Feeding Manchester #3 - Workshop 1: Defining Sustainable Food.

Introduction to the workshop:

The definition of sustainable food that we have all signed up to is closely based on Sustain's definition (although we have added food democracy). Probably none of us achieve all of these criteria all of the time – but by signing up to them we are agreeing that this is the ideal definition of sustainable food and something we want to work towards.

The eventual idea is to put these on the FeedingManchester website to say that this is what all of the people listed on the website are working towards. In small groups this workshop discussed two questions:

1. Are there any key issues that people think are missing from the explanations?
2. How many criteria do people need to be achieving to get listed on the website?

Below are the notes taken during the discussions. The results of this workshop will be looked at and a proposal drawn up for additions to the current definition & explanation. That will then be circulated to FeedingManchester participants for discussion/agreement via email or at the next event if that seems to be the preferred option.

Group A (with Chris).
Are there any key issues that people think are missing from the explanations?

1) Grow your own.
2) Mentioning 'closed loop' - e.g. share more, waste less, composting & recycling
3) Explain the animal welfare standards more.
4) Food appropriate to climate – transportation from Spain Vs heating greenhouses here.
5) Acknowledge the power of advertising to encourage consumption and poor diets.
6) Sustainable livestock.
7) The food democracy section is vague.
8) The reference #9 is not sourced.

How many criteria do people need to be achieving to get listed on the website?

1. Need to consider the context. Encourage positive aside.
2. Perhaps ask groups how many of the principles could they address and how are they doing.
3. We need groups to make significant progress towards Sustainable Food.
4. How about a star system – scored on each criteria.
5. We could adopt a peer review system like Climate Friendly Food and have issues we flag up.

Group B (with Jane)
Are there any key issues that people think are missing from the explanations?
Clearer definition of local : Reference to G.C. Wheel.

Preamble that these principles are those we are working towards.

Include Polyculture in Part 2.

Part 1. local markets & exchange economises. Part 5 – need a verb. Caveat * as part of heading source.

Part 2. Include re-use of all organic wastes.

Q: *Should maximising welfare standards be included as part of the bold*? – include in as necessary point in subtext of Part 3 or just implied?

Part 5 – Caveat locally sustainably produced not available.

How many criteria do people need to be achieving to get listed on the website?
Hierarchy rather than specific 'no'.
Is there anything that is non – negotiable?
Working towards with action plan and time-line.
Holistic & person centred not barriers to working towards sustainable food.

Group C (with Helen)

Are there any key issues that people think are missing from the explanations?
In the introduction does it need to be more explicit that some criteria don't exclude others (i.e. that you can stock local organic produce and also non local fair trade)?

Suggestions (will add these suggestions to the actual definition in blue, and send it out so people can see them in context):
1) Add: supporting local food outlets.
2) Does it need to be more explicit that low carbon includes fosil fuel use – e.g. gas heated polytunnels?
3) Meat – do we want it to recognise the different impact of different meat products?
6) More explicit stuff about nutrition – e.g. promoting the idea of good value meaning 'nutrition per £'
7) The mainstream food system 'and supply chain behaviour' is unfair and unsustainable (e.g. 90 day payment terms, BOGOFs, price squeezing)....Food democracy is about...'and reducing inequalities'.

Fairness – access is also important –but not about making food cheaper, emphasis on benefits to local economy and fair supply chain. Adding a phrase like: 'working to reduce inequality' would work.

Proposed additional criteria:
8) Educational element – promoting the sustainable food discussion
9) Waste & Packaging reduction (& recycling) – this is an important issue – needs to be an additional criteria

How many criteria do people need to be achieving to get listed on the website?
Some projects don't meet many of the criteria – e.g. food access projects like Herbie – but they are working towards sustainable food.
Herbie does meet the fairness criteria (7) and promoting health and well being (6) (and they don't sell meat or fish so they fulfil 3 & 4 too!).
Also the issue of how much you are achieving it – e.g. Unicorn achieve all of the criteria

with some produce but not all of the produce does.

No one achieves all the criteria – it's aspirational.

What about having some kind of point system of standards/levels (bronze, silver, gold) – Herbie would score really highly on some – but could a big supermarket as well?

Problem is how that would be operated - no resources to have someone managing a point system/ checking peoples claims are true etc. - everyone will fill in their own section re how they are achieving the sustainability criteria. Criteria is to get people on there and then there will be logos for the users (e.g. fairtrade symbol, V for vegan etc.)

Important to allow for people in transition (e.g. producers converting to organic), people working towards the criteria.

Needs to be seen in the context of their own market

Are there things that people definitely can not do that would exclude them from being on the website? - rationale and justification

Who would access this? Who is the audience for the website?

How does it fit in with existing marks (e.g. the sustainable restaurant mark)?

General ideas for discussion re the website:

Discussion about how to exclude big multinationals who can say they stock some local, some organic, some fair trade, etc. - e.g. only get listed if you fulfilled the fairness criteria, or putting an emphasis on benefits to the local economy and fair supply chain.

An issue was raised about whether it was OK to rule out big supermarkets because they do stock these products and they create local employment. The term create local employment was challenged re employment displacement (shutting down local shops), and taking money out of the local economy.

An issue was raised about whether we will rule the majority of people out if we don't talk about supermarkets and which ones are more sustainable, as most people do shop at supermarkets.

Discussion re the focus of the website being on promoting people who work towards sustainable food and supermarkets with big marketing budgets not needing our promotion. There was an idea of charging businesses money to be on the website – and charging a lot to big supermarkets.

Could give general advice on sustainable produce that people can use where ever they are shopping without promoting particular supermarkets.

General environmental practise as a business – important but perhaps not an additional criteria – don't want to have too many – perhaps this could be advice on the website?

Information re the impact of different meat products – guidance on what is more or less sustainable - that information is out there.