

Food Values: Policy Evaluation

How does current Welsh Government food policy engage with and reflect values?

The Food Values project presents a new lens through which decision makers can assess food behaviours, business links and education programmes. It emphasises the importance of values, emotion and identity in food behaviours, acknowledging the complexity of our relationships with food.

Analysing policy alongside educational events was important for our overall evaluation because policy informs the wider context in which our participants operated. Educating people to behave more sustainably without considering the links between individuals and societal frameworks is setting them up to fail. There is a feedback loop between citizens' values and policy. Attending to the role and influence of government policy – as a critical component of this broader landscape – is therefore key to enabling social change.

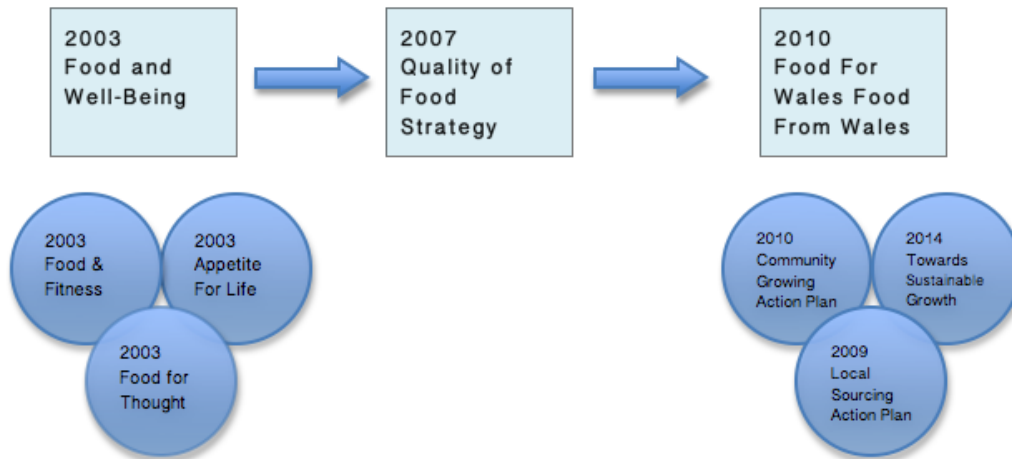
In Wales, food policy is made by a number of departments who have different objectives, such as health, farming and poverty reduction. Whilst this reflects the diverse and multi-faceted nature of food issues, the result has been that policy is often contradictory and sometimes difficult to define. Whilst some policy documents show ambitious strategies to cement equality, justice and sustainability into the food system, there have been challenges turning these into tangible action plans. Responding to this, the values approach can provide a new way of looking at policy and finding a way to make Wales a sustainable country.

In the following analysis we present the dominant narratives evident in Welsh food policy and the values these framings connect with. Following the rationale that values help us connect issues, which may otherwise be tackled in isolation (as outlined our values framework), we also consider the areas of connection and disconnection between policy narratives, government departments, and across the food sector. Lastly, we consider the extent to which policy feedback may be occurring in this arena, i.e. how policy may be shaping or shaped by national debate and the extent to which the values evident in government policy are those that resonate with the Welsh public.

Our analysis shows that food is often connected with values of Benevolence and Universalism at a community and policy level. These are important values to reinforce in order to tackle the diverse challenges of sustainability, and we therefore emphasise ways in which such framings can be supported. We also argue that food offers an avenue to ground the sustainability agenda in Wales, addressing the need for real-life examples and actions to influence behaviour changes, build cohesive communities and engage diverse voices around a common cause.

Positioning Welsh Food Policy

We address a range of policy documents which are connected with food. These include:



The ***Food and Well-Being Policy*** in 2003 demonstrated a commitment to joined-up social, health and food policy, positioning food as a key nationwide concern. This linked with nutrition and education strategies including *Food and Fitness*, and the *Appetite for Life* public procurement and school catering project. The Wales True Taste brand was also developed out of this framework to highlight the cultural qualities of Welsh food. The policy presented a framework to privilege the socio-ecological value of food and much of the rationale for subsequent funding of community growing, social engagement and nutrition improvements stems from this.

