

food
ethics

Growing pains

Children and food

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Eating and growing

We struggle to make sense of children as consumers. Are they exploited by unscrupulous marketing, to the detriment of their mental and physical health? Or are they shrewder than we think, and better equipped for life by being exposed to the economy from an early age? According to David Buckingham (p.8) it's a bit of both, but where this leaves parents, guardians, governments and businesses is hotly debated and hard to pin down.

We have little of the same ambiguity when it comes to children as producers. Globally, 132 million boys and girls aged 5-14 work in agriculture, accounting for 70% of child labour in those age groups, a practice established in international law to be harmful, exploitative and unjust. By contrast, articles in this edition, including those by young people, endorse the benefits of children growing and preparing food, for their education, enjoyment, health and community. So there are good and bad ways for children to be involved in food production and, in general, there is little risk of confusing the two.

Children's exposure to food advertising and standards for school meals in Britain – the focus of most contributions to this magazine – are a world away from the abject deprivation that drives child labour in poorer countries. Nevertheless, these issues are also important, and we can perhaps throw the challenge of dealing with children as consumers into clearer focus by reflecting on the more sharply defined distinctions that we already make about children as producers.

The mere fact children are involved in food production doesn't make it child labour. UNICEF defines child labour according to the amount of time spent working, the age of the child and the type of work: more than one hour a

week of economic work or 28 hours of domestic work for 5-11 year-olds; over 14 hours economic work or 28 hours of domestic work for 12-14 year-olds; and over 43 hours of economic or domestic work for 15-17 year-olds.

So it is appropriate to have different expectations for children of different ages, and there is an important distinction between what happens in the home and the wider economy. In the context of consumption, Wendy Wills (p.10) and Tony Cooke (p.15) point out that kids make discerning food and product choices – even if not to grown-

As 30% of children live in poverty, tackling economic inequality is a top priority

up tastes – from a very young age. But that doesn't equip them to make price-based decisions and participate in the wider economy. Marketing that expects the very young to do so, directly or by pester power, is unfair both to them and to their families.

At the heart of the matter is autonomy. Growing and preparing food is good when it enhances a child's education and life chances. It is bad when it does the opposite, by taking time away from school or compromising their physical or intellectual development. In practice, parents whose own autonomy is constrained by poverty expect their children to behave more autonomously,

and enter the workplace, from a younger age.

As Wendy Wills (p.10) explains, income and class are just as crucial when it comes to food consumption. While middle class parents may seek to manage their offspring's eating habits in their long-term interests, working class parents often expect their children to make autonomous food choices at an earlier age. They have more pressing priorities for 'good parenting' than diet, like keeping their kids safe, budgeting and staying in work.

So limits on marketing and the like can only achieve so much. As 30% of children in the UK live in poverty, tackling economic inequality must be a top priority for improving childhood nutrition. Given that most poor children live with at least one working parent, this means raising minimum incomes through wages as well as benefits – a key finding of our recent Food and Fairness Inquiry (www.foodethicscouncil.org/foodandfairness). Measures like free and better school meals, which improve diet directly as well as being redistributive, are doubly important.

This edition's contributors include experts who have fought for years to win improvements on these counts. While they say our new government may bring opportunities, there's no hiding their nervousness. As Christine Haigh (p.26) and Helen Crawley (p.4) point out, within weeks of taking office, plans were scrapped for free school meals for all primary school children below the poverty line, and the Health Secretary unveiled his hopes that the private sector will step into fund health campaigns where the state is getting out. If these cuts continue, the government may find itself guilty of child neglect. ■



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Supporting standards

An agenda for government



HELEN CRAWLEY draws some lessons from history.

The battle between ‘nanny state-ism’ and choice promotion in giving people the ability to make better choices in a world of plenty, lies at the heart of different approaches to supporting children to eat well.

All political parties will claim that the health, wellbeing and protection of children lie at the heart of their policy making, but the role the state has taken in supporting eating well among children over the past 30 years has been as much a barometer of the wider changes in public attitudes to food and health and changing health priorities, as of political ideologies. It is not that long ago that concern about children’s nutrition focused on dietary insufficiency, with post-war promotion of full fat milk, rosehip syrup and cod liver oil to protect children from underweight and vitamin deficiencies.

School meal nutritional standards introduced in 1941 specified the energy, protein and fat content of main meals, with 1,000 calorie school dinners designed to meet the needs of the hungry and physically active children they were there to support. From 1947, and for the next 20 years, education authorities had to provide school meals for all who wanted them at a set price with 95% of the cost covered by central government grants.

School meals with nutritional standards were finally wiped out by the Education Act of 1980, which removed the obligation on education authorities to provide food for anyone but those entitled to free school meals. ‘Nutrition in Britain is generally good’ said the Department of Health in 1981, a message repeated by both Labour and Conservative governments over much of the past 30 years. This marked a phase until the turn of the present century which saw governments generally keen to marginalise public health problems caused by food, and eager to keep the wheels of commercial food production and sales turning.

Yet surveys of children’s diets in the 1980’s pointed to problems ahead: the Diets of British Schoolchildren survey

commissioned to examine the impact of removing school meal standards, collected data in 1983 but controversially was not published until 1989. The report showed diets high in fat, low in many micronutrients and heavily dependent on chips, bread, milk, biscuits, meat products and puddings. Children in 1983 obtained over half the chips and cakes they ate from food in school; baked beans were the only vegetables eaten in any quantity and fruit failed to feature in most school meals. The findings prompted new campaigns for a return to school meal standards, but it took another 16 years and several more large national surveys before these were finally reinstated.

There has been a growing acceptance over the past decade that food really does matter to health, alongside an increasingly complex relationship with food choice. Whilst about 75% of the population regularly bought ready prepared supermarket meals by 2005, at the same time food suppliers were under scrutiny from the health lobby, consumer watchdogs and the government. The Sudan 1 food scare in March 2005, national press reporting of trans fats in foods and the national debate triggered by Jamie Oliver over the state of British school food put processed foods firmly in the media spotlight. Despite buying turkey twizzlers for home consumption, parents wanted schools to feed their children better, and the rising panic about obesity saw a government forced into regulation by a consortium of health campaigners.

With all schools now rightly required to show that the food they serve to children meets rigorous food and nutrient-based standards, and steady increases in families buying into the system, attention has turned to children under the age of five. The previous Labour government set up an advisory group to create better standards and guidance for child care settings at the beginning of 2010 – twelve years after lobbying by The Caroline Walker Trust and others for clear guidance in this sector first began.

The advisory panel’s report in autumn 2010 is likely to be launched into a new national climate of the rejection of regulation and local decision making. However, more encouragingly, this is now a world where social and health professionals are accustomed to working in multi-disciplinary teams within local area agreements and service frameworks. State and private childcare providers are keen to be seen to offer best practice, parents are more vocal and demand better food, and we have to be optimistic that there will be an eagerness to promote and monitor eating well for younger



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children, without the need for regulation, which would not have been seen 10 years ago.

State support of good nutrition among children has been increasingly seen as requiring changes to the environment around children as well as in providing better food education. Until May’s change of government, making good choices more accessible, reducing exposure to advertising and promotion of less healthy options, and increasing food skills were all seen as necessary, and these strands all received funding and support.

The previous government committed to re-introducing food skills in the national curriculum for all 11-14 year olds from 2011 as part of the response to rising rates of obesity, but whilst most people would accept that this is an essential life skill, evidence linking better food skills to good nutrition is hard to find. Lack of an evidence base makes policies vulnerable.

The missing infrastructure to allow many teenagers in state schools in England to gain practical cooking experience and the halt in school buildings programmes may mean that food skills reintroduction does not become compulsory, although this has not yet been suggested by the new coalition government.

Currently, food skills in schools are mostly taught through optional after-school cooking clubs like the £20 million lottery funded School Food Trust programme ‘Let’s Get Cooking’ or the Sainsbury’s and British Nutrition Foundation funded

‘Active Kids Get Cooking’ scheme. Initiatives undertaken by charities and with corporate support, rather than government schemes, do not form part of a whole school approach to improving food in schools that most believe is essential for improving public health. Making cooking skills optional is likely to mean that many of the children who need the skills the most won’t participate and the opportunity to empower all young people to eat better is lost.

At a local level, there are wide-ranging initiatives around promoting better food through healthy schools teams, community dietitians, oral health promoters and third sector organisations. These often use resources produced nationally through Change4Life, the (now) £50 million Department of Health social marketing campaign to promote eating well and physical activity among the population as a whole.

Coupled with restrictions on television advertising of high fat, sugar and salt foods during programmes with mainly child audiences, the raft of state funded initiatives to promote healthy eating among children in the UK has been viewed enviously by European colleagues. Many countries, such as Spain, have only just begun restricting what food children can access in schools for example.

Critics in the UK would argue that while we have made progress, we lack consistent approaches: much of the work is short term, while behaviours manipulated by a powerful food industry are hard to shift. There is also a question of whether



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Behaviours manipulated by a powerful food industry are hard to shift

responsibility, rather than regulation, the mechanism of choice for a 'more acceptable future health of our nation'.

Where we have failed to invest well to date is in providing better training and tools for those we rely on to support eating well and to give the information from which people could make good choices. Health visitors, practice nurses, support workers and others who advise on health and wellbeing at grass roots level often have little or no training on what eating well means or how they can support those on low incomes and in difficult circumstances. Despite the current obsession with food and cooking in the media, there remain few good, tried and tested resources showing practical, simple, cost-effective ways to eat well. And the advice we are given does not even begin to embrace the need for integrated advice around health and the environment.

Critically, if 'informed decisions' are to be the mechanism of choice, then the state has a role in providing clear and simple guidance and ensuring those it pays to impart advice can both understand it and act upon it. This will be a key area for lobbying.

Relying on those companies who profit from the sales of foods high in fat, sugar and salt to take on national health promotion as is being suggested would – to many – seem a perverse move. We must hope that those who will be responsible for a more localised health promotion system will have gained from the experience of the past 10 years, and will fund staff training and set targets for good food in public settings for children in their area. The government wants Change4life to become less a government campaign and more a social movement. Health campaigners will have much to do to defend the gains made over the past decade and ensure that the 'power of some of our best known companies' being harnessed by Andrew Lansley to make the nation healthy does not go further, faster, in increasing nutrient insufficiency for many children in England. ■

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we are reaching those most in need. Health inequalities are now reported to be at their highest in the UK since the depression of the 1930s, and poor diets are an integral part of the poverty agenda. Many see cancelling the extension of the free school meals pilots and abandoning plans to increase thresholds for free school meal uptake as short-sighted in tackling food poverty for children. Obesity in children, like tooth decay before it, is increasingly an issue of class in the UK, and it is state-funded initiatives which are best placed to tackle wide-ranging inequality.

Many areas of work around children's food and health were stimulated by the previous government's target to halt the rise in obesity among children under the age of 11 by 2020. This target may disappear from the new government's white paper on public health, as targets set by previous administrations often do, but all the signals are that future approaches on public health will be about reducing state control.

In a letter to the Observer in July 2010, health minister Andrew Lansley makes it clear that the new approach to public health will be one where 'people are encouraged and assisted to make informed decisions about their health' with social

School food Education on the table

MATT JONES, JUDY ORME, RICHARD KIMBERLEE, EMMA WEITKAMP and DEBRA SALMON review the evidence.

