



SOUTH OF
SCOTLAND

LOCAL
FOOD
GROWTH
PLAN

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Executive Summary

The South of Scotland Local Food Growth Plan has been brought together by collaborating partners to define actions needed to stimulate a strong and resilient local food economy.

It should be seen as a live and evolving document. It can be used by a wide range of stakeholders, from small enterprises to public sector authorities.

The Plan sits as part of a broader piece of work – the UK Local Food Growth Plan (LFGP) – and as such is intended to be a place-based, regional example. The Plan can also be used to inform regional duties for under the Good Food Nation Act.

Aims

The term ‘Local Food’ can mean different things to different people. The Sustainable Food Trust carried out a ‘Review of Local Food Definitions’ which found that scale and localness tend to correlate. This Plan uses the definition in the UK LFGP: “Local Food is food that is produced, processed, sold and eaten within the same region or local administrative area through transparent, SME-focused supply chains.”

This Plan aims to identify the following:

- A vision for the local food economy in the South of Scotland
- What is currently stopping us from achieving that vision
- Key actions to enable progress towards a strong, resilient local food economy

Summary of Actions

The Local Food Growth Plan outlines strategic actions across five core areas to build a stronger local food economy in the South of Scotland:

Local Food Production

- Support fruit and vegetable producers with access to land, secure tenancies, and start-up funding.
- Develop training programmes for new entrants and young people.
- Promote knowledge sharing through farm walks and workshops.

Supply Chain Infrastructure

- Establish collaborative distribution and storage hubs.
- Develop shared processing spaces and incubators for small enterprises.
- Improve infrastructure for meat producers, including butchery and apprenticeships.



Marketing

- Create a South of Scotland sustainable certification mark.
- Run shared marketing campaigns and storytelling initiatives.
- Organise chef-producer meetups and education programmes.

Collaboration

- Fund a coordination role to connect producers, buyers, and supporters.
- Maintain a live directory of local producers.
- Encourage producer collaboration in crop planning and market presence.

Policy

- Align regional policy with local food goals using Local Development Plans and Place Plans.
- Reduce regulatory barriers to infrastructure like polytunnels and mobile abattoirs.
- Advocate for improved procurement and horticulture strategies at national level.

Introduction

A strong local food economy has multiple benefits to communities, businesses, food producers and the environment.

Buying local means money supports nearby farmers and food producers, which helps the local economy thrive. This can help to create jobs boosting employment in farming, food processing, distribution, and retail locally. A strong local food system can also cushion the blow of global supply chain disruptions, such as those we saw during the Covid pandemic, or the impact of conflict and weather events. A well-supported local food system can help ensure access to food during emergencies.

Local farmers interested in selling are often more likely to use nature friendly and regenerative methods. Market Gardeners are more likely to grow organically, without chemicals. Local products often require less packaging, cutting down on plastic and other waste, and reduced transportation means reduced greenhouse gas emissions and lower carbon footprint.

A strong local food economy contributes to community wealth building, by connecting farmers and growers to customers, often through local food events that bring people together. This enables transparency- you often know where your food comes from and how it was grown. Fresh produce is usually harvested at peak ripeness, meaning better flavour and more nutrients. Local markets may offer heirloom or speciality crops not found in supermarkets, increasing variety, choice and diversity.

This Plan builds on a huge amount of work taking place across the South of Scotland: Dumfries and Galloway, and the Borders.

Dumfries and Galloway Sustainable Food Partnership, active since 2020 is a cross sector, multi stakeholder collaboration, working to co-create a fairer, healthier and more resilient food systems. The 2023-26 Action Plan includes actions towards strengthening the local food economy.


Eat SW Scotland formed in 2020 to work with food and drink businesses in Dumfries and Galloway by delivering training and networking opportunities.

In the Borders, cross sector working is being led by the newly formed Borders Food Forum and will have a focus on a sustainable and resilient food economy.

The South of Scotland Regional Land Use Framework seeks to create a balanced approach to land management. Amongst other objectives, this includes Supporting Land-Based Businesses: Encouraging local businesses to operate sustainably, in harmony with nature and communities, thereby fostering local economic prosperity, job creation, and skills development.



