

Serving up sustainability

A guide for restaurants and caterers on how to provide greener, healthier and more ethical food

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. With more and more consumers engaging with these issues, buying more sustainable ingredients is not just the right thing to do ethically – it makes good business sense.

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, businesses adopting a sustainable approach to food should:

1. **Use 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. **Specify 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) served**, as livestock farming is one of the most significant contributors to climate change, and **promote 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. **Exclude fish species identified as most ‘at risk’ by the Marine Conservation Society** (<http://www.fishonline.org/advice/avoid>), and **specify 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 a list of catering suppliers of Fairtrade products, see http://www.fairtrade.org.uk/suppliers_caterers.htm.
6. **Avoid bottled water** and instead serve plain or filtered tap water in reusable jugs or bottles, 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. **Promote health and well-being** by offering 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.food.gov.uk>) has a wealth of advice on all these topics.

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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.

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Introduction

As part of the Greener Food project,¹ London Food Link² is providing bespoke advice on sustainable food to a number of London's restaurants. We have produced this summary document to help other food businesses, organisations and interested individuals that are keen to use more sustainable ingredients.

In the first section we introduce the main principles of sustainable food, explain why these issues are so important, suggest some ways to market sustainable food to customers, and list some organisations you can go to for more detailed information.

In the second section we discuss each principle in more detail, explaining what the problems are, setting out a series of achievable steps that you can take to address these problems, and again listing organisations you can go to for more information.

New evidence is emerging all the time on how best to improve the sustainability of our complex food and farming system, so these principles are a work in progress. We would welcome any information you can give us about your experience of trying to put into practice these or other approaches to sustainable food, so please contact us (details on the front cover).

What is sustainable food?

There is no legal definition of 'sustainable food,' although some aspects, such as the terms 'organic' or 'Fairtrade', are clearly defined. Our 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.



¹ As well as advising businesses on sustainable food ingredients, Greener Food offers support with efficient use of energy and water, sustainable management of waste, and recycling materials such as glass and used cooking oil. Participating food businesses receive an environmental audit of their operation with recommendations as to how they can reduce their ecological footprint by adopting more sustainable practices. Greener Food is being co-ordinated by London Sustainability Exchange (see <http://www.lsx.org.uk/>) and is funded by the London Development Agency.

² London Food Link is part of Sustain: the alliance for better food and farming – see: <http://www.sustainweb.org>.

Seven principles of sustainable food

In our opinion, businesses adopting a sustainable approach to food should:

1. **Use local, seasonally available ingredients** as standard, to minimise energy used in food production, transport and storage.
2. **Specify food from farming systems that minimise harm to the environment**, such as certified organic produce.
3. **Limit foods of animal origin** (meat, dairy products and eggs), as livestock farming is one of the most significant contributors to climate change, and **promote 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.
4. **Exclude fish species identified as most ‘at risk’** by the Marine Conservation Society, and **specify fish only from sustainable sources** – such as those accredited by the Marine Stewardship Council.
5. **Choose Fairtrade-certified products** for foods and drinks imported from poorer countries, to ensure a fair deal for disadvantaged producers.
6. **Avoid bottled water** and instead serve plain or filtered tap water in reusable jugs or bottles, to minimise transport and packaging waste.
7. **Promote health and well-being** by offering generous portions of vegetables, fruit and starchy staples like wholegrains, cutting down on salt, fats and oils, and cutting out artificial additives.

Each of these principles is discussed in more detail in section two of this document.

Why sustainable food?

Between 20 and 30 per cent of the global warming caused by human activity is contributed by our food and agriculture systems.^{3 4} And barely a day goes by without the media covering a health or environment-related story about food. Buying more sustainable ingredients is not just the right thing to do ethically – it makes good business sense. Here’s why:

- **Consumers are asking for it** - Evidence from the retail sector shows that British consumers are increasingly demanding ‘ethical foods’ such as organic and Fairtrade produce and free range eggs. As a nation we spent over £2 billion on these sorts of foods in 2006, an increase of 62% on 2002.⁵
- **It’s something to shout about** - Being able to tell customers an engaging story about where your ingredients come from can give you a competitive advantage, helping you to attract new customers to your business, and keep them coming back. Retailers are already capitalising on this by displaying pictures of and information about producers in their stores and on packaging. Training staff to be able to talk to customers about the origin and quality of the ingredients you use can also result in increased staff pride and loyalty.
- **Local suppliers means quality service** - As well as reducing food transport, buying more locally produced foods can mean getting fresher produce and developing closer relationships with your suppliers, resulting in a better service.
- **It can spice up your menu** - Incorporating local and seasonal produce into your menu, perhaps in the form of daily or weekly specials, or seasonal variations to standard menu items, can liven up your menu and keep your customers coming back for more.
- **It helps you build for the future** – Ensuring stable, long-term relationships with producers and suppliers, whether in the UK or overseas, and supporting them in meeting the very best environmental, social and economic standards, will also contribute to ensuring stability and quality in your supply chains.

³ See Food Climate Research Network – www.fcrrn.org.uk

⁴ Tukker A, et al. (2005) *Environmental impact of products (EIPRO): Analysis of the life cycle environmental impacts related to the total final consumption of the EU25*, European Science and Technology Observatory and Institute for Prospective Technological studies, full draft report.

⁵ Mintel report on Attitudes Towards Ethical Foods – see http://www.mintel.com/press_release.php?id=242166.

Don't stop at food!

Sustainability is not just about food. Customers increasingly expect businesses to be 'joined up' and not make claims about sustainability in one area, if they are being unsustainable in another. The Greener Food project helps businesses use less water and energy, produce less waste and recycle more – for more information on this and other support available to catering businesses, see <http://www.ethicaleats.org>.

Communicating your good work

Your choices matter! By talking about the changes you are making – and would like to make – with both your suppliers and your customers, you can help to encourage growth in both the demand for and the supply of sustainable food.

- Tell your suppliers about the sorts of sustainable foods you would like to buy, so that they start to offer them to you.
- Tell your customers about the good work you are doing, and explain why it is important.
- Train your staff in the issues you are trying to tackle, get them involved in the changes you make, and encourage them to promote this work to customers.
- Highlight the most sustainable foods on your menu, and use attractive adjectives to describe them.
- Turn sustainability into a selling point by making clear the company's commitment to improve its environmental performance.

For further information and support

- Why not join an association that can offer you support to develop your work on sustainability?
 - If you are in London, join London Food Link, a not-for-profit network of organisations and individuals with members as diverse as farmers, food businesses, food writers, caterers and community food projects – see: <http://www.londonfoodlink.org>.
 - London Food Link also hosts Ethical Eats, a network for restaurants, cafés and caterers in London and beyond – see: <http://www.ethicaleats.org>.
 - Sign up for news about plans to establish a standard or awards scheme for ethical restaurants. Send an email to charlotte@sustainweb.org for more information.
- For more information about how using more sustainable ingredients can add value to restaurant, café and pub businesses, see London Food Link's report *One Planet Dining: London's growing market for eating out sustainably* – available to order or download from <http://www.sustainweb.org/pubslst.php>.
- Caterers in the public sector in England can get help from, for example:
 - Good Food on the Public Plate. This Sustain project works mainly with hospitals and care homes, and some schools, in London and the South East, but also runs a national network of caterers putting sustainability into practice – see: <http://www.gfpp.org.uk>.
 - Food for Life: This five-year Big Lottery-funded initiative is led by the Soil Association, and aims to transform food culture in schools across England, bringing together the practical expertise of the Focus on Food Campaign, Garden Organic and the Health Education Trust. <http://www.soilassociation.org/foodforlife>
 - Your local Government Office, which is likely to have a sustainable procurement officer – see: <http://www.gos.gov.uk/national/>.

Section 2: Seven principles of sustainable food

1. Eat the seasons!

What's the problem?

The food we eat is being transported further than ever,⁶ and there is increasing demand for a wide range of ready-prepared and exotic out-of-season produce. These trends are associated with all sorts of environmental and other problems, such as:



- Loss of freshness, flavour and variety. Long-distance fruit and vegetable varieties tend to be chosen for their yield and keeping qualities, not for flavour, diversity or nutritional value. Many are harvested before they are ripe, and stored over long periods between production, packing and distribution, sometimes with post-harvest chemical treatments such as fungicides to increase shelf-life. Soft fruits and tender vegetables go off quickly – so those that travel long distances have to travel fast, usually by air, which is the most environmentally damaging form of transport.
- Increasing global warming. Food transport, even if it is not by air, creates greenhouse gas emissions that are contributing to the increasingly devastating effects of climate change.⁷
- Paying more for less. Instead of rewarding growers with fair prices for locally grown, seasonal produce, we pay for the costs of transporting, refrigerating and packaging associated with long-distance food.
- Loss of food security. We need to invest in a UK food and farming system that is resilient to major changes, such as surges in oil prices, extreme weather (such as floods or droughts) or competition from other crops such as biofuels. Otherwise, we face the prospect of increasing food prices and shortages.
- Loss of food culture. Distinctive varieties of fruit and vegetables and native breeds of meat are integral to our culture and landscape. Long-distance food erodes seasonal and local distinctiveness in favour of boring uniformity.
- Loss of food knowledge and skills. Most of us have lost our connection with the land and seasonal rhythms, and have little or no awareness of when and where various foods are produced.

