



**The One Planet Food Leadership Development Summer School, Falkland Estate,
Fife, 21-23 July 2010**

Andrew Guest

Foreword

This report was compiled by Andrew Guest, a participant observer at the One Planet Food summer school. We asked Andrew to respond to the issues raised on an off stage during the three day event.

The report which follows is therefore his perspective and makes no claim to be comprehensive. Every participant will have come away from the event with different impressions and different ways of making use of the talks and discussions. However, Andrew has managed to weave together into a few pages the key strands from hours of conversations and we hope that it will serve both as an aide-memoire for those of us who were there and as a useful starting-point for future efforts to develop a food system which serves people and planet better.

Pete Ritchie and Teresa Martinez
One Planet Food
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'What can we do to create a localised food system that is fair and sustainable and interacts with the global food system whilst being focused on the idea of nourishment rather than nutrition?'

There's something not right about our food. Most of what we eat¹ comes from intensively farmed land or factory-scale food production, both highly dependent on fossil fuel, and in the one case damaging bio-diversity and in the other, animal welfare. This food is flown, shipped or trucked long distances, again at great cost in energy for chilling, packaging and transport²; over 70% of it is sold in five supermarket chains³, whose collective power drives down the income of growers and results in the closure of independent shops that we could have reached on foot rather than by car⁴. This large-scale, globally sourcing, supermarket system also promotes the increased sale of processed foods, which are damaging our diet⁵, and contributing to an increasing percentage of the population in Scotland now being classified as overweight or obese⁶. Meanwhile 1 in 6 people in the world go hungry⁷.

Food is a basic human need, but our food system has created so many distances between us and our food. We don't see it growing, we don't know how most of it is made, we have to travel further to get it; what we pay for it does not take into account the cost of pollution and resource depletion caused by its production⁸, we eat far more than we need, and we throw a lot of it away⁹.

When you stand back and look at it, the system looks truly daft. But changing it is not simple. Although eating is ultimately a personal act, food is also political and global, and it is also big business. But some change is stirring: in July this year 25 people attended the One Planet Food Summer School at the Falkland Estate in Fife.

'Nourish', 'Scotland's sustainable food network', brought into being by One Planet Food and other organisations earlier this year, now has over 200 members. How can the complexity of the food system be un-picked so that these stirrings of change gain enough strength and momentum to re-make some of these disconnections and develop new, more sustainable, alternatives to the current food landscape in Scotland?

Food – culture, not consumption

One key point made at the Summer School is simple - that food, currently regarded by government, farmers and most of the food industry as merely consumption, should be considered more as culture. Despite the efficiencies of mass production and distribution and the quantity of produce able to be bought, individual food choices are in fact limited. It is difficult to buy anything NOT produced by this system, for instance food produced locally, food produced sustainably, food produced organically, food that comes directly from growers, food that is not processed. The increasing number of local initiatives in Scotland such as food buying groups, food growing groups, food networks and local food markets, are beginning to provide more choice, but they represent a tiny percentage of food sales¹⁰ and are often still dependent on government support¹¹. New models are needed that can tackle the issues of growing and distributing at larger scales. Finally, some 'glue' is needed to hold all these various initiatives together so that the movement can broaden public engagement and build support for the more substantial changes that are needed at political, social and cultural levels.

What's causing the problem?

1 Bigness. Farms, food factories (such as hen farms, pig farms, fish farms, dairy farms) food-sellers (the supermarkets), food distribution networks are all too big; their scale removes them from us as individuals, while at the same time giving them enormous influence over our choices¹². They constitute powerful lobbies, and have a strong voice in government.

2 Technocracy. These big industries and intensified production facilities are heavily dependent on technological solutions (for instance fertilisers, pesticides, animal drugs, bio-technology, machinery and a whole range of technological processes); this dependence develops its own self-perpetuating culture which becomes resistant to alternatives, for example organic production, or management systems that use less energy and are less dependent on technological solutions. The system is also hugely dependent on oil and cheap sources of energy¹³.

3 Education and government. Governments are more readily influenced by 'industry' and the 'big' lobbies, and research funding becomes directed towards more 'near-

market' technological products; colleges and universities, whether agricultural or veterinary, also conform to the dominant technocratic culture and promote technocratic management systems and solutions. Only able to look to the short term and afraid to 'rock the vote', governments are good at talking the sustainability talk but not too good at walking the necessary long-term walk.

4 Farmers. There are increasingly fewer of them, they are getting older and are all dependent on EU subsidies (another aspect of 'bigness' but not without hope of change – see below). Most farmers are acknowledged as being naturally conservative, resistant to change and not very good at creating new business models. In Scotland farms tend to be either very big, or very small, with a shortage of the more adaptable middle-sized farms¹⁴.

