

Good Food on the Public Plate

What we have done and what we have learned



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“I wanted an independent organisation to research this issue, so was very happy that Good Food on the Public Plate were able to provide me with the information I needed to be able to improve our food service.”

Paul Winter, Head of Hotel Services for the South London & Maudsley NHS Foundation Trust

Good Food on the Public Plate

Interim report, September 2009

1. Introduction

Good Food on the Public Plate (GFPP) has been running as part of the London Food Strategy Local Food Infrastructure project for nine months. GFPP is coordinated by Sustain: The alliance for better food and farming. Funding for GFPP is currently secured until the end of 2009 and the project will soon be evaluated to determine the case for further funding. This interim report outlines GFPP's achievements so far and sets the case for extended funding.

We are delighted to report that the changes this project has supported already add £144,700 of measurable change to purchasing sustainable products, and another £570,000 of measurable change is anticipated before the end of 2009. Previously, this public money was spent on food with poor sustainability credentials. In addition, several major London public-sector organisations are implementing policies and catering practices that are reducing packaging waste, diverting food waste to compost, and building relationships with sustainable farmers and distributors. We are also working with a cluster of London public-sector institutions to harness their significant collaborative buying power, and are planning more high-level successes in the future.

Through the enthusiasm and commitment of the project officers, we have already achieved all of the agreed outputs and milestones set in the original project plan, and are now setting ambitious targets for the next phase of work. To date we have provided business support to 62 organisations, and training to 47 individuals, surpassing our targets of 50 businesses supported and 15 individuals trained.

The project's working definition of sustainable food is based on Sustain's principles of sustainable food, at www.sustainweb.org/sustainablefood and also in the Department of Health's Sustainable Food Guidelines for the NHS¹.

It is important to acknowledge the difficulties in assessing changes in attitude and skills contributing to the achievement of sustainable procurement. We have therefore given examples of the support we have provided to our participating catering and procurement staff, alongside such data that is available on changes in purchasing behaviour. Based on this information we can conclude that we have helped to achieve some impressive changes in purchasing behaviour and in catering managers' attitudes to sustainable procurement.

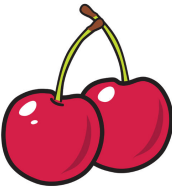
¹ Sustainable Food: A Guide for Hospitals, May 2009. Purchasing and Supply Agency: [http://www.pasa.nhs.uk/pasa/Doc.aspx?Path=\[MN\]\[SP\]/NHSprocurement/Sustainable%20procurement/Food/SustainableFoodGuide%20-%206may09.pdf](http://www.pasa.nhs.uk/pasa/Doc.aspx?Path=[MN][SP]/NHSprocurement/Sustainable%20procurement/Food/SustainableFoodGuide%20-%206may09.pdf)

2. What we do

We provide a wide range of assistance to a diverse cross-section of public sector organisations to use more sustainable food in their catering. Where appropriate, we group them into clusters of organisations, either geographical or sectoral, who can work together on sustainable procurement and with whom we can take similar approaches because of their common circumstances. The main services we provide are set out below.

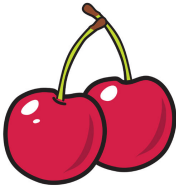
a. Auditing food purchasing

Good Food on the Public Plate conducts food purchasing audits for interested organisations. This involves collecting purchasing data, often liaising with suppliers, which is then analysed to identify changes that would improve sustainability, alongside highlighting current good practice. A major part of these audits has been identifying changes that are cost neutral or that can even make savings.

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|  | <p>CASE STUDY: London Borough of Enfield</p> <p>Auditing 12 months of Enfield's food purchases clarified the current level of sustainability. An immediate output was costing a move to free range eggs. Enfield now use only free range eggs. Some fish was already from sustainable sources and work continues on ensuring only sustainable fish is served.</p> <p>Enfield is now working with their fruit and vegetable supplier to identify suitable seasonal and locally produced products.</p> |
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b. Brokering supply chain links

Often public sector bodies would like to switch to more sustainable supplies but do not have the staff time to investigate new options. Good Food on the Public Plate has spent a lot of energy identifying appropriate suppliers and forging successful relationships between them and our participants.

