



Flora McLean

**Director,
Scottish Food and Drink Federation**

As Director of the Scottish Food and Drink Federation (SFDF), Flora's role is to represent and promote the interests of the manufacturing industry in Scotland – primarily to the Scottish Executive, the Scottish Parliament and its committees, FSA Scotland and Scottish Enterprise.

As SFDF is a devolved division of the Food and Drink Federation, Flora sits on the FDF Strategy Group and its three Steering Committees - Health & Wellbeing, Food Safety & Science, and Competitiveness & Sustainability.

Flora is the current Chair of the Scottish Food Chain Group and is a member of the Stakeholder Working Group convened by Scottish Enterprise and SEERAD to establish a new food chain body, *Scotland Food and Drink*.

Flora represents industry on the Scottish Food Enforcement Liaison Committee (SFELC), a strategic advisory body to the Food Standards Agency in Scotland. She is also a member of the Improve Stakeholder Strategy Group. Improve is the sector skills council for the food and drink manufacturing industry.

Flora was recently invited to become a member of the Food and Health Alliance Steering Committee. The purpose of the Alliance is to promote effective communication and debate between stakeholders and the sharing of knowledge and best practice.

Flora was elected Joint Secretary of the Scottish Parliament's Cross Party Group on Food, a role she shares with Mary Lawton of the Scottish Consumer Council. Flora also contributes to the CBI Scotland Trade Association Committee and is a member of the Scottish Policy Innovation Forum.

Before being appointed Director of the Scottish Food and Drink Federation in May 1999, Flora worked in the Westminster Parliament (House of Commons) for five years and then for the Food and Drink Federation in London for five years.

Flora is a graduate of both Glasgow and Strathclyde Universities.

Scottish Diet Action Plan Review

The Scottish Food and Drink Federation (SFDF) commends NHS Health Scotland for instigating a review of the Scottish Diet Action Plan (SDAP). Learning from our experiences in the intervening ten years offers us all an opportunity to build on the successes and re-focus our efforts.

However, the reality is that it is only possible to begin to build on success if there is a preparedness to acknowledge contributions and celebrate progress – whether those contributions are from community projects, dietitian-led initiatives or from industry. In our view, much of the review report concentrates on the achievement of dietary targets and, in the process, pays only scant attention to a range of significant areas of improvement. To that extent, the Review Report is something of a missed opportunity.

Furthermore, when it comes to population-wide targets, like those set by the SDAP, we need to openly acknowledge that they will not be achieved overnight. Otherwise we fall into the trap of just talking about ‘failure’ to meet dietary targets and risk losing momentum built in other areas. To make progress on a population wide basis will take time - we are ALL in this for the ‘long haul’.

Industry: Delivering Progress

The food and drink manufacturing industry recognises that it has a responsibility to help consumers understand more about the food they eat and how to enjoy a healthy lifestyle and balanced diet. Therefore, in terms of the SDAP, industry has worked to deliver progress on a number of fronts.

Whilst SFDF itself was only established in mid-1999, we have undertaken to play our part alongside government, educators, consumers and the rest of the food chain, in helping to improve the nation’s health.

In the intervening period, we have worked constructively with the Food and Health Co-ordinator, FSA Scotland and other key players. For instance, on school meals, we are of the view that it is unquestionably right for government to intervene. Right because it is important to instil good nutritional habits at an early age and because, as provider of school meals, government has a duty to specify the nutritional standards it wishes to deliver.

Therefore, SFDF contributed to the original FSA Scotland-led process of developing nutrient specifications for school meals and has subsequently welcomed the ‘health promoting schools’ concept and ‘whole school’ approach enshrined in the Schools (Nutrition and Health Promotion) (Scotland) Bill.

Then in 2004 industry set out seven clear commitments in the *FDF Food and Health Manifesto*, followed by the *Delivering On Our Commitments* report (2005), which sought to demonstrate the very real progress industry is making. The report found that when compared to 2004:

- 97% of products (worth £33bn) would have full nutrition information on pack by end 2005
- £15bn of products would have full Guideline Daily Amounts (GDA) information on pack by end 2006.

The recently launched 'What's Inside Guide', a consumer education programme, builds on the commitment.

On reformulation, by end 2005, products worth £7.4bn had a lower level of salt; £2.2bn had a lower level of fat; and £1.4bn had a lower level of sugar.

Whilst considerable progress has already been delivered that will benefit all consumers, our members are committed to continuing to reduce levels of fat, salt and sugar in products and providing lower fat, salt and sugar options where technologically possible, safe and acceptable to consumers.

Furthermore, industry has committed itself to being an exemplar for promoting healthy living within its own workforce – and when you remember that we employ circa 50,000 people in Scotland alone and upwards of 500,000 across the UK, there is the potential for this to have a truly positive impact.

Mapping the Way Forward

1. Health & Wellbeing: Holistic Approach, Cross-cutting Solutions

We share the Review Panel's assertion that the '*challenge is to frame policy to address a complex multi-causal problem in a cross-cutting way*'

Health is not just about diet. SFDF has consistently advocated that a *Whole Diet, Whole Lifestyle* approach – with at least equal importance attached to physical activity as diet - is what will succeed in improving health and wellbeing.

In our view, a more holistic approach to health and wellbeing and better integration of the policy goal of improving Scotland's diet-related ill-health into other policy areas will be more likely to achieve sustainable progress.

For instance, education has a crucial role to play – especially in relation to children. Nutrition and health education can help teach children how to construct a balanced diet and physical education can encourage more active lifestyles from an early age.

Similarly, in addition to communicating the importance of a balanced diet and a more active lifestyle, we would urge the Scottish Executive and local authorities to prioritise improvements to our built environment in order to enable more physical activity to be easily incorporated into our daily lives. This could be achieved through the provision of more open spaces within communities for no cost, or low-cost active leisure, or improved lighting along paths to encourage walking and cycling.

2. Greater Focus, Greater Impact

We concur with the view that *‘to achieve population-level impact, a more focused and prioritised approach to policy and implementation may prove to be more effective....’* Concentrating resources and the efforts of all the key players on fewer actions will allow more consistency of message to be achieved and is likely to make a bigger impact.

3. Improving Communication and Engagement

In our view, the Scottish Executive’s appointment of a Food and Health Co-ordinator was significant in enabling improved co-ordination between agencies and stakeholders and encouraging a sense of shared responsibility for delivering progress.

Whilst the subsequent establishment of a Food and Health Council seemed to offer the prospect of ongoing active engagement with industry and others, this potential has not been realised. Rather, having failed to directly involve industry (food manufacturing and foodservice), the Council seems to have placed another obstacle in the way of open dialogue and active engagement and has generated drift instead of action.

Therefore, we are of the view that steps need to be taken to rectify this situation and so actively engage industry on a sustained and ongoing basis.

There are many health issues affecting Scotland to tackle, but we all need to pull together to achieve sustainable progress. SFDF is committed to playing its part, along with government, educators, consumers and the rest of the food chain, in helping to improve the nation’s health.