

North East Region – Good Food Economy Pilot

Executive Summary

The North East Sustainable Food Alliance (NESFA) is a partnership of three North East food partnerships and Food and Drink North East (FADNE). The aim of this project was to grow the sustainable food economy in the North-East, increase local businesses' understanding of food sustainability and trial a new way of working regionally.

We published two surveys in Autumn 2022, one aimed at food businesses and the other at the general public, in order to understand and compare the priorities of each group around food sustainability - to help inform businesses' practices.

Business and Public Surveys Results

- Limited engagement from businesses (36 respondents). The public survey was much better responded to (530 respondents).
- There was no clear leader in terms of which environmental sustainability issues businesses were prioritising. Perhaps that shows that all of the issues are important.
- Businesses showed a need for support in promoting their food sustainability practices. Answers from the public survey may be helpful in providing this:
 - The public survey generated clear priorities for the most important food sustainability issues. Reducing food waste was the top priority, using in season food was second and buying food from local food producers was third.
 - Promoting sustainable food awards was identified as the best way a business could promote their practices, followed by promoting their values and aspirations second, and promoting their use of local suppliers and producers on menus/displays third.
- In both the public and business surveys there was a clear interest in wanting to find out more about a regional Food Ambassadors programme.

The surveys provided some useful data for both food businesses and food partnerships, as well as generating some valuable learning for the design and development of future consultations.

This pilot way of food partnerships and regional food and drink organisations working regionally has been successful and effective, with the few challenges identified enabling the partnership to improve even further in future.

Introduction

The North East Sustainable Food Alliance (NESFA) is a partnership of the three North East food partnerships (Middlesbrough, Durham and Newcastle) who collaborated with Food and Drink North East (FADNE) on this pilot initiative during 2022.

Aims, Objectives and Outcomes

The over-all long-term goal of this campaign was to grow the sustainable food economy in the North-East, stimulating increased demand for good food enterprises. Local food producers are not bound by local authority boundaries, and for an effective local food economy there is a clear need for a regional approach. To achieve this a joined-up partnership approach to working across the region is needed, engaging with key organisations and partnerships to develop and consolidate relationships. A clear consensus on what constitutes local and sustainable food is also required.

However, the scale and complexity of achieving the long-term goal is beyond the capabilities of this campaign (and budget). This partnership set out to test how to work in a new way, across partnership boundaries and representing a larger region, map the processes and procedures taken, points to consider and think about and type of people to include, such as Local Economic Partnerships (see appendix 1).

NESFA aimed to increase the understanding of sustainability and sustainable food (by local food businesses) and support more businesses in adopting sustainability principles and practices. It also set out to begin the process of introducing a new regional procurement working group (or enhance an existing group) to influence catering & procurement teams to buy more local food.

NEFSA Development – The Process

Stage 1 – Formation

We used the Sustainable Food Places (SFP) Toolkit for setting up a partnership as a guide to get us started. We thought it was important to articulate the way we would work together. These are the questions we asked ourselves:

1. What single word would you use to describe the way you will behave towards each other?
2. How should it be run?
3. What do you want to do about organisation and leadership?
4. What about adding new members?

Broadly we wanted to work as a team so to communicate openly, collaborate, be supportive of one another and respectful.

It was decided that to start with, we did not need a formal structure and that we would ‘feel our way’ to scope out what the joint areas of work could be. Our aim was to identify collaborative projects, rather than just be a talking shop (it became clear that a lot of talking was needed to get to this point however!)

We agreed that a charter or statement of intent would be an appropriate way to pin down our aims and objectives at this stage, and that more specific roles and responsibilities could be agreed once projects were developed.

North East Sustainable Food Alliance (NESFA) – Statement of Intent

NESFA will:

- Exist and operate as an informal alliance between the three founding SFP partnerships in the North-East region: Newcastle, Middlesbrough and County Durham.
- Maintain its independence from other regional food initiatives but collaborate on a project-by-project basis, when appropriate and in accordance with NESFA’s aims and principles.
- Focus on activity that is best done at a larger scale and a regional level – to avoid conflict with the local focus of each partnership.
- Offer a collective regional SFP voice in consultations when relevant and appropriate.

Procedures:

- NESFA will work on the principle of reaching consensus where possible.
- Where consensus is not possible, partners can opt out of joint initiatives on a project-by-project basis.
- NESFA will initially work on practical collaborative initiatives without adopting a formal governance structure.
- NESFA will work towards developing a formal structure if and when it becomes necessary.
- Membership of NESFA is open to other SFP members in the North East of England and to organisations/businesses/partners in the region that share and are aligned with NESFA’s vision and principles.
- NESFA will develop a shared project/initiative work plan.

- In-person or online meetings will be held quarterly with more regular meetings when working on specific initiatives.

Principles:

- Professional
 - Open
 - Co-operative
 - Transparent
 - Respectful
 - Innovative
 - Honest
 - Supportive
 - Kind
-

NESFA did not want to be an exclusive group. The food system does not work within administrative boundaries therefore it might make sense for other food partnerships in, or bordering the North-East England region, to become part of NESFA and this will become apparent as the Alliance takes shape.

As it was unclear at this stage exactly what activity NESFA would be carrying out, it did not make sense to agree a formal meeting or decision-making structure. We all felt that regular meetings on Zoom and using Miro to keep track of thoughts, questions and decisions would be appropriate. Our work had all been disrupted by the pandemic so there was a lot of general uncertainty, and the meetings also became a support mechanism for Food Partnership Coordinators.

In terms of decision-making, it was felt that with a small group, unanimous agreement on action would be needed and that our approach would be to develop our vision and guiding principles, and work to find appropriate action through consensus. We found initial consensus in that we all felt the main focus of our activity should be around work best done at a regional scale, e.g. developing a Good Food Economy including procurement and promoting sustainable food businesses. We also identified a potential role for NESFA in providing a unified response to consultations on food issues.

Finally, we discussed the respective situations our food partnerships were in, and what arrangements might need to be in place to manage any shared funding we might access.

Stage 2 – Scoping

We spent some time idea-storming and unpicking some of the issues around the regional food economy to identify the areas we felt this alliance could be most effective. It highlighted where there were gaps in capacity and resource, as well as potential opportunities.

One of the drivers for coming together to look at regional food issues was the development of Food & Drink North East (FADNE), a CIC working to support food businesses in the region through networking, consultancy and training. FADNE had connected with food partnerships to some extent; they stated a commitment to sustainability and community in their 'Four Pillars' (Advocacy, Trade, Community and Sustainability) and during lockdown, launched their 'Local Heroes' local food delivery scheme which involved producers from around the region and operated in the Newcastle area. We agreed to invite the Director, Chris Jewitt, to a NESFA meeting and the resulting conversation highlighted the need to develop a stronger approach to sustainability within food businesses that more closely reflected the aims of member Food Partnerships, as well as a broader geographical distribution of activity around support for food businesses.

