

Citizens' forums on food: FSA supporting Scotland as a *Land of Food and Drink* – views from consumers across Scotland

Prepared for: Food Standards Agency

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Executive Summary

BMRB was commissioned by the Food Standards Agency (FSA) to conduct a nationwide series of citizens' forums, with the goal of establishing an ongoing dialogue with the public on food standards. Now in its second year, this wave of forums sought to examine consumers' views on the ways in which the FSA can support *Recipe for Success - a National Food and Drink Policy for Scotland* (NFDP) whilst still promoting the FSA's core agenda – *safe food and healthy eating for all*. The fieldwork consisted of three evening workshops, reconvened once, and took place in Scotland between August and September 2009.

Making healthy and sustainable choices

The Scottish diet was thought to be very similar to diets consumed in the rest of the UK and was perceived to be less healthy for particular groups. Respondents thought that consumers on a lower income or consumers who were employed full-time may be more likely to eat 'convenience foods' like take-away or processed foods. These foods were considered less healthy because they were thought to contain higher levels of salt, sugar and fat.

Scotland had a reputation for producing high quality items including beef, shellfish, fresh fruits and vegetables. At the same time however, the Scottish diet was stereotyped as being particularly poor. This stereotype was in part supported: by the media; by some Scots who were thought to 'revel' in this view; and by the widespread incidence of diet-related ill-health.

Respondents felt that while this stereotype persisted it would be difficult to promote Scotland as a "land of food and drink" – one of the core drivers within the NFDP. Promoting a healthy diet should, therefore, be a central aim for policy makers. Respondents thought there were three main barriers that consumers needed to negotiate in order to make healthy food choices in the future. These were: **understanding; cost; and accessibility**

Understanding: Respondents thought that the importance of maintaining a balanced diet was well publicised and understood by most consumers. However respondents were less confident when making practical food choices. Respondents thought that consumers may be overwhelmed by competing and even contradictory messages on maintaining a healthy diet. As a consequence respondents discussed deferring to intuitive attitudes to food.

Respondents thought that TV advertising and documentaries may be particularly effective in delivering information about healthy eating as these formats were likely to reach a greater variety of consumer groups. The internet may be a useful in targeting young adults however respondents thought that it was unlikely that consumers would seek out healthy eating sites unless they had a specific health concern, for example if they were diabetic or wanted to lose weight.

There was a view that unhealthy food choices may become habitualised over time and therefore some consumers may be more resistant to information on healthy eating. Respondents thought that education from an early age would have a longer term impact on the Scottish diet. Healthy eating campaigns in schools were considered to be effective in addressing poor diet in children.

Respondents trusted that information and advertising which incorporated messages about healthy eating would be more reliable from the government or the Agency than marketing from manufacturers and retailers. There was a perceived role for government in ensuring that information presented to consumers was not misleading.

Cost: Special offers, particularly in supermarkets, reinforced the perception that processed foods and unhealthy snacks were cheaper than healthy, fresh alternatives. However many thought that home-cooked meals made from scratch could be less expensive than processed alternatives and therefore there were mixed perceptions about getting real “value for money” when shopping. There was a perception that the variety of food choices which were affordable to consumers on a lower budget was limited.

Respondents’ perceptions varied as to the relative expense of local/domestic foods when compared to imported equivalents. In Glasgow, respondents thought that imported foods were less expensive than local foods. These respondents were concerned that encouraging supermarkets to provide more local foods could reduce the variety of foods affordable to consumers on restricted budgets. However, respondents in Aberdeen and Edinburgh who had bought foods from farmers markets, or other independent suppliers of local foods, thought that there was a misconception amongst consumers that local foods were more expensive. These respondents suggested that buying only the required amount of food from a local supplier, and therefore wasting less, could be no more expensive than buying imported foods from the supermarket. This could especially be the case as consumers in supermarkets may ‘over-purchase’ discounted foods..

Accessibility: Supermarkets were thought to provide easy access to healthy foods all year round. Respondents also thought that creating direct links between the consumer and local producers would improve access to healthy foods whilst also supporting the Scottish food and drink industry and addressing issues relating to the wider sustainability agenda.

Promoting Healthier and More Sustainable Food Choices

There was a view that consumers had a responsibility to make food choices which were more sustainable; conversely, respondents thought that for most consumers cost and convenience had a greater impact on food choices. Consumers were unlikely to make food choices solely because the item was sourced locally or because it was organic, for example.

The Reputation of the Scottish Food industry and Food Safety

Respondents believed that the Scottish food industry had a good reputation for food safety, even compared to the rest of the UK. This was twinned with a lack of awareness of food standards abroad but an assumption that food was potentially less safe, particularly when sourced from beyond the EU.

There was a perception that food safety standards were sufficiently monitored and upheld in Scotland. Food safety was largely taken for granted, for example some respondents assumed that anything on sale in a UK supermarket could be considered safe to eat. However, there was a view that consumers were less well equipped to make judgements about food safety standards than they were about healthy food choices, particularly given the perceived complexity of issues such as GM foods, and pesticide use. Food hygiene issues were however largely considered to be everyone's responsibility and much easier to understand.

Although consumers were concerned about issues relating to food safety, they suggested that they were more likely to *'not think about it'*, partly because of a lack of confidence in their knowledge and understanding but also because they expected the government and food businesses to ensure standards were being met.

Respondents suggested that there was a responsibility for the FSA to inform consumers about the food safety implications associated with farming and processing of foods and, beyond that, to ban processes which have consumer related implications for food safety. Some respondents also thought it possible to get food hygiene information from local authorities directly, should they wish to do so.

Country of origin labelling

Respondents were more aware of country of origin labelling (CoOL) for certain products such as meats, fresh fruit and vegetables. Consumer concern about a product's country of origin was related to the perishability of the product and the potential for it to cause a health hazard. However many of the respondents were primarily concerned with price and value for money.

Respondents felt that the definition of “last significant change”, when described to the groups by FSA observers was vague and did not reflect their expectations of ‘country of origin’. Some of the respondents felt that the emphasis for assigning origin should be on the early stages of the food production process; either where food was born/germinated or raised/grown. Later stages such as processing and packaging were considered by respondents insufficient to determine the country of origin of a given product.

The importance of CoOL to respondents varied across the selected areas; with different emphasis placed on the relative importance of fresh local (i.e. Scottish) produce, a more general desire for high quality, and those who prioritised value for money. There were a number of factors which motivated consumers to buy local produce including: the perceived ‘quality’ and freshness of the item, supporting the local economy, environmental concerns, concerns about animal welfare standards in comparison to other countries, and trust in the quality and safety of a familiar local source. CoOL was considered a very useful tool in identifying Scottish produce, especially when it was prominent, clear and used strong iconography. Respondents thought that it may be valuable to use CoOL more proactively on high quality Scottish produce like meat, fish and fresh fruit and vegetables as a way of further promoting Scotland as a ‘land of food and drink’. However it was generally considered that the rules on CoOL needed to be clarified so that consumers could understand exactly how origin is defined.

Introduction

In December 2005, the Food Standards Agency (FSA) Board agreed to develop more creative and experimental ways of engaging directly with individual consumers and to construct a new model for consumer engagement. Central to this aim was the establishment of a nationwide series of consumer forums to enable the FSA to establish an ongoing dialogue with the public on food standards.

The forums provide the opportunity for the FSA to innovate in the way it makes decisions to protect public health and consumer interests in relation to food safety. In particular, the forums help to frame issues the FSA focuses on, and ultimately the advice its gives, from a consumer perspective.

Specifically, the forums aim to:

- Understand the “top of mind” concerns of UK consumers;
- Develop deeper understanding about particular concerns that consumers have in relation to food;
- Test FSA policy and ensure that the views of consumers are taken into account at all stages of the policy making process.

This report outlines findings from year two of the citizens’ forums, exploring consumers’ views on the ways in which the Food Standards Agency can best support the National Food and Drink Policy for Scotland, whilst still promoting the FSA’s core agenda – *safe food and healthy eating for all*. The aim of the policy, as announced in June 2009, “is to promote Scotland’s sustainable economic growth by ensuring that the Scottish Government’s focus in relation to food and drink, and in particular our work with Scotland’s food and drink industry, addresses quality, health and wellbeing, and environmental sustainability, recognising the need for access and affordability at the same time.”¹ The policy outlines how Government in Scotland will:

1. Support the growth of the food and drink industry
2. Build on Scotland’s reputation as the land of food and drink
3. Ensure we make healthy and sustainable food choices
4. Make the public sector an exemplar for sustainable food procurement

¹ Richard Lochhead, Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs and Environment, 19 June 2008

5. Ensure our food supplies are secure and resilient to change
6. Make food both available and affordable to all
7. Ensure that people understand more about the food they eat

1.1 Approach

The approach adopted to address the aims involved a series of three workshops across Scotland convened over two waves. Each workshop comprised 10 participants. Each workshop lasted 2 hours.

The discussions in the first wave of forums, developed in relation to a topic guide (see appendix 2), specifically explored the following areas:

- Perception and reputation of Scottish diet and Scottish produce
- Consumers views on the FSA's agenda: 'Safe food and Healthy Eating for All'
- Supporting the National Food and Drink Policy – food safety issues
- Making healthy and sustainable choices
- Sources of information on food choices

The second wave examined the issue of country of origin labelling and explored the following areas:

- Country of origin labelling (CoOL) and consumer perceptions
- Understanding of CoOL and concept of 'local'
- The influence of CoOL on purchasing behaviours

Each group was moderated by an independent facilitator, and representatives from the FSA in Scotland were also present, both observing and adding clarification in discussions where respondents required it. Stimulus materials were used to aid discussion and provoke debate (see appendix 3). The findings were subject to a full analysis, which forms the basis for this report. A full methodology can be found in appendix 1.

1.2 Report outline

The next section of this report examines the role of consumers, FSA (and wider government) and industry in promoting 'safe food and healthy eating for all' through the National Food and Drink Policy. Chapter two looks at participants' views on Scottish diet and examines the consumers' decisions in relation to making healthy and sustainable choices. Chapter three looks at attitudes towards food safety and its perceived impact on the reputation of Scottish food and drink. Chapter four examines participants' views on and use of CoOL. Finally, chapter five pulls together the findings from this both workshops and explores their implications for the FSA.

2 Making Healthy and Sustainable Choices

This report examines respondents' views on three main themes: healthy and sustainable food choices; food safety and country of origin labelling (CoOL). The implications of these views on the NFD for Scotland are considered throughout the document. This chapter explores how consumers can be encouraged to make healthier and more sustainable food choices whilst supporting the Scottish food industry. Initial stages of the workshops examined the Scottish diet and what made it distinctive for respondents.

Respondents had no difficulty in naming individual dishes that they thought were particularly Scottish. However, respondents felt that the bulk of their diet was very similar to the rest of the UK although it contained Scottish elements. Whilst respondents thought that Scottish consumers ate traditional Scottish dishes more regularly than other parts of the UK, they also thought that these foods formed part of a diet which incorporated both domestic and international cuisine. Some traditional Scottish dishes had been 'modernised' by incorporating cultural influences from outside Scotland:

"My mum does it even though she's from, like, Pakistan [...], we still do Mince and Tatties, we, kind of, put a wee bit of Garam Masala in it!" (Glasgow, Female)

"I make Haggis Lasagne." (Edinburgh, Male)

The Scottish diet was regarded as healthier for some groups than others. Respondents suggested that consumers on lower incomes, those who had a poor understanding of nutrition, or those who had busy lives, may be more likely to eat convenience foods on a more frequent basis. As a consequence these consumer groups were thought to have higher levels of fat, sugar and salt in their diet.

