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A City for all Londoners: Sustain response to consultation

Introduction: Towards a Sustainable Food System for London

Sustain is the alliance for better food and farming. We advocate food and agriculture policies and practices that enhance the health and welfare of people and animals, improve the working and living environment, promote equity and enrich society and culture. www.sustainweb.org/about/

Currently in London we run a number of networks and initiatives as well as publishing:

- The annual Good Food for London report which measures progress and encourages London councils to take action on good food covering action on 11 different good food measures, such as food growing, encouraging breastfeeding, school food, Fairtrade and fair pay. www.sustainweb.org/publications/good_food_for_london_2016/
- Beyond the Food Bank: London Food Poverty Profile www.sustainweb.org/publications/beyond_the_food_bank_2016/ This is the second edition of London's comprehensive food poverty profile. The report looks at what local authorities are doing to reduce food poverty across a range of measures.

As well as being a member of the London Food Board, Sustain works in partnership with many organisations involved in food and farming to run:

- **London Food Link:** Working for a healthy, sustainable and ethical food system for the capital. Through our projects and campaigns we strive for a food system that benefits all Londoners. www.sustainweb.org/londonfoodlink
- **Capital Growth:** Sustain set up and run Capital Growth, London's Food Growing Network, with over 2000 members providing support for anyone in London who wants to grow food whether at home, as part of an allotment, in a community group or school. www.capitalgrowth.org/
- **Growing Health:** A project run jointly with Garden Organic identifying see how community food growing can be routinely used by the health and social care services as a way of promoting health and wellbeing. www.sustainweb.org/growinghealth/
- **Sustainable Food Cities:** The Sustainable Food Cities Network is a collaboration with the Soil Association and Food Matters that helps people and places share challenges, explore practical solutions and develop best practice on key food issues. www.sustainweb.org/sustainablefoodcities

In the run up to the Mayoral elections, London Food Link stated:

"At London Food Link we believe there are food related challenges the new Mayor of London should be tackling head on and opportunities for them to seize. They should be using their power and

position to influence businesses, landowners, local authorities and, moreover, the rest of us Londoners to ensure our city is a world leader on food issues.”

We supported the key messages in the 2016 ‘Capital of Food’¹ report which highlighted the achievements of the London Food Board, its partners and the Mayor of London’s food team. It also outlines some of the challenges London will face around food in the future, as the city continues to grow.

We now welcome the opportunity to contribute to the new strategies for London and the London Plan, looking to 2050 and what needs to change to ensure ‘good growth’ for London.

Cities have an important role to play in making food better for everyone. We want to ensure that every single Londoner can afford to eat well and has a healthy diet and that food-related initiatives are used across strategic themes as a way to achieve improved outcomes for all Londoners.

Sustain’s definition for good food is that it should be produced, processed, distributed and disposed of in ways that:

- Contribute to thriving local economies and sustainable livelihoods - both in the UK and, in the case of imported products, in producer countries;
- Protect the diversity of both plants and animals and the welfare of farmed and wild species,
- Avoid damaging or wasting natural resources or contributing to climate change;
- Provide social benefits, such as good quality food, safe and healthy products, and educational opportunities.

How the Mayor’s Strategies can support a sustainable food system in London

Food and farming cuts across a number of themes relevant to the Mayor of London and A City for All Londoners. Food consumption and production has a huge impact on health through diet-related disease and on the environment through carbon emissions during production, transport and waste. It also has huge potential to create skills, grow local economies, build resilient and engaged communities and create opportunity to celebrate London’s diverse culture.

We recommend the continuation and revitalisation of the London Food Board to engage the amazing range of stakeholders, initiatives and social entrepreneurs in the capital and to ensure London retains a strategic and innovative approach to good food. In particular we would recommend that London aims to achieve a silver award as part of the Sustainable Food Cities network in order to showcase the city’s achievements.

We have highlighted below some of the key areas where food could help deliver the vision of a City for all Londoners.

The London Plan

The plan should identify how the theme-based strategies can be delivered through spatial planning. This may mean challenging councils and landowners to take more responsibility and use innovative methods to achieve sustainable food system to benefit future residents of the City. There should be greater effort made by all to ensure policy is implemented. A key element of the evidence base will be a greater understanding of food security and food poverty.

The previous London plan supported community food growing, and we would like to see the next plan to go even further by protecting community assets pertaining to food growing, and encouraging the creation of new land for food growing with appropriate length of tenure. This could be within existing green spaces, the green belt or be created from brownfield sites.

¹ <https://www.london.gov.uk/what-we-do/business-and-economy/food/support-and-resources/capital-food-ten-years-london-leadership>

Housing

Healthy communities living in well designed housing

- *Create and protect food growing spaces as part of the design of **all** new housing developments*

Allotments and community growing gardens increase the availability of healthy and sustainable food by expanding the space allocated for food growing. Such spaces can also enhance the quality of green spaces in neighbourhoods thereby contributing to biodiversity and sustainable urban drainage. They have a proven role in improving mental and physical health and in creating cohesive communities as well as providing opportunities for training and skills development.

Environment

Productive use of the Green Belt

- *Develop a more sustainable, localised food system for London that supports green jobs*

Food produced on the Green Belt is close to urban markets, near the labour force, can help connect urban dwellers to the rural landscape and encourage shorter (and potentially more transparent) supply chains. A report by the Campaign to Protect Rural England², found that people living in cities are keen to buy food that has been produced in their surrounding Green Belt, showing a potential market for such produce. A productive green belt will be a better protected green belt. Outer London Boroughs should lead the way through their management of the public estate (ex GLC) which they acquired on London's behalf.

