Socks & Sausages

We've come a long way on food policy, but it isn't far enough!

Caroline Walker Trust lecture 2012, by Kath Dalmeny, Policy Director of Sustain: The alliance for better food and farming (www.sustainweb.org)

My name is Kath Dalmeny, policy director of Sustain, an alliance of food and farming organisations who care about good food, whether from a health, sustainability or ethical viewpoint. We work as an alliance so that we can become more than the sum of our parts, seeking to change the way food is grown, processed and consumed. When we work together, we are a movement and we have immense power. We may be sitting down now, here in this lecture, but when we get together and decide to take action, then we really move!

I'll give you a few examples of some of the things that we do at Sustain. Recently, we advised the London 2012 Olympics on food sustainability issues, and there were lots of wins there on Fairtrade, sustainable fish, animal welfare and freely available drinking water. Unfortunately, we didn't do terribly well on health, partly due to the junk food sponsors! There's still a lot of work to be done to improve the food served by caterers.

I also sit on the London Food Board, trying to bring a healthy and sustainable food approach and a systemic way of thinking about the way London feeds itself. Sustain colleagues such as Dan Keech and Ben Reynolds (www.londonfoodlink.org) were instrumental in getting food onto London's political agenda in the mid 2000s, and establishing a food board to keep up the momentum – still going strong six years later, chaired by Rosie Boycott, and tackling diverse issues such as food procurement, community food growing, sustainable fish, curbing junk food take-aways near schools and creating better markets for local farmers.

I and several of my colleagues are also involved in supporting the social enterprise Growing Communities (www.growingcommunities.org), working locally to make fresh, healthy, affordable and sustainably grown food available to people in Hackney. We are working with the inspiring director there, Julie Brown, supporting that enterprise to start sharing how to do it with others around the country – how to create a half-million turnover enterprise that provides good food, with a viable enterprise that can also support good jobs.

And we work with Food Matters (www.foodmatters.org), a dynamic food consultancy run by my friends Victoria Williams and Clare Devereux, based in Brighton & Hove, but with national influence, who have been so successful in championing the message of good food policy at a city and institutional level. That work is now developing into a really exciting new Sustainable Food Cities project, which Sustain is working on with Food Matters and the Soil Association, to embed good food into the work of local authorities and communities.

It is worth also mentioning (because I'll come back to what we can learn from the world of carbon) that I'm involved in some campaign work with my husband to make the energy system in the UK more efficient (www.dynamicdemand.co.uk), and to use the unique qualities of the energy distribution network to enable more integration of renewable energy.

What I seek to illustrate with these examples is just how diverse the work is that we need to undertake to make the food system healthy and sustainable for the long term, and how many guises we all have to wear to promote change. And we all need each other in order to make that succeed. We must work together – we draw so much strength from each other's expertise and enthusiasm. At the same time – when we do come together – it is vitally important that we have a clear focus on what we can win. We have such limited time and money, we must use these precious resources effectively.

Here we are at the annual Caroline Walker Trust lecture (www.cwt.org.uk), one of the places that our movement meets and has an opportunity to think together about the way forward. I didn't meet Caroline, but reading about her life I have a suspicion that I would have thought she was absolutely fantastic. When you prepare for a lecture like this, you read someone's life story and experience pleasing tickles of connection. And her work and influence lives on in so many of the people and organisations that work on food policy and are connected to Sustain. Caroline was, for example, involved with:

- the inspiring people who formed the pioneering Coronary Prevention Group – to name but a few – several of whom are present at this lecture – Jeanette Longfield, Mike Rayner, Professor Philip James, Jack Winkler, Geoffrey Cannon, Mike O'Connor.
- the Food Commission, where I personally benefited from the best apprenticeship in food campaigning that anyone could ever receive, from the marvellous Tim Lobstein. Campaigning is one of the few powerful weapons we have to combat the economic forces that make our food so unhealthy and unsustainable.
- the framework and campaigning zeal instigated by the original 1983 NACNE (National Advisory Committee on Nutrition Education) report – of which, more anon – which set

the scene for battling campaign activities with the food industry as the target, which has characterised our movement – particularly on nutrition – ever since.

- taking good nutrition into communities, and championing good fresh food standards in local schools and community groups – this is a particularly interesting area – with communities taking back control of their food system. It's particularly interesting to see how we can get away from talking about healthy food purely in technical nutrition terms, and moving it into a motivating mode, re-framed as a better way of life that involves good livelihoods, better social connections and plenty of colour.

