



Public Health  
England

Protecting and improving the nation's health

# **Healthier, more sustainable catering** Information for those involved in purchasing food and drink

Includes useful information for organisations aiming to meet Government Buying Standards for Food and Catering Services

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# Purchasing to support healthier and more sustainable food provision

1. This guidance has been developed to help those involved in purchasing of foods and ingredients to ensure that their service provides both health and sustainability benefits. It will also help those who must meet or have chosen to meet **Government Buying Standards for Food and Catering (GBSF)** purchase ingredients and products that meet these standards.
2. In order to ensure the ingredients and products you choose to buy are healthier and more sustainable you will need to collate some information on your potential purchases.
3. For some ingredients and products, you may be able to identify those that meet a definition of healthier and more sustainable, whereas other products might meet one or other aspect but will still help you support healthier and more sustainable catering overall.

## Getting started

4. The tables in this document will help you identify products that support healthier and more sustainable catering provision. However, you will need to talk to your suppliers in advance of buying your food and drinks to ensure you have all the information that you need to make informed choices. For some products, you will need to collate information on:
  - salt content
  - total and saturated fat content
  - sugar content
  - fibre content
  - energy content
  - product size
  - amount of fruit in a product (where relevant)

You will also need to collate information on:

- seasonality of fruit and vegetables
- origin of meat, fish and dairy products, origin of palm oil
- fair trade options

- production standards (ie meets UK legislative standards for food production or equivalent standards)
  - traceability of fresh, chilled and frozen produce
  - authenticity of products
  - environmental production standards (eg integrated production, integrated farm management standards or organic)
  - animal welfare (eg the conditions in which pigs are raised and the availability of free range eggs)
5. Some suppliers are already collating this information and will be able to offer you summaries of products that will help you meet healthier and more sustainable catering requirements such as in GBSF. Examples of healthier, more sustainable catering practice, including those from PHE's own staff buildings, Hull and East Yorkshire Hospitals NHS Trust and the British Heart Foundation's 'Social Cooking Project' are available. These demonstrate how it is possible to offer a range of healthier food options within a diverse range of settings including those where GBSF standards in place at that time were met.
  6. If your organisation or client must meet (or has chosen to meet) GBSF you will be meeting specific criteria. The [GBSF Checklist](#) available from the PHE website sets out both the mandatory and best practice GBSF criteria.
  7. If you are not looking to meet GBSF criteria, the criteria in this guidance will nevertheless be useful in helping you choose your ingredients and products that help provide a healthier and more sustainable service.
  8. Table 1 provides information on foods/ingredients you might buy to meet specifications aligned to GBSF or when looking for healthier and more sustainable procurement of food. This is an extract from the Food Guidelines presented in PHE's [Healthier More Sustainable Catering – A Toolkit for Serving Food to Adults](#). Tables 2 and 3 can be used to select those products that are lower in fat, saturated fat, salt and sugar.
  9. Other organisations in your area may also be looking to buy healthier and more sustainable food and drink. You may wish to consider whether there is an opportunity of working together to develop a local consortium.

## Things to consider within your contract to help meet a healthier and more sustainable food service

**Table 1: Tips on choosing foods for healthier, more sustainable catering**

<p><b>Potatoes, bread, rice, pasta and other starchy carbohydrates</b></p>	<p><b>Bread</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• buy a variety of breads – including wholegrain, brown, wholemeal, granary and seeded</li> <li>• look for breads made with a combination of white and wholemeal flour with or without added fibre for customers who don't like brown or wholemeal bread</li> <li>• choose lower salt bread where possible</li> </ul> <p><b>Flour</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• buy wholemeal flour which can be used for some recipes or used to replace some of the white flour to add folate, iron and fibre to the dish</li> </ul> <p><b>Breakfast cereals</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• buy fortified breakfast cereals as they can be a good source of vitamin D, folate and iron</li> <li>• buy higher fibre and lower sugar breakfast cereals. To meet GBSF, at least 50% of breakfast cereals (procured by volume) need to be higher in fibre (ie more than 6g/100g) and not exceed 22.5g/100g total sugars</li> </ul> <p><b>All products</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• buy products that contribute high amounts of salt to the diet at lower volumes. To meet GBSF, at least 50% of breads, breakfast cereals, ready meals and pre-packed sandwiches (procured by volume) must meet salt targets<sup>1</sup></li> <li>• buy boiled starchy food products such as rice, pasta and potatoes that have been cooked without salt</li> <li>• buy higher fibre options including wholewheat pasta, brown rice and potatoes that can be cooked and served with skins on</li> <li>• buy lower fat, salt and sugar products where these</li> </ul>
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<sup>1</sup> Salt targets to be met by 2017 were published in March 2014. GBSF criteria relate to the targets to be met by 2012. Where products meeting the 2017 targets are available, these should be purchased in preference.

