

Fair Work in the Food and Drink Sector

In February 2019, the South Wales Food Poverty Alliance published their report, 'Food Poverty In South Wales: A Call To Action'. The full report can be found [here](#)¹. It brings together a range of evidence on the scale and impact of food poverty across South Wales and some of the initiatives trying to address the issue. The report recognises the need to shift focus from the provision of food aid to ensuring that everyone can access good food, including the need to boost incomes.

The calls to action in the report are cross cutting, covering numerous Ministerial portfolios. We would like to highlight one of the calls to action:

'Use of all available policy levers, including the Economic Contract, to ensure that employers across Wales pay the real Living Wage², set by the Living Wage Foundation, and act to reduce the gender pay gap.'

The report shows that 24%, or 750,000 people, in Wales each year were living in relative poverty after paying housing costs between 2014-17 and that over half the people living in poverty in Wales today are in work. In addition, more than a fifth of workers in Wales are earning less than the real Living Wage as set by the Living Wage Foundation - this rises to a third of workers in some areas, for example Blaenau Gwent and Pembrokeshire.

The report highlights that research on decent work for women in the food and drink sector³ found that the workforce remains heavily gender segregated, with more to be done to tackle a culture of discrimination based on gender. Career pathways within the food and drink sector were overall not clearly defined with more needing to be done by stakeholders to develop and communicate opportunities for career progression.

The food and drink industry has been recognised as a foundation sector for support by Welsh Government under Prosperity for All. There is a continued aim to grow the sector and promote Welsh food and drink. Welsh Government's initial engagement report on the new Food and Drink Action Plan suggests that providing 'fair work' and better skilled (and remunerated jobs) is seen as key to the sector's contribution to tackling poverty and inequality.

As a globally responsible nation, we must do everything we can to ensure that the human and labour rights of the people producing our food, whether here in Wales or overseas, are respected and to end the widespread human suffering among women and men in global supply chains.

We would like assurances from the Minister that she will use her responsibility for:

- Agriculture sector development, including wages and skills
- Developing agri-food sector, associated supply chains, promotion and marketing of food and drink from Wales

to ensure that:

- the revised Food and Drink Action Plan delivers measurable progress on payment of the real Living Wage and reducing the gender pay gap within the Welsh food and drink industry and its associated supply chains

¹ https://www.sustainweb.org/foodpower/map/south_wales_food_poverty_alliance/

² <https://www.livingwage.org.uk/what-real-living-wage>

³ <https://www.cteg.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/Decent-Work-for-Women-in-Wales-A-Sectoral-Study-03.10.17-Final.pdf>

- consideration is given as to how Welsh Government can work with the other developed nations and UK Government to influence large national and international food and drink organisations, including retailers, to pay the Real Living wage
- consideration is given to the minimum rates of pay for agricultural wages and how they can be brought in line with the Real Living Wage.

**The Third Sector Energy, Environment and Rural Affairs Planning Group
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