Concerns about rising levels of obesity amongst children have underpinned much work in UK schools to reform food and nutrition-related education. By 2020, the British Medical Association predicts that over one quarter of children will be obese and have a shorter life expectancy than their parents. Increasingly, such trends are seen as a consequence of a global food economy in which children are, without precedent, exposed to heavily marketed, processed energy-dense foods. In this individualised and post-traditional world, the school is a key public arena in which to engage hearts and minds, and to promote access to healthier and sustainable foods for children.

In the UK, programmes such as National Healthy Schools and Eco-Schools support a move to healthier and more environmentally sustainable schools. Similar initiatives are increasingly under way in North America and the rest of Europe. Other initiatives, such as the Food for Life Partnership, bring together nutrition and sustainability issues through making changes to food education and to the quality of food available in school.

Backed up by recent research, these programmes make the case for the role of school education in promoting healthy and sustainable lifestyles. For example, initiatives focusing on year groups, such as 'Cooking with Kids', suggest that focused interventions related to cooking are effective at developing skills and changing attitudes. Children participating in structured educational courses on growing increase their uptake and preference for fruit and vegetables. Farm-link educational programmes can improve children's understanding of food production and can also increase school meal uptake, as well as changing pupils' knowledge, attitudes and behaviours toward food.

Looking beyond formal education, food provision in schools has a role in promoting opportunities for a healthier diet. School meals are offered in all maintained primary schools and form part of a means-tested programme to provide free school meals to those on low income. So approaches that address both health and environmental impact through school meals can have far-reaching effects on children's health and could go some way to overcoming income-related inequalities in access to healthy food.

The case for improved school meals extends beyond dietary benefits. Evidence indicates that improving the nutritional value of school meals can have a direct impact on educational performance. Michèle Belot & Jonathan James evaluated

the Jamie Oliver 'Feed Me Better' campaign and showed that primary schools implementing healthier meals achieved a 3-6% increase in number of pupils obtaining a level 4 in English SATs testing and a 5-8% increase in the number of pupils obtaining a level 5 in Science. These impacts can also be seen at the school level. Schools close to attaining Healthy School status as part of the National Healthy Schools Programme tended to have better Ofsted ratings. There was a trend towards children in these schools being absent less often.

Much has been achieved to improve the school meals service since Jamie Oliver's 'Feed Me Better' series took up the cause first championed by the Food for Life campaign in 2003. Food-based and nutrient standards now regulate the nutritional value of school meals and, in a number of English local authorities, caterers are starting to adopt accredited standards for the provision of more sustainable foods.

However, take-up of these newly nutritious school meals is low, averaging 43% in primary schools and 37% in secondary schools. At these take-up levels, overheads place a heavy burden on the price of a school meal to parents, placing downward pressure on ingredient spending. School meal services are now heavily dependent on the £240m school meal grant (averages 14p per meal at current take-up levels over 3 years from 2009-11) to subsidise direct costs like ingredients and catering staff pay. Most local authorities and schools with a quality meal service are subsidising their food spend to a greater or lesser extent.

Now, local authority drives to achieve enhanced efficiency savings, and central government spending restraints, risk placing an even greater downward pressure on school meal ingredient spending. Local authority school meal providers are being asked to reduce their ingredient spend by up to 10p per child per meal, from an average baseline of 63p. This risks reducing take-up of school meals yet further in a vicious cycle of decline, which can only undo the good work of recent years and result in perpetual grant dependency or the closure of school meal services beyond statutory free school meal provision.

These circumstances threaten to drive apart much of the integrated work that has brought together the nutrition and food sustainability agendas in schools. We now have a wealth of evidence that lends support to 'multi-component' programmes, where action happens at a range of levels and across different aspects of school life. Here are opportunities for children and all stakeholders – parents, teachers, caterers, food producers – to create change in schools. Such 'bottom-up' integration is widely recognised as more sustainable than single issue interventions driven by external experts. Children clearly experience their school in the round, so we might expect that what they learn about food in the classroom should carry through into real opportunities to shape the food they eat both in and out of school. ■

A fully referenced version of this article is available from info@foodethicscouncil.org.

Matt Jones, Judy Orme, Richard Kimberlee, Emma Weitkamp and Debra Salmon, from the Institute for Health, Sustainability and the Environment at the University of the West of England in Bristol, are evaluating the Food for Life Partnership's work with schools.

Food marketing and obesity



DAVID BUCKINGHAM
examines how childhood
mixes with commerce.

The marketing of food and drink to children has become one of the most controversial issues of our time. In 2008-9, I led a major independent assessment for the UK government on 'the impact of the commercial world on children's wellbeing'. The relationship between food marketing and obesity was one of the most hotly contested issues we addressed, and we heard evidence from a wide range of businesses and campaign groups, as well as conducting our own review of the academic research. We aimed to be balanced and objective, but also to point to some new ways of thinking about the issues.

Our report argues that it is time to move beyond a polarised view of children's relationships with the commercial world. Children are not the innocent, passive victims imagined by some campaigners; but nor are they the savvy, autonomous consumers celebrated by some of the marketers. If we wish to understand children's behaviour as consumers, we need to take account of the broader social and cultural context. Simple cause-and-effect explanations do not do justice to the complexity of the issues.

Over the past fifty years, there have been significant changes in family life – both in the structure and organisation of families, and in parents' beliefs about child-rearing. More generally, children have enjoyed increasing recognition and status in a whole range of social domains. These developments have led to some striking changes in how households allocate expenditure: they have created new opportunities and imperatives in respect of consumption, as well as posing new ethical challenges. Yet while overall levels of affluence have risen, so too has relative inequality; and the extension of a 'consumer society' may be intensifying the pressures on poorer families.

What does research tell us?

On one level, the relationships between food advertising and obesity would seem to be straightforward. There is general agreement that levels of childhood obesity are rising – although there is an important debate about the scale of this phenomenon, and about whether it can justifiably be termed an 'epidemic'. Meanwhile, most television food advertising is for high fat, salt and sugar (HFSS) food.

Prior to the recent restrictions on advertising in children's television, Ofcom's research found that food advertising was

dominated by breakfast cereals, confectionery, savoury snacks, soft drinks and fast-food restaurants; while advertising for staple items and fresh foods was declining. Despite the new restrictions, the overall balance in television advertising generally – to which children of course continue to be exposed – is likely to remain fairly similar.

The connections here would seem to be obvious: children watch ads for unhealthy food, which cause them to prefer and choose such foods, so they become obese. However, the evidence from research on this matter is rather less than conclusive. Despite some claims that there is an emerging consensus, key reviews of the research disagree – in some cases, quite profoundly – in their overall conclusions.

Much of the evidence here is correlational: it establishes associations between exposure to advertising and problems like obesity, rather than causal relationships between them. Furthermore, it tends to consider the effects of advertising in isolation from other factors such as the influence of parents or peers. This makes it difficult to offer definitive conclusions about the relative importance of advertising compared with these other factors.

The question of causality is crucial here. It may be that advertising encourages people to eat an unhealthy diet, which in turn is one contributory factor in obesity. However, it may equally be that people who are disposed (for various reasons) to eat an unhealthy diet – or are unable to afford a healthy one – are also inclined to watch a lot of television.

In fact, much of the research measures children's overall viewing of television rather than their viewing of television advertising in particular. This is problematic, as there are many possible ways in which television viewing might be associated with obesity.

Watching television is a sedentary activity, which does not burn many calories. People who watch a lot of television tend to do less exercise, and are more likely to prefer other sedentary activities. People tend to snack while they watch television, and are less inclined to stop when they are full. Television is also a relatively inexpensive form of entertainment, which is a major reason why it is more heavily watched in less wealthy families, who are also more likely to be obese.

While it seems reasonable to conclude that advertising does have an impact on children's food preferences, most reviews agree that the impact is small. One frequently quoted figure is that exposure to television advertising accounts for some 2% of the variation in children's food choice. Of course, food consumption is only one factor in obesity, and as such, the influence on obesity is bound to be even smaller than this;

although one could argue that a variation of 2% does make a cumulative difference when multiplied across the population.

Advertising, food and obesity: a wider view

The research in this field has generally explored food preference or food choice rather than obesity per se. However, the relationship between the food people say they prefer and what they actually eat is not straightforward. They are not always able to eat what they would ideally wish to eat: a whole range of other factors, most notably price and availability, come into play. As such, an expressed preference for 'unhealthy' foods among children cannot on its own be taken to result in (or be equated with) obesity.

Furthermore, it appears that taste preferences and dietary patterns are largely determined by other factors, and are in place from a very young age, well before children become aware of advertising.

The early years are especially important: once established, taste preferences and eating habits appear to continue with relatively little change for the rest of a person's life. Some people are genetically more disposed towards obesity, or have an inherited preference for sweet food. Aspects of family interaction also play a role: obese children are more likely to have obese parents, although children may well ask for many things that (for a variety of reasons) they do not get.

Lifestyle, and particularly the amount of physical exercise people take, is obviously another key factor. Evidence here suggests that while children's calorie intake has remained more or less steady over the past 30 years, the number of calories they burn through exercise has declined. This may relate to a number of other factors, not least the decline in free access to public space for play.

All these things relate in turn to other social differences, including ethnicity and age. The strongest association, however, is with poverty: at least in developed economies, poor people are much more likely to be obese than wealthy people. The reasons for this are largely to do with the availability and price of particular kinds of food, and the opportunity and time that people have to prepare it.

If advertising does play a role here, it does so in the context of these other factors – which themselves interact in complex ways. One of the problems with the research in this field, however, is that it tends to consider the relationship between marketing and obesity in isolation from these other factors, or to account for them in unduly simplified ways.

Future research and policy

It is perhaps predictable that an assessment like ours would conclude with calls for further research. Much of the research

that is frequently cited here is quite outdated. Most of it relates exclusively to television advertising – which is a fairly small (and indeed shrinking) part of the broader marketing environment. We need to consider other aspects of marketing, such as point-of-sale displays, sponsorship, media tie-ins and product placement, which may be more influential.

We particularly need to consider the use of new digital media. One apparent consequence of the new regulations on television advertising to children is that marketers are increasingly diverting their efforts online. They are using a whole range of new techniques such as branded environments, advergames, mobile and viral marketing, and behavioural profiling. As yet, very little is known about how children respond to these things, and the effects they may have.

However, we also need to look beyond marketing. The distribution, availability and pricing of particular types of food may represent a much more important constraint on diets, especially in low-income families. We need to look at children's and families' food practices in context, rather than studying the influence of advertising or marketing in isolation. We also need to explore the complex, and often quite contradictory, emotional and cultural meanings attached to food.

All this has implications for health promotion as well. If advertising is not the all-powerful 'magic bullet' some imagine it to be, equally it would be wrong to expect social marketing campaigns – however attractive and well-funded – to bring about radical changes in children's behaviour. We need to understand much more about the complexity of factors that are involved in food practices – and, not least in this case, what causes people to continue to consume things that they know are 'bad' for them.

Given the significance of this issue in terms of social policy, two further points should be emphasised here. First, the lack of convincing proof about the causal effects of marketing does not in itself mean that such effects do not exist. In this case, it simply suggests that we are dealing with complex issues with multiple causes, and that we need appropriately complex ways of understanding and addressing them.

Second, the fact that the effects of marketing may be much smaller than other influences does not in itself imply that nothing can or should be done about them. Some potential causes may be much easier to address at a policy level than others. Even so, it is vital to consider the potential unintended consequences of increasing regulation, and to balance the costs against the potential benefits. ■

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Family food

Childhood choices



'Good parenting' is a class act, argues WENDY WILLIS.