Respondents thought that their diet was no less healthy than in other parts of the UK. However, there was a perception that this was not reflected in the international reputation of Scottish food. Many of the foods which respondents thought people outside Scotland perceived to be stereotypically Scottish were deep fried fast foods, with deep fried mars bars being mentioned in all groups as a food which contributed to a negative impression of the Scottish diet. While on one hand Scotland was seen as producing healthy, high quality fresh foods, these perceptions were frequently overlooked when people considered these unhealthy aspects of Scotland's diet.

The image of the poor Scottish diet was supported by three factors. Respondents thought that this view was exaggerated in the media; some respondents suggested that Scots sometimes 'revelled' in this image which was not helpful to

Scotland's reputation as a whole and; respondents thought that the incidence of diet-related ill-health proved that problems existed in Scotland,

"Our reputation in Scotland is probably of being the deep fried mars bar eaters and heavy whiskey drinkers [...] How can we say this image of us is not true when we still have the worst rate for heart disease in Europe?" (Aberdeen, Female)

Essentially, respondents found it far too simplistic to describe the "Scottish diet" as healthy or unhealthy, or to describe Scottish food as being of high or low quality. However, respondents felt that, as long as the international reputation of the poor Scottish diet persisted as the dominant model, it would be difficult to promote the healthier aspects of Scotland's food and drink industry.

Respondents thought that principle barriers to making healthy food choices, and therefore challenging Scotland's reputation were: contradictory information about healthy foods which led to consumers having a **poor understanding** of what constituted a healthy meal; the **perceived additional expense of healthier foods**; and the **accessibility of healthy produce**.

2.1 Understanding healthier choices

Respondents considered it important to maintain a healthy diet and thought that the healthy eating message was well publicised. Respondents were aware that it was important to have a balanced diet which incorporated a variety of foods. Foods perceived to be healthy included fruit and vegetables, lean meats and fish. Respondents believed that most consumers understood how to maintain a healthy diet. However, beyond eating more fresh fruit and vegetables, respondents were less confident about exactly what constituted a balanced diet and how they could make healthier choices. This was because contradictory messages about healthy eating and food safety meant that judging the relative healthiness of individual items could be more complex.

There was a perception, expressed in all groups that it was difficult to make judgements on the relative healthiness of different items, as there were multiple factors that contributed to their nutritional balance. Therefore, respondents felt that consumers may be overwhelmed by contradictory messages on maintaining a healthy diet.

"There's a lot of contradictory stuff as well you read in the press. One week you can do this and the next week you can't. So you have to take everything with a, pardon the pun, a pinch of salt. It is a bit crazy." (Edinburgh, Male)

When making food choices, there were a number of different factors which respondents felt made consumers' selections more complex. For example, there were different types of fats such as saturated, unsaturated and hydrogenated, and different types of carbohydrates, all of which were understood by respondents to have an effect on the healthiness of an item.

Concerns relating to food safety were, on occasion, thought to conflict with some healthy eating messages, such as the negative effects of pesticides sprayed onto fruit and vegetables or low fat foods which contained additives. Respondents were also concerned by the health implications of 'E numbers', preservatives and additives contained in processed foods. These factors were seen as potentially reducing the variety of foods which could be considered both healthy *and* safe.

The number of different messages on healthy eating was regarded as having a negative effect on consumers' capacity and inclination to use this information. Some messages or information may be disregarded by some consumers. For example respondents expressed a view that that some information was more relevant for those who had a particular health concerns such as diabetes or high-cholesterol. Respondents also suggested that consumers may use a single nutrient as a proxy for the overall nutritional qualities of the product. Some respondents indicated that they would avoid foods which were high in salt or high in fat, but paid little or no attention to other nutritional elements.

Respondents discussed deferring to a 'common sense' attitude to food due to the perceived complexity of some healthy food decisions. There was a perception that fresh meats, fish and vegetables were more likely to be healthier than processed foods and there was a high awareness of the 'eat 5 a day' message. Respondents also discussed eating less healthy foods in moderation, in avoiding big meals late in the evening, and trusting your instincts – what one respondent described as 'listening to your body'.

2.1.1 Informing consumers on making healthier choices

There was a perception that most consumers understood the importance of maintaining a balanced diet. Therefore there may be other factors which contributed to unhealthy food choices by adults. These factors were identified as: a perception that lower quality and less healthy foods were cheaper than better quality healthy foods; a view that cooking healthier food is difficult and time consuming, and; habitually purchasing unhealthy foods. Some consumers may benefit from further information, particularly in promoting home cooking (discussed in section 2.3). However there was a view that others routinely made unhealthy food choices despite a good understanding of what was healthy. Therefore education in schools was considered an important factor in effecting behaviour before it has become habitualised. There was also a view amongst

respondents that an unhealthy choice was a choice that *other* people made – that it was not *their* problem.

“Everybody’s got a fairly good idea of what to eat [...] and its got nothing to do with poverty because there’s about £50 worth of absolute rubbish in their trolley. Nothing’s going to change that [...] unless they educate kids from a young age up” (Aberdeen, Male)

Healthy eating campaigns in schools, were considered to be effective in addressing poor diets in children from a young age. These included both practical steps like reducing access to fizzy drinks and unhealthy snacks as well as educating children about healthy eating.

Respondents discussed a range of channels which they thought would be effective in presenting information about healthy eating to consumers. Promoting healthy eating through TV advertising and documentaries was considered to be particularly effective as it was these formats which were likely to reach the greatest number of consumers.

There was a perception that the internet would be a good channel to target young adults and students. There was a view that young people, who were setting up home for the first time, may need additional guidance on cooking dishes which were healthier and inexpensive. There was also a perception that these consumers may be more likely to be regular internet users and would therefore be more likely to make use of these channels. One student in the groups suggested that was indeed the case. However, respondents thought it was unlikely consumers would seek out healthy eating websites unless they had a particular health concern or wanted to lose weight.

Despite considering that the internet may be a useful tool to access information on safe food and healthy eating, respondents did not remember using the FSA or any other Government website for this purpose. Other websites had been used to research healthy eating and one respondent had used the BBC website as guidance for cooking healthy and cheap foods.

“BBC Healthy Living, part of it is a good food website they have is really good. When [...] I was on my own for the first time I just like lived off that basically for all my meals. I got really good recipes and it told me what was good and what was bad. So I’ve used that as a really good source” (Edinburgh, Male)

Manufacturers marketing which incorporated messages about healthy eating, was regarded as frequently unreliable and potentially misleading. Information and

advertising from the government or FSA was thought to be more reliable because there was no vested interest in 'pushing' any particular message. Therefore, there was a view that there was a role for the government in ensuring that information presented to consumers was accurate and reflected a range of factors. For example, if a product is labelled as low in fat it should also make it clear if it is relatively high in salt or sugar. Respondents also thought that the clarity and visibility of food labels were important in order to ensure that consumers were well enough informed about both the nutritional benefits and disadvantages of a given product. The colour-coded traffic light system was considered particularly helpful as it was perceived to be easy to spot and interpret.

"The whole traffic light system is a real big help. [...] even just getting a sandwich at lunchtime you can see a huge difference in some of the different ones and I definitely pick up the healthier ones" (Edinburgh, Female)

2.2 Cost of healthier choices

Respondents thought that the low cost of unhealthy foods in supermarkets encouraged consumers to make unhealthy food choices and therefore contributed to a poor diet. 'Buy one, get one free', ready meals for £1 and multi-packs reinforced the feeling that processed foods could be cheaper than fresh foods. Additionally, there was a perception that healthier foods, like fresh fruit and vegetables, fish and good quality meat, were expensive when compared to unhealthy ready meals and snacks.

Glasgow workshop - Wave One

1) Ensure we make healthy and sustainable food choices

Better quality food be more reasonably priced.
(+healthy)
(Make ~~fruit~~ fruit/salad/veg more affordable)

Respondents at the Glasgow workshop were particularly concerned by issues relating to the affordability of healthy foods. There was a perception that only lower quality foods were affordable to consumers who were on a tight budget. Although these consumers understood the importance of healthy eating and maintaining a balanced diet, respondents thought that their budget restricted them to purchasing low quality foods which were less healthy.

"It's all down to how much people can afford to buy, [...] if you're on a strict budget [...] how can you go and buy your kids good quality food with the price of the fruit sometimes, with the price of the vegetables, [...] maybe some families would love to

give their kids and they can't afford them because the fruit and veg is quite expensive" (Glasgow, Female)

Respondents thought that it was challenging for some consumers to compare the cost of products that were priced according to their weight; consumers with poor numeracy skills were considered to be less able to make judgements about the relative values of these products. Instead it was thought that these consumers may rely on other visual prompts when making decisions about what represented value for money. Consumers may focus on 'value for money' marketing techniques employed by supermarkets which respondents felt could potentially overstate the cost benefits of lower quality, processed produce.

Respondents across all groups recognised that preparing home-cooked, healthy meals in bulk and then freezing the excess for later consumption, was a cost effective method that allowed consumers to save time and eat healthily. Respondents thought that there was a need to educate consumers to ensure that they have the skills they need to produce healthy meals at home. Additionally respondents felt that it was necessary to promote home-cooking to raise awareness among consumers of the value of home-made foods.

2.3 Access to healthier choices

There was a perception that supermarkets could have a positive effect on the accessibility of healthy foods. Supermarkets were thought to provide better choice, make a wide range of foods more affordable and allow consumers to access fresh fruit and vegetables all year round. Access to affordable healthy foods was therefore seen to be more problematic for consumers living in rural and inner city areas where it may be more difficult or time-consuming to travel to a supermarket.

"If you're living in a wee village in the far north I shudder to think how far you'd have to go to get to a supermarket"
(Aberdeen, Male)

Respondents thought that creating direct links between the consumer and local farmers would improve access to healthy foods whilst also supporting the Scottish food and drink industry.

"Farmers' markets are something that should definitely be encouraged and food boxes for people in the towns that are brought in from local farms in the area. Stuff like that. That's what we need. Not more packaging" (Aberdeen, female)

Respondents were also concerned that public sector organisations, such as schools and hospitals, often appeared to provide unhealthy food choices. While

respondents recognised that there was a drive to improve the food served in schools, there was considerable variation in their views on the quality of food served in schools. Some parents thought that measures taken to promote healthy eating in schools were a great success. However, some respondents thought that serving healthier food which was unappetising encouraged some children to seek alternatives at take-away food outlets close to their school. For example, it was suggested that it was counter-productive to restrict chips in schools as children will just go to elsewhere. Instead it would be more effective to offer 'healthier' oven chips instead. Respondents thought that the public sector should always be shown to be providing access to and delivering high quality healthy foods at all levels.

2.4 Cooking Skills and Convenience Foods

There was a perception that it would be beneficial to promote home-cooking to encourage consumers to cook more fresh foods. Respondents in Aberdeen thought that the 'traditional' Scottish diet was healthier because foods were home-cooked and used fresh local ingredients. For example, Scotch Broth used fresh ingredients such as seasonal vegetables, barley and meat which could all be produced in Scotland. To enable consumers to apply healthy eating messages into their daily diet, respondents thought it was important to provide practical cooking skills. Promotion of home-cooking should also emphasise that cooking from scratch can be easy and no more expensive than buying processed foods.