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| <p>CASE STUDY: Chelsea Cluster</p> <p>The UK's higher legal minimum welfare standards for pigs has meant the UK market has been flooded with cheaper bacon produced from imported pig meat. Royal Marsden and Royal Brompton Hospitals are now in the final stages of securing a supply of bacon from British reared pigs from Woburn County Foods, an SME in Bedfordshire.</p> <p>Although the product is more expensive per kilo than imported pig meat some of this cost has been offset by slightly reducing the weight of the rashers, and by some very competitive prices on sausages using British reared pig meat from the same supplier.</p> |  |
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c. Advising on contract specifications

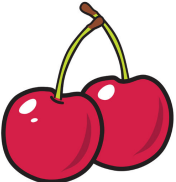
An important part of public sector food procurement is developing food supply contracts that contain robust sustainability specifications. We have provided this advice and support to several organisations when the

opportunity has arisen. These opportunities are not frequent, as contracts often lock in the public sector to the same supplier for several years.

Once the contract is written with robust sustainability specifications we can work with people to monitor those contracts, and we have already begun to do this with some of the project's participants.

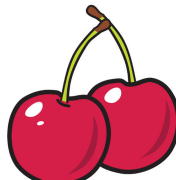
d. Advising on purchasing

Good Food on the Public Plate has provided both *ad hoc* and strategic advice to participants on their purchasing. Part of our role is to be always available to catering managers as they are going about their daily tasks – providing advice and answers to their questions. We also provide more formal advice through attending planning meetings and developing strategies (see below).

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|  | <p>CASE STUDY: South London and Maudsley NHS Foundation Trust</p> <p>South London and Maudsley NHS Foundation Trust (SLaM) has been using only pasteurised liquid eggs but their catering managers wanted to get SLaM policy changed to allow free range shell eggs from a regional supplier to be used. We researched and wrote a paper outlining Department of Health and Food Standards Agency guidance and other hospitals' current use of shell eggs.</p> <p>Paul Winter, SLaM's Head of Hotel Services, will be taking this paper to meetings at SLaM to support his case for allowing free range shell eggs to be used. Paul said: <i>"I wanted an independent organisation to research this issue, so was very happy that Good Food on the Public Plate were able to provide me with the information I needed to be able to improve our food service."</i></p> |
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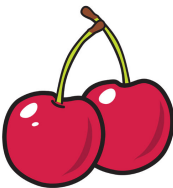
e. Offering guidance on sustainable food procurement policies

A common starting point for organisations is to develop their aims into a sustainable food procurement policy. Good Food on the Public Plate has provided of advice and expertise on this to several organisations. We have provided tailored drafts and met with whole catering teams to discuss their policy.

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| <p>CASE STUDY: City University London</p> <p>City University London has a strong sustainability team and is the home of the internationally renowned Centre for Food Policy. The university wanted to integrate sustainability into the food served on campus. The first step was to develop a sustainable food procurement policy to set the plan for how to make sure the food served would be sustainable. We developed a policy template for the university and are continuing to support City to develop this to become a university policy.</p> <p>Environmental Officer Dawn White said: <i>"We are in the last stages of writing our sustainable food policy. Good Food on the Public Plate helped us with the initial and subsequent drafts and we are planning on working with them more to carry out the implementation of the policy."</i></p> |  |
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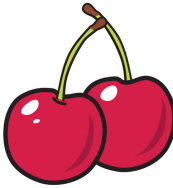
f. Providing networking opportunities

Good Food on the Public Plate has developed a reputation among those involved in sustainable food procurement as a good source of information about activities in this area. We often field inquiries about the state of public sector food procurement make introductions and create links between interested individuals and organisations.