Being part of a family, in whatever form that takes, influences what all of us eat. Social scientific research was fairly slow to start exploring this topic, and for some time children were perceived as being the passive receivers of food, with parents and other care-givers seen as the active agents in the relationship. The most insightful and interesting research treats children on a par with adults, in terms of investigating how, when, why and what food is eaten and negotiated over in the messy context that is the family.

Parents influence children's eating habits partly because they transmit habitual, mundane practices to their offspring. We all eat what we are used to eating and it is the rare parent who would pass on a completely different food ethos to their children. Eating habits are very often a sign of a family's social background, and food consumption reflects what sociologist Bourdieu called 'distinctions of taste'. We learn to eat like our family eats and, because many of us live and work around people similar to us, this continues to support these ingrained habits.

This relates to whether we prefer to eat at a table, eat alone or with others, with or without cutlery, cook 'from scratch' or pop food into the microwave. Children learn what is and isn't tolerable to their parents from a young age and, although many try to push the boundaries, particularly as they become teenagers, the boundaries are still only redefined within limits that are acceptable to parents.

These limits very much reflect broader ideologies about parenting, identity and family life. Ideologies become manifest through food and eating practices, but could equally be revealed through parents' and children's perspectives on, for example, schooling or physical activity. As children often become living trophies, as Susan Honeyman has termed them, transmitting ideals and expecting children to eat in a particular way reflects back onto parents and the way they are raising their sons and daughters.

Middle class parents, for instance, often prioritise their children's long term health and therefore push home the

need for children to eat breakfast and consume vegetables (regardless of whether a child likes them) and so on. Parents from lower social class groups often prioritise helping their children to achieve autonomy at an earlier age – this means expecting them to make some of their own food choices and, as they become teenagers, to prepare or acquire food.

This does not mean that lower social class parents do not care about long term dietary health, but that very often they have other, more pressing issues to deal with on an ongoing basis (like keeping children safe in unsafe neighbourhoods; budgeting on a lower income; looking for/sustaining employment). In terms of a hierarchy of needs, eating a healthy diet gets pushed down the list of priorities for 'good parenting' among many lower social class families. There are different principles at work here, rather than better or worse principles. This is an important distinction that policy makers often fail adequately to take on board.

Children themselves are often savvy eaters and consumers. Even from a very early age, children learn to shape how, when and what they are fed. Babies learn to respond to social cues, like crying to be fed when other family members are sitting down to eat, and they soon learn how to manipulate their parents to give them food. As children get older, their preferences often shape what food is bought or served, whether this is when children eat without their parents or together as a family. Many parents are prepared to produce variations within a meal to ensure that everyone gets to eat what they like and to ensure that a 'family dinner' is possible. Allison James and colleagues, for example, cite many examples of this kind of compromise, including a mother who cooks 'hot, middling and cool' versions of a curry to keep everyone happy and fed.

Accommodating children's preferences and tastes can mean extra domestic labour and sometimes an increased cost, but many families – even those on a lower income and those with long working hours – are often prepared to do this on a regular (several nights a week) basis. This again, however, is often indicative of ideologies about a child's place within the family. Some parents refuse to make 'different' food and children have to eat what their parents eat. Work by Helen Mavoa, with adolescents from different socio-cultural groups, suggests these different practices reflect deep rooted beliefs about adult-child hierarchies and the need to 'do' family through everyone eating the same food.

Refusing to eat food prepared by one parent but not by the other; refusing to sit and eat with siblings or step-siblings; 'secretly' eating fast food or sweets or other foods that



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parents disapprove of; or being 'greedy' are powerful ways for children to create conflict or tension within the family, whether deliberately or inadvertently. The act of eating goes far beyond the physiological imperative but this seems particularly evident in a family setting. Knowing which eating practices will upset parents illustrates the way that children absorb the implicit meaning that such habits hold – they know the 'rules of the game' and they are not afraid to get a red card to make a point! One teenage girl that I interviewed some years ago, for example, would eat chicken if her mother cooked it but not if her father did – she claimed there was something 'wrong' with the meat he cooked. She was perhaps not aware that she also described to me her difficult relationship with her father and a sense of closeness to her mother.

A relatively recent development has seen food-related initiatives and social marketing campaigns that are targeted directly at influencing children in families. Childhood has become increasingly commodified, with marketers trying to hook children, even very young ones, with products that appeal to them directly.

It was perhaps only a matter of time before non-brand-related marketing reached out to younger people with the aim of influencing the whole family. The School Food Trust 'Lets Get Cooking' campaign, for example, aims to teach cooking skills to children and hopes that children will replicate the recipes they learn back at home. Change4Life, the government initiated healthy living campaign to get people to 'eat well and move

more' has included television advertisements advising children about 'me size' portions and reasons they should aim to cut fat consumption.

Whilst it is a positive move to acknowledge children's agency, age-appropriate autonomy and active roles within the family environment, there are issues that are not being addressed here. One is the lack of evidence for improving children's health through direct targeting. There is little evidence, for example, that getting children to cook will improve their diet or health or pass on cooking skills to their families. Secondly, it is unfair and immoral to target children without teaching them, from a very early age, the critical reasoning skills necessary for them to learn how to evaluate the veracity of what adults outside the family are telling (or selling) them. This becomes even more important when government is planning to hand over campaigns like Change4Life wholly to the private sector. Thirdly, children live in families (ideally) for a reason – because they need nurturing to adulthood and are too young to take full responsibility for their everyday lives and actions. Let's teach children about sustainable food systems, preparing and eating tasty food and dietary health but let's do so in consultation and partnership with their families rather than seeing them as 'fair game'.

A fully referenced version of this article is available from info@foodethicscouncil.org.

Wendy Wills leads the British Sociological Association's Food Study Group and is a Senior Research Fellow at the University of Hertfordshire.

Learning for a change



HETAN SHAH finds some sustainable success stories.

A recent survey by the National Trust of a thousand children aged 8-12 years revealed the lengths they go to avoid eating their greens: 42% hide them under other food on their plate; 30% throw them in the bin when no one is looking; 23% sneak them on to someone else's plate; and 17% feed them to the family pet.

The same survey showed that 72% of children in the UK would like their own space to grow fruit and vegetables and, outside London, 63% of children would rather eat fruit and vegetables they have grown themselves than buy them from a supermarket. This reveals a desire amongst young people to engage with the food system on their own terms. So what is going on in schools to develop this interest, and how might policy support the pioneering work that is going on?

There has been an increased interest among some schools over recent years in bringing issues of sustainability and social justice into the curriculum, and the food system is a critical part of this. The best known example relating to food is the work of Incredible Edible Todmorden. This community based project now involves every local school in Todmorden. Every school has a small 'growing boat', full of earth, where they grow food, and all are developing other food related projects – for example Ferney Lee Primary is making available 26 raised growing beds for community use – building real links between the school and local community.

Learning about food from a social justice perspective can also be a powerful motivator for young people to engage with the food system. In Liverpool, for example, a number of young people were inspired by learning about Fairtrade, with the support of a local charity Liverpool World Centre. These young people used their school councils to drive through change in school procurement processes to ensure more Fairtrade products were stocked in the school. They also engaged in peer-mentoring of young people who were councillors in other schools, to ensure that the approach was taken up more widely. Ultimately more than 40 schools were involved.

How does learning about food contribute to education for sustainable development and wider consideration of our

relationship to the food system? Learning is a complex process, and it is difficult to understand the relationship between young people's exposure to global issues and their ability and inclination to respond to global challenges both now and in the future. The evidence does suggest, however, that when young people are given the opportunities to learn about food and sustainability, it helps them make the connections to their own lives and enables them to rethink their relationship with the food system. For example, the Royal Horticultural Society's Campaign for School Gardening has just been evaluated, giving evidence that involving pupils in school gardening encourages them to learn about food and sustainability, and leads to a wide range of positive outcomes, including an increased awareness of the seasons, understanding of food production and a positive attitude to healthy food choices. Similarly, in a study of 15 schools engaged in sustainability initiatives for WWF, the young people were able to explain their learning about sustainability in terms of healthy lifestyles, saving energy, and recycling, and were able to relate this to their personal actions and sense of responsibility.

What works?

What are the best schools doing? Research by Ofsted concluded that the most successful schools embed sustainability right across the curriculum, as well as through special events and activities, and these take place inside and outside the classroom. Food and sustainability can be brought out across most curriculum subjects – it is not just the purview of geography.

Examples like the Liverpool Fairtrade initiative show that schools which take a participatory approach, ensuring that young people get a voice and drive change, tend to be more successful.

Fostering critical thinking is key too. It is easy to lapse into telling young people what to think or do, whether about food or other issues. What happens in schools can often focus on promoting 'better' behaviours such as buying and eating local produce. This is necessary but not sufficient – in a learning environment pupils need also to develop their own critical understanding of the issues. Education is not just about inculcating values and behaviours – it is about developing empowerment and critical learning. We face complex choices and there are not necessarily easy answers. Do I grow my own, buy Fairtrade, or buy organic or local? In the long run we will only move towards sustainability and a sustainable food system if we develop our capacity to think, challenge and change ourselves and the world around us.

The most successful schools embed sustainability right across the curriculum



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At St Gregory's Catholic Comprehensive school in Kent, the food tech department challenge students to consider the sourcing of the ingredients they use. Where do the different elements of the dish they are making come from? What are food miles? Which ingredients can they source locally, and what are the pros and cons of this? What are the different ways food waste can be disposed of? Through educational opportunities like this, young people learn for change.

It is important to avoid the trap of unquestioningly promoting a set of agendas for individual change and moral refrains ('be responsible; buy local food; feel bad when you fly'). Change is political, and politics needs an analysis of the roles of all different actors – government, business, NGOs and individuals. A systemic analysis also seeks to try and understand the incentives within the system – why do people act as they do, and what needs to be done to help create behaviour change? For example in relation to food, telling individuals to change ('eat healthy; buy organic') may have less impact than helping young people understand the food system, and the methods of advocacy they might use to change it.

What next?

The work that is going on in schools around food, sustainability and global issues fits into a number of education policy initiatives, including a 'global and sustainable development' dimension running across all secondary subjects; 'learning outside the classroom' and 'Sustainable Schools' (both of which do what they say on the tin!). However, much of the good work that has happened has been because of the passion of individual teachers and head teachers rather than because of government policy. Sustainable Schools has not been well-resourced or particularly high on the agenda – it is largely seen as an add-on for schools.

It is not yet clear what the new government's approach will be in this area. Our view is that two things are key. The first is that policymakers need to have a bold vision which puts education for a just and sustainable world at the heart of plans for schools. Schools do take their lead from policymakers and unless they give the sustainable schools agenda a green light, it will tend to be overlooked by everyone but the enthusiasts. We should be clear that this does not mean throwing out traditional subjects, but ensuring that each uses the lens of their discipline to consider sustainability issues. Science, geography, history, maths, design and technology, citizenship and economics all have important perspectives to contribute to sustainability and – specifically – to the food system.

Secondly, there is a need to provide greater levels of support to teachers around sustainability – including in their initial training – because many lack confidence in this area. NGOs have an important role to play here – they can provide support to schools on complex sustainability agendas.

By giving young people direct experience of growing the food they eat, we can have a real impact on their capabilities to assess critically what a sustainable food system would look like and to advocate for sustainable food. Pioneering schools are already doing just this; we now need the new government to set out a bold vision in this area, and to support every teacher to have the confidence to lead on sustainability. ■

A fully referenced version of this article is available from info@foodethicscouncil.org.