"Maybe we should have promotion of home-cooking, rather than bleating on about education and food groups [...] we obviously have a generation of people who can't cook in lots of situations [...] I think maybe we should be promoting home-cooking"
(Edinburgh, Male)

There was a perception that it may no longer be consistent with consumers' busy lifestyles to produce home-cooked meals every night. However, respondents thought that processed foods could form part of a healthy diet as long as these were of high quality and nutritionally balanced. It was considered possible for consumers to make healthier food choices, when eating processed foods, by checking food labels.

Respondents recognised that some foods had been 'reformulated' by industry along a healthier profile ('health by stealth'). There was a perception that some consumers were likely to purchase less healthy convenience foods automatically because they did not have the cooking skills necessary to prepare meals themselves and because these choices had become habitualised. Therefore respondents thought that there was some value in reducing the levels of fat and salt to ensure that these processed foods were healthier.

2.5 Promoting Healthier and More Sustainable Food Choices

Respondents' views on making sustainable food choices reflected messages in the media which centred on buying foods that were produced locally. For example, some respondents mentioned the Fife diet project, which encourages people in Fife to eat only local produce for a year.²

"I've been told over and over and over by the media, fresh local produce. Buy fresh local produce [...] and you also know you're supporting your local farmers." (Edinburgh, female)

Respondents thought that consumers had a responsibility to shop more sustainably. However, sustainable shopping practices were often secondary to factors such as cost and convenience. There were three behaviours which respondents thought were effective in making more sustainable food choices. These were: buying local; buying organic and; growing your own.

While respondents discussed buying organic produce, growing your own food or supporting small scale producers, buying local produce was considered to be the primary way in which consumers could help to support food production in Scotland. 'Local' production was considered largely a proxy for 'sustainable' food – with increased food miles considered to equate to less sustainable production.

However, respondents' views did not suggest that they were motivated only by issues relating to sustainability as there were several factors which appeared to motivate consumers to source food locally. Primarily, there was a perception that Scottish produce was of a better quality, tastier and safer. There was also a perception that food which had travelled long distances may be less fresh. Respondents were unlikely to make food choices because the product was sourced locally or organic unless there were other perceived advantages such as taste and cost. A more in depth discussion on purchasing Scottish produce is contained in chapter four.

"I mean if you bought it [organic produce] and it was better tasting or whatever then fair, but its not, I don't see the difference [...] I just buy meat and fruit as it is, I wouldn't buy it because it was organic." (Glasgow, female)

Respondents felt that Scotland had significant natural resources and an abundance of land that was underutilised. Consequently, respondents felt that it

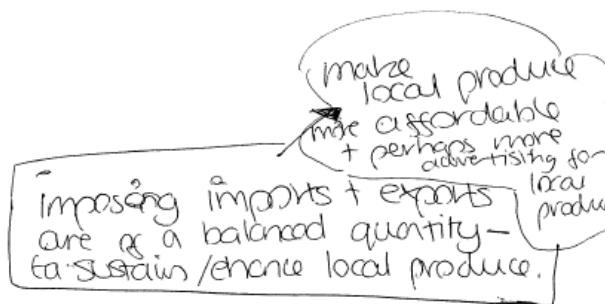
² <http://fifediet.co.uk/about/>

should be possible to utilise these resources and produce more high quality food in Scotland.

2.5.1 Cost of Buying Local

Respondents thought that most consumers would be unlikely to choose local or organic produce if there was a significant price difference. Therefore, it would be necessary to make local produce more affordable and comparable to the cost of imported foods, in order to encourage consumers to choose these.

Glasgow workshop - Wave One



"You prefer to buy organic [...] but if it comes down to a huge price difference you're not going to care about that" (Edinburgh, Male)

Respondents in Glasgow were concerned that encouraging supermarkets to provide more local produce may drive up the price of everyday shopping. There was a perception that, due to restrictions on consumers' budgets, the variety of food choices which were affordable, was significantly reduced. Imported foods, which were perceived to be more affordable, were therefore considered important to supplement the range of affordable foods for consumers on restricted budgets.

"If you say you're going to put restrictions on supermarkets then you're taking the choice away from people that don't have choice really of where they're going to go and buy. I think you should actually... well the cheap [less healthy] food put the prices up and all the good quality food bring it down" (Glasgow, Female)

However respondents who had purchased local foods from independent suppliers, such as farmers' markets, thought that there was a misconception among consumers that healthy Scottish foods, were more expensive than imported products bought in the supermarket. Some products, bought at a farmers' markets, were regarded as less expensive than similar products bought in the supermarket. In addition respondents thought that supermarkets could appear to be cheaper through buy one get one free (BoGoF) deals. Such deals actually

encouraged wasteful shopping habits, as unwanted foods could spoil before use. Therefore, respondents suggested that buying only the required amount of food from a local supplier and wasting less, could be no more expensive than shopping at the supermarket, although the perception of greater value for money at the supermarket would persist.

2.5.2 Convenience of buying local

Respondents thought that supermarkets threatened the existence of local producers both directly, by driving down the prices paid to farmers, and indirectly, by perpetuating a 'culture of convenience'. Respondents noted that there was no longer a fruit and vegetable market in Edinburgh, for example, due to the dominance of supermarkets.

Buying foods from local independent suppliers was thought to be less convenient than shopping at a supermarket due to increased travel needed to go between several shops in order to purchase all the required items.. In addition,, it was considered that, as some foods were seasonal, they may not be accessible all year round from these sources.

Supermarkets were thought to improve the accessibility of healthy foods and respondents recognised that their shopping had, to a degree, become habitualised by their reliance on them. Consumers therefore expected year round supply of fruits and vegetables and respondents thought that as a result they were losing a sense of seasonality in the produce that they buy.

*"I couldn't tell you what's currently in season [...] I assume that everything's going to be there [...] you're seeing everything as sustainable because it's there the whole time."
(Edinburgh, Female)*

Buying local produce in season was considered preferable by some, as foods were thought to be better quality. The traditional Scottish diet was thought to have been seasonal and respondents suggested that it should reflect seasonality of produce in order to be more sustainable.

So maybe our diet should vary seasonally then, because you should [...] take advantage of seasonal products. So in the summer months, we're all going to eat some strawberries, in the winter [...] seasonal roasted veg like, parsnips and potatoes and all that sort of thing. (Female Edinburgh)

Convenience and the variety of produce available year round were considered to be the primary advantages of supermarket shopping. Respondents thought that there were few outlets, like farmers' markets and local butchers, which were supportive of local producers. There was a perception among respondents that

improving accessibility to local produce, through more direct sources, such as farmers markets, could encourage consumers to buy healthier produce, while supporting local farmers.

“Great local markets selling great local produce at an affordable price to encourage people to cook at home and to cook simply and tasty the way the Italians do and, as you quite rightly say, the way the Scots did and the English do I’m sure to some extent.” (Aberdeen Female)

2.6 Promoting Healthier and Sustainable food choices

Respondents thought that consumers were likely to be ‘food literate’ as messages about healthy eating were well publicised. However consumers may be less confident in applying this understanding to practical food choices. Respondents were in favour of education which promoted healthier choices and provided practical skills that enabled consumers to apply this understanding to everyday food choices. There was a view that promoting a healthy lifestyle and enabling consumers to make healthier food choices may also have a positive effect on food manufacturers.

“Government should teach healthy lifestyle to people [...] and then people can react to that education by putting pressure on supermarkets and suppliers so they will change production according to the demanding of the market” (Glasgow, Male)

Glasgow workshop - Wave One

How can FSA Scotland promote safe food and healthy eating for all

*EDUCATING CHILDREN
THROUGH DOMESTIC SCIENCE TO PROMOTE HEALTHY EATING*

Respondents suggested that there may be several ways in which the FSA can work with food manufacturers to promote healthier and more sustainable food choices. Encouraging manufacturers to reformulate products to make processed foods healthier, by reducing salt and fat content would be beneficial to those who were unable to prepare home-cooked meals every day or who choose processed foods habitually.

Reducing the ‘temptation’ of unhealthy foods was also perceived as one possible area where the government, FSA and supermarkets could have a role. Respondents suggested tighter controls on advertising and on the availability of unhealthy snacks at point of sale.

Clarity in labelling was expressed across all groups as a way to ensure that consumers understand more about the contents of processed foods. As previously mentioned, there was spontaneous support for the colour-coded traffic light system.

There was a perception that creating more direct links between Scottish consumers and Scottish farmers would help consumers to make healthier and more sustainable food choices, whilst also supporting the Scottish Food and Drink Industry.

Local food was also considered healthier, fresher, more sustainable and of higher quality than food sourced from elsewhere. There was a perception that consumers had a responsibility to shop 'ethically', to look for locally produced, sustainable foods and to thereby put pressure on manufacturers and supermarkets to increase supply of more sustainable produce.

"I think it's a supply and demand thing. I think if we bought more of the things that were locally sourced, that were more natural, more organic, that people would stock them more and make them more available" (Aberdeen, Male)

However for many consumers, convenience and affordability were more significant concerns. Therefore it was considered important that imported produce was still available, as this ensured good access to healthy foods which were inexpensive and available year round. In the Glasgow workshop, respondents thought that it was much more important that households on a lower income were able to access good quality foods at a price that was viable for their budget, regardless of whether that food was local or organic.

2.6.1 Areas for investigation

Respondents largely expressed their trust in the FSA and Government to provide clarity for consumers on what constituted a healthy diet. However, consumers expressed concerns about conflicting messages relating to food safety and dietary health advice. The FSA could consider how gaps in consumers' understanding of Government messages regarding the safety and health benefits of processed foods and their ingredients, could best be addressed.

The FSA could consider ways in which consumers might be encouraged to think about their shopping and eating habits more carefully in order to counter the view that healthy food shopping is expensive. The need to develop skills to make 'hearty' home cooked meals was mentioned by all of the groups. Ensuring that consumers are aware of how to integrate starchy carbohydrates into their diet, for example, as well as vegetables would encourage a holistic approach to food.

3 The reputation of the Scottish food industry & food safety

3.1 Food safety and reputation

As discussed in the previous section, perceptions of the Scottish food industry were polarised. On the one hand, the Scottish food industry had an international reputation as a producer of high quality foods, whereas on the other, the Scottish consumer had a reputation for eating unhealthy foods.

Many of the respondents considered fresh local produce to be of higher quality than pre-packaged meals; a judgement based in part on perceptions that it was *“less mucked about with”* and therefore contained less additives. For example, fresh locally sourced foods underwent less processing, were considered more likely to be free range or organic and hygiene standards were perceived to be better than in countries outside of the EU. Countries within the EU were thought fairly similar in terms of their hygiene standards, although it was felt that quality control and animal welfare standards could vary between countries.

Respondents believed that food safety and food hygiene standards in Scotland were good, and that the Scottish food industry had a strong reputation in this area. Respondents bought Scottish foods, particularly meats, because they were perceived to be safer. Respondents’ discussion of food safety issues suggested that they tended to trust that health and safety issues were sufficiently monitored by the relevant authorities in order to ensure that the Scottish food industry delivered produce that was safe to eat.

