



**CYMRU**

**NFU CYMRU**

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**Director: J Malcolm Thomas**

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Ruth Hatton  
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Dyddiad/Date: 26<sup>th</sup> March 2008

Dear Mrs Hatton

**Re: Consultation – Proposals for Healthy Eating in Schools Measure**

NFU Cymru represents 15,000 members in Wales and welcomes the opportunity to comment on the above consultation that lays out proposals for healthy eating in schools. NFU Cymru recognises that we in Wales are facing a number of challenges regarding health matters and are particularly concerned about the findings of the latest Welsh Health survey which has found that 56% of adults are classified as overweight and even more worryingly 37% of school children are classed as overweight, and the health and wider implications this has on our society. NFU Cymru also recognises that the key to changing lifestyles and reducing these figures is to encourage healthy eating during childhood and adolescence as good practice and habits formed here are more likely to be taken into adult life.

NFU Cymru is fully supportive of healthy eating initiatives and the overarching purpose of this measure which is a holistic and comprehensive policy on nutrition in primary and secondary schools. We also believe that Welsh farmers produce the safest and highest quality food any where in the world which should form the basis of a well balanced, nutritious, healthy school meal in Wales. In this respect there is a serious need for the Welsh assembly Government to pursue local procurement as a major initiative, rather than merely paying lip service to the issue.

We would also like to see food education become more of a priority on the school curriculum not only in terms of domestic science but also in terms educating children on where and how their food is produced.

The consultation asks 7 questions and we have laid out brief observations to each question below.

**Question 1**

We certainly support the aim that any measures must be holistic and an “all school” approach to healthy eating. We do feel however that there are a number of other measures that could be employed to promote this approach. Firstly it is essential to link healthy eating with physical activity, the energy in to energy out equation is very simple! UK wide calorie and salt fat intakes have been falling but inactivity is increasing. School is clearly a critical part of this and we need too see more emphasis on sport in the school curriculum. We have

in the past seen school fields being sold off, time reduced for school sports and a reduction of any element of competition. These areas need to be addressed along with healthy eating in order to get on top of the problem.

**Question 2**

NFU Cymru would be of the opinion that it is the change on the ground that is key to acceptance and perhaps this should be phased. We also recognise that it is essential to get buy in from parents or this approach will not work although children will have a certain amount of influence on home eating habits if healthy eating messages work and children take them home. The key therefore is to achieve demand for healthier school food before imposing it and this should be aimed at both children and parents and the way to do this is through educating on the benefits of healthy eating.

**Question 3**

Again similar to question 1 we fully believe that the overall curriculum needs to be looked at and a number of areas addressed. We believe we need a return to curriculum time and emphasis on domestic food science and general food education which not only looks at healthy eating but addresses where and how our food is produced on the farms of Wales. With better cooking skills comes a reduction in consumption of highly processed foods. We think any proposed measures should include a responsibility upon local authorities/WAG to seek to procure locally within their purchasing strategy. Local food procurement is linked to children's knowledge of food production and interest in food, ingredients and where it comes from and an interest in their local environment. Where schools source their food should reflect the principle of healthy eating. We at NFU Cymru believe Welsh farmers are best placed to meet the demands of local procurement and this should be a compulsory policy of all Welsh schools.

**Question 4**

NFU Cymru would ask how sustainable development is defined in the context of this consultation. We believe that local food procurement fits in here and by including a firm policy on this issue would have the added benefit of extending the holistic approach across the whole of the local community, merely strengthening the position of the school within that community. If we look at how change can be sustained we need to look at how healthy children become healthy adults and again this comes down to food education and children fully understanding the benefits of a healthy balanced diet and where and how this food is produced.

**Question 5**

NFU Cymru believes that any such initiative has to have the full commitment of the schools heads and governors in order to succeed and therefore we would agree that any progress needs to be reported and certain duties and responsibilities set for schools in order that progress is made in achieving the aims.

**Question 6**

NFU Cymru believes that the points raised in relation to question 5 are also relevant to question 6 and none more so that the duty on Welsh Ministers to exercise their functions on the school curriculum. We have already stated our belief that there needs to be more emphasis on domestic science given in the school curriculum and this is certainly an area where Welsh Ministers can bring their influence.

**Question 7**

N/A

I hope these views are useful and if we can be of any further help or offer any further clarification then please do not hesitate to contact me at any time

Yours Sincerely



**John Mercer**  
**Farm Policy Advisor**  
**NFU Cymru**