

Vote Good Food: A manifesto for healthy and sustainable food for London

In recent years, London has made great strides in promoting healthy and sustainable food, from restricting unhealthy food adverts on public transport to supporting food growing networks and has been recognised through a Silver Award as part of the Sustainable Food Places accreditation scheme.

While progress has been made, the last mayoral term faced new challenges, compounded by the Covid-19 pandemic. We call on the next Mayor to put good food policies at the heart of the capital's recovery plan, creating opportunities to bolster employment and local economies, protect public health, create a robust safety net and confront the climate and nature emergency driven, in large part, by our food system.

Below we set out specific policy asks for the next Mayor of London to adopt in their manifesto. We also call for a commitment to **maintaining the London Food Board and the Greater London Authority's Food Policy Team**, and to support London to 'go for gold' as part of the Sustainable Food Places scheme.

This document has been produced by **Sustain: the alliance better food and farming**, who run the London Food Link network, working for a healthy, sustainable and ethical food system that benefits all Londoners, in collaboration with three other London-based national food charities:

- **Feedback:** an environmental campaign group working for food that is good for the planet and its people.
- **Food Foundation:** a registered charity with a mission to change food policy and business practice to ensure everyone can afford and access a healthy diet.
- **School Food Matters:** providing advice to schools and fully funded food education programmes across all 32 London boroughs.

Our asks for the next Mayor of London

Improve children and adult health by ensuring all Londoners live in a healthy food neighbourhood

All Londoners, particularly children deserve to thrive, no matter where they live. Yet London has some of the highest diet-related disease rates including childhood obesity, in Europe, with deprived areas most affected. The Covid-19 pandemic has laid bare the risks that health inequalities and obesity pose to our national resilience. It is now time to make sure every London neighbourhood offers a healthy food environment where good and affordable food enjoys a starring role.

Ensure all Londoners have access to healthy food by virtue of living in a Healthy Food Neighbourhood:

In the London Recovery Programme, the GLA has committed that by 2025 every Londoner lives in a healthy food neighbourhood. Sustain's vision for this includes supporting good food business so people can buy healthy, affordable food, minimising the tide of unhealthy food advertising and ensuring Londoners have money to buy food. It also incorporates food growing spaces, community settings and the role of schools and health services (covered below).

Keep junk food out of the spotlight: Extend the city's ground-breaking junk food advertising restrictions on London transport to include London's sports stadiums, retailers on Transport for London networks and the rest of the Mayor's estate. This will encourage councils to adopt similar policies, setting the stage for healthier food across London. This should also explore further policies to limit junk food in School Superzones.

Ensure all Londoners can grow their own food via community food gardens, orchards and school gardens.

Our city's food gardens have grown exponentially over the last decade, providing food resilience, exercise and access to nature during the pandemic. They are most needed in deprived communities, which often have poorer access to quality green spaces. Likewise, all children should have access to a school garden, also invaluable during the pandemic as safe spaces for teaching when many enrichment activities had to be cancelled.

Support community-led projects and provision of good food: Voluntary, community and Social enterprise (VCSE) food projects have been invaluable during the pandemic, responding to need at the heart of the communities they serve. But many are stretched and need more support. This includes securing infrastructure, such as community kitchens or access to school facilities, grant programmes and social enterprise support packages.

Secure Good Food for all Londoners

London's already high levels of food insecurity have risen dramatically during the pandemic as many individuals and families reach breaking point. As the crisis continues to unfold, we risk seeing worsening food poverty in 2021 without decisive action. More should be done to stop the institutionalisation of food banks and to enable Londoners to access good food with dignity and ensure a robust safety net. Policymakers must work with communities, families, and individuals to ensure all Londoners can access healthy, affordable and culturally appropriate foods locally and with dignity.

