



## Press Release

*EMBARGOED UNTIL 12 MIDNIGHT 16 JULY*

### **£5 billion potential boost to local economies through local food in public sector catering**

Using local food in our school, hospital and prison canteens would boost local economies by at least £5 billion and create many local jobs. This is one of many findings of 'Good Food on the Public Plate'; Sustain<sup>i</sup> and East Anglia Food Link<sup>ii</sup>'s new 'manual for sustainability in public sector food and catering'. The manual, launched today, is a definitive guide for those wishing to introduce sustainable food policies and practices into the public sector.

The manual argues that food supplies and catering services in the public sector need to be made more sustainable. The need is urgent: it is being called for by the general public, by producers and others in the farming sector, by regional and national government, and by many European organisations. The benefits to consumers, suppliers, purchasers, and to society at large are potentially huge. More sustainable food in the public sector could lead to better quality food for consumers, more market opportunities and greater profitability for suppliers and producers, reduction in costs, both directly and indirectly, for public sector bodies, reduced diet related disease, and improvements in environmental quality and social benefits for society in general. The recommendations for government include;

1. The Office of Government Commerce (OGC), supported by the Cabinet Office, Treasury, and the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM), should seek to amend European and WTO procurement legislation so that, in future, environmental and social criteria are given equal weight to economic aspects in the award of food and

catering contracts. To underpin this, the UK Government should propose new, European-wide methods for specifying sustainable food and evaluating tenders for food and catering contracts.

2. Government and the devolved administrations should also introduce a new, UK-wide law, to require public authorities, departments and institutions to incorporate sustainable development into food procurement and provision. This would include specifying organic, fair trade, traditional and regional ingredients, and culturally appropriate and distinctive food in healthy, seasonal recipes and menus.
3. The Treasury should provide money for sustainable food and encourage investment in the long-term improvement of public sector food and catering, including in the supply system, in catering staff, kitchen equipment and facilities, serving and dining areas, and in training to support menu and recipe changes and development.

Anne Dolamore, Guild of Food Writers, and Chair of the project, writes "*It is hoped that those who read and use this manual will be at the vanguard of a movement to revolutionize public sector catering in this country which has, for far too long, been the victim of a cheap food culture that has contributed to the creation of an unsustainable food system.*"

Tully Wakeman, Co-ordinator of East Anglia Food Link said "*We are delighted to be associated with this publication, which will be invaluable in forging the partnerships necessary to change the experience of food in schools, with huge benefits for children, their health, and food producers.*"

Victoria Edwards, Board Member of the Countryside Agency said: "*Farmers are crucial to our countryside. However, the farming industry is in decline and their share of the domestic food market has plummeted to a fraction of what it was fifty years ago. New approaches are needed now, to help them to maintain England's quality landscape and the multi-million pound public sector catering industry, therefore, has immense potential to boost England's rural economy. The Countryside Agency is delighted to support this timely guide which will show public sector bodies the way forward.*"

Vicki Hird, Sustain's Policy Director states "*This comprehensive and comprehensible manual will be an invaluable reference and resource for all those wanting to see better food and more sustainable practises in public sector catering.*"

The foreword of the manual is written by Jonathon Porritt, Chair of the Sustainable Development Commission and Director of Forum for the Future.

**-Ends-**

### **Editorial notes;**

*Good Food on the Public Plate: A manual for sustainability in public sector food and catering* sets out the reasons why sustainable food is needed in the public sector, and how to achieve it. It is intended for suppliers, purchasers, caterers and other stakeholders and is designed to be used as a key source of information and guidance on the theory and practice of sustainable public sector food and catering. It begins by reviewing food and catering in the public sector and considers what the elements of 'sustainable food' are. It also provides guidance for suppliers wishing to supply the public sector, including advice on collaborating with others, how public procurement works, and what will be required from them. The manual has a detailed section exploring the procurement legislation, and gives advice to procurement officers wanting to improve the sustainability of the food or catering service they purchase. It also has advice on good catering practices, and considers the wider elements of developing an integrated approach and sustainable food culture.

