



94 WHITE LION STREET, LONDON N1 9PF

tel: 020-7837-1228 • fax: 020-7837-1141

e-mail: sustain@sustainweb.org

website: www.sustainweb.org

Sustainable Food Chains

Briefing Paper 6

Public Procurement of Sustainable Food:
Review of activity 2002-04

The Sustainable Food Chains project

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, promote equity, and enrich society and culture. Sustain represents over 100 national public interest organisations working at international, national, regional and local level.

This briefing paper is part of an initiative by Sustain, called '*Sustainable Food Chains*' to promote sustainable food, including in public sector catering. More specifically, activities include;

- Establishing contact with interested bodies at regional, national and European level, currently developing, or planning to develop, policy options.
- Developing policy recommendations for the statutory, private and voluntary sectors to support sustainable food economies, with the publication of '*Feeding the Future: Policy Options for Local Food*' (November 2003)
- Organising a national conference to discuss and develop policy recommendations.
- Producing a technical manual on public procurement with case studies called '*Good Food on the Public Plate*' (July 2003). This includes a 'How to do it' guide on buying and supplying local/fair trade and organic food including legal and contractual aspects, supply chain issues, and ideas for catering options.
- Establishing six pilot projects. These have been established in tandem with the technical manual, and highlight experience gained at local level.
- Producing briefing papers on local food and public sector catering and the potential for sustainable food providing health, farming, and environmental benefits.
- Advising and negotiating with government at European, national, regional, and local level for changes in policy and action to support the public procurement of sustainable food.
- Responding to consultations from national and European government and others on public procurement issues.

'Sustainable food', for the purpose of this paper, refers to food which meets a number of criteria including;

- **Proximate** – originating from the closest practicable source or the minimization of energy use
- **Healthy** as part of a balanced diet and not containing harmful biological or chemical contaminants
- **Fairly or cooperatively traded** between producers, processors, retailers, and consumers
- **Non-exploiting** of employees in the food sector in terms of rights, pay and conditions
- **Environmentally beneficial** or benign in its production (e.g. organic)
- **Accessible** both in terms of geographic access and affordability
- **High animal welfare standards** in both production and transport
- **Socially inclusive** of all people in society
- **Encouraging knowledge and understanding** of food and food culture

Contacts and information

For all enquiries about the project, please contact:
Vicki Hird, Policy Director vh@sustainweb.org

Other briefings available as part of this initiative include;

Briefing 1 Local Food; Benefits, Obstacles and Opportunities

Briefing 2 Public Sector Catering; Opportunities and issues relating to sustainable food procurement

Briefing 3 Public Procurement of Sustainable Food: Current, planned and related initiatives

Briefing 4 The English Regional Development Agencies; What are they doing to support sustainable food economies?

Briefing 5 The English RDA's Sustainable Farming and Food Strategies: Good or bad?

All documents are downloadable from Sustain's website (<http://www.sustainweb.org>) in pdf format. Hard copies are available at a cost of £5 each plus £1 postage and packaging or all six for £15, from;

Sustain

94 White Lion St

London, N1 9PF

This paper does not necessarily represent the views of Sustain or any of Sustain's members. Although every effort has been made to ensure the information is correct at time of release, the editors cannot be responsible for errors or omissions.

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Introduction

There has been much interest and activity over the last year in the area of providing better food in the public sector, from announcements by Lord Whitty, Minister for Food, to steps taken by school catering managers. This review does not include every initiative by individual institutions (see 'Briefing 3 Public Procurement of Sustainable Food: Current, planned and related initiatives', for a number of individual initiatives), but it does illustrate that much is now happening to bring about sustainable public food procurement at European, national, and regional levels, and in most counties in the UK. Much activity is still new and emerging and therefore requires support. The lessons learnt during the course of the initiatives noted here and elsewhere will be valuable in informing future work and developing policy.