What can we do about it?

Buy more seasonal food

There is growing consumer demand for more seasonal and local food. Two thirds of consumers say they are trying to buy more seasonally,⁸ and at least a quarter of visitors to restaurants specialising in ethnic cuisine want more healthy dishes featuring fresh, local ingredients.⁹ This is because local, seasonal food

⁶ Food transport accounted for an estimated 30 billion vehicle kilometres (a unit of measure representing the movement of any transport vehicle over one kilometre) in 2002, of which 82% are in the UK.

P. Watkiss, *The Validity of Food Miles as Indicator of Sustainable Development*, Defra, 2005

⁷ Food transport produced 19 million tonnes of carbon dioxide in 2002, of which 10 million tonnes were emitted in the UK, almost all from road transport. This figure represents 1.8% of the total annual UK carbon dioxide emissions and 8.7% of the total emissions from UK road use. P. Watkiss, *The Validity of Food Miles as Indicator of Sustainable Development*, Defra, 2005

⁸ Institute of Grocery Distribution, *Retail and Foodservice Opportunities for Local Food*, March 2006

⁹ Mintel, *Ethnic Restaurants and Takeaways – UK*, June 2006

is seen by consumers as being fresher, tastier and more nutritious.¹⁰ As the National Consumer Council (NCC) has noted, “Seasonal food can offer better taste and be more affordable, while local food can deliver freshness, reduce food miles, offer benefits to local farmers and communities and help reconnect consumers with where their food comes from.”¹¹



- Support and encourage local, seasonal food. You can:
 - Develop trading relationships with local growers by, for example, visiting markets where producers sell their food direct to the public;
 - Develop a seasonality chart for the produce you like to use, to help you plan your menus (some examples are in Further Information, below);
 - Ask your suppliers for food that has been grown and processed locally; say you don't want fresh produce from heated greenhouses (which extend the season artificially, using lots of energy)¹²;
 - Ask your suppliers for British fruit and vegetables produced to the standards of a recognised assurance scheme, such as certified organic, LEAF Marque¹³ or Assured Produce;¹⁴
 - Coordinate food deliveries from local suppliers into one delivery, to ensure maximum supply chain efficiency (one refrigerated van, one tank of fuel, one driver - and in London, one Congestion Charge payment!);
 - Favour suppliers that have sustainability policies in place, including transport, and are working to reduce their environmental impact;
 - Use suppliers of distinctive varieties of produce or traditional foods from regions close to your business.

Serve more seasonal food

- Design your menus to reflect what is available seasonally.

¹⁰ Institute of Grocery Distribution, *Retail and Foodservice Opportunities for Local Food*, March 2006

¹¹ National Consumer Council (2006) *Seasons' Promise: An enjoyable way to tackle climate change*, by Sue Dibb, Joanna Collins and Ed Mayo, see: http://www.ncc.org.uk/nccpdf/poldocs/NCC133_seasons_promise.pdf

¹² Though note that a small number of producers are investing in greenhouses that use sustainable forms of energy, so you might want to support them by choosing their produce.

¹³ For more information on these and other assurance schemes, see the Farming for the Planet section in this document.

¹⁴ Assured Produce (AP) is a part of Assured Food Standards (AFS) for the production of fruit, salads, herbs and vegetables. See here for information on the scheme and its logo <http://www.assuredproduce.co.uk/>.

- Seasonal foods are those that can be grown naturally at a particular time of year in the UK – without the need for energy-intensive conditions such as heated greenhouses or chemical treatments – minimising storage times, packaging, refrigeration and food transport.
- Seasonal food is more likely to have been stored only for a short time, so its quality and taste may be better than out-of-season produce.
- Produce that is in season is in plentiful supply and can be good value. Take advantage of this by rediscovering culturally diverse recipes for preserving seasonal produce for those times when it is unavailable.
- Tell your customers why your menu features particular ingredients.
 - Food businesses that feature seasonal and locally grown food do not offer the same foods all year round.
 - Make a virtue of this by using seasonal produce as an opportunity to advertise and tell stories about your interesting new menu items.
 - Connect your customers to the seasons and celebrate the fact you are using the freshest foods available – for example by creating displays of seasonal produce.

For further information

- There are now many ways to find out when certain varieties of fruit, vegetables, fish and meat are in season:
 - Download Sustain’s publication *Good food on the Public Plate: A manual for sustainability in public sector food and catering* - <http://www.sustainweb.org/publications/info/91/> (pages 48-51)
 - On the web, seasonality information can be found at, for example:
 - <http://southeastenglandfoodanddrink.co.uk/display.aspx?id=46>
 - <http://www.eattheseasons.co.uk/>
 - <http://www.rivercottage.net/>
 - http://www.bbc.co.uk/food/in_season/
- To find local and regional food producers:
 - Contact your local Food Links organisation – see <http://www.foodlinks-uk.org/FlukMemList.asp> for a list of Food Links groups.
 - Contact your Regional Food Group – see: http://www.foodfrombritain.com/buyersguide/Regional_guide_Useful_Links.asp
 - If you’re in London or the surrounding counties, use London Food Link’s Local Food Finder: <http://www.localfoodfinder.org>.
- To find local producers’ markets in your area, contact:
 - London Farmers' Markets: <http://www.lfm.org.uk/>
 - The National Farmers' Retail & Markets Association (FARMA): <http://www.farma.org.uk/>

2. Farming for the planet

What's the problem?

Farming contributes under 1% to the UK's total economic activity each year,¹⁵ but it takes up 74% of land in the UK¹⁶ and has an immense impact on our environment. Historically, farming has contributed to the beauty of the British countryside; however, industrialised agriculture has also caused environmental damage such as soil erosion, water pollution, and damage to wildlife habitats by using pesticides and other intensive farming techniques.¹⁷



What can we do about it?

Arguably one of the best ways to assure the environmental quality of the food you buy is to get to know personally the farmers that supply your food, and find out about the methods they use and the standards they work to. Some small farms, for example, operate to high standards but cannot afford the time or money needed to join an official accreditation scheme.

However, we realise this is not a practical option for everyone. In the absence of direct links, ensure that you buy food accredited to a recognised standard, such as one of the schemes listed below. Many consider organic food to be the most environmentally benign form of farming, with the LEAF (Linking Environment and Farming) scheme assuring some environmental benefits. Organic and LEAF Marque accreditation is clearly marked on food packaging and/or on signs at farms, and an accredited producer will be able to provide a copy of a valid certificate. Other schemes, such as Assured Food Standards (the 'Red Tractor'), guarantee that legal minimum standards have been met, or higher in some cases. See below for further information on the schemes.

Recognised accreditation schemes in use in the UK include the following:

¹⁵ National Statistics online (National Statistics <http://www.statistics.gov.uk/CCI/nscl.asp?ID=6711>, viewed 23 July 2007).

¹⁶ Defra, *Framework for Environmental accounts for agriculture – final report*, (London: Defra, 2004).

¹⁷ Professor Jules Pretty, Director of the Centre for Environment and Society at the University of Essex, has estimated that to clean up the environmental damage caused by food production and distribution in the UK would cost £2.3bn. Jules Pretty, "Policy challenges and priorities for internalizing the externalities of modern agriculture," *Journal of Environmental Planning and Management* 44 no.2 (2001): <http://www.essex.ac.uk/bs/staff/pretty/JEPM%20pdf.pdf>.

Organic – these standards require farmers to protect the environment, primarily by severely restricting the use of pesticides, and avoiding the use of artificial chemical fertilisers. Instead, organic farmers rely on developing a healthy, fertile soil and growing a mixture of crops. Studies of organic farming systems show less environmental damage and a greater amount and variety of wildlife than conventional systems.¹⁸ Certified organic farmers must also operate to high standards of animal welfare. There is a range of organic inspection and certification bodies,¹⁹ of which the Soil Association is the largest. The word organic is defined by law, and all certifying bodies must comply with European organic regulations. Some certifying bodies, including the Soil Association, have higher standards than these. Buying seasonal and local organic food brings even greater benefits.



