

Briefing on ...

Food For Good

A Food for Good Charter for the public sector

Introduction

UNISON Scotland has welcomed Scottish Government plans to introduce a cross-cutting National Food Policy. In our response to the Government's Discussion Paper 'Choosing the Right Ingredients' we said that it makes total sense to draw together a range of policy areas affecting food, including climate change, sustainable development, health, education, transport etc., addressing issues such as public sector procurement, food labelling, animal welfare and local sourcing of food.

Food for Good – a Charter for sustainable, healthy food

UNISON Scotland launched a Food for Good Charter for the NHS in 2003. This has now been updated and expanded as a Charter to cover the whole public sector, embracing local and global social justice factors. We believe that fresh, local, healthy food in nurseries, schools, hospitals and prisons would make a major contribution to improving the diet and health of the nation. The public sector market for food in Scotland is worth about £85m and strong leadership would have direct health benefits as well as helping influence suppliers to provide more local, organic and fair trade products.

Contacts list:

Fiona
Montgomery
f.montgomery@unison.co.uk

Dave Watson
d.watson@unison.co.uk

@P&I Team
14 West
Campbell Street
GLASGOW
G2 6RX

Tel 0870 7777 006
Fax 0141 331
1203
Textphone 0141
248 3981



Launch at Gargieston Primary School, Kilmarnock

The Food for Good Charter says that sustainability should be at the heart of food policy. It urges that universal free school meals should be a major part of the Scottish Food Policy, contributing to health and tackling childhood obesity. The Charter, printed in full overleaf, covers Sustainability, Health, Social Justice, Excellence and Skills. East Ayrshire Council's pioneering sustainable school meals work has shown how it is possible to meet key criteria within the price local authorities currently pay.

In the interests of health and sustainability we need well-resourced, quality public sector catering provided by directly employed staff with proper training and good employment conditions. UNISON argues that it is important to learn the lessons of what went wrong in public sector catering in the past, with policies of Compulsory Competitive Tendering, PFI, privatisation and outsourcing, which cut pay and conditions for contracted-out staff and saw poor food quality and standards with great reliance on cook-chill and cook-freeze.

Further Action/Information for Branches

Branches can raise these issues with local employers, asking them to adopt the Charter. Keep the Policy & Information team updated on work in this area. f.montgomery@unison.co.uk. Equally if branches have members who can make a contribution to the development of our Food for Good strategy, please let us know.

The Food for Good Charter is on the reverse of this Briefing. Posters of the Charter and a recruitment leaflet including the Charter are available from UNISON Scotland. UNISON Scotland response to the Scottish Government discussion paper The Future for Food in Scotland is at: www.unison-scotland.org.uk/response/futurefood.html

Sustainability

- *Food should be fresh, prepared locally and sourced locally where possible.*
- *Mains-fed water coolers should be provided, minimising the use of bottled water.*
- *Public bodies should produce annual reports giving clear 'global footprint' type information on all aspects of their food use, including e.g. % of fresh, local food, progress on waste minimisation and recycling etc.*

Health

- *Universal free school meals should be recognised and adopted as a major contributor to improving health and tackling childhood obesity.*
- *The aim for all public sector catering should be to give a daily option of an organic/ethically produced main meal, ideally locally sourced.*
- *Vending machines on school/hospital premises should be used for healthy alternatives, not junk/fast food.*

Social Justice

- *Fair trade food should be used where possible, with targets of 50% by 2010 where relevant fair trade products are available.*
- *Decisions about menu options should give consideration to providing less meat-intensive diets, with more fresh, seasonal fruit and vegetables and sustainable fish.*
- *Animal welfare must be prioritised, with an aim for animal produce of using only recognised farm assured schemes or organic schemes by 2015.*

Excellence

- *All food must meet quality nutritional standards, monitored by relevant regulators. This involves excellence in procurement and in staff training and conditions.*
- *The top priority must be the contribution of food to health and wellbeing, with recognition of the folly of previous policies that pursued Compulsory Competitive Tendering, privatisation, PFI and outsourcing - cutting standards and employment conditions, increasing the use of cook-chill and cook-freeze food, and allowing 'fast' and junk food in schools and hospitals.*
- *The public must have access to clear relevant information about food, including via labelling and annual reports.*

Skills

- *Quality training and proper pay and employment conditions for the sector, including training in environmental factors as part of 'green workplaces'.*
- *Lessons for young people in primary and secondary schools about the food chain, sustainability and preparation of healthy meals.*
- *Public awareness campaigns on healthy diets, tied in with support to local food co-operatives and similar initiatives to improve access to quality food for the most vulnerable.*