Hetan Shah is the Chief Executive of the DEA, and has written and spoken extensively on a wide range of topics relating to sustainable development and social justice.

What has experience taught you about food and young people?



Patti Rundall has worked for nearly 20 years with Baby Milk Action and the global network IBFAN, campaigning for effective controls on the marketing and labelling of breastmilk substitutes.

As Jean Giraudoux (1882-1944) once said "The secret of success is sincerity. Once you can fake that you've got it made."

An ambition of some of the world's largest and most irresponsible food corporations is to gain the trust of children and their parents, and many are busy representing themselves as trustworthy and responsible providers not only of healthy foods but of nutrition education. Once gained, this trust has a number of spin-offs which benefit companies hugely – not least the notion that it's safe to allow companies to regulate themselves. This is a notion our new coalition government is keen to espouse as they open the door ever wider to inappropriate sponsors of education.

Indeed the \$31 billion infant feeding industry has been built on such trust and the lead company Nestlé, one of the most boycotted companies on the planet, has perfected this art. Nestlé Chairman Peter Brabeck-Letmathe told shareholders in April 2010 that it was unnecessary to tie corporations up in a regulatory straitjacket because Nestlé had already adopted sound principles and core values!

Food industry-sponsored education materials and facilities present an even more complex problem than straightforward advertising because they blur the boundaries between advertising, marketing and education. Through such sponsorship companies can:

- Distort curricula in favour of business interests.
- Confuse and mislead children about the safety and nutritional value of novel/reformulated ingredients.
- Divert attention from the company's aggressive marketing of unhealthy foods.
- Involve potential critics in partnerships and so discourage whistleblowing.
- Discourage open debate about sponsors.
- Undermine public health messages.
- Show evidence of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR).
- 'Engineer consent' for actions which are anti-social and which harm sustainable development, the environment and human survival.

At the spring Tory conference in February I asked Michael Gove how he was going to stop such companies harming child health through involvement in education. He answered: "I have no idea"!

Baby Milk Action's education pack, 'Seeing through the Spin, Public Relations in the Global Economy' was created to help develop students' critical faculties and to provide them with the tools they need to deconstruct the many subtle PR messages they receive. See: www.babymilkaction.org/spin and info.babymilkaction.org/node/156



David Edwards is Director of Let's Get Cooking, a national network of school-based healthy cooking clubs for children, parents and the wider community, led by the School Food Trust and supported by a £20 million grant from the Big Lottery Fund. www.letsgetcooking.org.uk

Through our national network of nearly 4,000 school-based Let's Get Cooking clubs for children and parents, we know that children have a huge influence on what is eaten in the home. By learning to cook healthy family meals in a fun environment, children and young people are getting excited about food. They are trying something new and using 'positive pester power' to encourage their families to get cooking too. It really does have an impact on eating habits; our research has shown that more than half of club members (59%) eat a healthier diet after being involved.

So far, more than 500,000 people have developed their cooking skills through Let's Get Cooking with 90% of club members cooking again at home and sharing their new cooking skills with at least one other person. Schools tell us that children are nagging their parents to buy new kinds of fruit after they have made fruit smoothies or that they brag about what they cooked for dinner at home with their families the night before. Our young club members are the catalyst for inspiring whole communities to cook and learn about food, as each club holds regular community cooking events ranging from 'bring and share' picnics to curry buffets and family 'cook-along' sessions. Each year, as part of our 'Cookathon' competition, we challenge clubs to get as many people as possible to cook a healthy dish on the same day and, this year, more than 50,000 people took part.

I believe teaching children to cook is a really effective way to inspire families to eat a healthy balanced diet.



Chloe Palmerfield, Stacey Pope and Laura McCorry are all 12 years old and in Year 7 at Four Dwellings High School in Birmingham, a Food for Life Partnership school.

Chloe: We've been cooking in school in Food Technology and Science, and learning about the science of food. Cooking helps you find out what ingredients go into the food you eat. When I get older I will definitely cook from scratch. When you've cooked something yourself you feel proud and tastes nicer. You don't feel that when you eat ready meals.

Laura: I decided to join the Chicken Garden (the school keeps chicken, geese, ducks and turkeys) because I thought it would be good fun to help collect the eggs. I've learned how the eggs are formed and how they're laid and what the difference is between a goose and duck egg. Before I didn't even know that ducks and turkeys could lay eggs. I used to love eating eggs, but now I know it could be a chicken's life, I'm not so keen. We have used eggs from the Chicken Garden in Food Technology and I have brought some home too that my mum wanted to cook.

Stacey: We dug a bed up in the school allotment and harvested some beetroots and corn that we were allowed to take home. Before I went to the allotment I didn't know where beetroots and corn came from and I had never tasted beetroot before, but I liked it. I now grow tomatoes and strawberries at home. In the future I want to get a little greenhouse and grow some of my own food. It's nice to grow your own. It makes you feel proud and it also tastes better. For example, strawberries you grow yourself are much sweeter. I think most people would like growing because they would enjoy it and feel proud – it's a really good experience.



Tony Cooke is Government Relations Director at Sodexo, a company which serves over a million meals a day in UK and Ireland, including in schools, hospitals and army barracks.

From a young age, children are savvy consumers.

My eight year-old son could write a thesis on which console has the sharpest graphics or on which dinghy is the best value. He's already nobody's fool and, whilst fully capable of rational thought, he's also perfectly capable of irrational impulse; begging for an inflatable hammer at the fairground.

He is a child after all – and so he is with food.

Thanks to recent campaigns, all of which Sodexo has enthusiastically supported, his generation are more food literate than any before; he knows about GDAs, about obesity and diet-related illnesses. He can recognise a carrot by its foliage.

He's got the message, but does this stop him begging for chocolate after swimming? Of course not.

Is he doomed to dietary decline? Of course not.

By the time he's an adult, he will expect to take personal responsibility for his healthcare and will know the price for not doing so. He will become a self-preservationist and will have stopped begging for chocolate... and inflatable hammers!

If the food industry is to adapt to his generation and make products that appeal to him, they will need to realise that he can't be fooled and will inhabit a world that's personalised around him. He will expect products and services to do the same. Above all, he will define himself by his impact on the world, rather than the brands he consumes.

Have faith in our children. They will be smarter consumers than we are.



Sam Moody started his career in the kitchen at 16 and now works as Head Chef at the Bath Priory Hotel.

I have always had a love for food, from eating it to cooking it, and there is nothing I wouldn't try. I was a very lucky child, born into a family of cooks and gardeners, freshly grown vegetables were picked ready for the kitchen. I grew up with a wide appreciation for fresh food and flavours and my Dad could get any one of my "I Don't Like That" friends to eat anything he served.

My love of food led to my career choice and now aged 25 I am proud to be Head Chef at the Bath Priory Hotel. To get to this position I have worked with some great chefs, including Michael Caines. One mantra they all follow is the importance of food quality, fresh, local and sustainable. Cooking good food is my life, the ingredients we use are the best and nothing that is less than perfect will leave the kitchen. I am young, keen and at the start of my career, I am passionate about what I do and love creating really good food – but I do sometimes wonder who we will be cooking for in 20 years.

Today's youngsters are in danger of becoming used to bland flavours and poor quality, heavily salted, processed food. Eating is no longer an experience, just a way of refuelling. The palette is very sensitive and learns to taste as you eat a wide range of foods - the more variety you enjoy the larger your memory bank of flavours becomes. What concerns me is if we have a generation fed on flavourless reclaimed meats, over-cooked bland vegetables and additive-laden fruit squash drinks, they will never be able to truly enjoy a well-cooked meal and all of nature's delicate flavours.

'Value' now means cheap, computer games are more important than eating well, and celebrity culture and fad diets do little to reinforce respect for good food. All combined, we really are in danger of raising an unhealthy generation. Life is far too short not to be enjoying it to the full. Kids today need to rediscover fresh air and more importantly, good, well-cooked food.

What has experience taught you about food and young people?



Lee Dawson, 16, attends St. Wilfrid's Catholic High School in West Yorkshire, a Food for Life Partnership School.

'Food culture' is something that affects every aspect of a person's life – especially if you are of schooling age. Over the past few decades, the way in which young people are fed within our schools has become almost disastrous, as school caterers seem to have lost their way on the path to health, nutrition and sustainability where school dinners are concerned. However, due to the work and initiative of the Food for Life Partnership, things are beginning to change for the better. As young people, we are encouraged by this organisation to face such problems directly, in order to improve the effect on the environment and ourselves.

Our school, St. Wilfrid's Catholic High in West Yorkshire, was chosen by the Food for Life Partnership to be the 'Flagship School' in our region. With advice and guidance, St. Wilfrid's has now achieved something that can only be described as an astounding accomplishment in such a short space of time.

As a result of this, we were given the task of documenting our achievements within the school – and local community – by creating a short film (www.youtube.com/watch?v=X8Uy4PfxTzM). Ranging from seeking local and organic suppliers, to improving the way in which we as students eat our meals, a student and teacher action group has changed the way we think about food forever. The film would show others how easily this can be done.

We also went to a Food for Life Partnership Student Summit in Bristol – at which pupils of age 14-16 came from every corner of the country. Themed 'You Food', the summit aimed to spread the message that the food culture within every school can be perfected, with global issues in mind. We enjoyed discussions and workshops on concerns such as the amount of oil used in the food chain and the effects on animals when 'intensively farmed'. By the end of the summit, the students had developed a 'manifesto' on what needs to be done and in what order. This was then presented to the Government, to tackle the school food crisis directly.

The objectives of the summit were shown to be realistic and achievable, through St. Wilfrid's short film. Hopefully, as a consequence, other learning communities can be encouraged and enthused by the Partnership as were we.



Professor **Judith Buttriss** became Director General of the British Nutrition Foundation (BNF) in 2007, having been BNF's Science Director for almost 10 years. She is a Registered Public Health Nutritionist and a member of Defra's Family Food committee.

Do children get a bad press? We hear a lot about 'pester power' but usually in a negative sense. Older children, especially, can influence their peers and younger children, and children have the potential to shape the food decisions made at home for the better. What can be done to harness children's natural curiosity, enthusiasm and interest in the environment to develop a generation of young ambassadors for healthy food choices?

In primary schools around the UK, teachers are doing a great job getting groups of children to grow, cook and taste food together, building their confidence and making the naturally more timid ones become more adventurous. Understanding where food comes from and having some basic food skills and food knowledge are crucial acquisitions for children and young people.

There is untapped potential for children to be conduits between the classroom and home, and lots of free resources to provide information about food and health and encourage healthy eating habits. At www.foodfactoflife.org.uk we provide an extensive range of resources for children and young people, linked to the school curriculum, to help empower them to make informed healthy choices. Building on the FSA's Core Food Competences, a set of resources called food route is available from www.food.gov.uk/healthiereating/nutritionschools/teachingtools/foodroute, and a 'Food Passport' has been produced (www.foodinschools.org) to convey to parents what their children know about food and can do safely in the kitchen. We hope this initiative will encourage reluctant parents to let children transfer their new-found culinary skills and enthusiasm about food to the family kitchen!

MAKING A DIFFERENCE

Eat your greens

The impact of free fruit and veg in schools



JANET CADE and CHARLOTTE EVANS find it takes more than freebies to change what kids eat.

Plenty of evidence exists to show that young people do not consume enough fruit and vegetables compared to the national recommendation of five portions per day. The National Diet and Nutrition Survey of 4-18 year olds found that one in five young people ate no fruit, and three out of five ate no leafy green vegetables during a usual week. The most recent National Diet and Nutrition Survey showed that only 15% of 11-18 year olds were consuming 5 or more portions of fruit and vegetables per day. Children from households with lower incomes also had lower intakes of fruit and fruit juice than the general population.

