

Food Miles Policy Document

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Overview

Food Miles, Resources and the Environment

'Food Miles' refers to the distance food items travel from the farm to our business and point of service to our customers. The 'food miles' items sourced from some national suppliers, wholesalers and large retailers outlets tends to be 27 times higher than food (menu) items purchased from sources local to our clients' base. The concept of buying local is simply to buy food produced, grown or raised as close to the point of service of these foods as possible to maximise freshness, minimise harmful effects on the environment (e.g. carbon emissions) and to support local rural communities and support the sustainability of these communities. It is a disturbing fact that 95% of fruit and 50% of vegetables consumed in the UK are imported.

So currently how does much of the food we serve travel to our business? It is trucked across the country, hauled in freight ships over oceans and flown around the world, and we note from a new report from DEFRA that food miles rose by 15% between 1992 and 2002.

A tremendous amount of fossil fuel is used to transport foods such long distances. Combustion of these fuels releases carbon dioxide, sulphur dioxide, particulate matter and other pollutants into the atmosphere, contributing to global climate change, acid rain and air pollution. Processed food also uses large quantities of packaging which becomes waste that may be difficult, if not impossible, to recycle.

Aside from the environmental damage that can result from processing, packaging and transportation of goods, agribusinesses are themselves a major source of air and water pollution. As a rule local farms tend to be run by farmers who live on the land and work hard to preserve it. By purchasing locally to our outlets, we can talk directly to the farmer growing the food we purchase and establish what they do and how they do it.

The Issues

- Buying food from local farms means we are supplying our customers with food in its prime condition and supporting local communities
- Food transported short distances is fresher
- Local foods usually undergo minimal processing and often the shelf life does not need to be extended by the addition of preservatives
- The environmental impacts of our catering activities are reduced

Our Strategy and Action Plan

- We will take due note of the Foods Standards Agency 'Farm to Fork' policy and where possible adhere to any relevant advice given
- We will when possible buy British and in season as buying seasonally helps to negate the need for artificial heating in glasshouses
- We will actively look to source some specific produce from farms or supplier/producers within the county in which each of our clients is based, having due regard to the interpretation of 'regional' and 'local' within food safety legislation
- We will look at ways of sourcing foodstuffs with minimal and/or biodegradable packaging. In addition recycling will be prioritised (see the environmental and waste policy documents)
- We have noted and endorsed the government's action plan to reduce the environmental and social costs of food transport in the UK by 20% by 2012
- We will appraise our customers by fact leaflets on our policies and action plans to reduce food miles

This document will be reviewed periodically and our customers advised on the progress made.

Tony Nicholl
Managing Director

