1. The Initiative

Why are the farming and food industries important?

A. The following statistics show why the food and farming industries are important:

- UK consumers and institutions spend £162 billion a year on food and drink. Food alone is estimated to be worth £112 billion a year.
- Food is serviced by a major industry that accounts for 7% of national output and provides 3.7 million jobs.
- A small proportion of our food comes from the developing world but it supports a large number of people.
- Public sector procurement of food and catering services alone is worth £2 billion annually and provides over 1 billion meals a year.
- There are more than 65,000 outlets in the health and educational sectors and 21,000 staff canteens.
- The vast majority of public sector food procurement is by the NHS, schools, prisons and the armed forces.
- Education, healthcare and services account for 6% of food service sales but 29% of meals served outside the home. For more information: see the NAO’s report on smarter food procurement in the public sector - http://www.defra.gov.uk/farm/policy/sustain/procurement/nao-smarterfood.htm

What is the Public Sector Food Procurement Initiative?

A. The Public Sector Food Procurement Initiative (PSFPI) was launched on 26 August 2003 in support of the Government’s Sustainable Farming and Food Strategy for England, which aims to deliver a world-class sustainable farming and food sector that contributes to a better environment and healthier and prosperous communities. The PSFPI is designed to promote

Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs

Public Sector Food Procurement Initiative (PSFPI) - frequently asked questions

Revised 12 December 2007

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healthy food and improve the sustainability and efficiency of food procurement, catering services and supply into the public sector.

What does food procurement encompass?
Food procurement encompasses not just how public bodies procure food (and catering services), but also how they:

- Work out what food they want to buy and from whom;
- Receive and store food;
- Prepare and serve food;
- Dispose of waste food; and
- Monitor their costs and service performance.

What are the main PSFPI objectives?
A. The PSFPI has six priority objectives, to:

- promote food safety, including high standards of hygiene
- increase the consumption of healthy and nutritious food
- improve the sustainability and efficiency of production, processing and distribution
- increase tenders from small and local producers and their ability to do business
- increase cooperation among buyers, producers and along supply chains
- improve the sustainability and efficiency of public food procurement and catering services

Other important objectives cover consumer behaviour, organic food, animal welfare, fair treatment of suppliers, working conditions for catering staff and catering for ethnic minority, cultural and religious groups.

Who is co-ordinating the Initiative?
A. There are several cross government groups with an interest in food procurement. These include:

- **Sustainable Procurement Operations Board (SPOB).** It was established in 2006 to implement recommendations of the Sustainable Procurement Task Force, of which food is one of ten priority areas.

- **Food Procurement Implementation Group (FPIG).** This was established in March 2003 to take forward Government policies on health, food, farming, sustainability (including efficiency) in the public procurement of food and catering services; plus promote and oversee the implementation of the PSFPI across the public sector. Achievements include: (1) comprehensive PSFPI web site; (2) more joined-up government; (3) communications strategy; (4) regional projects to develop the demand and supply sides; and (5) good links into food, farming and voluntary sectors.

- **GOR Steering Group.** This was established 2005 to coordinate PSFPI activities of the Government Offices for the Regions (GORs), which include running workshops and piloting projects to develop the demand and supply sides with support from Regional Centres of Excellence, the industry and voluntary sectors. The Group comprises PSFPI contacts in the Government Offices for the Regions (GORs); plus representatives from the School Food Trust, NFU, Meat and Livestock Commission and English Farming and Food Partnership.

- **PSFPI Practitioners Group.** This was established in 2006 and comprises coordinators appointed by the GORs and Regional Development Agencies (RDAs) to implement the PSFPI in the regions. It reports to the GOR Steering Group on what it is doing to
disseminate best practice and promote inter-region cooperation, e.g. developing supply chains in eastern and south east England to supply into London.

- **Food Procurement Group (FPG).** This was established in 2006 to deliver recommendations made by the National Audit Office and Public Accounts Committee to increase the efficiency and sustainability of food procurement across the public sector, e.g. “how to” guides, tools, food quality standards, improved contract management practices; standardised contracts and food benchmarking.

The **Food Procurement Action Group (PAG)** merged in late 2007 with the Food Procurement Group. The PAG was set up to mainstream the PSFPI and efficiency agenda into the procurement of food and catering services for schools. FPIG and FPG are linked through members that belong to both groups.

**What is Defra doing to promote the initiative across the public sector?**

A. PSFPI achievements include: a comprehensive web site with guidance, tools and case studies; holding of national and regional conferences and workshops for buyers and suppliers; regional pilots and projects to develop the supply side. More information on the web site at: [http://www.defra.gov.uk/farm/policy/sustain/procurement/index.htm](http://www.defra.gov.uk/farm/policy/sustain/procurement/index.htm);

**What benefits will the initiative deliver?**

A. The benefits include: more sustainable UK rural local economies; more competitive small and medium sized suppliers; improved animal welfare; healthier and better performing students and workforce; reduced hospital stays; greater choice for ethnic and religious groups; savings from waste minimisation; and the more efficient use of energy, water and other resources.

**What help is the PSFPI to British farmers?**

A. The legal framework (i.e. the EC Treaty, and EC procurement directives) governing public procurement means that public sector buyers cannot restrict their purchases to specific locations or suppliers, as this would discriminate against producers in other localities. It would also reduce competition contrary to UK public procurement policy that is designed to achieve better value for money for the taxpayer.

There is however plenty of scope within these rules for public sector bodies to pursue a key objective of the Public Sector Food Procurement Initiative (PSFPI) that is to increase tendering opportunities for small and local food producers and their ability to do business. For example, by specifying fresh and seasonal produce and breaking contracts into lots.

Where catering services have been outsourced: we are encouraging public bodies to work in partnership and on a voluntary basis with their contract caterer to increase opportunities for small and local producers. More information on the PSFPI and how to deliver its objectives is given the guide “Putting it into practice”, which is published on the Guidance page of the PSFPI web site at [http://www.defra.gov.uk/farm/policy/sustain/procurement/guidance.htm](http://www.defra.gov.uk/farm/policy/sustain/procurement/guidance.htm).

**Is there an economical way to achieve PSFPI objectives?**

A. This depends on the quality of catering presently on offer. Schools food for example have suffered from two decades of neglect necessitating the Government investing in a multi-million pound package of improvements, including £240m to continue to subsidise healthy ingredients until 2011 after the current £220m transitional fund runs out in 2007/08 – see DCSF press notice of 4 September 2006 [http://www.dfes.gov.uk/pns/DisplayPN.cgi?pn_id=2006_0121](http://www.dfes.gov.uk/pns/DisplayPN.cgi?pn_id=2006_0121).

