Education
9. Research (projects and funding) concerning food, farming or environment
10. Advisory service concerning food, farming or environment
11. Supplying inputs to the food and farming/horticulture industry (seed merchant, feed merchant, machinery etc.).

Data from this survey are available online at

[http://sruc.ac.uk/info/120636/scottish\\_organic\\_action\\_plan](http://sruc.ac.uk/info/120636/scottish_organic_action_plan)

### Stakeholder meetings

Stakeholder meetings were held for the following groups:

1. Producers
2. Supply chain
3. Biodiversity and the environment

Reports from each of these meetings are available online at

[http://sruc.ac.uk/info/120636/scottish\\_organic\\_action\\_plan](http://sruc.ac.uk/info/120636/scottish_organic_action_plan)

## Appendix ii. The Scottish Organic Forum

### What is the Scottish Organic Forum?

The Scottish Organic Forum (SOF) is an industry-led body whose key objective is to *strengthen and promote Scotland's organic food and drink supply chain through collaboration*. The SOF meets quarterly.

**Current members of the SOF:** Soil Association Scotland, Scottish Organic Producers Association, Organic Growers Alliance, Caledonian Organics, Scottish Organic Milk Producers Association, Scotland's Rural College, SAC Consulting and the Scottish Government.

The views and priorities represented in the plan are those of the organisations and individuals who took part in the consultation and do not necessarily reflect the views and priorities of any of the member organisations of SOF.

## Appendix iii. The Scottish Government policy context

This plan will contribute to the goals of Scottish Government policies and discussion documents in many areas. The key policies are as follows, and the following table gives a wider view and more details:

1. The Future of Scottish Agriculture, 2015
2. Programme for Government 2015 – 2016
3. Recipe for Success: Scotland's National Food and Drink Policy – becoming a Good Food Nation, 2014
4. 2020 Challenge for Scotland's Biodiversity, 2013
5. Climate Change (Scotland) Act, 2009
6. Getting the best from our land – a land use strategy for Scotland, 2009
7. Catering for Change, Buying food sustainably in the public sector, 2011

## How organic food and farming supports Scottish Government policy objectives

### CLIMATE CHANGE

<p><u>Climate Change Delivery Plan (2009) Chapter 6 p. 37</u></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Rural Land use: Reduce GhG emissions from agriculture by 1.3 MtCO<sub>2</sub>e by 2020</li> </ul>	<p><b>REDUCING GHG EMISSIONS</b></p> <p>There is a growing body of scientific evidence which shows that organic farming releases less greenhouse gases per hectare than non-organic farming.<sup>5</sup></p> <p>The agriculture and related land use sector in Scotland accounts for 23.4% of total greenhouse gas (GhG) emissions and is the third largest emitting source after energy supply (30.2%) and transport (24.4%).<sup>5</sup> Over one third of Scottish agriculture's total emissions come from nitrous oxide N<sub>2</sub>O - 298 times more damaging than CO<sub>2</sub> in terms of its global warming potential.<sup>6</sup></p> <p>The main cause of N<sub>2</sub>O emissions is from the application of synthetic nitrogen-based fertiliser to arable soils and leaching.<sup>7</sup> Organic systems prohibit their use and instead use alternative techniques including nitrogen-fixing clovers and legumes, green manures and crop rotation. As a consequence, organic agriculture has lower N<sub>2</sub>O emissions from nitrogen application, due to lower overall nitrogen input per ha than in conventional agriculture.<sup>8</sup></p> <p>Organic systems also tend to use less fossil energy than non-organic systems, on a per hectare and, in most cases, on a per unit of food produced basis, because energy inputs for industrial manufacture of fertilisers and pesticides are avoided and there is less use of imported animal feeds.<sup>9</sup></p> <p><b>SEQUESTERING CARBON</b></p> <p>Organic farming practices increase soil organic matter (SOM) which removes CO<sub>2</sub> from the atmosphere and stores the carbon as biomass and soil organic carbon in the soil, reducing its release back into the atmosphere.<sup>10</sup> It has been estimated that widespread adoption of organic farming practices in the UK would offset 23% of UK agricultural emissions through soil carbon sequestration alone.<sup>11</sup></p>
<p><u>Scotland's Economic Strategy (2015) p. 45</u></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Priority 1 Investment - Natural capital, resource efficiency and low carbon: Reduce GhG emissions by 80% by 2050</li> </ul>	
<p><u>Climate Ready Scotland: Scottish Climate Change Adaptation Programme (2015) p. 50</u></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>N2.22: Support projects that aim to prepare agricultural businesses for the impacts, opportunities and risks that both climate and economic change present</li> </ul>	
<p><u>2020 Challenge for Scotland's Biodiversity (2013) p. 18</u></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ecosystem health: Improve resilience to climate change through increased habitat diversity on farms</li> </ul>	
<p><u>Scottish Government National Performance Framework (2015)</u></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>National Outcome 12: Value and enjoy our built and natural environment and protect it and enhance it for future generations</li> <li>National Outcome 14: We reduce the local and global environmental impact of our consumption and production</li> </ul>	
<p><u>Scottish Rural Development Programme 2014-2020: Agri-Environment Climate Scheme</u></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Objective 2: Reducing greenhouse gas emissions from agriculture and securing carbon stores in peatlands and other organic soils</li> </ul>	