While Scottish produce was perceived to be some of the safest food available, concerns about food safety were regarded as a universal problem that affected all countries at some level. Even with high standards, respondents thought that consumers would always face the risk of rogue manufacturers or outlets that were not adhering to the required food hygiene standards. Some concern was also raised that food additives currently perceived as safe (aspartame was mentioned) and used in processed foods could subsequently prove to be a hazard to health.

3.2 Consumers’ concerns regarding food safety and shopping habits

While comfortable discussing healthy eating, respondents’ discussion of food safety tended to focus on domestic issues related to hygiene and food preparation. Respondents were less confident discussing the wider food safety issues that might arise in food production, processing or in relation to specific ingredients. This was accompanied by a feeling that, as consumers, they should be able to feel confident that food will be safe at the point of purchase;

individuals should then take responsibility for appropriate storage, preparation and cooking once they have purchased a product.

Respondents felt that official communications from government placed greater emphasis on messages related to health and nutrition, rather than on food safety. However, respondents tended to trust that food safety was well monitored by the appropriate authorities and that there were sufficient safeguards in place to ensure that food produced or sold in Scotland was safe. Food safety procedures were thought to be rigorous and possibly even over cautious on occasion; for example, “sell by”, “best before” and “use by date” markings were considered by some to be very conservative measures of a food’s freshness.

“I’d expect it to be fairly well regulated. Like pretty much everything else in the country is hugely well regulated or over regulated. I’m sure that food is carefully monitored would be my gut feel” (Edinburgh, Female)

Food hygiene issues, such as how to properly store and prepare foods, were better understood than safety issues relating to farming methods, such as the use of pesticides, food processing, or the use of additives and preservatives. Some respondents referred to a range of issues including additives, preservatives and ‘e-numbers’, pesticides, and GM foods as being somehow ‘concerning’. This concern appeared to stem from confusion in the face of mixed media messages, often relating to topics that were seen as technical and required specialist knowledge in order to judge their validity. Respondents thought therefore, that there was little alternative for consumers other than to trust that food safety was well monitored by the relevant authorities.

“The process of hygiene and cleanliness is quite an easy one for all of us to understand. We all know the difference between clean hands and dirty hands, a clean knife and a dirty knife. We don’t understand the chemicals that are in our food and how they may affect us long term [...] because these are questions for scientists and we’re not. You don’t have to be a scientist to understand hygiene but you need to be a scientist to understand food additives.” (Aberdeen, Female)

3.3 Making judgements on food safety

Discussion of food hygiene highlighted the role of intuitive judgements made by consumers on the safety of a product; respondents were quite comfortable using their senses to assess whether food looked or smelled bad.

Respondents felt more able to judge the safety of food which they were preparing from scratch at home rather than the pre-prepared, processed foods they bought

at the supermarket. This was related to a greater sense of control over hygiene and food preparation at home, and a perception that cooking from scratch with fresh ingredients ensured less exposure to any potentially harmful additives or preservatives.

When eating out respondents made judgements on the hygiene standards of a restaurant or food outlet based on the cleanliness of the restaurant itself as well as the bathroom facilities. In addition, word of mouth 'reviews' were particularly important when deciding on where to eat, as were online restaurant reviews, although no specific websites were mentioned.

*"Yes, I really wouldn't pay much attention to the certificates but more and more now Google is great for reviews on restaurants. You type in the name of a restaurant and if it's got seven five star reviews you're going to go. So I think that's a lot - like recommendations from other customers is a lot better."
(Edinburgh, Male)*

Food hygiene certificates were not widely used in decision making; and this is discussed more fully in section 3.4. It was felt that restaurants with poor hygiene standards would struggle to remain open for long as a poor reputation and failed hygiene inspections would result in the outlet being closed down.

"I always check the toilet out when I go into a restaurant [...] if they are not keeping the toilet clean then how can you expect them to be keeping the kitchen clean?" (Glasgow, Female)

Respondents recognised that some of the judgements that they made about the safety of food produced in Scotland, in comparison to other countries, may be based on their own perceptions rather than fact. When rationalising their perception that Scottish foods were safer than foods from other countries, respondents' referenced their awareness of better standards of animal welfare, including the view that meats from healthier animals were likely to be safer, as well as the view that the Scottish environment was regarded as cleaner. However, respondents recognised that these perceptions may not reflect actual food safety issues, which highlighted that consumers were less informed about food safety issues than they were about healthy food choices.

"Sometimes I just think, you know, Scotland's waters are quite safe where Shellfish from other parts are maybe [not so] but that's just ignorance, I don't know, so I just play safe and buy [Scottish]" (Glasgow, Female)

In addition, the transportation and storage of food was regarded as being linked in some way to food safety; foods that had travelled less distance, and as a result been stored for less time, were perceived to be safer and less likely to be spoiled.

3.4 Consumer information needs

While there was a general awareness of food hygiene certificates, understanding of their specific meaning and the rules governing their display appeared to be vague and inconsistent. Some respondents mentioned having seen certificates in restaurant windows indicating a “pass” for hygiene and assumed this meant that a basic standard of food hygiene was being adhered to.³

Some respondents felt that certificates were not particularly reassuring in and of themselves; the presence of a certificate was seen as an indication that an individual had been on a course in food hygiene rather than a guarantee that they were actively applying that knowledge in the kitchen. Overall, food hygiene and safety when eating out were largely taken for granted and based on a trust of food outlets maintaining standards, backed by enforcement from hygiene inspectors.

As respondents thought that they were less able to make judgements about the safety of food processes, their views on food safety tended to reflect specific issues or events which they had seen publicised in the print and broadcast media. Examples of these included recent celebrity driven campaigns on animal welfare and school dinners, as well as larger scale debates on topics like genetically modified foods. Respondents felt that the media should be held responsible for fair and accurate reporting on food related issues; there was a sense that conflicting accounts and reversals in reported advice were common.

“I think the media does confuse you, because if you go back far enough the ad was always ‘go to work on an egg’. And then what happens... Edwina Curry comes along with a big ad ‘don’t eat eggs’ and now it’s swung around again and they’re now saying that eggs are good for you. So the media actually makes you very confused.” (Edinburgh, Female)

“The media may sensationalise it a bit, but we wouldn’t have heard about genetically modified food if it wasn’t for them.” (Aberdeen, Male)

Aside from the media, respondents were unaware of specific channels where they could access information on food safety issues. Consumers supposed that *‘there must be a website’* on food safety but had not researched this further. Instead it

³ The ‘Scores on the Doors’ Scheme – The Agency sponsored a number of local authorities across the UK to participate in a variety of pilot schemes during 2006 and 2007. A public consultation was also held in 2008. Further legislation would be required to make the scheme mandatory for food businesses. In Scotland the scheme is being piloted using a “pass” or “improvement required” system. <http://www.food.gov.uk/safereating/hyg/scoresonthedoors/sotdbbackground/>

was thought that word-of-mouth and recommendations from other consumers or the media would reveal any relevant food safety issues. Whilst respondents felt confident that there was impartial information available to support them in making healthier choices, there was very little awareness of the FSA's "eatwell"⁴ website. In relation to food safety and eating out there was a vague awareness in the Glasgow workshop of a website where consumers could check a food outlet's hygiene rating, although nobody reported actually having used any service like this.

It was assumed by respondents that information would be available should consumers decide to actively seek it out. Overall, respondents felt there was less consumer interest in information on food safety issues when compared to advice on health and nutrition; safety was largely taken for granted or simply too technical for consumers to make judgements on.

While self-assured in terms of domestic food hygiene, respondents lacked confidence in their capacity to interpret information relating to wider safety issues, additives and preservatives, or genetically modified organisms (GMOs) for instance. This information was seen as 'scientific' and requiring a deeper level of understanding than the average consumer could be assumed to have.

Although consumers were concerned about issues relating to food safety, they suggested that they were more likely to *'not think about it'* and their discussion of food safety concerns suggested that this apathy was related to a lack of confidence in their knowledge and understanding of the relevant issues. This lack of confidence was fed partly by the inconsistency of messages relating to food in the media and a sense that advice was constantly changing. By contrast, messages on nutrition, such as eating "5-a-day", were seen as more consistent and less technical.

3.5 Responsibility for maintaining food safety standards

Respondents thought that current food hygiene laws were very effective and, through meticulous standards, ensured that the overwhelming majority of food consumed in Scotland was safe. Respondents recognised that it was necessary to balance a robust system for monitoring hygiene standards, in order to protect the consumer, with what was viable and affordable for government and business. Therefore they felt that current food hygiene standards were sufficient in conveying to consumers that Scottish food was safe.

⁴ *Eatwell* – available at: www.eatwell.gov.uk

“Environmental health now, they’re so strict, it doesn’t matter whether it’s just a wee hole in the wall you’re selling out of or a big restaurant” (Glasgow, Female)

Respondents also expressed a degree of trust in certain food businesses and major brands. If food came from a ‘reputable’ well-known source, it was considered to be safe, no matter where in the world the product originated. This trust was therefore based on an intrinsic assumption that all food safety controls were being tightly regulated at all stages of production.

Respondents thought that consumers had a responsibility to complain about breaches in food hygiene; however, it was felt that individuals could sometimes be complacent and not draw issues to the attention of the relevant authorities. Respondents thought it was doubtful that they or other consumers would complain about food safety issues unless they were particularly concerned about a specific hazard or contracted a food related illness. Instead, emphasis was placed on appropriate authorities and their enforcement activities to ensure safety. Additionally, consumers were unsure where they could report food safety issues.

“No, I would maybe phone Environmental Health if I was really that... if it was somewhere I eat all the time and I was really that worried about it.” (Glasgow, Female)

Issues relating to additives, chemicals, agricultural and industrial processes were less well understood than issues relating to healthy eating, respondents felt that consumers had to trust the government to assess whether the food they ate was safe. Respondents suggested that there was a responsibility for the government to inform consumers about the food safety implications associated with farming and processing of foods and, beyond that, to ban processes or ingredients which have consumer related implications for food safety.

3.6 Food Safety and supporting Scottish food and drink

Whilst it was considered important that food safety standards be maintained at their current levels, there was little suggestion that improvements were needed. Food safety concerns were perceived to be universal and not specific to Scotland. Scotland was thought to have a good reputation for food safety.

Some respondents perceived that there was less food safety concerns associated with ‘natural’ foods, i.e. organic farming and fresh produce, but others were undecided on the issue. However, encouraging the manufacture of this produce might also complement Scotland’s image as a land of high quality food and drink.

“When I went round the farm he showed me a row they had of completely organic non-treated things and these plants were

sort of like this and had like four minky looking apples. And he's like look, we keep this to show if we didn't use all the herbicides and pesticides this is what they would look like. It's just impossible to run a business. And you see all these lovely other healthy things..." (Edinburgh, Male)

3.6.1 Areas for Investigation

There was evidence that consumers may require further information and education to empower them to make informed choices about food safety, rather than disregarding issues which they did not understand and focusing on food hygiene.

There appeared to be two separate strands of understanding on food safety. For some, 'food safety' seemed to refer to production process and ingredient related issues (e.g. additives, pesticides and GMOs). For others 'food hygiene' and safe preparation and cooking came to mind. Hygiene was considered straightforward and respondents were largely content with what they saw as the regulatory system keeping food businesses in check. On the other hand there were some concerns that 'food safety' was a great unknown; respondent understanding was much more limited and trust in the FSA to regulate it was therefore more important. The Agency may wish to consider how this divide between hygiene and broader safety issues can be bridged.