Elsewhere it may be possible to achieve PSFPI objectives at no or little extra cost. Our approach is twofold:

(1) **Demand-side** - to encourage buyers and specifiers to build the following considerations into their business cases for food and catering services:

- “Quality” food need not cost more. In switching to say organic foods buyers should initially go for those with a lower price premium such as dairy produce and look to offset any
increased costs by say specifying seasonal produce that is generally cheaper than out of season food.

- Better quality food tends to go further, as many industrially produced products contain large amounts of added water, whilst organic meats for example may shrink less with cooking.

- More nutritious food can result in shorter recovery times in hospitals, more alert pupils and less anti-social prisoners – providing savings far in excess of those achievable from trying to cut the cost of food and catering services. Tastier food is also likely to result in less waste from leftovers and thus reduce disposal costs.

**Supply-side** - to publicise the support available to farmers and growers that can help them meet public sector requirements for quantity, quality, consistency and security of supply, e.g. see the information on funding linked to the Regions page of the PSFPI web site at [http://www.defra.gov.uk/farm/policy/sustain/procurement/regions.htm](http://www.defra.gov.uk/farm/policy/sustain/procurement/regions.htm).

**Does this mean that no extra money should be made available for public sector catering?**

A. Taking forward the PSFPI and other related Government initiatives might increase costs, especially where catering has been considered a low priority such as in schools. But extra costs have to be matched by better quality.

In the past, under compulsory competitive tendering, public bodies tended to cut catering budgets to divert money to other services. Today - under the Gershon Efficiency Review – they are being asked to free over £7 billion for front line services by procuring more wisely. One of the aims of the food procurement initiative is to convince decision takers in public bodies to channel some of these efficiency savings into their catering operations. They cater for some of the most vulnerable people in society and so are providing the sort of front line services that the Government wants to invest more in.

But better “quality” food need not cost the earth. There should, for example, be scope to offset some increased costs by specifying seasonal produce, which is normally cheaper than out of season food. Good healthy and nutritious food can also increase the take-up of meals so reducing unit costs due to economies of scale. Serving tasty, wholesome meals can also reduce plate waste and therefore disposal costs.

**Is the requirement placed on public sector bodies by the Gershon Efficiency Review to achieve efficiency savings in their procurement activities hindering implementation of the food procurement initiative?**

A. There was evidence that the Review did trigger a cost cutting agenda that was obstructing the delivery of sustainable procurement. This resulted in some public bodies cutting the cost of their procurement – including catering services - without properly weighing up the affect on other operations within their own organisations or on the public sector as a whole.

The Office of Government Commerce (OGC) has however made it clear that: efficiency does not signal a return to mindless aggregation and lowest price as the basis for decision-making; and buyers need to harness the public sector spending power to support delivery of sustainability objectives.

The OGC-DCFS led Food Procurement Group has also been is also taking a number of actions to deliver recommendations made by the National Audit Office and Public Accounts Committee to increase the efficiency and sustainability of food procurement across the public sector. These actions include:

- developing “how to” guides and tools;
- establishing food quality standards based on the top 250 products;
- developing collaborative approaches to food procurement;
- introducing improved contract management practices;
- standardising contracts and developing common specifications;
- opening up national framework contracts negotiated by the NHS and others to the rest of the public sector;
What is Defra doing to implement recommendations in the NAO’s report “Smarter Food Procurement in the public sector” (Reiterated in the HC Committee of Public Accounts’ report of 6 March)?

A. Defra is working with major food procurers, the Office of Government Commerce, the Government Offices for the Regions and voluntary bodies to help implement the recommendations. Outcomes include guidance for:

- Buyers - on putting the PSFPI into practice and how to increase opportunities for small and local producers when aggregating demand;
- Farmers on how to do business with the public sector;
- Practitioners - a DIY guide promoting sustainability and greater efficiency.

Defra, DCSF, the School Food Trust and the North East Centre of Excellence are working together to produce guidance and tools for implementing the NAO and PAC recommendations on school food.

Defra is also funding the Government Offices for the Regions to improve the supply and demand sides, including working with NHS Supply Chain that is opening up its contracts to other public bodies and is keen to attract more suppliers. A user-friendlier catering toolkit will shortly appear on the PSFPI web site.

2. Procurement rules

What obligations are placed on public sector bodies by the UK procurement policy, the EC Treaty, EC procurement directives and the statutory instruments that implement them?

A. The Government’s public procurement policy requires all purchases of goods and services to achieve value for money having due regard to propriety and regularity. Value for money is defined as “the optimum combination of whole life cost and quality (or fitness for purpose) to meet the customer’s requirement”.

Public bodies are also required to comply with the EC Treaty, the EC procurement directives and the UK regulations that implement them. These are designed to ensure that public procurement is fair, transparent and not used to discriminate by setting up barriers to free trade – see the Treasury-Defra joint note on environmental issues in purchasing on the PSFPI web site at: http://www.defra.gov.uk/farm/policy/sustain/procurement/genguide.htm.

However, within this framework, there is plenty of scope for public sector bodies to pursue sustainable development considerations in their procurement of food and catering services – as explained in the guide “Putting it into practice” on the PSFPI web site at http://www.defra.gov.uk/farm/policy/sustain/procurement/guidance.htm

Are contracts below the EC threshold for supplies and services subject to the same legal constraints as those above the threshold?

A. All public authority contracts, irrespective of their value, must comply with the EC Treaty. There must be no restraint on the free movement of goods and services, and no discrimination on the grounds of nationality. The EC procurement Directives - which are implemented in the UK through Regulations (i.e. Statutory Instruments) - must be applied to contracts where the estimated value exceeds a set threshold. The Regulations stipulate principles and procedures for technical specifications, selecting suppliers, advertising competitions and awarding contracts.

Are there plans to require public bodies to buy local food?
A. No. Restricting buyers’ purchases to specific locations or suppliers would be contrary to UK public procurement policy of achieving value for money for the taxpayer. It would also be illegal under the EU Treaty and public procurement regulations, which do not permit public sector buyers to restrict their purchases to specific locations or suppliers. However, the rules do allow public bodies to increase tendering opportunities for small and local producers and this is one of the key objectives of the PSFPI. See the guide “Putting it into practice” on the Guidance page of PSFPI web site at http://www.defra.gov.uk/farm/policy/sustain/procurement/guidance.htm

Is it true that the policy and legal framework for public procurement prevents buyers from considering sustainability issues?

A. There is a perception that the EU Treaty and procurement regulations prevent buyers from pursuing PSFPI objectives. They do place some limits on the tender process such as in the way contracts are advertised. However, this is mainly to ensure fairness and transparency and to prevent discrimination.