	<p>are available – use table 2 to classify products as ‘high, medium or low’</p>
<p><b>Fruit and vegetables</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• buy vegetables that have been cooked without salt</li> <li>• buy tinned vegetables and pulses in water, with no added salt or sugar</li> <li>• buy tinned fruit in juice rather than in syrup</li> <li>• buy lower fat, salt and sugar products where these are available – use tables 2 and 3 to classify products as ‘high, medium or low’</li> <li>• buy products that contribute high amounts of salt to the diet at lower volumes. To meet GBSF, at least 50% of ready meals (procured by volume) must meet salt targets<sup>2</sup></li> <li>• check with suppliers about in-season produce so that in-season produce can be highlighted on menus<sup>3</sup></li> <li>• buy desserts that are fruit based (ie have at least half the raw ingredients by weight as fruit). To meet GBSF, at least 50% of the volume of desserts available is based on fruit – which can be fresh, canned in fruit juice, dried or frozen</li> <li>• when buying fruits and vegetables grown abroad consider fairly traded options</li> </ul>
<p><b>Dairy and alternatives</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ask for the origin of the dairy products so that this information can be indicated either on the menu or accompanying literature, or at least is available when the information is requested by the consumer</li> <li>• buy lower fat, salt and sugar products where these are available – use tables 2 and 3 to classify products as ‘high, medium or low’</li> <li>• buy products that contribute high amounts of saturated fat to the diet at lower volumes. To meet GBSF, at least 50% of hard yellow cheese has a maximum total fat content of 25g/100g and at least 75% of milk is reduced fat (that is, semi-skimmed,</li> </ul>

<sup>2</sup> Salt targets to be met by 2017 were published in March 2014. GBSF criteria relate to the targets to be met by 2012. Where products meeting the 2017 targets are available these should be purchased in preference.

<sup>3</sup> In respect of the use of fresh produce, menus shall be designed to reflect the natural growing or production period for the UK, and in-season produce shall be highlighted on menus.

	<p>1% or skimmed milk)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• buy products that contribute high amounts of salt to the diet at lower volumes. To meet GBSF, at least 50% of ready meals (procured by volume) must meet salt targets<sup>4</sup></li> </ul>
<p><b>Beans, pulses, fish, eggs, meat and other proteins</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ask for the origin of the meat and meat products so that this information can be indicated either on the menu or accompanying literature, or at least is available when the information is requested by the consumer</li> <li>• buy lower fat, salt and sugar products where these are available – use tables 2 and 3 to classify products as ‘high, medium or low’</li> <li>• buy products that contribute high amounts of salt to the diet at lower volumes. To meet GBSF, at least 50% of meat and meat products, soups, cooking sauces and ready meals (procured by volume) must meet salt targets<sup>4</sup></li> <li>• buy products that contribute high amounts of saturated fat to the diet at lower volumes. To meet GBSF, meat and meat products (procured by volume) are lower in saturated fat where available and at least 75% of ready meals contain less than 6g saturated fat per portion</li> <li>• choose lean cuts of meat where possible. Some types and cuts of meat are higher in fat, particularly saturated fat</li> <li>• look for meat products with higher meat content, look at the label for more information – also consider the fat and salt content</li> <li>• buy fish from sustainable sources meeting the FAO Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries (includes Marine Stewardship Council certification and Marine Conservation Society ‘fish to eat’ or equivalent). Avoid ‘red list’ or endangered species of farmed or wild fish (Marine Conservation Society ‘fish to avoid’)</li> <li>• meat products in pastry, such as pies and sausage</li> </ul>

<sup>4</sup> Salt targets to be met by 2017 were published in March 2014. GBSF criteria relate to the targets to be met by 2012. Where products meeting the 2017 targets are available, these should be purchased in preference.