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|  | <p>CASE STUDY: Queen Mary University of London</p> <p>Queen Mary University of London (QMUL) was hoping to start composting their food waste but was unsure about how to do that in practice. Through our networks we knew that the London School of Economics (LSE) had a very impressive recycling and composting system and so co-ordinated a visit to LSE for the QMUL catering manager. Queen Mary has now begun to compost all of their kitchen food waste.</p> <p>Of Good Food on the Public Plate, Michele Washington, QMUL Head of Catering and Contract Manager said: <i>"I am learning so much from you. May I thank you for your constant source of information."</i></p> |
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g. Liaising with suppliers

We also provide advice and assistance to suppliers and have helped several suppliers to sell to public sector organisations. We have also run several workshops bringing together buyers and suppliers to discuss the issues faced in supplying sustainable products to the public sector.

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| <p>CASE STUDY: Free range eggs</p> <p>Imperial College and Thamesbrook Nursing home previously bought eggs from caged hens. The free range eggs now bought by these two institutions are from Wholesome Foods, an SME in East Sussex that was located by the Good Food on the Public Plate project. Wholesome Foods act as a packing and distribution centre for small farms local to them.</p> |  |
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| <p>"Good Food on the Public Plate and Sustain have provided an enlightened and energetic force to tackle difficult barriers on the supply chain, that commerce would not ordinarily tackle due to their business trading practices, competition, suspicion and commercial barriers to entry."</p> <p>Diana Spellman, Managing Director of Partners In Purchasing Limited</p> |  |
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3. Achievements

a. Achieved to date

Thanks to Good Food on the Public Plate £144,700 more each year is now being spent on higher welfare free range eggs. Seven of our participating public sector institutions won Good Egg Awards in 2009 from Compassion in World Farming to acknowledge their public commitment to using cage free eggs. GFPP itself was also given an award to recognise our work in helping more organisations to use cage free eggs.

Imperial College has stopped using cod for their Friday fish and chips in light of the fact that most cod fisheries are not yet managed sustainably. Another major pan-London public sector organisation (who wish to remain anonymous at this stage) is poised to drop cod and replace it with sustainably managed pollock, saving themselves several thousands pounds per year.

b. In the pipeline

We have commitments from various organisations for the following changes to be achieved before December 2009:

- Two universities will no longer use bottled water, and serve filtered tap water in refillable bottles. In the case of Birkbeck, University of London this will result in 13,358 bottles per year no longer being manufactured, transported, and disposed of;
- More than £186,000 per year of additional changes to move from unsustainable to sustainable fish;
- A £300,000 per year collaborative contract will be set up for sustainably produced fruit and vegetables;
- £49,500 per year change from imports to bacon and sausages from British reared pigs;
- £19,700 per year change to cage free eggs;
- £15,000 per year will be spent on enhanced welfare Freedom Food chicken.

These changes will add up to £570,000 per year being spent on more sustainable food which, previously, was spent on food with poor sustainability credentials.

Along with these quantifiable achievements the project is also working with a range of organisations including:

- City of London
- City University
- Government Office for London
- Greenwich Catering Services
- ISS Mediclean
- Kingston University

- London School of Economics
- Queen Mary University
- Royal Holloway University
- School of Oriental and African Studies
- Transport for London

We are helping these organisations with issues such as menu assessments, purchasing audits, providing recommendations on sustainable contract specifications and developing sustainable food procurement policies. As described above, we have also been able to help some organisations make changes to their catering practices, for example by introducing food composting.

c. Long term

A major part of GFPP's recent work has been acting as the secretariat to the pan-London cluster of public sector organisations to investigate setting up framework agreements to supply them with sustainable food. We are initially working on dairy and meat with annual values of £450,000 and £2,500,000 respectively. This cluster has the potential to change radically the procurement practices of public sector organisations in London who are interested in sustainable food and to influence millions of pounds worth of tax payers' money to support sustainable food and farming.

d. Additional targets for the next four months

As well as continuing to develop the work outlined above, GFPP has set itself some extra targets, based on what we have accomplished in our last nine months of work. These are:

- Free range eggs to all of the London Universities Caterers Association's (LUCA) members;
- Free range eggs to three new hospitals;
- Sustainable fish in the rest of the LUCA sites;
- Phasing out bottled water in the rest of the LUCA sites;
- Developing some case studies of English apples and pears, only when in season, to several organisations;
- Developing some case studies of reducing the quantity of meat on the menu, using the savings to improve the quality (Farm Assured as minimum).