Buyers can still achieve their objectives by working within the rules, which are designed to make the buyer consider exactly what they want from a contract at the start of the procurement process. It is when identifying need and the specification stages that there is the most scope for considering sustainability issues. General guidance on procurement policy and the legal framework are given on the Guidance page of the PSFPI web site at http://www.defra.gov.uk/farm/policy/sustain/procurement/genguide.htm.

Why is the Government not arguing in Europe for a change in the law to enable public sector bodies to take account of external costs at the award stage?

A. At the award stage all criteria, including environmental considerations, must be: (1) relevant to the subject of the contract; and (2) give a benefit to the contracting authority. This is confirmed by the EU public procurement directive that was implemented in the UK in January 2006. See the Treasury-Defra “Joint note on environmental issues in purchasing” on the PSFPI web site at: http://www.defra.gov.uk/farm/policy/sustain/procurement/genguide.htm.

Going beyond this, at the award stage, would undermine the UK’s procurement policy, based on achieving value for money for the taxpayer. It would also be inconsistent with the fundamental principles on which the Directives are based in that the external criteria may be discriminatory and difficult to quantify and, as such, could reduce competition if companies choose not to tender because they find compliance too onerous.

External costs can be considered as part of the procurement process, but this must be done at an earlier stage. That is, when considering how to fulfil requirements and when setting specifications when they can be considered in the context of using resources efficiently and effectively.

This is why the guidance on food procurement advises that: those responsible for requisitioning contracts should be alert to external costs when allocating budgets for catering and food (and when producing business cases) so that quality is not lost as a result of cost constraints. Any price premium paid for higher standards should however be justified by the particular requirement and consistent with rules on affordability, efficiency and effectiveness.


How can public sector contracts truly take account of sustainable development if buyers cannot under the rules consider the environmental effects of food transportation and external economic costs during the award stage?

A. The policy and legal framework for public procurement do not permit public sector buyers to restrict the distance that goods travel, as this would discriminate against producers from further away and reduce competition.

The distance travelled is not the only factor determining the environmental impact of a product. Another is production. For example, the carbon produced locally from heated greenhouses may exceed the carbon produced from transporting the same food from a country with a

Defra, Carbon Trust and BSI British Standards are developing a methodology for measuring embodied greenhouse gases (GHGs) that should make it easier to determine which products have the least impact on global warming - [http://www.carbontrust.co.uk/carbon/briefing/carbon_label.htm](http://www.carbontrust.co.uk/carbon/briefing/carbon_label.htm).

Local producers should normally be more competitive on direct transport costs. Where this is not so, it may be due to the payment of subsidies that distort the cost of production and therefore the market price.

That’s why recent CAP reforms are important. They aim to decouple the bulk of subsidy from production, enabling farmers to realign their businesses to meet market demands - not produce what the subsidy regimes dictate. This is a better solution than trying to make changes to the public procurement rules that could distort the market in other ways that may have an adverse impact on sustainable development.

**Can the public sector require a supplier (e.g. a fruit/vegetable wholesaler or catering butcher) to audit regularly its own suppliers to ensure that they are conforming to food safety standards?**

A. It is not normally permissible to put conditions on the relationship that prime contractors have with their subcontractors. However, in the case of food supply, where certain standards may have to be achieved and therefore verified, it is acceptable to request some form of proof to show food has been produced in the manner required. Indeed, a key PSFPI objective is to promote food safety, including high standards of hygiene.

This can be achieved by specifying that the contractor supplies food that has undergone specific production and process methods that meet all relevant food safety standards at all stages of the supply chain starting with the farm. This means that a main contractor is obliged to pass on these obligations to lower tier suppliers and can be asked to provide assurance that this has been done. But it must be left to the main contractor to decide how their relationships with sub contractors operate.

Where certification or external inspections are used to check compliance with standards this should be enough to prove production requirements are being adhered to. Care would need to be taken with a requirement along these lines to ensure a contracting authority is not reaching beyond what can legitimately be justified by the subject of the contract. Advice on food safety is given in the guide “Putting it into practice” published on the Guidance page of the PSFPI web site at [http://www.defra.gov.uk/farm/policy/sustain/procurement/guidance.htm](http://www.defra.gov.uk/farm/policy/sustain/procurement/guidance.htm).

**Can the public sector require a supplier (e.g. a fruit/vegetable wholesaler) to distribute to schools from a depot within the area of the local authority?**

A. Such a requirement would be seen as unnecessarily prescriptive and counter to seeking value for money; plus discriminatory by setting up an unnecessary barrier to trade. The requirement ought to be couched in terms of delivery performance, e.g. freshness etc.

**Can the public sector give preference to suppliers who can offer educational benefits as part of the supply package?**

A. No. In a tender for the supply of fruit and vegetables, for example, it would seem to add a requirement that was not directly linked to the subject of the contract i.e. the actual food. It would therefore have the potential to add expense to the contract, undermining the policy to achieve value for money, and might prove difficult for suppliers to cost. It could also be viewed as discriminatory against non-UK suppliers. For example, if this requirement were to feature as a contract condition, it might not just be a matter of the contracting authority deciding whether to fund a trip to Italy itself or not (were an Italian company to win). It might actually be the case that the Italian supplier decided not to bid in the first place because it felt unable to meet such a requirement.
The pursuit of farm visits can however help to reinforce a whole school approach to food and public bodies such as schools, where feasible, may wish to pursue this in partnership with their suppliers on a voluntary basis after contracts are awarded.

**Are catering services exempt from EU public procurement regulations?**

A. There is a distinction between the procurement of food and catering services. Catering is classed as a Part B service and covered under the Hotel and Restaurant Services category of the Public Contracts Regulations 2006 (Statutory Instrument 2006 No.5).

Part B services are not subject to the full vigour of the Directives, e.g. covering advertising route, competition procedures and timescales. However, ALL procurements are covered by EC Treaty principles and should be carried out in a fair and transparent way to ensure free movement of goods and services and non-discrimination.

Some advertising and competition would therefore need to be carried out to ensure that suppliers were treated in accordance with Treaty principles and, also, to achieve value for money in accordance with the UK's procurement policy. The European Commission's interpretative communication, published on 24 July 2006, advises public sector buyers on how to award fairly contracts that are of low monetary value or not fully covered by the EU Directives on public procurement.

The procurement of food supplies, where the value exceeds the EC threshold - circa £100,000 for central government and £144,500 for other public bodies - is subject to the full requirements of the Public Contracts Regulations 2006 (Statutory Instrument 2006 No. 5) and so must be advertised in the Official Journal of the European Union (OJEU).

**Are buyers required to advertise catering contracts in the Official Journal of the European Communities where the value exceeds the EC threshold?**

A. Catering is classed as a Part B service and covered under the Hotel and Restaurant Services category of the Public Contracts Regulations 2006 (Statutory Instrument 2006 No.5). The applicable CPV codes for that category are from 55000000-0 to 55524000-9 and from 93400000-2 to 93411000-2.