	<p>rolls, are often high in fat; choose the lower fat options where available</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• look for canned pulses with no added salt and sugar</li> <li>• choose baked beans which are reduced salt and sugar varieties</li> <li>• buy food that is produced in a way that meets UK legislative standards for animal welfare, or equivalent standards<sup>5</sup></li> <li>• buy eggs, including fresh in-shell, liquid and powdered eggs, which are sourced from systems that do not use conventional cages. If from a caged system, enriched cages must be used</li> </ul>
<p><b>Fats and spreads</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• to meet GBSF, at least 75% of oils and spreads are based on unsaturated fats (eg olive, rapeseed, soya or sunflower oils)</li> </ul>
<p><b>Foods high in fat, salt and sugars</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ask suppliers about and check the levels of salt, fat, saturated fat and sugars in their products – use tables 2 and 3 to classify products as ‘high, medium or low’</li> <li>• buy products that contribute high amounts of saturated fat to the diet in lower volumes. To meet GBSF, biscuits, cakes and pastries (procured by volume) are lower in saturated fat where available</li> <li>• buy smaller sizes of savoury snacks, confectionery and packet sweet snacks. To meet best practice elements of GBSF savoury snacks should only be available in packet sizes of 30g or less</li> <li>• confectionery and packet sweet snacks should only be in the smallest standard single serve portion size available within the market and not to exceed 250kcal</li> <li>• buy sugar sweetened beverages in smaller single</li> </ul>

<sup>5</sup> Refer to: [www.gov.uk/animal-welfare](http://www.gov.uk/animal-welfare). UK standards are generally similar to EU standards for food production. There are, however, differences in animal welfare standards for some aspects of pigmeat and broiler chicken production. Broiler chicken, pork and pork products, must be compliant with UK standards, as set out in the Welfare of Farmed Animals Regulations 2007 (as amended). If, in any particular circumstances, this leads to a significant increase in costs which cannot reasonably be compensated for by savings elsewhere, the procuring authority shall agree with the catering contractor or supplier to depart from this requirement. The reasons for doing so shall be noted and recorded. This decision shall be signed off by the Head of Procurement or equivalent senior official of the government department or other public body. In such an eventuality, EU standards shall be met at a minimum.

	<p>serving sizes. To meet best practice elements of GBSF, all sugar sweetened beverages to be no more than 330ml pack size and no more than 20% of beverages (procured by volume) may be sugar sweetened. No less than 80% of beverages (procured by volume) may be low calorie/no added sugar beverages (including fruit juice and water)</p>
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<b>Non-food category specific criteria</b>	
<b>Ethical trading</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>buy fair trade tea and coffee. To meet GBSF at least 50% of tea and coffee is fairly traded. To meet best practice elements of GBSF, all tea, coffee, cocoa and bananas are certified as fairly traded and dairy products meet the Voluntary Code of Practice on Best Practice on Contractual Relationships</li> </ul>
<b>Water</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>do not buy pre-bottled water (mineral or spring)</li> </ul>
<b>Menu analysis, calorie and allergen labelling</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>ask suppliers for information on nutritional content of foods and allergen information to help the service provide analysed menus if these are required in the specification. To meet best practice elements of GBSF both these criteria must be met</li> </ul>
<b>Production standards</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>central government must source food meeting UK legislative standards for food production, or equivalent standards<sup>6</sup>. See appendix 1 for a list of relevant legislation. You must ensure that food is verifiable as meeting these standards by either checking that farm inspection systems meet UK standards of inspection or their equivalent, or if not, that they are subject to an independent assurance system</li> </ul>
<b>Traceability of fresh, chilled and frozen produce</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>to meet GBSF check that catering contractors or food suppliers are able to ensure the traceability of fresh, chilled and frozen produce in accordance with current UK legislation or equivalent</li> </ul>
<b>Authenticity</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>to meet GBSF check that the catering contractor or supplier has systems in place to enable it to check and ensure authenticity of products</li> </ul>

<sup>6</sup> GBSF notes that if, in any particular circumstances, this leads to a significant increase in costs which cannot reasonably be compensated for by savings elsewhere, the procuring authority shall agree with the catering contractor or supplier to depart from this requirement. The reasons for doing so shall be noted and recorded. This decision shall be signed off by the Head of Procurement or equivalent senior official of the government department or other public body. Procurers or catering contractors must ensure that food is verifiable as meeting these standards by either checking that farm inspection systems meet UK standards of inspection or their equivalent or, if not, that they are subject to an independent assurance system.

