

March 2017

Sustainable Food

Guidance for Conference and Events Organisers

WEB VERSION



UNIVERSITY OF
CAMBRIDGE

Sustainable Food Policy

The [Sustainable Food Policy](#) aims 'to minimise the impact of catering operations on the environment, [and] to promote sustainable practises and consumption'.

The four main objectives written in the Sustainable Food Policy are:

- 1) To improve vegetarian/vegan choices and actively promote these over meat options
- 2) To reduce ruminant meat consumption
- 3) To increase sustainably sourced fish where possible
- 4) To cut food waste and disposables

The Sustainable Food Policy is aligned closely with wider University sustainability objectives. The University's Vision on Environmental Sustainability is that: 'The University is committed to making a positive impact through outstanding environmental sustainability performance'.

Planning catering for events

- When choosing your menu the recommended default position is to choose vegetarian or vegan options. This is because just one dinner of beef or lamb has the same footprint as eight months' worth of chickpea based dinners.
- Food requirements should be planned carefully and efficiently to avoid unnecessary wastage.
- The University Catering Service and

the Preferred Suppliers are very experienced in this area.

Disposables

- Avoid ordering individually packaged food/drink items and or non-compostable disposable crockery, glassware and cutlery.
- Where possible, opt for china and glassware even if there is an additional charge for this.
- Where disposable packaging must be used, aim to use environmentally sustainable options, such as Vegware, which can be collected with food waste and sent to anaerobic digestion rather than going to landfill.

Meat and Fish

Reducing consumption of animal products, and particularly those from ruminants - cows, sheep and goats - is probably the single most effective route to lowering the greenhouse gas (GHG), land and water footprint of human diet. The livestock sector accounts for 14% of global GHG emissions – more even than the direct emissions from transport. Nearly 40% of livestock emissions are in the form of methane – a powerful GHG generated as a by-product of ruminant digestive systems.

- If choosing meat options, consider poultry/pork over ruminants.
- Please ensure meat is produced to high environmental and animal welfare standards e.g. Red Tractor Assured, and is as locally sourced as possible.

If choosing fish, please ensure that it is

accredited by the Marine Stewardship Council (MSC), and does not feature on the [Marine Conservation Society](#) “fish to avoid” list. The UN Food and Agriculture Organisation estimate that 81% of monitored fish stocks are currently over-exploited, or even fully exploited.

Eggs and Dairy

Ensure that eggs and dairy products that are consumed conform to high environmental and animal welfare standards, free range where possible.

Vegan Products

Try to choose vegan options as often as possible - switching to plant-based diets dramatically reduces the amount of land, water, and oil resources used in food production. It is estimated that switching from high meat intake to vegan reduces diet's GHG footprint by 60%.

To encourage staff and students to make vegan choices, we advise event organisers to present meat as an ‘opt in’ choice rather than ‘opt out’ on registration forms. Plant-based dishes should have a prominent place on all menus/platters.

Plant-based foods should aim to be seasonal and sourced as locally as possible. Not only will this reduce environmental impacts, it should also ensure that the produce is less expensive.

Further Information

- University Centre website ([www.unicen.cam.ac.uk/food-](http://www.unicen.cam.ac.uk/food-safety/sustainable-food)

[safety/sustainable-food](#))

- Environment and Energy website (www.environment.admin.cam.ac.uk/sustainable-food)
- Ways to get involved (www.environment.admin.cam.ac.uk/s/potlight-sustainable-food)
- Guidance (www.environment.admin.cam.ac.uk/guidance#food)

Other leaflets in the Food Safety

Guidance Notes Series

- 1 Food Safety – An introduction to legislation for University premises
- 2 Catering Options - A guide for departments and faculties
- 3 Staff Kitchens and Tearooms – General hygiene requirements
- 4 Food Hygiene Training Requirements
- 5 Guidance on Departmental Barbecue Safety
- 6 Purchase, Delivery and Storage of Food
- 7 Preparation and Service of Food
- 8 Personal Hygiene Requirements for Individuals Preparing or Serving Food
- 9 Cleaning and Pest Control in Food Preparation Areas
- 10 Food Safety Guidance for Departmental Christmas Parties

- 11 Food Safety for Charity Events – A guide for departments and faculties

See also:

- Vegware – Eco-friendly packaging & catering disposables (www.vegware.com)
- Keepcup – Reusable takeaway cups (www.keepcup.com/)
- Cambridge Sustainable Food - Local organisation promoting sustainable food. (www.cambridgesustainablefood.org)

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