The Soil Association’s definitive annual Organic Market Report²⁰ shows that organic food and drink sales in the UK nudged the £2 billion mark for the first time in 2006, with a sustained market growth rate of 22 per cent throughout the year. Retail sales of organic products through organic box and mail order schemes and other direct routes increased from £95 million in 2005 to £146 million in 2006 – a staggering 53 per cent growth, more than double that experienced by the major supermarkets. In fact, there is currently not enough UK organic production to meet demand, which means that some organic food is – like conventional food – imported, causing additional greenhouse gas emissions– particularly in the case of food imported by air.²¹



LEAF (Linking Environment and Farming) – a scheme in which farmers audit their production systems and examine soil management, fertility, pesticide use, and pollution control and management. It encourages farms to have an ‘integrated farm management system’,²² to reduce farming’s impact on the environment, and member farmers can use the **LEAF Marque** on their products. This is not a scheme defined in law.

- **Assured Food Standards (AFS)** – an umbrella body for various different crop and meat assurance schemes. Standards require farmers to comply with UK laws about the environment, food safety and animal welfare, and occasionally other steps that take them above this legal minimum. Member farmers can use the **Red Tractor** logo. Like LEAF Marque, AFS standards are not defined in law.²³



Other schemes encouraging improved environmental performance include the ‘**Entry Level Scheme (ELS)**, and the ‘**Higher Level Scheme (HLS)**, which are government-run schemes known as ‘agri-environment schemes’.²⁴ These provide government funding to farmers to implement environmental

¹⁸ For information on the environmental and sustainability benefits of organic farming, see Defra’s website: <http://www.defra.gov.uk/farm/organic/consumers/index.htm>.

¹⁹ There are 10 UK approved organic certifying authorities – for a full list, see: <http://www.defra.gov.uk/farm/organic/standards/certbodies/approved.htm>.

²⁰ Organic Market Report 2007, Soil Association, August 2007. ISBN 978 1 904665 23 6 <http://www.soilassociation.org/marketreport>

²¹ Although increasing quantities of conventional food continue to be imported by air, the Soil Association is currently undertaking a major consultation exercise to determine whether – and under what conditions – airfreighted imports should be permitted to carry an organic label. The Soil Association board has recommended that airfreight of certified organic food should continue only when there is proven benefit for farmers in poor countries (e.g. through Fairtrade certification), and where importers continue to explore ways to use less damaging methods of transportation - with the aim of reducing fossil fuel dependence. For further information see: <http://www.soilassociation.org/airfreight>.

²² LEAF: <http://www.leafuk.org/leaf/organisation>

²³ See www.littleredtractor.org.uk for further information

²⁴ For further information see <http://www.defra.gov.uk/erdp/schemes/es/default.htm>

management on their land. These schemes do not have logos, so a food business would have to ask farmers if they belong to one of these schemes, or are planning to join them.

If you've gone to the trouble of buying environmentally-friendly farm produce, remember to tell your customers! You could:

- Use your menu – even if an entire dish is not made from food produced to organic or other environmental standards, individual ingredients can be highlighted – for example, 'lasagne made with organic beef'.²⁵
- 'Tell the story' of the farmer and their production system in your publicity materials.
- Make use of the marketing materials produced by accrediting organisations (see 'further information' section for contact details).

For further information

- For more information about organic certification and the rules covering organic production, see the website of the UK's largest organic certification body, the Soil Association: <http://www.soilassociation.org>.
- For information about the LEAF Marque, see <http://www.leafuk.org/leaf/>.
- For information about the Red Tractor logo and the various assurance schemes associated with it, see http://www.redtractor.org.uk/site/rt_home.php.
- To find accredited producers in your region, contact the relevant accrediting organisation.

²⁵ For guidance on using the term 'organic' and – if desirable – the Soil Association symbol on menus, see: <http://www.soilassociation.org/web/sa/saweb.nsf/d39dda83e1f3c019802570ad005b4516/ea5f8c5b6171057f80256e6a003136e0?OpenDocument>.

3. Meat and dairy products: less is more

What's the problem?

Climate change

According to latest figures from the United Nations, animal farming globally causes more greenhouse gas emissions than all of the cars, lorries and planes in the world put together, and the effect is increasing.²⁶ The reasons for this are complicated, but are associated with several factors:



- Large amounts of animal feed need to be produced to make relatively small amounts of meat or milk – around 7kg of grain for 1kg of beef; 4kg of grain for 1kg of pork; 2kg of grain for 1kg of poultry.
- Nitrogen fertilisers are used to produce animal feed, resulting in energy use and emissions of, for example, the powerful greenhouse gas nitrous oxide.
- Livestock (particularly ruminants such as cows and sheep) emit high levels of methane from their digestive systems.
- Natural ‘carbon sinks’ such as forests, that can absorb carbon dioxide, are destroyed to make way for animal grazing, or crops for animal feed, so removing trees and disturbing or destroying soil.
- Animals, their feed and the resulting animal products are usually transported, often over large distances, and usually in energy-intensive refrigerated conditions.
- The demand for meat and dairy products is increasing, especially in booming Eastern economies, shifting from traditional diets to a more Western pattern of consumption.

Animal welfare

Much of the meat on sale in the UK is produced intensively, with little or no regard for animal welfare. According to Compassion in World Farming²⁷:

“The explosion in meat consumption is paralleled by the global expansion of industrial ‘factory farming’ of animals, a system which by its very nature compromises basic welfare standards. In factory farms, the animals suffer from confinement, isolation or overcrowding and the frustration of their natural behaviour.”²⁸

The most frequent forms of poor practice include:

- Overstocking, which can encourage disease to develop and spread. Antibiotics are frequently used to counter this problem, which leads to their overuse as bacteria become resistant to them. Rearing animals in smaller groups would be a more sustainable way to avoid the problem in the first place. Overstocking prevents some animals from getting access to enough food, which can lead to bullying, fighting and injuries. Overstocking can also result in animals not having enough space to move around or exhibit natural behaviour.
- ‘Corner cutting’ techniques that benefit the farmer but can harm the animal, e.g. dehorning animals, which causes them discomfort, weaning animals too young, and routinely using electric prods.

²⁶ To see details of the United Nations research into meat and the environment, visit: <http://www.fao.org/newsroom/en/news/2006/1000448/index.html>. See also Steinfeld, H et al. (2006) *Livestock's long shadow: Environmental issues and options*. Food and Agriculture Organization, Rome. http://www.virtualcentre.org/en/library/key_pub/longshad/A0701E00.htm

²⁷ Compassion in World Farming was established by a dairy farmer who had become concerned about factory farming methods, to campaign for improved standards of animal welfare in the farming industry. See <http://www.ciwf.org/>.

²⁸ Compassion in World Farming Trust (2004) *Reducing Meat Consumption: The case for urgent reform*. See: http://www.ciwf.org/publications/reports/Global_benefits_summary.pdf
Also see the Compassion in World Farming Eat Less Meat campaign at: http://www.ciwf.org.uk/campaigns/primary_campaigns/eat_less_meat.html

Meat and health

Although we do not need meat in our diets, eating small amounts is not a health problem, and many people enjoy it. However, there is growing evidence of a link between consumption of red and processed meats and certain types of cancer, hence the long-standing recommendation from the Department of Health²⁹ that that “lower consumption of red and processed meat would probably reduce the risk of colorectal cancer” and that “individuals’ consumption of red and processed meat should not rise...from around 90g/day cooked weight”. A recent report published by the World Cancer Research Fund (WCRF)³⁰ is even more stringent, reducing the recommended daily amount of red meat to around 70g a day, or less than 500g per week, and also noting that very little, *if any*, processed meat should be eaten.³¹

Meat and some dairy products, and particularly meat products like sausages, pies and breaded products, also tend to be high in fat and saturated fat and are often high in salt. High fat consumption is linked to increased risk of obesity, heart disease and strokes. Even popular white meats such as poultry, often chosen for their apparent health benefits, have been found to be fatter than in the past due to methods of production and processing.³²

On a more positive note, there is plenty of scientific evidence that eating a greater proportion of foods of plant origin (fruit, vegetables, pulses, nuts, seeds and wholegrain foods) can reduce the risks of serious diseases such as heart disease and certain cancers. Foods of plant origin tend to be naturally low in fat and salt and also contain high levels of other useful nutrients such as vitamins, minerals, antioxidants and dietary fibre.



What can we do about it?

Eat less meat

The conclusion is that we should all eat less meat (especially red meat and processed meat) and fewer products of animal origin, both to reduce significantly our effects on the environment, and to improve our health. While the number of vegetarians in the UK has remained relatively stable over recent years, evidence suggests that more and more people are trying to eat less meat – indeed some market research suggests that ‘meat reducers’ account for 45% of the population.³³ It is also worth remembering that just one vegetarian in a group of people going out to eat can hold a considerable sway over the group’s choice of restaurant.

To provide for both vegetarians and people trying to eat less meat for health or environmental reasons, caterers and food businesses can, for example:

²⁹ Department of Health (1998), "Nutritional aspects of the development of cancer", Report of the Working Group on Diet and Cancer, Committee on Medical Aspects of Food Policy (COMA), Report on Health and Social Subjects No. 48, HMSO, London

³⁰ World Cancer Research Fund (WCRF, 2007). Food, Nutrition, Physical Activity and the Prevention of Cancer: A Global Perspective. Washington DC.