Improving poor diet in childhood is important due to its probable link to poor health in later life. Direct evidence of associations between childhood diet and adult non-communicable disease risk is scant at present. However, there is strong evidence that improvements in levels of fats, sugars, sodium, fruits and vegetables in young people lead to short term health improvements such as a reduction in the prevalence of obesity and improvements in blood pressure, lipid profile and insulin resistance.

In the long term, these improvements are proven to reduce the risk of developing cardiovascular disease, diabetes and certain cancers. Recent reports from the World Health Organization, World Cancer Research Fund and Foresight clarify the risks of poor diet and disease, and encourage governments throughout the world to look at ways of improving the quality of people's diets. There is convincing evidence that a low intake of fruit and vegetables is a risk factor for cardiovascular disease and cancer later in life. Tackling these diseases is a government priority, as they account for 60% of all early deaths in England. Apart from a reduction in smoking, an increase in fruit and vegetable consumption is considered the most effective strategy for reducing the risk of cardiovascular disease and cancer.

In order to address some of the dietary and health issues outlined above, a national 5 A DAY programme has been established over recent years to raise awareness of the health benefits of eating more fruit and vegetables. One aspect of the 5 A DAY programme is the School Fruit and Vegetable Scheme (SFVS), to address children's low intakes of fruit and vegetables. The SFVS is the largest-scale intervention in English children's diets since the introduction of free school milk in 1946. Since November 2004, a free piece of fruit or vegetable has been provided to children aged four to six years

on each school day. The scheme aims to distribute 440 million pieces of fruit and vegetables each year to over two million children in 18,000 schools. The scheme cost £43 million to run last year alone.

Has the scheme worked?

An evaluation of the scheme found small positive changes associated with fruit intake in young children, but intakes waned over time. Intakes initially increased by about half a portion/day. However, once children were no longer eligible for the free fruit their intakes dropped back to previous levels. There was also evidence that children's intake of fruit and vegetables declined at home at the same time as it increased at school. This is of particular concern since a stated aim of the 5 A DAY school scheme is 'to increase awareness of the importance of eating fruit and vegetables, encouraging healthy eating habits that can be carried into later life'.

If the impact of the scheme is not reaching into the home then other approaches may be needed. It may be that parents, knowing that their child was receiving a free piece of fruit at school, relaxed their vigilance, resulting in lower intakes of fruit at home. In addition, although large in scale, the SFVS only constitutes a small intervention in a child's total diet. To have a greater impact on fruit and vegetable intake other mealtime opportunities such as school dinners, packed lunches and even meals eaten at home should be targeted.

Provision of free fruit to children in other countries (Norway, Netherlands, Denmark, New Zealand) has also shown small increases in intakes, but only of fruit. Other research has suggested that school-based nutrition programmes can moderately increase fruit and vegetable intake.

However, studies which showed a large increase in overall intake used highly intensive interventions with special resource teachers or an outside person to implement the activities, suggesting that these would be interventions that could not be rolled out nationally at a reasonable cost. Results were not differentiated into school and home intakes, but children were eating more fruit on school days than non-school days.

Achieving population-level behaviour change requires long-term commitment and resource. The provision of free fruit and vegetables to young children at school cannot be the only way to improve intakes. This activity needs to be backed up by school policies and family-based education. In addition, supermarkets and food manufacturers should be incentivised to ensure that fruit and vegetables are readily available for all sectors of the population at a reasonable cost.

Professor Janet Cade and Dr Charlotte Evans are in the Nutritional Epidemiology Group at the University of Leeds.

Community based food work

The Brighton & Hove Food Partnership



VIC BORRILL describes the partnership's whole city approach, working with children and adults.

We know the problems – spiralling childhood obesity, increased costs both financial and personal as a result of diet-related illnesses in adults, and a food system that is a major contributor to global warming and the destruction of ecosystems. And yet, knowingly or otherwise, the majority of people continue to consume and throw away food in a manner which exacerbates these problems.

The Brighton & Hove Food Partnership believes that healthy people make a healthy city and that all residents should be able to enjoy food that is nutritious and produced in ways that respect the environment, animals and people. In particular we work in communities to increase understanding of the links between food and health, we provide opportunities for adults and children to learn to cook and grow food, and we work towards better access to sustainably produced food.

Although Brighton & Hove sits in the affluent south east, the city is one of contrasts, with clear areas of deprivation. The city experiences wide health inequalities with a difference in life expectancy of ten years between the most and least deprived areas. Figures for mental ill health are high, with suicide rates well above the national average. Fourteen of our local areas fall within the 10% most deprived in England and four fall within the 3% most deprived. Rankings of deprivation for employment, health and education, skills and training are particularly poor. In addition, the city has one of the largest ecological footprints in the country, with 18% of it attributed to how we produce, distribute and consume our food.

In 2006, Brighton & Hove was the first city to produce a Food Strategy, Spade to Spoon. This document has provided a framework for delivery and enabled resources to be passed to the Food Partnership and others to drive forward actions within it.

We recognise that in order to meet the dual challenges of diet-related ill health and the environmental impact of food production there will need to be a considerable change in the way we eat. Our approach is about getting out and about around our city, sharing knowledge, inspiring people to make changes and to eat in ways that are healthy, affordable and sustainable. Because we are funded to deliver programmes that focus on the links between food and the environment and food and health, we are able to draw on both areas of knowledge.

We take a development work approach so, rather than trying to do everything ourselves, we work to improve the food knowledge of others in the city. For example, there are a lot of people who are not confident in their ability to cook using affordable ingredients but it would not be practical for us to try to meet this need. Instead, we have developed a programme called Cookability which trains people to become community cookery leaders. Teaching people the basics around nutrition, group skills and food hygiene, and providing a range of easy to read recipes, this work is about increasing the number of people in communities and organisations that can teach others to cook. We then support the Cookability Graduates in their work.

Sue is a youth worker for Turnerland Youth Club in an area of the city where there are high numbers of young people not in education or employment. She completed Cookability and now runs a weekly food and health group for vulnerable young women. Cooking from scratch gives the

young women confidence and practical skills, and the sessions give Sue a chance to talk to them about their lives.

Learning to cook is a fundamental life skill. I learnt at school – something that I am extremely grateful for. Starting with fruit salad moving to pastry and bread via soups and stews, the skills I'd learnt by the time I was 16 I still use today. We know that most schools cannot offer ongoing cookery classes because of timetable pressures. In partnership with the Healthy Living Centre in East Brighton we run Sticky Fingers. This is a project funded by NHS Brighton & Hove which works with seven primary schools in deprived areas of the city to encourage young people to take an interest in where their food comes from through growing, picking and cooking. The project supports schools to grow food either by setting up allotments on their own land or by linking them with local projects. The approach taken is hands-on, with children involved at all stages – making compost, planting seeds, harvesting and cooking.

The experience for children of picking and then eating food is incredible



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Consistent feedback is that the experience for children of picking and then eating food is incredible. By sharing a worker across the schools the scheme provides more than what can be offered if individual schools tried to run their own programmes.

As the teacher at Whitehawk Primary School says, "Although the children would receive cookery classes once or twice a year, the regular attendance of the worker in the school means that gardening and cookery activities are now one day a week and have become part of the everyday school experience. The teachers feed back that what the children have learnt during their cooking and growing experience gets brought back into lessons."

Our work is also about helping people to understand the environmental impact of what they eat. Harvest Brighton & Hove is a Big Lottery funded project which aims to help more people grow their own food. We have a demonstration vegetable garden in a central park, run training courses and work to find more land for food growing. Whilst we are not expecting everyone to become self sufficient, we know that once people have tried growing some of their own food, at home, school or in a community, their respect for food increases. This is a hook on which we can encourage people to make other changes, for example, in what they buy or how much food they throw away.

We are grateful we have a Primary Care Trust and Council that recognise that investing in food work now is important in preventing diet-related ill health later – and long may that continue! Our relationship with them is crucial in determining who we should be targeting. An element of the city's work to





reduce and prevent obesity amongst adults and children takes a community-based approach. We are commissioned to deliver a series of programmes across the city for adults and children who are above their ideal weight. For young people and their families, this is the nationally recognised MEND programme, while for adults we have developed targeted group and one-to-one sessions. We also deliver sessions about healthy weight with parents and teachers and work closely with children's centres to reach new parents.

We use consistent teaching materials aimed at increasing knowledge and supporting behaviour change. An example of how this work improves knowledge around food and health is the food label reading lessons which consistently receive positive feedback.

People are very confused:

- Average daily amount (for whom)?
- How much fat (and is there such a thing as good fat and bad fat)?
- How much sugar should there be in this health bar?
- What do all of the different colours on the packets mean?

Our workshops look at examples of food labels, cover common problems such as a portion size, talk about how to compare items and what to look out for. While nutritional labelling only forms a small part of the way in which people shop, as the Food Ethics Council's Food Justice report rightly points out, we know that for people who need to lose weight for health reasons or those shopping for vulnerable people, understanding what is in the food being sold is crucial.

Government campaigns have an important role to play in educating people and, where available, we use nationally recognised materials in our sessions, for example salt reduction

or 5 A DAY, the best example being the recent Change4Life campaign. Social marketing campaigns such as these give us recognised branded materials and a language which we can use in our face to face work. For example, the Change4Life Portion Swaps or Drink Swaps are advice that we would have been giving anyway but, by using the branded materials which are more visible due to advertising on television and use by GP surgeries and schools, it reinforces our message.

I was asked to give examples of how the Food Partnership uses food as a tool to help adults and children make changes that will affect their health and that of the environment. In brief, we go out into communities and use face to face work to inspire people to think about what they eat, and support them to make changes that will benefit their health and the environment. ■

If you want to know more about the work of the BHFP please visit www.bhfood.org.uk and www.harvest-bh.org.uk

Vic Borrill has been the Director of the Brighton & Hove Food Partnership since 2008.



Fit for the future

The Food for Life Partnership



RIKKE BRUNTSE-DAHL
reports on a programme reaching
thousands of schools.

"The Food for Life Partnership is about mending our broken food culture by inspiring the next generation to care about what they eat. We learn how the food we eat impacts on our health, the health of our planet and animal welfare by growing it, cooking it, eating it and visiting farms."

Emma Noble, Food for Life Partnership

A healthy, sustainable food culture will not just appear out of nowhere. While Health Minister Andrew Lansley was wrong when he stated earlier this year that the 'Jamie Oliver effect' will not work in tackling obesity, he was completely right when he said that 'nothing would work unless people's behaviour changed'.

To mend the UK's broken food culture, we need to change the way we view food and consequently the way we eat. This kind of change requires knowledge of food and farming systems as well as the skills to grow and cook our own food.

The 'Jamie Oliver effect' was the catalyst for real change across the country and paved the way for programmes like the lottery-funded Food for Life Partnership.

Inspired by famous dinner lady Jeanette Orrey, who also inspired Jamie Oliver to launch his school dinner campaign, the Soil Association founded the Food for Life campaign in 2003 to help schools source fresh, local and organic produce and give pupils the chance to visit farms to see how their food is produced.

As the school dinner campaign developed it became increasingly clear that food education was needed to make sure that the next generation not only eat well at school, but also take the principles of a healthy food culture with them into adulthood.

