

Purchase of Local and/or Organic Foods for Patients and Cafeterias

The Hospital Food Project (NHS), London, England



Hospitals are major purchasers and providers of food, whether through on-site cafeterias and restaurants, vending machines, or directly to patients. Health care leaders increasingly are seeking to alter food purchasing to provide healthier foods to patients and staff.

The Hospital Food Project is a two-year effort through which four London National Health Service (NHS) hospitals are working with local partners to increase their purchase of local and/or organic food. Its goals are to 1) have local and/or organic food purchases equal 10% of their routine food purchases, and 2) develop a model that can be used by other hospitals to do the same.

Two of the hospitals focus on sourcing these foods for their cafeterias, while the other two source for both cafeteria and patient food.

<i>Cafeteria/Patient Food</i>	<i>Cafeteria Food Only</i>
St. Georges Hospital Ealing Hospital	Royal Brompton Hospital Bethlem Hospital

Background. In the United Kingdom, both government and hospital agency policies support hospital sourcing of locally produced and/or organic foods. England's

Each year the NHS serves more than 300 million meals in approximately 1,200 hospitals and spends over £500 million.

Sustainable Food Procurement Initiative seeks to increase consumption of healthy, nutritious food and reduce the adverse environmental impacts of food production, among other goals. And the National Health Service's Purchasing and Supply Agency (PASA) and NHS Estates have developed a Food Procurement Action Plan that promotes sustainable food procurement and suggests improvements in a number of areas including environmental issues, healthier eating, and enabling local suppliers to compete. Despite the strong policy support a number of barriers to sourcing sustainably-produced food still exist including a lack of extra funds to buy higher quality food.

The Project was launched by London Food Link, a project of Sustain-the alliance for better food and farming which represents over 100 national public interest organizations, in partnership with the Soil Association, the UK's leading

certifier and promoter of organic farming. Funders of the Project include the Department for Environment, Food, and Rural Affairs, the European Agricultural Guidance and Guarantee Fund, and the King's Fund, whose president is Prince Charles.

Implementation. The Project's organizers aim to make it as easy as possible for hospitals to make the leap from standard food procurement practices to increased use of local and organic producers, in part by building relationships, managing cost implications, and addressing administrative, safety, and supply issues. More specifically, organizers will work with hospitals to develop menus that take advantage of seasonal and/or organic foods, set supply tenders that will improve local and/or organic suppliers' ability to win contracts, and use existing supply chains to reduce administration. Organic certification training will also be provided to hospital distributors and staff.

Organizers also will help food producers and suppliers understand the supply requirements of the public sector, optimizing conditions for getting local and/or organic food into patient wards and cafeterias.

The Project will also conduct research to:

- Explore barriers that exist within local food infrastructures,
- Investigate distribution needs in London, and
- Evaluate the associated health and economic effects of increasing the supply of good local food to hospitals.

Conclusion. Though this project is just getting off the ground, it has tremendous potential. Organizers are working to overcome a number of barriers and the project has been very challenging thus far.

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Source. http://www.sustainweb.org/hospital_backgr.asp