

Sustainable Practices in Food Service: The Priority of 2024

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As the dust settles on a controversial COP28, experts have outlined the major focus areas that food service businesses, and the clients they serve daily, from SMEs to global brands, will be embracing.

The \$3 trillion food service industry, having placed much emphasis on sustainability over recent years due to its sheer scale, continues to strive to make improvements to impact both the environment and client experience. It remains integral as a priority, synonymous with global focuses. There are several key elements that businesses will look ahead to improve upon and tackle, when it comes to achieving attainable milestones in their sustainable programming.

Alex Kristall, Managing Director of [The Good Eating Company](#), stresses the value and importance of hitting sustainable goals, and the communication to clients about these practices: "Clients' concern for our environmental impact has increased every year. It has become a major factor and therefore something we have focused on. We have identified key areas for improvement and have set these as goals within GEC. By highlighting the various strands, we aim to encourage businesses we work with, and help them meet their own ambitious ESG commitments. Clients and suppliers should be working together to achieve desired outcomes. Furthermore, sustainability is increasingly a consideration for employees; 78% of employees in a survey conducted by our parent company Sodexo noted that environmental sustainability is very important to them. Therefore, corporations will strive to facilitate change, not only for the good of the planet, but to enhance and satisfy their teams."

Key areas that will be a focus in 2024 for food service providers will be:

The Supply Chain

- Prioritising local farmers and suppliers to reduce carbon footprints and support the local communities in which businesses operate is becoming the norm. Alex Kristall notes; "By sourcing fresh, seasonal ingredients locally, companies can contribute to the vitality of regional economies and ensure the highest quality in their offerings. The supply chain is the most important third party provision for GEC, ensuring we get the most amazing seasonal produce to share with our clients and we ensure to purchase only from suppliers that meet strict quality standards."

Zero-Waste Initiatives

- Striving for zero waste, companies are implementing rigorous recycling programs and this extends to efficient kitchen practices, where food waste is repurposed for use in other parts of the business, compost minimising impact on landfills. "Meticulous management of consumption to ensure minimal waste is integral however, repurposing left over food has also been a great point of discovery and innovation for our sector. We have seen a huge rise in food donations to avoid waste and this is something that is becoming increasingly popular across the board. Many of GEC's sites leftover food to Go Dhamic's Feed Everyone Campaign that distributes food within central London."

Eco-Friendly Packaging

- The use of sustainable, biodegradable packaging materials to further reduce environmental impact is transcending industries and positively, for many is the expected. As Alex notes: "At GEC we work with Notpla, which will decompose no matter where it is disposed. It can be put in the recycling bin, home-compostable, general waste. The removal of single-use packaging is a factor that can be a tricky one to balance. Storage of many foods, which would require to otherwise be disposed of, is prolonged due to use of plastic. However, alternatives are becoming more and more available and therefore, will be far easy to implement across the food service industry."

Empowering the workforce

- Food service providers will be providing their clients with educational materials that drive an understanding of the importance of sustainable food among workforces. "Giving employees greater knowledge of the provenance of food, along with an understanding of the impact of a shorter supply chain, for example, is anticipated to create a halo effect that workers adopt into their personal lives," Alex comments.

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