

February 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 of 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 Environmental Sustainability Vision is: 'The University is committed to making a positive impact through outstanding environmental sustainability performance'.

Planning catering for events

When choosing your menu the default position should always be to choose vegetarian or vegan options because just one meal of beef or lamb has the same footprint as eight months' worth of chickpea based meals. Food requirements should always be planned carefully and efficiently to avoid unnecessary wastage. You should use the University Catering Service or one of the Preferred Suppliers who 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 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, please ensure that it is produced to high environmental and animal welfare standards e.g. Red Tractor Assured, 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, because 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 eater 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 produced.

Even with vegan produce, some options can prove to be unsustainable, however. For example, the palm oil industry is linked to high rates of deforestation, habitat degradation, climate change, animal cruelty and indigenous rights abuses. The expansion of soybean plantations is also leading to deforestation, threatening biodiversity and endangering the livelihoods of local people.

Plant-based foods should 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

Further information can be found:

- on the University Centre website (www.unicen.cam.ac.uk/food-safety/sustainable-food)
- on the Environment and Energy website (www.environment.admin.cam.ac.uk/sustainable-food)
- on the Vegware website (www.vegware.com)
- on the Keepcup website (www.uk.keepcup.com)

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

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