



London Food Purchasing Commitment

A toolkit to ignite
sustainable food purchasing
by London's local authorities

Produced by: **ReLondon**  **sustain**
the alliance for better food and farming

Endorsed by: **#OneWorldLiving**



**LONDON
COUNCILS**

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1. Introduction

1.1. What is this document

This document aims to support signatories of London's Food Purchasing Commitment. Alongside this toolkit, ReLondon and London Councils' Climate Programme are offering webinars to support boroughs. To join the distribution list for these webinars, [sign up here](#).

1.2. Who is it for

This toolkit is designed to be used principally by London local authority officers, but also by other procurers and providers of food in London that may wish to align their own catering arrangements with the targets in London's Food Purchasing Commitment (for example, NHS trusts, schools and early year settings). We have written the toolkit with environment, climate change or procurement local authority officers in mind.

1.3. Context

Action on food can help to tackle many of today's biggest health, environmental and social challenges, including climate change. From an ecological perspective, food and farming is responsible for an estimated one-third of UK emissions.¹ In London, research commissioned by the Greater London Authority and conducted by the University of Leeds suggests that food accounts for approximately 10% of the city's consumption-based greenhouse gas emissions, because of the kinds of food we eat, how and where that food is produced, and the amount of it that is wasted.²

London's local authorities are at the forefront of efforts to shift to a low carbon food system in London. They recognise they have a key role to play in reducing the city's food footprint by making the food bought and provided across council services (including in schools, early years settings, and social services) more sustainable and wasting less of it, whilst ensuring value for money for their contracts. Reducing food loss and waste and shifting to healthier and sustainable menus can deliver affordability co-benefits for the council, helping to reduce costs amid the current cost of living crisis. And by supporting local food producers and growers to access public sector contracts, councils can play an important role in community wealth building.

As part of London Councils' One World Living programme to reduce the climate impact of London's food system, in 2022 ReLondon, the London Borough of Hackney and Sustain convened a working group of local authorities to develop a city-wide food procurement commitment to set targets in relation to food greenhouse gas emissions and food waste. The result, London's Food Purchasing Commitment, sets a common minimum level of ambition for London's local authorities, in line with their net zero and One World Living climate commitments, and the Mayor's target to cut food waste by 50% per person by 2030.

In addition to local authorities, other procurers and providers of food across London, in particular schools, early year settings and anchor institutions (e.g. hospital trusts), are encouraged to consider aligning their own catering arrangements with the targets in London's Food Purchasing Commitment, and thereby contribute to driving a food system transformation in our capital city.

¹ <https://wrap.org.uk/resources/report/uk-food-system-ghg-emissions>

² https://relondon.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/ReLondon_Londons_food_footprint_online.pdf

What does the evidence tell us about London's food footprint?³

- Food accounts for approximately 10% of London's consumption-based greenhouse gas emissions.
- **Food loss and waste generated in London totals 1,456,000 tonnes each year.** 67% is estimated to be edible and according to the available data just 0.5% of the total food loss and waste in London is redistributed.
- By reducing food loss and waste by 50% and shifting towards a more healthy and sustainable diet, London could see a **reduction in food-related consumption-based emissions of 31% a year.**

2. London's Food Purchasing Commitment

2.1. Scope

Signatories of the Commitment commit to work towards the targets below for all food procurement that is either under direct or indirect council control.

Signatories also commit to influence other procurers and providers of food in their borough, in particular schools, early year settings and anchor institutions (e.g. hospital trusts), to align their own catering arrangements with these targets.

What do we mean by direct and indirect control?

Where local authorities have direct control, the council runs the catering provision in-house. Where local authorities have indirect control, the council sets out and manages a contract which goes out to tender to private providers. For example, a council procures a catering company to source, prepare and deliver school meals or to run a park cafe.

2.2. Targets

Target 1: Food-related greenhouse gas emissions

A. **Measure:** Measure absolute and per plate CO₂-eq emissions on an annual basis, starting in 2023, and share this data with ReLondon.

B. **Target:** By 2030, reduce per plate emissions by 38% against this baseline figure or to below 1.04 kg of CO₂-eq (based on a life cycle assessment) or 4.39 kg of CO₂-eq (based on a life cycle

³ https://relondon.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/ReLondon_Londons_food_footprint_online.pdf

assessment and an assessment of carbon opportunity costs) to align with the CoolFood initiative⁴ and the Paris Climate Agreement.

What does the per plate food emissions target mean in practice for our caterers? Can we still serve meat?

Your caterers are encouraged to increase the amount and proportion of low carbon foods, such as vegetables, pulses, beans, legumes and other plant-based food they buy and serve.

We suggest that your caterers introduce low carbon days, where all dishes served are plant-based only

Common questions

Q: Does it matter whether we opt for the relative reduction target (i.e. reduce per plate emissions by 38% against our baseline) or the absolute target (i.e. reduce per plate emissions to either 1.04kg or 4.39 kg of CO₂-eq)?

No – it's up to you which you opt for.

Q: How can we estimate the life cycle assessment and carbon opportunity costs of the meals we are currently serving?

