

Ten Actions for Food Businesses



Food businesses have a vital part to play in supporting sustainable food.

Sustainability is about taking responsibility for the impact of your business on society, the environment and the local economy. The idea is to change these impacts from negative to neutral, or better still positive. Choosing to produce or sell sustainable food means you'll be making a positive difference to the environment, animal welfare, food waste, and your local community.

We've created a list of ten important actions to consider, including achieving the Food For Life Catering Mark - an independent endorsement that food providers are taking steps to improve the food they serve, using fresh ingredients which are free from trans fats, harmful additives and GM, and better for animal welfare.

1. *Know the 'what, where, how?' of your ingredients* - Thinking about the ingredients you use is often a good step to identifying what you could change. Where are they from? How are they produced? Do they include artificial ingredients, and what packaging are they wrapped in? Can you choose products that are healthier, better for environment, and better for the local economy?

2. *Using local and seasonal produce* - Design your menu around what's in season. Locally grown, seasonal food is often the freshest produce you can get and the short journey from supplier to kitchen often makes it a better choice for the environment too. Ask your supplier where their produce is from and how it's grown.

3. *Choose higher welfare meat and dairy* - Happy, healthy animals produce tastier, more nutritious meat and dairy produce. Source your meat and dairy products from food producers that meet higher standards of animal welfare, such as RSPCA Freedom Food or Organic standards. Talk to your butcher about sustainably sourced, ethical meat. Don't forget to tell your customers that your menu features higher welfare products. Research suggests that customers are happy to pay more for higher welfare if they know about it.

4. *Pick sustainably sourced fish* - Sourcing sustainable fish protects fish stocks and marine life, and supports jobs in fishing. Use a variety of fish on your menu and take pressure off the over-fished 'big five': cod, tuna, prawn, haddock and salmon. Choose fish that aren't listed on the Marine Conservation Society's (MCS) 'fish to avoid' list and, instead, pick fish that are Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) certified. The MSC can also provide you with details of certified sustainably sourced fisheries and suppliers. Alternatively, organically farmed fish have lower stocking densities and are fed more sustainable feeds.

5.

Support environmentally friendly food - Environmentally friendly farming helps reduce the impact of farming on the environment. Consider buying from food producers that guarantee higher environmental standards, such as the Soil Association, Organic Food Federation, LEAF, Rainforest Alliance, and Assured Food Standards. Remember to ask your supplier about his or her products and processes. Small businesses often can't afford to join an accredited scheme but might still be operating at high environmental standards.

6.

Influence your supply chain - Think about what you're ordering: where it comes from, how it has been made, what packaging it comes in, and how it was transported to you. Can you spot anything you can improve when you look at your supply chain link-by-link? Talk to your suppliers and customers about what you want to achieve and see if you can find a more sustainable solution together.

7.

Reduce food waste - Reducing food waste saves money, helps you manage your stock, and is better for the environment. Measure your food waste and consider how you could reduce it. Could you make your menu planning and ordering more efficient? Can you turn spare stock into 'daily specials'? Can you offer your customers different portion sizes or take-home boxes for leftovers?

8.

Buy Fairtrade - Fairtrade produce guarantees a fair price for the food crop and ensures that people working in poorer countries are paid fairly for their work. Fairtrade tea, coffee, chocolate, and exotic fruit is widely available and tastes great. The Fairtrade Foundation website gives advice to business on stocking Fairtrade ingredients and products and they'll let you use a logo on your marketing materials and menus to let your customers know that you're Fairtrade too.

9.

Cut out packaging and reduce general waste - Reducing packaging is good for the environment and can save you money. Ask your supplier to supply goods in recyclable containers or crates rather than plastic bags and ask them to take back shrink-wrap, pallets and cardboard. Avoid using disposable cutlery and plates but, if you need to use them, choose biodegradable products that can be composted along with any food waste. Don't forget to tell your customers, so they know how to dispose of them.

10.

Promote what you're doing and what your business stands for - If your business is doing great things, make sure your customers know. Talk to us about your pledge, get our support, and display a Food Cardiff sticker in your window. Raise your business credentials by entering awards. The Soil Association Food for Life Catering Mark, Sustainable Restaurants Association Star Award and Cardiff Council's Healthy Options Award are just a few you might consider. Use social media and local press to tell your story—make yourself visible and tell people why being an ethical business is important to you.