There was some awareness amongst respondents of initiatives run by some local authorities regarding information about the hygiene status of catering premises. This 'scores on the doors' scheme is being piloted in certain areas at the moment, but there is obviously potential for further roll out. Respondents lacked a specific understanding of the scheme and greater publicity would perhaps explain the scheme, further encouraging its use as a guide for consumers. Such 'point of sale' information would help drive forward standards across the food and drink industry and make a positive impact on the reputation of food businesses in Scotland.

4 Country of Origin Labelling (CoOL)

4.1 The importance of food labelling in general

Respondents felt that the range of information currently provided on food labels was sufficient to enable them to make informed decisions about their food choices. A wide range of information was identified, including: nutritional values; sell by, use by and best before dates; storage & cooking instructions and; “ethical” and production certifications. There was a perception that consumers could prioritise and use this range of information to help them better understand what they were buying and its nutritional value.

Labelling that supported quick but informed decision making was particularly valued by respondents. In real shopping situations respondents reported feeling time pressured and emphasised the importance of being able to make quick decisions. As mentioned previously, front-of-pack traffic light labels were highlighted as an example of supporting quick and informed choices. While happy with the range of information available, some specific problems were identified by respondents in the way in which product information was presented to consumers; section 4.1.1 examines these concerns in greater detail.

Respondents held the food industry responsible for ensuring that information on labels was provided in an accurate and clear manner. There were some respondents who felt a level of distrust towards industry and big business, leading to a sense that some food producers or retailers would mislead consumers if they could get away with it. As such it was also felt that there was a role for government in ensuring that the industry adhered to rules on marketing and the health claims attached to products.

“[The food industry] needs to give us a lot of information about what we’re actually buying and what we’re eating.” (Edinburgh, Female)

4.1.1 Which aspects of food labelling make food choices harder?

Respondents considered “sell by”, “use by” and “best before” date marking to be a particularly confusing area. Most respondents were happy to exercise their own judgement, those who trusted the dates as a firm guideline on safety would only eat food within these dates. Those respondents confident in their own judgement of whether or not a product was safe to eat questioned whether they were always accurate and felt that dates could be over-cautious and therefore encouraged waste.

As discussed in chapter two, specific health claims on packaging were often perceived to be misleading. Respondents gave examples of products prominently

claiming to be low in fat but failed to adequately point out the relatively high sugar or salt content.

The small size of text on packaging was sometimes criticised as unhelpful, as important information could get lost among the small print. This was particularly problematic for those with eyesight problems.

The position of information on packaging was also regarded as an important factor. It was perceived that information which could discourage consumers from purchasing a product could be hidden away on the back of packets, under folds or simply concealed among the multitude of other information.

4.1.2 Importance of information to different groups of consumers

Respondents recognised that different groups of consumers have diverse information needs in relation to food. While some were concerned only with price and taste, others had more specific dietary requirements, and as a result, labelling was more important to them. The groups identified included:

- Those consumers who were dieting
- Those with allergies/intolerances
- Those who had concerns about particular additives
- Those who were shopping for children

Group discussions tended to focus particularly on aspects relating to health and nutrition when discussing labelling. As previous discussions have shown, individuals often selected one or two nutrients as a proxy for the overall healthiness of products. A consumer could be concerned with levels of salt and overall calorie content, while another would concentrate on saturated fat, for example.

4.1.3 Supporting food choices

The wide range of information available on packaging was used in a multitude of different combinations to support decision making. Individuals prioritised the information to such varying degrees that it would be difficult to exclude any particular elements.

While awareness of the types of information available on food labels was relatively high, regular usage was quite limited. Label usage was often inconsistent and as consumers, respondents tended to shop for the same 'core' products every week. This familiarity meant they rarely checked labels except when making decisions on new or unfamiliar products. Clear and simple language and legibility were considered vital. Images and symbols were also valued, acting

as a recognisable visual shorthand, with images containing the guidelines for home freezing and denoting suitability for vegetarians cited as an example of clear recognisable labelling.

4.2 Country of origin labelling - Awareness

Awareness of country of origin labelling (CoOL) was high, although this varied between product types. For example, respondents had frequently noticed origin labels on meat products, fresh fruit and vegetables, but were less likely to remember seeing CoOL on products such as honey and olive oil. Commonly, respondents reported purchasing at least some Scottish produce, either through conscious effort or as a consequence of choices based on other factors such as price and convenience.

Respondents were also concerned about the authenticity of the products they bought, with certain products expected to have a particular origin. For example, respondents in Aberdeen discussed products linked with specific origins such as Champagne, Parma Ham and Parmesan cheese⁵. In a specifically Scottish context, respondents thought it was interesting that certain dishes, such as Arbroath Smokies, enjoyed greater protection, while haggis and shortbread did not. It was not obvious to respondents why a product such as a Scotch egg, a product which they did not necessarily assume would be produced in Scotland, remained a generic product loosely based on a traditional Scottish recipe, while other products established a more definite and protected identity or brand.

In the case of livestock, respondents linked certain breeds such as Aberdeen Angus automatically with Scotland. This caused some confusion, leading some respondents to the assumption that all beef served in an Aberdeen Angus Steakhouse must be of Scottish origin. Similarly, respondents perceived that particular brands implied that the product had a specific origin. For example, a specific olive oil spread was mentioned which due to its name and packaging could be perceived to be Italian, when in fact it was made elsewhere.

"I had [Brand Name] spread which is 'not produced in Italy'. But it didn't say where it was produced. It just said not produced in Italy." (Aberdeen, Female)

While recognition and awareness of CoOL was high among respondents, consumers made use of the labels infrequently. When trying to identify Scottish produce, respondents found CoOL a useful tool. Those who reported using CoOL

⁵ For example, while Parmesan is a protected term that strictly applies only to authentic Parmigiano-Reggiano, the name is commonly used to refer to any hard cheese made to the same recipe

to find Scottish produce explained that they did so because they felt these locally sourced foods would be the freshest available and were reassured by their perceived quality. However, those who expressed little interest in the relationship between origin and quality explained that they trusted the supermarkets to supply fresh and safe food regardless of where it was sourced and that price and value were their major concern.

4.3 Understanding of CoOL and defining 'origin'

While many had noticed CoOL on a range of foods, respondents had limited prior awareness of the legal requirement to display them on particular products. Prior to the workshops, there was also very low awareness among respondents regarding the rules surrounding use of CoOL.

The concept of last significant change caused considerable confusion as the definition was felt to be somewhat vague and potentially misleading. The FSA's guidance notes on country of origin labelling explain the rules as follows:

"There is no statutory definition of "place of origin or provenance" in the Food Labelling Regulations 1996 or of "origin or provenance" in Directive 2000/13/EC. But both in Codex and the World Trade Organisation Rules, the country of origin is deemed to be the place of last substantial change. This is consistent with section 36 of the Trade Descriptions Act 1968 where the approach is that for the purposes of the Act: 'goods shall be deemed to have been manufactured or produced in the country in which they last underwent a treatment or process resulting in a substantial change'." ⁶

Once the rules were explained by FSA observers this sparked lively debates over exactly where in the production cycle a product's origin should be defined. Additionally, there was some concern that the rules currently allowed food producers and retailers to manipulate consumers' perceptions of origin. For example, respondents were concerned at the thought of cheaply produced meat being imported from overseas and simply processed, packaged and then labelled as Scottish.

There was some concern that the rules surrounding the last significant change potentially undermined local food businesses as these generally had higher production costs than businesses producing the equivalent food overseas. These higher production costs were viewed as part of the justification for slightly higher prices. Respondents thought that this could be exploited by manufacturers and

⁶ <http://www.food.gov.uk/multimedia/pdfs/originlabellingguid0909.pdf>, accessed 20/10/09.

supermarkets who could import the raw materials before making a significant change to them in order to label it as Scottish produce. These 'marketing' practices, would make it impossible for Scottish farmers to compete on price, although both products would appear as Scottish to the consumer.

"The premium prices that we have to pay the British farmers for raising British pigs, and they require more space and different foods and more humane conditions and that's why the British pork is more expensive. But if you can get it cheap from Denmark and slice it and salt it here, or whatever, and still put a premium price on it, but that's misleading, totally."(Glasgow, Female)

Respondents felt that the emphasis for assigning origin should be on the early stages of the food production process; either where a food was born/germinated or raised/grown. Later stages such as processing and packaging were considered insufficient to determine country of origin and were potentially misleading for the consumer. However, there was added complexity for products that were regarded as a traditional Scottish food, such as shortbread, but that sourced at least some of their ingredients from outside Scotland.

"It [shortbread] would have to be made in Scotland by a Scottish recipe. I don't think I'd worry about where the butter, the sugar and flour came from." (Edinburgh, Female)

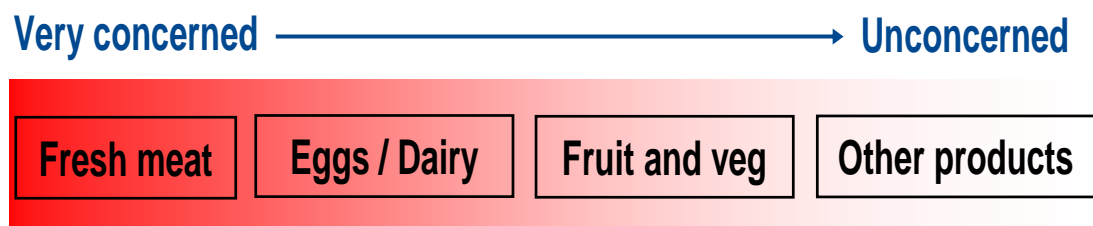
Therefore, respondents recognised that the issue of country of origin was not straightforward, particularly for products that contained more than one ingredient. As the verbatim quotes in table 3.1 below illustrate, respondents tended to frame origin by focusing on meat and fish either as stand alone products or as elements of multi-ingredient products.

Table 3.1 - Respondent's range of views on where origin should be fixed:

"It's got to have lived a life...part of its life..."
"It has to be killed in Britain."
"Born and bred and killed in the same place."
"Need to see what its birth certificate says."
"Farmers in Scotland buy their lambs maybe from Wales or something and take them home and rear them and it's still Scottish."
"It's like, if you're born in Scotland but move to America...you're still Scottish, do you know what I mean?"

The key factor leading to concern about a product’s country of origin was the perishability of the product and its perceived potential to spread food borne illness. In the case of animal products, concerns about animal welfare standards were also a central consideration. The relative importance of origin in relation to safety concerns shifted between different product types as illustrated in figure 3.2 below.

Fig 3.2 – Spectrum of importance for CoOL linked to food safety concerns



Most respondents were broadly supportive of CoOL being included on packaging, in the sense that more information was considered a positive step, supporting both consumer choice and decision making. However, CoOL wasn’t generally seen as essential; the importance of value for money and quality often took precedence over wider health, environmental or political considerations.

“The bottom line is, if you’ve bought it, eat it, you don’t like the taste of it, you won’t buy it again. If you like the taste you’re not going to be too fussed if it’s spent half its life south of the border.” (Aberdeen, Male)

4.3.1 Influence of CoOL on purchasing decisions

Respondents found it hard to describe the influence of CoOL on their purchases; while they were certainly interested in the details during group discussion – particularly debating the ‘last significant change’ rule - there were doubts over whether this interest would be maintained when actually shopping. In ‘real world’ scenarios at the supermarket, time pressures and value for money would continue to be the primary concern.

