

## SUBMISSION FROM NOURISH SCOTLAND

### 1. About Nourish

Nourish Scotland is a not-for-profit organisation campaigning for a fairer food system in Scotland. Nourish facilitates this change through engaging with organisations, community initiatives, politicians and officials, producers and individuals. We work to influence policies from local to EU level and provide a platform for networking and sharing best practice. We make sure that food is brought to the fore in public debates of various kinds, making the link between a localised food system and its positive outcomes for economic development, community cohesion, job creation, skills development, public health, environmental stewardship and justice.

We welcome this opportunity to provide evidence to the Committee. Our expertise and experience is in relation to the food system, so our responses to the Committee's enquiry are focused on that sector of the economy. This evidence also draws on experience of food SMEs connected to Nourish.

### 2. What makes a job 'good' or 'bad'?

The recent example of Lithuanian migrants working as chicken-catchers for gangmasters working for big food businesses exemplifies the worst of jobs in food: long hours, no job security, tied accommodation, bullying and harassment, dirty and unsafe work, poor pay based on piece work, having to handle animals roughly, just doing one routine job in a system, no sense of doing a worthwhile job, no feedback from customers.

The best of jobs in food is just the opposite: reasonable hours and job security, running your own business or being a respected and trusted employee, decent pay not based on piecework, safe working conditions, being part of a team, housing rights separate from employment, having time to take care, having job variety, chance to develop skills and contribute ideas, and a sense of the work being worthwhile, feedback from customers.

Jobs like these are found in many food SMEs, though decent pay and job security has been difficult to achieve over the last few years, and there is always downwards pressure on catering wages.

The advantage of smaller companies is that more employees have an interface with end-customers; employees are likely to have a variety of roles and tasks; and employees see more of the whole process, whether that's growing vegetables in a market garden to sell to restaurants, running a small restaurant cooking food from fresh, making jams and chutneys in a small factory to supply regional sales outlets and a farmers' market stall, or adding value to milk with on-farm cheese-making.

### 3. Have jobs become better or worse since 2008?;

From the feedback we've had from some SMEs, wages have been flat or were even reduced as a result of the recession; that some posts have been

cut or vacancies not filled in order to keep the wage bill down; that owner-managers have gone back to work on the floor; and that there has been relatively little investment in staff development.

4. What effect might low quality/low pay jobs have on the economy?;

The acceptance of low quality and low pay jobs tends to lower expectations all round. There's also a danger of creating a cycle of underinvestment, where low wages become the norm and lock SMEs into a suboptimal steady state

5. What the health impacts of low quality jobs might be;

Where people are put on zero hour contracts, and can't afford to take a day off sick as they only get statutory sick pay, any underlying health, stress, debt or family/personal problems are exacerbated. The only compensating factor is that in some SMEs owner-managers have been very open with staff about the problems and have shared – and been seen to share – the pain. This can at least help people feel they have a valuable role in helping the business keep going, and this has health benefits

6. What can the Scottish Government and public policy makers do to improve job quality in Scotland. –

Nourish believes there are significant employment gains from building a food economy which includes a greater diversity of SMEs and short food chains linking consumers and producers. Short food chains can create **more** jobs, whether in rural areas through adding value to farmgate produce or in urban areas through independent and community retailers which can generate three times as many jobs per £ spent on food. Many of these jobs will be good jobs – in many cases not especially well-paid, but jobs worth doing, with opportunities to be creative, develop new skills and engage with customers.

Nourish encourages Scottish Government and public policy makers to make a concerted and sustained effort to support the local food economy and to help employers in that sector to improve job quality. This could be for example through a 'living wage in food' campaign where business rates reductions are offered for a period to living wage employers. Other measures include making it easier for SMEs to invest in their workforces – for example taking on apprentices, helping staff gain qualifications, improve managers' performance through mentoring and coaching and so on. We recognise investments made for example through the Food and Drink Skills Academy but think some SMEs struggle to make the most of existing schemes because of day to day pressures.