Europe-wide

Eco-procura

ICLEI's 'Eco-procura' project includes BIG-Net (a network of local authorities) and a biannual conference. ICLEI conducted the EU-funded RELIEF research project and its findings have been reported showing the environmental benefits of 'green' purchasing. Ecoprocura will be running the 'Procura+' campaign for local authorities to adopt sustainable procurement policies and practices, starting in January 2004. See <http://www.iclei.org/europe/ecoprocura/>

ECSEP

The European Coalition for Social and Environmental Procurement are a group of NGOs campaigning for amendments to the proposed new EU directives: See European Environmental Bureau at <http://www.eeb.org/>

Alimen Terra

The European Network for Sustainable Food Systems is a network of farmers unions, cooperatives, and NGOs conducting work on sustainable food procurement including the Interreg 111C Pan-European project. See below. See <http://www.alimenterra.org/>

Interreg IIIC– Pan-European

Bid for a pan-European project being developed by partners including Alimen Terra focusing on the exchange of good practice, development of common methodologies, and the creation of models for public sector catering that can operate on all levels throughout Europe: Areas involved include the East of England (lead), Veneto and Languedoc-Roussillon (Italy), Longadoc (France), Andalusia (Spain), and possibly Estonia, Poland, and Sweden. See <http://www.alimenterra.org/>

Interreg IIIB– Atlantic Arc

Bid by South West Local Food Partnership with the Soil Association and partners in Ireland, Wales, Brittany, Spain and Portugal for EU Interreg IIIB funding for a project covering the Atlantic Arc areas which aims to develop sustainable local food content in public procurement.

See <http://www.southwestfoodlinks.org.uk/>

Many individual examples of good practice exist in Italy, France, Austria, Sweden, Finland, Germany, and elsewhere. Case Studies: Vienna, French schools, Italian schools, Denmark (in *Good Food on the Public Plate*), Sweden and Finland (in *Relocalising the Food Chain*).

UK-wide

Food for Life

Food for Life is a partnership initiative including the Soil Association aiming to increase amount of local and organic food in schools. A pilot project ran for six months between March and

September 2003. The project worked with primary schools to trial menus, source new supplies and work on improving food education. Schools involved were based in Hampshire, Nottingham, Devon and London. Report, of the same name, on organic school meals published in October 2003. See <http://www.foodforlifeuk.org/>

Sustainable Food Chains

Sustain runs the 'Sustainable Food Chains' project which has included production of the *Good Food on the Public Plate* technical manual, probably the most comprehensive publication on sustainable food procurement and catering available. It has also involved pilot projects in six areas of England and Wales stimulating action at a local level. The project also produces briefings, and is conducting a 'green canteen' survey, runs an email newsgroup, and works to develop and influence policy.

See http://www.sustainweb.org/chain_index.asp

Sustainable Development Commission

The Sustainable Development Commission produced the *Food Procurement in the NHS* report in 2002. The SDC/Kings Fund's 'Healthy Futures' project aims to help the NHS adopt sustainable procurement and includes best practice case studies and reports. See <http://www.sd-commission.gov.uk/wp/03.htm>

England

Organic Action Plan

The OAP is part of the 'Strategy for Sustainable Farming and Food' and includes a specific priority of introducing organic food into public sector catering. Links to the FPIG, see below.

See <http://www.defra.gov.uk/farm/organic/>

Food Procurement Implementation Group (FPIG)

FPIG is a central government cross-departmental group aiming to incorporate sustainable development into food and catering contracts in the public sector. Activities include every government department producing an action plan on sustainable food procurement, online guidance for central buyers, a national conference 26 Nov 2003 at Novotel London, regional seminars in 2004, and a training package for purchasers. IDeA (one of the group's members) is the UK national partner for Procura+ campaign (see Europe).

See <http://www.defra.gov.uk/farm/sustain/procurement/index.htm>

Better Hospital Food

The Better Hospital Food programme is run by NHS Estates and is looking at conducting activities on food procurement and waste. It also develops (non-compulsory) menus for hospital caterers.