³¹ The WCRF report (2007) defines processed meat as meat preserved by smoking, curing or salting, or addition of chemical preservatives, including that contained in processed food.

³² Wang Y Q, Thomas B, Ghebremeskel K and Crawford M A (2004) Changes in Protein and Fat Balance of Some Primary Foods: Implications for Obesity? Institute of Brain Chemistry and Human Nutrition, London Metropolitan University

³³ Data on market trends in consumers choosing to eat less meat are collected regularly by the TNS Family Food Panel (www.tns-global.com), and reported by the food industry's Food and Drink Federation on its dedicated Meat Free website: http://www.meat-free.org.uk/mf_market_trends.aspx

- **Reduce the amount of red and processed meat you use overall.** Don't just think about the vegetarians! Design dishes that use smaller amounts of flavoursome meat to good effect, with the bulk of the meal being made of foods of plant origin.
- **Offer a good range of vegetarian options** with higher levels of fruit, vegetable and wholegrain ingredients, and reduced amounts of fat and animal products (i.e. not simply replacing a meat component with cheese). Many vegetarian dishes will also meet the needs of, for example, people who wish to eat halal and kosher food.
- **Reduce waste** by designing dishes and menus that use 'less favoured' (and cheaper) cuts of meat, such as those from the forequarters of the animal, so that carcasses can be used more efficiently.

Buy the best

Recent research shows 67% of consumers already think animal welfare is an important issue,³⁴ and over 50% of the population is currently making at least one or two purchase decisions as a result of their attitude to animal welfare standards.³⁵ Use the money saved from cutting back on the volume of meat you use to buy local or British meat produced to high environmental and animal welfare standards. One way of checking that the meat you buy has been produced in a humane, sustainable way is to visit the farm where the animals were reared.³⁶ If this is not possible, ask suppliers for British³⁷ meat produced to the standards of a recognised assurance scheme, such as:



Certified organic – as well as upholding environmental standards, organic certification tends to require higher standards of animal welfare than the other schemes listed here. For more information on organic standards and certifying bodies, see the 'Farming for the planet' section in this document.



Free range – the description 'free range' is defined in European law, but only for poultry. Free range poultry farming systems must allow poultry to have access to open-air runs that are mainly covered with vegetation, and have rules governing the amount of space that the birds have and the type of shelter provided. Other animals such as pigs are often described as 'free range' or 'outdoor reared,' but these terms are not legally defined.



RSPCA Freedom Foods³⁸ – this scheme aims to improve farm animal welfare; it does not include environmental standards. The RSPCA's Farm Animal Department sets the standards for each species, controlling rearing, handling, transportation and slaughter. Member farms are assessed and monitored by an independent body, and can use the Freedom Foods logo on their products. A product that carries the Freedom Foods logo does not necessarily come from a free range animal.



Assured Food Standards³⁹ – this is an umbrella body representing a number of different assurance schemes, and is represented by the 'Red Tractor' logo. Standards require farmers to meet legal requirements for food safety, environmental protection and animal welfare as a minimum. However, AFS schemes do not require that animals or birds have

³⁴ Ethical Consumerism (2006) Institute of Grocery Distribution, Consumer Unit

³⁵ Consumer Attitudes to Animal Welfare (2007) Institute of Grocery Distribution

³⁶ Many farmers are happy to allow customers and potential customers to visit their farms, and some sign up to schemes like 'Open Farm Sunday' to give members of the public an opportunity to see where their food comes from – see <http://www.farmsunday.org/farmsunday/>

³⁷ For more information on the benefits of choosing local produce, see the 'Eat the seasons!' section in this document.

³⁸ See the Freedom Food website:

<http://www.rspca.org.uk/servlet/Satellite?pagename=RSPCA/RSPCARedirect&pg=FreedomFoodHomepage>

³⁹ See here for information on the Red Tractor logo: http://www.redtractor.org.uk/site/rt_home.php

outdoor access, and have been criticised for being insufficiently stringent, in terms of both the environment and animal welfare.⁴⁰

See footnotes for links to more information on these schemes.

You may also like to consider buying ‘rare breed’ meat from native British breeds of livestock. Over centuries these indigenous animals have, through selective breeding and natural evolution, adapted to become as efficient as possible in their local environment, making the most of the type, quantity and quality of the food available and the climate. In return, the livestock benefit their native environment. Many people say that these breeds also provide a tastier product,⁴¹ and products made from rare breed meat can provide good marketing opportunities.

If you have taken some of the steps suggested above, you can market your good work to your customers and encourage more sustainable behaviour. For example:

- Promote the vegetable content of your dishes alongside the meat so that your customers learn to value it.
- Describe ‘free range’ or organic meat as such – individual ingredients can be listed and described even if a whole dish is not made from sustainable ingredients, for example, ‘lasagne made with organic beef’, or ‘omelette made with free range eggs’.⁴²
- List the provenance of the meat that you do sell, including the name of the farm where known, and provide additional information about the farms and animal welfare for interested customers.

For further information

For background reading, take a look at the following websites which give more information about this important subject:

- For more information about farm animal welfare, see the Compassion in World Farming website: <http://www.ciwf.org/>.
- For more reasons to reduce meat consumption, see the website of the Compassion in World Farming’s Eat Less Meat campaign: <http://www.eatlessmeat.org>.
- To see details of the United Nations research into meat production and its effects on the environment, visit: <http://www.fao.org/newsroom/en/news/2006/1000448/index.html>.
- For detailed scientific and background information on the climate change effects of animal feed production, see the following paper by the Food Climate Research Network: <http://www.fcrn.org.uk/frcnresearch/publications/PDFs/TG%20society%20animal%20feed%20paper%2029-1-07.pdf>.
- A major new report from the Food Climate Research Network explores the livestock sector’s contribution to the UK’s greenhouse gas emissions and assesses what less greenhouse gas intensive systems of production and consumption might look like. See: <http://www.fcrn.org.uk/frcnresearch/publications/PDFs/TG%20FCRN%20livestock%20final%206%20Nov%20.pdf>

⁴⁰ Compassion in World Farming, “Farm Assurance Schemes & Animal Welfare - Can We Trust Them?” 2002 – see here for full report: <http://www.ciwf.org.uk/littleredtractor/Images/Farm%20Assurance%20Report.pdf> or here for a summary: <http://www.ciwf.org.uk/littleredtractor/index.htm>

⁴¹ For more information about rare breeds see the website of the Rare Breed Survival Trust: <http://www.rbst.org.uk/>.

⁴² For guidance on using the term ‘organic’ and – if desirable – the Soil Association symbol on menus, see: <http://www.soilassociation.org/web/sa/saweb.nsf/d39dda83e1f3c019802570ad005b4516/ea5f8c5b6171057f80256e6a003136e0?OpenDocument>.

4. Plenty more fish in the sea...?

What's the problem?

Our appetite for fish has increased so rapidly over the past fifty years, matched by the increasing industrialisation of the fishing industry, that we are seriously at risk of losing some species from our seas for ever. Over three quarters of the world's fish stocks are currently either fully or over exploited,⁴³ and some scientists estimate that, at the current rates of depletion, most of the world's fish stocks will collapse by 2048.⁴⁴ As millions of people depend on fish for food and for their livelihood, this would have dire social as well as ecological consequences.⁴⁵

The environmental problems associated with fishing include:

- Loss of marine biodiversity, not only from declining fish stocks but also from 'bycatch' – non-target (and often commercially useless) species such as whales, sharks, dolphins, sea-birds and young fish being accidentally killed by fishing gear;
- Damage to sensitive areas of the sea bed and other marine environments by certain fishing methods, particularly bottom trawling.

Efforts to address these issues are being undermined by illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) or 'pirate' fishing, some of the spoils of which end up in the UK market. Pirate fishing is thought by some experts to pose the single greatest threat to the achievement of sustainable fish stocks.⁴⁶

Fish farming, or aquaculture, can seem like a solution to many of these problems, and the aquaculture industry has boomed in recent years, with farmed species including salmon, trout, sea bass and prawns. However, aquaculture is often very intensive and is associated with a host of social and environmental problems, such as:

- A poor 'feed conversion ratio' – many farmed species are carnivorous (they need to be fed other fish), and around 3kg of wild caught fish are needed to produce, for example, 1kg of farmed salmon;⁴⁷
- Diseases and parasites such as sea lice, resulting from the high concentration of fish in each pen, which can also spread to wild stocks;
- Pollution – this can include fish faecal matter, antibiotics and toxic chemicals such as 'anti-foulants' used to keep cages and netting free of seaweed and barnacles;⁴⁸
- Animal welfare problems – this may be a particular issue with fish that would usually migrate, such as salmon;
- The destruction of sensitive and ecologically important habitats – this problem is particularly associated with parts of Asia and Latin America, where huge tracts of mangrove swamp have been destroyed in the development of prawn farming;
- Poor employment conditions, the loss of livelihoods and food security, and the displacement of coastal people – also particularly associated with prawn farming in poorer countries.⁴⁹



⁴³ 52% of the world's fish stocks are currently fully exploited (i.e. being fished at their maximum biological capacity), and a further 24% are over exploited, depleted or recovering from depletion. Figures from the United Nation's Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), 2005 – see http://eng.msc.org/html/content_528.htm.