The WRI has a [carbon calculator](#) which should help you and your caterers to estimate the carbon footprint of the meals and recipes they are currently serving or planning to serve. This carbon calculator is free to use and aligned with London's Food Purchasing Commitment, so we recommend that you use this one.

To get you started, we have used WRI's carbon calculator to estimate the carbon footprint of a selection of recipes (see the box below).

Q: What does "per plate" mean?

"Per plate" is defined here as "per 1,000 kcal."

Q: What do life cycle analysis and carbon opportunity costs mean?

Life cycle analysis includes all upstream greenhouse gas emissions from agricultural supply chains, except land-use change. Most agricultural supply chain emissions come from the production process. Besides production of food and animal feed, upstream supply chain emissions arise from the following sources: transport of food and animal feed; food processing; food packaging; and losses during harvest, transport, processing, and packaging.⁵

The carbon opportunity cost of a food is the amount of carbon sequestration potential likely to be lost from native plants and soils because of additional production of that food (and resulting agricultural expansion). Conversely, it can be defined as the amount of carbon that could be stored if production of that food declined and land in agriculture returned to its native vegetation. Life cycle assessments often estimate greenhouse gas emissions from agricultural production and subsequent stages in the food supply chain and sometimes also estimate food-related land use. However, most do not fully translate agricultural land use into carbon opportunity costs.⁶

⁴ The CoolFood pledge has been made by a number of cities: Milan, Copenhagen, Ghent, New York, and Toronto.

⁵ Waite, R., D. Vennard, and G. Pozzi. 2019. "Tracking Progress Toward the Cool Food Pledge: Setting Climate Targets, Tracking Metrics, Using the Cool Food Calculator, and Related Guidance for Pledge Signatories." Technical Note. Washington, DC: World Resources Institute. Available online at: www.coolfoodpledge.org

⁶ Ibid.

Estimated carbon footprint of a selection of recipes (using WRI's carbon calculator)

EXAMPLE DISHES*	TOTAL CARBON COSTS PER 1,000 KCAL (based on a life cycle assessment and an assessment of carbon opportunity costs)
Bean and rice burrito	2.73
50:50 turkey and lentil bolognese	3.79
Chicken and pasta dish	3.90
Fish fingers, peas and oven roasted chips	4.38
Sausage and butterbean stew served with creamy mash	5.17
Sausages, mash and peas	6.57
Beef burger with coleslaw	52.76

*Recipes sourced from the BBC Good Food website

Target 2: Food waste

A. **Measure:** Measure food waste⁷ from your operations on an annual basis, starting in 2023, and share this data with ReLondon. (The Working Group will calculate an average local authority food waste figure for 2023, which will be used as a baseline).

B. **Target:** Reduce food waste by 50% by 2030 against this average baseline figure.

⁷ To be normalised per plate or per volume of food served.

Target 3: Food provenance

A. **Measure:** *Establish what percentage of your total ingredient budget in 2023 is spent on food that supports fairer, more equitable, sustainable and farmer-focused food production, and food that builds wealth within communities, and share this data with ReLondon. This means:*

- *Produce sourced from the Greater London region, or an adjacent county*
- *Produce bought directly from a small and medium-sized enterprise (SME) or a farmer within the borough*
- *Produce bought through a model which allows local and smaller producers to access public sector contracts (e.g. dynamic food procurement)*
- *Fairtrade produce*
- *Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) certified fish or fish considered 'fish to eat' (i.e. rated 1 or 2) by the Marine Conservation Society*
- *Any free-range meat, dairy or eggs*
- *Any certified organic produce*

B. **Target [optional]:** *Spend at least 30% of our total ingredient budget by 2030 on food that supports fairer, more equitable, sustainable, and farmer-focused food production, and food that builds wealth within communities. This can include any of the bullet points in the list above.*

This target is optional in year one, to allow a baseline of purchasing to be gathered.

What is dynamic food procurement?

Often, local authority food purchasing contracts are held by large corporations in the UK, with smaller local food producers being unable to supply these catering contracts because of barriers to entry such as complex paperwork. Dynamic procurement provides a solution to this by creating a digital platform for food producers and buyers that breaks down large tenders into small lots. This enables contracts to be fulfilled by a mixture of different (including small) suppliers, because local suppliers have flexibility to move in and out of the system depending on availability, compared to conventional framework contracts which tend to limit access due to their stringent pre-qualification requirements.

A series of successful pilots including in Bath and North East Somerset have shown the potential of using dynamic procurement to deliver a more coordinated and responsive procurement process that better reflects the active and immediate nature of the local food supply. Recognising the cost-effectiveness of these pilots, dynamic procurement has been recommended by the National Food Strategy and Parliament's Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee to be implemented by public bodies across the UK. Read this [procurers guidance document](#) and contact [DP Procurement](#) at info@dp-food.com to find out more.

Common questions

Why should we be thinking about food provenance?