But what was particularly tickling is that I'm also rather interested in socks! For Caroline, socks were a symbol of the disparity in labelling information. In the 1980s, the amount of information you could get about the fibres in your socks was more than the information that you'd get about the ingredients in your sausages. You could get more information about what you put on your feet, than what you ingest and becomes part of your body. Clearly, a madness that needed to be exposed. (And here, a quick thank you to my friend Victoria Williams in the audience for lending me her socks as a prop!) Caroline made it real. She would bring a pair of socks with her to talks and point at them, saying "Why do we know more about these than what's in our food?" Such direct, persistent and passionate campaigning led to many improvements in food information. Hence the title of this lecture – "Socks and Sausages". It is a tribute to Caroline's genius for exposing the madnesses in our food system – and then doing something about them!

This review of recent food history gave me the uncanny feeling that I'm treading in Caroline's footsteps. But then I didn't know Caroline. And I thought some more, and I realised that I'm not treading in Caroline's footsteps, I am treading in YOURS, because I do know so many of YOU.

Please do not be offended if your face isn't here. It seems to be a characteristic of the food movement that either people are 'out there' in terms of communication, making their faces and voices heard; or they are busy behind the scenes making change happen but not drawing attention to themselves as individuals. I use this slide to illustrate how inspired I am by all of your work, and how much my personal thinking and campaign work is shaped by YOU. But equally, if your picture isn't up here, don't be offended!

This slide represents friendship. Friendship is the glue that holds our movement together. Brilliant people and brilliant ideas make change happen. Every person shown here has done something I profoundly admire, have been inspired by, have learned from or laughed with. I thank you for that inspiration. And I've said it before, and I'll say it again. When we work together, we are so very powerful. This is a really important principle for me. It is not about individual leaders making change happen from the top. Change takes a thousand great ideas and a wealth of creativity to make change happen. It's a collective creativity that stretches our imaginations to see what is possible and then – most importantly of all – to go for it and make it happen.

That's what Sustain is all about – bringing that creativity together and focusing it like a laser beam on making change happen. I might have the grand title 'policy director' (a useful way to adopt a guise when taking the message of good food into places where such titles seem to matter), but as my wonderful boss Jeanette Longfield so often says, you don't direct a network. You coordinate it, you work out ways to navigate together, you negotiate, you learn the landscape and then try and work out with others what the priorities are and how to move towards them *en masse*. In this way, we become more than the sum of our parts.

And when you find the things that make sense for the movement, you go for those hell for leather! We often don't have much money or many paid staff, so we don't have the luxury of time. We have to kick up the biggest fuss with the slimmest of resources.

I get the impression Caroline Walker would have been very familiar with this state of affairs.

I know from knowing YOU that the people worth hanging out with at the moment are those who 'get it' when it comes to food and who are prepared to roll up their sleeves and get stuck in to making change happen. So what shall we do with our movement next? How shall we bring to bear our incredible powers and talent to cultivate change? And importantly, what powers do we actually have? Will we let ourselves get beguiled by the Big Society rhetoric and end up running libraries? Or do we have the power to change legislation? Do we have enough money? And in straitened times, on what shall we spend the little money that we do have? What should be our focus to make change happen?

I think we have come a long way in food policy largely due to people such as yourselves. Let me paint my own broad-brush map of inspiration and action. In this room are represented the friends who have held food companies to account through brilliant campaigning journalism. Written the nutrient profiling model for the Food Standards Agency. Defined the nutrition standards for school meals. Won a ban on junk food advertising during children's TV. Brought Ribena ToothKind to its knees for terrible health claims. Taught local people to build thriving community supported bakeries and vegetable box schemes. Written clauses for Government Buying Standards. Campaigned for environmental law on behalf of government that wasn't getting around to doing it on their own, and then wrote the law so that it could be brought in. Taken Ofcom to Judicial Review. Taken the food fight to parliament. Persuaded

very large caterers, step by painful step, to use higher welfare meat, sustainable fish and less salt. Helped prisons and care homes to see food as a key to people taking back control of fragmented lives. And a special tribute to my friend Mary Whiting (in the front row) for using the fax machine in Sustain's office to send faxes to dictators to expose their human rights abuses. I love to see people putting their passion into making things change!

I could go on. We do go on. Here, today, I honour all those that I have learned from and in whose steps I walk. (Noting that in one case, I also walk in your socks – you know who you are – thank you for that Christmas present!)

This collective wisdom and action is a precious inheritance. An inheritance that comes about through living – we're giving each other ideas, permission, excitement and inspiration – all the time.

This is my problem slide. I don't like to dwell on problems. I like to look at solutions. We know, collectively, that food is about everything that we do, and when we get it right then we build the foundations of good lives, healthy hearts, decent livelihoods, a fairer society, better community relationships, humanely treated animals, well protected fish stocks, colourful and enjoyable experiences -- things that people want to come together for, and just generally a better life.