⁴⁴ Information from the Environmental Justice Foundation, see: <http://www.ejfoundation.org/page357.html>

⁴⁵ Figures from FAO, as above.

⁴⁶ In 2006 the Environmental Justice Foundation and Greenpeace carried out a joint investigation into the impact of IUU fishing off the coast of Guinea, linking illegal fishing operations to seafood on sale in the UK – see <http://www.ejfoundation.org/page357.html>.

⁴⁷ This is according to a study published in the scientific journal Nature – see: <http://www.puresalmon.org/feed.html>.

⁴⁸ Sustain (2005) *Like Shooting Fish in a Barrel: the collapse of world fisheries in the 21st century and what we can do to prevent it happening*: <http://www.sustainweb.org/publications/info/143/>

Organic fish farming aims to reduce some of these problems, but opinions vary as to the extent to which it does so. In fact, some people believe that organic standards should not apply to salmon aquaculture – not least because the confined conditions in which farmed salmon are kept are so at odds with their natural, migratory habits.⁵⁰

Fish and health

Oily fish such as mackerel, herring and sardines can be a valuable source of omega-3 fats, which are believed to have important benefits for heart health and mental development. However, there is clearly a problem with promoting increased consumption of fish for human health when fish are so under threat. More and more organisations are now promoting sustainable fishing, to ensure that health benefits of fish consumption can be enjoyed by future generations.

There are some health problems associated with increasing the amount of oily fish we eat. The same fatty tissues in fish that provide valuable omega-3 fats also tend to have high levels of pollutants such as mercury and synthetic chemicals called PCBs (polychlorinated biphenyls). PCBs accumulate in the body and can damage the development of foetuses; for this reason, pregnant women are advised to limit the amount of fish they eat and avoid certain types of oily fish altogether.⁵¹



What can we do about it?

A very significant 77% of consumers are already concerned about seafood sustainability, according to a recent study,⁵² and with the current state of fish stocks this concern is likely to grow. A consumer survey showed that purchases of sustainable fish rose by a massive 224% in 2007.⁵³ In response to such demand, Pret a Manger, the major chain of sandwich shops, has already switched one of its sandwich fillings from farmed salmon to wild Alaskan salmon⁵⁴ certified by the Marine Stewardship Council (see below).

To play your part in conserving the marine environment:

- **Do not buy fish from overfished stocks or badly managed fisheries** as listed on the Marine Conservation Society's 'fish to avoid' list.⁵⁵
- **Ask your fish supplier** for assurances that the fish they supply has been legally and sustainably caught (and for evidence if you are not convinced by the answer). Most importantly, ask:
 - *where* the fish was caught – as the sustainability of some species varies according to location (again, see the 'fish to avoid' list) – don't be fobbed off with "it's from Billingsgate"!

⁴⁹ The Environmental Justice Foundation has published a series of reports on the problems associated with shrimp aquaculture – see for example *Farming the Sea, Costing the Earth: Why we must green the blue revolution*: http://www.ejfoundation.org/pdf/farming_the_sea_costing_the_earth.pdf.

⁵⁰ See <http://www.puresalmon.org/organic.html>, and Joanna Blythman, "Why organic salmon is causing a nasty smell", *The Observer*, 22nd October 2006: <http://observer.guardian.co.uk/foodmonthly/story/0,,1925040,00.html>.

⁵¹ See advice on the Food Standards Agency for foods to avoid during pregnancy: <http://www.eatwell.gov.uk/agesandstages/pregnancy/whenyrpregnant/#cat226049>.

⁵² Waitrose/YouGov survey, published August 2006, see 'Waitrose to phase out fish caught by beam trawling': http://www.fishupdate.com/news/fullstory.php/aid/5180/Waitrose_to_phase_out_fish_caught_by_beam_trawling_.html

⁵³ The Co-operative Bank's Ethical Consumerism Report 2007, see: http://www.cfs.co.uk/images/pdf/ethical_consumer_report_2007.pdf

⁵⁴ Pret a Manger website, viewed 11 October 2007 <http://www.pret.com/menu/sandwiches/3500.shtm>

⁵⁵ For the 'fish to avoid' list see <http://www.fishonline.org/advice/avoid/>; the Pocket Good Fish Guide is also available in hard copy from the Marine Conservation Society: <http://www.mcsuk.org>

- **how** it was caught – bottom trawling is generally considered to be one of the most environmentally damaging fishing methods, but driftnets⁵⁶ and even longlines are also associated with high levels of wasteful bycatch.⁵⁷ More sustainable methods to look out for include handline (e.g. mackerel), diver caught (e.g. scallops), jigs (e.g. squid) and pots or creels (e.g. lobsters or crabs). Phrases such as ‘traditional methods’ are meaningless.
- **Promote sustainably caught fish on your menu** – many customers now understand that seeing phrases such as ‘line caught mackerel’ and ‘diver caught scallops’ on a menu mean that the restaurant is taking steps to make more sustainable choices.
- **Choose and promote fish with the Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) logo**, which is certified to come from well-managed fisheries and not from endangered stocks. The MSC can provide details of certified fisheries and suppliers of MSC-labelled fish, which include fishmongers and mainstream foodservice suppliers of fish and fish products: <http://www.msc.org>.⁵⁸
- Contact the Marine Stewardship Council for information on how to obtain permission to **use the MSC logo on menus and publicity materials**. If full MSC accreditation seems to be too expensive for your business, **consider linking up with other food businesses** to get joint inspection and accreditation, which can be much more cost effective. Jointly, you can also put greater pressure on suppliers to give you more information about the fish they supply, and to offer you more sustainable fish.
- Given the controversy about some **farmed fish and shellfish**, you might want to consider whether to avoid the problem and not stock them. Not all farmed seafood is problematic, however; tilapia, for example, is a non-carnivorous fish (i.e. it eats plant food, not other fish) that can be farmed sustainably, and farmed mussels are tasty and sustainable and may be available from local sources.



For further information

- For details about the problems associated with **overfishing, trawling and aquaculture**, see:
 - Greenpeace’s ‘Defending Our Oceans’ campaign: <http://oceans.greenpeace.org/en/our-oceans>
 - The WorldWide Fund (WWF) for Nature’s marine programme: <http://www.wwf.org.uk/researcher/issues/livingseas/0000000020.asp>
 - The Environmental Justice Foundation’s campaigns and reports on bycatch, pirate fishing and prawn (shrimp) aquaculture: <http://www.ejfoundation.org/>
 - Sustain’s report, “Like Shooting Fish in a Barrel: the collapse of world fisheries in the 21st century and what we can do to prevent it happening”: <http://www.sustainweb.org/publications/info/143/>
 - Forum for the Future’s report ‘Fishing for Good’, see: <http://www.forumforthefuture.org.uk/docs/publications/217/fishgood.pdf>
- Contact the **Marine Stewardship Council** for details of suppliers of MSC-certified fish, and information on how to obtain permission to use the MSC logo on menus and publicity materials: <http://www.msc.org>, and sign up to the MSC’s free Fish4Thought email bulletin: http://eng.msc.org/html/content_532.htm.
- For the **Marine Conservation Society’s lists of ‘fish to eat’ and ‘fish to avoid’** see <http://www.fishonline.org>.
- Contact the **Seafood Choices Alliance** (<http://www.seafoodchoices.com>) on 020 7811 3347 for details of their forthcoming **Seafood Sourcing Directory**, a guide to 50 of Britain’s top seafood species and their sustainability.

⁵⁶ Driftnets are now illegal in many national and international waters, including the Mediterranean and the Eastern Atlantic, but are still being used in IUU fishing operations in these areas – see <http://www.ejfoundation.org/page171.html>

⁵⁷ See the Marine Conservation Society’s league table identifying the most and least sustainable fishing methods: http://www.fishonline.org/caught_at_sea/methods/Fishing_Methods_League_Table.pdf.

⁵⁸ Note that some MSC-certified fish available in the UK is transported over long distances, sometimes by airfreight, though usually by sea; where possible, choose MSC-certified fish from the waters around the UK to support local, sustainable fisheries.

5. Trade fair

What's the problem?