London is highly dependent on imports, with almost all of London's food supply (99%) being imported. From a broad circular economy and ecological perspective, there are a number of benefits associated with prioritising locally produced food through agro-ecological means, for example: boosting biodiversity, sequestering carbon and improving local soil and water quality. Supporting and prioritising food that is cultivated locally through sustainable practices forms part of the Mayor's London Food Strategy and the Food Flagship Initiative. Consuming food produced locally and/or through agro-ecological means can in some contexts result in reduction of GHG emissions - this is dependent on a diversity of context-specific factors such as yields and production methods. Such practices could also generate a diversity of broader ecological and socioeconomic factors – from boosting biodiversity to providing education opportunities.

Why is the food provenance target optional in year 1?

There is currently limited data on what % of ingredients bought by local authorities are sustainably and locally produced and no pre-existing and commonly used targets to align around. With that in mind, and following consultation with local authorities, the decision was taken to make measuring food provenance a compulsory element of London's Food Purchasing Commitment. After baseline food provenance data has been received from signatories, the working group will be consulted to develop an additional required target in relation to food provenance.

3. Eight reasons to make London's food procurement commitment

1. Achieve emission reductions and deliver on your climate goals

Signing up to the procurement commitment can help you to deliver on your key climate goals, including those in your Climate Action Plans and the One World Living (OWL) programme. Local authorities can achieve emissions reductions through the food they serve and the contracts they control and signing up to these targets also acts as a signal for other large buyers of food in London and could help to encourage them to align their own catering arrangements with the targets in London's Food Purchasing Commitment.

2. Advance your public health objectives

According to the EAT-Lancet Commission, a large body of work has emerged on the environmental impacts of various diets, with most studies concluding that a diet rich in plant-based foods confers both improved health and environmental impacts.⁸

3. Reduce food waste and make cost savings

Strategic use of procurement criteria to reduce food waste can support your council's food waste reduction targets and bring financial savings, with Waste and Resources Action Programme (WRAP) calculating that for every £1 invested in food waste management, an organisation stands to make £14 in savings.

⁸ https://eatforum.org/content/uploads/2019/07/EAT-Lancet_Commission_Summary_Report.pdf

Reducing food waste from catering contracts will also help contribute to the Mayor's 2030 target of cutting food waste per person by 50%, in line with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 12.3. Maximising the inclusion of low carbon foods such as beans, lentils and chickpeas, can be cheaper than alternatives and can be used in a variety of dishes.

For every £1 invested in food waste management, an organisation stands to make £14 in savings.

Source: Waste and Resources Action Programme (WRAP)

4. Tackle food insecurity amidst the cost-of-living crisis

In London, more than 2.3 million Londoners live below the poverty line and 33% of adults have skipped meals to save money so that their children can eat (GLA, 2021)⁹. It is more important than ever that the most vulnerable people - including children - are guaranteed a high quality, healthy meal in public institutions. Councils can work to address food poverty through procuring nutritious and sustainable meals and making healthy food more accessible and affordable. By doing so, councils are setting an example and empowering families to reduce their own household food bills by increasing the amount of plant-based proteins consumed at home.

5. Serving low carbon food is inclusive

Menus should take account of and accommodate the cultural, religious, and special dietary needs of local communities. It is estimated that there are more than 3 million vegetarians and vegans in the UK and just under 10% of people in England and Wales have a religion with dietary prescriptions. Those whose religion involves dietary observances around eggs, dairy, shellfish and meat may choose a plant-based meal when eating outside the home.

6. Support your local food producers and nature-friendly farming, and tackle deforestation

Councils can help build wealth within their communities by supporting localised food systems through their procurement. Supporting agro-ecological farming will also benefit the local environment and biodiversity. A 'business-as-usual' approach to meat production and consumption threatens the habitats of [more than 17,000 species globally](#)¹⁰.

For every pound invested in procuring local food through short supply chains, local communities receive £3 in economic benefits

Source: [Growing Communities study with the New Economics Foundation and the Soil Association](#).

⁹ [Mayor of London calls for universal free school meals | London City Hall](#)

¹⁰ [Proactive conservation to prevent habitat losses to agricultural expansion | Nature Sustainability](#)

7. People are concerned about the climate crisis: they want change

84% of Londoners say they are concerned about climate change, and this number is increasing¹¹. [Polling in 2021](#) found that 68% of the public either strongly or somewhat agreed that public sector food should provide a healthy and sustainable diet and 80% said public canteens should help people minimise their impact on the environment and limit climate change.

8. Be part of a bigger movement in London

Join a pan-London commitment which adopts a common and consistent approach for London's councils aiming to help transform the city's food system, while learning from the successful examples of other cities in the UK and Europe which have enacted change through their procurement. Being part of a bigger movement increases the impact of individual council actions and makes it easier for each council and the city to measure progress.

Inspirational case studies

Here are a few examples of places in the UK and beyond that have transformed public sector food, to great feedback from those they serve, and within tight budgets.