<b>Higher environmental production standards</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• to meet mandatory elements of GBSF at least 10% of the total monetary value of primary commodity (ie raw ingredient) food and drink procured shall be inspected and certified to meet publicly available Integrated Production (IP) or Integrated Farm Management (IFM) standards, or publicly available organic standards.</li><li>• such standards require systematic and integrated management of natural habitats, energy, water and waste, and management of soils, landscape and watercourses, for example</li><li>• to meet best practice criteria of GBSF at least 40% of the total monetary value of primary commodity (ie raw ingredient) food and drink procured shall be inspected and certified to publicly available Integrated Production standards or Integrated Farm Management standards, or organic standards</li></ul>
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## Criteria for foods that are low/medium and high in total fat, saturated fat, total sugars and salt

10. When choosing products refer to Tables 2 and 3 to help select those that are lower in fat, saturated fat, sugars and salt where possible. These high, medium and low nutrient criteria are also used for colour code labelling. This labelling is being used on front-of-pack by some food manufacturers to help consumers make a healthier choice<sup>7</sup>.

**Table 2 – Criteria for 100g of food**

	<b>Low</b>	<b>Medium</b>	<b>High</b>	
<b>Total fat</b>	3.0g or less per 100g	More than 3.0g and less than or equal to 17.5g per 100g	More than 17.5g per 100g	More than 21g per portion*
<b>Saturated fat (saturates)</b>	1.5g or less per 100g	More than 1.5g and less than or equal to 5.0g per 100g	More than 5.0g per 100g	More than 6.0g per portion*
<b>(Total) Sugars</b>	5.0g or less per 100g	More than 5.0g and less than or equal to 22.5g per 100g	More than 22.5g per 100g	More than 27g per portion*
<b>Salt**</b>	0.3g or less per 100g	More than 0.3g and less than or equal to 1.5g per 100g	More than 1.5g per 100g	More than 1.8g per portion*

\* Portion size criteria apply to portions/serving sizes greater than 100g.

\*\*Sodium from all sources expressed as salt.

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<sup>7</sup> For further information see the Front of Pack nutrition labelling guidance published by the Department of Health. Available at: [www.gov.uk/government/publications/front-of-pack-nutrition-labelling-guidance](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/front-of-pack-nutrition-labelling-guidance)

**Table 3 – Criteria for drinks (per 100ml)**

	<b>Low</b>	<b>Medium</b>	<b>High</b>	
<b>Total fat</b>	1.5g or less per 100ml	More than 1.5g and less than or equal to 8.75g per 100ml	More than 8.75g per 100ml	More than 10.5g per portion*
<b>Saturated fat (saturates)</b>	0.75g or less per 100ml	More than 0.75g and less than or equal to 2.5g per 100ml	More than 2.5g per 100ml	More than 3g per portion*
<b>(Total) Sugars</b>	2.5g or less per 100ml	More than 2.5g and less than or equal to 11.25g per 100ml	More than 11.25g per 100ml	More than 13.5g per portion*
<b>Salt**</b>	0.3g or less per 100ml	More than 0.3g and less than or equal to 0.75g per 100ml	More than 0.75g per 100ml	More than 0.9g per portion*

\* Portion size criteria apply to portions/serving sizes greater than 150ml.

\*\*Sodium from all sources expressed as salt.

