

Policy issues surrounding the sustainable public sector food procurement agenda in the UK: A discussion paper

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1. Background

Sustain: The alliance for better food and farming advocates food and agriculture policies and practices that enhance the health and welfare of people and animals, improve the working and living environment, enrich society and culture and promote equity. We represent around 100 national public interest organisations working at international, national, regional and local level.

Sustain was one of the first organisations to work on sustainable public sector food procurement, with the publication of the ‘Good Food on the Public Plate’ manual, in 2003 along with East Anglia Food Link. Sustain also ran, with the Soil Association, the ‘Hospital Food Project’, a practical pilot project to increase the amount of sustainable food in four London hospitals.¹ Sustain has also worked with Camden Council school meals service, and the ‘Greater London Family’ including the Metropolitan Police and London Fire Service, to try to increase the amount of sustainable food being provided.

This paper has been written by the Good Food on the Public Plate project, a practical initiative of Sustain, which follows on from the pilot ‘Hospital Food Project’, and aims to demonstrate that the policy agenda laid out in this paper can be made reality in a range of public sector institutions. We are currently working with more hospitals, schools and care homes in the public sector in London and the South East. Our immediate aim is for these institutions to serve nutritious, high quality food, from local producers who use sustainable farming and distribution methods. Our longer term goal is for this type of food to become routine in public sector catering.

¹ Hockridge, E. & Longfield, J. *Getting more Sustainable Food into London’s Hospitals: can it be done, and is it worth it?* (London: Sustain, 2005).

2. The replication network

As part of the ‘Hospital Food Project’ a replication network was developed, as an advice and information sharing network for similar projects already running, or for individuals or organisations who wished to set up similar projects. The results of the practical pilot projects show that sustainable food procurement is possible. However, without funded support services, often run by non governmental organisations on a charitable basis, change is happening at an extremely slow pace.

Now that the pilot phase is complete and an expanded Good Food on the Public Plate project is well underway, the replication network has been renewed. The first meeting, on April 25th, 2007, aims to discuss the policy agenda surrounding sustainable public sector food procurement, and explore how this can better support uptake of sustainable food procurement throughout the sector. Actions required to take this agenda forward will also be discussed. This paper draws on the experience of Sustain and other NGOs, and makes suggestions to be discussed at the April meeting.

3. The current situation

The message that procurement of sustainable food can have a role in school meals, hospitals and other public catering has been given loudly and clearly by Defra Ministers² and officials as part of the Department’s Public Sector Food Procurement Initiative. A number of very positive examples exist in hospitals, schools and care homes where sustainable food has found a place in public procurement (see appendix II for examples), and organic food is becoming available in Defra staff restaurants. However, there is still a long way to go.

Public procurement of goods and services represents a highly significant economic activity in the EU, and institutional food represents an important part of this sector. For example, in the UK the public sector provides approximately 1.8 billion meals every year. This accounts for 7% of the entire UK catering sector.³ In the UK the quality of institutional food has historically been driven down by reduced budgets and competitive tendering techniques which mean that cost cutting has been an overriding priority, resulting in a reliance on low quality ingredients and production methods, in both agriculture and manufacturing⁴.

There is potential for public sector catering to contribute to broader policy goals, for example to support health and education, local job creation, and increased opportunities for small and medium-sized (SME) food businesses, as well as supporting environmental objectives. Institutions such as hospitals, schools and care homes are, for example, allowed to purchase organic food.⁵ However, local purchasing developments are hampered by EU procurement directives which prohibit

² Two Years On – The Action Plan to develop organic food and farming in England (London: Defra, 2004).

³ Lampkin, N. *The role of public procurement in supporting European organic agriculture*, ORG 53* (London: Defra. Unpublished).

⁴ Lampkin, N. *The role of public procurement in supporting European organic agriculture*, ORG 53* (London: Defra. Unpublished).