South of Scotland Enterprise (SOSE) works across the region, supporting food and drink businesses to get off the ground, or increase resilience and sustainability. They provide strategic support and expertise to help businesses grow, develop, and reach new markets. Over the last 5 years, SOSE have produced several useful reports summarising the position of the food and drink sector.



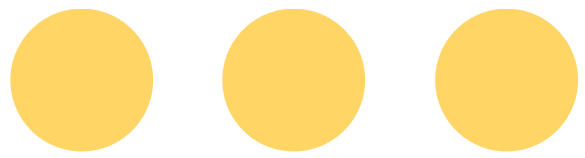
In August 2024, South of Scotland Destination Alliance (SSDA) convened a roundtable between food and drink industry stakeholders to look at what is needed to improve the food and drink offering for visitors to the region. This meeting identified a range of actions around quality, provenance, pride, experience and reputation.

In January 2025, SOSE supported a number of scoping and feasibility projects aimed at identifying actions needed to support the position of small producers in local supply chains. Several of those studies have fed into this Plan, including:

- Increasing fruit and vegetable production in Dumfries and Galloway
- Growing the Resilience of the Galloway Food Hub
- Developing an Organic On-farm Butchery Facility
- Increasing Small-Scale Food Production Through Land Release in the Borders
- Increasing Access to Local Food Through Food Hubs in the Borders

Also in January 2025, SSDA commissioned work to undertake a South of Scotland Food and Drink Landscape Survey. The survey had a total of 190 responses.

This has drawn out where additional support is needed for producers, food and drink businesses, events organisers and support organisations. Detail and key issues from the survey have been included in this Plan.

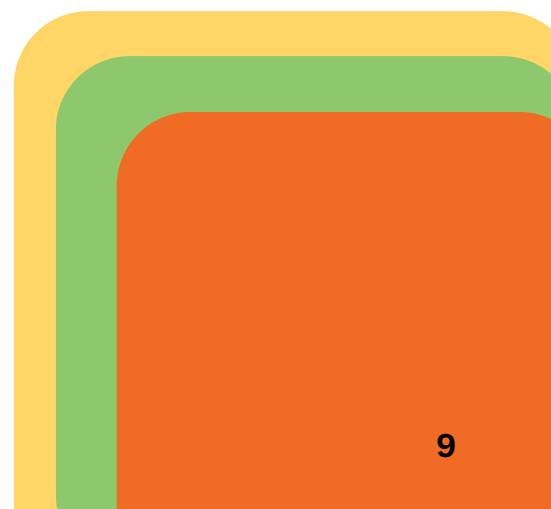


Two events – Growing the Local Food Economy – were held in March 2025, in Dumfries and Galloway and the Borders. These events brought together producers and suppliers, food and drink businesses and other stakeholders in the food and drink industry. Attendees heard from key speakers, and had opportunities to network and hear from each other.

Breakout discussions at these events recorded aspirations in sustainability, collaboration, supply chain infrastructure, and local production. Outcomes from these discussions have been included in this Plan.

Through Propagate, Dumfries and Galloway is a partner in the UK project, Procurement for Good. This is a four year UKRI funded project led by Coventry University. The project aims to identify opportunities for small local producers to access public food supply chains. A roundtable was held in January 2025 with farmers and procurement officers. This helped to identify initial aspirations and barriers. Information from this meeting has also been included in this Plan.

Finally, a number of conversations and interviews have taken place with key local businesses, farmers and supply chain operators to supply additional information for this Plan.





Regional Context

The South of Scotland represents a huge and highly varied part of Scotland. Dumfries and Galloway and the Borders are both known for their scenic landscapes, strong agricultural heritage, and tight-knit communities. They share similar challenges such as population decline, limited public transport, and rural poverty. Both areas also benefit from a growing interest in local food, tourism, and community-led regeneration.

