



**NCASS**<sup>TM</sup>  
NATIONWIDE  
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# A SUSTAINABLE SUMMER GUIDE

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It's unsurprising that food production is a key driver of climate change, which is something increasingly difficult to ignore for event and festival traders - especially when the shows they work at are looking to minimise their environmental impact.

Moving towards a more sustainable food system is a global imperative, but how can events and traders highlight, support, and deliver more climate friendly solutions to customers together?

There are some quick wins available. Diverting edible food surplus to local charities instead of landfill, for example, can be managed in-house and is often popular with food businesses - it simply takes a bit of co-ordination. As you will know, NCASS have worked with A Greener Festival for many years on the food waste initiative 8th Plate (the how-to instructions behind the 8th Plate are available to everyone free of charge). Traders are the best people to manage food waste initiatives at events as they don't want food waste. In addition to this, having a good network of wholesalers and suppliers that are located nearby festival or event sites and setting up a collection at the end of the event can really help eliminate food waste.

Better management of resources onsite, especially power and water, can offer efficiencies that should reduce, if not cover, overall costs. Most events sell connections rather than amounts of power. This crude approach means that not only do traders buy more power than they need, but events could also then build a margin on top. Therefore, better power management could offer savings to both food businesses and events while reducing impact.

Packaging suppliers are exploring composting food waste onsite at festivals and events, creating the possibility of a more circular approach with waste food returning to the earth as nutrients rather than rotting at landfill. However, when it comes to packaging, there is often a need for commercial composting and recycling is linked to local authority's policies and processes.

The Single Use Plastic ban has placed the focus on packaging, so working with suppliers directly to make the best solutions available to ensure consistency is even more important than ever. The elephant, or in this case the cows in the room, are ruminators. Animals that graze on grass and generate greenhouse gases while they process their food. There are also issues around how the beef or dairy is produced, with varying production methods resulting in different outcomes. Beef from a regenerative farm for example, has a very different impact compared to animals bred and raised on former rain forests halfway around the world and fed on soya grown on cleared forests.



As the Green Event Code of Practice outlines (led by the Vision: 2025 group, the code is intended to establish best practice, provide clear and robust minimum standards, and shared targets for sustainability, understood and adopted by all stakeholders across the outdoor festival and events industry), there should be minimum standards, practices, and targets for food & drink at events and festivals and recycling, food waste, reducing meat and dairy and greener sources of energy are some of the fundamentals that should underpin an organisers' approach. Some events, like Shambala, have taken a proactive approach to delivering more sustainable food on site, by working with their caterers to switch out meat and dairy. However, this process has taken time, meaningful interactions with business owners - and relies on the good will of the 'Shambalans' - but they are arguably the exception, not the rule.



The festival catering sector is made up of thousands of micro businesses who tend to specialise in specific cuisines or dishes, usually selling one or two products with optional variations. With around 15% of the UK population and a similar number stating a desire to become so, the market and desire for vegetarian food has never been greater, especially amongst younger people; an increasing number of the population are eating less meat, but higher quality food (namely as 'flexitarians'). But that still leaves the majority of the population being meat eaters.

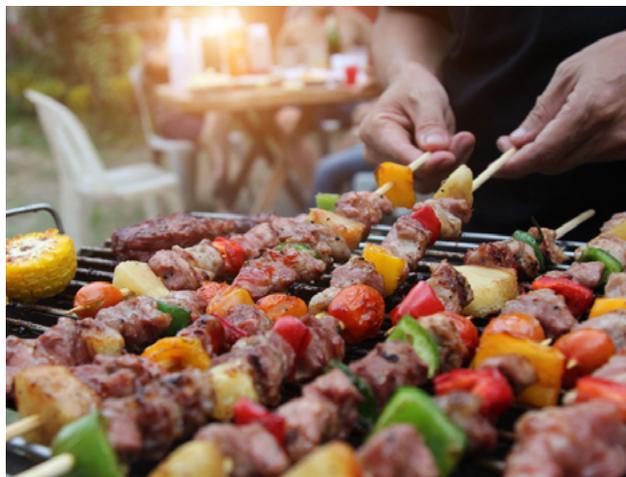
As meat alternatives become more affordable and more convincing it's likely more people will switch from animal protein in the future. The shift towards less meat will continue without the need to persuade punters to choose pulses over meaty flavours.

One option to reduce the impact of meat being sold at the event may be to reduce the amount of animal protein on the plate. Most burgers weigh 180g, reducing them to 150g would shave 20% off the meat consumed but may not really be noticed by the consumer. Another way forward could be to reduce the amount of meat in a dish by 40% and replace this with vegetables (think 60-40% bolognese) When the confectionary companies reduced the size of chocolate bars to accommodate sugar restrictions, people barely noticed.

There has been huge growth in vegetarian and vegan food popularity at festivals and there are a lot of amazing traders specialising in meat-free cuisine who do some of the best food in the business, but there are also countless traders who have an ethical approach to meat and dairy and who have excellent relationships with their suppliers, and this is often part of their USP. More measurable and responsible sourcing will likely mean working together with suppliers to find solutions that make sense for traders without creating a negative impact on the end users when it comes to menu prices or choice.

While food businesses will adapt to accommodate the events they want to work at, their wriggle room for making changes may be limited. It may be that the bold, proactive, and arguably top-down approach of Shambala is the way to genuinely ensure food businesses do not bring high impact products to sell on site. A number of festivals in Europe have taken to managing the sourcing of the food for the events on behalf of the caterers, thus making it easier to measure the impact of the food and manage what comes on site. But this may not be possible for events with more limited resources.

However, every event or festival is different and has different criteria and focus – sustainability isn't simple; there are often barriers to achieving an ideal outlined in a policy or procurement process and some of these barriers have become more prominent due to supply chain challenges.



The best place to start for you if you are a trader is by working collaboratively with events and festivals, asking them for support in working with more complex elements such as labelling CO2 emissions and calculating power requirements in advance. Once confidence has been established in delivering these measurements, you will be equipped to weave them successfully into their work across all events as part of sustainability indicators and targets.

As with all aspects of event production, communication is key to getting the best out of the events you work with – use the experience, knowledge, and expertise of the trader management teams and other traders to create the best possible working relationships and you won't go wrong.

With rising costs across all aspects of running a food business impacting small independents across the UK, how can we create a pragmatic approach when it comes to sustainability & catering?

We want to make this work across the board and so would love to hear from you about the changes you are making so that we can support by sharing information and create tools for our members that make sustainable practices accessible and successful in their implementation. Please get involved with this by sharing your thoughts and examples of what you are doing by emailing: [roxy@ncass.org.uk](mailto:roxy@ncass.org.uk).



Get in touch with our team and we'd love to have a chat.

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