See <http://www.betterhospitalfood.com/>

Eat the View

The 'Eat the View' project run by the Countryside Agency has helped support various activities including a Youth Hostel Association procurement project, part-funding of Sustain's Good Food on the Public Plate manual, and a partnership in the Local Food Works project (see below). See

<http://www.eat-the-view.org.uk/>

Local Food Works

Local Food Works is a partnership project between the Soil Association and Countryside Agency to develop and support local food networks. It has a comprehensive website on the local food sector including contacts, news and events, publications, case studies, briefing sheets, and weblinks.

See <http://www.localfoodworks.org/>

Scotland

The Scottish Executive's 'Healthy Eating Group' is currently looking at local food in schools and prisons. A seminar on sustainable food procurement in the Forth Valley is planned for March 2004, organised by Forth Valley Food Links. See <http://www.fvfl.org.uk/>

Wales

The 'Welsh Procurement Initiative' group has now been established. It aims to enable Welsh suppliers win public sector contracts. See <http://www.winningourbusiness.wales.gov.uk/index.htm>

Monmouthshire

A 'Better School Dinners' conference was held in Monmouth in September 2003. The *Better School Dinners* report is available online and a pilot project in the area is planned. A 'buy local food' campaign is run by a local paper and Wye Valley AONB.

Powys

Powys Public Procurement Partnership established in Powys, including research by Cardiff University '*Relocalising the food chain: the role of creative public procurement*' (2002). Powys Public Procurement Partnership Report also produced and available to download at <http://www.localfoodworks.org/>

Case study: Powys Public Procurement Partnership (in *Good Food on the Public Plate* and Local Food Works website).

Denbighshire

Parents' group called 'Better Food for our Children', which is campaigning for less processed and more local food in the school's meals.

Northern Ireland

Event organised by Friends of the Earth (Northern Ireland) in 2003 and resulting report '*Relocalising food procurement briefing: How a 'local first' purchasing policy can boost farm incomes and cut food miles*' April 2003.

Case Study: Belfast City Council (in *Good Food on the Public Plate*).

North West

A food procurement strategy group has now been formed covering Cheshire, Lancashire, Cumbria, Merseyside, and Manchester, and led by the North West Food and Health Taskforce. Project proposals are currently being developed for coordination of work in each area.

Cumbria

Sustain and the Rural Regeneration Unit (North West) held a workshop on school meals in November 2002 and the *Better Food in Cumbrian Schools* report was produced as a result. County-council consultation is taking place with schools on their catering arrangements.

North East

North East Land Links Project and Sustain held the 'Public Procurement of Food in the North East' conference in December 2002, resulting in the report, *Public Procurement of Food in the North East* and informing a number of initiatives in the region. Further work on public procurement has also been included in the region's Sustainable Farming and Food Strategy.

Yorkshire and the Humber

A Local Food Working Group has been established with a public procurement sub-group, looking at ways to introduce local and/or organic into the sector. The Soil Association and English Nature are developing a project called 'Public Procurement Case Study Yorkshire', working with a secondary school in Harrogate and two primary schools in the area.

The Country Land and Business Association (CLA) conducted a survey in 2003 of all 13 education authorities in the area. The survey asked what the authority's policy was on sourcing safe, fresh local food for school meals and how the CLA might help in promoting the wider benefits of purchasing local produce.

East Midlands

Leicestershire

A 'Food for a Better Leicestershire' event was held in June 2003 organised by Leicestershire Food Links and Sustain with a resulting report with action plans for schools and hospitals in the area.

Nottinghamshire

A 'Healthy, sustainable food for Greater Nottingham' event was run in September 2003 by Nottinghamshire Food Initiatives Group (FIG). Plans are being developed for the County Council catering service to introduce some organic ingredients into the service.

Case Study: St Peter's Primary School (in *Good Food on the Public Plate* and on Local Food Works website).

West Midlands

Localise West Midlands held the 'Local Government: Local Food' conference in Wolverhampton in July 2003. A pilot project is now being planned by Advantage West Midlands, the regional development agency.