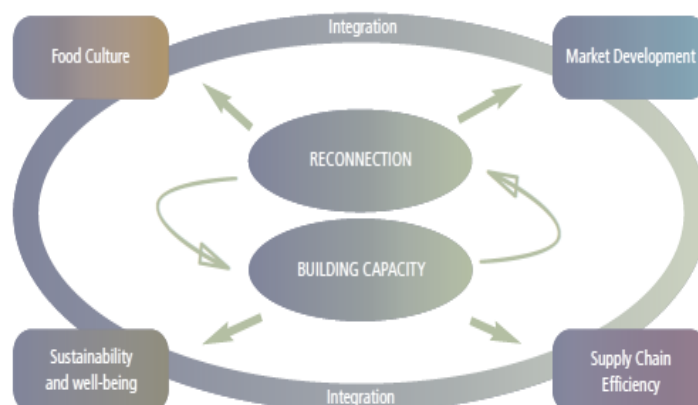
The ***Quality of Food Strategy*** in 2007 strengthened the food and well-being approach and sought to achieve three benchmarks of food quality: Well-Being, Justice and Accountability. These benchmarks were to be achieved through six key action points:

1. Food studies to be part of the National Curriculum;
2. Improving nutritional standards of school and hospital meals;
3. Healthy eating schemes aimed at deprived areas;
4. Reducing levels of pesticides and toxins in food;
5. Further encouraging production and consumption of organic food;
6. Increasing local procurement and working to reduce food miles.

Both ambitious and cross disciplinary, the policy assigned responsibility to a broad spectrum of Welsh Government departments, from Rural Affairs and Heritage through to Public Services and Performance. This demonstrates dedication to multi-stakeholder policy development, and affirms the cross-departmental position of food in policy. The *Quality of Food Strategy* also introduced the aim of applying a 'whole-life approach to public health'.

Food for Wales, Food from Wales was then introduced in 2010 as an ambitious 10-year strategy, informed by the sustainability objectives laid out in *One Wales: One*

Planet, 2009. This identifies 5 key indicators of progress (shown below), nested under the over-arching goals of reconnection and building capacity.



Supporting the message for integration between progress indicators, *Food for Wales, Food from Wales* also sets out a clear intention to connect existing policies: linking the Rural Development Strategy *Farming, Food and Countryside*, Health Strategy *Our Healthy Future* and Planning in the *Wales Spatial Plan*.

Towards Sustainable Growth, the 2014 the Food and Drink Industry Action Plan, shifted the debate somewhat away from the concerns of well-being, justice and accountability towards a focus on economic sustainability and the growth of the food industry. The top-line concern is to achieve 30% economic growth in the Welsh food sector by 2020. Alongside this, the True Taste Brand has been replaced by the Food and Drink Wales identity to create a more 'trade-focused' platform.¹

Analysing Values in Policy

This overview gives a brief insight into the development of food policy within the Welsh Government over the past decade. Drawing-out the deeper messages in this policy trajectory is important to enable us to identify some of the values that underpin Welsh food policy.

A food policy that asserts the values of **Universalism** and **Benevolence** emphasises social *and* environmental justice, offering clear avenues for food to be part of a bigger sustainability project. Much of the food policy discussed has connected with these values; particularly through the use of the following frames:

- Connecting food to people and place;
- Framing action on food as part of the broader goal of sustainability in Wales;
- Involving people in a collective conversation and shared sense of responsibility.

In contrast, and potential opposition to these values, **Achievement**, **Power** and **Security** are also evident in the following framings:

¹ Wales Online, 2013, 'Welsh true taste brand scrapped', <http://www.walesonline.co.uk/news/wales-news/welsh-food-drink-awards-scrapped-5134312>

- Emphasising economic priorities and the need for a competitive food industry;
- The need for national food security;
- Targeting individual responsibility for action on food.

In particular, it is clear that economics is a powerful driver – and perhaps increasingly so in recent years. In a time of stagnant salaries, growing poverty and increased household costs, it is understandably hard to see beyond price.

Increasing economic development through export is one tactic that Wales can employ to achieve greater economic strength in the food system, but how might it meet with the other concerns to achieve a sustainable food nation? Peter Davies, the Sustainable Futures Commissioner, highlights that there are *“competing objectives in developing sustainable food for Wales, such as the influence of red meat production against the priorities for nutrition.”*² Economic growth may come at the expense of other key government priorities such as a healthy nation. Considering the rising social and economic impact of food related health problems such as obesity (which has a projected £47bn annual cost in the UK), a joined-up approach is needed.³

Amber Wheeler, a researcher in food systems at The University of South Wales, highlights that the *“food strategy previously had no links between food and health in Welsh Government, but that has changed as public health and food units have begun to collaborate.”*⁴ Avoiding contradiction and conflicting targets across departments is important. But this is not just about cross-checking work packages. Taking a values approach can help us find their overlapping priorities and a stronger footing for aligned strategies. Notably, it is difficult to find alignment between a strategy for economy and health based on values of Power and Achievement, whereas Universalism and Benevolence offer a number of synergies.