World market prices for commodity crops such as coffee, sugar and rice are highly volatile, often falling below the costs of production. Between 1970 and 2000, prices for some of the main agricultural exports of poorer countries fell by between 30 and 60 per cent.⁵⁹ The reasons for this are complex, and related to unfair rules governing international trade, which oblige many poorer countries to open their own markets to imports while producing goods for export. According to Oxfam, this means that:



“Poor farmers are faced with falling crop prices, a falling share of the retail price of produce they sell, competing goods from rich countries dumped on their markets at subsidised prices, and a lack of meaningful access to those countries’ markets for their own produce.”⁶⁰

The consequences can be devastating for both small-scale producers and agricultural labourers. With few – if any – other employment opportunities open to them, and no welfare state to fall back on, many small farmers are unable to afford basic necessities such as food for their families, healthcare, and education for their children. Labourers on plantations fare little better, often facing gruelling hours, low pay, no job security, unpleasant or downright dangerous living and working conditions, sexual harassment and serious health problems resulting from the use of hazardous pesticides. Many plantation workers have been prevented from joining trade unions by intimidation and sometimes even physical violence.

Fairtrade and well-being

Buying Fairtrade products is about improving the well-being and livelihoods of agricultural producers and labourers in poorer countries, by improving trading relationships and so ensuring better working conditions, greater access to healthcare and a higher standard of living. Buying Fairtrade products is one way to help people out of the cycle of poverty and illness.

What can we do about it?



Since the Fairtrade Mark was first introduced to the UK in 1994, the UK market for Fairtrade products has gone from strength to strength. Sales of Fairtrade products in the UK exceeded £285m in 2006, an increase of 46 per cent on 2005. According to research carried out by the market research organisation MORI in 2006, 57 per cent of adults in the UK now recognise the Fairtrade Mark, and 53 per cent correctly associate it with the phrase “Guarantees a better deal for Third World Producers”.⁶¹ A survey carried out by Oxfam in 2007 found that whether or not a product has been traded fairly is the second biggest ethical factor considered by consumers when buying food (78% of respondents, after excessive packaging at 86%).⁶²

⁵⁹ Communication From The Commission To The Council And The European Parliament: Agricultural Commodity Chains, Dependence and Poverty - A proposal for an EU Action Plan (2004). See http://trade.ec.europa.eu/doclib/docs/2004/may/tradoc_117111.pdf.

⁶⁰ ‘The Rural Poverty Trap’, Oxfam (2004), see www.oxfam.org.uk/what_we_do/issues/trade/bp59_unctad.htm

⁶¹ MORI/TNS data obtained from the Fairtrade Foundation

⁶² Survey conducted by Oxfam amongst more than 1,700 UK residents aged 16-65 during February 2007 – see http://www.oxfam.org.uk/applications/blogs/pressoffice/2007/03/increased_ethical_concerns_lea.html.

When buying products that cannot be grown here and tend to be imported from poorer countries, such as tea, coffee, chocolate, tropical fruit and juice, and rice, look for the Fairtrade Mark. This is an independent consumer guarantee that the product has been produced and traded in accordance with Fairtrade standards,⁶³ which stipulate that:

- A guaranteed minimum price is paid for the crop, which covers the costs of sustainable production;
- An additional sum known as the 'Fairtrade premium' is paid to the producers for investment in business development and social and environmental projects to benefit the wider community, and used to benefit the workers and their families on plantations;
- Small-scale producers are organised in a co-operative or other democratic organisation;
- Workers on plantations are guaranteed legal minimum wages or above, decent working conditions and the right to join a trade union;
- There is no forced or child labour;
- Minimum health and safety and environmental standards are complied with, and there is a commitment to improving worker conditions and sustainable farming methods.

Fairtrade standards are set and monitored by Fairtrade Labelling Organisations International (FLO), and use of the Fairtrade Mark in the UK is governed by the Fairtrade Foundation. Some products are described as 'fair trade' or 'fairly traded', but only products with the Fairtrade Mark are independently certified to ensure producers have received the benefits of the internationally agreed Fairtrade system.⁶⁴

You can support Fairtrade by:

- Demanding Fairtrade certified products from existing suppliers – many wholesalers and distributors now offer a range of Fairtrade products in both retail and catering sizes. If your current supplier does not supply any Fairtrade products, ask them why not.
- Buying from a wholesaler that specialises in Fairtrade products, such as Infinity Foods, Suma or Essential Trading, or direct from a Fairtrade company such as Cafédirect or Divine Chocolate.
- Promoting Fairtrade to your customers on menus and promotional materials (note that you must have permission from the Fairtrade Foundation to use the Fairtrade Mark – see below).

The degree to which companies participate in the Fairtrade system varies a great deal. You may prefer to buy from companies that commit all or most of their range to Fairtrade, or that work in close and long-term partnerships with their producers. Some companies work entirely to the principles of fair trade, and may be part-owned by producers in poorer countries or reinvest a percentage of their profits in supporting producer development programmes. There are also mainstream commercial suppliers who have incorporated a few Fairtrade certified options into their range as a result of customer demand.

For further information

- Details about Fairtrade products and standards are on the websites of the Fairtrade Foundation (<http://www.fairtrade.org.uk>) and the international Fairtrade Labelling Organisations (<http://www.fairtrade.net>).
- For a list of wholesalers supplying Fairtrade products to the catering trade and independent retailers, see http://www.fairtrade.org.uk/suppliers_caterers.htm.
- For information about local Fairtrade Town campaigns, see http://www.fairtrade.org.uk/get_involved_fairtrade_towns.htm.
- For information about using the Fairtrade Mark in promotional materials or on product packaging, see http://www.fairtrade.org.uk/resources_download_the_mark.htm.
- For the Fairtrade Foundation's 'Fairtrade at work' campaign to switch workplaces to Fairtrade tea, coffee and other products, see <http://www.fairtradeatwork.org.uk/index.html>.
- 'Buying into Fairtrade: Procurement in the private and public sector' shows how Fairtrade can feature in procurement: http://www.fairtradeatwork.org.uk/resources/buying_into_fairtrade.pdf.

⁶³ For more information about Fairtrade standards, see http://www.fairtrade.org.uk/about_standards.htm

⁶⁴ The range of Fairtrade products is increasing, and includes coffee, tea, cocoa and chocolate, sugar, bananas and tropical fresh and dried fruit, wine, juices, herbs, spices and rice. See <http://www.fairtrade.org.uk> for a full list.

6. Don't bottle it!

What's the problem?

Bottled water is a waste of money – it has been calculated that £1,000 spent on bottled water would cost a mere 49p for the same volume from the tap.⁶⁵ Bottled water also has considerable environmental costs, including the energy costs of production and transport, and the environmental costs of disposing of (or, very rarely, recycling) the bottles. The financial costs of disposing of water bottles fall, of course, on your business.



Water and health

We should all be drinking more water – it is good for hydration, digestion and all-round wellbeing. The trend towards consumers ditching high-calorie sugary fizzy drinks in favour of water certainly promises health benefits. However, we don't need to drink water from bottles. UK tap water is governed by some of the strictest rules in the world, tested to even more stringent standards than bottled water, so it is safe and palatable to drink. There are no known health benefits from drinking bottled water instead of tap water.

What can we do about it?

Government is urging everyone to 'do our bit' for sustainable development, and some departments and agencies have a policy to serve only tap water. The Food Standards Agency, for example, now provides mains-fed chilled bottled water in 70cl re-useable bottles for all its meetings. When this policy was announced in January 2007, the Agency noted that "This will replace the current system of bought-in bottled (still and fizzy) water thereby saving on waste (boxes), energy (transportation) and promote re-use of bottles." Even in the USA, the mayors of San Francisco and New York have taken action to promote tap water in place of bottled water.⁶⁶

A recent survey carried out for the National Consumer Council showed that restaurant customers resent being made to feel 'cheap' if they ask for tap water, and also resent the mark-up on bottled water.⁶⁷ Taken together with people's environmental concerns – covered throughout this report – this attitude provides yet another marketing opportunity. Routinely serving tap water is a powerful, simple, cost-effective way of demonstrating that, as a responsible business, you are 'doing your bit'.

- Blind taste tests confirm that, particularly if the water is chilled, most people cannot tell the difference between tap water and still bottled water.
- Chilled tap water can be provided in very attractive jugs or re-usable bottles, which can be branded with your company logo.
- Customers who have been provided with an attractive, sustainable product for free may feel more inclined to spend money on other menu items or drinks.

If you feel that using bottled water occasionally is unavoidable, perhaps at an outdoor event, then choose brands that support development projects – for example:

⁶⁵ Personal communication, April 2007, Water UK – www.water.org.uk

⁶⁶ "Bottled out: Americans rethink their wasteful approach to water." 4 August 2007. David Osborne. The Independent

⁶⁷ Water Jugs Omnibus Survey, September 2007, carried out for the National Consumer Council by TNS Consumer Omnibus. See here for press release:
http://www.ncc.org.uk/news_press/pr.php?recordID=361&PHPSESSID=e53a08788f09cb9a6e463f9c63b9a67e.