What are the factors supporting change?

Despite the major obstacles to change in our food system, there are significant dynamics in our current political, social and economic climate which could support change in our food culture.

1 Climate change. The big system and its technocratic dependency is hugely carbon-intensive; greenhouse gas reduction is a major governmental policy aim, the public are becoming increasingly aware of its importance, and pressure is already being put on the food industry to reduce both emissions and waste¹⁵. Studies show that organic farming 'locks away' 21-28% more carbon than non-organic¹⁶. The growing interest in more local solutions, whether to energy generation or food production, and the support for such projects in Scotland by the Climate Challenge Fund¹⁷, supports a move to alternatives to big systems.

2 Health. Scotland has poor health by UK and European standards; the country lags behind comparable countries such as Sweden and Denmark and also suffers in comparison to other parts of the UK including industrial regions like the North East of England¹⁸. 'In Scotland, eating habits are the second major cause, after smoking, of poor health. The national diet contributes to a range of serious illnesses which include coronary heart disease, certain cancers, strokes, osteoporosis and diabetes'¹⁹. Poor diet is linked to consumption of too much (carbon-intensive) processed foods, too much (carbon-intensive) meat and too much fat, in itself one result of increasingly intensive food production systems²⁰.

3 Food sovereignty/resilience. In a world increasingly vulnerable to political, economic and climatic changes, the consideration of 'food security' or 'food sovereignty' is now a standard part of public policy²¹. Greater food sovereignty can only be achieved by increasing local production and supply of food and adopting production systems that are less dependent on non-renewable fuels and the import of foods from other countries.

4 People are changing. In the year 2006-7 sales of 'ethical' food increased by 17%. In the period 2006-2009, the number of consumers saying that they were buying locally produced food increased from 15% to 27%. In 2007 30% of consumers said that they already grew, or were intending to grow, their own vegetables²².

5 EU policies. Farmers would not still be farming without the single farm payment and other subsidies coming from the EU and from national governments: these already pay farmers for engaging in other activities such as preserving landscape amenity and increasing biodiversity²³. These subsidies are coming up for review in 2013, and with EU policies currently more progressive than national policies in the UK, subsidies could be directed to help create other outcomes such as reducing the carbon-intensity of farming, organic food production and re-creating connections between farmers and eaters²⁴.

How can we build on this to help bring about change?

To its credit some of the above issues and drivers are identified in the Scottish Government's new Food and Drink Policy²⁵, but the policy's targets are vague, the government's ear is weighted towards big industry and progress towards implementation is glacial. But in any case we can't wait for Government to fix the system, partly because Government is itself part of the bigness problem, but also because new solutions are more likely to come from creative individuals than government officials. As with other aspects of culture in the 21st century, the old ways of big, top down, expert-driven, corporate-led commodity-focused technocratic solutions need to be rolled back before a new landscape can be created. One Planet Food and the projects represented by the members of Nourish illustrate what is already happening already, but what might be the planks of a strategy for the next phase?

If bigness and disconnections are key parts of the problem, then more smallness and more connections will be the key part of the solution.

1. More connections between individuals and growing food – through more people growing their own food in allotments, backgreen plots²⁶, short-term tenancies of vacant land²⁷, mobile growing pods²⁸, community orchards²⁹.
2. More connections between food eaters and food growers, or would be food growers - at individual level, group level and 'bulk' level. Through Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) schemes, food co-operatives³⁰, buying networks, and more information about local and regional food. More projects like the Fife Diet³¹ which link eaters to local growers and promote food and eating as culture.
3. More local shops selling more local produce. This is easier said than done as many food groups can show³². Farmers' markets are only scratching the surface³³, and more stalls at Farmers' Markets are selling crafts and candles; if more restaurants are sourcing local produce³⁴, why not more shops? Warning – you may have to pay more. But eat less.
4. Start with public procurement. Just as the government has a say in the criteria for farm subsidies, so they have influence over the public procurement of food for schools, hospitals, government bodies³⁵. In terms of a public sector lead in changing individual behaviour and cultural expectations, what would be the equivalent of the ban on smoking in public places or the compulsory wearing of seatbelts in cars?
5. More connections to the other driver areas. Sustainable food interests must work with public health interests, climate change interests, community development interests, even with the NFU to campaign for supermarkets to trade fairly with farmers (including Scottish ones).