“There’s always going to be somebody who has to know where everything comes from, but the majority of people don’t really care.” (Aberdeen, Female)

The seasonality of Scottish fruit and vegetables meant limited periods of availability for these products each year. Respondents said they would happily buy apples from anywhere for the majority of the year but when Scottish apples became available they might actively seek these out, once they had noticed them on the shelves. Respondents felt that supermarkets were keen to promote Scottish produce and make it conspicuous. This was thought to help to stimulate demand for these products.

While cost was the dominant factor in most purchasing decisions, CoOL was seen as potentially useful for avoiding produce from a particular country. Reasons for this included concerns over specific health scares, more general impressions of lower safety or welfare standards, environmental concerns surrounding produce being transported long distances, or political/ethical worries either directly related to food or as a broader protest against that country. Respondents reported having boycotted produce from apartheid era South Africa for political reasons, for example. While reluctant to name specific countries they would avoid at present, respondents tended to distinguish between produce from within the EU and less obviously 'trustworthy' products from further afield. Indeed there was a perception that in certain cases, other EU states had higher welfare and production standards than the UK.

The issue of avoiding particular countries made some respondents uncomfortable. It was felt that sweeping statements about a nation's produce could potentially damage the reputation of an entire national food industry without sufficient grounds. The impact of health scares in particular were seen as potentially devastating to all producers of a product rather than being confined to the specific parties involved.

"To me that's a sort of racism of food products. [...] To me it's inappropriate that we should start saying I don't trust that country's food. If we don't trust their food we shouldn't be importing it; if we're importing it then we should all figure that it's safe to eat." (Glasgow, Female)

Respondents did tend to make a distinction between a positive sense of patriotism and support for Scottish produce, as opposed to a more negative set of attitudes directed at produce from other countries which was dismissed as unhelpful prejudice.

4.4 CoOL and Buying Scottish Produce

Country of origin labels were seen as a useful way for consumers to identify Scottish produce. Respondents suggested a wide range of factors that influenced their decisions to buy Scottish produce, including: environmental concerns, supporting the local economy, wanting the freshest available produce, concerns about animal welfare standards abroad and simply trusting food from familiar local sources.

When considering similar products with different origins respondents had a propensity towards choosing the Scottish product, although they tended to buy imported products if these were seen to be significantly cheaper. As a result, cost emerged as the dominant barrier to buying Scottish produce, although it was harder to gauge exactly what level of price difference would be a tipping point for

consumers, as disposable income and the influence of the factors above varied considerably both within and between the groups.

Whilst it is not possible to generalise beyond these small group discussions, within this piece of research there were qualitative differences in attitude between the three selected locations. There was a sense in Aberdeen that Scottish produce was the freshest and healthiest available as it had travelled less distance, CoOL was therefore mostly used to identify local Scottish produce. In Edinburgh by contrast, the emphasis was placed on identifying the highest quality produce, with less emphasis on Scottish origin. Individuals based purchasing decisions on their perceptions of which country produced the highest quality 'version' of a particular product and CoOL were then used to identify these products on the shelves. In Glasgow, the group placed greatest emphasis on price and value for money, origin was therefore not a front of mind concern when making purchasing decisions.

Meat, fish, fresh fruit and vegetables were the most commonly noticed and purchased Scottish produce. However, consumer motivation to buy these products was not solely driven by the desire to support the local economy. Instead, supporting local producers was regarded as a bonus related to purchasing the freshest and highest quality produce.

Scottish meat in particular was regarded as less likely to have been connected with UK health scares such as the bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE) crisis. It was also widely assumed that animal welfare standards in the UK and Scotland were higher than abroad. However, when questioned, respondents demonstrated that they had very little specific knowledge of the standards of food production both here in the UK and abroad.

"I prefer to buy Scottish meat because I feel - when we went back to all the mad cow stuff and everything else that it seemed that Scotland fared and awful lot better in terms of following procedures and the quality of the products." (Edinburgh, Female)

In terms of food safety, those who felt comfortable buying any product stocked by a major supermarket, had little interest in country of origin. This was based on the assumption that the stores themselves would ensure adequate standards were met, both in terms of food safety and animal welfare.

Respondents felt that fruit and vegetables grown in Scotland were superior in terms of freshness and more flavoursome than equivalent products that had been imported. Additionally, farmer's markets were perceived to be superior to supermarkets in this regard, with the perception that supermarkets sometimes

kept fresh produce in long term storage whereas produce from farmers' markets came straight from the farm to the market.

As well as a desire for fresh local produce, respondents who were conscious of their environmental impact were concerned about importing food from distant countries. Respondents agreed that consumers had grown accustomed to year round availability of a wide selection of products. As such, any attempt to revert to a more seasonal model based on what could be produced locally, would limit consumer choice and therefore undermine Scotland's image as a "land of food and drink" in its broadest sense.

4.4.1 Variations on Scottish Labelling

There are many different terms that could imply a product is Scottish; however consumer perceptions of these can be quite different. Commonly, respondents found it easier to think in terms of single food items rather than products containing multiple ingredients. Discussions highlighted how respondents differentiated between the following terms, each potentially indicating a different interpretation of what was "Scottish".

"Made in Scotland" - This term was felt to apply mainly to products with multiple ingredients. Respondents thought that consumers would not automatically assume that all the raw ingredients were Scottish, instead, while the ingredients may be imported from outside of Scotland, the finished product would be considered Scottish. For example, shortbread could be made in Scotland to a Scottish recipe but with ingredients from numerous international sources. Some felt that the phrase was interchangeable with *"Assembled in Scotland"*.



"Produce of Scotland" - This term was considered to indicate to consumers that the product had been grown or reared in Scotland. As such this was seen as the phrase that would most reliably indicate that a product was of Scottish origin. From respondents' point of view this term was likely to signify where the ingredients were grown or the animal born and raised. Therefore in order for a product to qualify as "Produce of Scotland" it would be

insufficient for it to only have been processed or packaged in Scotland. The picture shows a design from the Glasgow group aimed at the international export market.

“Scottish” - This was felt to be open to interpretation and could fall under either of the definitions given above; as such it was of limited usefulness for consumers seeking to guarantee that the product was made from locally sourced ingredients rather than to a Scottish recipe. However the term could be combined with other phrases, such as the location where it was sourced, in order to illustrate that it originated from Scotland. The picture shows a design from the Glasgow group aimed at the Scottish domestic market.

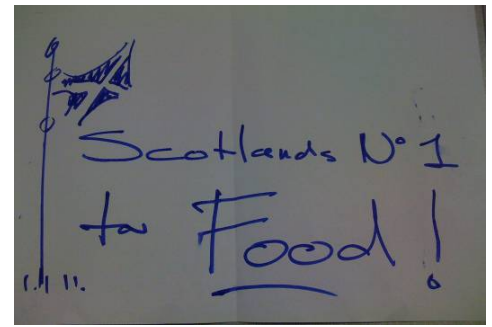


“Scotch” - Respondents felt that ‘Scotch’ wasn’t a particularly useful term for defining origin. The word wasn’t widely used by respondents who perceived it to be more widely used by visitors. It was pointed out that very few Scots would refer to Whisky as Scotch for instance. When more broadly applied to food products the term was attached to generic products such as Scotch eggs or Scotch broth and couldn’t be relied upon as an indicator of Scottish origin. Respondents also displayed a lack of awareness of the specific meaning of Scotch when applied to lamb or beef. Once a Scotch beef logo had been highlighted by an FSA observer, it was seen as a useful way to identify meat that had been born, reared and slaughtered in Scotland. Respondents had not previously seen the significance of the label or its linking of origin with a quality assurance standard. The picture shows a design from the Glasgow group aimed at the United Kingdom market.

Visual prompts were also perceived to be important in supporting the phrases used on labels. The picture shows a design from the Aberdeen group aimed at the Scottish domestic market. Images such as the Saltire or Tartan edging on packaging were seen as useful visual shortcuts, which could even bypass the need to look for CoOL. However, as indicated above, there are a range of perceptions associated with CoOL and the degree to which further visual prompts actually clarify the exact nature and origin of the product is debatable.



Overall, the marketing of products as Scottish for the domestic market was seen as valuable; respondents linked this to a sense of Scottish patriotism which encouraged them to choose these products over imported alternatives. The picture was designed by the Aberdeen group to make Scottish produce more visible to the domestic market.



"I think Scotland is a very patriotic country and I think that a food producer would be shooting themselves in the foot if they were based in Scotland but they didn't put a Scottish logo on if they were trying to... or an element of Scottish branding, if they were trying to sell within Scotland, because there is a big loyalty, as we've see in the group, towards Scottish produce which... the rest of the UK, I don't think, has that." (Edinburgh, Male)

4.5 CoOL - Further thoughts

Before taking part in the workshops respondents generally had an awareness of CoOL. However, understanding of what was meant by "origin" varied considerably between respondents and discussion of the rules around the *last significant change* only served to further complicate the issue in the minds of respondents. Commonly respondents believed that under these rules it was not always possible to expect that the country of origin given on the label would necessarily coincide with their own definition of the product's origin. Despite these issues, CoOL was considered useful for consumers who were looking to identify certain products – 'primary produce' such as meat – in particular.

Respondents thought that any return to a more seasonal model of food availability based around the Scottish climate and importing less food would be counterproductive. It was considered that this would restrict consumer choice and the accessibility of some healthy foods. While Scottish food was praised for its quality and taste, it was perceived as potentially more expensive than imported equivalents, although peoples perception as to what real 'value for money' actually was varied.

Buying Scottish produce was also linked to a sense of national pride and more specifically: The perceived freshness and superior taste of locally produced foods; the lesser environmental impact of locally sourced produce; a desire to support the Scottish food industry and the local economy; and reassurance of relatively high animal welfare standards and a strong Scottish food safety record.

4.5.1 Areas for Investigation

The FSA might want to consider whether it would be useful to agree standardised country of origin labelling, ensuring that is well understood and easily recognisable to consumers. It would be important for FSA to consider how best to ensure consumers had the relevant tools to negotiate the CoOL issues identified in this report, and for industry to ensure they are applied appropriately.

It might also be useful to explore options which would allow consumers to quickly identify healthy, 'high quality' Scottish produce.

Respondents felt that the rules defining origin as based on 'last significant change' were somewhat vague and potentially misleading for consumers. The Agency could further investigate ways to clarify consumer understanding of what is meant by 'origin' on food labelling. Respondents in the main felt that country of origin should be defined no later than where the main ingredient for the food product was grown or reared – however how this could apply to composite products would need to be considered.

5 Conclusions

There were a number of factors which effected consumers' food choices including cost, knowledge, convenience, health (including food safety issues) and country of origin. Although respondents perceived that Scottish consumers preferred to buy Scottish produce, they did so only when the cost and convenience was comparable to products from outside Scotland. Country of origin labelling (CoOL) was therefore useful in helping consumers to identify Scottish produce when shopping and assisting them in making choices about buying local produce, although peoples perception of what a range of origin labels signified was variable. On analysis, CoOL can often appear be used to market products rather than to assist consumers in making fully informed choices.

