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Libby Brooks

The Scottish government has relied too heavily on food charity during the coronavirus outbreak, according to **Food Workers for Food Justice**, a group of independent food banks, community food groups and supporting organisations who have written an open letter to the first minister, Nicola Sturgeon.

While praising the Scottish government's "cash first" approach to food aid, the letter calls for an end to the government's dependence on food banks and stresses that direct monetary relief must be accessible to all those who need it.

The Trussell Trust reported an 89% increase in need for emergency food parcels during April 2020, while the Independent Food Aid Network figures show a 246% increase in the number of parcels distributed in Scotland in April 2020 in comparison with last year.

Setting out a manifesto for long-term change, the signatories - who represent over 35 different community food initiatives based in 14 Scottish local authorities - put forward a plan for nationwide food hubs that are community run but centrally funded as part of a move towards building a local and sustainable food system, as well as enshrining the right to food in law. "Now is the time to start creating these structures that will enable resilience for future crisis scenarios and provide essential support today."

Sabine Goodwin, coordinator of the Independent Food Aid Network, said:

**“***Independent food banks in Scotland have reported huge increases in need for emergency food parcels since the outbreak of Covid-19. The Scottish government's "cash first" approach is most welcome but as the poverty crisis deepens much more needs to be done. Food bank teams are doing all they can but the voices of frontline volunteers need to be heard. They cannot continue to be relied on to pick up the pieces.*



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