The slide shows a book. I've adopted a new habit recently. There are too many books to read about food, the environment and food politics. Now I skip to the back and read only the solutions. In some books, sadly, this is pretty thin on the ground. But if the solutions look sensible, then I know it's worth the pain of reading through the problems to get to them. I recommend this approach, it saves a lot of time and heartache! Some books have only two pages of solution, and I think that's pointless. We are living in a time when we don't have a lot of time to waste on re-rehearsing how awful everything is. We know what we need to fix, and generally we know how, so let's get on with it. And by doing so, we will attract new alliances and friends to build the movement, because they will want to be with us.

So let's go back to the 1980s and the 1983 report that set in train so much of the food campaigning that we work on now. Let me take you back to a first personal footstep, and linked to the proud heritage of the Caroline Walker Trust. I was 13 years old when the National Advisory Committee on Nutrition Education submitted a report to the Department of Health saying that modern food culture was causing many of the major diseases of our time (as it still is!). I'm sorry to say, but the NACNE report at the time passed me by completely unawares. I come from a family who was more likely at the time to be watching *Carry On* films and *The Sweeney* than documentaries or news reports about nutrition. But

something must have got through. Culture began to shift. In my house, the tangible effect of the NACNE report is that my mother started to buy Flora margarine for my Dad. We all ate butter, and she made him eat polyunsaturated fat.

Let me give a flavour of what was going on in food politics. My 13-year-old self was entirely unaware that this would hold my future. I quote from Geoffrey Cannon: At the time:

> "Small vulnerable groups were being targeted for advice on avoidance of vitamin deficiencies. The issues of dental caries, heart disease, strokes, obesity and a host of other diet- related issues were not even considered. On NACNE we developed a new set of priorities; but our proposed change in the strategy of national nutrition education was soon seen as revolutionary and premature. Officials from the Department of Health considered that it trespassed on their own province of policy-making; and the British Nutrition Foundation reflected the alarm of food manufacturing industries concerned at the threat to their profitable business. Despite, however, efforts by government and industry to stall the process, it became clear that opposition could not be supported by scientific or public health arguments; and understandable self-interest was overcome when the delay and obfuscation was exposed by *The Sunday Times* and *The Lancet* in the summer of 1983. The exposé and subsequent publicity for the NACNE report led to remarkable changes in the approach of the voluntary sector. Government departments then had to struggle to shift from opposing the NACNE report to cope with public demand for free access to clear advice on diet and its relationship to health."

From a distance of 30 years, it's hard not to read all this as being a bit like a fairy tale (apart from the fact that some of the characters are here in the audience!), with the wicked uncle of the Department of Health and the conspirators – the British Nutrition Foundation. But we do have to tell ourselves these stories to keep up the campaigning impetus. Small battles have been won, but we still have so much to do.

We're still fighting that battle right now. And that was 30 years ago. For me, this seems like a pivotal moment in the recent history of the food movement. And it did lead to change. So let's look at where we have made wins in policy, and what we can learn from them. The NACNE report played its part in setting the scene for this culture of campaigning for change.

I think food policy generally responds to crisis, and to the fights that ensue.

Bee Wilson brilliantly did the Caroline Walker Trust lecture a couple of years ago, and talked us through the history of the adulteration of food, as many of you will remember, bringing with her phials and jugs of brightly coloured liquids and additives in food. She talked us through the big fights of the 19th century, which were generally about food safety and food quality. My image here is of the 1820 treatise on

the Adulteration of Foods and Culinary Poisons by Frederick Accum. With brilliant campaigning clarity – a Caroline Walker moment – he quoted from the Bible: "There is death in the pot."

Frederick Accum said: "The proliferation of newly discovered chemicals and the absence of laws moderating their use, made it possible for unscrupulous merchants to use [food additives] to boost profits at a cost to the public health."

Sounds rather familiar. What do we learn? It takes a very long time to change food culture. We have to keep at it, especially in the face of an industry that finds it economically advantageous to do the wrong thing, such as replacing real nutritious ingredients with additives that mimic their taste or texture.

But we have made progress. It is now possible not only to get information about your socks, but also your sausages, hooray! The label of these socks says that they are 80% cotton, 18% polyamide and 1% elastine. The kind of labelling you now get on sausages has many similarities – tiny writing, tells you the percentage compositional make-up, and uses words you've never heard of and sound distinctly unappetising!

When Caroline Walker compared the provenance information for socks and sausages, she was following in the proud tradition of Frederick Accum. She was a brilliant communicator who made visible the madnesses of our food system, making them relevant and accessible, goading the public and policy-makers into having an opinion, and then looking stupid if they didn't take action. And she, like us, was riding on a movement of change – an inheritance that we can use to good effect. Here are just a few:

- Pure Food Act (1860)
- Sale of Foods and Drugs Act (1875)
- Establishment of public analysts [those who check that standards are being met]
- Baby food legislation [no arguments there about the nanny state!]
- Food Labelling & Safety Acts (1990s) [definitions, standards]
- QUIDs legislation [Quantitative Ingredient Declarations – gloriously detailed food quality legislation to expose adulteration, but usually in the tiniest of typeface]
- Codex Alimentarius [food quality and safety argued on an international stage]
- Recent progress has included mandatory nutrition labelling [such an obvious step, but still after so many years of campaigning!]