The Soil Association therefore joined forces with three other food-focused charities, Garden Organic, the Focus on Food Campaign and the Health Education Trust. Together they formed the Food for Life Partnership, which is funded from 2007 - 11 through a £16.9 million grant from the Big Lottery Fund Wellbeing Programme.

The programme currently works with more than 2,500 schools to get healthier and more sustainable school dinners on the menu, and to give children the opportunity to take responsibility for their own health through practical food education like growing, cooking and visiting farms.

Through an awards scheme, the Food for Life Partnership gives schools a framework for linking school meals, growing, cooking, farm visits and community engagement. Dedicated teams across England offer hands-on support to school staff, who are creating school gardens or cooking clubs, caterers working to improve school meals and farmers who want to host educational visits.

In reality this means that schools using the Food for Life Partnership programme and progressing through Bronze, Silver and Gold awards, will go on a journey to develop all aspects of good food culture within their school and their local community.

When schools reach Bronze they serve seasonal school meals that are at least 75% freshly prepared by a well-trained school catering team. School meals are a part of a vital education service. By putting fresh, local, seasonal and organic food on the school menu, children get to understand the link between what they learn about healthy eating and what they actually eat. They also grow up with the expectation that food should be freshly prepared and of high quality, which is a crucial step towards creating a sustainable food system.



Where it all began: Jeanette Orrey with children at St Peter's Primary School, Nottingham. Copyright Food for Life Partnership

Pupils and parents are involved in planning improvements to school menus and the dining experience via a School Nutrition Action Group, boosting school meal take-up. Every pupil has the opportunity to visit a farm during his or her time at school, and take part in cooking and food growing.

Growing food organically at school gives pupils the opportunity to learn about where their fruit and vegetables come from. Young people always show far more enthusiasm for eating food that they have grown and nurtured from a seed or plant themselves. As pupils develop their growing skills they will become more aware of fruit and vegetables that can be grown seasonally in this country. And by learning how to garden organically they will begin to respect and appreciate the environment that surrounds them. Food for Life Partnership schools across the country have been amazingly creative with their growing activities. Some grow in pots using scarce available space, some have dug up parts of the playground or unused areas within the school, while others have taken on allotments.

Schools that achieve the Silver award serve school meals on plates, not flight trays, and serve a range of locally sourced and organic items. Serving meals on plates and using real crockery is part of improving the 'dining room experience'. Jeanette Orrey realised many years ago that improving children's experience in the dining room is very important in laying the foundation for a good food culture in the future. Along with serving freshly prepared, local, seasonal and organic meals, pleasant surroundings and a focus on manners and developing social skills are setting the scene for a good school food culture. This, we believe, will stay with pupils into adulthood.

Silver schools also have cooking clubs, and pupils get to cook with and eat the produce grown in the school growing area. Cooking is a basic life skill and knowing how to cook a meal from scratch using fresh produce is an absolute necessity to realise a sustainable food future where we can feed ourselves and our families. Besides teaching children an invaluable life skill, cooking in school can easily be linked into the curriculum. Many Food for Life Partnership schools have organised clubs where parents can join and cook with their children. At this stage on the journey, parents and the wider community also get involved in food education via food-themed events such as a farmers market at the school.

When schools reach Gold, they are hubs of good food culture in their community, actively involving parents and community groups in cooking and growing activity. One of the most important aspects of the Food for Life Partnership is that the impact is not just felt within the school gates, but spread way beyond. As Jeanette Orrey says: "Food is so much more

powerful than many of us realise and what happens in the school has a huge impact on the local community."

Schools are still hubs in their local communities and as such they are ideal for spreading good food culture to parents and community organisations, and they also help re-establish the all-important connection between people and producers in local communities.

At Gold level, on top of school meals being freshly prepared they are also 50% local and 30% organic. In addition, more than 70% of pupils will be choosing to eat school meals. Every pupil learns to cook and has the opportunity to grow food, and groups of pupils are actively involved in the life of a local farm.

Knowing how food is produced – or could be produced – empowers children to grow up making the right food choices. Besides growing their own organic vegetables, visiting farms is a superb way of learning about food production. Through the Food for Life Partnership, schools set up a link with a local organic farm, which the pupils visit throughout the year and thereby experience seasonal food production for themselves.

School farm visits help educate future consumers as well as their parents. A recent study by Kingston University found that 54% of parents said they had learned something from their child's farm visit and that the children's trips to farms influenced some parents' consumer behaviour, with 16% of parents saying that they would now be more prepared to change how they chose their food, and buy more local, seasonal or organic products.

The benefits of all this work are immense and varied. Whether the focus is on children's health, learning, community cohesion or other school priorities, supporting sustainable food and farming systems or giving children, individuals and communities the opportunity to experience the enjoyments that a good food culture creates, there is no doubt that it all contributes to a better future of food for us all.

Jeanette Orrey concludes: "We have come a long way to create a wholesome and sustainable food culture within schools and communities, but with Government cutting costs and the rising food and oil prices, we need to work even harder going forwards. We owe it to the future generations."

Rikke Bruntse-Dahl represents the Food for Life Partnership, a network of schools, communities, caterers and food producers across England that works to transform food culture. All schools can join the Food for Life Partnership for free. To find out more visit www.foodforlife.org.uk.

Some schools grow in pots using scarce available space, some have dug up parts of the playground or unused areas



Copyright Food for Life Partnership



"Being part of the Food for Life Partnership has raised the aspiration and achievement of staff and students. Our work with the programme has considerably contributed to the school being judged as 'outstanding' in our Ofsted inspection. Facilities are now working effectively together and we use the Food for Life Partnership template for success in other areas of school life."

Aidan Smith, Deputy Headteacher Kirk Hallam Community Technology College

Preventing childhood obesity



TIMOTHY ARMSTRONG
explains the work
of World Health
Organization.

Childhood obesity is one of the most serious public health challenges of the 21st century. The problem is global and steadily affecting many low- and middle-income countries, particularly in urban settings. The prevalence has increased at an alarming rate. Globally, the number of overweight children under the age of five is estimated to be over 42 million. Close to 35 million of these are living in developing countries.

Noncommunicable diseases (NCDs) today represent a leading threat to human health and socioeconomic development. They cause an estimated 35 million deaths each year, 80% of which occur in low- and middle-income countries. The great burden of mortality, morbidity and disability attributable to NCDs, along with the significant financial strains on health systems, has over the last decade accelerated the recognition of the importance of addressing NCDs. This increased global commitment is most recently reflected in the decision of the UN General Assembly in May 2010 to hold a UN high-level meeting on NCDs in September 2011.

WHO's political framework for NCD prevention was established in 2000, when at the Fifty-third World Health Assembly, the WHO Member States asked the WHO Director-General to continue giving priority to the prevention and control of NCDs (Resolution WHA53.17). The Global Strategy for Infant and Young Child Feeding (2002), the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (2003) and the Global Strategy on Diet, Physical Activity and Health (2004) have all contributed substantially to global NCD prevention efforts. WHO's mandate

for NCD prevention was reiterated and strengthened by the endorsement of the Action Plan for the Global Strategy for the Prevention and Control of Noncommunicable Diseases in 2008 (Resolution WHA61.14).

The Global Strategy on Diet, Physical Activity and Health focuses on diet and physical activity, two of the main risk factors for NCDs. In conjunction with other risk factors, unhealthy diets and physical inactivity contribute to the development of NCDs through raised blood pressure, raised blood glucose, abnormal blood lipids and overweight/obesity. Overweight and obesity in adults now ranks as the fifth leading global risk for mortality. In addition, 44% of the diabetes burden, 23% of the ischaemic heart disease burden and between 7% and 41% of certain cancer burdens are attributable to overweight and obesity.

Since the endorsement of the Global Strategy in 2004, a number of countries across the world have developed national action plans aimed at improving diets and increasing physical activity as part of national strategies to combat obesity and reduce the risk factors for NCDs. The Global Strategy raises energy imbalances in children and adolescents as a particular concern and contains several recommendations relevant to the prevention of childhood obesity. It stresses the importance of a 'life-course' perspective in NCD prevention; recommends that school policies and programmes support the adoption of healthy diets and physical activity; and recommends that relevant stakeholders address responsible marketing of food and beverages high in saturated fats, trans-fatty acids, free sugars, or salt, especially to children.

In light of the dramatic rise in childhood obesity over the past decade, and as part of WHO's response to the global epidemic of NCDs, a WHO Forum and Technical Meeting on Population-based Prevention Strategies for Childhood Obesity was held in December 2009. The

objective of the meeting was to identify priorities for population-based strategies to prevent childhood obesity and define roles and responsibilities for various stakeholders.

The meeting concluded that comprehensive and coordinated interventions which support and facilitate physical activity and healthy diets in the context of a social-determinants-of-health approach represent the best way forward for obesity prevention in childhood. Moreover, such interventions must occur across the whole population, in a variety of settings and through multiple strategies. Action must span policy, programmes and advocacy. The meeting participants identified a number of guiding principles for the development of population-based policies to prevent childhood obesity, including equity, inclusivity, multisectoral engagement, transparency and environmental change. The need for surveillance, monitoring and evaluation to support effective action was also emphasised.

The meeting identified specific actions for combating childhood obesity for all major stakeholder groups. For WHO, one of the proposed actions was the development of a "tool" for Member States to determine and identify priority areas for action. Such a tool would support governments in setting their priorities based on existing data and capabilities. Critical next steps for all stakeholders were identified as the scaling up of monitoring and surveillance efforts, improved coordination of preventive action, and the creation of more formal platforms for information sharing and exchange, especially in terms of 'best practice' interventions.

An important achievement in NCD prevention efforts was reached in May 2010, when the 193 WHO Member States agreed to endorse a Set of Recommendations on the Marketing of Foods and Non-Alcoholic Beverages to Children. WHO embarked on this

area of work after the Member States at the Sixtieth World Health Assembly requested the WHO Director-General "... to promote responsible marketing including the development of a set of recommendations on the marketing of foods and non-alcoholic beverages to children in order to reduce the impact of foods high in saturated fats, trans-fatty acids, free sugars, or salt, in dialogue with all relevant stakeholders, including private-sector parties, while ensuring avoidance of potential conflict of interest" (Resolution WHA60.23).

A comprehensive process to develop the recommendations was initiated to fulfil this mandate. The first step was the appointment by the Director-General of an Ad-Hoc Expert Group on Marketing of Foods and Non-Alcoholic Beverages to Children to provide technical support to WHO. After a four day meeting in December 2008 and ensuing deliberations, the Expert Group submitted technical advice to WHO in three core areas: (i) what should be the objectives of Member States' policies on marketing of food and non-alcoholic beverages to children; (ii) what are the evidence-based or currently applied policy options available; and (iii) what are the mechanisms required to monitor and evaluate recommended policy options.

Prior to the meeting by the Ad-Hoc Expert Group, two dialogue meetings were held with relevant stakeholders, one with representatives of the international nongovernmental organisations and another with representatives of the global food and non-alcoholic beverage industries and advertising industry. These two dialogues enabled participants to inform the Secretariat of relevant work being undertaken by their organisations in the area and reports of the dialogues were presented by the Secretariat to the Ad-Hoc Expert Group Meeting.

During the period February to May 2009, the Secretariat developed a Working Paper for regional consultations

with Member States. The aim of the consultations was to provide the Secretariat with the views of Member States on the marketing of foods and non-alcoholic beverages to children. The consultations were facilitated by the WHO regional offices between June and August 2009 and in total 66 Member States submitted a response. Additional input on the Working Paper was provided by the global food and non-alcoholic beverage industries, and advertising industry and international nongovernmental organisations through dialogue meetings in August and September 2009.