- One Water, which donates all its profits to building water pumping systems in poor countries. See: <http://www.onewater.org.uk/index.html>.
- Frank Water, which donates all its profits to technology-based clean water projects around the world. See: <http://www.frankwater.com/whatisfrank.php>.

For further information

- Download Sustain's publication, *Have you bottled it? How drinking tap water can help save you and the planet* - <http://www.sustainweb.org/page.php?id=137>.
- If you have any concerns about the health and safety aspects of serving tap water, these can be allayed by the Chartered Institute of Environmental Health, an independent organisation representing environmental health officers, whose own policy is to provide tap water for meetings and events – <http://www.cieh.org>.
- If you want to communicate your views about your local water company, contact the Consumer Council for Water on <http://www.ccwater.org.uk>.
- For more details about reducing waste in general, including that from water bottles, see Waste Online at <http://www.wasteonline.org.uk/>.
- For information about the water industry and its standards, contact Water UK at <http://www.water.org.uk>.
- Companies such as The Pure Water Co. (<http://www.purewater.no>) and Aqua 3 (<http://www.aqua3water.com>) offer filtration systems for businesses such as restaurants.



7. Serve up well-being

What's the problem?

Sustainability is not just about being 'green'. The social and economic aspects of sustainable development are just as important as the environmental issues so, for example, businesses need to be sensitive to public concerns about nutrition, allergies, additives, food safety and so on.



Food and health

No-one can have failed to notice that we are facing an obesity crisis. Around a quarter of adults are already not just overweight, but obese,⁶⁸ and the recent Government-sponsored Foresight report⁶⁹ noted that, if nothing is done, the proportion of obese people will rise shockingly to more than half of all adults by 2050, with all the associated individual ill-health and social costs (currently estimated to rise to £45 billion). The same fatty, sugary, salty diet that contributes to obesity also leads to a long and growing list of deadly or debilitating disease such as coronary heart disease, stroke, several types of cancer, and number of digestive disorders and oral health problems. Importantly, the Foresight project reported that the solutions to this health crisis are not just about individual choice. For a healthier nation, we need to change the environment in which people make their choices – and that means healthier recipes and marketing techniques being used by people who provide most of our food – namely food manufacturers, retailers, restaurants and caterers.

What can we do about it?

The Food Standards Agency's annual consumer surveys⁷⁰ continue to show that people are concerned about the nutritional quality and safety of their food, with some 60% saying they would like more information about the food they buy. Growing numbers of people are aware they should be eating at least five portions of fruit and vegetables a day, and also eating less salt, fat and sugar. At the same time, many people have to avoid certain foods or substances due to food allergy or intolerance, while others are keen to avoid additives that have been linked to safety concerns or to hyperactivity in children.

Major manufacturers, retailers and caterers continue to respond to these trends by promoting healthier products, changing recipes to remove unhealthy ingredients and additives, and using clearer labelling. The 'traffic light' system⁷¹ developed by the Food Standards Agency, for example, helps customers identify which products contain high or low amounts of fat, saturated fat, salt, sugar and calories – a scheme widely supported by health and consumer groups. You could join them by:



- Giving **basic nutrition information on your menus**, explaining what you have done to remove unhealthy ingredients and promote well-being. For example, several pub and restaurant chains now highlight which dishes contain a good serving of fruit or vegetables to contribute to the 'five a day' intake. Others make a general statement on the menu about using

⁶⁸ Department of Health. Health Survey for England 2003. 2004, The Stationery Office: London.

⁶⁹ Trends and Drivers of Obesity: A literature review for the Foresight project on obesity. 2007. http://www.foresight.gov.uk/Obesity/Outputs/Literature_Review/Literature_review.htm

⁷⁰ Food Standards Agency page viewed on 11 October 2007 <http://www.food.gov.uk/science/surveys/foodsafety-nutrition-diet/>

⁷¹ Food Standards Agency page viewed on 11 October 2007 <http://www.eatwell.gov.uk/foodlabels/trafficlights/>

healthier cooking oils, and reducing salt use, making healthy options for children, or providing average calorie information for different dishes and portion sizes.

- Creating tasty dishes that need **no salt added during the cooking stage** (your customers can add salt, if they wish). If you are already following the sustainability advice in the rest of this report, and devising seasonal menus based on local and organic produce, you should not need to rely on salt to bring out the delicious flavours – taste before you season!
- Making sure you follow the Food Standards Agency rules on labelling menu items that might contain allergens (see link below), and giving a **good choice of allergen-free dishes**.
- Similarly, fresh and appetising meals are not likely to be made from – or complemented by – pre-processed ingredients or condiments (such as ketchup or pickles) so you are probably already **avoiding artificial additives**. However, it is worth checking the packaging of anything that you buy to make sure that you – and your customers – are not getting any nasty surprise ingredients.

These measures are relatively simple and likely to be popular with customers. However, dealing with the nutritional quality of your whole menu – for example, the fat, sugar and fibre content - can be a little trickier. Although for most of us eating out has long since ceased to be reserved for treats and has become routine,⁷² we often still think of it ‘special’ and therefore not an occasion when we want to think about health. Putting a few ‘healthy choices’ on the menu may not stimulate additional sales of these items, but committing to making your whole menu generally healthier, and telling customers about the good work you are doing, might well boost sales. Luckily, the suggestions we’ve already made in these guidelines are not only good for your sustainability credentials, but also good for health – and possibly also good for your profit margins:

- Base your main courses on **generous portions of wholegrains, other starchy foods and vegetables**, and your desserts on **lashings of fruit**. These ingredients are available in increasing variety, with a wide range of attractive textures, colours and tastes, and – in season – are very good value. This style of dish will not only help your customers meet their target of eating at least five portions of fruit and vegetables a day, but also give them value for money portion sizes without piling on the calories. It also means that you can afford the small quantities of meat and dairy products you do serve to be of the highest quality, and they can be promoted and appreciated as such.
- Don’t spoil your good work by overdoing it with oils and fats. Gram for gram, they have around twice the calories of other foods, so **use fats and oils sparingly**, both in cooking and in dressings. Using less cooking fats might also help with waste disposal problems (see information on waste in the next chapter - *You’ve got better food, now...*).
- **When you do use oils, fat, butter, margarine or vegetable fat spread, choose options that are healthier**. Liquid oils are generally healthier than solid fats. Avoid margarines or vegetable fats with hydrogenated ingredients (sometimes called trans fats - the least healthy of all⁷³) and try to choose oils and fats that are high in polyunsaturated fat and monounsaturated fat, and low in saturated fat. Butter is a natural ingredient, but it is high in saturated fat, and sometimes high in salt, so use it sparingly.
- Help get the next generation’s palates trained to appreciate fresh, tasty food by **offering smaller portions of your normal dishes for children**. There is no need for children’s food to be – as it often is – covered in breadcrumbs and fried, presented in animal shapes, brightly (and artificially) coloured, and over-salted (or sickly sweet, if a dessert). Children will appreciate being treated like grown-ups, and parents will appreciate that good quality, rather than novelty, is on the menu.
- **Don’t use big portion sizes as a marketing opportunity**. Most people eat plenty of calories already, probably too many, so they do not need any encouragement to eat more! If you do want to fill the plate and make your meals look like value for money, pile on the vegetables and starchy foods, not the high fat elements of the meal such as meat or cheese. ‘Super-sizing’ to attract customers needs to become a thing of the past.

⁷² Figures from Datamonitor show that Britons eat more out of home meals than any other country, including the US. *New Opportunities in Out of Home Food and Drinks Consumption*, 2006. See <http://www.datamonitor.com>

⁷³ See information on the Food Standards Agency website <http://www.eatwell.gov.uk/healthydiet/nutritionessentials/fatssugarssalt/fats/>

- Make **ingredients lists and nutrition information readily available**. Tell customers what you are doing, and ask for their opinions.

Following these guidelines would mean pretty much everything on the menu is both delicious *and* healthy, so your customers may well see your establishment as the kind of place they can eat often, rather than for a rare treat!

For further information

- Advice for caterers on allergy and intolerance is available from the Food Standards Agency on <http://www.food.gov.uk/safereating/allergyintol/caterers/>. There are also specialist organisations, some of which produce information for caterers, such as *The Allergy Catering Manual*: <http://www.allergycateringmanual.com/>.
- Information, guidance and tips galore are available on the government salt campaign site <http://www.salt.gov.uk>.
- The *Food Magazine*: <http://www.foodcomm.org.uk/> regularly exposes excessive use of additives in products, alongside misleading labelling and marketing. See also their new additives site: <http://www.actiononadditives.com> – which focuses on artificial colours and preservatives proven to have a detrimental effect on young children’s mood and behaviour.
- If you are in Scotland, you might like to contact the organisers of the Healthy Living Award, which runs an awards scheme and ‘Coretalk’ newsletter for food businesses wanting to improve the nutritional value of their food. Free advice is also available on the website: <http://www.healthylivingaward.co.uk>.
- The Vegetarian Society doesn’t just provide information for vegetarians. They offer training for professional chefs, and you can commission their Cordon Vert chefs to develop recipes to your specifications – whether you’re promoting a particular product or ingredient, or just want some new ideas. See <http://www.vegsoc.org/business.html> for more details.