Part B services are not subject to the full vigour of the Directives, e.g. covering the advertising route, competition procedures and timescales. However, ALL procurements are covered by EC Treaty principles and procurement should be carried out in a fair and transparent way to ensure free movement of goods and services and non-discrimination.

Some advertising and competition would therefore need to be carried out to ensure that suppliers were treated in accordance with Treaty principles and, also, to achieve value for money in accordance with the UK's procurement policy. The European Commission's interpretative communication, published on 24 July 2006, advises public sector buyers on how to award contracts fairly that are of low monetary value or not fully covered by the EU Directives on public procurement.

The procurement of food supplies, where the value exceeds the EC threshold - circa £100,000 - is subject to the full requirements of the Public Contracts Regulations 2006 (Statutory Instrument 2006 No.5) and so must be advertised in the Official Journal of the European Union (OJEU). These regulations were replaced by a single regulation following the coming into force in the UK of new European Directives in January 2006, but the processes and exclusions remain the same.

**3. Food safety, health and nutrition**

**Why is added emphasis given to food safety?**

A. The PSFPI has always given importance to food safety but, following the review of the initiative in 2007, it was decided to make it more transparent by including it as a priority objective. Statistics provided by the Food Standards Agency show that 600 to 700 people died in 2006 as a direct result of something they ate – mostly due to food poisoning.

There are over 300,000 reported cases of food poisoning each year and still a significant microbiological contamination in the food system. Contaminated food can present a risk to the
consumer and a complex and lengthening supply chain poses considerable challenges for traceability and monitoring, particularly of imports.

**What is the Food and Health Action Plan?**

A. “Choosing better health - a food and health action plan” was published in March 2005. It outlined the key actions necessary at national, regional and local levels to deliver the commitments in the Government’s White Paper “Choosing Health: Making healthier choices easier” published November 2004, i.e. to improve people’s health through improved diet and nutrition. Work to develop the action plan is being taken forward in two distinct phases.

**Phase 1** - identified patterns and trends in nutrient and food intake that impact on health and disease and key influences on diet and eating patterns. The output was the Food and Health Problem Analysis, and was formally issued in July 2003, inviting comments from stakeholders to ensure that the problems had been correctly and comprehensively identified.

**Phase 2** - the Department of Health is working across Government, with the food industry, and with other stakeholders to develop and agree solutions and actions to the problems identified during Phase 1. The resulting coherent national plan will help people in England improve their diets.


*Is the objective in the Public Sector Food procurement Initiative to increase consumption of healthy and nutritious food yet another example of the "nanny state" – this time trying to control what we eat?*

A. Once people get used to fatty, sugary and salty foods they find it hard to give them up to the detriment of their health. Take salt – through strokes and heart disease it is implicated in 35,000 British deaths a year. Take obesity. It increases the risk of diabetes, cancer and heart disease. The UK Government’s Foresight Programme’s report “Tackling Obesities: Future Choices – Modelling Future Trends in Obesity and the Impact on Health” (published 17 October 2007) warns that obesity, if unchecked, will cost the country £45billion by 2050 in lost productivity and patient treatment.

All public sector bodies – especially those that serve the most vulnerable in our society – have a duty to provide healthy meals. This key emphasis on nutrition and healthy eating lies at the heart of Government policy. For example, in the schools sector, the Department for Children, Schools and Families established the School Food Trust in September 2005 to transform school food and food skills, promote the education and health of children and young people and improve the quality of food in schools - [http://www.schoolfoodtrust.org.uk/index.asp](http://www.schoolfoodtrust.org.uk/index.asp).

**Why is healthy food a key objective of the public sector food procurement initiative?**

A. The food we eat, and the way it is produced and manufactured, significantly affects health. Cancer and cardiovascular diseases including heart disease and stroke are the major causes of death in England, together accounting for almost 60% of all premature deaths. The types of diet people eat and, therefore, the food they buy and the way it is processed and prepared can influence the risk of developing these diseases.

It is estimated that a shift to a balanced diet could yield significant health and economic benefits. For example: increasing fruit and vegetable intake by 136 grams a day could prevent 42,000 premature deaths a year (411,000 life years gained); reducing daily salt intake from an average of 9 grams to 6 grams a day could prevent 20,000 premature deaths (170,000 life years gained); and a cut in added sugar intake by 1.75% of energy could prevent 3,500 premature deaths (49,000 life years gained).

The guiding principle is to make it easier for consumers to choose a healthy diet and to remove the barriers that can make it difficult to do so.
4. Local Sourcing

Why does Defra support the local food sector?

A. There are good reasons for supporting the local food sector:

- **Economic** - local food producers create jobs and prosperity for the local (predominantly rural) workforce and provide income less dependent on exchange rates, decisions on CAP policies or commodity price fluctuations; local food production also helps keep money in the local economy. The New Economics Foundation estimates that for every £10 spent locally generates £25 for the local economy – the local multiplier effect.

- **Social** - local food marketing makes consumers more aware of and interested in the origin of food, helping to improve their links with and understanding of the rural economy, food production, land management and rural community issues. Furthermore, the local multiplier effect can help improve the standard of living in poorer communities allowing people to afford more nutritious food that’s better for their health.

- **Environmental** - local foods can provide an important added value outlet for the products of traditional (and more extensive) farming systems that conserve landscape and biodiversity.

What steps is Defra taking to increase tendering opportunities for small and local producers?

A. Steps taken include:

- Holding national conferences and, through the Government Offices for the Regions, regional workshops for buyers and suppliers to increase the uptake of the PSFPI.
- Publishing guides for producers to help them supply the public sector
- Establishing a comprehensive web site with guidance, tools and best practice case studies to help public bodies implement the PSFPI.
- Funding projects in the English regions to develop the capacity of small producers and to improve food supply chains into the public sector.
- Funding English Farming and Food Partnerships (EFFP) to develop a “Share to Supply” programme to encourage and help farmers and food producers cooperate in supplying the public sector.
- Awarding grant funding to EFFP to undertake a 3-year project to promote and develop more collaborative food supply chains, including into the public sector that should help more farmers supply this important market.

What steps are public sector bodies taking to procure British produced food?

A. A key objective of the Government’s Public Sector Food Procurement Initiative is to increase the amount of locally and regionally produced food purchased by public sector bodies.

This cannot be done by restricting business to UK suppliers because the European Treaty prohibits discrimination on the basis of nationality. However, the legal and policy framework for procurement does allow public bodies to create a competitive environment that encourages more domestic producers to bid for public sector business.

