

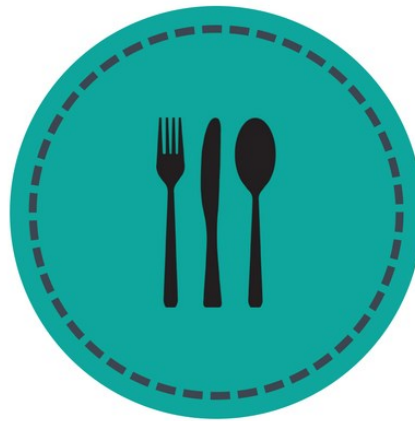
# Sustainability and Catering Teams

*Food and the processes involved in producing and serving food have a huge impact on the environment, workers' rights, and local businesses. With people interacting with food every day, engaging people about sustainability in relation to food is easier than engaging about energy efficiency, for example. Catering teams have the opportunity to contribute to creation of a healthy campus community through working with professional staff, academics, students, and the wider local community on sustainable catering issues.*

Tackling food waste is **good for budgets** as well as sustainability

Eating sustainably is healthier, contributing to **healthy working and studying lives**

Staff and students are **happier customers** when there are ethical, sustainable options



Sustainable catering is a good way to **engage staff & students**

Food can be used for community engagement, creating **positive social & environmental impacts**

Marketing sustainable food options can **increase your customer base**

## Collaborative Project Suggestions

### Communication

#### *With catering teams*

Briefing catering staff on the provenance and sustainability credentials of the food items that they are working with allows this to be communicated to catering users through their interactions or signage. As knowledge of the impacts of food on the environment needs to be improved, this is an effective way of educating users and promoting the good work of your catering team. **>> Getting Started:** **Engage with the catering manager on the schedule and structure of team meetings to see when there is time available for you to talk with catering staff and how best to present your ideas.**

Catering is rarely provided through one centralised service, with many institutions hiring external contractors, and others having different catering providers for different departments and buildings.

**>> Getting Started:** Work with the catering teams to understand the structure and contacts within the whole institution.

*Often the easiest place to start addressing sustainability issues is in catered halls of residence and buffet-style dining facilities, followed by café outlets due to te scale and structure of food provision*

*Customer satisfaction and meeting expectations are a main priority. Where customers are seen to expect a wide variety of choices, this can clash with sustainability objectives. Large quantities of diverse food not only leads to food waste, but is difficult to procure sustainably*

#### *With students & staff*

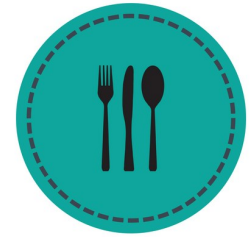
Studies have shown that simple messages are as effective as detailed ones – simple prompts to remind catering users not to take more than they can eat is all that is necessary to start to reduce food waste. **>> Getting Started:** **Create simple and clear messaging to create change .**

Healthy or sustainable eating campaigns such as 'Meat Free Monday' are becoming more popular. Promoting these initiatives and communicating the reasons can be good way of educating students and staff on sustainability; however, some caterers maybe be hesitant due to perceived backlash on the issue. **>> Getting Started:** **Work with the catering team to try reduce the meat options (e.g. leave only one meat option on the menu) one day a week .**

Contact [EAUC-Scotland](#) for more support communicating sustainability

## Food waste

- Reducing food waste can be a cost saver, with savings invested in other food initiatives.
- Environmental impacts of food waste are not fully understood by those using campus catering facilities, and more can be done to communicate this.
- Cutting trays from canteens has been shown to reduce food waste by up to 30% as people take less food; the downside is a slight increase in cracked crockery and messy tables.
- Decreasing the number of menu items to only two or three can also have a significant impact on reducing food waste, and can also be a benefit when aiming to achieve some catering certifications (see below).



>> **Getting Started:** Discuss with your catering team what the main causes of food waste are, as observed by catering staff. Identify one or two projects which could be implemented to address these issues.

## Packaging



- Issues around disposable cups, cutlery and crockery are a hot topic. Charges, discounts, or price structure changes can encourage the use of less disposable items. (*Find more resources about this on the [Sustainability Exchange!](#)*)
- Trial a charge on disposable cups, with reusable cups being charged the advertised price for coffee and tea. Initial data has shown this tactic to be effective.
- Serving food in disposable packaging has been shown to increase waste stream contamination.
- The choice of reusable crockery to replace disposables is important since colour, shape and size of plates can change perceptions of portion size and also increase food waste.

>> **Getting Started:** Work together with the catering providers to establish which tactic would be most effective in your institution and what is most financial feasible. Trials are always a good way of testing the water.

## Certifications

- The large number of certifications for food standards has been criticised for causing confusion for consumers who may believe, for example, Fair Trade status also covers locally and sustainably sourced food.
- Certifications can be a crucial driver when negotiating potential initiatives with senior management teams, as well as providing guidelines for cater teams to use to work towards sustainable practices.
- Certifications can be useful for communicating food choices, particularly because staff and students tend to support certifications that make clear the provenance of their food.

*Café-style outlets produce more disposable packaging and prepare less food in bulk, which makes it more difficult to meet standards for food certifications.*

>> **Getting Started:** Research different certifications and how your catering practise already align with their standards; there may be some easier for you and the catering team to achieve if there are some sustainable practices in place.

## Community engagement

*Finding staff time to conduct initial surveys and other research remains a significant challenge*

- Institutional strategies often involve some form of community engagement that demonstrates value to local residents. Linking food and the local community creates a vibrant community around campus, and can provide volunteering opportunities for staff and students.
  - Sharing food is one of the most effective first steps in community engagement, and well-established initiatives have formed through living-lab approaches with involving students, staff, and academics.
  - Catering teams who collaborated with sustainability teams to survey staff and students on their catering expectations found sustainably and ethically sourced food to be more important than choice.
- >> **Getting Started:** Community engagement is likely on the agenda for many departments within your institution, making food sustainability and engagement an ideal area to collaborate on.

Contact [EAUC-Scotland](#) for Catering Department engagement workshops