An example of a more integrated approach that attends to Universalism and Benevolence is the Welsh Government Food Unit’s analysis of social value within product supply chains. Here they have learnt from the development of Products of Designated Origin (PDOs) elsewhere across Europe, to emphasise quality and uniqueness. Currently Wales has four PDOs, but work is ongoing to develop a further eighteen. A Welsh Government representative explained how the supply chains of these products are being analysed to uncover the *“intrinsic value of these products within their locality”*,⁵ thus offering a model to connect local economies and environments with traditional cultural knowledge and social practices.

An issue that has not yet benefitted from a more integrated approach is food waste, which has widely been presented as a ‘single-issue’ problem and associated with personal responsibility. For example, through calls to ‘shrink your bin’ from government backed campaigns such as Love Food Hate Waste.⁶ The individualistic framing of food waste belies the fact that it is a systemic issue that requires a change not only in the personal valuing of food, but also shifts in communication (labelling), technology (packaging) and regulation (cosmetic standards). Food waste is also often

² Peter Davies Interview May 2015

³ McKinsey Global Institute, 2014 *Overcoming obesity: An initial economic analysis*, http://www.mckinsey.com/insights/economic_studies/how_the_world_could_better_fight_obesity

⁴ Amber Wheeler Interview May 2015

⁵ Welsh Government Representative Interview May 2015

⁶ Wrap, 2015, *Love Food Hate Waste*, <http://wales.lovefoodhatewaste.com/>

connected with feelings of shame and blame, which affirm Power values and can therefore work against Benevolence and Universalism.

If instead we frame food waste as an issue to be dealt with collectively, for the greater good of society, we might see more focus on reducing the problem at source or finding community-level solutions. For example, in Denmark small-scale anaerobic digesters have been installed in towns to process waste food and provide a local energy source for residents. Looking at the bigger picture also offers opportunities for multiple gains. For example consumption related health issues such as obesity and diabetes are connected to large portion sizes, a systemic problem that contributes to both over-eating *and* waste.³ Tackling both together, some American Colleges have adopted tray-less canteens which has reduced waste by up to 30%, whilst simultaneous reducing overconsumption as well.^{7 8}

Overall, many of the problems faced across the food system stem from the lack of intrinsic value afforded to the food we eat, as people are removed from processes of production and food is treated solely as a commodity. The values approach offers a means to think beyond this narrow framing and to start exploring what really underpins our relationships with food. It also helps us become more attuned to the messages and behaviours we are affirming, and offers the chance to connect apparently disparate issues through underlying values.

Applying Values

Understanding what people care about deep down is the first step to creating policy narratives that can bring about long-term change. A values-based approach requires us to listen to others in order to understand their perspectives. Collective conversations also implicitly enforce a participatory ethos, which supports Universalism. The Welsh Government has a good track record of public engagement through the Sustainable Development Charter and Wales Environment Link. Appealing to a collective sense of identity and shared values has also been championed and exemplified in the *Sustainable Development Narratives Framework*, developed for the Welsh Government by the Climate Outreach Information Network (COIN). Most recently, the national conversation *The Wales We Want* demonstrated the power and legitimacy of collectivising the policy process, enabling national values and voices to inform the development of the *Well-Being of Future Generations Bill*.

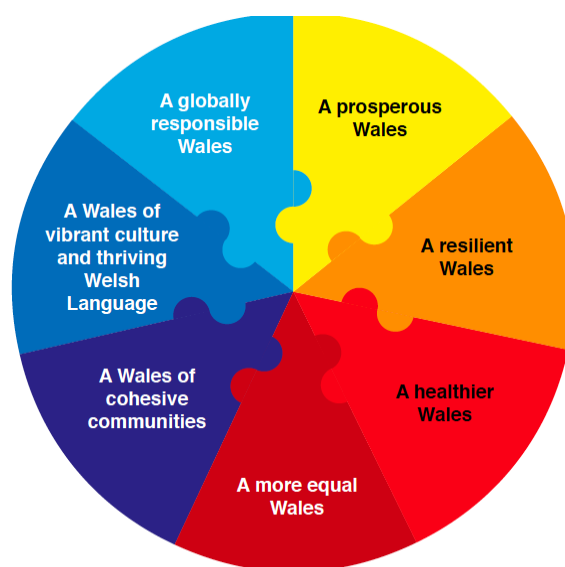
It is in advancing this agenda for sustainability that we see a key role for food as a uniting and grounding theme. Wales has embarked on a long and bold journey to place sustainability at its core, since it was positioned at the heart of the National Assembly for Wales' constitution during its formation in 1998 and subsequently set-out as a formal strategy in 2009 with *One Wales: One Planet*. The enshrining of the Well-Being of Future Generations (WBF) Act on 29th April 2015 demonstrates a two-footed leap towards affirming this agenda. It will 'make public bodies think more