Respondents thought that there was a need to promote home-cooking and a more traditional diet that did not contain so many nutritionally poor processed foods. This diet should instead consist of locally sourced ingredients wherever possible, as buying fresh local produce was thought to both be healthier and more sustainable. However it may also be necessary to provide educational support to some consumers to ensure that they have the necessary cooking skills to support this change in their diet.

5.1 Making Healthy and Sustainable Choices

Respondents suggested that the negative stereotype of the unhealthy Scottish could be detrimental to the image of Scotland's food culture. Therefore it was important to promote healthy eating as a first step towards changing this. To achieve this it was necessary to address the three main barriers.

Understanding: Messages about healthy eating and food safety could sometimes be perceived to be confusing and contradict each other. Therefore respondents were less confident when making food choices. Respondents thought that promotion of home-cooking, which emphasises value for money and convenience, may be effective in encouraging consumers to prepare healthier meal rather than buying processed foods. Real clarity and standardisation on food labelling would also assist consumers. It was noted that 'traffic light' nutrition labelling on front of pack was clearly recognised and used.

Cost: Consumers have a tendency to perceive processed foods as offering greater value for money. However respondents thought that home-made foods, made in bulk, could be as cost effective. Again better clarity of labelling – on cost and weight for example – was recognised as a potential area which could be addressed to assist.

Accessibility: Supermarkets have a positive effect on access to healthy foods. However, supermarkets were perceived as more convenient and as providing greater choice than local independent suppliers and may therefore discourage consumers from purchasing foods from these outlets.

There was a need identified to promote the home cooking skills, budgeting and planning in order to encourage consumers to cook from fresher ingredients, whether sourced from local suppliers or supermarkets. Ease-of-access to unhealthy products within supermarkets was also identified, with respondents noting point-of-sale “temptations” which rarely encouraged healthier choices.

5.2 The Reputation of the Scottish Food Industry and Food Safety

Respondents felt it was important, for the reputation of the Scottish food industry that high standards of food safety were maintained. It was considered that controls in place to monitor hygiene standards were sufficient, but when pressed some believed the frequency of visits by local authorities to be far higher than is in fact the case.

While they largely felt able to make informed choices about healthy eating; respondents felt less well-informed about some aspects of food safety. On the whole respondents were more confident discussing food preparation and hygiene than wider safety issues, particularly those related to specific processes or ingredients arising before the point of purchase. Respondents felt that some issues may be too complex for consumers to interpret due to the ‘scientific’ nature of many of the food issues they had heard about in the media. There was a perceived need to clarify fact from fiction across both food safety and healthy eating arena.

Some respondents thought that foods which were perceived to be more ‘natural’, i.e. organic or fresh, rather than processed, were considered “safer”. As Scotland had a reputation for its exceptional environment, respondents thought that producing more ‘natural’ foods and building links between the environment and local food produce, would enhance the image of Scotland’s food culture.

5.3 Country of Origin Labelling

Consumers thought that country of origin labelling (CoOL) could be promoted as a way to help consumers to identify high quality Scottish produce through clear and easily recognisable iconography. However, respondents were concerned that a lack of understanding of ‘origin’ and the rules concerning the last significant change may mean that CoOL may not always reflect the consumer’s expectations of origin.

While all labelling needed to be geared to allowing consumers greater choice, rather than promoting any particular brand, there was recognisable support for

'home' produce. Respondents identified a variety of Scottish produce which was thought to be of very high quality and preferable to alternative imported products. In addition, there were several factors which motivated consumers to buy local Scottish produce. These included environmental concerns, supporting the local economy, wanting the freshest available produce, concerns about animal welfare standards abroad and trusting familiar local sources.

However cost, convenience and variable availability as a result of seasonality also had an effect on food purchasing decisions. Therefore, while buying Scottish might be preferable, consumers valued the choice currently offered, a range of home and imported produce, suited to a range of budgets.

Appendices

- 1 Recruitment and Methodology
- 2 Topic guides
- 3 Stimulus material

Appendix 1: Recruitment & Methodology

The recruitment was managed by our internal field team, recruiters used 'free find' methods for each of the areas involved in the study. The field managers were fully briefed on the project and provided with detailed recruitment instructions and a screening questionnaire in order for recruiters to assess respondents' eligibility to participate in the research.

All recruiters are members of the IQCS (Interviewers Quality Control Scheme). Recruiters used 'free find' techniques, members of the public were approached face to face and asked to undertake a screening questionnaire to assess eligibility and ensure that designated quotas were accurately filled.

In total 32 respondents took part in the research. Quotas were set for gender, age and social grade in order to ensure that the research covered.

Table 1. Recruitment quotas achieved for this research:

Area	Gender		Age						Social grade				Ethnicity
	Male	Female	18-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65+	AB	C1	C2	DE	Non-White
Edinburgh	4	6	1	2	2	3	2	0	2	6	1	1	Min 2
Aberdeen	4	6	0	2	3	2	1	2	1	4	2	3	Min 1
Glasgow	4	6	1	3	2	2	1	1	0	2	2	6	Min 3
TOTAL	12	18	2	7	7	7	4	3	3	12	5	10	N/A

Once recruited, the participants were sent a confirmation letter and received a reminder phone call in the week leading up to each of the two workshops. The field team also made recruitment checks prior to the workshops to ensure that the quotas set in the relevant recruitment profile had been filled. Participants received incentive payments of £35 at the first workshop and £45 at the second workshop.

Table 2. Workshop Timetable (All dates 2009)

Area	Workshop 1	Workshop 2
Edinburgh	27 th August	14 th September
Aberdeen	7 th September	17 th September
Glasgow	10 th September	21 st September

Group discussions were carried out by experienced qualitative researchers trained in the techniques of non-directive interviewing. Each group was digitally recorded and then professionally transcribed in preparation for analysis.

Material used in the analysis of qualitative methods is text based, consisting of verbatim transcriptions of interviews and discussions. Moreover, the internal content of the material is usually in detailed and micro-form (for example, accounts of experiences, inarticulate explanations, etc.). The primary aim of any analytical method is to provide a means of exploring coherence and structure within a cumbersome data set whilst retaining a hold on the original accounts and observations from which it is derived.

Qualitative analysis is essentially about detection and exploration of the data, making sense of the data by looking for themes and structure contained within it. TNS-BMRB uses a method called **Matrix Mapping** which works from verbatim transcripts and involves a systematic process of sifting, summarising and sorting the material according to key issues and themes. The process begins with a **familiarisation stage** and would include a researcher's review of the audio tapes and/or transcripts. Based on the coverage of the topic guide, the researchers' experiences of conducting the fieldwork and their preliminary review of the data, a **thematic framework is constructed**. The analysis then proceeds by **summarising and synthesising the data** according to this thematic framework using a range of techniques such as cognitive mapping and data matrices. When all the data have been sifted according to the core themes the analyst begins to **map the data and identify features within the data**: defining concepts, mapping the range and nature of phenomenon, creating typologies, finding associations, and providing explanations.

The mapping process is similar for both individual interviews and group discussions. The analyst reviews the summarised data; compares and contrasts the perceptions, accounts, or experiences; searches for patterns or connections within the data and seeks explanations internally within the data set. Piecing together the overall picture is not simply aggregating patterns, but it involves a process of weighing up the salience and dynamics of issues, and searching for

structures within the data that have explanatory power, rather than simply seeking a multiplicity of evidence.

Appendix 2: Topic Guides

Wave 1

FSA Scotland (45106881)

Topic Guide (Citizens' Forums - Scotland)

	Notes	Approx timing
1. Introduction and background		15 mins
<p>1.1 Scene-setting</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • About BMRB – independent research agency • Introduce research – ongoing dialogue with public on food, food standards and health; • Commissioned by Food Standards Agency • Confidentiality – their views will be used, but not identifiable • Recording group – recordings only available to the research team • Length of discussion approx. 2 hours <p>1.2 FSA Introduction</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Welcome and introduction to FSA / staff / observers <p>1.3 Group introductions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participants introduce themselves to the group. Ask participants to give their first name and their favourite food. 	<p>Welcome: Orientates interviewee, gets them prepared to take part in the interview</p> <p>Outlines the 'rules' of the group (including those we are required to tell them about under MRS and Data Protection Act guidelines)</p> <p>Introduction: provides contextual background information about the interviewee and helps respondent become more at ease with discussing issues with moderator and group.</p>	<p>5 mins</p> <p>5 mins</p>

	Discuss briefly	
2. Scottish food and diet		10 mins
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What types of food are thought of as Scottish? • What qualities do you associated with such food? <p>Probe:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Quality ○ Nature/natural products ○ Expense/ Value for Money ○ Choice/Range of Scottish produce <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do you actively seek out Scottish products? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What would you say a typical Scottish diet is like? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ What is good about the Scottish diet ○ What is bad about the Scottish diet 		
3. Thoughts on FSA Scotland’s Vision		30 Mins
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explain that FSA have a vision, this is the primary aim of all of FSA policies <p>FSA’s Vision: “Safe food and healthy eating for all”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explain that there are 3 parts to the policy “Safe Food”, “Healthy Eating” and making sure both are achieved “for all”. The group is going to discuss what each part of the vision means in practice <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What does healthy eating mean? [Stimulus 1] <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ PROBE ON: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Balanced diet 	<p>Stimulus 1, 2 and 3</p> <p>STIMULUS 1: Write respondents’ thoughts on “healthy eating”, key words and</p>	10 Mins

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Fat/calories/salt ▪ Freshness/quality ▪ Cooking from scratch. ▪ Public health <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What does safe food mean? [Stimulus 2] <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ PROBE ON: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Food Preparation i.e. Hygiene eating out and at home ▪ Food Production i.e. Chemical / microbiological / Radiological contaminants. ▪ Additives, pesticides, supplements, packaging, bacteria, sterilisation. ▪ Allergies and intolerances ▪ Are food hygiene and safety issues a concern for you – or do you assume that the food you are sold is ‘safe food’? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What does “for all” mean [Stimulus 3] <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ PROBE ON: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Affordability ▪ Accessibility (geographically accessible) ▪ Vulnerable groups: elderly; rural areas ▪ Local shopping/convenience stores <p>Explain Scottish Government’s food and drink policy has 7 aims (Read out).</p> <p>FSA want your views on how we can support these aims through the promotion of “safe food and healthy eating for all”</p> <p>[Have condensed these themes into the following – which we will look at in turn:</p> <p>1. Industry reputation and the choices we</p>	<p>associations on Healthy Eating spider diagram</p> <p>STIMULUS 2: Write respondents’ thoughts on “food safety”, key words and associations about safe food on spider diagram</p> <p>STIMULUS 3: Write respondents’ thoughts on “for all”, key words and associations about safe food on spider diagram</p> <p>Give out handout of 7 Policies:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Support the growth of the food and drink industry 2) Build on Scotland’s reputation as the Land of Food and drink 3) Ensure we make 	<p>10 mins</p> <p>10 mins</p>
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<p>make</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. Making healthy and sustainable choices. 3. Availability and understanding about the food we eat. 	<p>healthy and sustainable food choices</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4) Make the public sector an exemplar for sustainable food procurement 5) Ensure our food supplies are secure and resilient to change 6) Make food both available and affordable to all 7) Ensure that people understand more about the food they eat 	
<p>Break</p>	<p>Interviewer to display Stimulus 1, 2 and 3 on the wall</p>	<p>5 mins</p>
<p>and the choices we make</p>		<p>15 mins</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> o How relevant is the reputation of a business to you perception of how safe the food is? – and does it affect your food shopping or eating out patterns? PROBE: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Do you make choices based on whether a business has a good safety record? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ PROBE: is this based in fact or perception? o How would you know whether a place had a good hygiene record? • How does business’s reputation for providing or promoting healthy food affect your shopping, eating out patterns? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Does it encourage them to shop with this business? Why? What would put them off? • What role is there for the FSA in encouraging businesses to deliver safe food and healthy eating for all? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o PROBE: Should they encourage or regulate? How heavy handed do they need to be? • What role for consumers? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o What influence can consumers 	<p>Refer to Stimulus 2 if appropriate (Food Safety spider diagram)</p> <p>Refer to Stimulus 1 if appropriate (Healthy Eating spider diagram)</p> <p>Refer to Stimulus 3 if appropriate (For All spider diagram)</p>	

