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Prepared on 15 October, 2021 by Siôn Pickering for the Good Food Policy Working Group.

Good Food Policy Update 2020-21

Description of the paper

This paper provides an update on actions taken as part of the Good Food Policy by the University in 2020-21, challenges faced, and sets out proposed actions for the 2021-22 year.

Successful actions in 2020-21

Re-introduction of disposable cup levy

Catering outlets at the University and Students' Association remained closed a significant proportion of 2020-21 and, when these were opened, a number of measures were taken to safeguard outlet staff and their customers to avoid cross-contamination of Covid-19. As such, availability of single use items such as cups and cutlery increased over this time. In recent months, the University and Students' Association have restored the disposable cup levy at all catering outlets.

Figures provided by ACE note that, compared to the baseline (2017-18), sale of disposable cups in September 2021 was down 62%. This was a decrease of ~35% compared to September 2020 (noting that not all ACE outlets were open in September 2020, which may skew this latter figure). It is too early to establish whether this reduction will continue throughout the 2021-22 academic year.

Development of sustainability, health & wellbeing outlet

For the University, one of the key highlights for this year is the development of Bloom Café in Kings Buildings.

"Bloom focuses on healthy, affordable, local, seasonal and nutritious foods – with plant based alternatives where possible. The café has an emphasis on health & wellbeing as a whole package, combining wholesome nutritional food with a more sustainable operation and an environment that promotes positive mental wellbeing"

SRS have worked closely with colleagues in ACE to trial a number of new initiatives at Bloom including: a wider range of reusable items; graphics to educate staff and students regarding good food at the University; introducing living plants to the space to support environmental wellbeing (in progress at time of writing). It is hoped that Bloom will act as a test centre for sustainable initiatives which can then be rolled out more widely across the University once shown to be effective.

Planetary menus

The University and Students' Association have supported a student-led project (Planetary Menus) to introduce and promote a series of menus aligned with the [EAT-Lancet report](#). The planetary menus project runs for four weeks from September 2021, with each week focusing on a different sustainability theme (e.g. Fairtrade & ethical eating or food waste). ACE have committed to include 18 dedicated menus at the JMCC catering outlet at Pollock Halls over the course of the project.

This project is currently underway at time of writing and so no outcomes are available at this time. However, anecdotal feedback received by ACE from students is positive, and the project is gaining good traction through its social media. Further feedback will be sought from students at the end of the project.

Though the planetary menu doesn't remove meat or animal products from all plates within the meal plan, there is a significant reduction in the meat or animal produce actors the project. As such, this project is supporting the University's goal to increase plant-based and vegetarian plates to at least 50% across all outlets, and is improving the understanding and awareness of such initiatives at the University.

Research opportunities

The University continued to support a number of research opportunities in 2020-21 including:

Students as Change Agents (SACHA): Fairtrade

Three groups focused on the question: How can Scotland move beyond awareness raising and have the Fair Trade concept instilled in public consciousness and buying practices? This was run over the 2021 summer, as part of the [Students as Change Agents](#) programme in Careers Services. SRS supported this project and connected with the Edinburgh Fairtrade Forum and Scottish Fairtrade Forum.

Masters Dissertation: Perceptions and positioning of to milk in retail settings

SRS supported a student with their Masters Dissertation which focused on the perceptions and positioning of milk in retail settings. At the time of writing, the dissertation had been submitted for marking, with a copy of the dissertation being made available to SRS when allowed.

Global University Climate Forum: Review of the Good Food Policy

SRS supported a group of five students through the Global University Climate Forum to analyse the Good Food Policy from a student perspective, with a focus on reducing food waste. A number of recommendations were put forward for actions that would align with, and enhance, the Good Food Policy. These included: Provide a list of food suppliers and sources (to increase transparency); Introduce 'no-tray days' at catered halls of residence; and include students in menu planning. A PDF copy of this report is available [here](#).

Acknowledging Success

In 2020-21, the University was awarded its eighth bronze "*Food For Life Served Here*" award for its consistent effort in providing healthy and sustainable menus. In addition, the University's catering team was rewarded with the "*Peas Please – Rising Star*" award for its drive to encourage the consumption of more fresh vegetables. The pledge put forward by the University for Peas Please is challenging and will push the University through to 2023.

Students Association

Though not formally named within the Good Food Policy, the Students Association continue to support the key principles within their outlets, and have recently ratified a sustainability strategy at the organisational level. It is expected that sustainable food will continue to be a prominent theme within their work. Some of the actions noted by the Students' Association for 2021-22 are the continuation of the Disposable Cup Levy (aligned with the University); reintroduction of the zero-waste corner in 40 George Square following the temporary closure due to Covid-19; evaluation of rolling out zero-waste outlets across a wider range of outlets; continuing to support the University and Students' Association Fairtrade Award; and supporting student-led projects such as the Planetary Menu project at Pollock Halls.

Challenges in 2020-21

Strains within University supply chains

One of the most significant challenges facing the University in regards to the Good Food Policy is the resilience of current supply chains. A number of factors, which include Covid-19, have led to a strain on University catering supply chains. In real terms, this has meant that menus may have needed to be adapted

at short notice, new suppliers have been engaged for key ingredients, and stock has been sourced from suppliers with a reduced workforce.

As such, it is noted that it has not been possible to undertake certain Good Food Policy actions. This is particularly evident with regards to certain actions from the Palm Oil Policy where the University has not pressed suppliers since the Covid-19 pandemic started in March 2020. As supply chains begin to settle, and resilience grows, it is expected that the University and Students' Association will focus once more on this important area.