⁵ Commission of the European Communities (COM), *Commission Interpretive Communication on the community law applicable to public procurement and the possibilities for integrating environmental consideration into public procurement*, (Brussels: COM, 2001).

awarding contracts on the basis of proximity of production to consumption, and this can undermine the ability of local producers to take part in public procurement contracts. At the same time, care needs to be taken to ensure that, in balancing environmental, social and economic requirements, contracting bodies do not inadvertently discriminate against local and UK producers.⁶

Practical experience in assisting public sector caterers to move towards sustainable food procurement, for example as part of Sustain's 'Good Food on the Public Plate Project' (see appendix II for further details) has shown us that:

- Although sustainable food procurement is a part of government policy, such food is not being bought by the public sector to a significant extent.
- Current budgets do not allow widespread use of sustainable food. Practical and policy solutions need to be found to overcome this issue.
- The supply of organic food, particularly from UK producers is often not on a large enough scale, or available on a dependable enough basis to satisfy the requirements of public sector caterers.
- Procurers and catering staff often do not have enough knowledge of the benefits of sustainable food to make the extra effort required to make it an important part of the menu.
- Adequate cooking facilities and training may not always be available to allow the incorporation of sustainable food supplies into routine menus.

These problems need to be overcome to meet one of the priorities of the Organic Action Plan⁷; to use public procurement to provide an important market for local farmers.

4. Current policy support for action

At a global level, green public procurement is specifically mentioned in the implementation plan for the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD), encouraging "relevant authorities at all levels to take sustainable development considerations into account in decision making."⁸

The international Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) recommends that member countries take greater account of environmental considerations in public procurement of products and services. It recommends concrete steps to ensure environmental criteria are considered, which include providing information, training and technical assistance to officials involved in the public procurement and making available to all levels of government information and tools that facilitate greener public purchasing.⁹

⁶ Defra, *Action plan to develop organic food and farming in England – Two Years on* (London: Defra 2004).

⁷ Defra, *Action Plan to develop organic food and farming in England* (London: Defra, 2003).

⁸ EUROPA *The Greening of Public Procurement* (Brussels: European Commission, 2005)

⁹ OECD *Recommendation of the Council on Improving the Environmental Performance of Public Procurement* (Kifissa: OECD, 2003).

At a European level, Article 6 of the Amsterdam Treaty specifies that “environmental protection requirements should be integrated into the definition and implementation of the policies and activities¹⁰ .”

At the UK level, public procurement is one of the opportunities which is highlighted as a key way for UK farmers to reconnect with the market in the strategy for sustainable food and farming.¹¹ In addition, the Organic Action plan for England, contains the aspiration that 50% of public authorities should specify organic food in contracts by 2010.

This issue affects all countries in the UK, and each has policies to support sustainable food procurement for the public sector. There are examples of good practice, for example, in East Ayrshire Schools¹², Carmarthenshire schools¹³, and the EU Raphael project,¹⁴ although evidence suggests that these are largely isolated examples and public procurement of sustainable food is not yet practised to a large extent in the UK¹⁵ .

5. Problems that need to be addressed

The policies to increase the amount of sustainable food sourcing in the public sector are clear. This message has been widely publicised, and has been advocated at the top level of public sector organisations. However, this message about how and why sustainable food should be procured is still not reaching all those who make the decisions about what food to buy. Research by Cardiff University¹⁶ highlights that perhaps the main barrier to sustainable food procurement is a lack of understanding among procurement professionals and institutions about what is allowable under EU law. Evidence indicates that those regions and nations that have clear guidance and support from their Governments about what is allowable under EU law have achieved greater take-up of organic food¹⁷ .

Another problem is that, within the UK, many different organisations have responsibility for increasing the amount of sustainable food being served by the public sector. They include the Regional Development Agencies, the government offices in the regions, and individual local authorities and hospital trusts.

Thus, measures are needed to ensure that procurement staff have a greater level of understanding about the benefits of sustainable procurement, alongside clear targets to increase the amount of sustainable food being bought. The need for strong voices in support of social, health and environmental considerations in public procurement of

¹⁰ EUROPA, *The Greening of Public Procurement* (Brussels: European Commission, 2005)

¹¹ Defra, *The strategy for sustainable farming and food: facing the future* (London: Defra, 2002).

¹² Hannah Pearce et al, *Double Dividend* (London: Sustainable Consumption Roundtable, 2005).