The manual contains fifteen fascinating case studies from Florida to Wiltshire, and from Venice to Belfast. The foreword is written by Jonathon Porritt. There are seasonal and regional recipe ideas and charts, a model sustainable procurement policy statement, model contract specifications and evaluation system, checklists for suppliers, procurement managers and caterers, reviews of assurance schemes, purchasers and funding sources, a review of other useful guides and reports, and over a hundred links to useful organisations. All this will be invaluable for the following groups or institutions; policy makers, producers, suppliers, producer groups, procurement managers, schools, hospitals, prisons, social services, local authorities, central government departments and agencies, rural and agricultural development workers, regional development agencies, economic development departments, public sector budget holders, catering managers, prison and school governors, headteachers, parents, patients, hospital trustees, health promotion workers, LA21 officers, community dieticians, voluntary sector organisations and projects. A summary is available on request.

The organisations listed below are very pleased to support the publication of the manual. They believe it will make a valuable contribution to the debate on food procurement and provision in the public sector, and be useful for those wishing to improve food and catering sustainability. In supporting the manual, each of the following organisations is indicating its formal agreement only in those areas where it has specific competence. At the same time, each acknowledges the expertise and authority of the other organisations in their respective fields.

Allergy Alliance  
Baby Milk Action  
BioDynamic Agriculture Association  
British Association for the Study of Community  
Dentistry  
Butterfly Conservation  
Chartered Institute of Purchasing and Supply  
Child Poverty Action Group  
Children's Society  
Compassion in World Farming  
Common Cause Cooperative

Common Ground  
Commonwork Land Trust  
Campaign to Protect Rural England  
Elm Farm Research Centre  
Fairtrade Foundation  
Family Farmers Association  
Farm Retail Association  
Farmers Link  
Food Commission  
Food Links UK  
Foundation for Local Food Initiatives

Friends of the Earth  
Guild of Food Writers  
Haemolytic Uraemic Syndrome Help (HUSH)  
HDRA – The Organic Organisation  
Hospital Caterers Association  
International Institute for Environment and Development  
King's Fund  
Land Heritage  
Local Authority Caterers Association  
Marine Conservation Society  
Maternity Alliance  
National Council of Women  
National Farmers Union  
National Federation of Women's Institutes

National Heart Forum  
National Oral Health Promotion Group  
New Economics Foundation  
NHS Purchasing and Supply Agency  
Northern Ireland Chest, Heart and Stroke Association  
Permaculture Association  
Pesticides Action Network (UK)  
Royal Society for the Promotion of Health  
Royal Society for the Protection of Birds  
Soil Association  
UK Public Health Association  
Women's Environmental Network  
Women's Food and Farming Union

## All media enquiries should be directed to:

James Petts, Policy Officer, Sustain  
Tel: 020 7837 1228  
Fax: 020 7837 1141  
Email: [james@sustainweb.org](mailto:james@sustainweb.org)

or

Vicki Hird, Policy Director, Sustain  
Tel: 020 7837 1228  
Fax: 020 7837 1141  
Email: [vh@sustainweb.org](mailto:vh@sustainweb.org)

### Funders of the manual include:

Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation  
Cobb Charity  
Earth Resources Research  
Esmee Fairbairn Foundation  
Network for Social Change  
The Countryside Agency  
The Rainford Trust

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<sup>i</sup> **Sustain: The alliance for better food and farming, has a membership of over 100 organisations representing the key UK public interest groups concerned with food and farming. It includes farming, consumer, environment, animal welfare, public health and development groups.**

<sup>ii</sup> **East Anglia Food Link is a not-for-profit co-operative representing all parts of the sustainable food chain. We run and participate in a range of projects and services across the East of England and in collaboration with UK and European partners.**