One clear example of the impact on University supply chains is the use of waste coffee grounds to form soil conditioner through a partner – Revive Eco. Unfortunately this process has paused due to the insolvency of the courier company used by Revive Eco to pick up the coffee grounds from University cafes. Revive Eco are looking to establish a suitable alternative courier within Edinburgh. Until a new courier is in place, all coffee grounds are currently added to the University's food waste, which is processed via aerobic digestion.

Deferral of award & accreditation submissions

Due to the impact of Covid-19 on a number of key stakeholders, the University and Students' Association deferred their Fairtrade Award submission by one year to February 2022. A number of the criteria have yet to be complete, including those with strong links to the Good Food Policy. The Fair Trade Working group have now started to meet regularly in order to achieve the agreed criteria. However, the timescale for achieving some criteria may not be possible due to ongoing challenges within the supply chains.

One of the Fairtrade Award criteria which is expected to be met is the introduction of new Point of Sale (POS) graphics to highlight Fairtrade and other sustainability credentials. SRS are developing these, and are expecting to share with key stakeholder towards the end of 2021. In part this has been undertaken through the inclusion of a large wall graphic within the Bloom café (noted above) which highlights the Good Food Policy, and work undertaken within this policy.

In addition to the Fairtrade Award, the University is working toward reaccreditation of the "Food for the Brain" accreditation (an annual accreditation which showcases the University's commitment to healthy eating) and the "Sustainable Restaurant Association Award" (renewed every 2-years, focusing on three pillars of sustainability: Sourcing, Society, and Environment). Both of these were due for completion on 2020-21 and have been deferred to 2021-22 due to resource pressures due to Covid-19 pandemic.

Updates on 2020-21 actions

| Proposed actions | Progress | Notes |
|---|--|--|
| Expanding our range of vegetarian and plant-based options, and ensuring that at least 50% of meal options in our outlets continue to be vegetarian or plant-based | Complete | All outlets offer at least 50% meal options are vegetarian or plant-based. This is taken into account when new menus are planned. |
| Establishing a Good Food Working Group to oversee the implementation of our Good Food Policy | Launched in April 2021 | First meeting held in Spring 2021 with follow up in October 2021 |
| Discouraging disposable cup use via our disposable cup levy (currently paused due to Covid-19) and looking at other ways to remove single-use items from our catering service, in line with the University's zero-waste ambition | Completed | Disposable Cup Levy back in place at all ACE catering outlets following short term changes due to Covid-19. Addition of sustainable cutlery and beeswax wrap trial at Bloom café. |
| Joining the Peas Please initiative, which aims to bring together farmers, retailers, fast food and restaurant chains, caterers, processors and government departments with a common goal of making it easier for everyone to eat veg (announced January 2021) | Completed | Joined Peas Please and received "rising star" award for our commitment / pledges |
| Implementing the University's Palm Oil Policy | Some actions paused | A review of the Palm Oil supply chain was paused due to staffing constraints and there has been limited capacity to engage with suppliers. Suppliers are also struggling with staff resourcing and delays or unavailability of products within their supply chains. |
| Introducing new Point of Sale materials to better highlight fair trade and sustainable options in our cafes | In progress. Due to be completed by end of 2021. | Paused while cafes and outlets were shut due to Covid-19. SRS now working to develop these with new product ranges at cafes and the University gift shop. Good food graphic in Bloom highlights some of this work and is designed to be adapted in the future as new actions are undertaken |
| Continuing to offer opportunities for staff and students to learn about sustainable food | Completed | Continued addition within SRS training packages (Introduction to Sustainability, Taking Action for a Sustainable World, carbon literacy) Offering student placements and supporting research projects (e.g. CSSD, Living labs, SACHA, Global University Climate Forum) |

Agreed actions for 2021-22

For 2021-22 it has been agreed that the University will take the following actions. Because of the disruption caused in 2020-21, it was agreed by the Good Food Working Group that the actions that could not be completed in 2020-21 will be rolled over to 2021-22. Where actions have been completed, these are updated for 2021-22.

| Proposed actions | Status |
|---|--------------------------|
| Continue to expand our range of vegetarian and plant-based options. Ensuring that at least 50% of meal options in our outlets continue to be vegetarian or plant-based. Evaluate the uptake of these options across the University, potentially as a living lab research project. | Updated for 2021-22 |
| Arrange for the Good Food Working Group to meet three times per year to discuss actions taken and work together to overcome barriers | Updated for 2021-22 |
| Continue to discourage disposable cup use via the disposable cup levy. Evaluate success of reusable items at Bloom and establish feasibility of rolling these out more widely, in line with the University's zero-waste ambition | Updated for 2021-22 |
| Work towards achieving the University's Peas Please pledge through: Increasing the number of vegetable side-serving options in hot food retail outlets; Increasing the number of vegetarian salad options in grab n' go cafe outlets; Increase the average weight of vegetables used per recipe from 90 grams to 150 grams per serving; Highlight and promote vegetables through Cook Along videos for at least 300 students who are self-isolating in self-catered halls | Updated for 2021-22 |
| Implement the University's Palm Oil Policy, with a specific focus on resuming the Palm Oil supply chain review | Rolled over from 2020-21 |
| Introducing new Point of Sale materials to better highlight fair trade and sustainable options in our cafes | Rolled over from 2020-21 |
| Offer opportunities for staff and students to learn about sustainable food. In part, providing access to relevant data on food, waste or reuse from catering outlets. | Updated for 2021-22 |
| Work towards awards or accreditations, including "Food for the Brain" and the "Sustainable Restaurant Association Award" | Rolled over from 2020-21 |