¹³ Carmarthenshire Council, *Local Sustainable Food Strategy* (Carmarthen: Carmarthenshire Council, 2004).

¹⁴ Central Procurement Directorate of Northern Ireland (CPDNI), *Public Procurement in Northern Ireland* (Belfast: CPDNI, 2006).

¹⁵ Morgan, K. *School Meals and Sustainable Food Chains* (London: The Caroline Walker Trust Lecture, 2004).

¹⁶ Morgan, K. & Morley, A. *Relocalising the Food Chain: the Role of Creative Public Procurement*, (Cardiff: The Regeneration Institute, Cardiff University, 2002).

¹⁷ Morgan, K. & Morley, A. *Relocalising the Food Chain: the Role of Creative Public Procurement*, (Cardiff: The Regeneration Institute, Cardiff University, 2002).

food is particularly important, in light of the Gershon Efficiency review, which advocates the need for savings of £3 billion to be made in public sector procurement¹⁸.

Conversely, at the highest level, leaders are stating the fact that ‘best value’ does not simply mean ‘cheapest price’. For example, Sir Neville Simms, Chairman of the Sustainable Procurement Taskforce stated that “sustainable procurement, supporting wider social, economic and environmental objectives in ways offering real long-term benefits is the only way to gain true value for money for the public purse”¹⁹.

Despite this high level and recent positive statement, anecdotal evidence continues to show that financial pressure on buyers, for example from finance departments, means that in reality, the cheapest *short term* price is being sought, without consideration for the longer term effects of such purchasing practices. In the case of cheap food, the long term costs of environmental damage caused by intensive farming, or of the health costs of “junk” food are simply not being regularly incorporated into buying decisions.

6. What should happen now?

A growing proportion of British organic produce should be used as a matter of routine in public sector catering, rather than being a rarity. For this to happen there needs to be:

- Strong, clear leadership from government at every level.
- Structured and routine financial, policy and practical support to implement sustainable public procurement.
- Thorough understanding and implementation, by those responsible for procurement, of the rules for local and organic procurement²⁰, so that environmental, social and health objectives, as well as economic considerations lie at the heart of public sector food procurement decisions.

Examples of where this already exists can be found in other European countries²¹, and can perhaps offer options for the UK. For example, Denmark and Italy have benefited from government support to convert to organic food in the public sector. Both national governments have provided funding and in Italy, both national and regional laws have been passed to include organic as well as local ingredients in school meal provision. A number of regions in Europe have also noted that organic procurement strategies tend to favour local and regional producers.²²

The recommendations set out below (currently in no particular order) are those which we believe are required to develop large-scale procurement of sustainable food for the public sector.

¹⁸ HM Treasury, *Releasing Resources for the Frontline: An Independent Review of Public Sector Efficiency* (London: HM Treasury, 2004).

¹⁹ Simms, N. *What's the plan?* (London, Defra: 2006)

²⁰ Defra, *Notice of Seminar on procurement of organic food in the public service* (London: Defra, 2003 ORG 89, Unpublished*).

²¹ Lord Whitty, *Speech to the Sustainable Procurement Conference* (London: Defra, 2003 ORG 138, Unpublished).

²² Lampkin, N. *The role of public procurement in supporting European organic agriculture*, (London: Defra, ORG 53, Unpublished).

1. Public sector caterers should specify freshness, seasonality and favourable service criteria in their contracts, and be encouraged to do so by public policy.

This means that public sector caterers would:

a) Purchase fresh ingredients, which in turn promotes locality as a quality factor.

Such a measure would also necessitate the re-introduction of production kitchens for individual institutions, rather than relying on cook-chill/cook-freeze meals which are currently served at many hospitals. Alternatively, large scale, public sector owned production kitchens could be introduced, which could prepare local food for several public sector institutions, such as the one being developed by the Cornwall Food programme²³.

b) Purchase according to local production capabilities, for example demanding products in season.

