

Sustainable Sharing Series

Ethical Food Standards

There are a plethora of food standards operating within the UK and the options can be confusing. Some are overarching standards which can be applied to whole food outlets, some focus on specific items, and some are a hybrid of the two. We hope this guide will give you an overview of some of these standards and how they are applied.



Farming Certifications

Red Tractor is the baseline for the UK, they ensure food is compliant with UK law and occasionally goes above this minimum standard of legislation, particularly around animal welfare.

RSPCA Assured offers a little improvement on Red Tractor standards, particular with regard to animal welfare, but livestock can still be held in less than ideal enclosures. The RSPCA also has a **Freedom Food Free Range** which ensures all animals have access to outside space and shelter during the day.

Pasture for Life (Pasture Fed Livestock Association) ensures beef is 100% pasture fed with a lot of environmental gains from bio-diversity on pastureland and reduced carbon footprint

LEAF (Linking Environment and Farming), environmentally focussed, low input management systems are required for this certification. Plant protection services and fertilisers are only allowed when absolutely necessary.

Organic – **Soil Association** and **Organic Farmers and Growers**

Organic certification means farmers are aiming to protect the environment, particularly by restricting the use of pesticides and avoiding artificial fertilizers. Organic certification required compliance with all European Organic Regulations. SOIL Association standards can be very black or white in assessing criteria.

Biodynamic Farms, this uses all the principles of Organic farming but takes use a whole farm approach. Rather than using a linear system, they monitor how all farming activities strengthen and support each other, similar to a circular economy model.

Fish Certifications

Supermarkets display a range of labels but many are meaningless and unmonitored.

Marine Stewardship Council certified by category. Avoiding red rated fish would be a huge move forward in this area. MSC only certify wild fish. **Aquaculture Stewardship Council** certifies farmed fish in a similar way.

Organic Fish Farms, which are SOIL association approved, allow farmed fish more room to move and have higher environmental standards and ensure that fish are given responsibly sourced feed.

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Marine Conservation Society offer a Good Fish Guide, the link is in the resources below. Again, avoiding red certified fish would be a good move forward.

There is also an organisation called **Sustainable Fish Cities** which organisations can sign up to show an external commitment to sourcing sustainable seafood.

Other food -

Fairtrade: Offers minimum prices, premiums and credit to farmers with some labour and environmental standards also incorporated. This is now a paid subscription framework.

Rainforest Alliance certification: partnered with UTZ certification scheme. They offer a due diligent approach but standards can be vague. Certification only requires 30% of product to be sourced from Rainforest Alliance certified farms of estates.

Real Living Wage ([Living Wage Foundation](#))

Certification for organisations paying real living wage which is higher than the government's minimum wage.

Sustainable Restaurant Association Framework (SRA) is a wholistic approach, which includes aspects such as living wage and staff, as well as looking at sourcing, waste and society. The accreditation system works with weighting on various aspects. Their 10 part system is easy to engage with.

The accreditation also offers support on how to improve various aspects of service and delivery, this system works especially well for Universities who are looking at low cost meals for students. They offer a good support forum online giving direction to improve on various aspects of ensuring you keep up to date.

TIP: Knowing your suppliers is key in working well and keeping communication open.

TIP: Sharing your institutions goals is important and helps to build relationships locally, and link in with student placements and research.

TUCO - Using expertise and frameworks to support your priorities, alongside using research and support from institutions such as TUCO is helpful. Rising issues can be quickly identified and they cover a lot of the legwork in term so research to allow you to buy with confidence, as well as supporting with driving down costs and putting pressure in the right places to improve quality and standards.

Resource Links

- [TUCO Green House Gas Calculator](#)
- [Carbon Trust's certification](#)
- [Sustainable Food Places](#)
- [Good Fish Guide](#)