



NEWS RELEASE

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New report highlights importance and problems facing food sector in London

A new report published today (Thursday 17 June) shows the importance of food to London's economy whilst highlighting the serious problems facing the sector in the capital.

The report, called Capital Eats, found that Londoners spend nearly £11 billion on food each year. However, it also highlighted the lack of access to nutritious food for people on low-incomes. It showed that 53 per cent of inner London children and 33 per cent of outer London children live below the poverty line whilst 13 wards in East London boroughs have been identified as "food deserts" where there is no local provision of affordable fresh food.

Furthermore the report found that 80 per cent of food eaten in London is produced outside the capital despite 12,000 hectares or 8 per cent of Greater London being farmland. It also reported that half a million tonnes of food ended up in landfill sites as waste each year.

The report, which was jointly produced by the London Development Agency and London Food Link, found that 31,000 people work in food manufacturing – making it the second biggest manufacturing sector in the capital. Furthermore it showed that there are around 60,000 food retailers in London, around 25 per cent of all London businesses.

The LDA has set up a new body called London Food to look at many of the issues raised in the report and to devise a more co-ordinated food and farming strategy for the capital. London Food will be made up of leading figures from food businesses, farming, community sectors and government. It will look at ways of reducing the environmental impact of food manufacturing in London, raising the level of skills of workers in the food industry and improving Londoners' diets.

Honor Chapman, Chair of the London Development Agency, said: "This report clearly shows that the food sector is hugely important to the capital's economy and it is therefore vital to encourage its development. Food issues affect many of the LDA's activities such as promoting health, raising productivity, encouraging innovation and creating new jobs for some of the

most disadvantaged groups in the capital. We have set up London Food to make the sector stronger and more sustainable, bringing benefits to food firms, workers and consumers across the capital.”

Ben Reynolds, Project Officer of London Food Link, said: “The importance and cultural diversity of London food is undisputed. We now need to ensure that the whole of London’s food sector becomes more sustainable, that more fresh food is available, and that currently niche products such as locally grown food become mainstream and affordable and accessible to more Londoners.

There is a clear need for more co-ordinated action to ensure more Londoners benefit from fresher foods which will promote good health and benefit individual producers. This report outlines policy issues for each sector and explores options for change.”

David Smith, London Food member, Chairman of the Confederation of Independent Retailers said: “There are too many ‘shopping deserts’ in London, especially in the deprived parts of the capital. I hope that London Food is able to create the right environment so that small retailers can flourish and supply fresh produce to more Londoners, especially on low incomes.”

Editor’s Notes:

The London Development Agency is the Mayor's agency for business and jobs. The LDA prepares the Mayor's business plan for London and mobilises the support and resources of hundreds of partner organisations to help build a thriving economy for London's people, businesses and communities. The LDA is dedicated to improving sustainability, health and equality of opportunity for Londoners.

London Food Link is a project by Sustain, the alliance for better food and farming. London Food Link aims to help producers, consumers and retailers make a positive choice for sustainable local food. This means better access to affordable, high quality and seasonal food, shorter supply chains and campaigning for policies which promote a thriving food economy and culture. London Food Link members include councils, health authorities, businesses, environment and community groups.

For press enquiries ring Vincent Burke at the LDA Press Office on 7954 4682/07976 081 041 or Ben Reynolds at London Food Link on 020 7837 1228/07939 202 711.

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Capital Eats report Media strategy

It is going to food correspondents/social affairs correspondents on national papers.

General & Business print/broadcast media

Going to Jonathan Prynne, Evening Standard Consumer Affairs, Editor

Matthew Morris, East London correspondent, BBC London

Mark Gould, Society Guardian

Regeneration press

Key messages

Food is massively important to London's economy in terms of the size of the market and food manufacturing.

However, there are serious issues affecting the sector such as the lack of affordable food to people on low incomes living in "food sectors"