6. More smallness. Too much bigness, be it supermarkets, government, cars, has weakened social capital and community glue at a local level. In addition to setting up new groups such as Transition Town groups, existing social institutions like churches, women's groups, mothers' groups, gardening groups and local schools should be connected together and built upon to mobilise support and engagement, and build the social capital without which local initiatives cannot survive. The Fairtrade movement took its first steps amongst the churches and the Women's Institute and sales of Fairtrade certified products have grown from £33m in 2000 to £799m in 2009³⁶.
7. There are philanthropic and forward-looking landowners and creative and entrepreneurial farmers (like the Falkland Estate, David and Wilma Finlay at Rainton Farm, Pete Ritchie and Heather Anderson at Whitmuir Organics and Bruce Bennett at Pillars of Hercules, all of whom featured in the Summer School); but with few farmers likely to match the levels of personal determination shown by these examples, new ways need to be found to spread their enthusiasm and experience and increase their number.
8. Research funding. While many of the new food initiatives in Scotland might not have been realised without the support of the Scottish Government's Climate Challenge Fund³⁷, more substantial funding could be allocated from Research grants to support the development of more sustainable growing and distribution schemes, of different management practices and more eco-centric solutions.

What else needs to happen?

The purpose of the Summer School was to agree on the main challenges in changing the food system in Scotland and to start building the necessary influence and capacity to make those changes.

The greatest effect that any individual can have is on what is closest to them. People working in North Queensferry will have most effect in North Queensferry, people working in Portobello, in Portobello. A new food system in Scotland will consist of many localist initiatives, but the greatest danger in such initiatives is that it is hard for them also to communicate collectively on a regional or national level, even though it is the agendas at these levels that are setting the terms of their own existence. 'Nourish' is perhaps beginning to connect the local initiatives in Scotland together, although it is not yet sufficiently pro-active; the Fife Diet and Forth Valley Food Links³⁸ provide examples of bodies working at a regional level; One Planet Food itself could work at the national and international level, working in partnership with other national institutions. All of these bodies will need to speak a language of local food which communicates directly to those who speak the language of price or convenience; they will need to unpick the complex web of sustainability to draw in those more focused on the here and now or the nearer orbit of their own lives and own behaviour. Clear arguments should be made for how the concern for high quality local food in a society of plenty goes hand in hand with a concern for high quality food in a society of scarcity in other parts of the world. Activities and initiatives at each level must be clearly focused and choose its targets realistically. Additional sources of funding to short-term government grants must be found – ultimately local food will need to become a profitable market to be in.

Establishing a critical cultural mass for new ideas in small countries which are neighbours and cultural bedfellows to bigger countries can be difficult, but that only reinforces the need to communicate and connect globally. One Planet Food should work as closely as possible with bodies who share its aims who have a presence in Scotland, such as the Soil Association and World Wide Fund for Nature and others who don't such as Making Local Food Work and Sustain, the New Economics Foundation, La Via Campesina, and the Family Farm Defenders in the USA. If they can speak and work together, these individuals, groups and organisations will start to make a new 'noise' to counter the 'surround sound' of techno-speak, eco-desperation, political defeatism and industry dominance that drowns out calls for change and inhibits alternative practice, and gradually start to build a more sustainable food system in Scotland.

Andrew Guest

Andrew Guest writes on culture, architecture and the environment.

¹ 'We' in this context should be taken to mean 'people in Scotland'

² See 'Food Futures' Soil Association, 2009. 'The average increase in 'food miles' in the last 30 years is 25%'

³ The DEFRA Food Statistics Pocketbooks 2009 gives the breakdown of food sales in the UK. Sales in Tesco, Asda, Sainsbury's and Morrisons accounted for 76% of all food sales in the year measured.

⁴ See 'Food Futures' Soil Association, 2009. 'During the 1990's, 1000 independent grocers, butchers and bakers closed every year.'

⁵ For the effect of processed foods on our diet see Felicity Lawrence 'Eat Your Heart Out'.

⁶ 'Recipe for Success', Scotland's National Food and Drink Policy, June 2009 spells out the rising levels of obesity on page 11 and the connection between poor diet and poor health.

⁷ The World Food Programme says 'There are 1.02 billion undernourished people in the world today'. <http://www.wfp.org/hunger>

⁸ For more information on the real cost of food see Felicity Lawrence 'Eat Your Heart Out'.

⁹ According to the Government's Love Food Hate Waste campaign we throw away 8.3 million tonnes of food each year. This represents 25% of the food that is bought. See <http://www.lovefoodhatewaste.com>

¹⁰ Research conducted by One Planet Food in Fife concluded that 79.5% of food spend was through the major supermarket chains. By contrast the local food market supplied 0.53% of food sales. 'Challenges of the Food System', seminar held with St Andrews University and Fife Council, 28 April 2010. See www.centreforstewardship.org.uk/oneplanetfood.

