

FDF Scotland response to the Advisory Group on Economic Recovery call for views on COVID-19

FDF Scotland represents the food and drink manufacturing sector which turns over £10.5bn, accounting for 30% of total Scottish manufacturing.

FDF is part of the Scotland Food and Drink partnership, who will shortly share the food industries proposals with the Scottish Government on specific asks to ensure that the Scottish food supply chain from our farmers and fisherman to manufacturers, retailers and hospitality remains resilient, safe and innovative. We would welcome the opportunity to discuss this in more detail in the coming weeks.

While demand for some companies and products has increased greatly, other businesses – particularly those who serviced hospitality or speciality retail and have seen their customers disappear – are now facing extremely difficult times. Where possible, food and drink businesses have been doing their best to adapt by suspending or reducing operations, cancelling non-essential investments, reducing spending and diversifying e.g. to producing hand sanitiser.

Government action is needed to protect food suppliers adversely affected as a result of COVID-19 both in the immediate aftermath and longer term.

A pause on government consultations until 2021 and a review of bills to be introduced in the Scottish Parliament in the next nine months will help to mitigate increasing cost of producing food in Scotland food and consequently a rise in prices and potentially food poverty for many Scottish households who may be facing the biggest recession in history.

Changing behaviours

Research suggests that there will be a long-term increase in people working from home. This is an opportunity to reduce the environmental impact associated with commuting and business travel.

During the lockdown, Scottish households have had more time and money to spend on groceries for consuming in the home. As previously mentioned, a deep recession will likely mean that a shoppers will expect food prices to remain low and price and convenience will be the most important factors in purchasing decisions.

Infrastructure investment

As mentioned above, allowing for road and rail infrastructure investment to target improving efficiency and reducing emissions associated with the movement of goods rather than commuters and business travel would be welcome. FDF has previously fed back that the Scottish transport strategy is very focused on the movement of people and there is a need to improve our resilience by investing in transport infrastructure that allows efficient movement of goods.

FDF and our members are very supportive of a “green” recovery. Investment in renewable energy such as geothermal, hydro and tidal that can benefit both households and communities across Scotland are vital if Scotland to achieve net-zero by 2045.

Both businesses and households in Scotland have relied on the internet for communicating and for ecommerce. We ask that the Scottish Government accelerates the rollout of superfast broadband and also improves mobile data coverage across Scotland.