⁷ EPA, 2015, 'Food waste reduction and prevention', *Environmental Protection Agency USA*, <http://www.epa.gov/foodrecovery/fd-reduce.htm>

⁸ WHO, 2014, 'Limiting portion sizes to reduce the risk of childhood overweight and obesity', http://www.who.int/elena/tiles/bbc/portion_childhood_obesity/en/

about the long-term, work better with people and communities and each other, look to prevent problems and take a more joined-up approach'.⁹

To do this, we need to move beyond rhetoric.¹⁰ Measurable outcomes are important in this regards, to set targets and track the achievements of sustainability criteria over time. Food offers clear benchmarks in achieving cross-sector sustainability objectives. This can be seen for instance in the Welsh public procurement plan which combines boosting local economies, connecting consumers and producers, and reducing the burden on transport. Food can be a central piece of the puzzle for Welsh Government to become a sustainable nation giving both a strong platform for policy measurables, such as greenhouse gas impact and economic growth, while appealing beyond the numbers to a more human side of sustainability. A values-led approach also demonstrates how food can unlock national identity, cultural values and pride in the way that other sustainability factors such as energy and water might not do. This cross-cutting reach clearly resonates with the seven well-being goals of the new act shown below.



Perhaps the greatest strength of the WCFG Bill is that it roots economic sustainability within the broader issues of environmental and social sustainability. Indeed it is aiming to challenge the assumption that sustainability is contrary to economic development, to say instead that sustainability *is* economic development. This move attempts to overcome longstanding tensions in global debates around sustainable development^{11 12}. Again the values approach is helpful here, as it reminds us that the desire for wealth and power alone can pull against values of Universalism and Benevolence which underpin sustainability, but economic development in the service of social justice, equality, protecting the environment, and a world at peace certainly has a role.

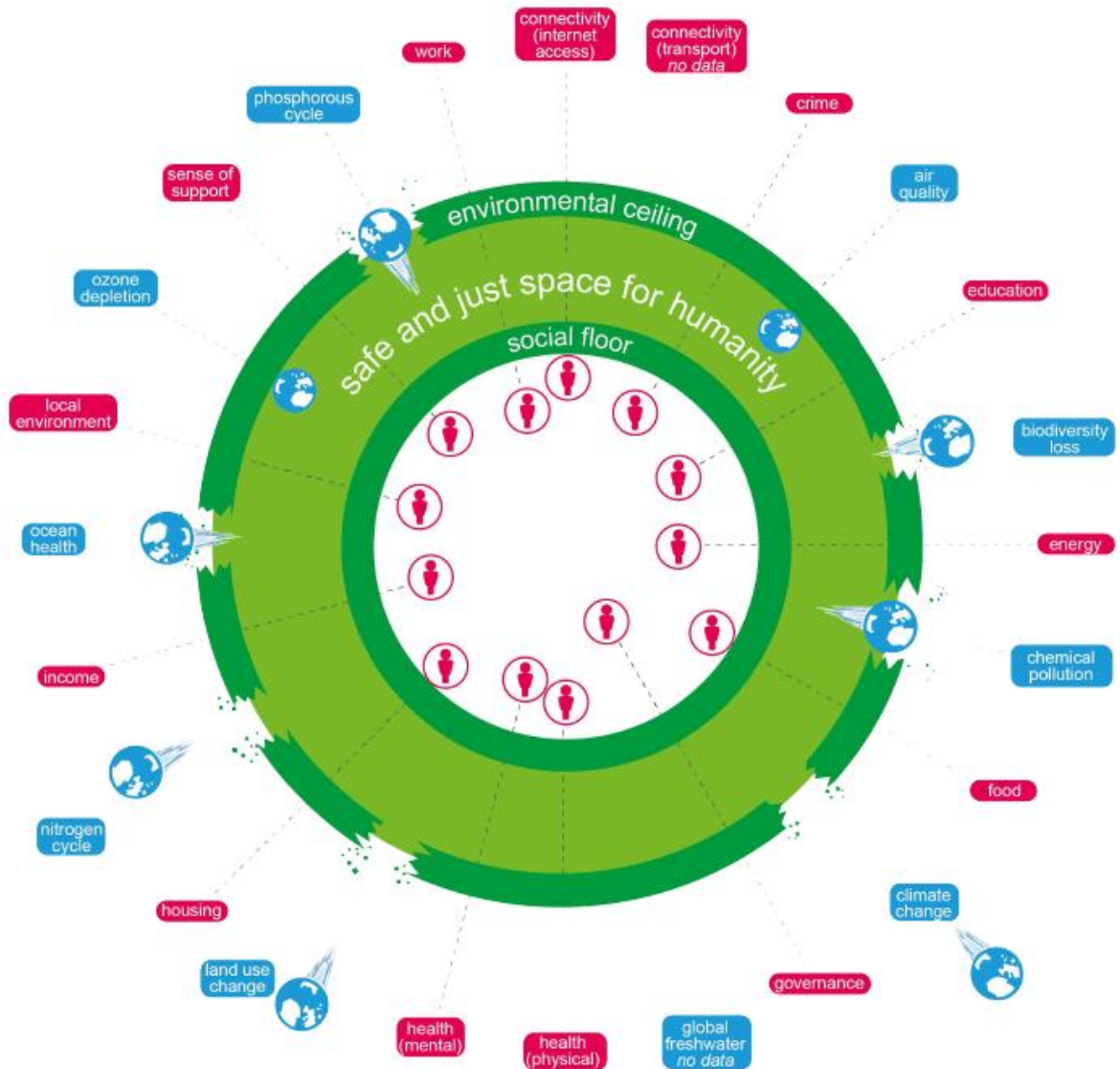
⁹ Welsh Government, 2015, Well-being of Future Generations Act.