This could be encouraged by developing seasonal menus, to update the menus which hospitals are currently obliged to use as part of the government run 'Better Hospital Food Initiative'²⁴. These menus currently are not seasonal, do not encourage sustainable sourcing, and are widely criticised by hospital catering staff.

c) Specify favourable service criteria

This could include, for example emphasising minimal packaging, and delivery responsiveness, i.e., how quickly and flexibly deliveries can be made, which could favour local suppliers,

2. There should be better links and more coherence between relevant government departments.²⁵

The Department of Health, for example, rarely supports sustainable public procurement, while Defra does not adequately exploit the links between sustainability and nutrition. It is likely that the government's Sustainable Development Commission would be highly supportive of this objective, as it is currently engaged in a major programme of review to ensure that all government departments develop joined-up policy so that sustainability gets due consideration in policy-making and implementation.

3) Government should set targets for including organic produce in public procurement.

The Organic Action Plan for England includes the aspiration that 50% of public authorities should specify organic food in contracts by 2010. Percentage targets for the amount of organic food being procured by the public sector should be set and integrated into contracts and key performance indicators for catering operations in the public sector. The level of targets could be decided by gauging levels being achieved within existing public sector food procurement pilot projects and might include the following:

- **20% of food should be organic in public sector institutions when in season (i.e. when readily available in the UK) by 2012.** In addition, requirements for

²³ Cornwall Partnership Trust. *Cornwall Partnership Trust annual report 2004/05* (Cornwall: Cornwall Partnership Trust, 2005)

²⁴ NHS Estates *Better Hospital Food Initiative resources* (London: NHS Estates, 2005)

²⁵ Dowding, O. *Notice of Seminar on procurement of organic food in the public service* (London: Defra, ORG 89, Unpublished*).

freshness and seasonality will help to ensure that supply chains are, as far as possible based on local production and such statements are permissible within public sector contracts.

- **All public sector bodies should commit to the Soil Association ‘Food for Life’²⁶ targets by 2015.** While some in the public sector, particularly schools, are making good progress, others – such as the Ministry of Defence – appear to have done very little work in this area in the past.

It would also be important to ensure that organisations which have responsibility for large-scale purchasing, such as the NHS Purchasing and Supply Agency (PASA), have the same targets as individual organisations, and that these are monitored and enforced. Although PASA has an environmental policy,²⁷ which states that food grown using organic methods can be specified in contracts, our experience in the Good Food on the Public Plate project is that this is not enforced, and there may be similar problems with other large-scale buying groups.

Each public sector organisation should also include sustainable procurement in an overall strategy for the organisation. Where appropriate, this might lead to some joining up of budgets and responsibilities so that a range of sustainability objectives can be met simultaneously²⁸.

4. Procurement staff should be trained in sustainable food procurement

Procurement staff should be ‘trained for innovation’, so that they recognise that ‘value for money’ does not necessarily mean cheapest.²⁹ This could be achieved by, for example, developing new or existing training courses which all procurement officers must attend, supported by materials on good practice.

For example, a new training scheme for sustainability for public sector catering staff is being undertaken by Sustain and the Greenwich Cooperative Development Agency, supported by the Food Strategy Unit of the London Development Agency. This three year project will take place in London, and will run over three years. The results of this project, and others such as the training running at Ashlyns Organic farm³⁰, will inform potential training for the rest of the country.

In addition, the School Food Trust has been commissioned by the Department for Education and Skills to lead on the establishment of Regional Training Centres for school caterers. These centres will be networks of training provision for the school food workforce. To date, it is not clear whether sustainability will be included in the training programme, but we believe that it should. Otherwise, this will be a wasted opportunity to meet public sector food procurement objectives.

²⁶ Soil Association, *Food for Life report: Healthy, local organic School Meals*, (Bristol: Soil Association: 2003).

²⁷ NHS Purchasing and Supply Agency, *Environmental Purchasing Procedure* (London: PASA, 2003)

²⁸ National Audit Office. *Smarter food procurement in the public sector: a good practise guide*, (London: The Stationary Office, 2006).

²⁹ Morgan, K. *Notice of Seminar on procurement of organic food in the public service* (London: Defra, ORG 89, Unpublished*).

³⁰ Ashlyns Organics Ltd. *Feeding our Future* (Ongar: Ashlyns Organics Ltd, 2007 <http://www.ashlynsorganics.co.uk/>).

