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*For immediate use*

**Quality Meat Scotland dishes up another helping of meat vouchers to school children**

In a bid to tackle Scotland’s obesity epidemic and educate the next generation of consumers, Quality Meat Scotland (QMS) has delivered 322 ‘meat vouchers’ to schools across Scotland, a figure which tops that of previous years.

The QMS Meat Voucher Scheme is an industry initiative to help combat the obesity epidemic sweeping Scotland by helping teach secondary age children how to cook quality nutritious meals.

The home economics departments of secondary schools spanning the length and breadth of the country have received vouchers worth up to £180 which can be exchanged for fresh, locally produced Scotch Beef PGI or Specially Selected Pork. Redeemable at their local Scotch Butchers Club member, the vouchers enable cookery lessons which educate and inspire pupils to cook healthy, balanced meals at home.

Helen Graham from The Mary Russel School in Paisley, a school catering for boys and girls who require Additional Support, applied for the scheme this year and is thrilled about what it brings to children. She said:

“Learning about, and cooking with, red meat will be a new experience for many of our pupils, but I am confident that it will open their eyes to the joys of cooking and importance of eating a nutritious and varied diet.”

From an economic perspective, Ms Graham commented: “Without the financial boost of the voucher, our department, like many others, would struggle to afford quality red meat products to use for learning. But now, we can now get the pupils involved and excited about working with this fantastic ingredient.”

The Meat Voucher Scheme is just one aspect of the work developed by QMS’s Health and Education Scheme to engage schools and pupils.

QMS Health & Education Manager, Alix Ritchie said:

“We are immensely proud to have delivered the meat voucher scheme for another year alongside our many other educational activities. We are catering to the demands of the school curriculum and getting the next generation thinking about what they are putting into their bodies, something which we believe is a true take home lesson.”

For more information on Health and Education team’s resources visit

www.education.qmscotland.co.uk/FarmingFoodsteps/ or follow @MakeItScotchSc on Twitter.

**ENDS**

**Notes to editors:**

QMS is the public body responsible for promoting the PGI labelled Scotch Beef and Scotch Lamb brands in the UK and abroad and also promoting Scottish pork products under the Specially Selected Pork logo.

Please note that the use of the word Scotch in the Scotch Beef PGI and Scotch Lamb PGI brands is correct and should not be substituted for an alternative such as Scots or Scottish. The history of the use of the word Scotch in this way, traces back to the 18th century.

QMS also helps the Scottish red meat sector improve its sustainability, efficiency and profitability and maximise its contribution to Scotland's economy.

The quality assurance schemes run by QMS cover more than 90% of livestock farmed for red meat in Scotland. They offer consumers in the UK and overseas the legal guarantee that the meat they buy has come from animals that have spent their whole lives being raised to some of the world’s strictest welfare standards.

Scotland’s beef, lamb and pork producers make an important contribution to the country’s economic, social and environmental sustainability, contributing over £2 billion to the annual GDP of Scotland and supporting around 50,000 jobs (many in fragile rural areas) in the farming, agricultural supply and processing sectors.

For more information visit www.qmscotland.co.uk or follow QMS on Facebook or Twitter.