<p>have? How can they influence manufacturers to deliver safe food and healthy eating for all?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Do consumers want this. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ PROBE: Possible perceived effects on cost, choice etc. 		
5. Healthy and sustainable choices		15mins
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> o How can we make choosing healthy and sustainable food and drink easier? PROBE: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o How would you choose 'healthy' products? o What role Government in encouraging healthy and sustainable choices? o What role industry in encouraging healthy and sustainable choices? • What can the FSA do to encourage healthy and sustainable choices for all? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o PROBE: Labelling issues?, Websites?, Social marketing/advertising?, Education? • What can you do as consumers to encourage healthy and sustainable choices for all? 	<p>Refer to Stimulus 1 (Healthy Eating spider diagram)</p> <p>Refer to Stimulus 3 (For All spider diagram)</p>	
6. Understand the food you eat and effective information		15 mins
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • REFER TO DISCUSSION IN SECTION 5 - How can the FSA help Ensure that people understand more about the food they eat and providing effective information on food Start the discussion as wide as possible PROBE ON: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Education. ▪ Information provision and advice (outside formal education). ▪ Acceptability of Choice Editing? ▪ Social Marketing The focus it down onto the specific areas: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Healthy eating: how can we help ensure access to effective 	<p>Refer to Stimulus 1</p>	

<p>information on healthy eating?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Safe food: how can we help ensure access to effective information to safe food? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ PROBE: do people care about the safety record of food businesses? Where would you find out information? Have you ever acted on such information? ▪ For all: How can we ensure that everyone has access to such information? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ What are the best methods to deliver information? For you, for others? ○ PROBE: on accessibility and cost 	<p>(Healthy Eating spider diagram)</p> <p>Refer to Stimulus 2 (Food Safety spider diagram)</p> <p>Refer to Stimulus 3 (For All spider diagram)</p>	
<p>7. Exercise</p>		<p>15 Mins</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Split group into 3 – or keep as one group depending on dynamic? • Explain Exercise to Group • Group 1 given sheets with points 1 and 2 • Group 2 given sheets with points 3, 4 and 5 • Group 3 given sheets with points 6 and 7 • Ask groups to suggest a policy which addresses the statement, • Ask group to present and discuss their policies. 	<p>Policy Sheets:</p> <p>Each policy sheet begins with the statement</p> <p>How can FSA Scotland promote safe food and healthy eating for all and...</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Support the growth of the food and drink industry 2) Build on Scotland's reputation as the Land of Food and drink 3) Ensure we make healthy and sustainable food choices 4) Make the public sector an exemplar for sustainable food procurement 5) Ensure our food supplies are secure and resilient to change 6) Make food both available and affordable to all 7) Ensure that people understand more about the food they eat 	

8. Interim exercise		
<p>Ask respondents to think about what Scottish foods are available to them. This might be in a supermarket, butchers, take-away, café etc.</p> <p>Think about how these products work against or support the issues we've talked about today.</p> <p>If you can please bring back examples of labels etc. (pictures) which we can talk about next time.</p>		

THANK AND CLOSE

[Evaluation handouts and incentives]

Wave 2

FSA Scotland (45106881)

Topic Guide (Citizens' Forums - Scotland)

	Notes	Approx timing
2. Introduction and background		5 mins
<p>1.1 Scene-setting</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • About BMRB – independent research agency • Remind participants of the aims of the research – ongoing dialogue with public on food, food standards and health; • CoOL workshop – to understand consumers' decisions in relation to the origin of their food and the importance of Scottish produce. • Commissioned by Food Standards Agency • One of three groups being run around Scotland • Confidentiality – their views will be used, but not identifiable • Recording groups – recordings only available to the research team • Length of discussion approx. 2 hours <p>1.2 FSA Introduction</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Welcome and (re-)introduction to FSA / staff / observers 	<p>Welcome: Orientates interviewee, gets them prepared to take part in the interview</p> <p>Outlines the 'rules' of the group (including those we are required to tell them about under MRS and Data Protection Act guidelines)</p> <p>Introduction: provides contextual background information about the interviewee and helps respondent become more at ease with discussing issues with moderator and group.</p>	

<p>1.3 Group introductions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participants re-introduce themselves to the group. Ask participants to give their first name and their favourite foreign food. 	<p>Discuss briefly</p>	
<p>2. Discussion of the pre-task</p>		<p>10 mins</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> PRE-TASK EXERCISE: Ask participants to show any examples of food packaging etc. they brought in which they feel work against or support the issues we talked about in the previous session, or discuss any thoughts they had about food between the two workshops in these terms <ul style="list-style-type: none"> PROBE: Why does that work against or support issues we talked about previously. PROBE: How easy is it to understand and take decisions on how healthy or safe you think the food product is? Why is it easy / difficult to understand? Assess the impact of this exercise on their purchasing patterns, any plans to change these patterns; why, how 	<p>INTERVIEWER NOTE: Discussion centred on the FSA vision of 'Safe food and healthy eating for all' so please ensure that the discussion deals with at least one of these three elements.</p>	
<p>Planning</p>		<p>50 mins</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explore the importance of labels on food products <ul style="list-style-type: none"> PROBE: Do they look for labels on food while they are shopping? PROBE: How important is the 		<p>10 mins</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has CoOL labelling ever influenced your decision on whether to buy or not buy a particular product? • What does it convey to participants / other consumers? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ PROBE ON: Quality, food safety • So, what level of detail do you expect CoO information to show? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ PROBE ON: ○ Where the food was produced / born ○ Where the food was grown / reared ○ Where the food was harvested / slaughtered ○ Where the food was packaged ○ Where the ingredients come from / where the main ingredient comes from ○ Is this the same for all types of food? 		10 mins
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • And what about 'Scottish' labelled products specifically? If a product says that it is 'Made in Scotland' what does this mean to you? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ What about 'Produce of Scotland' ○ What about 'Scottish' ○ What about 'Scotch'? ○ What about if the product is displaying a Scottish flag or other picture associated with Scotland such as an emblem or 		10 mins

<p>poultry, wine, honey, olive oil, fruit, vegetables</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Are these the products that you want to know CoO for before buying? (Which ones are they worried / not worried about?) • Thinking about the products that participants have mentioned, what is it about these products that make you feel that consumers benefit from information about the CoO? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ PROBE ON: Health and safety, environment, food security sustainability, economic issues. ○ Why do you think you feel this way about these products ○ Is there a need for CoOL information regardless of what country the food product comes from? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ PROBE ON: EU, Western countries (e.g. Australia, USA), other countries ○ Should consumers always be able to find out which country their food comes from? Why / why not? 	<p>issues so try not to cover in too much depth here.</p>	
<p>Break</p>		<p>10 mins</p>
<p>5. Food safety and CoO</p>		<p>10 mins</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are participants concerned about health and safety issues depending on the origin of the food product? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ For which products? 	<p>INTERVIEWER NOTE: Please ensure that you reference earlier discussion as this topic will have probably already come up. Ensure that you tailor depending</p>	

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ For which countries / areas ○ Why do they feel this way? • Would a CoOL ever influence your decision to purchase a food product based on health and safety concerns alone? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ PROBE ON: Whether CoOL really provides enough information to make a decision in this regard. Why do they say this? 	<p>on these earlier discussions.</p> <p>INTERVIEWER NOTE: You will need to reference the previous discussion on labelling for this question.</p>	
<p>5. Buying Scottish</p>		<p>15 mins</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What do participant think about buying locally / Scottish sourced produce? • Which products would they ideally like to source from local / Scottish sources? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Why do they feel this way about these products? ○ What makes them special / different from other products? ○ What does 'local' convey? e.g. within 30 miles? • What factors would encourage you to buy more Scottish produce? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ PROBE ON: Patriotism, ethical production, environment, food security, airmiles. • What are the barriers to buying more Scottish produce? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ PROBE ON: Seasonality, not available in mainstream shops, 	<p>INTERVIEWER NOTE: Are there differences between which products they want to source locally and which they want to source from Scotland.</p>	<p>10 mins</p>

<p style="text-align: center;">low quality, cost</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SUGGESTED TEXT: In an ideal world we would all like the best a cheapest foods to be produced on our doorstep – as we all know this is not the case. Climate and labour costs mean that many products can not be produced here or can be produced more cheaply elsewhere. • To what extent do participants feel that sourcing foods from overseas in order to keep prices lower can be justified? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ PROBE ON: The benefits of cheap and healthy foods on our diet, environment / sustainability, economy, food security, working conditions overseas. 		5 mins
5. Exercise – design a COOL		15 mins
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Split participants into 3 groups and get them to design their ideal CoOL using the A3 paper and pens provided. • Group 1 to design CoOL for products for the Scottish market • Group 2 to design CoOL for products for the UK market • Group 3 to design CoOL for products for the international market • Get participants to think about: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Position / prominence ○ Colour ○ Text (If any) ○ Imagery ○ It's relationship to other 	<p>Moderator to provide A3 paper and pens.</p> <p>INTERVIEWER NOTE: International market includes EU but not England, Wales and NI, this is covered by UK group</p>	10 mins

<p style="text-align: center;">information on the packaging</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bring the group back together and get each group to talk about their design in turn. 		5 mins
6. Any other issues		5 mins
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What would you like to see on labels in order to make a more informed choice when buying food? • Would you like to have more information about CoO when you eat out in restaurants, take aways, pubs etc? • Do you think what you have learned during the two sessions will change the way you shop? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Why / why not? • What three top line messages would they want to give to government / FSA? • What areas do they think are most important in relation to CoOL? • Anything else participants would like to raise or discuss 		

THANK AND CLOSE

[Evaluation handouts and incentives]

Appendix 3: Stimulus Materials

The seven aims document was used as a stimulus in order to aid discussion about how the FSA could help support Scotland as a land of food and drink.

The Scottish government's 7 aims for food & drink policy

- 1) Support the growth of the food and drink industry
- 2) Build on Scotland's reputation as the Land of Food and drink
- 3) Ensure we make healthy and sustainable food choices
- 4) Make the public sector an exemplar for sustainable food procurement
- 5) Ensure our food supplies are secure and resilient to change
- 6) Make food both available and affordable to all
- 7) Ensure that people understand more about the food they eat

Policy sheet 3

Policy Sheet

How can FSA Scotland promote safe food and healthy eating for all and...

1) Make food both available and affordable to all

2) Ensure that people understand more about the food they eat