5. Government and non-governmental organisations should highlight and disseminate good practice

Such organisations should promote practical examples where organic food has been procured in the public sector. These successful initiatives can give procurement officers on the ground both practical information and encouragement to buy more sustainable food.

6. Government, local authorities and trusts should increase food budgets

Budgets need to be increased, with policy support to ensure that the money is used in the correct context (for example to ensure that the budget increase is not used to buy imported organic produce or more pre-prepared foods). Professor Kevin Morgan states that: “It is clear that individual organisations will need to be supported financially in many cases to meet the increased cost of organic food”³¹.

However, it should also be noted that Peter Melchett (Policy Director of the organic certification body, the Soil Association) states that “organic food is not necessarily more expensive, for example if one compares a basic organic product to a highly processed conventional one”³². However, as noted below, cooking facilities need to be in place to be able to prepare such food, with menus designed to include such foods.

Whether or not food costs rise in the long term, it is likely that most organisations would require at least some kind of ‘pump priming’ funds to begin the process of increasing the proportion of sustainable food procured. For example, unfortunately many organisations currently do not have adequate facilities to cook meals from fresh and whole ingredients. Therefore, Defra’s Organic Action Plan Group should support calls for kitchen facilities to be re-instated to ensure that the cost benefits of using primary products can be achieved.

7. Local producers should receive practical support to help them win contracts

Support will also be required for suppliers, such as training in tendering techniques, facilitation of cooperation between smaller producers, and encouraging the development of appropriate supply infrastructure³³.

Appropriate supply infrastructure would include linking local producers with infrastructure that is already being developed, for example in London through the London Development Agency.³⁴ This might include fixed facilities to aggregate and distribute the food (possibly with basic preparation and washing facilities), sustainable food centres established in existing wholesale markets, or be a ‘virtual’ hub for ordering products.

³¹ Morgan, K. & Morley, A. *Relocalising the Food Chain: the Role of Creative Public Procurement*, (Cardiff: The Regeneration Institute, Cardiff University, 2002).

³² Melchett, P. *Notice of Seminar on procurement of organic food in the public service* (London: Defra, 2003, ORG 89 Unpublished*).

³³ London Development Agency. *London Sustainable Food Hub: Opportunities for a sustainable food logistics centre in London*. (London: LDA, 2005).

³⁴ London Development Agency. *London Sustainable Food Hub: Opportunities for a sustainable food logistics centre in London*. (London: LDA, 2005).

The replication network could offer support for such infrastructure development, for example, by responding to consultations, and making a strong case for the value of supply infrastructure to facilitate sustainable public sector food procurement.

The development of such infrastructure will have a beneficial impact on producers by offering an efficient way of marketing and distributing their produce. It will also benefit public sector organisations by cutting the number of invoices which need to be raised, which can be a significant cost to the organisations.

8. All those interested in sustainable public sector procurement, particularly Defra, should support calls for changes to EU law

Support for sustainable producers through public procurement should also include efforts to widen the flexibility of EU procurement regulations to allow greater discretion for institutions to purchase from small local and regional producers. Without this, there is a danger that considerable amounts of imported organic food will be used due to lower costs,³⁵ which could undermine the environmental benefits implementing the policy. There is currently some uncertainty over exactly how the EU rules can and should be interpreted on a national level, and many examples of public sector caterers throughout Europe adopting different approaches.

Influence must be exerted in the European Union both to integrate sustainability into public procurement and to allow greater freedoms within EU procurement directives for institutions that wish to support sustainability goals through procurement of local supplies. This already occurs in the US, where public institutions are given the opportunity to support local producers by being given limited dispensation from competition laws³⁶. Such an approach could be adopted in the EU.

One suggestion is that a strong unified voice is developed on these issues. This would include a range of organisations (particularly in the third sector) which could form an alliance to lobby for such measures.

Assistance will also be required from all the government departments with any responsibilities for procuring food. The budgets required to take such measures forward will require further discussion.

Public procurement of sustainable food has the potential to be an important market for UK producers, which in turn will help meet all the objectives of the UK's sustainable food and farming strategy.

