

# Sustainable Food Definition.

**Sustainable food takes into account environmental, health, social & economic concerns and consists of eight inter-related principles<sup>1</sup>. Although few progressive food ventures meet all of the principles below, this definition is an underlying aspiration to drive awareness-raising and change within our organisations and the wider food system:**

## **1. Local & seasonal.**

Food now travels further than ever before with money leaking from local economies. Local & seasonal food offers a way to: minimise energy use in transportation & storage; increase freshness & quality; strengthen local distinctiveness & build more resilient communities, whilst supporting local food outlets and farmers alike.

*For information about local seasonal food visit: [http://gcdemo.joeshort.net/?page\\_id=63](http://gcdemo.joeshort.net/?page_id=63)  
<http://thetimeisripe.kindling.org.uk>*

## **2. Organic & sustainable farming.**

Organic, low-carbon and closed-loop food production, avoids artificial fertilisers & genetically modified organisms, while maximising crop diversity. This is a more resilient production system that is beneficial for the environment, encourages biodiversity, and offers a long-term investment in soil fertility for future food production. It also has a crucial role to play in countering climate change - potentially offsetting 23% of the UK's greenhouse gas emissions from agriculture through soil carbon sequestration alone<sup>2</sup>.

*For information about organic food visit: [www.soilassociation.org/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=jcJ2m%2BT5%2BK%3D&tabid=353](http://www.soilassociation.org/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=jcJ2m%2BT5%2BK%3D&tabid=353)*

*For information about low-carbon farming visit: [www.climatefriendlyfood.org.uk](http://www.climatefriendlyfood.org.uk)*

## **3. Reducing foods of animal origin & maximise welfare standards.**

Meat and dairy products are among the most energy & greenhouse-gas intensive food products of all. The meat industry contributes 40% more than all forms of transport combined<sup>3</sup>. On top of this livestock uses 70% of agricultural land world wide (30% of the Earth's land surface)<sup>4</sup>, yet creates a fraction of the calories (per unit of land) compared to cereals or vegetables, contributing to malnutrition & food in-security<sup>5</sup>. With a focus on climate change it is also crucial not to lose sight of other ethical food issues, as Garnett (2008) states: *the problems of food and climate change need to be tackled in partnership with, rather than separate from, other pressing social, ethical and environmental problems... including the welfare of animals*<sup>6</sup>.

*For information about the impact of meat production visit: [www.fao.org/ag/magazine/0612sp1.htm](http://www.fao.org/ag/magazine/0612sp1.htm)*

*For information about animal welfare standards visit:  
[www.ciwf.org.uk/resources/shopping\\_guide/default.aspx](http://www.ciwf.org.uk/resources/shopping_guide/default.aspx)*

## **4. Excludes fish species identified as at risk.**

Overfishing is the greatest single threat to marine wildlife and habitats, with nearly 80% of world fish stocks fully or overexploited. Many once common North Sea species are now overfished – with cod stocks on the verge of commercial collapse & common skate virtually extinct<sup>7</sup>.

*For information about fish to avoid visit: [www.fishonline.org/advice/avoid/](http://www.fishonline.org/advice/avoid/)*

## **5. Fair-trade-certified products.**

Fair-trade ensures producers are paid fairly for their work, offering a strategy for poverty alleviation and sustainable development. It creates social & economic opportunities for producers and workers who have been exploited, disadvantaged or marginalised by the conventional trading system.

*For information about fairly traded goods visit: [www.fairtrade.org.uk](http://www.fairtrade.org.uk)*

## **6. Promote health and well being.**

Only 18% of adult Mancunians eat the recommended minimum of five portions of fruit & vegetables a day<sup>8</sup>, and childhood obesity & other food related illnesses are on the increase. At the same time 15% globally go hungry<sup>9</sup> while in the UK we waste approximately one third of all food<sup>10</sup>. A sustainable food system is about health & well being for all – individually, locally and globally.

*For information about a healthy diet visit: [www.eatwell.gov.uk](http://www.eatwell.gov.uk)*

## **7. Food democracy.**

The mainstream food system and supply chain is unfair & unsustainable. Decisions & profits are taken by a handful of large companies driving down prices & maximising profits at the expense of farmers, local communities & the environment. Our current unsustainable food system has turned us into a nation of passive consumers in a top down system from which we expect unlimited 'choice' but over which we have little control. Food democracy is about reconnecting people to food & taking responsibility for it, ensuring control by and fairness among local producers, suppliers and consumers, and working to reduce inequality in the food supply chain.

*For information about fairer food visit: [www.growingcommunities.org/background/manifesto.htm](http://www.growingcommunities.org/background/manifesto.htm)*

## **8. Reduction of waste and packaging.**

Approximately 70% of primary packaging is used for food and drink which is often discarded contaminated by residues of the original contents, making it difficult to recycle. Buying local and seasonal food reduces the need for unnecessary packaging, minimising the negative impact on the environment from the current large scale disposal of inorganic waste. Generally, food should come with the minimum of packaging and wherever possible the use of reusable packaging should be used/promoted.

*For information about food packaging visit:*

*[www.wasteonline.org.uk/resources/InformationSheets/Packaging.htm](http://www.wasteonline.org.uk/resources/InformationSheets/Packaging.htm)*

## **References:**

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