You've got better food, now...

What's the problem?

Sustainability is not just about the food you serve. Customers increasingly expect businesses to be 'joined up', and not make claims about sustainability in one area if they are being unsustainable in another. Three areas of special concern are dealt with in this chapter: waste, energy and water.

Waste

However much energy is has been used to make food and its packaging, all of it is wasted when it is thrown away. For example, in the UK we throw away an estimated 6.7 million tonnes of food every year, accounting for around a third of all of the food we buy. About half of this is edible, with the rest comprising of peelings, meat bones, and so on. Food also makes up a high proportion of the waste from manufacturing, catering and retail outlets. Fruit, vegetables and salads make up about 19% of the waste by weight from supermarkets. Artificially high cosmetic standards stipulated by supermarkets and caterers can also result in large amounts of a fruit crop going to waste.⁷⁴



Energy

The catering and retail sectors are also a major user of energy – both directly (for cooking, lighting and refrigeration) and indirectly (in the production, processing and transportation of the food). Most of this energy will be from non-renewable fossil fuels, and are therefore a significant source of greenhouse gases. In total, the food sector is estimated to be responsible for between 20 and 30 per cent of the UK's greenhouse gas emissions.⁷⁵ Much more could be done to improve energy efficiency and encourage food businesses to play their part in reducing our contribution to global warming.



Water

Water demand has increased dramatically over the past quarter of a century, and we now use half as much water again as we did in 1980.⁷⁶ This is a result of changes in lifestyles and many more water-using appliances. The need for us to use water more efficiently is due to several factors – not simply because water resources are finite (a good enough reason in itself!). For example, water purification is a major user of energy, which contributes to climate change. In itself, climate change means we can expect hotter, drier summers and more unpredictable weather, with greater risk of droughts and water shortages. We should all do our bit to use water more wisely.



What can we do about it?

The Greener Food project uses the expertise of many 'green' organisations to support London restaurants, cafés and take-aways in managing their businesses more sustainably. As well as advising

⁷⁴ Friends of the Earth (2002) Briefing Paper: Supermarkets and Great British fruit, see: http://www.foe.co.uk/resource/briefings/supermarket_british_fruit.pdf

⁷⁵ Calculations from, for example: Garnett, T., Food Climate Research Network, presentation to Sustain: The alliance for better food and farming, spring 2007. See the FCRN website at: <http://www.fcrn.org.uk>, and EIPRO Environmental Impact of Products, April 2005, European Science and Technology Observatory and Institute for Prospective Technological Studies, see: http://ec.europa.eu/environment/ipp/pdf/eipro_draft_report2.pdf

⁷⁶ Greater London Authority (2007) Water matters: The Mayor's Draft Water Strategy. See: <http://www.london.gov.uk/mayor/environment/water/docs/la-draft-water-strategy.rtf>

businesses on buying sustainable ingredients, Greener Food offers support for efficient use of energy and water, sustainable waste management, and recycling of materials such as glass and used cooking oil. Participating businesses receive an environmental audit with recommendations for how they can reduce their ecological footprint by adopting more sustainable practices.

A recent survey from the market research organisation Mintel⁷⁷ reported that 71% of British adults recycle as much packaging waste as they can. This attitude is supported by a 2007 government survey, which also showed that around two-thirds of us are concerned about saving energy, and over half about saving water.⁷⁸ Taking action on these issues will not only put you in tune with your customers' views, but can also save your business money. For example, you can:

- **Cut down the amount of excess packaging you receive from suppliers**, by telling them that you would prefer to receive goods in minimal packaging. Ask them to explore using packaging that is re-usable, refillable or made from recyclable materials.
- **Buy in bulk.** Weight for weight, larger boxes, cartons and bags use less packaging materials than smaller ones.
- **Choose goods that are (in order of preference):**
 - **Re-usable** – washable crockery, jugs, cutlery and other goods are far better than those that get used only once and then thrown away.
 - **Made from recycled materials** – to support the market for recycled products.
 - **Compostable or recyclable.**
- **Avoid goods and materials that cannot be re-used, composted or recycled.** If it needs to go in the bin, it will go straight to a landfill site, and these are filling up rapidly!
- **Encourage customers to recycle the materials they use** – especially for take-away food – by labelling packaging, and providing waste bins clearly separated into different materials.
- **Cut down food waste** you produce by designing recipes to make the best use of the food you buy, to use up leftovers, and to allow for creativity with what you've got. Putting soup on the menu is an easy and tasty way to use excess vegetables, and to cater for seasonal variations.
- Set up a **food composting** system, or get your food waste collected for composting.
- In recipe dishes where the look of ingredients is less important than the taste, **use blemished fruit and vegetables and riper fruits** that might otherwise go to waste. Tell your supplier that you are happy to use such ingredients, and ask for them at a reduced price.
- If you operate a retail and catering business, **use produce near its sell-by date for cooking**, to cut back on waste.
- **Separate waste products** to reduce your disposal and landfill tax costs. Recycling 7,000 cardboard boxes a year could reduce your waste disposal bill by up to 20%, and some companies collect waste cooking oil for free and turn it into biodiesel. Landfill tax will keep getting more expensive as the government tries to encourage companies to recycle waste rather than send it to landfill sites – in fact it is set to double to £48 per tonne by 2010.⁷⁹
- **Energy saving** tips include not only energy-efficient light bulbs (which can save 10% of your lighting costs), but also making sure your equipment – such as boilers and refrigerators – are properly maintained and up-to-date. It can sometimes save you money and energy if you replace old equipment with an 'A-rated' energy-efficient model. For example, an old and poorly maintained boiler can cost 30% more to run than a newer efficient model.
- Spray taps, dual flush toilets and repairing leaks can save you money by **cutting water waste**. Installing save-a-flushes in your toilets could save you up to one litre of water per flush. Composting food waste rather than putting it through a sink macerator will avoid polluting the water and also save on your water use.

⁷⁷ Mintel report on Ethical and Green Retailing, June 2007 - to read more go to: http://www.mintel.com/press_release.php?id=289890

⁷⁸ Department of the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (2007) Survey of public attitudes and behaviours towards the environment. <http://www.defra.gov.uk/news/2007/070814a.htm>

⁷⁹ See Defra's website for more information about landfill tax: <http://www.defra.gov.uk/environment/waste/strategy/factsheets/landfilltax.htm>

For further information

- Greener Food is being co-ordinated by London Sustainability Exchange (LSx) and is funded by the London Development Agency. For more information about LSx see <http://www.lsx.org.uk/>
 - For information about free business support on waste and recycling see London Remade http://www.londonremade.com/business_support.asp
 - Sustainable Energy Action can provide information about saving energy. See <http://www.sustainable-energy.org.uk/site.builder/business.html>
- Waterwise specialises in providing information about saving water - <http://www.waterwise.org.uk/>
- UK food waste information (mainly about domestic waste) is available the Waste Reduction Action Programme (WRAP), at: <http://www.lovefoodhatewaste.com/>
- Information for businesses about waste reduction and recycling is available from many organisations, such as:
 - London Remade: <http://www.londonremade.com>
 - Business Link: <http://www.businesslink.gov.uk> (follow the link to 'environment and efficiency')
 - Biffa: <http://www.biffa.co.uk/getrecycling/businesses.php>
 - Your local authority has targets for reducing the amount of waste going to landfill, so is likely to have waste reduction activities and support, although services may vary.

About Sustain



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.

We operate in collaboration with our membership and:

- Facilitate the exchange of information to strengthen the work of the membership, and help promote their activities to the media and to policy makers.
- Develop networks of members and allied organisations to devise and implement policies on particular issues of common concern.
- Advise and negotiate with governments and other regulatory agencies to ensure that legislation and policies on food and agriculture are publicly accountable and socially and environmentally responsible.
- Encourage businesses to produce, process and market foods which are good for health and the environment, and to devise, invest in and maintain policies and practices that make sustainable food choices the easy choice.
- We have an extensive range of publications covering our current and past areas of work.

The alliance is a registered charity (no. 1018643) and company limited by guarantee (no. 02673194). The alliance is independent from the agri-food industry and is funded from grants (from charitable foundations and government or government related sources), membership subscriptions and sales of publications. We also undertake paid contract work, where the results of the work will further the alliance's purpose. No funding is accepted from any source which would compromise, or appear to compromise, the alliance's principles.

To find out more about Sustain's work, and our members, visit: <http://www.sustainweb.org>