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Catherine Gazzoli: Scotland gives rest of the UK food for thought

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By Catherine Gazzoli

Nation up to speed with slow approach to produce, writes Catherine Gazzoli

SERIOUSLY good venison with the Fletchers in Fife. Sharp Dunlop cheese with Anne in its namesake village, biting cheddar on Bute, a little hard-to-get honey in Linlithgow.

Since I have relocated to Britain to lend a hand to the Slow Food movement

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in the UK, I haven't felt much affinity to a snail – our little symbol for this international movement for good, clean and fair food.

There is a lot to do. In fact, from our London HQ, things can sometimes look bleak with GM, labelling and waste issues piling up. Visiting our many Scottish groups is the best medicine. From Skye to Ayrshire, Aberdeenshire to Fife, I can sense the snail on the move. In Edinburgh, my last port of call, issues around food feel light years ahead. I take a deep breath when I walk into Dovecot Studios to our temporary Slow Food Cafe which spreads the word about the growing movement in Scotland. I get excited about Slow Food Edinburgh's Slow Suppers and the local farmers' market. I'm genuinely surprised that Scotland's small artisan producers are still such a secret.

My friends on the Continent are obsessed with what I might be eating. There are many jokes about deep frying. It's my laugh, however. As I get to know the producer network gathering around Slow Food in Scotland, I am more and more impressed with the local Slow Food groups which inspire locals hungry not only for great taste but for the story behind that taste. Achieving food security doesn't need a lot of new bells and whistles. It's happening really deliciously right here.

Already Scotland is publicly rejecting the notion that schools can't afford to feed kids anything but low-grade, nutritionally deficient food. The Scottish Food Policy is a lighthouse for our friends down south.

Slow Food in Scotland is helping to make a statement that food security can be promoted by bringing neighbours and community members together in the spirit of goodwill and for the joy of sharing good local food. That is the heart of the Slow Food movement and, from an outsider's eyes, it is also the core of true Scottish character.

• *Catherine Gazzoli is chief executive of Slow Food*

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