³⁵ Lampkin, N. *The role of public procurement in supporting European organic agriculture*, (London: Defra, undated, ORG 53, Unpublished*).

³⁶ Lampkin, N. *The role of public procurement in supporting European organic agriculture*, (London: Defra, undated ORG 53 Unpublished*).

Appendix 1: Sources of more detailed information

Key documents:

Defra, "Action Plan to Develop Organic Food and Farming in England", (London: Defra, 2003).

EUROPA *The Greening of Public Procurement* (Brussels: European Commission, 2005)

HM Treasury. *Releasing Resources for the Frontline: An Independent Review of Public Sector Efficiency* (London: HM Treasury, 2004).

Morgan, K. & Morley, A. *Re-localising the Food Chain: the Role of Creative Public Procurement*, (Cardiff: The Regeneration Institute, Cardiff University, 2002).

National Audit Office. *Smarter food procurement in the public sector: a good practice guide*, (London: The Stationery Office, 2006).

Soil Association, *Food for Life: healthy, local, organic school meals*. (Bristol: Soil Association, 2003).

Sustain & East Anglia Food Links, *Good Food on the Public Plate: A manual for sustainability in public sector food and catering*. (London: Sustain, 2003).

Related ORG Papers:

(*These papers have been produced by the Organic Action Plan for England, and are unpublished. For copies, please contact: organic.standards@defra.gsi.gov.uk.)

Org 38: Recommendations by the Powys Public Food Procurement Partnership for action by the Welsh Assembly.

Org 49: Information on public procurement policy and practice for organic food in Sweden and Denmark.

Org 51: Committee Inquiry into Organic Farming. 16 October, 2002.

Org 53: The role of public procurement in supporting European organic agriculture.

Org 54: Answers to questions about public procurement of organic food in Sweden.

Org 58: Evaluation criteria for the Defra action plan to develop organic food and farming in England.

Org 89: Notes of Defra seminar on procurement of organic food in the public services on 5 March 2003.

Org 95: Powys Public Procurement Partnership report on 'Local and local organic food in schools and hospitals - contributing to the health of our nation.'

Org 102: Analysis of responses by multiple retailers to letter from Michael Meacher MP. 23 May, 2003.

Org 115: Report to Defra Organic Action Plan team on increasing the proportion of UK supply for key organic foods. December, 2003.

Org 119: Evaluation of specific action points in the DEFRA Organic Action Plan as at 17th Sept 2003

Org 138: Extracts from Lord Whitty's speech to sustainable procurement conference mentioning organic farming and food. 26 November, 2003

Org 145: List of Organic Action Plan proposed sub-groups and main subjects for action. 20 October, 2004.

Org 164: Review and priorities for further action and detailed progress report on the Organic Action Plan two years on. July 2004.

Org 176: Some headlines on organic food in restaurants and canteens.

Org 180: Report from workshop on the benefits, opportunities and challenges of organic growth and regional development on 29th Nov 2004.

Org 189: The links between the Sustainable Farming and Food Strategy and organic production. 15 March, 2005.

Org 196: Suggestions for presentation about the work of the group for the England Organic Action Plan group's meeting with Lord Bach on 16 Sept 2005.

Org 205: Soil Association report on pesticide residues in school children's fruit. September 2005.

Org 221: Feasibility research by Food Matters into increasing access to organic food for low income consumers.

Org 228: Review of the English Organic Action Plan group as at summer 2006.

Org 232: Comments from Peter Melchett on the correlation of Organic Action Plan stakeholder group work plan suggestions with Sustainable Farming and Food Strategy action plan priorities.

Org 233: Draft revised terms of reference for the Organic Action Plan stakeholder group.

Implementation of CAP reform in the UK – evidence from the Soil Association to EFRA inquiry. 1 December, 2005.

Appendix 2: Examples of good practice

Although sustainable food procurement is not yet widespread, there are a growing number of positive case studies which have incorporated sustainable food into menus. The following is a sample of these.