¹⁰ Institute of Welsh Affairs, 2012, *Turning rhetoric into reality: Legislating for sustainable development*, <http://www.clickonwales.org/wp-content/uploads/Turning-rhetoric-into-reality.pdf>

¹¹ Herman Daly, 1996, *Beyond Growth*. Beacon.

¹² Molly Scott Cato, 2009, *Green Economics*. Earthscan.

Drawing out the practical dimensions, it is useful to note the complementarity between the well-being goals and a recent report from Oxfam, *The Welsh Doughnut*.¹³ This has applied a framework for environmental sustainability and social justice that is based on the twin challenges of delivering a decent standard of living for everyone (the social floor) and operating within planetary boundaries. The Doughnut model, shown below, links and connects policy spaces that are often divorced. Food is inherently central to many elements of the model, with its large impact upon climate change, land use, water consumption, health, and community connectivity, again reaffirming its potential to ground the broader agenda for sustainability.



Overall, values present a path for policy makers, community groups and education professionals to try out a new way of putting food at the centre of their work. It presents a new, positive and collaborative way to frame food, beyond the restrictions

¹³ Oxfam, 2015, *The Welsh Doughnut: A framework for environmental sustainability and social justice*

of a 'business as usual', short-term economic approach, to see the transformative potential food holds in building a sustainable future in Wales.

Recommendations

1. Use values in conversations between different parts of the food sector.

A lead could be taken from the Sustainable Development Narratives Framework developed by COIN to test new narratives and language for the Welsh Government to apply to public engagement.

2. Grounding the sustainable development narrative in food

Food has a grounding quality that can reach out to all Welsh people, and make sustainable development real. Gardens, kitchens, bakeries, farms - all these can be used to engage the public in this sustainability narrative.

3. Highlight cross-departmental position of food

As it implements the Well-Being of Future Generations Act, Welsh Government could emphasise the role of food in drawing together the sustainability agenda by convening its own staff and representatives from outside to develop policy.

4. Tell a compelling story

Wales has cultural, social and economic strength in its food landscape, and a tradition of collaboration and education. Welsh Government could emphasise this identity with a compelling narrative that draws on rich traditions and connects all these diverse voices.

5. A Food Manifesto for Wales

Bringing people from different parts of the food system together to find common ground through discussions about values creates a collective sense of commitment. This is necessary if there is to be change at a societal level. A collective conversation and pledge towards the food futures we want for Wales, involving both government and civil society, is therefore an important next step.