

Understanding NHS employees' practices of food sustainability at work and home

Background

- We wanted to understand employee practices in relation to sustainability, specifically food, to help support the implementation of catering service improvement in line with the NHS committed to net zero by 2040¹.
- We considered that employee opinions can play a vital role in supporting the implementation of sustainable practices, specifically in the catering services.
- We collaborated with Imperial College Healthcare Trust, in exploring staff practices across their sites.

Aim

- Explore staff behaviour around food sustainability, at home and at work
- To identify motivators and barriers to implement and support a low carbon emission menu.

Methods

- The data presented here is focused on the Mildmay pilot between 26/09/23 and until we reached more than 20% of participants (closed 26/01/24).
- Questionnaire contained 18 qualitative and quantitative questions.

Results

- 27/71 (38%) of staff participated.
- In response to wanting training on sustainability, 17/26 (65%) did and 9/26 (35%) did not want training, one did not answer.

Having more plant-based meals a week - meat is too cheap and not sustainable

People should not be forced into becoming vegetarians, because of allergies to some plant-based foods





	Choosing seasonal fruits and vegetables	Eating less red meat	Eating more vegetarian /plant based	Choosing sustainably sourced fish
At home	12	9	7	11
Both	12	8	8	5
At the workplace	2	1	2	0
Neither	1	7	9	8

■ At home ■ Both ■ At the workplace ■ Neither

Chart 1 shows the responses to which practices they try at home, the workplace, at both or at neither.

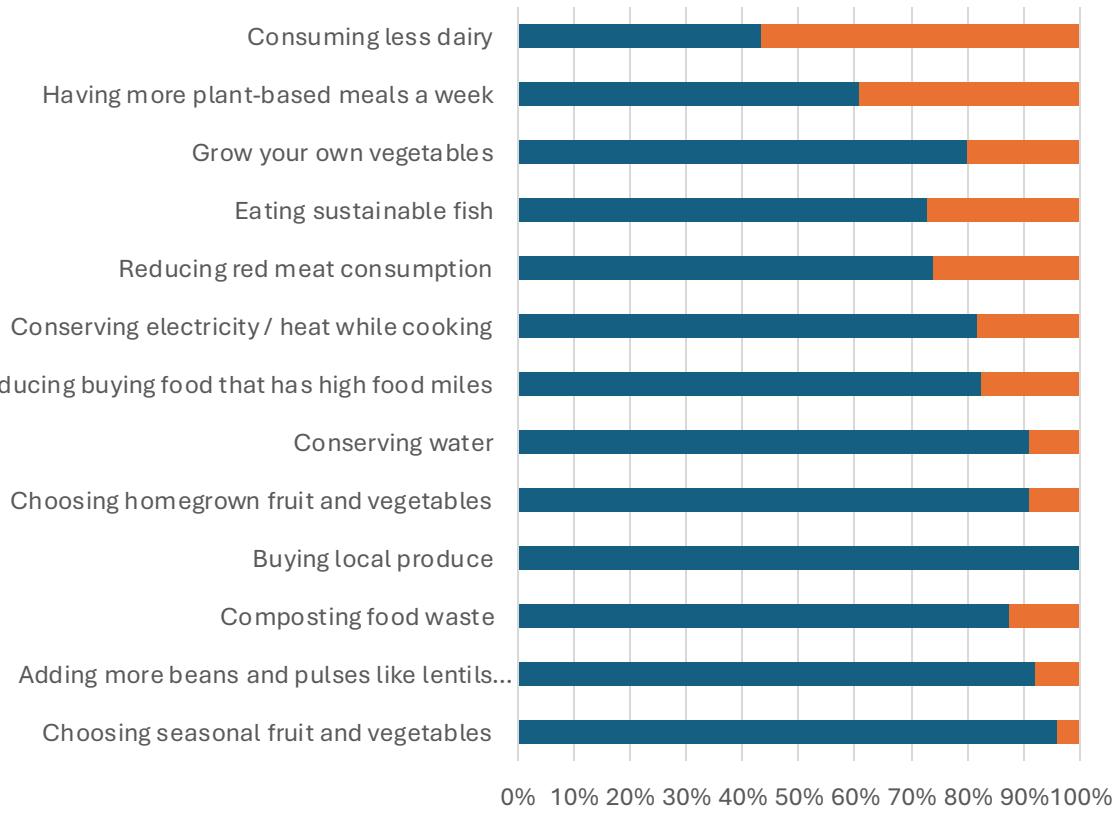


Chart 2 demonstrate motivators food-based sustainability initiatives staff would like to try