UK case studies:

- **Tower Hamlets:** The council has taken a range of measures to increase the vegetarian choices on offer on council owned premises and improve their school catering service including by ensuring that all fish is MSC certified, favouring fairtrade and free-range products, increasing the proportion of organic food and using small local suppliers from East London. In recognition of their actions, the catering service was awarded a Silver Food for Life accreditation by the Soil Association.
- **[Bath and North East Somerset:](#)** A leader in introducing dynamic procurement, the council has taken an innovative approach to opening up school food procurement to local food producers by introducing specialist technology termed 'dynamic purchasing systems'. The pilot in 50+ Bath and North East Somerset primary schools showed financial benefits, with the council saving 6% in cost on its previous contract, as well as boosting the local economy through opening the market to smaller producers. Shorter supply chains also provided greater transparency and granularity of data allowing the council to make more informed decisions on factors other than price, such as climate or biodiversity sustainability, to select suppliers and products.
- **[Leeds:](#)** Leeds City Council has been working with schools to halve the carbon footprint of the food that they serve by 2030 through adopting 'planet-friendly' menus that were co-designed with students, as well as sourcing seasonal food from local producers and suppliers based in Yorkshire. Through taking a collaborative approach with school leaders and students, the council has managed to secure high levels of support.
- **[Durham:](#)** Durham County Council has been proactive in establishing a range of Sustainable Buying Standards for Food which include using local sourcing with minimum animal welfare standards (free-range eggs and Red Tractor for meat, poultry and dairy); having a preference for seasonal produce; specifying fair-trade or ethically sourced for a range of food; and facilitating access to procurement contracts for small local producers.

International case studies:

- **[City of Milan, Italy:](#)** Milan has been at the forefront of global efforts by cities to prioritise low-carbon school food procurement having reduced emissions generated by the menus of school canteens by 42% between 2015 and 2021. Milan achieved this through working with the largest catering supplier to schools, Milano

¹¹ [Londoners' views on climate change in 2023 | London Councils – Home](#)

Ristorazione, to develop meals that were balanced between health and sustainability, transitioning menus towards plant-based ingredients or meats with a lower carbon footprint (e.g. poultry).

- [City of Paris, France:](#) As part of the city's latest Sustainable Food Plan introduced in 2022, Paris has adopted an ambitious target for its municipal catering services to have 100% organic and sustainable food by 2027. To achieve this, the city has set a number of commitments related to catering including ensuring that all food is seasonal, sourcing at least 50% of food from local producers within 250 km and having two vegetarian meals served as a minimum per week.
- [City of Malmö, Sweden:](#) The potential of using food procurement for sustainability objectives has been recognised in a range of forerunner initiatives by the city government of Malmö. For example, Malmö's school restaurants managed to increase the overall share of organic food to 70% without raising budgets through strategies such as increasing the proportion of vegetable proteins (e.g. legumes) and having fewer processed ingredients. Adopting a holistic approach to school menus combined with awareness raising and capacity building actions has helped to reduce the city's emissions from food consumption by 30%.
- [City of Oakland, United States:](#) Changes to procurement enabled the School District in Oakland to reduce its school lunches' carbon footprint, serve healthier food, and save money. By drastically increasing the proportion of fruit, vegetable, and legume purchases, the Oakland Unified School District managed to reduce its carbon footprint by 14% and benefit from saving \$42,000 in the process.

Existing council priorities and strategies which may benefit from London's Food Purchasing Commitment

Signing London's Food Purchasing Commitment could contribute to meeting many of your council's existing strategies and priorities, including:

- Health and wellbeing strategies
- Recycling and reduction plans
- Net zero commitments and climate emergency action plans
- London Councils' One World Living commitment to cut consumption-based carbon emissions
- Low carbon procurement policies
- Inclusive economy strategies

Getting London's Food Purchasing Commitment signed off by your senior leadership team or cabinet

The process for signing varies from council to council. Some will require board-level sign off. For others, this isn't necessary because London's Food Purchasing Commitment delivers pre-existing OWL/net zero commitments.

4. Implementing the Commitment

Bronze stage: Get started

- **Join the distribution list for our ad hoc webinars which provide additional support:** The [sign-up link is available here](#).
- **Identify which teams you need to engage:** This may include education, facilities management, venue managers, procurement, waste, parks and green spaces, and public health. Do get all your stakeholders on board very early in the process, including senior leaders from relevant teams, and work with them to map out what role they may play in supporting the implementation of the Commitment.
- **Form a working group,** comprising individuals from these relevant teams with a role in supporting the implementation of the Commitment.
- **With your working group, complete a self-assessment using this tool.** This is a crucial first step to build a clear overview of food procurement across your local authority. It will help you to identify some high priority areas or contracts to focus on and prioritise at the start of your journey. In signing London's Food Purchasing Commitment, you are committing to work towards the timebound targets for **all** food procurement that is either under direct or indirect council control. But initially, and as a guide while you are starting your journey, we suggest that you start with some high priority areas - the self-assessment tool will automatically tell you what these are.
- **Report any ongoing activity** being taken to tackle food emissions, waste or provenance to the ReLondon team.