The Good Food on the Public Plate project

The 'Good Food on the Public Plate' Project builds on the pilot 'London Hospital Food Project' which increased the amount of local and or organic food in four hospitals in London. The report of this successful two-year project,³⁷ which began in early 2004, shows how hospitals can contribute to happier patients and staff, a better environment and more business for local farms and food companies, just by changing the food they buy and serve. By the end of 2005, one of the four London hospitals in the project was buying almost 15% of their food from local and/or organic sources, with the others making progress and more hospitals wanting to join in. However, there were problems too, and the report outlines how they were overcome, and what more government needs to do to make sustainable food in hospitals the norm, rather than the exception. This new phase of the project aims to:

³⁷ Hockridge, E. & Longfield, J. *Getting more Sustainable Food into London's Hospitals: can it be done, and is it worth it?* London: Sustain, 2005.

- work with at least 20 hospitals, five schools and five care homes in London and the South East to increase the amount of sustainable food being served as part of their routine catering;
 - improve the health of patients, pupils and residents, as well as staff and visitors, as a result of providing more fresh and healthy food; and
 - improve the viability of local economies by ensuring that small and medium sized enterprises have opportunities to supply to the public sector, including by developing shorter supply chains and linking producers and the public sector.
- More details from <http://www.sustainweb.org/page.php?id=83>

Cornwall Food Programme

The Cornwall Food Programme is a commitment from the five hospital trusts in Cornwall to procure supplies in a sustainable manner. Through supporting local suppliers, growers and the producers, the trusts are encouraging the local economy and, through offering longer contracts, allowing local businesses to develop and grow.

In addition to the economic benefits, a reduction of 'food miles' results in less environmental damage and closer partnerships through the supply chain, which can also reduce packaging.

Plans are underway to develop a Cornish Food Production Unit in Camborne to replace the catering facilities at the Royal Cornwall Hospital and to provide an in-county facility to prepare, produce and cook hospital and canteen meals for all of the NHS in Cornwall.

The Cornwall Food Programme's work is funded by Objective One, Defra, Soil Association, and Organic Southwest; and works in partnership with NHS Purchasing and Supply Agency, Department of Health and the Regional Development Agency. June 2004 saw the appointment of a Sustainable Food Procurement manager who in the last twelve months has seen the introduction of local fish, milk, cheese, eggs and yoghurt onto hospital menus.

More details from:

<http://www.cornwall.nhs.uk/CPTAnnualReport05/OurSupportServices/CHES/CornwallFoodProgramme.aspx>

Food for Life

The Food for Life programme is the Soil Association's award-winning programme to transform school meals and food culture in schools. It helps schools think about their food culture and create school meals which are tasty, nutritious, local and organic. Food for Life is based around the whole school approach, which encourages children, parents, catering staff, governors, head teachers and producers to all fully engage in changes to school food provision. The Food for Life targets are that:

1. School lunches should aim to provide food which meets the nutrition standards set by the Caroline Walker Trust and the School Meals Review Panel.
2. 75% of all foods consumed should be made from unprocessed ingredients.
3. At least 50% by weight of meal ingredients should be sourced from the local region (50 mile radius or the proximity principle applies).
4. At least 30% by weight of food served should be from certified organic sources.
5. Better classroom education on food, cooking, nutrition and health should be provided and all children should visit a farm at least once during their time at school.

The most recent development for the initiative is a £16.9 million Big Lottery Fund grant, which will bring good food, cooking skills, farm visits and food growing to thousands of school children and their families. Some 180 schools in diverse communities across England will now become beacons of good food culture. The positive effects will go much further, getting schoolchildren and parents across the country cooking, re-training dinner ladies, and offering farmers secure markets for local, seasonal and sustainably-produced food.

Led by the Soil Association, The Food for Life Partnership consists of the Focus on Food Campaign, Garden Organic and the Health Education Trust, bringing together experience of successful practical work in schools, revolutionising school meals and giving children the chance to grow and cook food, and visit organic farms.

The Food for Life Partnership is currently finalising the selection criteria for the 180 flagship schools across England. When the criteria are completed, the project will seek nominations from regional public health and food procurement experts, as well as direct applications from interested schools and caterers.
More details from: <http://www.soilassociation.org/foodforlife>