Food and Drink North East

It is FADNE's mission to build a vibrant and engaged community that champions positive trade, promotes a sustainable, circular economy and acts as a collective and inclusive voice for the region's food and sector. Their overall objective is to grow the sector's contribution to the regional economy to 10% GVA by 2025.

FADNE's vision is to

- build North East England's reputation as a food and drink destination;
 - help the region become a recognised centre for innovative start-ups and world-class manufacturing;
 - showcase and celebrate its diverse food and drink offer; while
 - placing heritage, sustainability, provenance and community at its heart.
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During the next few meetings, a whole range of possible activity was discussed. Whilst it felt at times like we were going round in circles, the process of free thinking and discussion enabled us to come to a detailed and shared understanding of the challenges within our region's food systems – sometimes working out what you can't / won't do is just as useful!

Stage 3 – Developing a Rationale

With support from Ben Messer as facilitator, we worked on the following questions:

1. *Why focus on the North East?*
2. *What do we mean by sustainable food and why is it important?*
3. *Why is it a good idea for us to work as an alliance?*

Focusing on these questions helped us to articulate our belief that a regional approach was necessary to support sustainable food businesses, which do not operate within the administrative boundaries of a local authority - particularly not here in North East England where the food economy is relatively undeveloped.

We contrasted the approach of large food businesses (e.g. Greggs) and small food businesses (e.g. sole-trader cheesemakers) to sustainability and realised that the term 'sustainable food' is subject to interpretation – so we developed our own definition to inform NESFA's work.

In addition to enabling us to work together across the region, forming an alliance meant that we could explore these complex issues as a team, pooling our individual knowledge and expertise and representing the diversity of experience within the food system across the region. We also knew the regional and sub-regional structures have no interaction with food partnerships, and our ability to connect with them was hampered by operating at a local authority level. There was potential for economies of scale, for example each partnership has a procurement group which involves NEPO (North East Procurement Organisation) and key partners like Universities, Hospitals etc. Working as an alliance could facilitate regional conversations to connect key stakeholders on relevant issues regionally which might make collective action more feasible.

Stage 4 – Defining sustainable and local food

This took some time and was not a simple task. We wanted to create a definition that would be positive and inclusive but strong enough to encourage real engagement and limit 'greenwashing' opportunities. It should

help food producers to consider where they are working sustainably and inspire further improvement – representing a process towards a more sustainable food system. We looked at a range of issues, including for example where makers sourced their ingredients, how food is transported around the region, where it is sold and who can afford to buy it. These conversations also helped us to formulate our thinking around how we promote sustainable local food and develop partnerships with organisations that have different drivers and use different language. We recognised the need to make an economic case for local & sustainable. The resulting definition was shared with FADNE and will be used as the basis of future partnership development and activity.

North East Sustainable Food Alliance (NESFA) - How We Define Sustainable Food and Drink

Food and drink that is produced, processed, traded, consumed and disposed of in ways that:

- Supports North East Food and Drink Businesses: Contributes to thriving local economies that sustain the livelihoods of people working in our region.
- Promotes Environmental Sustainability: Protects the diversity and health of plants and animals, avoids damaging natural resources and minimises our contribution to climate change.
- Provides Social Benefits: Ensures people have access to good quality, safe and healthy products, as well as opportunities to come together, learn about food and drink, nature and our great North East cultural heritage.

North East Sustainable Food Alliance (NESFA) – Key Aims:

- Building relationships between food partnerships and with relevant cross sector partners
 - Providing a platform for collaboration
 - Explore and agree common ground
 - Making a place where people can provide mutual support
 - Sharing knowledge and expertise
 - Joint projects
 - Amplifying the voice of food partnerships in the region
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Stage 5 – Project development

We discussed the possibility of joint work around Food Resilience pilots and explored a few project ideas, but the timing was not right and the delivery mechanisms were local, not regional. The SFP Good Food Economy Pilot was an ideal opportunity to test out the approach we had been developing.

Once the Good Food Economy pilot was underway, a related opportunity arose for NESFA to work together on a related regional piece of work to engage and promote for a change to a Dynamic Food Procurement (DFP) system. NESFA came together, used their collective reach to engage with a range of interested stakeholders from across the region who said they would like to know more. NESFA then applied to the Dixon Foundation and were successful for some seed funding to engage anchor institutions with DFP, and to explore possibilities of how a DFP system could be introduced in the North East.

Working Collaboratively

Food Partnerships working together

Advantages

- A collective unified voice between several like-minded food partnerships is stronger.
- The collective can use good contacts within respective local authorities/ areas to talk to their counterpart to encourage them to follow suit – peer-to-peer, talking the same language.
- The collective has greater reach and scope of reach.
- By diversifying the members, there is a greater chance of enhancing the skillset within the collective.
- By working together there is greater solidarity. Support is provided by your colleagues and counterparts – you won't feel like you are on your own.
- Many hands make light work! Workloads and responsibilities can be shared.

Learning

- The collective needs to find a common purpose to work on. There is no point working on something just for the sake of it.
- It is important to work through and come to a joint decision on your statement of intent, principles, procedures, rationale and what you define sustainable food as – this sets the foundation for the group and means the collective is ready to act when opportunities arise.
- Be mindful that working collaboratively can dilute time - do you get as much done? More time can be spent talking to come to collective decisions.

What Would We Do Differently?

- Not a great deal – NESFA had the luxury of time during COVID to work through and collectively agree on our statement of intent, principles, procedures, rationale etc without the pressure of delivering to a deadline.
- Once NESFA were successful with a funding bid and had a project to deliver with outputs and outcomes, it would have been more beneficial to clearly define roles, tasks, and timescales at the beginning.

NESFA and FADNE working together

All of the food partnerships within NESFA had engaged with Food and Drink North East (FADNE) to varying extents prior to the Good Food Economy project, particularly Food Newcastle where FADNE have been on the steering group for several years. However, this project was the first time any of the partnerships had worked with FADNE in a funded capacity with intended outputs and outcomes.

Successes

FADNE has strong links to food businesses and consumers in the North East, particularly SMEs. This was vital to the project as the links of the food partnerships themselves would have been insufficient to generate useful data.

The expertise of the group members was complimentary and comprehensive for its purpose. FADNE brought a wealth of communications and marketing experience and a great understanding of how best to engage North East businesses and consumers. The food partnerships had a high level understanding of food sustainability literature, landscape and context and were well linked to partnerships in other locations via the SFP network so could therefore draw on learnings from elsewhere.

