

Food Flagship Initiative

CALL TO ACTION



Photo: The Curperve/Neil Evans

THE CHALLENGE

The way our food is produced has a damaging impact on soils, biodiversity and water quality and is contributing to the climate crisis. Food accounts for almost 10% of London's consumption-based greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions¹, in large part because of the kinds of food we eat, how that food is produced, and the amount of it that is wasted. Only a small proportion of food surplus and food waste is redistributed, reprocessed or recycled, with precious nutrients being lost instead of being cycled back into fields to grow more food.

The Covid-19 health crisis has highlighted the fragility of our food system and its vulnerability to shocks and disruptions. With an increasing number of Londoners experiencing food insecurity and diet-related ill health, it has exposed on-going socio-economic and health challenges.

THE RESPONSE

The Mayor has taken bold action to address these challenges and move London towards having a low carbon, zero waste, and healthy and sustainable food system. He has set ambitious targets in his London Environment Strategy and London Food Strategy to eliminate all organic waste sent to landfill by 2026, to reduce food waste by 50% by 2030 (in line with SDG 12.3), and to achieve carbon neutrality by 2030.

On top of this, London is – alongside New York City and São Paulo – one of the Ellen MacArthur Foundation's three Strategic Partner Cities, working to accelerate the transition to a circular economy, which includes creating a more circular urban food system. Over three years, ReLondon, the Greater London Authority (GLA) and the Ellen MacArthur Foundation will work with public and private stakeholders to pioneer circular food system solutions and spark a food system transformation that will help tackle the climate crisis, generate new jobs, build supply chain resilience, and improve human health and community wellbeing.

With London's population projected to reach 10.8 million by 2041, it is vital to change the way food is produced and consumed in the city.



A city where everyone enjoys food that is deeply valued, sustainably produced and never wasted.

The initiative is deeply aligned with the Covid-19 recovery missions² developed by the GLA, which aim to use the recovery from the pandemic to reimagine the city as a place with a better long-term future for Londoners. One which is fairer, greener and more resilient than it was before.

OUR CALL TO ACTION

To realise a circular economy for food – and the economic, environmental and health benefits associated with it – unprecedented and pioneering action is needed across the food system.

We're bringing together a consortium of public and private stakeholders across London's food value chain – from peri-urban farmers' associations and innovators, to food brands, retailers, hospitality and public sector institutions – who are committed to three pillars of action, identified as the principle building blocks of a circular economy for food in London.



The pandemic has shown how fragile our food system can be even in a city like London. This initiative will work with businesses across the food value chain to help increase the resilience of our food system, reduce waste and climate impacts and contribute to London's green recovery from Covid-19.

Shirley Rodrigues, Deputy Mayor of London for Environment and Energy

The consortium will play a decisive role in mobilising action across these three pillars and carving out the city's food system transformation. It will meet routinely to share priorities, exchange ideas and insights, and work collaboratively towards a common vision for a healthy, thriving food system, by putting in place scalable or replicable demonstration projects.

If you're interested in joining the London Food Flagship Consortium and pioneering a circular economy for food in London, we want to hear from you. Fill in our short '[Express Interest](#)' form today.



We need collaborative approaches to solve complex food system challenges such as food waste and the climate emergency. By joining this bold initiative, you can take action to accelerate London's transition to a circular economy for food.

Liz Goodwin, Chair, ReLondon and Champion of the Sustainable Development Goal 12.3



¹ Owen, A. and Barrett, J. Consumption based greenhouse gas emissions for London (2001 – 2016). University of Leeds

² London.gov.uk/coronavirus/londons-recovery-coronavirus-crisis

THREE PILLARS OF ACTION

To join the London Food Flagship Consortium and become a pioneer in carving out the city's food system transformation, you'll need to commit to these three pillars of action.

1. INCREASE THE SOURCING AND PRODUCTION OF FOOD GROWN USING AGRO-ECOLOGICAL PRACTICES, AND LOCALLY WHERE POSSIBLE.

Over 8 million tonnes of food are consumed in London each year. The way most of it is farmed causes GHG emissions and soil degradation, and uses up finite mineral resources through the production of synthetic fertilisers and pesticides.

Food procurement is a unique opportunity to positively influence the way food is produced, supporting local food growers and producers, and facilitating a shift to agro-ecological practices that regenerate the soil, capture carbon, reduce the consumption of water, and eliminate or strongly reduce the use of synthetic fertilisers and pesticides. At the same time, developers, local authorities, and community groups also have a key role to play in supporting the expansion of London's network of urban and peri-urban food growing spaces, which bring a multitude of benefits including community wellbeing, social cohesion, and skills and job creation.

BENEFITS

- Reduced GHG emissions and soil regeneration.
- Reduced pesticide exposure and lower air pollution.
- Increased resilience to future shocks, local job creation and skill development.

2. INCREASE THE PREVALENCE OF HEALTHY AND SUSTAINABLE FOOD ITEMS AND MENUS.

Not all foods are equal from an environmental standpoint – generally animal proteins require more resources to produce than plant-based foods and have a higher carbon footprint.

In London, it is estimated that meat, poultry, dairy and eggs account for close to 20% of food & drinks consumed by weight, but almost 50% of all food & drinks related GHG emissions³. Increasing the share of plant-based foods eaten compared to meat, dairy and eggs could have substantial climate and other environmental benefits, as well as positive health outcomes for Londoners.

Food providers across the capital, whether public or private, have a unique role to play in diversifying the food choices available to Londoners and ensuring that healthy and sustainable plant-based food products, meals and menus are available and accessible to all.

BENEFITS

- Reduced GHG emissions.
- Increased consumption of healthy food items, meals and menus.
- Diversified revenue streams.

3. ELIMINATE AVOIDABLE FOOD WASTE WHEREVER POSSIBLE AND RECYCLE UNAVOIDABLE FOOD WASTE BACK INTO PRODUCTIVE USES.

London produces around 1.5 – 1.75m tonnes of food waste each year, which has a value of £2.55 billion⁴. Most of this waste (much of it edible) ends up in landfill or incineration, causing GHG emissions and nutrient loss.

In a city like London there are unique opportunities to design out food waste along the whole value chain and make a meaningful contribution towards the city-wide target of a 50% reduction in food waste by 2030. By preventing it in the first place; diverting and redistributing it where it is unavoidable; and finally transforming it to produce energy- and nutrient-rich organic fertiliser that can be used on nearby farms or as a useful feedstock for materials production.

BENEFITS

- Reduced GHG emissions and renewable sources of nutrients for fertiliser creation.
- Reduced air pollution due to a reduction in the amount of waste sent to landfill and incineration.
- Redistribution of edible food waste surplus to vulnerable communities and direct and economic savings.

To help you to achieve this pillar, we encourage you to increase the share of food with high environmental standards such as organic (Soil Association) and LEAF Marque and/or partner with one or several of the 205 peri-urban farms in London to source local food

To help you to achieve this pillar, we encourage you to sign the World Resource Institute's Cool Food Pledge and commit to a target of reducing the GHG emissions associated with the food you provide by 25% by 2030.

To help you to achieve this target action, we encourage you to sign up to WRAP's UK [Food Waste Reduction Roadmap](#) and/or to the Friends of Champions 12.3 network, both of which commit you to reducing food waste by 50% by 2030.

³ Extrapolated from an analysis of scope 3 Food and Drink GHG emissions in a London Borough (GLA, unpublished)

⁴ London Environment Strategy