

Response ID ANON-TXTF-RUMH-2

Submitted to **National Food Strategy - Call for Evidence**

Submitted on **2019-10-25 10:42:07**

Introduction

1 Data protection notice

2 Would you like your response to be confidential?

No

Please explain clearly in writing why you need to keep these details confidential:

3 What is your name?

Name:

Kath Dalmeny

4 What is your email address?

Email:

kath@sustainweb.org

5 What is the name of your organisation?

Organisation:

Sustain: The alliance for better food and farming

6 Who are you responding as?

Non-governmental organisation – In an official capacity as the representative of a non-governmental organisation / trade union / trade body / other organisation.

About your organisation: NGOs

16 What area does your organisation primarily operate within?

Any other charitable purposes

please specify:

The health and sustainability and equity of food, farming and fishing

17 Where does your organisation operate? (please select all that apply)

North East, North West, West Midlands, East Midlands, South West, South East, Yorkshire and the Humber, East of England, Greater London, Northern Ireland, Wales, Scotland, Outside the UK

Your views

19 Please enter your response below

please enter your response below:

Good food for schools, hospitals and care settings

Let's make the National Food Strategy the historic moment when public sector food procurement is established – in politics, practice and perpetuity – as one of the pivotal ways to deliver on our nation's food system priorities. For once and for all, food for schools, hospitals, government departments, nurseries, meals on wheels services, care homes, prisons and the armed forces must reliably serve the needs of public health; equitable access to good food for all; fair food, farming and fishing livelihoods; good food citizenship, skills and education; sustainable food production; mitigation of dangerous climate change and restoration of nature – at home and overseas.

Over the past 20 years, numerous government and third-sector reports, initiatives and inquiries have called for the "power of public procurement" to be harnessed to transform our food, farming and fishing system and for the public sector to "lead by example", setting the contractual obligations and pace for private-sector change. There has been investment, albeit intermittent, and some big steps forward over this time, and there are many admirable pioneers. However, improvement is still piecemeal, initiatives come and go, and many well-documented gaps remain. A worryingly large proportion of public sector food contracts is still not being used to best advantage to meet priority national food system goals. There are also concerning recurring reports of a downward pressure on budgets, contractual criteria, food quality, standards, catering facilities, staffing, as well as in lifeline food provision for children from low-income families and for elderly and vulnerable people.

We need a transformation in public sector food, establishing as the normal expectation good food that delivers on public values – supported by legislation, standards, measurement, accountability, skills, adequate budgets and institutional culture.

Here is the state of play, across the most significant arenas of public sector food:

- Central government: Government Buying Standards are in theory mandatory for central government, for government departments, in prisons and the armed forces. When introduced in 2011, the stated national ambition was for all central government to meet the baseline standards, and for there to be significant progress on the aspirational goal of food meeting higher environmental standards, such as agro-ecologically produced food.
- NHS hospitals: Sustainability, food quality, nutrition, malnutrition screening and food service standards are in theory mandatory for NHS hospitals as part of the NHS Standard Contract, however a recent survey found that only half of hospitals were meeting the standards.
- Schools: Nutrition and food quality standards are mandatory for school meals (though not first-wave academies) but sustainable procurement is not mandated. Voluntary integrated healthy and sustainable food schemes such as Food for Life Served Here are leading the way.
- Local authority contracts: Provision of local authority food-relevant services for the most vulnerable, such as meals on wheels, promotion of Healthy Start vouchers, Holiday Hunger programmes, school breakfast clubs and crisis payments for people going hungry are patchy, too often poorly prioritised and/or in decline.

Standards and provision for each arena are tailored to meet some national priorities, but with different emphasis and impact in practice. From research we have reviewed, we conclude that there are examples of inspiring leadership in every public sector food arena, at small and larger scale, and many inspiring voluntary initiatives, but that standards are generally patchily applied and with little or no official monitoring or accountability. And in general, standards are not adequate to the inter-related agendas of food's role in addressing health, poverty and inequalities as well as climate and nature emergency.

Below, we set out 10 recommended steps to achieve transformational change. The National Food Strategy needs to catalyse action to:

1. Set out a visionary commitment, with clear expectations for beneficial outcomes and an integrated approach: a call to action by all public sector food buyers, providers and institutions, within a national framework. In keeping with the top priorities of our time, we suggest that this should be framed as the public sector helping to facilitate achievement of:
 - A just transition for the food, fishing and farming sectors, providing fair and consistent markets for food producers working towards net zero greenhouse gas emissions and restoration of nature
 - Realisation of the Right to Food for all, especially those most vulnerable to food poverty and hunger
2. Overhaul Government Buying Standards, the NHS Standard Contract, School Food Standards and work with voluntary catering standards to ensure that they clearly serve the nation's public health, inequalities, sustainability, climate change and biodiversity agendas. All standards now need to be 'net zero emissions proofed' as a matter of urgency.
3. Take a bold approach to climate- and nature-friendly food, using high-profile public sector institutions to engage the public, showcase good practice and innovation and get the nation talking – especially about ways to design out waste, use food from agro-ecological production methods, reduce dependence on intensively produced meat and dairy, shift to more plant-based diets and use only verifiably sustainable fish.
4. Set a national expectation (preferably legislation) that public sector food must meet the standards and that award of public sector food contracts must be weighted to favour health and sustainability, with official guidance giving confidence this is both permissible and desirable under procurement rules and the Public Services (Social Value Act) 2012.
5. Establish adequate mechanisms for transparency, reporting and accountability on priority criteria, including inspection by official bodies such as Ofsted and NHS Improvement.
6. Protect and enhance public sector food budgets and monitor spend.
7. Monitor and publish data on when food contracts for public sector institutions are due for renewal and use this to target interventions and plan roll-out of higher standards.
8. Integrate health and sustainability into training for procurement, catering and management staff.
9. Make it easy for smaller and diverse agro-ecological farmers to participate, for example dynamic purchasing systems, meet-the-buyer events and values-led brokerage. Such interventions could be paid for by the UK Shared Prosperity Fund as an investment in struggling rural economies.
10. Prevent new international trade deals undermining high standards in public sector food.

please upload supporting evidence in a.docx or .pdf file format.:

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Your views

20 Which of the following areas does your response best relate to? (please select all that apply)

Agriculture, Economy, Environment, Food Security, Health

if other, please specify:

Consultee Feedback on the Online Survey

21 Overall, how satisfied are you with our online consultation tool?

Very satisfied