The group made good use of technology to enable remote partnership working. Online meetings were well attended and productive, and the use of Miro boards to document the conversation and increase productivity was very effective.

Challenges

Since this was a pilot project it was important to have a lot of flexibility to allow the project to develop over time. However, the lack of defined outcomes and timescales meant that productivity could have been improved.

Differing working styles and capacities between food partnerships coming from the third sector, compared to a regional food and drink organisation more strongly linked to the commercial sector meant that expectations could have been better managed.

Areas for Improvement

A more clearly defined project brief with specific roles for each partner and the necessity for flexibility throughout the duration of the project agreed - perhaps in the form of a service level agreement - would have been useful to manage expectations between partners.

Agreeing outcomes and more specific timescales at the start of the project and as it progressed would have helped to increase productivity and allowed members of the group to cover gaps in work with more notice.

NESFA Business and Public Surveys with Food and Drink North East (FADNE)

Methodology

NESFA partners developed two separate questionnaires on environmentally sustainable local food related issues working with the Community Lead for Food and Drink North East (FADNE).

Survey Monkey was used as the survey tool facilitated by Food and Drink North East to assess knowledge and priorities relating to sustainable food issues by the different groups. FADNE had a paid for account, so this enabled us to ask as many questions as we required. It is a recognised application and is widely used so through this would help with take up and engagement. Other survey tools are freely available and provide a similar service.

The first survey focussed on regional food businesses; this was undertaken during September 2022. This was circulated initially through contacts held by FADNE, it was then subsequently shared via the social media channels and newsletters coordinated by the three separate Food Partnerships.

The second survey focussed on public perceptions and was undertaken in November 2022, this was again promoted by FADNE and gained the most engagement once shared via existing contacts from the three Food Partnerships.

NESFA designed the questions so a direct comparison could be made between responses from businesses and the public. It was felt this would be of interest and value to businesses and provide clear areas to focus on and support them in appealing more to potential customers.

Key Learnings

Survey Results:

- Limited engagement from businesses, those that did respond gave good answers and added more in the open-ended questions.
- There was no clear leader in terms of what businesses were prioritising in terms of environmental sustainability issues. Perhaps that shows that all of these issues are important.
- The public survey was much better responded to and had a good geographical spread. Environmental sustainability issues were important to the vast majority of respondents. Cost was the least important issue when choosing environmentally sustainable food. This may not be the case when choosing standard items eg breakfast cereals; canned foods etc or if a more representative sample of the population was surveyed.
- The vast majority of businesses would like support or feel they could improve how they promote their sustainability practices. Answers from the public survey may be useful information to provide to businesses on the most important issues and options for how to promote their activities
 - Compared to the business survey, the public survey generated clearer priorities for the most important food sustainability issues.
 - Reducing food waste was the top priority for the public, using in season food was second and buying food from local food producers was third

- Promoting sustainable food awards was identified as the best way a business could promote their practices, followed by promoting their values and aspirations second, and promoting their use of local suppliers and producers on menus/displays third.
- In both the public and business surveys there was a clear interest in wanting to find out more about a regional Food Ambassadors programme.

Recommendations for Methodology Improvements:

- Improve promotion of business survey, consider different medium (e.g. interviews / in-person) or reduce length of survey in order to increase number of respondents, reach more younger businesses and reach more business from the Hotelier/Restaurateur and Buyer/Distributor groups
- Consider different question style to identify more clear leaders in the most important food sustainability practices questions, especially in the business survey
- A different style of promotion of the public survey to reach a more representative sample of the North East general public would likely yield quite different results
- Consider the wording of each question and the question order very carefully as this may influence answers given. Engaging with a specialist consultant may be worthwhile.

See Appendix 3 for Business Survey and Survey Results

See Appendix 4 for Public Surveys and Survey Results

Conclusions

Whilst some of the results and engagement from the two surveys we developed were not as we hoped, there were still several valuable learnings to be gained both for North East food businesses and the food partnerships themselves, which will be useful to develop work on food sustainability in the region. The limitations of the surveys will help inform the design of future consultations, and could be particularly valuable for partnerships in other regions.

The Good Food Economy project has provided a great opportunity to test a new way of working for North East food partnerships. We have developed strong, beneficial working relationships and working regionally and in conjunction with a regional food and drink organisation (FADNE) has allowed us to engage organisations in a way that would otherwise not have been possible. The challenges we have encountered have provided valuable learning for how to build on the success of the NESFA partnership as we continue to work together in future.

The collaborative approach and great working relationship NESFA developed meant NESFA were ideally placed to take a lead on a related piece of work promoting and engaging anchor institutions with Dynamic Food Procurement. NESFA were also successful in securing funding from the Dixon Foundation to develop this further.

Appendix 1: The Economic Landscape

The three food partnerships of NESFA have had very limited experience of working with Local Economic Partnerships (LEPs). However, Food and Drink North East (FADNE) has extensive experience of working with LEPs and generating other economic opportunities for the food and drink sector within the north east.

FADNE is a regional independent food and drink Community Interest Company (CIC) whose aim is to build a vibrant and engaged community that champions positive trade, promotes a sustainable, circular economy and acts as a collective and inclusive voice for the region's food and drink sector. They have extensive experience of working with LEPs and generating other economic opportunities for the food and drink sector.

Here is their learning around working with LEPs.

Relationship Building

FADNE's engagement with LEPs is really quite nuanced. We get great engagement with people at certain levels. When we go higher up the chain, it's getting more and more difficult. It's getting harder to have a meaningful conversation and to have a strategic conversation about where work around sustainable food sits in the future planning for the region.

You have to build relationships. If you've got a strong contact or someone that you know and that understands you, start with them and then just start gathering other food and drink sector organisations and people around you to create that collective voice. It shows that you've done your research, and it's not just one person's point of view; you are putting forward the collective voice covering all aspects (community, economic, climate etc), and this is what we all feel is needed.

FADNE is getting a sense now that there's no real single point of power or somebody to speak to that is going to really make things move. Our advice; try and find someone who is going to carry your cause and start there. This might not be the obvious point of contact, which makes it a more difficult job, and that's why it's much more about relationships being built and taking a bit more of a subversive approach as to how you get sustainable food on their agenda.

How Can We Start to Influence Change?

It is really important and potentially a lot more powerful if the local food and drink sector comes together and speaks with a collective voice. Gather the thoughts, views and the issues facing a range of cross sector food and drink organisations, and submit a collectively signed letter to the Chief Executive of the LEP requesting the need for a strategic plan around food drink, and also request feedback as to why food and drink is not being given the priority that we think it needs.

