



WWF *for a living planet*

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WWF UK's response to the draft Healthier Food Mark

WWF-UK welcomes the opportunity to respond to this consultation on the draft Healthier Food Mark for the public sector. In January 2009 WWF UK launched its One Planet Food programme aimed at reducing the impacts of our eating habits on the environment. We previously responded to the DEFRA consultation on securing food supplies up to 2050¹, and the FSA consultation on its advice on Fish Consumption. Currently we are working on a One Planet Diet which is looking at how diet can be both healthy and sustainable.

The concept of a Healthier Food Mark is both timely and important, as the need to address the impacts of food on health and the environment has never been more apparent and the need for swift, decisive action more urgent. Government should be leading on this, no more so than in its own procurement policy, in helping its staff to move towards a sustainable diet and to lead by example. The idea behind the Healthier Food Mark is admirable and incorporates some key elements, those being procurement, catering practice and sustainability.

WWF UK applauds many of the elements of this plan as moving forward and being attainable, with many practical, possible components, though there are several areas that need further consideration.

The primary overarching concern is that it is a voluntary commitment. Due to the urgency of the situation and the need for government to show leadership this must be compulsory, as a voluntary food mark will probably have limited value and limited participants. A mandatory commitment to the food mark would demonstrate how government departments are leading by example and are able to follow their own recommendations. This would make it easier for caterers to supply departments as there only need to be one set of standards they would have to meet. This would enable caterers and the government to keep costs down as the suppliers would not have to produce different amounts of similar produce that will be provided according to different standards.

The Healthier Food Mark is producer focused. This is fine to a certain extent but to have the maximum impact the food mark should deal with the problem of consumption, especially the need to reduce meat and dairy consumption, this being a major cause of greenhouse gas emissions. The chair of the IPCC, Dr Rajendra Pachauri, said in September 2008 that a reduction in meat and dairy consumption would help tackle climate change, a position echoed by the NHS in January 2009. This is an area the Healthier Food Mark needs to address, as a reduction in meat and dairy consumption will have health and environmental benefits. A recent report from Imperial college London has highlighted that if people followed the advice on the FSA's eat well plate they would consume less meat and dairy and more fruit and vegetables. The resultant impact that consumption would be reduced enough to achieve the UK's 2020 GHG targets with no nutritional deficit. By promoting the eat well plate within government there will be health and environmental benefits in line with current governmental advice. A recent report by Imperial college² that examines strategies for reducing red meat and dairy

¹ WWF UK's response to the DEFRA enquiry into securing food supplies up to 2050: The challenges for the UK http://assets.wwf.org.uk/downloads/2050_food_consultation.pdf

² Jackson, B et al, (2009) "Strategies for reducing red meat and dairy consumption in the UK" Imperial College, London



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consumption has concluded that based on the evidence by simply following the advice on the eat well plate there will be a 25% reduction in GHG emissions while making significant health gains, a win win situation. As well as caterers providing meals based on the eat well plate's recommendations it would be useful to ensure all public sector workers are made aware of and trained in the eat well plate, what its purpose is and how they will benefit from following it.

The Healthier Food Mark would also benefit from Clear nutritional guidance on what makes up a healthy diet with weekly recommendations, such as 1-2 portions of oily fish, the amount of meat and dairy needed and alternate sources of protein to replace white fish and some meat consumption.

Another area that could be approved is around fish supply. As a founder of the Marine Stewardship Council (MSC), WWF UK has extensive knowledge and experience of the seafood sector and a detailed understanding of the state of the world's fisheries, as well as how much seafood is beneficial in a diet. MSC sourced seafood is playing a vital part in the current food chain, with supermarkets such as Tesco and Sainsbury's committing to only source MSC fish. A valuable contribution to this drive towards protecting the world's fisheries and to more people only buying MSC fish would be, as part of the Healthier Food Mark, a commitment to 100% MSC sourced fish on all menus.

The consultation makes no mention of palm oil which is used in a wide range of consumer products, from margarine to lipstick and detergent. Most of the nine million loaves of bread eaten every day in the UK are made in industrial bakeries and contain vegetable fat, often made from palm oil. In countries such as Indonesia and Malaysia, millions of hectares of rainforest have been cleared to plant this crop. Forest conversion is continuing, destroying the habitat of highly endangered species such as the Asian elephant, the Sumatran tiger and the orang-utan.

WWF is a founder member of the Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil (RSPO) which aims to ensure that production and use of palm oil is carried out in a sustainable manner based on economic, social and environmental viability. Ecologically-friendly palm oil plantations must not replace forests of high conservation value or deep peat soils, should have management practices that minimize pollution, and must include measures to protect biodiversity such as wildlife and forest corridors. As part of the Healthier Food Mark WWF UK believes that there should be a public commitment to only using RSPO certified palm oil by 2015.

WWF UK is supportive of the Healthier Food Mark and recognises that it has many good components. If the above changes were made the Healthier Food Mark would enable government to demonstrate its total commitments to a healthier, sustainable food system, and to lead nationally and internationally.

The healthier food mark should provide overarching information on sustainable food that would be used to inform all participants, from suppliers to consumers. This should demonstrate the environmental and health benefits of a sustainable diet and what it should incorporate. The need for people to reduce meat and dairy consumption in their diets has to be highlighted, as this will have both environmental and health implications. As a whole people have too much of these in their diets and the government should be instrumental in reducing consumption within its own offices. This information could also be used to continue supporting and disseminating the 5 a day information and other tools such as the FSA's eatwell plate.