**While deaths
from NCDs
primarily occur
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diet begin in
early childhood
and build up
throughout life**

The resulting Set of Recommendations was endorsed by the Sixty-third World Health Assembly and gave the Director-General a clear mandate to provide technical support to Member States, when requested, in implementing the Set of Recommendations. It contains an evidence section and 12 recommendations. The purpose of the recommendations is to guide efforts by Member States in designing new and/or strengthening existing policies on food marketing communications to children.

They set out the evidence and provide a clear rationale for Member States to take action at national level and/or through international collaboration, and they provide a framework to facilitate such action. However, it is up to each Member State to give full effect to these recommendations.

The Set of Recommendations reiterates the overall goal of the Global Strategy on Diet, Physical Activity and Health, which is "to promote and protect health by guiding the development of an enabling environment for sustainable actions at individual, community, national and global levels that, when taken together, will lead to reduced disease and death rates related to unhealthy diet and physical inactivity". By supporting actions that reduce the impact on children of foods high in saturated fats, trans-fatty acids, free sugars, or salt, Member States and other stakeholders can all contribute to ensuring that children everywhere are given the opportunity to grow and develop in an enabling food environment which fosters and encourages healthy dietary choices and the maintenance of healthy weight.

Overweight and obese children are more likely to develop NCDs such as diabetes and cardiovascular diseases at a younger age. While deaths from NCDs primarily occur in adulthood, the risks associated with unhealthy diet begin in early childhood and build up throughout life. Since overweight and obesity, as well as their related diseases, are largely preventable, efforts in this area need a high priority. While interventions to prevent childhood obesity may not yield the most cost-effective returns in the short term, the long term cost savings to health systems and society at large due to a lower burden of mortality, morbidity and disability attributable to NCDs should not be underestimated. ■

A fully referenced version of this article is available from info@foodethicscouncil.org.

Dr Timothy Armstrong is Co-ordinator of the Surveillance and Population Based Prevention Unit at the World Health Organization.

Fighting for the right to good food

The Children's Food Campaign



The Children's Food Campaign's CHRISTINE HAIGH rallies recruits.

The Children's Food Campaign is one of a number of projects run by Sustain: the alliance for better food and farming. Sustain works for the implementation of 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.

In fact, the Children's Food Campaign pre-dates Sustain, its history stretching back to the early 1990s when one of the organisation's predecessors, the National Food Alliance, released a series of reports looking at the way in which unhealthy food advertising targeted children.

Campaigning about the impact of junk food marketing on children's diets continued after the National Food Alliance merged with the Sustainable Agriculture Food and Environment (SAFE) Alliance to form Sustain in 1999. This area of work morphed into the Children's Food Bill Campaign, which called for legislation to promote and protect children's diet-related health.

Though the bills never made it into law, they attracted the support of over 280 MPs and had the effect of raising the profile of the issues they covered, with progress seen on many of them since. Today the Children's Food Campaign continues to work on four main priorities:

- Protecting children from junk food marketing;
- Ensuring children receive a real food education;
- Making healthy school meals available to all;
- Securing food labelling that everyone, including children, can understand.

We recognise that, while the food people consume is the result of choices that they make, this is largely shaped by the wider food environment, which in so many ways fails to support healthy food choices. Children can't eat a healthy school meal if all that is on offer is pizza and chips; nor should we be

surprised when they opt for fat- or sugar-laden snacks if these are virtually the only types of food marketed to children.

The Children's Food Campaign exists to press for policies which shape this food environment to make it easier for children to eat a healthier diet. This is particularly important in the context of childhood obesity, levels of which have risen dramatically since the campaign's conception, eliciting various largely unsuccessful campaigns, strategies and initiatives from local and national governments.

The Campaign saw a number of successes under the Labour administration. Our concerns about unhealthy food television advertising to children were partly addressed by Ofcom with the introduction of restrictions that prevent food and drink products high in fat, salt or sugar (HFSS) from being advertised on television during children's programming. Although these regulations do not go as far as we had hoped, failing to cover other programmes with large audiences of children such as *The X Factor* and *Coronation Street*, they remain some of the toughest restrictions in the world.

Earlier this year, we found an additional use for the nutrient profiling model which was developed by the Food Standards Agency for use by Ofcom in defining HFSS products. After concerted campaigning, it was announced that whilst the ban on product placement in UK-made television was being lifted, placement of HFSS foods would not be allowed in any programmes. This was a key breakthrough as it was the first recognition from government that children need protecting from unhealthy food advertising in all their television viewing.

Another success was the recognition that children should leave school with at least basic cooking skills, not just the ability to design pizza boxes or complete other exercises that formed part of many food technology classes. As a result, practical cooking lessons are now part of the secondary school curriculum, with new kitchen facilities for all those schools that previously lacked them.

Meanwhile, after years of campaigning, and with a little help from a certain celebrity chef, mandatory nutrition standards for school meals were introduced, meaning that children are guaranteed at least two of their five portions of fruit and

vegetables with each day's lunch, and that deep fried foods are limited. Some school canteens still leave much to be desired, and many children still opt to bring their own food or eat elsewhere because of lack of seating or long queues, but generally speaking the food itself has greatly improved.

However, take-up of the improved meals is still low, with only about 40% of children taking advantage of them. Many children from low-income families are excluded because they cannot afford to pay for them and are not eligible for free meals. A recent Ofsted report recorded one case in which siblings had to take it in turns to have school meals because the family could not afford to pay for meals for both children.

One solution to this would be to see lunchtime as an integral part of the school day, with catering provided in the same way as stationery and teachers, making school meals free for every pupil. In places where the policy has been trialed, such as in Scotland and Hull, uptake has risen to between 75% and 95%, so that eating a healthy school meal becomes the norm. As well as forcing schools to tackle their inadequate dining facilities, short term benefits include improved diet, better concentration and classroom behaviour, and there are longer term impacts such as healthier eating habits at home and higher educational attainment.

Despite the inevitable costs to the public purse, economies of scale would mean that costs per pupil and administration outlay would decrease. In addition, valuable local jobs, ideal for parents of school-aged children, would be created. The increased number of meals served would also be a fantastic opportunity for schools to source sustainably, linking with local farms and food businesses to provide freshly prepared meals on a regular and predictable basis.

There's still plenty to be done. Rules on television advertising of unhealthy foods to children are inadequate, and range from weak to virtually non-existent for other forms of junk food marketing, most notably new media. Twenty-four hours of cooking lessons in an entire twelve years of full-time schooling is far from a real food education. Far too many children still miss out on healthy school meals for reasons ranging from long queues and lack of dining facilities to their parents' inability to afford the meals, and the stigmatisation of free school meals.



Copyright William Cho (flickr)

One solution would be to see lunchtime as an integral part of the school day

The new coalition government brings new opportunities to improve policies that affect children's health. However, there is also a risk that a commitment to reduce public spending, state control and costs to businesses will see many of the gains made in recent years rolled back. Within weeks of taking office, the Department for Education had cancelled plans that would have seen free school meals made available to all primary school children living below the poverty line, not just those from out-of-work households. Plans to trial universal free school meals in five local authorities also bit the dust. At the end of June, Health Secretary Andrew Lansley was on record criticising Jamie Oliver's campaign for better school food, arguing that the state should not be telling people how to live their lives. More recently he has announced plans to increase the food industry's involvement in the Change4Life anti-obesity campaign, resulting in a clear conflict of interest. Yet prior to the general election, David Cameron expressed concern about the increasing commercialisation of childhood, and promised policies to address this.

So the fight to improve children's food is far from over. Join us for the next battle at www.childrensfoodcampaign.org.uk.

Christine Haigh has worked to promote and support urban food projects for many years and is now at Sustain as Children's Food Campaign manager.

Education for life

FARM-Africa in Tanzania

NGAIO BOWTHORPE gets practical about learning.

Over 70% of Tanzanians live in rural areas where the main economic activity is agriculture. FARM-Africa has been working in the Babati area of Northern Tanzania, a largely pastoralist district, since 1990. It is here that it runs its Agricultural and Environmental Education Project.

For many years, rural communities have developed their own traditional crop and livestock husbandry practices, despite a lack of ministerial support. While the majority of the rural population rely on agriculture and livestock rearing, the education sector had not made it a priority to develop life skills and motivate the younger generation.



Copyright FARM-Africa

FARM-Africa's project has been run in close collaboration with the Education Departments of Babati and Hanang District Councils, alongside a number of other partners. It aims to contribute to poverty reduction through rural development by increasing the effectiveness of agricultural and environmental education in primary schools. The purpose of the project is to develop a schools model of best practice that improves the delivery, quality and relevance of practical life skills (Stadi za Kazi) to primary education in northern Tanzania.

The initial aims of this project are to help build better household nutrition and increase the diversity of food eaten in traditional communities. This is being achieved through practical training for school children in agricultural techniques, which they go on to use on their home farms, sharing their new knowledge within and between communities. These demonstrations of good farming practice have led to an increased awareness of the environment and the sustainable use of natural resources.

The project seeks to improve the academic performance of students through quality and relevant primary education in the target schools. In this regard, the project promotes the discovery learning methodology in schools. Discovery learning involves the use of a range of practical experiences that help children learn for themselves. It is highly practical, complements theory and gives value to and builds on the child's existing experiences.

The project made learning materials relevant to the pastoralist community by supporting the training of primary teachers to produce appropriate educational materials. Six learning manuals have been developed including a manual on poultry keeping, cattle rearing, tree planting and specific crops such as maize, beans and indigenous vegetables. These books will be used by teachers and pupils in the life skills classes, and particularly when discussing the topic of dairy cattle management.

To complement the theoretical teaching, 24 schools have established demonstration plots to show how to rear poultry, plant and tend vegetables, establish tree nurseries and keep bees.

Rainwater harvesting tanks have been constructed at the schools involved with the project. Helen Altshul, Regional Director of FARM-Africa, explains why:

"The provision of water within school compounds and the produce grown on demonstration plots has increased the

Asha is a standard seven pupil at Gijedabung primary school. She is 15 years old and the second born in a family of five children. She loves studying both theory and practical subjects, but working outside classrooms makes her happiest as she is able to use the skills she learnt in classroom. Asha says, "The crops in my field demo plot at home are doing very well, they always make me happy. My father is very supportive and helpful to me and so is my mother. They both helped me to raise maize in my small plot. The maize in my plot looks very healthy with two big maize cobs for each plant. I am expecting to have a good harvest this season. My parents are happy with my maize – even our neighbours have come several times to learn from my plot. I always tell them I used improved seeds, and put on manure that makes the maize grow strong and healthy."

ability of schools to provide lunches which encourages school attendance and better nutrition for pupils."

Teaching the practical skills they need for resilient farming has had an enormous impact on the children involved in this project. Historically, pastoralists have not seen eating fruit as an important part of their diet but now pawpaws, guava and mangoes are being grown and eaten by the children at school, and parents are requesting fruit seedlings to grow at home.

George Elisante, Head Teacher at Boay Primary School, describes the impact that the project has had on his pupils: "Trees were planted around the school compound and some have been taken home for planting. They [the pupils] have skills in the management of crops, chickens and stingless bee keeping."

The project has given pupils a unique opportunity to acquire practical life skills which they have shared at home through home working groups. This, and the provision of school meals, has had the added bonus of encouraging pastoralists to enrol their children in school.

The process of passing learning from children to their parents has improved the technical knowledge to plant and tend crops and new seeds, and encouraged people in Babati to farm in a new, and sustainable way.