This could also be used as a lobbying tool. If it then gets pushed back, that will be useful as it tells you where the LEP thinking is.

Conversations at the moment are far more fruitful when we divide and conquer; work collectively in partnership with other businesses and organisations, all approaching their own contacts with the same message. Another good approach is delivering important and successful projects in collaboration with a LA, which can start to open up the conversations with and build a relationship with them.

Where is the power?

It feels like the power is not necessarily washed away but being spread thinner. With the current devolution issue and deals, it is probably best to try and get closer to Combined Authorities and their mayors. Devolution can play a powerful role in supporting rural economies to grow and a way to foster a more collaborative region, sharing prosperity across our economy. Getting the right relationships and infrastructure in place between rural areas and their urban neighbours is key.

The thoughts from the North East is that LEP powers are going to diminish quite significantly and they're going to become a signpost organisation more than anything else. There is an important role for local food and drink organisations/ collectives to be a part of that process. Therefore, it is important to continue with the lighter touch stuff e.g. sharing opportunities, engaging businesses and their networks, etc.

It was easier for FADNE to become a part of a national steering group than it has been to take those debates higher up regionally. For example, recently FADNE just joined the board of a DEFRA group which has apprenticeships in manufacturing (which included food and drink) that is trying to address the skills gap (e.g. butchery and fish).

LEPs are setting up advanced manufacturing steering groups, but at the moment there isn't anything around food, drink and agriculture. That hasn't even been floored.

Working with food and drink businesses

- You have to be agile when working with food and drink businesses. There's no gold medal answer to engage with local food businesses – you have to shape shift as much as the industry is doing at the moment. It is a constant stream of work to try and make people feel like local food and drink organisations are adding value.
- It is important to make sure that you're not duplicating, and you do things as one – you are likely to get more 'bang for our buck'. Businesses want to see the tangible value or that something is delivered that is going to hit their bottom line.

Appendix 2: The Good Food Ambassador

Led by Food and Drink North East the 'Raise a Fork' (#raiseafork) campaign is a digital pilot initiative delivered by Food Newcastle, Food Durham, Food Partnership Middlesbrough, and Food Sunderland.

The campaign was to be launched by a twofold roll-out, spanning over a designated time frame to engage food and drink outlets and the public to raise awareness for sustainable dining.

#raiseafork will see recognition of locally sourced menus to increase the number of, or footfall to, good food enterprises, as part of a more vibrant and diverse local food economy.

To start, prominent members of the public were approached and recruited to assist with the introduction of the # into the mainstream social media accounts of the North East – and wider, depending on their audience or 'following'. People contacted were food bloggers and local social media account managers for outlets around the Newcastle, Durham, and Northumberland areas. These people already show a belief in local procurement, independent business, and popular destinations. The pitch was easy as we were asking them to become involved in something they already do, but with a focused message and a vehicle to promote

themselves and the work they are doing. As it was already created and supported it gave them little work to do, an opportunity to widen their network in the food and drink sector, strengthen their reputation, and a reason to become a representative of a pilot national campaign, it was easy to get people on board and each was thrilled to be asked to become an ‘ambassador’.

The request was:

Find an outlet - this must fall within some parameters: independent, a selection of seasonal options or ingredients on the menu – to include both food and beverages, located within the North East. They must have a menu and money exchanged. This was to distinguish the difference between purchasing from-source ingredients, for example, items on a farmers’ market or farm shop. It will also promote the business that needs footfall to increase profit and reputation.

The requests fell within their everyday activity. When dining out add a post to social media. The call to action was:

Add #raiseafork, when visiting to celebrate their local menu offering (food and drinks) by

- adding a social post to include the #raiseafork
- include the location
- tag for the supplier of the food or beverage
- take a picture with you raising your forks!

The second stage of the campaign involved food and beverage outlets. This can include any outlet providing food and drinks – catering vans, social enterprises, restaurants, pop-ups, and food markets, as long as they have a menu, locally sourced ingredients have a part in the offering.

We contacted chefs to gather their thoughts on how they thought the campaign would work. It was in agreement that a campaign would be of benefit to catering venues.

They would also be involved in the public request, following the same guidelines or posting a picture, with their menu, adding the location of the item used, and post it using the #.

This would then drive their marketing message to include the items they are using.

Support would be given through basic training on how to alert public ambassadors that they are involved in the campaign. For example, crediting the item on their menu;

- Lamb from Hill Top farm in Durham
- Water bottled at source in Northumberland by the Northumberland Spring Water Company
- Greens provided by Bidside Community Farm
- Cheese from Meardale Dairy in Meardale

It is the hope that many out-lets would adopt the campaign, invest the small amount of time it takes to credit the producers and the reward is seen in custom.

The concept of a social media campaign had gained momentum and Ambassadors on both the public and business sides were recruited, however, the budget did not provide for the delivery.

Should funding become available, the campaign is ready to be rolled out.

Appendix 3 – Business Survey & Results

Business Survey Questions Used:

- 1) Email Address
- 2) First Name
- 3) Last Name
- 4) Please fill in your contact details:
- 5) Are you happy to be contacted to discuss your responses in more detail? YES/NO
- 6) Age of your business:
- 7) Your location:
- 8) What is the type of service you offer?
 - a. Do you sell directly to the public?
 - b. Do you sell directly to a business?
- 9) Are environmentally sustainable practices relating to food active in your business currently YES/NO
- 10) If you answered yes, can you rate which active environmentally sustainable practices relating to food in your business are the most IMPORTANT (1 being top priority)
 - a. Minimise food waste. For example: Supports redistribution, recycling, donation, preparation, stocking, display, storage, shelf-life
 - b. Promote seasonality. Actively sources locally grown, reared or produced ingredients to reduce food miles
 - c. Minimises contribution to waste production. For example: recyclable and reusable packaging, awareness of collection and disposal
 - d. Sourcing food from sustainable producers. For example: local farms, producers and taking into account food miles
- 11) Which of these areas is your focus for IMPROVEMENT over the next 12 months (1 being top priority)
 - a. Minimise food waste. For example: Supports redistribution, recycling, donation, preparation, stocking, display, storage, shelf-life
 - b. Promote seasonality. Actively sources locally grown, reared or produced ingredients to reduce food miles
 - c. Minimises contribution to waste production. For example: recyclable and reusable packaging, awareness of collection and disposal
 - d. Sourcing food from sustainable producers. For example: local farms, producers and taking in to account food miles
- 12) Which socially sustainable points are important to your business (please prioritise from 1 – 6)

- a. This business does not have environmentally sustainable focus currently
- b. Sustaining the livelihoods of people working in our region, providing meaningful and rewarding work
- c. Helping to build thriving local economies, and supply chain
- d. Creating opportunities to learn about food and drink culture and its special role in North East heritage
- e. Preserving traditional livestock breeds and heritage crop varieties and local food cultures
- f. Ensuring people have access to good quality, safe and healthy produce

13) Is there anything else you'd like us to consider when creating the food sustainability plan for the North East?(Open Ended Question)

14) What are your aspirations relating to sustainable food production and use over the coming 12 months? (Open Ended Question)

15) What innovations or initiatives is your company implementing to reach your food sustainability target? (Open Ended Question)

16) What are the current barriers in becoming a sustainable food company? (Open Ended Question)

17) Can you provide the social media details you use to promote your company?