Herefordshire

An event was held in 2003 by the Diocese of Herefordshire and the 'Better School Dinners' event in September 2003 covered the county.

London

A feasibility study into providing local and organic food to the health sector/hospitals in London was conducted by F3 for the Soil Association in 2002/2003. Following from this, a two-year pilot project will be conducted by London Food Link working with four hospitals in London to introduce local and/or organic food into their catering arrangements, with a start in January 2004.

See http://www.sustainweb.org/london_index.asp

East of England

School pilot projects and a National School Fruit Scheme feasibility study looking at alternative supply arrangements are being conducted by East Anglia Food Link. See <http://www.eafl.org.uk/> . An organic producer cooperative, Eostre Organics, covering the area and supplying public sector markets has been established. See <http://www.eostreorganics.co.uk/> .

Cambridge

Case Study: Stibbington Environmental Education Centre (in *Good Food on the Public Plate*).

Norfolk

A pilot project involving Eostre and a Norfolk and Norwich hospital staff canteen to provide local/organic meals is currently running and a seminar is planned for 2004.

Suffolk

Case Study: Hollesley Bay Prison Farm (in *Good Food on the Public Plate*).

South and South East

Oxfordshire

An event looking at sustainable food procurement is planned for spring/summer 2004 by Oxfordshire Food Group.

Kent

Kent County Council is involved in an Interreg bid to conduct work on sustainable food procurement.

West Sussex

An action plan for sustainable food procurement and provision is currently being developed by West Sussex County Council.

East Sussex

The 'Local Food in East Sussex Public Sector Catering' event, organised by Common Cause Cooperative and Sustain, was held in March 2003. It considered opportunities for improving school meals. A report on proceedings and action plans was produced. Work is now being taken forward by the East Sussex Food and Health Partnership.

Hampshire

The 'Hampshire Food on the Public Plate' conference was convened by Hampshire County Council Economic Development Department in July 2003. There is good market intelligence on current purchasing of food in the county.

South West

Strategy group established to co-ordinate strategy, research and funding needed to increase the procurement of SW local and regional food and drink into the SW public sector. Possible 2-year programme to include brokerage service to link purchasers with suppliers. Report titled '*Public Sector*

Procurement of Food & Drink in South West England produced by South West Local Food Partnership is available.

Gloucestershire

Gloucestershire Food Procurement Strategy Group (GFPSG) formed to lend support to the long-term implementation of the *Vision for Food* strategy. Report expected in 2004. 'Better School Dinners' event in Sept 2003 covered county.

Case Study: Gloucester City Council and South Gloucestershire Schools (in *Good Food on the Public Plate* and on Local Food Works' website).

Somerset

Feasibility study conducted in three schools in 2001. Pilot project, 'Turning the Blue Green' planned for 2004 involving a comprehensive school with 1500 pupils.

See <http://www.somerset.foodlinks.org.uk/>

Case Study: Somerset schools (in *Good Food on the Public Plate*).

Wiltshire

Case study of Wiltshire Producers network providing catering to opted-out school. A project is being developed by Wiltshire Food Links for 2004 onwards.

Case Study: Wiltshire Regional Producers (in *Good Food on the Public Plate* and on DEFRA website).

Dorset

A comprehensive 58-page report '*Local Food and Public Procurement Research: Identification of market opportunities for local food and drink producers to supply the public sector in Dorset*' was produced in 2003.

Devon

The 'Local Food for Local Schools' event ran in October 2003. Much preparatory work has been conducted by Devon Food Links. See <http://www.devonfoodlinks.org.uk/>

Cornwall

'Buy Local' campaign for Cornish schools resulting in supply contracts being won. Cornwall Healthcare Trust also developing arrangements, and is now a NHS Purchasing And Supply Agency (PASA) pilot for sustainable sourcing.

Case Study: Cornish schools, and Cornwall Healthcare Trust (in *Good Food on the Public Plate*) and Callington Community College (secondary school).