The other focus for work in the next few months will be to continue to work with the pan-London cluster.

4. Events

Good Food on the Public Plate has run some very successful events in the last nine months.

a. Contracts: A fresh look

Good Food on the Public Plate teamed up with the hugely successful Good Food Training for London (another project run as part of the implementation of the London Food Strategy). Together we ran a training event for procurement managers to equip them with the knowledge and confidence to write contracts that include robust sustainability specifications. The event was over-subscribed, attracting almost 50 participants representing a wide range of organisations, and the speakers were:

- **Dr. Roberta Sonnino**, from Cardiff University, advisor to the Scottish Government and Rome School Food programme, and co-author of 'School Food Revolution';
- **Roy Heath**, Sustainable Food Procurement Manager for the Cornwall NHS Food Programme;
- **Jackie Schneider**, Children's Food Campaigner, who helped to re-write the London Borough of Merton's school catering contract with a major catering company; and
- **Simon Doff**, Assessor from small supplier accreditation scheme **SALSA** explaining how to meet 'due diligence' responsibilities.

The day prompted very good feedback from the participants.

b. Supply workshops

We have run several workshops bringing together buyers and suppliers to discuss the issues around supplying sustainable produce into London. We have run one workshop to discuss meat, one to discuss dairy and are planning a third to re-address some of the meat supply issues.

c. Meet the buyer

Good Food on the Public Plate worked in collaboration with the South East Food Group Partnership to run a meet the buyer event which brought together a range of public sector buyers from London and suppliers from the South East. Once again, the day had great feedback with new links being formed between the participants.

We co-ordinated several other supplier visits, including a visit from a chicken supplier to the kitchen of one of our project participants to discuss possibilities for supply. We also arranged a tour for three of our participating organisations of a site which uses filtered tap water instead of bottled water to illustrate how the system works. Both of these visits have resulted in significant changes to procurement practices in participating organisations.

d. A showcase

The project is currently planning a showcase event to celebrate and share the great work that is now happening around sustainable procurement in London. We are aiming to have six speakers outlining their successes and challenges to a group of public sector buyers.

5. Feedback from participants

We have received a great deal of positive feedback from participants.

Wholesome Foods is a company who we connected with several organisations to supply free range eggs. Their Managing Director, Joey Appleton said:

“Many thanks for providing us with the link to supplying the public sector. As a producer/supplier in the south-east we have found it difficult to persuade caterers in the public sector that we are a viable option for them. You have bridged the gap perfectly.”

Of the *ad hoc* advice we provide, Norma Douglas from South London and Maudsley Trust said:

“On each occasion that I’ve requested assistance I’ve received it with ‘love’ – those members of Sustain giving help have been great.”

About our meet the buyer event, Jayne Rose of Nigel Fredericks Limited told us:

“I just wanted to thank you for a most enjoyable afternoon yesterday ... It was amazing how much information I felt I got from the buyers in such a short time.”

Regarding the need for further funding for a project like this, Diana Spellman, Managing Director of Partners In Purchasing Limited said:

“Sustain have provided an enlightened and energetic force to tackle difficult barriers on the supply chain, that commerce would not ordinarily tackle due to their business trading practices, competition, suspicion and commercial barriers to entry ... extra funding is required in order for new supply chains to benefit from the platform they have started.”

This feedback demonstrates that Good Food on the Public Plate has been highly valued in the public procurement community.