Ngaiio Bowthorpe is Communications Manager at FARM-Africa, which provides training and support for poor rural communities.

Analysis on a plate

FOOD ETHICS is the magazine of the **Food Ethics Council**, the independent advisory body working for an ethical future for food and farming. **Subscribe now to get cutting edge analysis from leading world experts**



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Farm education

Exploring the origins of food



BILL GRAHAM takes us on a farm visit.

What does farming mean to children when there is plentiful food in the shops? Why should the rural economy matter when they perceive their future employment to be in the city? Does the countryside offer them anything apart from a large green space for the occasional recreational visit with parents?

There is widespread concern about the way children, young people, and their families, have become disassociated from where their food comes from and do not know what is required for a healthy diet and lifestyle. They are also unaware of the many opportunities the countryside provides for leisure, social activities, and employment.

FACE aims to meet these educational needs by working with our members and partners to promote visits to farms, and provide easy access to a wide range of high-quality educational resources and activities to complement both school-based studies and outdoor visits.

Our work with schools and young people is highly successful because of the immediate and extensive benefits of visits to the outdoors, and of using food, farming and the countryside to support many aspects of the curriculum.

There is an enormous amount of goodwill within the agricultural sector to encourage and support educational visits to the countryside. FACE is committed to working with farmers to increase the number of visits and improve the quality of the educational experiences offered to schools. We work with a wide range of providers including school farms, city farms, open farms who charge for visits and working farms. In total, there are about 2,000 farms offering school visits involving one million pupils.

FACE believes that farms must be in tune with the current curriculum needs of schools and that schools should keep up to date with the ways in which outdoor experiences can support the curriculum. We continuously update farmers and teachers by providing resources, offering training sessions and organising pupil activities.

We have developed a scheme with a focus on accrediting farmers and farm premises. This has had the benefit of farmer confidence and farm standards, including health and safety and educational content. To date over 1,250 farmers have been trained and accredited – a real testimony to the commitment of farmers to this agenda.

It is interesting to track the changing attitudes towards farming and pupils' understanding of it by asking visiting students to reflect on their experiences.

When asked why we need the countryside, pupils will give the need 'to produce food' as the most important reason. However, a wide variety of other responses indicate that they have

developed an understanding of the bigger picture by providing reasons such as 'for our economy' and 'to balance the amount of wildlife and food we produce'.

When asked what skills they think a farmer needs, pupils will start with stereotypical perceptions such as 'looking after plants and animals' or 'working with machinery', but go on to mention other necessary attributes like 'business skills'.

Many indicate a personal regard for farmers using terms such as 'resourcefulness', 'well-organised' and 'hardworking'.

Much is made in the media of the negative images young people have about food, farming and countryside issues. However, given the right stimuli and encouragement, we can help children understand about our food, where it comes from, how it is grown and why it matters.

FACE is a charity that aims to help young people learn more about food and farming in a sustainable countryside. It is a non-political organisation established by the National Farmers Union and the Royal Agricultural Society of England with around 80 members representing the full spectrum of views across the sector. Further details can be found at www.face-online.org.uk

Bill Graham started his career teaching before running an educational centre at the Birmingham Botanical Gardens. He became the Executive Director of FACE in 2001.

Farms must be in tune with the current curriculum needs of schools

An inconvenient sandwich: the throwaway economics of takeaway food

Rosalind Sharpe | 2010 | new economics foundation | ISBN 978-1-904882-78-7

'Casual eating' – our appetite for quick, cheap, convenient food – is exploding; yet the casual side of the catering sector usually escapes scrutiny. This report sets about rectifying this omission, arguing that convenience outlets epitomise how efforts to protect the environment, safeguard health and promote justice are systematically undermined by the dynamics of today's market economy. SR

Bioscience for life?

Helen Wallace | 2010 | GeneWatch UK

In a comprehensive and revealing report that analyses investments in the biotech economy over the last few decades, GeneWatch UK documents how billions of taxpayers' money has been wasted by being poured into redundant or self-interested research studies. Looking at examples of expensive and ethically questionable projects, the paper makes some compelling arguments for a total review of how the biotech sector operates. With this summer's news that the government-backed Technology Strategy Board is funding Syngenta to develop GM biosensor plants, this is a timely call for real scrutiny of public initiatives that shape the future of our food system. KB

Feeding Britain: what consumers want

Nick Johnson (ed) | 2010 | The Smith Institute

The way we view and consume our food is changing, not least the relationship between health, affordability and sustainability. The essays in this collection attempt to make sense of the ubiquity of food in our popular culture, including the apparent conflicts between our expressed concerns over supporting local suppliers and animal welfare, for example, and our continuing preoccupation with price. SR

Food justice: the report of the Food and Fairness Inquiry

Food and Fairness Inquiry Committee | 2010 | Food Ethics Council | ISBN 978-0-9549218-6-6
The sheer scale of social injustice across all aspects of the food system demands urgent attention in its own right; moreover, tackling social injustice is a prerequisite for achieving our wider ecological sustainability and health goals. This is the powerful message from the food industry heavyweights, academics and campaigners who came together to conduct the Food Ethics Council's year-long Food and Fairness Inquiry. SR

Food rules: an eater's manual

Michael Pollan | 2010 | Penguin | ISBN 978-0-141-04868-0

Combining an amusing mixture of common sense, folk wisdom and what your grandmother used to tell you, this book cuts through the current bombardment of government issued healthy eating advice to provide simple, useful and logical tips to guide your way to a nutritious, balanced diet. A bible for all those lost in a sea of conflicting 'expert' opinion on what to eat. KB

Out of water

Colin Chartres and Samyuktha Varma | 2010 | FT Press | ISBN 978-0-131-36726-5

Setting out to address the key issues surrounding our dwindling water reserves in terms of climate change, agriculture, poverty and policy, this book goes from analysing the causes of the escalating water crisis to suggesting ways of sustainably managing our most precious natural resource. Packed full of facts, figures and case studies, Out of Water presents the reality of our current situation in a clearly defined, methodical way and provides some truly workable solutions. KB

The plundered planet

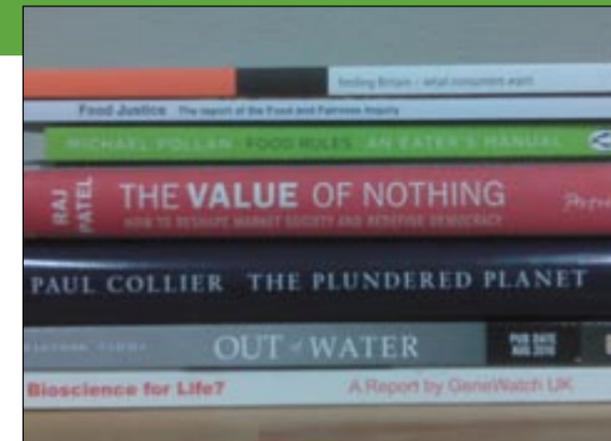
Paul Collier | 2010 | Allen Lane | ISBN 978-1-846-14223-9

From the author of The Bottom Billion, this book tackles the intricately complex question of how prosperity and economic success can be brought into harmony with the natural environment, both in the poorest countries in the world and the richest. Attempting to marry economics and environmentalism, Paul Collier struggles to prove that exponential growth and sustainability can be harnessed in a mutually beneficial relationship. KB

The value of nothing

Raj Patel | 2010 | Portobello | ISBN 978-1-84627-217-2

Doing for the market economy what he did for the food system, Raj Patel takes a closer look at why things cost what they do. He argues that whilst we put inflated prices on some things, we are undervaluing others that really should cost more, like our environment and health. Patel argues that we must rebalance market society, and his conclusions – while radical – are persuasive. EB



Forthcoming events

3 Sep - 17 Sep 10	Soil Association Organic Fortnight Soil Association www.soilassociation.org/organicfortnight Nationwide, UK
13 Sep - 24 Sep 10	Rights Based Approach to Food and Nutrition Security Course Wageningen UR Centre for Development Innovation www.cdi.wur.nl Wageningen, Netherlands
14 Sep - 18 Sep 10	14th International Biotechnology Symposium and Exhibition: Biotechnology for the Sustainability of Human Society University of Bologna www.ibs10.org Rimini, Italy
15 Sep - 16 Sep 10	NCFI National Conference National Care Farming Initiative www.ncfi.org.uk Newport, UK
16 Sep - 18 Sep 10	Food Security: Ethical and Legal Challenges Eursafe www.eursafe10 Bilbao, Spain
18 Sep - 3 Oct 10	British Food Fortnight Love British Food lovebritishfood.co.uk Nationwide, UK
23 Sep - 24 Sep 10	STEPS Conference 10: Pathways to Sustainability STEPS www.steps-centre.org Brighton, UK
24 Sep 10	Securing Future Food UK Food Group www.ukfg.org London, UK
28 Sep - 30 Sep 10	Livestock Biotech Summit Biotechnology Industry Organisation www.bio.org Sioux Falls, South Dakota, USA
28 Sep - 30 Sep 10	Global Agriculture Congress Agra Europe & F.O. Licht www.agra-net.com Brussels, Belgium
3 Oct - 8 Oct 10	Greenhouse Gases and Animal Agriculture Conference GGAA www.ggaa10.org Banff, Canada
7 Oct 10	Reducing Water Costs in the Food Industry Food and Drink Federation www.fdf.org.uk London, UK
7 Oct - 8 Oct 10	Modern Trends in Meat Farming British Society of Animal Science www.bsas.org.uk Krakow, Poland
7 Oct - 8 Oct 10	Good Agricultural Practice - the 10th GLOBALGAP Conference GLOBALGAP www.summit10.org London, UK
13 Oct 10	UK Farming and the Future of the Common Agricultural Policy Westminster Food and Nutrition Forum www.westminsterforumprojects.co.uk London, UK
18 Oct 10	World Food Day Food and Agriculture Organisation www.fao.org Worldwide
19 Oct 10	Conflict or Consensus? The Next Decade of Rural Policy Countryside and Community Research Institute www.ccri.ac.uk Cheltenham, UK
19 Oct 10	Can We Farm Without Subsidy? Business Link & Royal Agricultural College www.rac.ac.uk Cirencester, UK
21 Oct 10	Water in Your Supply Chain IGD www.igd.com/Water10 London, UK
29 Oct - 30 Oct 10	2nd European Sustainable Food Planning Conference Association of European Schools of Planning (AESOP) artsresearch.brighton.ac.uk Brighton, UK
1 Nov - 3 Nov 10	Cropworld: The Business, Science, Trade and Technology of Sustainable Global Crop Production UBM & BCPC www.crop-world.com London, UK
1 Nov - 5 Nov 10	Indigenous Knowledge as a Resource in Developing Livestock Systems British Society of Animal Sciences www.bsas.org.uk Nepal
2 Nov 10	Water Security Westminster Food and Nutrition Forum www.westminsterforumprojects.co.uk London, UK
10 Nov 10	Fishing and the Marine Environment Westminster Food and Nutrition Forum www.westminsterforumprojects.co.uk London, UK
15 Nov - 18 Nov 10	Sustainable Animal Production in the Tropics BSAS and INRA www.bsas.org.uk Gosier, Guadeloupe
25 Nov - 26 Nov 10	International Conference on Functional Foods Oxford Brookes University www.brookes.ac.uk Oxford, UK
30 Nov 10	Scanning the Agricultural Horizon to 2050 SCI Bio Resources Group www.soci.org Bracknell, UK