In the last eight years we have seen the development of a number of peri-urban farms in London that provide multiple outcomes for London, including employment, enterprise as well as biodiversity and ecosystem services. The demand for larger areas for producing food continues to grow and present opportunities for sustainable development within London's green belt.

Accessible greenspace

- *Ensure the creation of a network of accessible green spaces and encourage local involvement in their management.*
- *Utilise green spaces to develop a more sustainable, localised food system for London and increase opportunities for wellbeing.*

Sustain, through our work on the Capital Growth campaign, which supported 2012 new growing spaces in London, have illustrated the multiple social, environmental, health and economic benefits from allowing communities to manage often unloved or underused green space, which often encompasses food growing³. We have also collated the evidence that shows how this can support public health initiatives and improve health and wellbeing⁴.

New policy should ensure all residents in the higher density neighbourhoods to be developed have access to a planned network of green spaces where they can not only socialise, engage with nature, forge a relationship with food, but also take a responsibility for their local environment. Developers must ensure through the design of new high density neighbourhoods that amenity space and public open space is provided to mitigate the impacts of climate change on the locality and the health of its residents.

² <http://www.cpre.org.uk/resources/housing-and-planning/green-belts/item/1956-green-belts-a-greener-future>

³ https://www.sustainweb.org/publications/growing_success/

⁴ https://www.sustainweb.org/publications/the_benefits_of_gardening_and_food_growing/

Economic Development

Thriving local neighbourhoods

- *Protect and encourage provision and diversity of types of food retail outlets – such as small shops and markets - locally, and within easy walking distance of communities, or by public transport.*

People on low incomes find it more difficult to eat a healthy diet, and therefore suffer disproportionately from diet related diseases. Difficulties include not only lack of money, but also worse access to transport and to shops selling affordable and good quality food, particularly fruit and vegetables.

Innovation in the low carbon economy

- *Support the creation of jobs and enterprises in the sustainable food and farming sector*

Sustainable food and farming has been shown to support the creation of jobs, moving away from large scale industrialised processes to more labour intensive, low carbon farming and food production that creates 'more jobs per loaf/meal' etc. We believe with further investment this could be increased to see a flourishing *good* food sector producing food that is both good for people and the planet.

In order to maximise this opportunity within food enterprise in London, support should be given to:

- small- and medium-sized good food enterprises (including markets and on-site farm shops),
- the development of local and regional food distribution infrastructure,
- creation of local food products,
- the growing and supply of specialist vegetables e.g. for and by people from BAME communities,
- enabling small scale producers and their employees to live, work, and grow their business within London,
- ensuring availability of affordable business starter units and access to land for land based businesses,
- developing and supporting community food hubs where skills and training for local people can be delivered alongside food growing & cooking.

Green energy & waste

- *Discourage food waste, and stimulate productive and/or environmentally benign ways of using unavoidable food waste.*

Composting food waste, at the individual, commercial and community scale has the potential for anaerobic digesters to generate electricity and heat as well as producing valuable compost. The UK needs an exemplar city; where better than in central London with its concentration of restaurants and high density homes.

Health Inequalities

Food Poverty

- *Ensure every borough has a food poverty action plan.*

Food poverty has many, interlinked causes and cuts across a number of policy areas including economic development and health inequalities. A sudden illness, an unexpected bill, a change in benefit payments or the death of a parent or partner can tip a family into a food crisis. Low pay, inadequate welfare support or long-term illness, combined with high housing and travel costs, can condemn families to chronic hunger, poor nutrition and anxiety.

The Mayor's vision should include the need for every London borough to have a food poverty action plan. These plans bring together statutory and non-statutory partners to develop a coordinated and sustainable response to food poverty and its underlying drivers.

Two thirds of London boroughs do not currently have a food poverty action plan.⁵ We welcome the GLA's funding for five boroughs to develop these plans in 2017 and hope this will trigger further progress in other boroughs. These plans should identify and tackle the drivers of food poverty by fostering long-term sustainable responses and ensuring that London's growing population does not experience food insecurity.

We identify ten areas of action in which the GLA and London boroughs can take action to reduce food poverty. These are:

- Develop an action plan to tackle food poverty
- Increase the uptake of Healthy Start vouchers
- Promote breastfeeding to boost the health of infants and mothers
- Harness the value of children's centres to help families eat healthily and avoid food poverty
- Ensure low-income families have adequate access to childcare
- Provide meals 365 days a year to children in low-income families
- Become a London Living Wage employer and promote the London Living Wage
- Ensure all residents have physical access to good food
- Support and enhance meals on wheels provision
- Maximise financial support and support financial advice services

Access to good food, children's health and obesity

- *Create stronger and coordinated measures to control proximity of unhealthy hot food take-aways close to premises used by young people.*
- *Work with local businesses to improve their food offer.*

Access to good food is a relevant strategic policy issue. Councils have shown leadership in implementing policies to reverse unhealthy trends. Policies for new high density development should be future proof.

Current and future initiatives such as the Healthier Catering Commitment to support fast food outlets wanting to make their food healthier and the Local Authority Declaration on Sugar Reduction and Healthier Food need London-wide leadership to ensure implementation.

⁵ London Food Link/ Sustain (November 2016) Beyond the Food bank: London Food Poverty Profile 2016