Ensure all school-aged children access a healthy lunch by supporting every London borough to provide universal free school meals (UFSM) to ensure all children have at least one nutritious meal each day. The universal approach, as seen with infant free school meals, will allow for economies of scale and provide a welcome boost to the local economy, in relation to the local food supply chain and jobs for local people. [Read why this is so important](#)

Commit to the London Children's Right2Food Charter and a wider Right to Food: London can lead the way in becoming the first UK city to explicitly recognise this right for every child, as well as declaring support for a wider Right To Food, as has been done in Liverpool and Manchester. This would cover ensuring school aged children have access to universal free school meals (as covered above) and i further commitments as part of a strategy to eradicate child food insecurity, including:

- Until UFSM are introduced, a commitment to providing free school meals to all children with no recourse to public funds
- Funding for the Healthy Early Years London and Healthy Schools London
- Rigorous monitoring of school and nursery food standards
- Repeat the Survey of Londoners in 2022 to measure and monitor food insecurity at a London level.

Support and promote the take-up of Healthy Start across London: by working with health visitors and hospitals to increase awareness of the scheme, so more low-income families and young children will access fruit and veg.

Fund school food improvement officers for every borough to support/advise schools on procurement of nutritious school meals and to promote food education opportunities.

Encourage London councils to implement 'cash-first' approaches so that lower-income families can afford to buy their own food and reduce the need for food banks.

Pledge to ensure every older and disabled Londoner can access at least one good meal every day. This would involve:

- building on the Older Londoners' Food Summit 2020 to host an older people's food forum, ensuring people can connect across boroughs.
- training to help newer services to professionalise and establish sustainable, robust models and structures.
- Support robust referral pathways through shared learning, training and best practice guidance.
- funding for new voluntary services that have sprung up in response to the crisis to professionalise and encourage boroughs to maintain this seed funding.

Create a thriving food economy that creates good food jobs and skills

A good food economy with a mix of diverse food businesses providing access to healthy and sustainable food - not only makes healthy, sustainable food more accessible, but creates jobs and prosperity while regenerating high streets. The Covid-19 pandemic has exposed fragility in our food supply chain but also showed smaller-scale and localised food supply chains are resilient and can adapt to demand and support the emergency response. These enterprises can help to build back better in our city and safeguard the city's unique food culture. Specific actions include:

Set up a good food and farming investment fund to create 1000's of good food jobs, paying the London Living wage, building skills, and kickstarting businesses to support green economic recovery and a low-carbon economy. This includes:

- support for the start-up and scale-up of businesses focusing on healthy and/or low-carbon food/ circular food economy
- a programme for existing and new markets and traders to promote and sell more fresh produce and regenerate high streets
- training, advice and funding for new and existing food enterprises to source sustainable produce and create better infrastructure
- help for SMEs to engage in public procurement opportunities

Develop a London-wide good food retail strategy to stimulate small and medium enterprises to sell healthy, sustainable food and accept Healthy Start Vouchers, to support access to good food for all. This could be based on the Scottish Healthy Living scheme and include:

- mapping and identifying gaps in access to healthy, affordable food, and supporting SMEs and councils that are working with SMEs and social enterprises to increase access to healthy food where needed.
- Exploring a good food retail accreditation scheme to mirror the successes of the Healthier Catering Commitment.

Placing Food Social Enterprise at the centre of growth and innovation:

SMEs and social enterprises create more jobs per turnover than larger or non-social enterprises. The next Mayor should be looking to tap into this commitment to job creation, circular economy and low carbon by supporting the good food entrepreneurs in this sector.

Continuing to advocate for the LLW in the food sector, particularly larger food employers.

Address London's food-related environmental impacts to tackle the Climate and Nature Emergency

The way we grow, catch, process and transport food is one of the greatest threats to the health of our planet and in turn people, but with swift action we can change this.