6. Results achieved

Through our commitment and effort we have already achieved all of the agreed outputs and milestones. To date we have provided business support to 62 organisations, and training to 47 individuals, surpassing our targets of 50 businesses supported and 15 individuals trained. The table below provides more details.

| Table one: Milestone achievement | |
|--|-----------------------------------|
| Milestone | Status |
| Recruit / confirm 2 x Project Managers to end of December 2009 | Achieved |
| Launch of new phase of Good Food on the Public Plate including which sector and geographical clusters to prioritise in initial phase | Achieved |
| Co-ordinate 3 x sector-focused visits to producers to highlight benefits of sustainable sourcing | Achieved |
| Design and hold sector-specific events (e.g. with prisons, universities) to showcase best practice, challenges etc. | Achieved |
| Develop geographical- and sector-specific clusters to increase sustainable public sector sourcing | Achieved |
| Skills training delivered to individuals in participating institutions in line with outputs for the broader Local Food Infrastructure project, including monthly feedback to project co-ordinators | Achieved |
| Establish pan-London procurement working group (including appropriate strategic partners), 4 meetings to be held by end-September 2009 | Achieved |
| Submit project report to the LDA Project Manager which includes the findings of the evaluation | On track to be achieved by Dec 09 |

7. Lessons learnt

We have learnt a great deal in the last nine months which is informing our current work. An important and somewhat unexpected part of our role has been to give individuals in an organisation **a reason to get together and discuss sustainable food** issues. We often found that there were several people working in this area in an organisation who had not spoken to each other before. Sustainability teams in public sector organisations have been a valued support in our work with the catering and procurement teams in promoting sustainable food procurement.

Less surprising is that **a lot of organisations are very interested in collaborating** with each other and grouping into clusters. The process of bringing organisations together is relatively straightforward and those with in-house catering can find common issues to work together on.

Our experience is that **it is much more difficult, however, to work with those organisations that have contracted out their catering.** There are fewer procurement issues they can collaborate on and so we have worked with them on other elements such as Fair Trade University status, phasing out bottled water, food waste management, and conducting purchasing audits.

Procurement staff worry about the difficulties involved in managing the practicalities of collaborative procurement. Awareness of collaborative procurement is high but not many institutions practice it. Another of GFPP's roles has been to provide support for the management of these practicalities to **make collaboration more accessible to busy procurement managers.**

One of the main barriers to food being procured sustainably is a perception amongst catering and procurement managers that EU law on tendering processes prevented more sustainable procurement. The other main barrier we have found is concern about the cost of sustainable food. There are individuals who are overcoming these barriers and making efforts to improve the sustainability of their food supplies in every sector. **Investing in practical support for these 'potential champions' could reap great dividends** in improving sustainable procurement in the public sector. These individuals can act as examples to others in the sector, providing proof that organisations can procure sustainable food successfully within the constraints faced by their sector.

The suppliers that we have been working with say that **getting information about contract tenders, knowing the right people to contact and the complexity of the tender process are the main barriers to supplying the public sector.** Suppliers are, on the whole, keen to link to potential public sector supply chain opportunities. It is sometimes difficult for them to tackle the logistics of supply and distribution and to produce adequate volume for the tenders.

GFPP has been a catalyst for change in all the areas outline above, and momentum is building. However, making sustainable changes to procurement takes time. Although there are some 'quick wins' the final decision-making processes to achieve these are not as quick as we would like, which makes short-term projects problematic. **Public sector institutions commonly need continual support to make changes to their purchasing patterns.** Typically, changes in procurement can take several years. Given this restriction, we are delighted that GFPP has already contributed to £144,700 of measurable change to purchasing sustainable products, and another £570,000 of measurable change is anticipated before December. On top of this, the project officers have identified a number of additional areas for improvement before the end of the project's funded period to the end of December 2009.

Thus, we would argue the type of support that GFPP provides needs to continue to see the promising projects through to completion, and to build on this success into the future.

