

Report Summary: Sustainable food at the University of Cambridge

Laura Farrell, IARU intern, 4th July - 5th August 2016 (5 weeks)

Overview: This project investigated the impacts of reducing meat consumption (part of the the draft sustainable food policy of the University Catering Service).

Project objectives: Build an evidence base detailing how the implementation of the draft sustainable food policy has affected University Catering Services purchasing, sales, finances, customer satisfaction and overall environmental impact by:

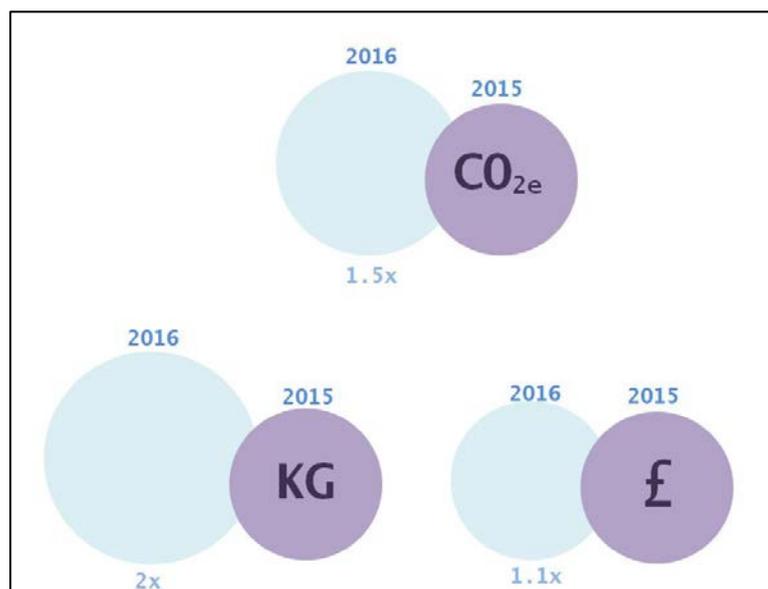
- i. Analysing purchasing data to determine savings or expenses associated with implementing the sustainable food policy.
- ii. Developing and carrying out a food survey to gain qualitative and anecdotal feedback on food options and determine what is important to current customers.
- iii. Based on i) and ii) producing key facts and graphs/charts to communicate the effects of the implemented changes

Process/methodology: The project consisted of two main parts:

1. Data analysis: Purchase data from March, April and May 2015 was compared with data from the same months in 2016. Excel pivot tables and lookup tables were created to compare total purchase spend on meat, fish and fruit and vegetables, to compare total weight purchased of meat, and fruit and vegetables, and to compare associated greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions of meat products purchased.
2. Food survey: A survey was developed and then conducted at UCS outlets. The survey was distributed online, in-person and in paper form. Responses were collected and analysed using Google forms.

Results: The percentages of ruminant meat purchased in terms of spend (£) and weight (kg) decreased, although overall spend and overall weight of meat increased from 2015 to 2016.

Total spend on fish, and total spend on fruit and vegetables similarly increased from 2015 to 2016 as did the total weight of fruit and vegetables purchased. The decrease in ruminant meat was shown to have a positive effect on associated greenhouse gas emissions.



120 survey responses were gathered: UCS customers said they are aware of sustainable food issues and many indicate a willingness to change towards more sustainable consumption.

A full set of graphs and visuals can be found in the [final report](#).

Recommendations:

1. Continue to improve data analysis efforts started as part of this internship by incorporating sales data. This will provide a complete view of UCS operations and explain overall increases from 2015 to 2016.
2. Combine 'choice architecture' techniques which increase the accessibility and desirability of sustainable food options with traditional communications methods such as posters to influence customer consumption behaviour.

Conclusions: This project demonstrates that the reduction of ruminant meat at UCS is financially viable and that it results in carbon emissions savings. Furthermore, it demonstrates that UCS customers are receptive to sustainable food initiatives.

Next steps: Use the results and visuals produced in this report to compile a paper supporting the sustainable food policy to be presented to the Environment Sustainability Strategy Committee for approval in October 2016.



About you: *Laura Farrell, Sustainability Science major at Australian National University in Canberra, Australia.*

Motivation: *I applied to the IARU Sustainability Fellowship in order to gain greater skills in developing and implementing sustainability projects that encourage people to make changes in their lives to achieve our sustainability goals.*

Personal outcomes from project: *I learnt how to create and use pivot tables, gained experience working in an office environment, got an in-depth knowledge about sustainable food, developed ideas for honours dissertation, and had fun!*

Vision: *I hope my work will help with getting approval from the University's Environmental Sustainability Strategy Committee for the sustainable food policy and support further implementation around the University of that food policy.*

What's next?: *Hoping to continue with studies and complete honours next year.*