Public bodies are being advised to structure contract requirements so that small and local suppliers have the capacity and opportunity to compete and a realistic chance of being successful. One example is to specify more fresh seasonal produce. We are also encouraging public bodies to work in partnership and on a voluntary basis with their food service companies to develop opportunities for local producers to become part of their supply chains.

The scope for applying these measures will vary depending on the size and particular requirements of each public sector contract. Public bodies have an overarching duty to secure value for money and so will have to ensure that the measures they adopt to encourage more supplies of local food are proportionate and justified. Nevertheless, the Government is
confident that more local produce could be supplied to the public sector through the intelligent application of procurement practice.

**Will Defra revise PSFPI guidance to give greater weight to the procurement of locally produced food and drink?**

A. The legal framework governing public procurement does not allow public bodies to give greater weight to locally produced food and drink when awarding contracts. This is because public bodies are required to ensure public procurement is fair, transparent and not used to discriminate by setting up barriers to free trade. It would also reduce competition contrary to UK public procurement policy that is designed to achieve value for money for the taxpayer.

The legal and policy framework does provide public bodies with plenty of flexibility to be innovative in their procurement and, for example, we are encouraging them through the PSFPI to increase tendering opportunities for small and local producers. How they can do this is explained in the advice on the PSFPI web site, including our recently published guide “Putting it into practice” on the Guidance page at [http://www.defra.gov.uk/farm/policy/sustain/procurement/guidance.htm](http://www.defra.gov.uk/farm/policy/sustain/procurement/guidance.htm).

**Is local food generally more nutritious?**

A. Freshness and nutritional value depend in part on how quickly the product is got to market and on the care taken with the product in transit and on display. With modern distribution systems, it is not always the case that local products get to market more quickly than products from further away. Rapid freezing of food can preserve nutrients more effectively than getting fresh food to local markets.

If being produced locally gives a cachet to a fresh product that it would not otherwise have and consumers switch from less healthy alternatives, then local food can have a positive effect on health. There is some evidence that this has happened in schools that have switched to cooking with fresh ingredients with the children receiving meals that are tastier, healthier and more nutritious.

**Q. Why is there not an enforceable definition of local food?**

A. Views are divided on whether a definition of local would be helpful. Some fear that it would lead to increased levels of bureaucracy. Others consider that a definition would ensure the term was not used in a way that could mislead consumers.

Multiple retailers use widely differing definitions of “locally sourced”. Some include regional food. Others define “local food” as produced within 30 miles from the store. Within Government, where a definition is needed, the most common one currently used is food produced, marketed and sold within a 30 miles radius. This is based on the National Association of Farmers’ Markets definition.

The Food Standards Agency are assessing the need for guidelines on the use of the term “local food”, but have not reached a conclusion. Our advice for suppliers of food and catering services to the public sector is for them to agree their own definition and to qualify accordingly data collected to measure their performance in this area.

**Is there a definition of “small supplier” in terms of turnover – the catering industry would class this as less than £16million?**

A. There is no single definition of a small or medium sized firm. Definitions include:

- J E Bolton’s 1971 *Report of the Committee of Inquiry on Small Firms* - states that a small firm is an independent business, managed by its owner or part owners and having a small market share.

- Section 249 of the Companies Act, 1985 - states that a company is 'small' if it satisfies at least two of the following criteria: (1) a turnover of not more than £2.8million; (2) a balance sheet total of not more than £1.4million; and (3) not more than 50 employees. *Medium-
sized companies must satisfy at least two of the following criteria: (1) a turnover of not more than £11.2 million; (2) a balance sheet total of not more than £5.6 million; and (3) not more than 250 employees.

- **Department for Business, Enterprise and Regulatory Reform (DBERR)** – for statistical purposes DBERR usually uses the following definitions: Small firm: 0 - 49 employees (includes micro); Medium firm: 50 - 249 employees; and Large firm: 250 or more employees. The Small Business Services Unit tends to use the DTI definition.

- **European Commission** currently uses the definitions: Small – maximum: 49 employees, annual turnover of €10 million, annual balance sheet total of €10 million, percentage owned 25%; Medium – max 249 employees, turnover of €50 million, annual balance sheet total of €43 million and percentage owned by one or jointly owned by several enterprises not satisfying the same criteria 25%. URL: [http://europa.eu.int/comm/enterprise/enterprise_policy/sme_definition/index_en.htm](http://europa.eu.int/comm/enterprise/enterprise_policy/sme_definition/index_en.htm).

Our advice for suppliers of food and catering services to the public sector is to choose one of these definitions and qualify accordingly data collected to measure their performance in this area.

**What proportion of publicly procured food is produced in the UK?**

Defra published a report on the PSFPI web site in November 2007 giving the proportion of domestically produced food used by government departments and also supplied to hospitals and prisons under contracts negotiated by NHS Supply Chain and HM Prison Service. It is published on the “Raising Awareness” page of the PSFPI web site at [http://www.defra.gov.uk/farm/policy/sustain/procurement/awareness.htm](http://www.defra.gov.uk/farm/policy/sustain/procurement/awareness.htm).

The figures cover the period 1 July 2006 to 30 June 2007 and should be treated as giving a rough guide to the amount of domestically produced food consumed by public sector bodies. This is because they are based on available data and, given that not all public bodies and their first tier suppliers seek provenance, there may be some inaccuracies in the data giving the proportion of domestic produce supplied.

**What proportion of school food is produced in the UK?**

Defra commissioned Ipsos MORI to gauge awareness of the PSFPI in schools and local authorities in 2007. The survey included questions on the proportion of tenders from small and local producers, including meat producers. The results were positive with:

- three in five schools (59%) and four in five Local Authorities stating that they encourage tenders from small and local producers;
- almost seven in ten local authorities (69%) stating that at least half the food supplied to schools in their area is from small and local producers;
- half of the schools (53%) stating that at least half of their food is supplied by small and local producers while one in ten schools (9%) say that all their food is supplied from these producers.

The report also found that in 52% of the local authorities and 44% of schools the proportion of food supplied by small and local producers during the last two to three years had increased.

A copy of the Ipsos MORI survey is on the PSFPI web site at [http://www.defra.gov.uk/farm/policy/sustain/procurement/school-food.htm](http://www.defra.gov.uk/farm/policy/sustain/procurement/school-food.htm). It was conducted during the period March to July 2007 and covered 81 local authorities and 255 schools.

**Have you got a percentage target for the amount of supplies that should be from a local source?**

A. The difficulty in setting a target for local sourcing is that it could be interpreted as encouraging public sector bodies to favour local suppliers.