(Options Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, Twitter, TikTok, Other)

18) Do you feel that you are making the most of promoting the work you do around sustainability?

(Yes, No, I need some help to gain more exposure)

19) Are you involved with local networks or events which promote sustainability relating to food?

Please add details if so

20) Would you like to receive information from your local Food Partnership YES/NO

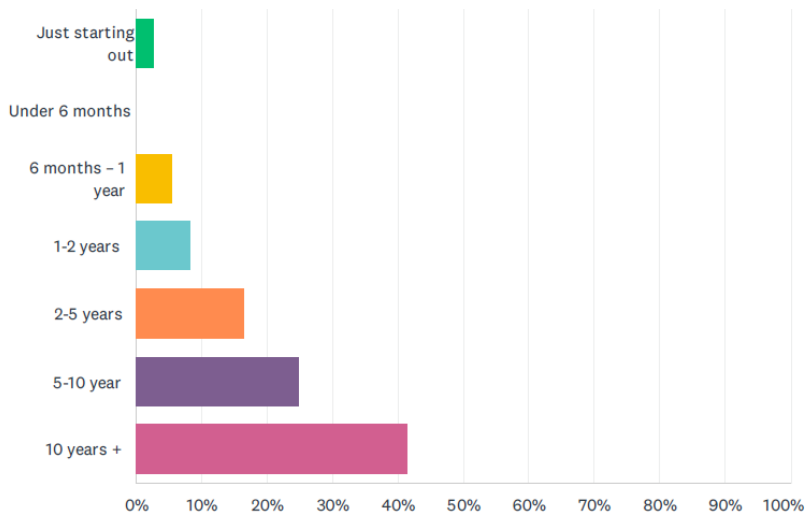
Would you be interested in finding out more on how your business can become a sustainable food ambassador for the North East YES/NO

Survey Results - Business Engagement

A small sample with 36 respondents, we had hoped for at least 50 responses

Q3 Age of your business:

Answered: 36 Skipped: 0

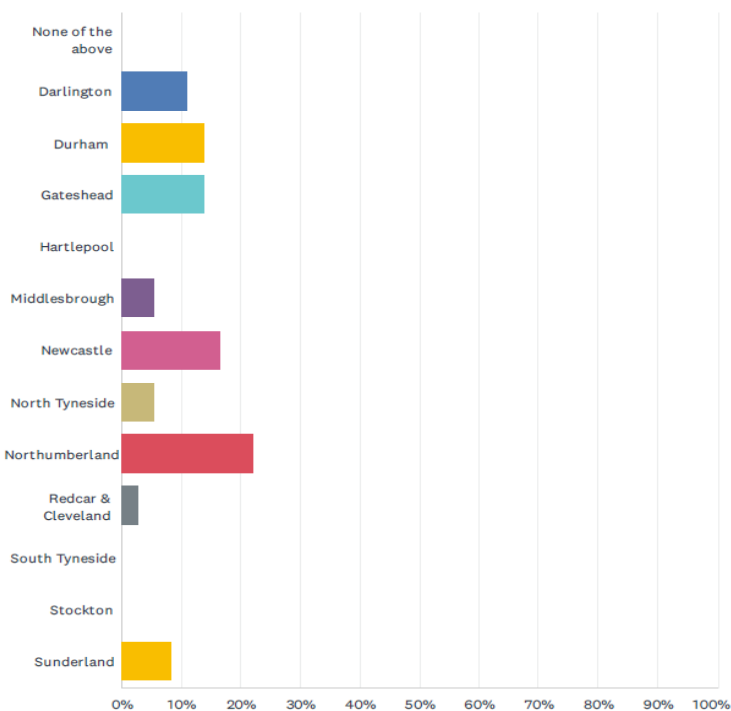


The largest proportion of businesses that responded were well established, with the largest response from those trading for over 10 years.

This could be due to established businesses having more staff resource to allow senior members of the team time to complete surveys such as this, and/or these businesses may have had more experience, of and see more value in, sustainable food.

Q4 Your location:

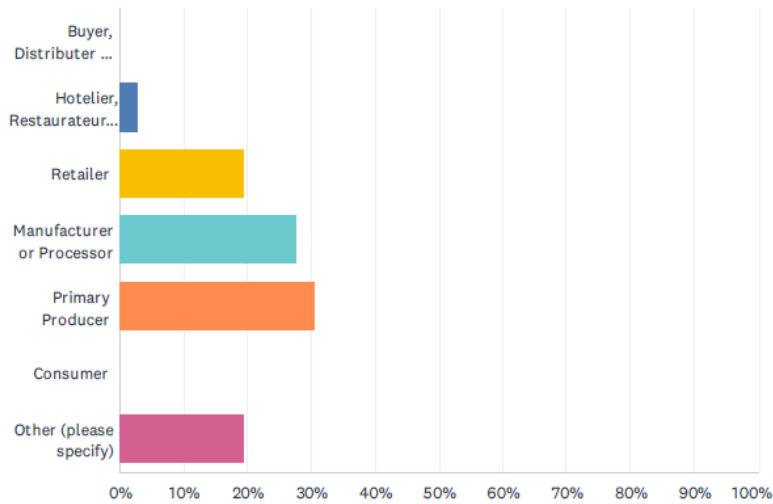
Answered: 36 Skipped: 0



Generally, a decent geographical spread across the region, just missing out on three local authorities areas (Hartlepool, South Tyneside and Stockton)

Q5 What is the type of service you offer?

Answered: 36 Skipped: 0

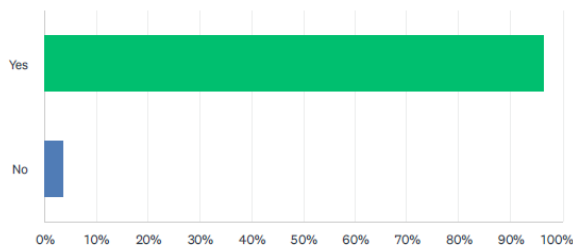


A spread of business types, the largest being Primary Producers and Food Manufacturers). These categories were agreed with FADNE based upon their categories within their database.