Silver stage: Establish your baseline starting points

Once you've completed your self-assessment and built a clear picture of what food you procure across your local authority, **your next step is to begin work to systematically establish your baseline starting points and send your data to ReLondon.**

Signatories to London's Food Purchasing Commitment are required to establish a baseline for the following measures:

- Absolute and per plate CO₂-eq emissions
- Food waste (in tonnes)
- Percentage of total ingredient budget which is spent on produce sourced from the Greater London region, or an adjacent county; produce bought directly from a small and medium-sized enterprise (SME) or a farmer within the borough; produce bought through a model which allows local and smaller producers to access public sector contracts (e.g. dynamic food procurement); fairtrade produce; MSC certified fish or fish considered 'fish to eat' (i.e. rated 1 or 2) by the Marine Conservation Society; any free range meat, dairy or eggs; any certified organic produce.

We have worked - in consultation with boroughs – to develop a common reporting methodology, accompanied by data collection templates, for each of these measures. A summary of each of the methodologies is provided below. For the detailed methodologies please email rachel.shairp@relondon.gov.uk or ander.zabala@hackney.gov.uk.

Reporting methodology for food-related greenhouse gas emissions

To report on your food-related greenhouse gas emissions, a science-based approach has been developed where local authorities collect, collate and submit total annual food purchase data by weight.

A pre-prepared standardised data collection template has been developed.

There will be no need for local authorities to use their food purchase data to calculate the carbon equivalent of the food purchased. This analysis will be carried out for boroughs that submit their food purchase data by the World Resource Institute's Coolfood movement.

Reporting methodology for food waste

To report on your food waste, our minimum suggestion is to segregate food waste from the residual bin and measure it (by weight) for 4 weeks a year, across at least 20% of your sites. Ideally these sites would be randomly selected.

Reporting methodology for food provenance

This is an opportunity to get to know where the foods you purchase come from. An approach has been developed where local authorities collect details on how much (by value) of the foods purchased during their baseline year fall into any of the categories listed below:

- Sourced from the Greater London region, or an adjacent county
- Bought directly from a small and medium-sized enterprise (SME)
- Bought through a model which allows local and smaller producers to access public sector contracts (e.g. dynamic food procurement)
- Fairtrade produce
- MSC certified fish or fish considered 'fish to eat' (i.e. rated 1 or 2) by the Marine Conservation Society
- Any free-range meat, dairy or eggs
- Any certified organic produce (e.g. Soil Association certified organic produce)

Gold stage (a): Act! Practical suggestions for how to achieve the targets

A. Actions to reduce food-related greenhouse gas emissions

To reduce the carbon footprint of the food you buy and the meals you serve, your in-house catering team or your catering provider should buy and serve more low carbon foods such as vegetables, pulses, legumes and beans and encourage their diners to choose them.

- **Start by understanding what you (as a local authority) can do to influence the food bought and served across your different services and settings.** Take a look back at your [self-assessment](#); in it, you have identified how different catering services are managed (e.g. in house, or via a private contract caterer). Depending on how your catering is managed, you have a number of different options for how to act to influence the food bought and served. The table below will help you to understand what you can do under each arrangement.
- **If your catering is managed by a contract caterer and your catering contract is due to be renewed in the next 2 years, your biggest opportunity is to influence at the contract renewal stage.** For example, inserting requirements to serve low-carbon meals into the contract requirements.

Opportunities for making changes to food bought and served under different catering arrangements

How is the catering managed?	How does this arrangement work?	What are the opportunities for making changes to the food bought and served?	Who should you engage?
Direct control	The council runs the service in-house and a team within the council decides menus and chooses suppliers.	The council team running the service can implement the changes needed directly, making changes over time and trialling what works. Menus are normally fixed for a period of time, so the next menu cycle would be the earliest that changes can be implemented.	Council procurement team and relevant teams that do the actual purchasing and cooking of food - e.g. schools team, care team or parks team
Indirect control (contract caterer)	The council procures and manages a contract. Initially this goes out to tender to private providers. Contracts are normally renewed or re-tendered every 3-5 years.	Requirements to serve low carbon meals and reduce the carbon footprint of purchased food can be written into procurement tenders and contracts. See Section 5 for example commissioning text. You can also speak with your caterer about what changes can be implemented within a contract.	The contract caterer and council, including the council's procurement team.
Indirect control (private contractor operates a 'full service')	The council uses a private contractor to provide a full service - for example operating care homes - catering is just one element of the contract.	Requirements to serve low carbon meals and reduce the carbon footprint of purchased food can be written into procurement tenders and contracts. See Section 5 for example commissioning text. You can also speak with your caterer about what changes can be implemented within a contract.	The contract caterer and council, including the council's procurement team

- **If your catering is managed in house, or you are within a contract cycle, you should engage your food service providers or in house-teams about making changes to the menus and dishes they serve.** As a very general rule of thumb, to reduce per plate greenhouse gas emissions, you should be looking to serve and encourage the eating of more delicious and flavourful plant-rich low carbon meals, using and celebrating new and interesting ingredients in your dishes and celebrate all the delicious natural produce our planet has to offer. [This Playbook](#) from WRI offers a huge number of practical changes food service providers can make to menus and dishes, based on the best available evidence.