8. Next steps for Good Food on the Public Plate

We have summarised above the successes achieved and lessons learnt by GFPP in the last nine months. It is clear that the support we are providing to public sector procurers is highly valued and has already had a significant positive impact on purchasing behaviour.

One of the key projects we are working on is the pan-London cluster which has the potential to influence a very significant amount of public spending, resulting in both savings and increased sustainable procurement. The cluster participants do not have the staff time to pursue the collaboration without the assistance that Good Food on the Public Plate is currently providing.

The objectives set out by Good Food on the Public Plate also appear to be relevant to the standards currently being discussed by the London Organising Committee of the Olympic Games (LOCOG). If these high sustainability standards are set into LOCOG's food policy GFPP's potential role may become even more important. GFPP could help create a significant and stable market for sustainable food after the Olympics. If these standards are set into policy by LOCOG there is a link between the legacy of those standards and the supply set up for LOCOG and the public sector in London.

Moreover, as explained by one of our participants, Diana Spellman, long-lasting changes to procurement behaviour usually have a time scale of several years. We would therefore argue that whoever supports the next stage of this project will get the most out of its investment to date by allocating some additional funds to allow the Good Food on the Public Plate project to continue at its current level of staffing (two full time equivalent) for at least another two years, to realise lasting changes to public sector purchasing and to achieve the ambitions of the London Food Strategy.



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The alliance is a registered charity (no. 1018643) and company limited by guarantee (no. 02673194).

Appendix 1: Details of a range of participants and our work with them

Camden Cluster

We brought together a pre-existing group of universities with some other organisations in Camden. The Camden Cluster has met to discuss bottled water, free range eggs, and food waste. In future the group aims to look at sustainable fish and Fair Trade.

Birkbeck University
British Library
Greater Ormond Street Hospital
Institute of Education
School of Oriental and African Studies

Chelsea Cluster

This group has decided to pool their purchasing power and create efficiencies that will allow them to improve sustainability. They have begun writing shared contracts for meat and eggs and are beginning to investigate fruit and vegetables.

Imperial College
Royal Brompton
Royal Marsden Hospital
Thamesbrook Carehome

Contract Caterers

We have been engaging contract caterers and advising them on ways to improve the sustainability of their operations.

ISS Mediclean
Sodexo

Greenwich Cluster

This is an example of a cluster that did not reach the desired level of collaboration due to the catering services being contracted out. These organisations met to discuss phasing out bottled water but since then we have been working only with Greenwich University to audit their caterer's suppliers.

Greenwich University
Trinity Laban University

Hospital Caterers Association

We have worked with members of this group on several specific issues as well as collaborating with Good Food Training for London to hold a Sustainable Food Workshop for their members.

London Boroughs

We have been working with all of these boroughs separately on issues related to their food provision. It is hoped that in the future phases of the project these boroughs will take advantage of the collaborative work in the London cluster.

City of London
Greenwich Catering Services

Kensington and Chelsea Primary Care Trust
London Borough of Hillingdon
London Borough of Kensington and Chelsea
London Borough of Tower Hamlets

London Cluster

This cluster is our biggest. The members are investigating writing collaborative framework agreements for the supply of sustainable products into the public sector in London. The first areas for tender are dairy and meat.

London Borough of Enfield
London Borough of Havering
London Borough of Tower Hamlets
London University Caterers Association (LUCA)
Metropolitan Police Service

London Government

We work with some government departments separately on how to get more sustainable food from their catering contracts issues. It is hoped that our future work will involve more government departments and us facilitating collaboration between them.

Government Office for London
Transport for London

London University Caterers Association (LUCA)

We work with several of the members of LUCA separately on sustainable procurement policies and conducting purchasing audits.

London School of Economics
Queen Mary University
Royal Holloway University

Universities

We have been working separately with some other universities on food procurement policies and menu planning.

City University
Kingston University

Suppliers

We have been working with a range of suppliers to help them sell their products to the public sector by seeking out appropriate suppliers, making introductions and assisting in the maintenance of relationships.