

Public Understanding of Sustainable Consumption of Food

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One of five projects:

- Public Understanding of Sustainable...

- Consumption of Food
- Energy Use in the Home
- Transport
- Finance and Investment
- Leisure and Tourism

✓ Available at

<http://www.defra.gov.uk/environment/business/scp/research/themes/theme3/sustain-consumpt0607.htm>

Research Aims

- Consumer aspirations around food
- Consumer perceptions and understanding of 'good food'
- Spontaneous understanding of the concept of sustainable consumption of food
- How consumers respond to the idea of sustainable consumption of food
- Acceptability of five specific behaviour goals
- Expectations of government/retailers/producers

PROPOSED HEADLINE BEHAVIOURS

Personal Transport

- Use more efficient vehicles;
- Use car less for short trips;
- Less flying (short haul)

Homes: waste

- Increase recycling;
- Waste less food

Homes: energy

- Install insulation;
- Buy energy efficient products;
- Better energy management;
- Install microgeneration

Homes water

- More responsible water usage

Eco-products

- Eat food locally in season;
- Adopt lower impact diet

Food Behaviour Goals

- Eat food that is locally in season
- Waste less food
- Buy certified/labelled/assured food
- Buy certified/labelled fish
- Adopt a diet with low environmental impacts

Methodology

- Recruitment framework based on Defra's pro-environmental segmentation model
 - Based on attitudes and values
 - Further development work underway
 - New model available from December 2008
- 14 discussion groups with follow up interviews
 - Each discussion group lasted for two hours
 - Participants were asked to complete a shopping diary before attending the group
 - 82 'blind' follow up phone calls were made two weeks after the groups were conducted

Who might do what

Ability to Act

High ability + willing

Segment 1

- Avoid unnecessary flights
- Use more efficient vehicles
- Use car less for short trips
- Install insulation
- Waste less food
- Increase recycling
- Better energy management
- Install microgen
- More resp water usage
- *Adopt a lower impact diet*
- Buy energy efficient products
- Eat more food locally in season

Segment 3

- *Avoid unnecessary flights*
- Use more efficient vehicles
- **Use car less for short trips**
- *Install insulation*
- Waste less food
- Increase recycling
- *Better energy management*
- *Install microgen*
- More resp water usage
- **Adopt a lower impact diet**
- Buy energy efficient products
- *Eat more food locally in season*

Segment 2

- **Avoid unnecessary flights**
- Use more efficient vehicles
- **Use car less for short trips**
- Install insulation
- Waste less food
- Increase recycling
- Better energy management
- *Install microgen*
- More resp water usage
- **Adopt a lower impact diet**
- Buy energy efficient products
- Eat more food locally in season

Segment 5

- *Avoid unnecessary flights*
- *Use more efficient vehicles*
- **Use car less for short trips**
- *Install insulation*
- *Waste less food*
- *Increase recycling*
- **Better energy management**
- **Install microgen**
- *More resp water usage*
- **Adopt a lower impact diet**
- *Buy energy efficient products*
- *Eat more food locally in season*

Segment 4

- *Avoid unnecessary flights*
- *Use more efficient vehicles*
- **Use car less for short trips**
- *Install insulation*
- *Waste less food*
- *Increase recycling*
- **Better energy management**
- **Install microgen**
- **More resp water usage**
- **Adopt a lower impact diet**
- *Buy energy efficient products*
- **Eat more food locally in season**

Segment 7

- **Avoid unnecessary flights**
- **Use more efficient vehicles**
- **Use car less for short trips**
- **Install insulation**
- **Waste less food**
- **Increase recycling**
- **Better energy management**
- **Install microgen**
- **More resp water usage**
- **Adopt a lower impact diet**
- **Buy energy efficient products**
- **Eat more food locally in season**

Segment 6

- **Avoid unnecessary flights**
- *Use more efficient vehicles*
- **Use car less for short trips**
- *Install insulation*
- *Waste less food*
- **Increase recycling**
- **Better energy management**
- **Install microgen**
- **More resp water usage**
- **Adopt a lower impact diet**
- **Buy energy efficient products**
- **Eat more food locally in season**

Low ability + unwilling

Willingness to Act

- Lists in order of carbon impact
- Green = high acceptability of goal
- *Amber* = medium acceptability of goal
- **Red** = low acceptability of goal

Headline Findings (across projects)

- Consumer understanding is low and assumptions do not match reality
- ‘If this is serious’ - Consumers expect Government and Business to be acting
- Behaviour goals –
 - People are motivated by local scale and personal benefits
 - People are unlikely to take on anything that will impact their everyday lifestyle
- Buying ‘better products’ is acceptable and people are interested in knowing they’re better

'Labelling is not the answer'

Make sustainable choices clearer

Make sustainable affordable

Reduce 'bad' offers

- Consumers are keen to emphasise that labelling is not the answer
 - There is already a lot to consider when shopping
 - Some would like a broader campaign of education
 - Some would like to see direct advertising

Headline Findings from Food Research

Any voluntary shift towards pro-environmental behaviour on consumers' side must be met with *visible* action from business and government

- A premium is placed on leadership in this area
- Businesses are seen as the lynch-pin for change
- Consumers are seeking leadership and guidance from Government

Actions for business:

- Supermarkets Only
 - Make sustainable choices clear
 - Make sustainable affordable
 - Reduce 'bad' offers

- Supermarkets and Producers
 - Reduce packaging
 - Examine supply chains
 - Support British
 - Reduce food miles

Messages for government:

- Consumers question why they have heard so little about sustainable food
- Government has a role as an educator
- Consumers believe the Government has a role to place in forcing businesses to change if it is not delivered voluntarily

How is this research being used...

- Engagement with major Defra projects (e.g. supermarket engagement, waste strategy, Act on CO₂ campaign)
- Stakeholder engagement
- Developing a Pro-environmental Behaviour Strategy

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Thankyou

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Key questions for discussion

- To what extent can we rely on labelling to influence behaviour?
- If its not 'carbon labelling', what might influence behaviour (e.g health, tasty food, community support)?
- Do we know who can take the lead in these initiatives?