NATURAL CAPITAL		
<p><u>2020 Challenge for Scotland's Biodiversity (2013) p. 55</u></p>	<p>Land &amp; Freshwater Management:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure measures taken forward under CAP encourage land managers to develop and retain the diversity of wildlife habitats and landscape features</li> <li>• Promote (High Value Nature Farming</li> <li>• Promote an ecosystem approach to land management that fosters sustainable use of natural resources</li> </ul>	<p><b>SUPPORTING BIODIVERSITY</b></p> <p>Within enclosed farmland habitats in Scotland, wild species diversity, water supply, soil quality and regulation of climate, hazards, pests and diseases have shown deterioration over the last 20 years, and the abundance of wild and domestic pollinators has also declined.<sup>12</sup></p>
<p><u>Scotland's Economic Strategy (2015) p.45</u></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Protect and enhance our natural capital</li> </ul>	<p>There is overwhelming scientific evidence that organic farming significantly benefits biodiversity. The most up to date scientific review – a meta-analysis of 94 studies conducted by University of Oxford researchers – confirms 30 years of research that organic farms have on average around a third more species of wildlife than non-organic farms. The report concludes that organic farming is a reliable method for increasing biodiversity on farmland and may help to reverse the declines of formerly common species.<sup>13</sup></p>
<p><u>Scottish Rural Development Programme 2014-2020: Agri-Environment Climate Scheme</u></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Objective 1: Deliver the 2020 Challenge for Scotland's Biodiversity</li> <li>• Objective 3: Meet obligations to improve water quality under the EU Water Framework Directive by reducing diffuse pollution</li> <li>• Objective 4: Control flooding through natural flood risk management</li> <li>• Objective 5: Support organic farming</li> </ul>	<p>By prohibiting artificial fertilisers, severely restricting the use of pesticides and encouraging the management of wildlife habitats such as ponds, hedgerows and banks, organic farms support a far greater abundance and diversity of flora and fauna than non-organic farms: <b>34% more wild plant and animal species; 50% higher numbers of wildlife;</b> higher numbers and species of pollinators; more different pollinator species including wild bees.<sup>14</sup></p>
<p><u>Scottish Soil Framework (2009) p.9</u></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• SO1 - Soil organic matter stock protected and enhanced where appropriate</li> <li>• SO2 - Soil erosion reduced and where possible remediated</li> <li>• SO3 - Soil structure maintained</li> <li>• SO4 - Greenhouse gas emission from soils reduced to optimum balance</li> <li>• SO5 - Soil biodiversity, as well as above ground biodiversity, protected</li> <li>• SO6 - Soils making a positive contribution to sustainable flood management</li> <li>• SO7 - Water quality enhanced through improved soil management</li> <li>• SO8 - Soil's productive capacity to produce food, timber and other biomass maintained and enhanced</li> </ul>	<p><b>PROTECTING SOIL &amp; WATER QUALITY</b></p> <p>18% of Scotland's water bodies are considered to be in less than 'good status' as a result of diffuse pollution from agriculture. Soil quality has declined with erosion and climate change posing the biggest threats.<sup>15</sup></p> <p>Higher levels of Soil organic matter associated with organic farming techniques can help to minimise soil erosion and reduce the risk of flooding and diffuse pollution, leading to better water retention and drainage, and reducing run-off into freshwater and marine bodies.</p>

