



## Press Cutting

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# Food in public service areas

How catering operations can positively impact a sustainable workplace...

**W**hilst much media attention is focused on the quality of food provided in public service areas such as education and the NHS, less widespread scrutiny is cast over the topic of feeding the thousands of people who every day support the running of the myriad of services.

The recent Public Sector Food Procurement Initiative report<sup>1</sup> identified that the use of UK reared and grown food produce across Whitehall departments' catering operations continues to rise. Making available fresh, seasonal, locally produced foodstuffs for employees in these areas involves a significant proportion of the government's catering spend. Whilst the public eye may not rest so keenly on the matter, its importance cannot be overlooked.

Food at work is an important issue for any employer. Access to nutritious, high quality, value for money refreshment during the course of the working day is known to affect motivation, satisfaction and productivity during the working day.

As the UK's leading independent contract caterer, BaxterStorey understands why delivering high quality food at work is so important and what it takes to achieve this. For us, it's about the most fantastic food served by the most highly skilled teams in the sector using the freshest, seasonal, locally sourced ingredients. We do this not because it's fashionable, but because we know this is the best way to produce great food.

BaxterStorey has been operating for eight years and provides services to over 500 UK organisations including Barclays, Virgin Atlantic, Unilever,



Department for Business, Enterprise and Regulatory Reform and Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs. Since the earliest days of the company's existence, it has pursued a policy of engaging with local farmers and producers to ensure its business can meet ambitious goals to have its entire food chain, where possible, sourced from within the UK.

This trend goes against standard catering sector practice whereby the bigger catering providers instead choose a smaller number of national and international suppliers, but local supply keeps BaxterStorey at the top of its game. It requires BaxterStorey's procurement team to remain market vigilant and fastidious in managing a wide supplier network. Vivality, the business needs skilled chefs who understand, and are able to manage, fresh produce creatively and cost-effectively. Sadly - due to the availability of cheap, pre-cooked and

processed foodstuffs - this knowledge and these skills are a diminishing quantity in the catering environment.

### An environmental view

Whilst operating in this fashion brings with it challenges, employing a sustainable focus on its food chain nets positive environmental results. BaxterStorey's commitment to using fresh, locally sourced products places the operation in the strongest position to help sustain the local supply chain, reduce energy usage and minimise transportation costs. It supports our business' wider sustainability initiatives.

BaxterStorey's entire environmental performance is regarded as industry leading and David Hughes, Sustainability & HPP Programme Manager, Information & Workplace Services responsible for the BERR site, explains that BERR has benefited from this approach. "BaxterStorey's positive approach to environmental management and sustainable development

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has without a doubt contributed robustly to the development of the department's achievements in sustainable development. Proactive management of energy, waste minimisation, transport, materials and procurement through the supply chain have resulted in lessening their environmental impact. These innovative initiatives have been welcomed not only at BERR but across Whitehall. When BaxterStorey received accreditation to ISO 14001, it was a significant achievement and a testament to the company's continued commitment and passion for environmental improvement"

Catering by its nature consumes huge amounts of energy and resource whilst producing massive volumes of waste including foodstuffs, cooking oil, packaging, effluent, administrative waste and surplus equipment. These impacts are not ignored by BaxterStorey, which has taken a robust approach to minimise negative environmental impact evidenced in its ISO 14001 accreditation. Avoiding unnecessary landfill is high on its list of priorities; schemes are in place to recycle food into energy, coffee grinds into compost and the company has developed a long list of partnerships that enable equipment to be recycled or rehoused rather than dumped.

CO<sub>2</sub> impact is controlled by using energy saving devices in its kitchens and offices as well as by recycling cooking oil into bio-fuel. We have produced a suite of cleaning products using chemicals that are 100% natural and biodegradable with no negative impact on the environment.

### Quality begins at home

Avoiding long distance haulage by sourcing local ingredients within the UK is a key sustainability target for BaxterStorey and its ability to 'buy British' grows stronger by the day. Whilst some products such as oranges and bananas will always have to be sourced outside the UK, BaxterStorey is committed to ensuring

that the UK is the first port of call for those that can be located on our shores. 95% of all fresh meat is procured within the UK and 80% of other fresh products such as fruit and vegetables are UK sourced. The list gets longer; every egg cracked is UK produced, each of the 3.2 million litres of milk the business uses annually comes from UK dairies and all bakery products are produced by British artisan bakers.

Extensive relationships with farmers and farming bodies including the National Farmers Union and the British Pig Association are proving fruitful for the company as it strives to close the 5% gap in all of its fresh meat produce being sourced in the UK. BaxterStorey has worked with the bodies to build a network of UK farmers who produce all pork products for its government contracts and we're confident that pulling further on these resources will enable us to guarantee a totally British supply chain for meat across the entire customer base, before the year is out.

BaxterStorey has strong links with individual farms; however sheer volume dictates that individual relationships with all farmers are not possible and a wholesale route is implemented. Wholesalers are briefed tightly to engage farmers who share the company's values. We want our supply chain to be driven by quality as we are. It is extremely important to us that BaxterStorey works with like-minded businesses. A sharp eye is kept on the farming community. Where we spot somebody doing something that looks like a good fit, wholesalers are encouraged to develop relationships.

Advocates of the quality benefits of having a strong UK farming resource to call on, the company is also conscious that its relationships with the farming community enable it to reassure clients and customers in matters surrounding the provenance of the food BaxterStorey supplies.

The groundswell of interest in provenance and local sourcing has as much to do with increased consumer knowledge regarding food quality, as it does with animal welfare, and it remains essential to be able to identify what comes from where. With open relationships and stringent processes in place throughout the supply chain, BaxterStorey is confident it can pinpoint the farm and farmer of every pack of beef, pork, chicken or eggs which enters its operation.

### Responsible service

Sustainability isn't only about food management at BaxterStorey. Sustainable responsibility is a vein that runs through the entire business. From investing in its teams, ensuring equity in supplier relationships to its BaxterStorey Foundation, a charitable arm which is set to distribute £100,000 of profit from coffee sales to a variety of good causes, it is evident that BaxterStorey pays more than lip service to its role as a corporate citizen.

This approach sits comfortably with the government's sustainable farming and food strategy for England: a best in class catering service that encourages a sustainable farming and food sector and that contributes to a better environment and healthier, prosperous communities.

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