Strategies to reduce the carbon footprint of menus and dishes¹²

- Introduce low carbon days when all the dishes served are plant-based only
 - Make low carbon foods the default choice or the 'Chef's recommendation' and include them in daily specials, meal deals and loyalty card schemes
 - Increase the proportion of low carbon protein meals served, including protein-rich chickpeas, lentils, beans and pulses
 - ⚡ Introduce plant-rich versions of popular dishes such as lasagne, pies, and casseroles
 - Celebrate cuisines from places with traditionally more sustainable diets than the UK
 - Price dishes fairly so that your dishes with a lower carbon footprint are attractively priced for diners
 - Increase the variety of plant-rich dishes on offer
 - Improve the flavour and texture of plant-rich dishes
 - Improve the appearance of plant-rich dishes
-
- **In addition, encourage your food service providers and in-house teams to think about how they position their low carbon and plant-rich dishes, how they communicate about them and how they promote them.** [This Playbook](#) from the WRI offers a huge number of practical actions food service providers can take on positioning, communication and promoting, based on the best available evidence. [ProVeg](#) offers free support to help you think creatively about the language you are using to make sure that plant-rich foods sound as delicious as possible and advice on positioning of menus to increase the popularity of plant-based dishes in schools. Inspired by [New York City's test kitchen](#), consider testing menus with your diners to get feedback on what they like – this will help prevent waste too.
 - **Finally, we suggest that you also encourage your food service providers and in-house teams to consider people training and investing in culinary talent building.** ProVeg offer free plant-based cooking workshops, almost every month. They also offer free in-person bespoke workshops for councils, contact colette.fox@proveg.com to find out more.

¹² Adapted from WRI's playbook https://files.wri.org/d8/s3fs-public/19_Report_Playbook_Plant-Rich_Diets_final.pdf

Common questions

Q: What does plant-rich and plant-based mean?

Plant-rich means a meal or menu or diet where plant-based foods make up the majority of all food consumed. Plant-based means foods are derived from plant-sources, including fruit, vegetables, grains, pulses, legumes, nuts, soya and tofu.

Q: Do you have any plant-based meal/recipe ideas?

A huge amount of further support and recipe ideas are available from ProVeg. Please visit their [School Plates Programme to download free resources](#).

Q: We are in the middle of a contract with a catering company - what should we do?

Councils that are in the middle of a catering commitment can still talk to their provider about what they can do immediately. We suggest the following steps:

1. Talk to your contract caterer, explaining your desire to make food served match the pressing climate crisis and ask if they can take steps to work towards the targets in the commitment mid-contract. The caterer may be very enthusiastic about adopting this commitment - especially because it would stand them in good stead for future contracts! They may well be doing plenty already.
2. Do some research on the caterer - they may have their own net zero commitments and sustainability aspirations - if so, this should be something they can do to help walk the walk on their own corporate commitments.
3. If the caterer is reluctant to commit on the grounds of increased cost, try to get to the bottom of the specifics of the increased cost. There are many examples of great menus on very strict budgets, and increasing veg and pulses is an effective way to offset any higher ingredient costs for higher-standard ingredients.
4. If your caterer is unwilling or unable to meet the targets in the commitment, as a last resort you can sign the commitment as a council now, to be adopted at the point that your contract is next renewed. To do this, you would write the targets into the contract when it is next renewed and expect the caterer taking on the contract to meet the criteria. Productive, ongoing conversations with your current contractor will greatly help make sure this gets in place smoothly.

Q: What can the council do if we don't have control (either direct or indirect) of much catering? For example, if we have devolved school catering to the schools to manage themselves?

You can still influence other procurers and providers of food in your borough, for example schools, early year settings and anchor institutions (e.g. hospital trusts), to align their own catering arrangements with the targets that have committed to London's Food Purchasing Commitment. You can also make it a requirement for vendors that operate at festivals and events on council land.

A note on sourcing

Changes to recipes, meals and menus should reflect the latest science on the importance of diversifying sources of protein to include more nutrient-dense plant-based sources and higher quality assured meat (such as meat that is free range or certified organic).

B. Actions to reduce food waste

- **Start by understanding what you (as a local authority) can do to influence food waste reduction across council settings that buy and serve food.** Take a look back at your [self-assessment](#); in it, you have identified how different catering services are managed (e.g. in house, or via a private contract caterer). Depending on how your catering is managed, there are different opportunities to reduce food waste. The table below will help you to understand what you can do under each arrangement to influence food waste measurement and reduction.