The legal framework for public procurement does not permit public sector buyers to restrict their purchases to specific locations or suppliers. The EU Treat and procurement directives are designed to ensure that all suppliers have the same opportunity to bid for public sector contracts and that the process is fair and transparent. The rules do however allow public
bodies to increase tendering opportunities for small and local producers, for example, by specifying freshness, seasonality and taste. See guidance on Defra’s web site. URL: http://www.defra.gov.uk/farm/policy/sustain/procurement/index.htm.

We would like our food service suppliers to play an active part in achieving this aim by ensuring that small and local suppliers are given opportunities to be part of their supply chains, provided they are able to offer value for money and meet quality considerations such as safety, security of supply and nutritional requirements.

Is it legal to specify PDO (Protected Designation of Origin) or PGI (Protected Geographical Indication) certified products?

PDOs and PGI are products that have been registered under EU schemes that grant protection to regional and traditional foods whose authenticity and origin can be guaranteed. The schemes are similar to the familiar ‘appellation contrôlée’ system used for wine.

The public procurement directives permit references to specific products such as those registered under EU approved schemes where the subject of the contract justifies this. For example, you could specify Stilton in order to make a Stilton and broccoli soup. A list of PDO and PGI products is available at http://www.defra.gov.uk/foodrin/foodname/pfn/index.htm.

When specifying such products, the words “or equivalent” must be included although the contracting authority would have the right to reject any product that did not meet the underlying need. Contracting authorities must not however design specifications in order to deliberately discriminate against products and producers from other areas or Member States.

Is locally produced food healthier?

A. Freshness and nutritional value depend in part on how quickly the product is got to market and on the care taken with the product in transit and on display. With modern distribution systems, it is not always the case that local products get to market more quickly than products from further away. Rapid freezing of food can preserve nutrients more effectively than getting fresh food to local markets.

If being produced locally gives a cachet to a fresh product that it would not otherwise have and consumers switch from less healthy alternatives, then local food can have a positive effect on health. There is some evidence from schools that have switched to fresh ingredients that the children are receiving meals that are tastier, healthier and more nutritious.

Why is it so difficult for small local producers to gain access to public sector markets?

A. It is appreciated that small suppliers face difficulties in doing business with public sector bodies, because of the substantial resources and tight timescales required to bid for the contracts. A key objective of the PSFPI is to increase the opportunities for, and ability of, small and local suppliers to compete to supply public sector bodies with food and catering services. Actions taken to achieve this include:

- Advice for suppliers selling directly to the public sector (http://www.defra.gov.uk/farm/policy/sustain/procurement/sellingpublic.htm)
- Advice for suppliers selling indirectly via, for example, food service companies and wholesalers (http://www.defra.gov.uk/farm/policy/sustain/procurement/sellingprimary.htm)
- English Farming and Food Partnership’s “Share to Supply” programme designed to help farmers collaborate with others to better satisfy the demand for fresher, healthier, better quality food in schools, hospitals and other public institutions. (http://www.sharetofarm.com/)
- Regional pilots to develop the supply side (http://www.defra.gov.uk/farm/policy/sustain/procurement/projects.htm)
- Publication of a Catering Services and Food Procurement Toolkit (http://www.defra.gov.uk/farm/policy/sustain/procurement/tools.htm)

What problems have been encountered with small suppliers?

One large food service company supplying the public sector has reported that it is a struggle to get small suppliers up to basic operating standards, although they were keen to encourage
them, as they are generally innovative. Few of the local suppliers knew about “due diligence”. Nor were they necessarily complying with existing legal requirements as a minimum. They also had no appreciation of the obligations arising from contractual arrangements or understanding of the extent of the primary supplier's market, e.g. in schools, hospitals. There was also a need for a more professional attitude, e.g. SME managers did not attend briefing sessions that the food service company organised for them.

However, as the case studies on the PSFPI web site show, there are small suppliers that are responding to the challenge: [http://www.defra.gov.uk/farm/policy/sustain/procurement/casestudies/index.htm](http://www.defra.gov.uk/farm/policy/sustain/procurement/casestudies/index.htm)

**What is being done to help small and local suppliers get a fairer crack of the whip while abiding with the EU Treaty and procurement regulations?**

**A.** A key objective of the PSFPI is to increase tenders from small and local producers and their ability to do business.

Steps taken include: standardising contracts and publicising them more widely; providing guidance and training for potential suppliers; running projects to develop the supply side; and encouraging greater cooperation among producers and along food supply chains through English Farming and Food Partnership’s “Share to Supply” and “Collaborative Supply Chain” programmes.

More information is given on the PSFPI web site with the guide “Putting it into practice” providing a wealth of knowledge that can help public bodies and their suppliers become more sustainable and save money too. It’s on the guidance page at [http://www.defra.gov.uk/farm/policy/sustain/procurement/guidance.htm](http://www.defra.gov.uk/farm/policy/sustain/procurement/guidance.htm).

**Does the Government have any good stories to tell on local food sourcing?**

**A.** Case studies on the PSFPI web site show a number of good stories on local sourcing - [http://www.defra.gov.uk/farm/policy/sustain/procurement/casestudies/index.htm](http://www.defra.gov.uk/farm/policy/sustain/procurement/casestudies/index.htm).


**What is Defra doing to pursue local sourcing and sustainable food procurement within its own catering units?**

**A.** Officials are working in partnership with Defra’s catering contractors to deliver PSFPI objectives. Progress made is shown in the report “Proportion of domestically produced food used by government departments and also supplied to hospitals and prisons under contracts negotiated by NHS Supply Chain and HM Prison Service - 1 July 2006 to 30 June 2007 (PDF 100 KB).”

**What help is provided to support local initiatives?**

**A.** The Public Sector Food Procurement Initiative is designed to increase tendering opportunities for small and local producers and suppliers and their ability to do business, for example, by becoming more competitive in meeting public sector requirements.

The Government Offices for the Regions and the Regional Development Agencies are running projects to develop the supply side. They are also assisting farmers and growers in identifying schemes and grants that can help them meet public sector requirements for quantity, quality, consistency and security of supply. Details of these schemes are published under “Funding” linked to the “Regions” page of the PSFPI web site at [http://www.defra.gov.uk/farm/policy/sustain/procurement/regions.htm](http://www.defra.gov.uk/farm/policy/sustain/procurement/regions.htm).

5. Supply side

What supply side difficulties has the Government identified?
A. Among the problems experienced by public procurement practitioners are:

- Some difficulty in getting the UK farming and growing industry to supply in consistent volume and quality to meet their specifications (e.g. MoD buys frozen lamb from overseas because UK lamb suppliers are geared up to export live animals);
- In many cases, with the exception of pork, there is a premium for meeting specifications by UK producers and suppliers and budgets cannot support the cost of meeting that premium.
- Consumers expect to be able to eat all year round foods that have a limited growing season in the UK.

What is the response of producers to the PSFPI?