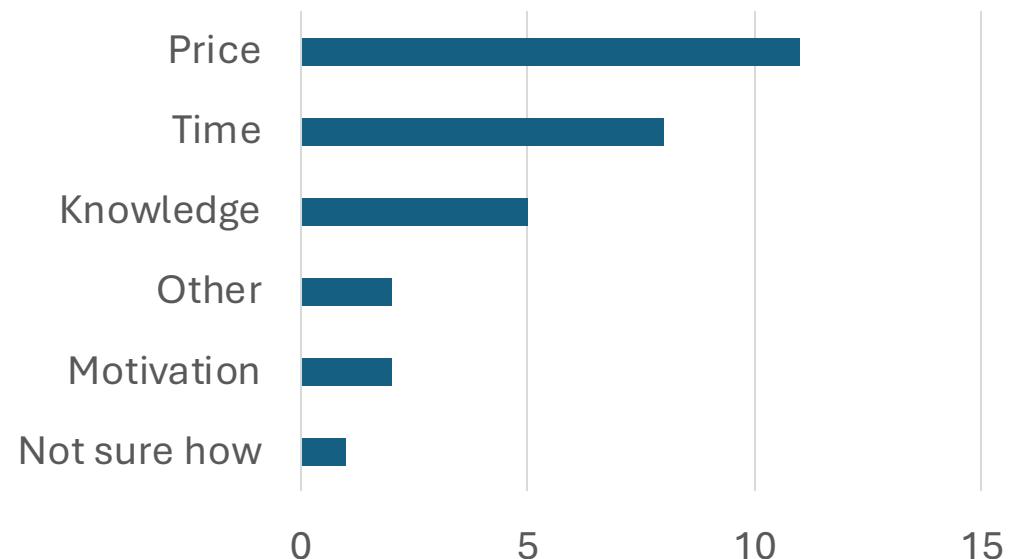


Chart 3 demonstrate the barriers to being more environmentally friendly

Discussion

- Although staff reported being familiar with sustainability terms, their responses and free text responses elucidated ongoing lack of knowledge on sustainability. Additionally, 65% of staff wanting training in sustainability. Their practices suggested that most staff are trying to follow more sustainable practices at home and at both home and work (table 1). Only a small number did more sustainable practices at the workplace and about a third did not eat less meat, choose sustainably sourced fish or ate more vegetarian/plant based (table 1). The barriers to being more environmentally friendly of price, time, knowledge and motivation, remained similar to the Imperial restaurants sites findings; price (75%), time (47%) and knowledge (34%) were their barriers to sustainable behaviours (n=126)². Across all sites there were difficulties encountered in engaging participants due to poor digital literacy and general literacy.

Conclusion

- The pilot at Mildmay provided insight into employee practices and barriers to following food sustainability at home and at the workplace. Improving awareness and training on sustainability may help engage more staff, help them answer questions about sustainability from patients and support them to make informed choices.



Authors

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References: ¹NHS England and NHS Improvement. 2020. Delivering a 'Net Zero' National health Service. Available: <https://www.england.nhs.uk/greenernhs/wp-content/uploads/sites/51/2020/10/delivering-a-net-zero-national-health-service.pdf> [Last Accessed: 24/09/24]; ²I Tezoo, S Lyu, H Tejani, R Enston, A Rugyendo. (2024) Catering for Change, From Fork to Future: Empowering Sustainable Catering Across Imperial College Healthcare Trust. Awaiting publication