Very low or no responses from Buyer/Distributor and Hotelier/Restaurateur categories. The latter could be due to the methodology of publicising the survey not reaching these industries. The lack of response from hotelier/restaurateurs could be due to limited staff capacity being typical in this industry. Adapting the methodology to reach these groups would be a key area for improvement since they represent a significant proportion of food and drink businesses, especially in the North East. Hotelier/Restaurateurs are also one of two groups in this survey that sell directly to the public which is also important.

Q8 Are environmentally sustainable practices relating to food active in your business CURRENTLY

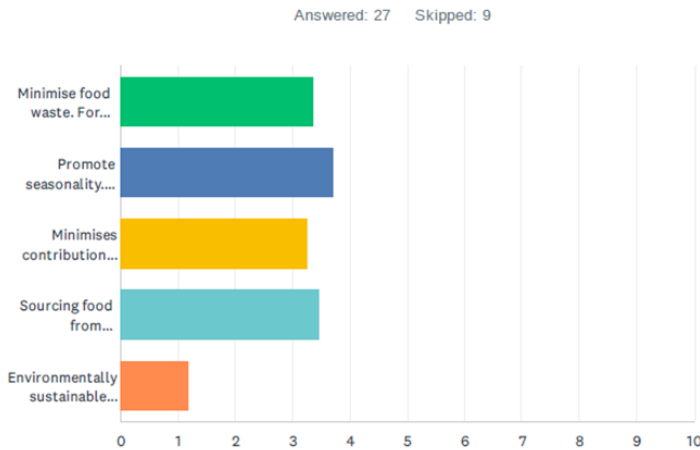
Answered: 27 Skipped: 9



Only 75% responded to this question, those that did answered yes, so it could be argued that this self-selecting group are already engaged and therefore more likely to complete the survey.

- Minimise food waste. For example: Supports redistribution, recycling, donation, preparation, stocking, display, storage, shelf-life
- Promote seasonality. Actively sources locally grown, reared or produced ingredients to reduce food miles
- Minimises contribution to waste production. For example: recyclable and reusable packaging, awareness of collection and disposal
- Sourcing food from sustainable producers. For example: local farms, producers and taking into account food miles
- This business does not have environmentally sustainable focus currently

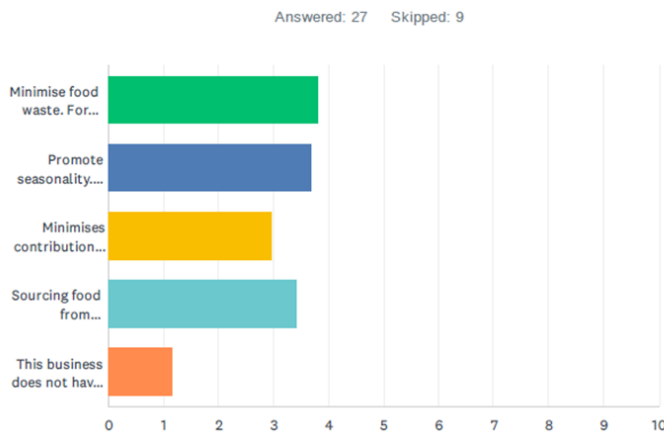
Q9 If you answered yes, can you rate which active environmentally sustainable practices relating to food in your business are the most IMPORTANT (1 being top priority)



No clear leader in terms of environmentally sustainable practices from the businesses surveyed

An alternative question style, for example selecting the single most important practice, or ranking the top 3 out of 5 possible answers, may have yielded a more clear leader. However this style of question was chosen as we anticipated that the majority of businesses would be looking at most if not all of these practices.

Q10 Which of these areas is your focus for IMPROVEMENT over the next 12 months (1 being top priority)



Minimise food waste. For example: Supports redistribution, recycling, donation, preparation, stocking, display, storage, shelf-life

Promote seasonality. Actively sources locally grown, reared or produced ingredients to reduce food miles

Minimises contribution to waste production. For example: recyclable and reusable packaging, awareness of collection and disposal

Sourcing food from sustainable producers. For example: local farms, producers and taking into account food miles

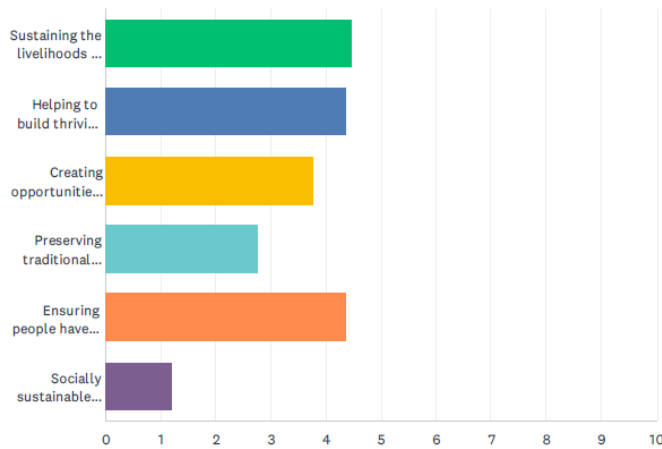
This business does not have environmentally sustainable focus currently

No clear leader in terms of priorities for the businesses over the next 12 months

As above a different question style may have yielded a more clear leader.

Q11 Which socially sustainable points are important to your business (please prioritise from 1 - 5)

Answered: 27 Skipped: 9



Sustaining the livelihoods of people working in our region, providing meaningful and rewarding work

Helping to build thriving local economies, and supply chain

Creating opportunities to learn about food and drink culture and its special role in North East heritage

Preserving traditional livestock breeds and heritage crop varieties and local food cultures

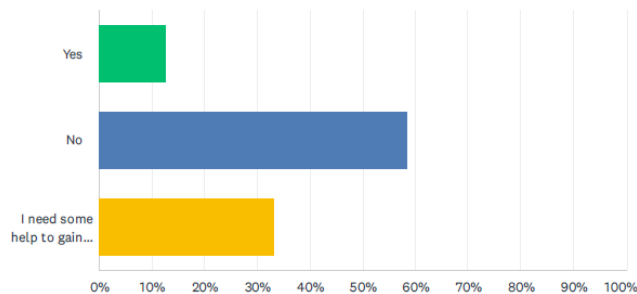
Ensuring people have access to good quality, safe and healthy produce

Socially sustainable points are not currently important to this business

As above a different question style may have yielded a more clear leader.