A. Producers have expressed concerns about low margins and the bureaucracy in doing business with public sector. But they are becoming more positive with, for example, 91% of delegates to a national suppliers’ conference in 2005 saying they are now more likely to look for public sector opportunities and 94% saying they now have a better understanding of how the public sector conducts its business - http://www.defra.gov.uk/farm/policy/sustain/procurement/nationalconference/foodsuppliers.htm

The activity of non government bodies like the NFU are also helping to interest producers in the public sector, e.g. by raising awareness with features on supplying the public sector in publications such as British Farmer and Grower. URL: http://www.nfuonline.com/x23951.xml (31 October 2007).

What is the scope for small farmers and growers to supply directly to the public sector?

The scope for small local producers to supply the public sector directly will depend on the size and particular requirements of each public sector contract.

The small producer may find a local school or college providing its own catering in-house a ready customer for its produce, e.g. schools that have ‘opted out’ to provide their own catering have achieved great success in engaging local suppliers. Examples are given on the case study page of the PSFPI web site at http://www.defra.gov.uk/farm/policy/sustain/procurement/casestudies/index.htm.

For other small producers the most practicable way of supplying food to the public sector is probably as a supplier to a catering contractor or wholesaler, or by cooperating with other producers. English Farming and Food Partnership's “Share to Supply” programme is helping farmers to collaborate to better satisfy public sector demand for fresher, better quality food in schools, hospitals and other public bodies – http://www.sharetofarm.com/x40.xml.

What is the difference between primary (or first tier) suppliers and second (or lower) tier suppliers?

From a customer's perspective: a first tier supplier is a supplier that invoices the customer for goods and services provided directly by that supplier (first-tier); and a second tier supplier is a sub contractor that invoices the first-tier supplier for goods and services supplied.

What advice can you give a potential first time supplier to the public sector?

A. Most public sector bodies are responsible for their own purchasing needs, and the best way to do business with them is to bid for advertised contracts. Contracts over certain thresholds (about £100,000) are advertised in the Official Journal of the European Union (OJEU). URL: http://ted.publications.eu.int/. Contracts below these thresholds are not advertised in a single place. Some departments advertise these contracts in the press, others may use frameworks and others advertise on line.

Links to the departments that advertise on line can be found in the Contact Finder section on the Office of Government Commerce's web site. The Office of Government Commerce and the Small Business Service have established a national opportunities portal web site, Supply2Gov,
to provide firms in the UK with access to opportunities below £100,000. URL: http://www.supply2.gov.uk/.

The NHS Purchasing and Supply Agency have a supplier registration programme, where you can enter your details on line to enable the agency to contact you with possible contract opportunities.

For contracts below £100k in value or where the product or service is particularly innovative it may be more appropriate to select a department or a number of departments and contact them directly. There is a facility to do this on the Office of Government Commerce web site.

URLs:
- OGC’s search engine for Government contacts: http://www.ogc.gov.uk/contractsdatabase/list_all_contracts_505.asp
- Tenders Electronic Daily: http://ted.publications.eu.int/official/
- NHS Supply Chain www.supplychain.nhs.uk/
- Defra’s Public Sector Food Procurement web site gives links to sites providing advice for Small and Medium Enterprises. URL: http://www.defra.gov.uk/farm/policy/sustain/procurement/sellingprimary.htm.

6. Food Assurance

What is the position on farm assurance standards in the PSFPi?

A. The PSFPi aims is to encourage public bodies to use their buying power to improve methods of production and animal welfare by specifying, as a minimum, relevant farm assurance standards and accepting, where appropriate Red Tractor criteria or equivalent as evidence that suppliers meet these standards. In a similar way progressing to higher standards such as, where appropriate, Linking Environment and Farming (LEAF) or equivalent for integrated farming or EC Regulation 2092/91 for organics.

Defra’s catering toolkit includes a model specification clause covering farm assurance and organic standards that Assured Food Standards and the NFU are promoting to public bodies through their own leaflet. Specifying farm assurance standards helps to create a more level playing field for our producers, as standards of husbandry are higher than in most other countries.

Does the requirement on public sector bodies to achieve value for money work against producers who adhere to farm assurance schemes that go beyond minimum legal requirements on issues such as animal health and welfare?

A. Value for money is defined as the combination of quality and whole-life costs. The buyer is able to specify quality standards set by farm assurance schemes and even go beyond such standards provided suppliers have an opportunity of demonstrating equivalence through other schemes or by other means.

Buyers can give preference to bids that exceed minimum specified standards if the intention to do so was made clear to all bidders. A clause that public sector buyers can use to specify farm assurance is included in the model specifications forming part of the Catering Services and Food Procurement Toolkit - http://www.defra.gov.uk/farm/policy/sustain/procurement/toolkit.htm.

Where the specification of high standards places additional costs on the supplier then we would expect them to reflect this in the prices charged, but this would not compromise value for money because the buyer is getting a higher quality product. Buyers must be satisfied that the balance between cost and quality represents an efficient and effective use of resources.

What is the point of buyers specifying assurance schemes that qualify for the Red Tractor label?
A. The main focus of assurance schemes is food safety, though they also cover environmental and, where appropriate, animal welfare issues. Supermarkets have long recognised the benefit of such schemes in providing a degree of assurance, backed by independent audit, that certain specified standards have been met. Although the standards are based on minimum legal requirements they also take account of, and sometimes exceed, the requirements of Codes of Good Agricultural Practice.

The standards in the baseline schemes are also used as a foundation for higher-level schemes such as Freedom Foods and LEAF. More information on assurance standards is given in the guide “Putting it into practice” published on the Guidance page of the PSFPI website - http://www.defra.gov.uk/farm/policy/sustain/procurement/guidance.htm.

Can you identify the key assurance standards you would like us to work with and the parameters they work within?

A. Our aim is to encourage public sector authorities to specify, as a minimum, that food supplied should be produced to meet the standards that are set by assurance schemes accredited to EN45011 or equivalent standards. In particular we want to establish specification criteria that govern production and process methods, animal welfare (where appropriate), environmental impacts, food safety and traceability.

Baseline schemes such as those eligible to use the Red Tractor logo would meet this minimum requirement, as would schemes such as Freedom Foods and LEAF, which require the observance of higher standards. Suppliers who do not belong to such schemes should be given an opportunity to demonstrate that they are complying with equivalent standards.

Where higher standards are specified we would expect any associated costs to be reflected in competitive bids. Public sector buyers have to satisfy themselves that the balance between cost and quality represents an efficient and effective use of resources. They can learn from UK supermarkets that have long recognised the benefit of assurance schemes backed by independent audit.