Opportunities for reducing food waste under different catering arrangements

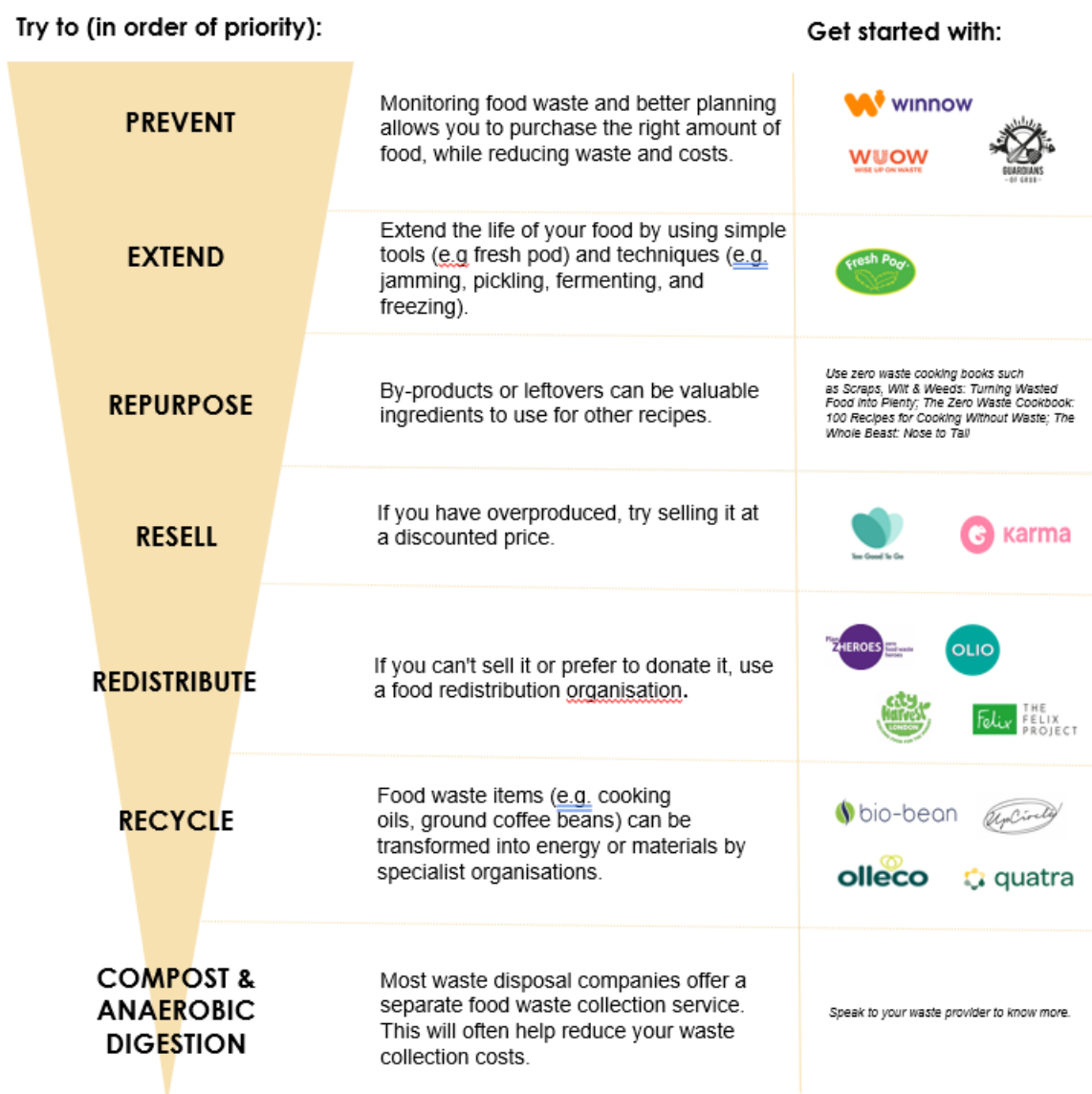
How is the catering managed?	How does this arrangement work?	What are the opportunities for reducing food waste?
Direct control	The council runs the service in-house and a team within the council decides menus, chooses suppliers, and disposes of the food waste.	The council team running the service can implement the changes needed directly.
Indirect control (contract caterer)	The council procures and manages a contract for the provision of catering services. Initially this goes out to tender to private providers. Contracts are normally renewed or re-tendered every 3-5 years	Requirements around measuring and reducing food waste can be written into procurement tenders and contracts. See Annex 1 for example commissioning and contract text. If you are within a contract, you can talk to your contract caterer about what they can do immediately.
Indirect control (private contractor operates a 'full service')	The council uses a private contractor to provide a full service - for example operating care homes. Catering is just one element of the contract	Requirements around measuring and reducing food waste can be written into your full-service contract. See Annex 1 for example commissioning and contract text. If you are within a contract, you can talk to your private contractor about what they can do immediately.

- **If your catering is managed by a contract caterer and your catering contract is due to be renewed shortly, your biggest opportunity is to influence at the contract renewal stage.** It should be a high priority of yours to insert requirements for food waste monitoring and reduction into the commissioning document and contracts. In Annex 1 we have provided you with example text for tenders.
- **If your catering is managed in house, or you are within a contract cycle,** you should:
 - **Start by engaging the relevant people.**
 - **Ask them to segregate food waste from residual waste** (if they are not already doing so as they may be recycling food waste).
 - **The next and critical step is to ask your in-house team or your caterers to understand how much food waste is being generated (in kgs) and where it is coming from.** This is the vital first step to reducing it in the future. Food waste tends to come from one of four sources:
 - Food preparation – peelings and trimmings

- Spoilage – food that has gone off
- Customer plates – leftovers
- Over-production – buffets and platters

