

# Food discussion notes

SRS Staff and Student Workshop, Wednesday 13<sup>th</sup> April 2016

The purpose of this document is to provide an overview of the main discussion points from the food table which was part of the SRS Staff and Student Workshop.

## What is your own view of existing practice in this area?

- The discussion mainly centred on University food provision (primarily ACE, but EUSA was also mentioned). After reading the brief many people were positive about what ACE has already achieved.
- Many people with special dietary requirements said they bring their own food onto campus because they are not confident they will be able to find something suitable in outlets, or they are not satisfied with existing options. Vegetarians and vegans in the group took a particularly negative view of University food provision.
- People felt labelling could be improved to help those with dietary requirements, because it isn't always clear what is in the products. Revamping labels would also be an opportunity to highlight healthier and more sustainable options at the point of sale.
- One person felt the quality of food is not consistent across Uni cafés and there should be better monitoring across sites.
  - Vegetarian & vegan options
    - Often no vegan or veggie options, or very poor vegan options
  - Healthy eating
    - Food deals (in EUSA shops) often don't allow for healthy eating
  - Labelling
    - Not always clear what's in food. Often no labelling
  - Consistency and quality
    - Consider standardising food products across UoE catering establishments
    - Quality of food in catered halls drops after a few weeks?
    - Centrally set standards seem not to be monitored to same level (across all sites)

## Are you aware of current University support programmes in this area?

- ACE staff + RAs were well aware of sustainable food initiatives. Awareness of current University activities amongst other members of the group varied. A number of people knew about the commitment to fair trade, and some individuals mentioned other specific initiatives like cooking workshops and beekeeping. Also some recognition of student-led initiatives like Hearty Squirrel. Several people had heard of the Good Food Policy.
- There was some discussion of certification schemes, particularly Fairtrade and MCS fish. People felt these schemes can be flawed so there needs to be an ongoing conversation about the University's approach.

- General awareness
  - Not aware of “support” but aware of student initiatives in Central Area
  - A general awareness of initiatives but not of any detail
- People said they knew about
  - Pollock Halls cooking lessons
  - Love Food Hate Waste at Pollock Halls
  - Beekeeping
  - Keep Cups are not ideal + no discount
- Sustainability certifications
  - Criticism of some certification schemes
  - Can fish be sustainable?
  - Need an international symbol for fair trade

## What are the opportunities to promote good food at the University?

- Discussion of running meat free days and veggie weeks. Also making healthier, more sustainable options more attractive to entice people.
- Students suggested there were opportunities to for staff and students to work together good food initiatives, more than is already happening.
- People would like to see more food growing. Someone suggested the use of more innovative vertical and roof gardening methods if land is tight. Lots of interest in using / selling what is produced within the University. People were interested to know if land use for growing is considered as part of the estates development process.
- More vegetarian and vegan options
  - Don't preach about vegetarianism in cafes, just sneakily bring in veggie food – you can still educate people about the impacts of meat, but you can separate this education and sneak veggie options into Unis shops and cafes
  - Meat free days
  - (Food should be) majority veggie with meat being the exception on the menu
  - Raise awareness of the impact of meat
  - Healthier options in catered food is always welcome eg. fruit, veggie, vegan
- Food growing
  - Growing food and selling what's grown
  - (Gardening) teaches us our place in ecology
  - Vertical and roof gardening

## What support programmes or resources do you think are required to implement these measures?

- There was broad consensus that what is already happening could be better advertised and communicated raise awareness of existing initiatives and educate people about wider food



issues. Sandra Kinnear felt that students in self-catered halls were a particular target group, and that ACE's ongoing efforts to reduce food waste (which is decreasing) could be better promoted.

- There was interest in running more workshops and other campaigns as a way of engaging students.
- Many people were keen to see greater efforts to reduce food waste, to divert edible food from the waste stream and to know more about what happens to wasted food (including data).
- Someone pointed out that clear actions and targets will be needed in order to implement the Good Food Policy
  - Better promotion
    - More PR to students of what we do in ACE
    - (Promotion is) good in catered halls not so good in self-catering
    - Communication improvement
  - New ways of engaging students
    - Web / Facebook / food workshops
    - Development kitchen could be used for more and different workshops
    - New campaigns to engage students in halls of residence - e.g. Big Switch Off
  - Food waste
    - Food waste effectiveness? Contamination
    - Surplus food to food banks
    - Food waste stats and PR
  - Food policy
    - Bullet points / action targets for going beyond the food policy