Geography and Population

Dumfries and Galloway has a longer coastline and a stronger connection to the Solway Firth, with more coastal communities and marine influences. The region also has a larger land area and includes the Galloway Hills, supporting a distinct upland ecology. In contrast, the Scottish Borders is more influenced by its proximity to Edinburgh and the Central Belt, offering slightly better transport links and economic connections.

Dumfries and Galloway has an area of 2700 square miles, and a population of around 150,000. The largest town is Dumfries with a population of 33,600, followed by Stranraer with just over 10,000. All other towns and villages are scattered across the large rural area. Soil types and topography vary from sandy soils and lower coastal ground, to upland rocky hills, and peat bogs.

The Scottish Borders is 1,800 square miles, with a population of around 117,000. The region is characterized by rolling hills, undulating plateaus, and the River Tweed, which flows through it. The area is part of the Southern Uplands and includes various hill ranges. The fertile agricultural plain known as "The Merse" is located in the eastern part of the region where the Tweed broadens.

Farming

Farming in Dumfries and Galloway and the Scottish Borders reflects their distinct landscapes and climates. Dumfries and Galloway is predominantly livestock-focused, with a strong emphasis on dairy and beef production. The region's wetter climate and fertile grasslands support intensive grass-based systems, making it one of Scotland's leading dairy areas. Upland areas, such as the Galloway Hills, are mainly used for hill sheep farming.


In contrast, the Scottish Borders features a more mixed farming system. While sheep and cattle are still important, especially in upland zones, the region has a significant area of arable land. Its drier climate and lighter soils are well-suited to growing cereals, oilseed rape, and other combinable crops. This results in a higher proportion of crop-based farming compared to Dumfries and Galloway.

Economy

The small scale local food production sector in the Scottish Borders is diverse, encompassing vegetable growers, fruit farms, dairy producers, and livestock farmers, many of whom are committed to sustainability, regenerative agriculture, and strengthening local supply chains. However, the number of producers remains limited, with only 2 market gardens, a handful of 'pick-your-own' farms and around 8 meat and dairy producers selling locally and directly via their own farm shops.

In Dumfries and Galloway, the small and local sector is still limited, however a broader range of opportunities and innovations have enabled and emboldened producers to establish.

The Galloway Food Hub is a producer led online market place. The Hub enables communities to access nature friendly food and drink from local producers. It started in 2022 with just 6 producers and 20 customers, and has increased to over 30 producers and over 100 customer orders each 'cycle'. The Food Hub boasts local fruit and veg, cheese, bakery products, preserves, meat and more.



Producers in Dumfries and Galloway are also collaborating through local farm shops – stocking and sharing produce, and supporting each other to increase impact and sales.

Dumfries and Galloway also has a strong network of Producer and Farmers Markets which offers local producers and businesses opportunities to sell produce, engage with customers and increase visibility. The Markets collaborate informally through a facebook group and the DG Markets forum. In contrast, there are just a couple of farmers' markets in the Borders.

The hospitality sector in the South of Scotland plays a vital role in the regional economy, closely tied to tourism, food and drink, and rural heritage. It includes a wide range of businesses such as hotels, guesthouses, B&Bs, cafes, pubs, restaurants, and visitor attractions. The region's natural beauty, historic sites, and strong local food culture attract both domestic and international visitors, supporting demand for high-quality, locally-rooted hospitality experiences.

Despite challenges like seasonal fluctuations and staffing shortages, the sector has shown resilience and innovation, with growing interest in agri-tourism, eco-tourism, and food-led experiences.

Key Issues

Information from the Food and Drink Landscape Survey, the Growing the Local Food Economy events, conversations and interviews, the Small Producers Scoping Studies, and the Procurement for Good roundtable has been brought together to inform this Plan. These are complimented by interviews and conversations – some of which are offered case studies in the appendices.

A number of key issues were identified by people we spoke to.

Fruit and vegetable producers indicated a lack of access to land, infrastructure and capital support to establish or grow their enterprises. Although larger landowners and farmers are often willing to offer land for growing, this requires secure and long tenancies or other farm-sharing agreements that give the Grower confidence. Producers also highlighted a skills gap and the lack of ‘pipeline’ for market gardeners.

