



Lord Whitty, Minister for Farming, Food and Sustainable Energy, meets Mike Duckett on a visit to Royal Brompton



King's Fund

WORKING FOR
BETTER HEALTH,
WITH A FOCUS
ON LONDON



Funding for the Hospital Food Project

This project is supported under the England Rural Development Programme by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs and the European Agricultural Guidance and Guarantee Fund. London Food Link is also grateful to the King's Fund for providing a grant to help with this project.

The Hospital Food Project

A new two year project is underway which aims to increase local and/or organic food supply into four London NHS hospitals to 10% of their routine catering provision. The Hospital Food Project, run by London Food Link in partnership with the Soil Association, evolved after recent work by Sustain and The Soil Association on encouraging sustainable food procurement in the public sector.

The Hospital Food Project aims are two-fold.

Firstly it aims to promote health by providing fresher food for patients, staff and visitors. Clearly much catering in the public sector is for vulnerable groups who deserve the highest quality food. However, food is sometimes not as fresh and nutritious as it could be, as length of time between farm and plate can be many days. There is evidence that transport and storage of food can affect its nutritional value, and some losses of nutrients may occur even under excellent storage conditions. The vitamin C content of fruits and vegetables, for example, starts to decline immediately after harvest so improving the freshness of food supplied to Hospital wards and restaurants is likely to affect the nutritional health of Hospital staff as well as the patients.

Secondly it aims to help Hospitals focus spending on building and strengthening supply chains originating from local farmers in London and the South East. The NHS is a major purchaser of food in the UK, spending over £500 million on food every year. About half of this is spent through the NHS Purchasing and Supply Agency (PASA). There is enormous scope

for Hospitals to develop a sustainable food procurement system which delivers the best possible combination of environmental, social and economic benefits for all those involved.

NHS Estates and NHS PASA are both committed to improving the quality of food being served in the NHS, improving the health of the nation and supporting the rural sector. Working closely with DEFRA on the Public Sector Food Procurement Initiative, PASA and NHS Estates have developed a Food Procurement Action Plan which addresses how improvements will be made in a range of key areas including procurement, quality assurance standards, environmental issues, healthier eating and enabling local suppliers to compete.

The Plan requires working closely with NHS Trusts, suppliers, catering contractors and farming representatives. Duncan Eaton, Chief Executive of NHS PASA said, "Sustainability and improving the health of the nation must be integral to public procurement. Sustainable food procurement offers the opportunity to deliver benefits across the board, from working with UK suppliers to improving environmental and health outcomes".

- The project hopes to connect Hospitals with local and/or organic food suppliers in order to establish:
- A workable local/organic supply chain which can deliver a proportion of Hospital food needs.
 - An administrative system which helps Hospitals to buy local food where appropriate.

Support will be offered to help Hospitals set supply tenders which improve chances of local and/or organic suppliers and to develop menus which favour seasonal and/or organic food. Specialist supply chain and technical training events will help food suppliers in London and the South East and Hospital Caterers optimise conditions for getting local and/or organic food into wards and staff restaurants.

As well as fostering better opportunities for supplying local food, the Hospital Food Project will also commission research on local food infrastructure and distribution needs in London, and on the viability of a new local food centre. The project will also measure the health and economic effects of increasing local and/or organic food supply to participating Hospitals. Additionally, a network will be established to replicate

Mushrooms grown by Agridutt (Int) Ltd



the projects successes in other areas of public sector catering such as schools.

Peter Melchett, the Soil Association's Policy Director said, "There is now a real enthusiasm to change the food served in schools and hospitals with a drive from the Government. With poor diets and the resulting serious ill-health epidemic now firmly on the political agenda, we have opportunities to make meals nutritious, healthy, popular and enjoyable."

Four London Hospitals have volunteered to participate in the project; one general Hospital, one teaching, one specialist and one mental health hospital. These broadly represent the diversity of NHS catering operations in London. Ealing General Hospital and St George's Hospital, Tooting due to their larger size and the nature of their catering operations will focus on provision of local and/or organic food in hospital restaurant areas.