## Further information

For more information on PHE's Healthier and More Sustainable Catering toolkits and tools see: [www.gov.uk/government/publications/healthier-and-more-sustainable-catering-a-toolkit-for-serving-food-to-adults](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/healthier-and-more-sustainable-catering-a-toolkit-for-serving-food-to-adults)

# Appendix 1. Annexe to Government Buying Standards for Food and Catering

## UK Standards of Production

If you are purchasing food from the UK or abroad, you must ensure it is sourced from producers who adhere to the relevant UK or equivalent standards of production. The standards of production are contained in the legislative standards for cross-compliance as set out in Common Agriculture Policy legislation (Commission Regulation (EC) No 1122/2009 & 73/2009). The full set of cross-compliance rules for England can be found at:

[rpa.defra.gov.uk/CrossCompliance2014](http://rpa.defra.gov.uk/CrossCompliance2014)

Cross-compliance is the set of rules that serves as a baseline for all farmers in England applying for direct payments (such as the Basic Payment Scheme) and certain Rural Development payments. These rules cover the environment, animal, plant and public health, animal welfare and landscape features. They are split into two types; Statutory Management Requirements (SMRs) which reflect specific elements of EU legislation, and standards of Good Agricultural and Environmental Condition (GAEC). SMR standards are the same in all EU member states. However, GAEC standards will have some variation.

You must therefore ensure that:

1. If sourcing from the UK or an EU member state, your producer must adhere to the relevant cross-compliance rules of the country of production
2. If sourcing from a third country, your producer must adhere to all Statutory Management Requirements (SMRs) in cross-compliance, and all England Good Agricultural and Environmental Condition (GAEC) which are of relevance to the farming land and system in that country of production

You should note that:

- cross-compliance rules differ between UK devolved administrations and can be found on each administrations website
- cross-compliance rules will change from 1 January 2015 as the new CAP scheme comes into force (Commission Regulation (EC) No 1306/2013)

## Summary of cross-compliance GAECs and SMRs

### Good Agricultural and Environmental Conditions:

- GAEC 1 - Soil Protection Review (SPR)
- GAEC 5 - Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA)
- GAEC 6 - Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs)
- GAEC 7 - Scheduled monuments
- GAEC 8 - Public rights of way
- GAEC 9 - Overgrazing and unsuitable supplementary feeding
- GAEC 10 - Heather and grass burning
- GAEC 11 - Control of weeds
- GAEC 12 - Agricultural land which is not in agricultural production
- GAEC 13 - Stone walls
- GAEC 14 - Protection of hedgerows and watercourses
- GAEC 15 - Hedgerows
- GAEC 16 - Felling of trees
- GAEC 17 - Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs)
- GAEC 18 - Water abstraction
- GAEC 19 - No spread zones
- GAEC 20 - Groundwater

### Statutory Management Requirements:

- SMR 1 - Wild birds
- SMR 3 - Sewage sludge
- SMR 4 - Nitrate Vulnerable Zones (NVZs)
- SMR 5 - Habitats and species
- SMR 6 - Pig identification and registration
- SMR 7 - Cattle identification and registration
- SMR 8 - Sheep and goats identification
- SMR 9 - Restrictions on the use of plant protection products (PPPs)
- SMR 10 - Restrictions on the use of substances having hormonal or thyrostatic action and beta-agonists in farm animals
- SMR 11 - Food and feed law
- SMR 12 - Prevention and control of transmissible spongiform encephalopathies (TSEs)
- SMRs 13, 14, 15 - Control of foot and mouth disease, certain animal diseases and bluetongue
- SMR 16 - Welfare of calves
- SMR 17 - Welfare of pigs
- SMR 18 - Animal welfare

## Animal welfare

In most cases UK standards of production are the same as those required by the EU. See: [www.gov.uk/animal-welfare](http://www.gov.uk/animal-welfare). There are certain differences in production of meat chickens and of pigmeat, where the UK has more stringent standards:

- EU meat chickens can be stocked to a maximum of 42 kg per m<sup>2</sup> if conditions in Annex 5 of Directive 2007/43/EC are met, whereas England, Scotland and Wales have an absolute maximum of 39 kg per m<sup>2</sup>
- close confinement stalls for breeding sows have been unilaterally banned in the UK since 1999, whereas the rest of the EU still permits sows to be kept confined individually for four weeks after service; Council Directive 2008/120/EC, which partially bans the use of sow stalls, came into force on 1 January 2013