Livestock Farmers have consistently flagged the gaps in abattoir and processing facilities. This is a common rural issue. In the South of Scotland, one abattoir serves the region in Lockerbie – although many producers have reported issues with Lockerbie and opt to use alternatives much further afield. Butchery – especially organic butchery – is also a notable gap. Farmers also identified the need for support to farm more regeneratively.



Producers of all types identified the need for business support and finance – capital and revenue grants to grow and develop their enterprises. Many expressed a frustration at the overemphasis on ‘innovation’ – rather than supporting tried and tested solutions. Small producers also noted difficulty with regulation and compliance that doesn’t ‘fit’ their scale of enterprise. Additional issues such as capacity, resources and time needed to effectively market products were also noted.

Hospitality and retail flagged finance and funding support as their main issues, particular for business development or instigating efficiencies. From the Food and Drink Landscape Survey, 73% of businesses said they had difficulty sourcing local produce. Many reported that they didn’t know where or how to find local produce. Most were aware of the lack of local fruit and vegetables. Some noted the absurdity of supply chains and lack of processing facilities

Supply chain operators and buyers indicated the need for quantity to satisfy their markets, which many local producers on their own are not able to provide. All wanted to offer more local produce and work with producers – stating also that they could help promote products and spotlight producers. There was a recognition of the lack of storage and necessary supply chain infrastructure, and an interest in collaboration to increase efficiencies.

Actions

In drawing together and analysing the information that has fed into this Plan, actions have been split across 5 sub-categories:

- Local Food Production
- Supply Chain Infrastructure
- Marketing
- Collaboration
- Policy



Taken collectively, these actions can contribute to a stronger and more resilient local food economy.

Since this is a working document, we have not identified specific organisation who will take forward pieces of work – the core principle for this should be collaboration.

Recommended aims and actions are broken over the following pages by theme.

Local Food Production

Local food production refers to actions needed to increase production of fresh fruit and vegetables; and also increasing the availability of nature friendly or organic local meat, cheese and other production up to the farm gate.

Aim

Fruit and Vegetable Producers have increased access to good quality land and secure tenancies

Producers have access to finance to set up and develop their businesses

There is increased capacity and skills in fruit and vegetable production and nature friendly farming

Actions

Develop a regionwide campaign to encourage landowners to offer land to Producers

Create a toolkit that includes model agreements, legal templates, business plans and step-by-step guides for both landowners and new entrants

Establish a funding scheme for capital and revenue costs, for producers to set and develop enterprises that contribute directly to the local food economy

Increase opportunities for knowledge sharing and CPD between farmers and growers through farm walks and skill sharing/workshops

Develop and resource a Local Food Production training programme with placements across several market gardens and regenerative farms

Supply Chain Support

Supply chain infrastructure relates to logistics and transport, packaging, butchery, abattoir, secondary production, and all other processes between the farm gate and the shop or kitchen.

Aim

There are more, thriving food and drink businesses and streamlined logistics and distribution

Businesses and communities have better access to local, sustainably produced food

There is improved infrastructure and support for livestock and meat producers post farm gate

Actions

Develop a network of shared and collaborative distribution hubs and appropriate storage facilities (fruit and veg, cold store, warehousing)

Develop incubator hubs and make spaces for small enterprises to set up and grow. Shared resources for example creamery, fruit presses, kitchens etc...

Roll out Food Hub model, integrated into distribution hubs as above, linked together across the South of Scotland

Galloway Food Hub develops Business to Business arm of enterprise

Develop on-farm organic butchery at Low Auldgirth and explore other locations across the South

Increase collaboration between existing butchery facilities

Map existing provision, develop and deliver more craft butcher training and apprenticeships

Marketing

Marketing identifies actions needed for branding, storytelling and increasing the uptake and purchase of local food.

