

Following consideration of this petition at its meeting on 19 September, the Committee had agreed to seek the views of the Scottish Government. The Committee's letter asked, in particular, about the Scottish Government's strategic approach to securing the right to food and whether the right to food will form part of the Good Food Nation Bill.

The Scottish Government is committed to ensuring that Scotland is a modern, inclusive nation which protects, respects and fulfils internationally recognised human rights. We embed human rights, equality, dignity and respect in all areas of policy, and are taking action to secure the progressive implementation of all human rights.

The right to food is contained in Article 11 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights as an integral part of the right to an adequate standard of living. The consultation on proposals for a Good Food Nation Bill advised that Scottish Ministers do not intend that the right to food will be incorporated into Scots law through the Good Food Nation Bill. The consultation proposed a statutory requirement on Scottish Ministers and specified public authorities to have regard to relevant international obligations and guidance in developing statements of policy on food. Scottish Ministers have committed to introduce a Good Food Nation Bill.

The Scottish Government understands its responsibility to ensure that internationally-recognised human rights have meaningful, everyday effect in people's lives. In January 2018, the First Minister established an Advisory Group on Human Rights Leadership to examine the human rights impacts of UK withdrawal from the EU and how best to protect and promote human rights across all potential scenarios.

In responding to the Group's report in December 2018, the First Minister endorsed its overall vision of a new human rights framework for Scotland. Subsequently, the Scottish Government established a National Taskforce, co-chaired by the Cabinet Secretary for Social Security and Older People and Professor Alan Miller, former chair of the Scottish Human Rights Commission, to progress the Advisory Group's recommendations.

The Taskforce, which met for the first time on 2 October, will develop a statutory human rights framework that brings internationally-recognised human rights into domestic law, and will also oversee a wider programme of accompanying activity to increase understanding of human rights both within public authorities and among the wider population. The Taskforce is currently in the process of developing the detail of its proposed work programme and the approach it will take to specific rights.

The Scottish Government already takes a human rights approach to tackling food insecurity, which is an important component of the right to food. We do this by mitigating the impact of welfare reform and investing in dignified responses to food insecurity.

Last year, we invested over £1.4 billion to support low income households - £100 million of which was to mitigate the worst impacts of UK Government welfare cuts. Our £3.5 million Fair Food Fund is designed to support dignified responses to food insecurity and has funded community meals, low cost community food pantries and links to further money advice and support. The Fund is evolving the response away from charitable approaches and towards human rights approaches.

In 2016, the Scottish Government accepted recommendations from the Independent Working Group on Food Poverty to measure household food insecurity and is doing this through the Scottish Health Survey. The data has been integrated in to our National Performance Framework outcomes on poverty and human rights, which are aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals - including Goal 2 to end hunger.