Q16 Do you feel that you are making the most of promoting the work you do around sustainability?

Answered: 24 Skipped: 12

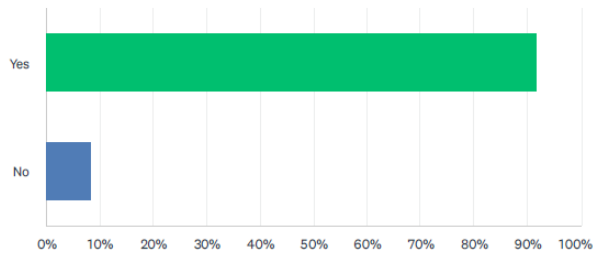


Over 87% of respondents would like more support in terms of sustainability promotion

This is one of the key learnings from the survey and something that NESFA may look to providing to businesses in the region in future. This could include case studies of successful promotional work from the SFP network, workshops with marketing experts on how to promote sustainability credentials and signposting to effective sustainable food award schemes.

Q19 Would you be interested in finding out more on how your business can become a sustainable food ambassador for the North East

Answered: 24 Skipped: 12



Overwhelming interest in the businesses become a sustainable food ambassador

Appendix 4 – Public Survey & Results

Public Survey Questions Used

- 1) Age Range
- 2) Area of north east you live in (local authority area choice)
- 3) When choosing where to get your food, what is most important to you?

(1 being top priority)

- Sustainability. For example: Food miles, animal welfare, packaging & less waste
- Convenience. For example: Delivery box, closest option, on-line
- Cost. For example: Affordable, best value
- Sourcing. opt for food from local producers and sellers
- Cost and Affordability

- 4) Where do you usually go to stock your cupboards?

(1 being most likely to 5 most unlikely)

- Supermarket chain
- Corner shop
- Food bank/Social supermarket/Community pantry
- Farmers market/Farm shop
- Online/delivery
- High street - Butcher/Baker/Grocer

- 5) Are you conscious of selecting environmentally sustainable food YES/ NO

- 6) When it comes to buying sustainable food, what is the most important to you?

(1 being top priority)

- Reduced or zero food waste - preventing, donating or recycling surplus food
- Buying food that is in season in the UK
- Buying food from local producers
- Buying food with no packaging or packaging that can be recycled
- Reduce food miles
- Cost, affordability, best value

7) What could a business do to encourage you to buy your food from them?

(1 being your most valued to 5 least valued)

- Promote their sustainable food accreditations and awards
- Promote their sustainability values and aspirations
- Promote their use of the local supply chain and regional producers on menus and displays
- Promoting their locations, opening hours and buying options
- Promoting their use of locally sourced food on their menus and displays

8) If you wish us to follow you to share your support of food and drink from the North East, please add your details?

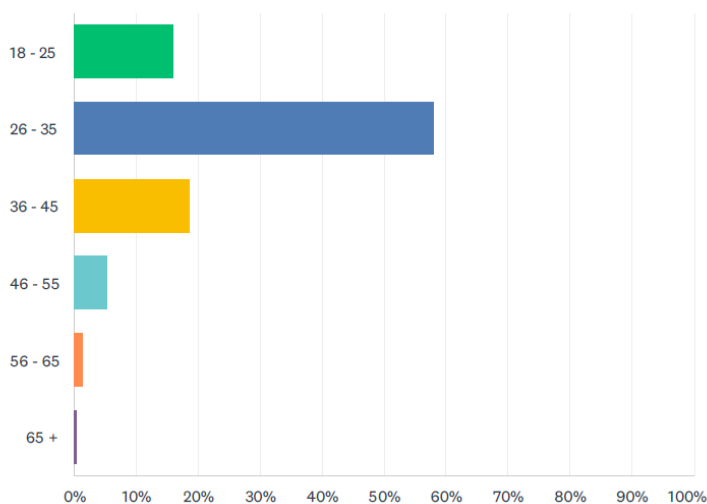
9) Would you be interested in finding out more on how YOU can become a sustainable food ambassador for the North East. Please complete the details above.

Survey Results - Public Engagement

This survey engaged 530 respondents, below are a selection of the responses.

Q1 Your age:

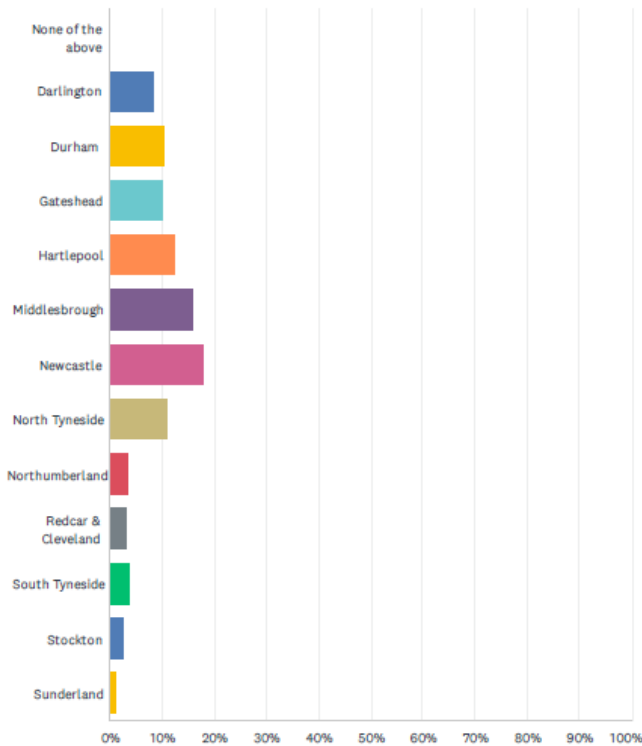
Answered: 530 Skipped: 0



Interesting age demographic, by far the largest of the groups were aged 26-35, followed by 36-45

Q2 Area of the North East you live in:

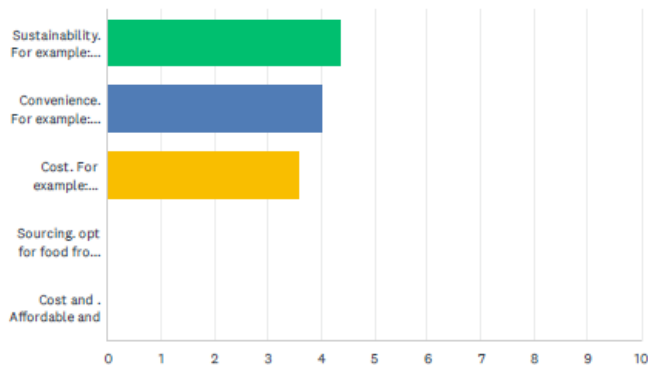
Answered: 530 Skipped: 0



Representation from all of the local authority areas from across the region. The greatest being Newcastle, followed by Middlesbrough