In the UK, 30% of greenhouse gas emissions arise from the food system and food related land use change, with 10% attributable to agriculture. A city like London has a considerable 'food footprint' that is impacting nature. Addressing this would include:

Confirm the C40 Good Food Cities declaration and progress the Milan Urban Food Pact through an action plan to achieve the ambitions that relate to food production, short food chains and supporting food producers. Food that is good for our health, the health of the planet, and supports a good food economy must become the norm, and catering for London's police, transport workers, the fire brigade and GLA staff should be the first place to start.

Remove factory farmed meat and dairy along with reducing overall consumption of meat and dairy by 50%. The cost savings can be used to buy higher-standard certified produce (i.e. organic, Pasture for Life and RSPCA assured) from British farms, as well as verifiably sustainable fish, more fruit, vegetables and pulses, and removing factory farmed meat and less ultra-processed food. The Mayor can encourage councils to follow suit for schools, civic catering and care settings. This will contribute to the national effort for greenhouse gas (GHG) reduction and help meet our Paris Agreement obligations from the Nationally Determined Contribution - where the government has recognised the contribution of sustainable diets and food waste to GHG emissions.

Encourage councils to include the reduction of food waste into local climate action plans, in line with SDG 12.3 which calls for a 50% reduction in food waste from farm to fork. Other actions could include work with councils and waste disposal authorities to ensure no organic waste to landfill by 2030, as per the government's Waste and Resources Strategy and promoting food redistribution, animal feed or anaerobic digestion as preferred means of disposal of surplus food over waste incineration.

Champion ten new nature-friendly farms on existing agricultural land and other sites in the urban fringe. This can integrate increased tree cover using 40% fruit and nut trees for human consumption and ensure no net loss of high grade farmland. Both the climate and nature emergency and the pandemic has shown the significance for London to engage in food supply and access to nature. Supporting nature-friendly agro-ecological farms with public access and skills development, investing in horticultural training for new entrants and creating a Greenbelt Strategy covering food production,

woodland coverage and habitat and species protection would ensure London continues to build resilience.

Double the number of London Boroughs signed up to the Veg Cities campaign to 12. This commitment would support multiple outcomes of increase consumption of veg, lowering climate change impact and increase food growing in local areas.

Reduce plastic waste and use of bottled water and other drinks. This would be achieved by committing to installing water fountains in all TFL stations to promote healthier lifestyles, save individuals money, and greatly reduce the Mayor's burden on waste-removal.

Champion water only schools. This would mean the only drink available in schools is water: schools are provided with enough drinking fountains and water refill stations to eliminate the need to sell water in plastic bottles.

Screen pension and investment portfolios for high-emitting agribusiness, especially industrial meat and dairy production and animal feed.

- **Sustain; the alliance for better food and farming**: as a national charity we have led the London Food Link network for 20 years, working with people who grow, cook, make and eat good food. Current initiatives in the capital including the London Food Poverty Campaign, Capital Growth food growing network and the Jellied Eel magazine.
- **Feedback**: based in London, they are a national environmental campaign group working for food that is good for the planet and its people.
- **Food Foundation**: is a registered charity with a mission to change food policy and business practice to ensure everyone can afford and access a healthy diet. In January 2020, it launched the London Children's #Right2Food Charter at London's first Children's Food Insecurity Summit, hosted in partnership with the GLA & Mayor's Fund at City Hall.
- **School Food Matters**: Founded in 2007, School Food Matters was born out of a grassroots campaign that transformed school meals for 38 schools in the London borough of Richmond. The charity now provides advice to schools and fully funded food education programmes in all 32 London boroughs. Our experience informs and strengthens our campaigns, bringing the voices of children, parents, and teachers to government policy.
- **The Orchard Project** are the only national charity dedicated to the creation, restoration and celebration of community orchards.

Contact: Sarah Williams, Programmes Director, Sustain. sarah@sustainweb.org

Sustain: The alliance for better food and farming advocates food and agriculture policies and practices that enhance the health and welfare of people and animals, improve the working and living environment, enrich society and culture and promote equity. We represent around 100 national public interest organisations working at international, national, regional, and local level. www.sustainweb.org