<p><u>Getting the best from our land</u> <u>A land use strategy for Scotland</u> <u>(2009)</u></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Land based businesses working with nature to contribute more to Scotland's prosperity</li> <li>• Responsible stewardship of Scotland's natural resources delivering more benefits to Scotland's people</li> </ul>	
<p><u>Water Environment and Water Services (Scotland) Act 2003</u></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Preventing further deterioration of, and protecting and enhancing, the status of aquatic ecosystems and, with regard to their water needs, terrestrial ecosystems and wetlands directly depending on those aquatic ecosystems</li> <li>• Promoting sustainable water use based on the long-term protection of available water resources</li> <li>• Aiming at enhancing protection and improvement of the aquatic environment through, amongst other things, specific measures for the progressive reduction of discharges, emissions and losses of priority substances and the cessation or phasing out of discharges, emissions and losses of the priority hazardous substances</li> <li>• Ensuring the progressive reduction of pollution of groundwater and preventing further pollution of it</li> <li>• Contributing to mitigating the effects of floods and droughts</li> </ul>	

**FOOD & DRINK**

<p><u>Recipe for Success: Scotland's National Food &amp; Drink Policy</u></p> <p><u>Becoming a Good Food Nation</u> <u>(2014)</u></p>	<p>Becoming a Good Food Nation has five key policy areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Having Scotland's public sector lead by example with the NHS, local authorities and Scottish Government signing up to offer fresh, seasonal, local and sustainable produce</li> <li>• Developing specific children's food policy in recognition of the impact of food on the health of young people and their ability to influence society's behaviour for generations to come</li> </ul>	<p>Organic food and farming supports the Scotland's National Food and Drink across its key policy areas.</p> <p>Organic food and farming contributes to reinforcing Scotland's reputation for 'cleaner and greener' food and drink.</p> <p>There is growing interest by public bodies in procuring more local, healthy and sustainable food including organic. Catering for Change provides guidance to public sector food buyers on how to procure sustainable food including organic. Food for Life Scotland provides practical support to help public catering services make step-wise changes</p>
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Working with communities to encourage the production and sale of more locally grown food</li> <li>• Promoting good food choices to consumers, enlisting the support of retailers, food producers and public bodies</li> <li>• Realising the economic benefits of a better domestic food culture for Scotland's food and drink sector</li> </ul>	<p>for procuring healthy and sustainable food.</p> <p>The independent new economic foundation (NEF) report <i>The Benefits of Procuring School Meals through the Food for Life Partnership</i> found that over £3 in social, economic and environmental value can be created for every £1 spent on Food for Life silver and gold menus (which must include organic produce), mostly in the form of new jobs in the local economy.<sup>16</sup></p>
<p><u>Procurement Reform (Scotland) Bill: Policy Memorandum (2014)</u></p> <p><u>Catering for Change: Buying Food Sustainably in the Public Sector (2011)</u></p>	<p>Paragraph 70 of the Bill: "public expenditure which demonstrates the potential of public procurement is sustainable food procurement, which the Scottish Government would expect to see covered in any procurement strategies."</p>	
<p><b>SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT</b></p>		
<p><u>Scottish Rural Development Programme 2014-2020</u></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Enhancing the rural economy</li> <li>• Supporting rural communities</li> </ul>	<p>Organic farms in the UK provides around 30% more jobs per farm than equivalent non-organic farms, and are more likely to have undergone diversification and be involved in on-farm processing and direct marketing and retailing, which supports the creation of additional local jobs.<sup>17</sup></p> <p>Evidence suggests that organic production has the potential to be a profitable way forward for many farmers. Financial comparisons show that organic farm businesses were slightly more profitable and less exposed to volatility than their comparable non-organic counterparts between 2006 and 2012.<sup>18</sup></p>

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