¹¹ In the year to June 2009 £700,000 was given to 'grow your own and community food projects' by the Scottish Government's Climate Challenge Fund. See p. 28 of 'Recipe for Success'.

¹² In 2006, the largest 111 food and drink retailing businesses accounted for 80% of all GVA in the food and drink retail sector, but represented only 0.2% of all firms in this sector. DEFRA Food Statistics Pocketbook 2009.

¹³ Felicity Lawrence 'Eat Your Heart Out' is a good source of information on the energy-intensiveness of the multi-national food producers and processors.

¹⁴ Information from Pete Ritchie at the One Planet Food Summer School.

¹⁵ Reducing the food system's greenhouse gas emissions and other waste is one of the main planks of the DEFRA Food 2030 Strategy.

¹⁶ Soil carbon and organic farming, 2009, Soil Association

¹⁷ See <http://www.infoscotland.com/gogreener/303.187.189.html> for information about projects which have received funding from the Climate Challenge Fund

¹⁸ See 'Improving Health in Scotland - THE CHALLENGE', The Scottish Government 2003

¹⁹ Scottish Health Survey. Quoted at <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Health/health/19133>

²⁰ Meat – 23% of the average UK household food bill is spent on meat (DEFRA Food Statistics Pocketbook 2009). Fat – Felicity Lawrence gives figures for the increased fat content of intensively farmed meat. A chicken in 1970 had 8.6g fat per 100g. In 2005 the average fat per chicken is 23g per 100g. 'Eat Your Heart Out'.

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- ²¹ 'Recipe for Success', Scotland's National Food and Drink Policy (June 2009) has 5 whole pages on 'Secure and resilient food systems.' 'Resilience' is also a key part of DEFRA's Food 2030 Strategy.
- ²² All three statistics from the DEFRA Food Statistics Pocketbook 2009
- ²³ In 'Eat Your Heart Out' 2008, Felicity Lawrence spells out how large international companies benefit most from farm subsidies, and how subsidies also encourage more intensive farming.
- ²⁴ See the European Food declaration, a manifesto for changes to the Common Agriculture and Food policy by a group of organisations concerned with the future of food and agriculture in Europe www.europeanfooddeclaration.org
- ²⁵ 'Recipe for Success', the Scottish Government June 2009.
- ²⁶ In one site in Edinburgh the Edinburgh Community Backgreens Association has developed 40 plots for local people to start growing their own vegetables. See www.ecba.org.uk
- ²⁷ See Guardian article 28 July 2010 by Bibi van der Zee on short term leases for land, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/society/2010/jul/27/grow-your-own-legal-perils>
- ²⁸ For instance Middlesbrough's Urban Farming project – see www.cabe.org.uk/case-studies/middlesbrough-growing and <http://localfoods.wordpress.com/2008/03/27/middlesbroughs-urban-farming-project/>
- ²⁹ See 'Abundance Edinburgh' a project started by Transition Edinburgh South, <http://www.abundanceedinburgh.com/>
- ³⁰ For information about food co-operatives see the Guardian article 10 December 2008 by Tom Moggach at www.guardian.co.uk/lifeandstyle/2008/dec/10/ethicalfood-foodanddrink. For more on mutuals and how to set them up go to www.uk.coop/
- ³¹ www.fifediet.co.uk
- ³² In a talk to the Food Group of the Edinburgh Old Town Development Trust on 22 March 2010 Gavin Corbett of the Shandon Food Group spelled out the difficulties of getting local food shops to stock more local food.
- ³³ At the One Planet Food Summer School the figure was given that the average daily turnover per stall at a Farmers Market is £90.
- ³⁴ To name a few – The Duke of Cambridge www.dukeorganic.co.uk, Konstam www.konstam.co.uk, The Canton Arms www.cantonarms.com, Spoon www.spooncafe.co.uk
- ³⁵ Public procurement may be one of the strongest aspects of 'Recipe for Success', Scotland's National Food and Drink policy which devotes 5 pages to 'Sustainable public Procurement in the food sector'. The Soil Association's Food for Life programme works with food producers and a wide range of caterers including schools, universities and sporting organisations to develop sustainable menus, and enable food suppliers to access new markets. See www.soilassociation.org
- ³⁶ Source – The Fairtrade Foundation.
- ³⁷ See notes 11 and 18 above.
- ³⁸ www.fvfl.org.uk

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