A clause covering farm assurance is included in the model specifications forming part of the Catering and Food Procurement Toolkit at http://www.defra.gov.uk/farm/policy/sustain/procurement/pdf/psfpi.pdf.

7. Organic Food

Why not set a target of between 30-60% organic ingredients to be used in recipes within say five years rather than encouraging caterers to provide an organic option, which is impracticable?

A. Setting such a target would certainly be possible although there might be difficulties about claiming the use of the organic ingredients, as the proportion of organic ingredients that qualifies a product to be described as organic is defined by EU law.

There are two options:

1. describe the product as organic, in which case at least 95% of the ingredients must have been produced organically, or

2. describe some of the ingredients of a product as organic, in which case the ingredients described as organic must amount to at least 70% of the product.

Pilot schemes in Defra show that to provide organic options can be a popular choice with diners so this approach does seem to be working.


A. The European Commission, in a letter of 27 April 2005, clarified that there is no legal requirement for catering establishments serving organic food to be registered as organic operators (http://www.defra.gov.uk/farm/policy/sustain/procurement/pdf/organicfarming-letter.pdf).
Defra is discussing with organic certifiers the possibility of them producing a voluntary code of practice to help caterers understand organic principles and comply with customers’ expectations. URL: This is under discussion at ACOS - see minutes of meetings (http://www.defra.gov.uk/farm/organic/standards/index.htm). The Soil Association has developed standards which can be built on for a national set of guidelines in due course - http://www.soilassociation.org/.

8. Animal welfare

What is the PSFPI doing to deliver the animal welfare dimensions of the Government’s Sustainable Farming and Food Strategy?

A. Defra is encouraging public sector bodies to specify higher animal welfare standards and, for that reason, has developed a model specification clause that promotes farm assurance standards, including those of higher level schemes such as Freedom Foods, or equivalent.

The model clause allows buyers to give a higher weighting for produce meeting higher level standards when awarding contracts. It is included Defra’s catering toolkit at http://www.defra.gov.uk/farm/policy/sustain/procurement/pdf/psfpi-clauses.pdf.

Does the PSFPI give guidance on the procurement of conventional battery eggs?

The PSFPI does not contain any specific guidance on purchasing eggs. However, objectives which apply to all food purchases include: increasing tendering opportunities for small and local food producers; raising standards of production; and addressing barriers to supply.

Defra published in a new guide, “Putting it into practice” in November 2007 that promotes animal welfare along with other PSFPI objectives.

9. Fairly traded

Can public sector bodies specify Fairtrade products?

Reference should be to fair trade (or “fairly traded”?) not “Fairtrade”. It is illegal under the EC public procurement directives to specify a trademark or to make the provision of fairly traded goods a requirement of a public sector contract. However, as explained in guidance produced by the Office of Government Commerce and Defra, there are ways of providing such goods, see:

- Section G of Annex 1 of Appendix 2 to the catering toolkit at http://www.defra.gov.uk/farm/policy/sustain/procurement/toolkit.htm

In essence this means public sector buyers can do no more than encourage caterers and food suppliers to source fairly traded products through voluntary non-contractual means. If there is sufficient demand for fairly traded products from say staff paying for the food out of their own pockets with no subsidy from public money then authorities can seek to broker a deal, but specifying fairly traded products in public contracts is not permitted.

Defra’s guidance on food procurement states that “where appropriate – provide fair trade and food produced under ethical assurance schemes as options – reflecting such needs in non-discriminatory specifications... “. Why is it not a requirement for public sector bodies to offer fair trade food as standard?

The EC procurement directives do not permit public sector authorities to set requirements in contract specifications about the social capacity of an undertaking. As such, specifying that products must have a fairly traded label is not permissible. That is why we advocate an approach that encourages buyers to work in partnership with their suppliers and caterers to provide fairly traded options where such options provide value for money, without making it a requirement or criterion.

The requirement on public sector bodies to comply with EC procurement Directives does not however apply to situations where staff or members of the public pay for food out of their own
pockets direct to the contractor. Such customers can choose to demand fairly traded goods without regard to cost or discrimination against non-fairly traded products. There is of course the risk for caterers that having sourced fairly traded products customers baulk at paying higher prices.

Fairly traded tea and coffee are already served in many Departments’ canteens, Defra included, at no extra cost. A few also provide fairly traded chocolate, orange juice and bananas. Fairly traded goods cover relatively few product areas (mainly tea, coffee, orange juice, chocolate, honey, bananas). More information on “fair trade” is given on the PSFPI website. URL: http://www.defra.gov.uk/farm/policy/sustain/procurement/trade.htm.

10. Working conditions of catering employees

What are you looking for to achieve “better working conditions for staff”?

A. Basically to provide healthy working conditions, safe-working methods, well maintained plant and equipment and responsible supervision so that personal injury, work-related illness, property damage, and unplanned interruptions are prevented or minimised.

Furthermore, to provide appropriate information and training so that all employees are aware of their duty to provide and promote a safe, hygienic, healthy and nutritious catering service by observing the law, rules and regulations and adhering to requirements specified within the contract of the contracting authority and related policies.

In short we’d expect catering contractors to treat their staff in a way that does not bring embarrassment to the contracting authorities.

11. School food

Q. What is the Government doing to improve school food?

The Department for Children, Schools and Families established the School Food Trust in September 2005 to transform school food and food skills, promote the education and health of children and young people and improve the quality of food in schools - http://www.schoolfoodtrust.org.uk/index.asp.

The Government has also provided additional resources to improve school food. It announced on 30 March 2005 an extra £280 million for school meals and support for schools and local education authorities in providing healthy food1. This followed the launch of the Children’s Mini-Manifesto by the Secretary of State for Education, on 21 March 2005, which included: (1) greater emphasis on nutrition; (2) inclusion of improvements to kitchen and dining areas in the new schools refurbishment programme; and (3) better training for catering staff.

The Government has since provided another additional £240m to continue to subsidise healthy ingredients until 2011 after the current £220m transitional fund runs out in 2007/082. It has also published legally binding minimum nutrition standards for school food to ensure healthier eating throughout the school day, banning meals high in salt, fat and sugar or containing low quality meat from lunchtime menus.3

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1 DFES’ press notice of 30 March 2005 announcing the extra funding is at http://www.dfes.gov.uk/pns/DisplayPN.cgi?pn_id=2005_0044
2 Government announces multi-million pound package to improve school food and fight childhood obesity. DfES (now DCSF) press notice of 4 September 2006 giving details of measures to subsidise healthy ingredients, improve training for catering staff, build kitchens and increase tendering opportunities for small and local producers.
3 Setting the standards for school food - DCSF Press Notice of 19 May 2006 - Details of new minimum nutrition standards for school food with “Notes for Editors” containing links to useful sources of information including new guidelines and procurement guidance.