

Nutrient density – a key metric for the Just Transition

The current consultation on the new Agriculture Bill in Scotland misses the fundamental role of agriculture in producing nutrient-rich food for Scots. The emphasis is on climate change mitigation and protecting nature – goals we heartily agree with – but it misses the goal of **feeding the nation well**.

For example, 'Scotland's farmers, crofters and land-managers are vital to our ambition to make our nation fairer and greener' (page 5 of the plain English summary). Why is this not 'to make our nation **healthier**, fairer and greener'?

With the cost of living crisis hitting Scotland at the tail end of the COVID19 crisis, we are now at risk of what is called the 'double burden of malnutrition.' Public Health Scotland statistics show that the gap in overweight and obesity among children is widening.

Today, children living in the most deprived areas of Scotland are **twice as likely** to have obesity (13.3%) than those in the least deprived areas (6.4%). Worryingly, on the other end of the malnutrition spectrum, there have also been increases in **child undernutrition**. In one health board, NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde, where a third of children live in poverty, the number of admissions of children (<18y) for acute malnutrition almost doubled from 572 in 2020 to 1,000 in 2021. The true figures are likely to be higher as most undernourished kids are treated by GPs, not admitted to hospital.

The **number nourished** metric is a new metric developed to quantify the number of people who can meet their dietary requirements for key nutrients from the crops produced on a hectare of Scottish land or with a kilogram of flour produced in Scottish mills, for example.

The consultation on the Agriculture Bill notes that the future payment framework must support 'high quality food production' but how is 'high quality' defined?

For example, 'Do you believe the new Agriculture Bill should include a mechanism to enable payments that support high quality food production?' (page 27 of the consultation report) – Yes, but what is 'high quality food production'?

We propose that a metric that takes into account the nutrient density of crops produced, such as the **number nourished metric**, would help address this omission. It could be integrated with the National Test Programme so that public health and dietary improvement underpin the benefits to climate and nature from farming and food businesses embarking on a just transition.

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