Aim

There is more visibility of high quality local food, local producers and food and drink businesses using local food

There is better understanding of local, seasonal and sustainably produced food

Increase visibility of current promotional work and marketing

Actions

Develop a South of Scotland Sustainable Certification Mark – similar to and building on Galloway and Southern Ayrshire Biosphere Mark

Develop shared South of Scotland marketing campaigns and storytelling for local producers and food and drink businesses using local food well

Organise farm walks and other opportunities for chefs to meet producers

Highlight existing opportunities delivering farm to fork education, and organise additional learning programmes for schools and communities

Develop a programme of chef support and networking to showcase local and seasonal produce

Pull together the stories, case studies, videos and spotlights across different organisations and platforms into one place

Collaboration

Collaboration looks at ways in which stakeholders across the sector can work together to support each other, cooperate, and share resources.

Aim

Retail and hospitality food and drink businesses find it easier to access locally produced food

Small producers have more opportunities to access different supply chains

There is better networking and collaboration across the local food sector to foster growth and efficiency

Actions

Establish a resourced role or small team who connect, communicate and champion collaboration across the South of Scotland

Develop and update a directory and map highlighting all local producers

Encourage collaboration between fruit and veg producers to align crop planning in and work together order to meet shared orders

Encourage sharing stalls at Farmers and Producer Markets between small producers

Properly resource the D&G Sustainable Food Partnership and Borders Food Forum

Create working groups and subgroups to support sector development as needed

Policy

Policy identifies actions that need to be taken by regional and national public bodies to support a resilient and vibrant local food economy.

Aim

Local policy levers and strategy are supporting the local food economy

There is more local food on school, hospital and other public food plates

Small and local producers are more consistently and adequately supported

Actions

Work collaboratively to co-develop Regional Good Food Nation Plans, in line with Good Food Nation Act requirements

Use Local Development Plan frameworks and Place Plans to make it easier for developments that contribute to a resilient local food economy

Reduce regulatory barriers to essential supply chain infrastructure such as polytunnels and mobile abattoirs

Work collaboratively with local food producers and supply chain operators to get more local and sustainable food into schools, hospitals and public food spaces

Develop a robust Scottish Horticulture Strategy that includes details on how fruit and vegetable producers of all scales will be properly supported

Extend farming subsidies to include food processing and supply chain infrastructure

Concluding Remarks

The South of Scotland Local Food Growth Plan represents an ambitious, practical, and deeply collaborative step towards a more resilient, sustainable, and prosperous local food economy. It brings together insights from producers, businesses, stakeholders, and communities across Dumfries and Galloway and the Borders, translating their voices into clear, actionable priorities.

While challenges remain—from infrastructure gaps and limited supply chain coordination, to regulatory barriers and resource constraints—this Plan offers a roadmap to overcome them. Its actions span production, distribution, marketing, collaboration, and policy, emphasising the importance of a whole-system approach.

Success will depend on shared ownership and collective effort. As a live and evolving document, this Plan invites ongoing engagement, creativity, and commitment from all corners of the food system. By working together, the South of Scotland can realise its vision of a thriving local food economy — one that is good for people, place, and planet.

Further Information

UK Local Food Growth Plan

The Plan outlines a framework of actions for local and mayoral authorities, national governments and food and farming organisations to grow local and agroecological food supply chains. A culmination of two years' research and consultation with food supply chain stakeholders across the UK.

[Click here to learn more](#)

Case Studies: Growing the Local Food Economy

A series of short interviews with attendees and organisers at the Growing the Local Food Economy events, March 2025. The events brought together farmers and producers, food and drink businesses, retailers, hospitality and supply chain operators.

[Click here to learn more](#)

Case Studies: Dumfries and Galloway Good Food Stories

Visit this library of case studies and stories about food and drink businesses across Dumfries and Galloway who are embedding sustainable principles in different ways.

[Click here to learn more](#)

Case Studies: Scottish Borders Foodscape Podcast

Exploring the way food shapes lives and land in the Scottish Borders. Charlotte Maberly interviews people who make our foodscape and considers how our past and present will shape our food future.

[Click here to learn more](#)

Acknowledgements

Collaborating organisations



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