We recommend using [WRAP's Guardians of Grub](#) food waste measurement methodology. Using technology is another option to keep on top of your waste for larger sites, with multiple kitchens. For example, Winnow uses digital scales and artificial intelligence to help chefs run more profitable, sustainable kitchens by cutting food waste. Kitchens using Winnow are able to cut food waste by a reported 40-70% and reduce costs by 3%-8%, improving margins whilst helping the environment. Find more details at winnowsolutions.com

The food waste hierarchy



- **Once an understanding has been built of how much food waste is being generated and where it is coming from, it is time for your contract caterer or in-house team to take steps to reduce food waste.** There are lots of things you can do on this - the charity WRAP has ideas

and tips on ways to reduce food waste. Their ‘Guardians of Grub’ resources are aimed specifically at supporting organisations and food businesses to measure and reduce food waste and they have free staff training on their website too. Some ideas are shown in the table below – the results of your bin monitoring will help you decide which ones are likely to be most effective.

- **Some food waste is unavoidable and inevitable (e.g. meat bones, egg shells, pineapple skin, tea bags), but there are still things that can be done to minimise the impact unavoidable food waste has on the environment:**
 - Redistribute for human consumption
 - Re-use and re-purpose
 - Send the food to be composted or for anaerobic digestion.

Some example strategies for tackling food waste

Action	Food preparation	Spoilage	Customer plates	Over-production
Zero waste recipes	X			
Food procurement and menu planning	X	X		
Food taster/tester days with your diners to understand what they like			X	
Food portion optimisation			X	
Provide ‘doggy bags’ to all customers			X	
Redistribute				X
Staff training	X	X	X	

C. Actions to increase the percentage of your ingredient budget that is spent on locally and sustainably produced food

- **Engage with your caterers and/or current suppliers to explore how they might be able to increase the proportion of ingredients they buy that are from the categories listed below:**
 - Sourced from the Greater London region, or an adjacent county
 - Produced or bought directly from a small and medium-sized enterprise (SME) or a farmer within the borough
 - Bought through a model which allows local and smaller producers to access public sector contracts (e.g. dynamic food procurement);
 - Fairtrade
 - Marine Stewardship Council certified fish or fish that are considered ‘fish to eat’ (i.e. rated 1 or 2) by the Marine Conservation Society
 - Free range (for meat, dairy or eggs)
 - Certified organic produce.

- **Conduct a market engagement to identify new suppliers which could support you in increasing the amount of local and sustainably produced food you buy.**
- **Work towards an accreditation (or require your caterers to work towards one).** The [Soil Association's Food for Life Served Here](#) accreditation or the [Sustainable Restaurant Association's Food Made Good](#) rating and achieve the highest standard, gold or three stars respectively, by 2030.

Gold stage (b): Submit your annual reporting data

You are required to report on your emissions, food waste and food provenance annually, using the same methodology as outlined for stage 2 (establishing your baseline starting points).

5. Useful resources

5.1. Other tools and guides

- The World Resources Institute's [Playbook for guiding diners toward plant-rich dishes in food service](#).
- The charity WRAP (Waste and Resources Action Plan) has lots of ideas and tips on ways to reduce food waste. Their '[Guardians of Grub](#)' resources are aimed specifically at supporting organisations and food businesses to measure and reduce food waste. There's an excellent short introduction video on their website ([Guardiansofgrub.com](#)), where you will also find a toolkit of practical 'operational resources' to help you track, reduce and learn about food waste, as well as free staff training.
- [SchoolFood4Change](#), a multi-partner project led by ICLEI Europe that developed a holistic [Whole School Food Approach](#) framework. This helps map out activities beyond the food served and how to work and empower other school stakeholders including teachers, staff, schoolchildren, and parents.

5.2. Grant and funding opportunities available

In the UK, there are several grants and funding opportunities available to schools and other organisations interested in implementing sustainable food practices and plant-based meals. Here are a few examples:

- **Local Authority Catering Association (LACA) Grants:** LACA offers a range of grants to its members, including the School Meal Hero Grant, which provides funding for school meal projects that promote healthy eating and sustainability.
- **The School Fruit and Vegetable Scheme:** This program provides free fruit and vegetables to all primary school children in the UK. Schools can receive funding to cover the costs of storage and distribution.
- **The Greggs Foundation:** The Greggs Foundation offers a range of grants to support breakfast clubs, lunch clubs, and after-school clubs that promote healthy eating and physical activity.

- **The Tesco Community Grants Programme:** This program provides funding to community groups, including schools, for projects that promote health and wellbeing. Grants of up to £1,500 are available
- **Healthy Pupils Capital Fund:** This fund provides funding to improve the health and wellbeing of pupils, which can include initiatives related to food and nutrition.

5.3. Practical resources

A variety of practical resources are being collated for you by ReLondon and the London borough of Hackney. These documents include:

- Example text for tenders and contracts
- In-depth paper

Please email Sarah.Malone@relondon.gov.uk and Ander.Zabala@hackney.gov.uk to request a copy of these practical resources.