Eat well and save the planet!
A short guide for consumers on how to eat greener, healthier and more ethical food

This is a one-page summary of Sustain's sustainable food guidelines, for consumers interested in eating greener, healthier and more ethical food. For more information, visit:
www.sustainweb.org/sustainablefood

Between 20 and 30 per cent of the global warming caused by human activity is contributed by our food and agriculture systems. And barely a day goes by without the media covering a health or environment-related story about food. At the moment, there is no legal definition of 'sustainable food,' although some aspects, such as the terms 'organic' or 'Fairtrade', are clearly defined. Sustain's working definition is that sustainable food should be produced, processed and traded in ways that:

- Contribute to thriving local economies and sustainable livelihoods – both in the UK and, in the case of imported products, in producer countries;
- Protect the diversity of both plants and animals (and the welfare of farmed and wild species), and avoid damaging natural resources and contributing to climate change;
- Provide social benefits, such as good quality food, safe and healthy products, and educational opportunities.

In our opinion, consumers wishing to support a sustainable food system should:
1. **Buy local, seasonally available ingredients as standard**, to minimise energy used in food production, transport and storage. To see which foods are in season, see, for example: http://www.eattheseasons.co.uk/.
2. **Buy food from farming systems that minimise harm to the environment**, such as certified organic produce. For information about organic certification, see the website of the UK's largest organic certification body, the Soil Association: http://www.soilassociation.org.
3. **Reduce the amount of foods of animal origin (meat, dairy products and eggs) eaten**, as livestock farming is one of the most significant contributors to climate change, and **eat meals rich in fruit, vegetables, pulses, wholegrains and nuts**. Ensure that meat, dairy products and eggs are produced to **high environmental and animal welfare standards**. See the website of Compassion in World Farming's Eat Less Meat campaign: http://www.eatlessmeat.org for more information.
4. **Stop buying fish species identified as most 'at risk' by the Marine Conservation Society** (http://www.fishonline.org/advice/avoid), and **buy fish only from sustainable sources** – such as those accredited by the Marine Stewardship Council (http://www.msc.org).
5. **Choose Fairtrade-certified products** for foods and drinks imported from poorer countries, to ensure a fair deal for disadvantaged producers. For information about Fairtrade products, see http://www.fairtrade.org.uk.
6. **Avoid bottled water** and instead drink plain or filtered tap water, to minimise transport and packaging waste. For information about the environmental problems associated with bottled water, see Sustain's report: *Have you bottled it? How drinking tap water can help save you and the planet* - http://www.sustainweb.org/page.php?id=137.
7. **Protect your and your family's health and well-being** by making sure your meals are made up of generous portions of vegetables, fruit and starchy staples like wholegrains, cutting down on salt, fats and oils, and cutting out artificial additives. The Food Standards Agency (http://www.eatwell.gov.uk/) has a wealth of advice on all these topics.

Consumers can also do their bit by asking for sustainable food to be sold by retailers, restaurants, canteens and in public sector institutions such as schools and hospitals, and supporting organisations and businesses that adopt sustainable food principles. You could encourage your workplace to adopt a sustainable food policy, and to take practical steps to support a more sustainable food and farming system.