Q3 When choosing where to get your food, what is most important to you?(1 being top priority)

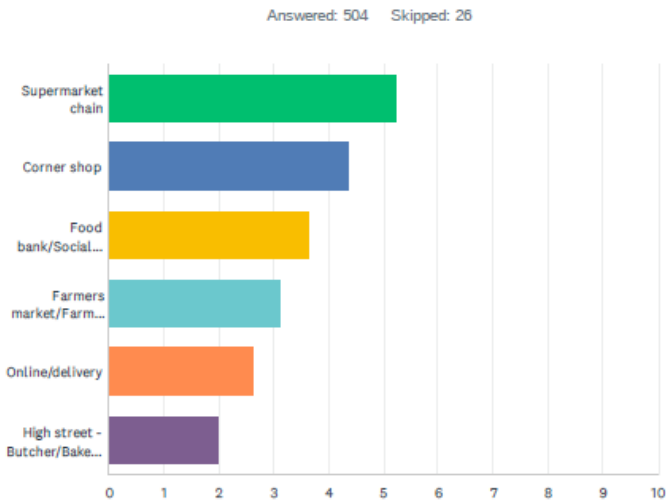
Answered: 505 Skipped: 25



From this question consumers rated sustainability as most important when choosing where to get food from, followed by convenience, followed by cost

This is perhaps surprising that sustainability is ranked so highly, however this is most likely due to the respondents being a self-selecting group who are interested in food sustainability due to the methodology used for promoting the survey. A survey that reached a more representative spread of the population of the region may well have yielded a very different response to this question in particular.

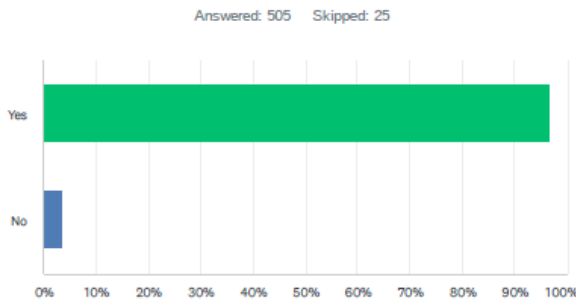
Q4 Where do you usually go to stock your cupboards? (1 being most likely to 5 most unlikely)



This question was worded to clarify where people did their main shop. Supermarkets were the most popular, then corner shops, then food banks, farmers markets, online and high street the lowest

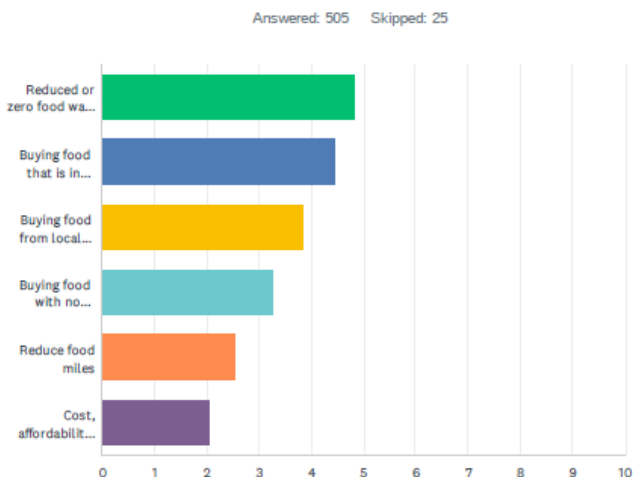
This is perhaps conflicting to the previous question, since supermarket chains and corner shops are more commonly associated with cost and convenience than sustainable food. It is unclear why the responses to these two questions are so conflicting. Perhaps methodology could have been improved with more consistent question wording e.g. “stock your cupboards” in Q4 versus “get your food” in Q3, or reversing the order of the questions may have yielded different results.

Q5 Are you conscious of selecting environmentally sustainable food



Overwhelmingly conscious of environmental sustainability of food, so is this self-selecting group representative of the general public?

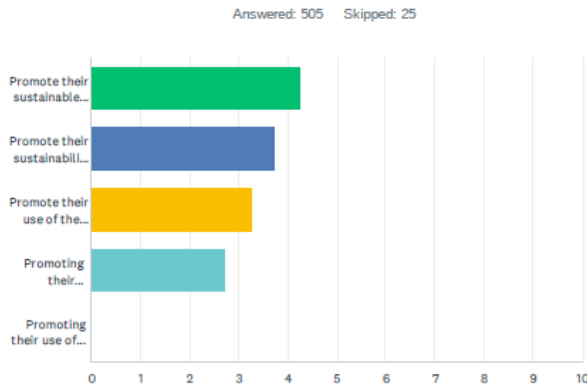
Q6 When it comes to buying sustainable food, what is the most important to you? (1 being top priority)



- Reduced or zero food waste - preventing, donating or recycling surplus food
- Buying food that is in season in the UK
- Buying food from local producers
- Buying food with no packaging or packaging that can be recycled
- Reduce food miles
- Cost, affordability, best value

A fair spread of responses across all of these priorities, reducing food waste being the highest priority, in season food second and from local food producers is third.

Q7 What could a business do to encourage you to buy your food from them? (1 being your most valued to 5 least valued)



Promote their sustainable food accreditations and awards

Promote their sustainability values and aspirations

Promote their use of the local supply chain and regional producers on menus and displays

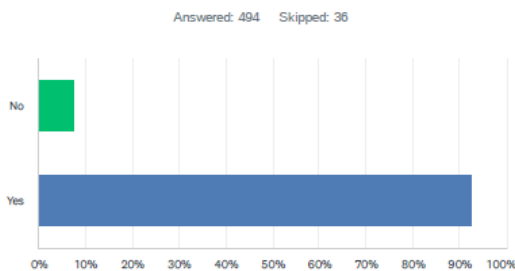
Promoting their locations, opening hours and buying options

Promoting their use of locally sourced food on their menus and displays

Suggestions to promote accreditations and awards and secondly their sustainability values as a business are the two highest scores, third and fourth are about the use of local food.

This information would be useful to relay to businesses since they showed an interest in improving promotion of their sustainable practices.

Q9 Would you be interested in finding out more on how YOU can become a sustainable food ambassador for the North East. Please complete the details above.



Over 450 people interested in how they could become a sustainable food ambassador in the North East region.