The Royal Brompton Hospital, Chelsea and The Lambeth Hospital, Stockwell which have smaller patient numbers will include both restaurant and ward catering.

To show support for the project, Lord Whitty, Minister for Farming, Food and Sustainable Energy, recently toured the kitchens at the Royal Brompton Hospital.

Mike Duckett, Catering Manager, (Member HCA Greater London Branch) Royal Brompton & Harefield NHS Trust, told Hospital Caterer, "The team at Royal Brompton is excited about participating in the London Food Link project. By increasing access to local suppliers we can help to promote health by providing fresher, seasonal foods for our patients." Mike was quick to point out

how at the moment his apples come from China, his tomatoes from Canada and Spring Onions from Egypt. The only produce that he could think of as being British were the potatoes and leeks! He is clearly looking forward to the next meeting with Fiona Cairncross (Project Co-ordinator) and the representatives from the other participating Hospitals so that they can really get the ball rolling. There are obviously lots of things to discuss and Mike is particularly keen to discover how long it will take to start building relationships with local suppliers and how he is going to manage the inevitable cost implications. Food safety will also be another topic high on Mike's agenda.

Fiona Cairncross, Hospital Food Project Co-ordinator at London Food Link told Hospital Caterer, "Initial discussions with Hospitals have been encouraging, with

lots of enthusiasm and commitment all round to make this project a success. There are particular issues surrounding food supply into London and so if we can make this project work in London then we should be able to make it work in other areas.

"The four Hospitals in the project want to source fresher, local and/or organic food but are concerned that it may cost more to do so. We will try to utilise gluts in supply of seasonal UK produce to keep costs down, but at times good quality, fresh and nutritious local and/or organic food may be more expensive to source. We will aim to use existing Hospital procedures wherever possible so that administrations costs are not increased."

The project has already received many expressions of interest from farmers and producers wishing to be involved, and these are being investigated by the project. One such company is Agridutt (Int) Ltd, a family business in the London Borough of Newham, growing over 9000kgs of mushrooms every week. Mr Datta of Agridutt (Int) Ltd, stressed, "It has made sense to me for quite some time that mushrooms grown in London should be supplied to London Hospitals, not Dutch mushrooms. I hope this project will be the start of something really good for Agridutt, which provides flexible, local and part time work to the multi-ethnic community in Newham."

Ref: 'Good Food on the Public Plate - A manual for sustainability in public sector food and catering' (Published Sept 2003), for full details of all Sustain publications, see www.sustainweb.org

Participating Hospitals

St Georges Hospital

Blackshaw Road
Tooting
London SW17 0QT
Contact: Alison Vincent-Edwards
Catering Manager
Tel: 020 8725 1949

Royal Brompton Hospital

Sydney Street
London SW3 6NP
Contact: Mike Duckett (HCA Member
Greater London Branch)
Catering Manager
Tel: 020 7351 8432

Lambeth Hospital

108 Landor Road
London SW9 9NT
Contact: Pam Wastell (HCA Member
Greater London Branch)
Facilities Business Manager
Tel: 020 8776 4671

Ealing Hospital

Uxbridge Road
Southall
Middlesex UB1 3HW
Contact: Wendy Capehorn
Hotel Services Manager
Tel: 020 8967 5602



London Food Link

London Food Link aims to help producers, consumers and retailers in London 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 local food economy and culture. London Food Link is a project by Sustain: The alliance for better food and farming. Sustain 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. Sustain represents over 100 national public interest organisations working at international, national, regional and local level. For further information, contact Fiona Cairncross, Hospital Food Project Co-ordinator at London Food Link.

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The Soil Association

The Soil Association is the UK's leading certifier and promoter of organic farming and food and as a charity also works to make local organic food available to all within a thriving local food culture. For information about current projects or to find out more about sourcing local and organic food, contact the Soil

Association's Local Food Links Department on 0117 914 2424 or visit their local food website at: www.localfoodworks.org

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