But worryingly, even the good progress we have achieved must also be defended tenaciously. Public analysts – so vital for ensuring that standards are being met – are now under threat. And many decisions are made outside the influence of health and environmental organisations, for example at Codex Alimentarius, where only those who can afford to attend international meetings and follow complex technical negotiations, can participate – i.e. generally government and industry.

What do we learn? Food has to be a serious policy issue. There has to be big enough and acute enough public concern for politicians to take action. There need to be publicly held standards and values, and these need to enforced and inspected and held to account, by paid staff whose job is to uphold values on all our behalves. And we, the food movement, have to keep up the pressure, no matter how boring the negotiations and meetings we have to go to, and the number of guises that we need to adopt, to make it happen. And that pressure and

scrutiny has to be held up over a very long time, as maintenance of the standards is vital and a big effort in itself.

So far in this story, the main focus has been on food quality. But there have been improvements in nutrition. In terms of nutrition, the NACNE report, and the band of campaigning food warriors that it generated, were instrumental in a sea change of public concern about food quality and its effect on our health. We did have (noting with alarm the past tense used to describe most of these!):

- Establishment of FSA (thank you to Professor Philip James for playing such a huge role in this), usefully with a food safety AND nutrition remit. Of course, these roles have now once again been separated; and unfortunately, food sustainability never made it onto the agenda.
- Five a day promotions
- Salt programme (do you remember Sid the Slug? Another food warrior, though slimier than most!)
- School fruit scheme (still reaching some schools in the UK, but in a very limited way)

Looking at the list, it is frankly a bit feeble. It needs much more action and then consistent maintenance. There have been some processed food re-formulation programmes, but it never got much further than salt – the saturated fat and sugar reduction programme lost impetus. School food nutrition standards are now under threat. There was a fantastic campaign win by getting junk food marketing banned during children's television – how wonderful – using the nutrient profile model defined by people in this room (gawd bless you!) But it's still limited. Junk food manufacturers can still use labels, cinema ads, school bus stops, websites, computer games, smartphones and other popular parts of children's culture to target them with junk-food messages. There have been feeble government efforts to displace sugary and fatty foods – we know that you can't just promote fruit and veg, you have to knock the unhealthy stuff out of people's diets. There have also been feeble efforts to tackle pricing, promotions and special offers on unhealthy food, even though we know that pricing and promotion are hugely influential on people's food choices. No regulation of junk foods. No financial incentives for manufacturers. Endless guidelines. And the Responsibility Deal, as if it is the answer to everything – which we, of course, are hugely sceptical about.

One of my proudest moments (and I am considering having this written on my gravestone) is that I'm responsible for the brackets in the Department of Health's five-a-day logo. When this logo and marketing campaign was first issued, we went to see the marketing company and they said "We couldn't use pictures of fresh fruit and vegetables because the canned fruit and frozen veg manufacturers wouldn't see their product reflected in the logo. So we chose squares. And we chose an insipid yellowy-green because it's an average colour for all fruit and vegetables. And we put 'just eat more' because the manufacturers liked that." We suggested that most shoppers might not know what the Department of Health wanted them to eat more of. So bracketed (fruit & veg) were added to the logo. Sometimes even the smallest of campaign wins take a lot of patience!

It has been important to do such promotions, of course. But they need to be maintained. Culture change isn't about telling a few people, just for a bit, that they need to eat at least five portions of fruit and veg a day. The message must be kept up and refreshed constantly. And five a day needs to be incorporated into ready meals, school meals, hospital food, workplace canteens – into the normal places where they will get consumed regularly.

Throughout the early 2000s, I spent quite a lot of time trudging around supermarkets over a period of six years, conducting surveys for the now defunct National Consumer Council, looking at how well supermarkets are helping their customers to buy healthier and greener products. I did a quick count of the amount of data we gathered – 10,000 pieces of data about price promotions on food in the top UK supermarkets.

Some useful stuff came out of this. It helped us to expose bad practice. It turned out that if you ate the same basic basket of foods in one supermarket (usually one with a lower socio-economic customer demographic), you would end up eating twice as much salt as you would if you bought the exact equivalent basket of foods in a supermarket serving people with higher incomes. Put more simply – if you were shopping somewhere posh and could afford it, you got healthier food. If you were shopping somewhere poorer, you got worse food. Classic campaign material. Expose the madness. Shame the perpetrators. Get it in the *Daily Mail*. Reformulation soon follows.

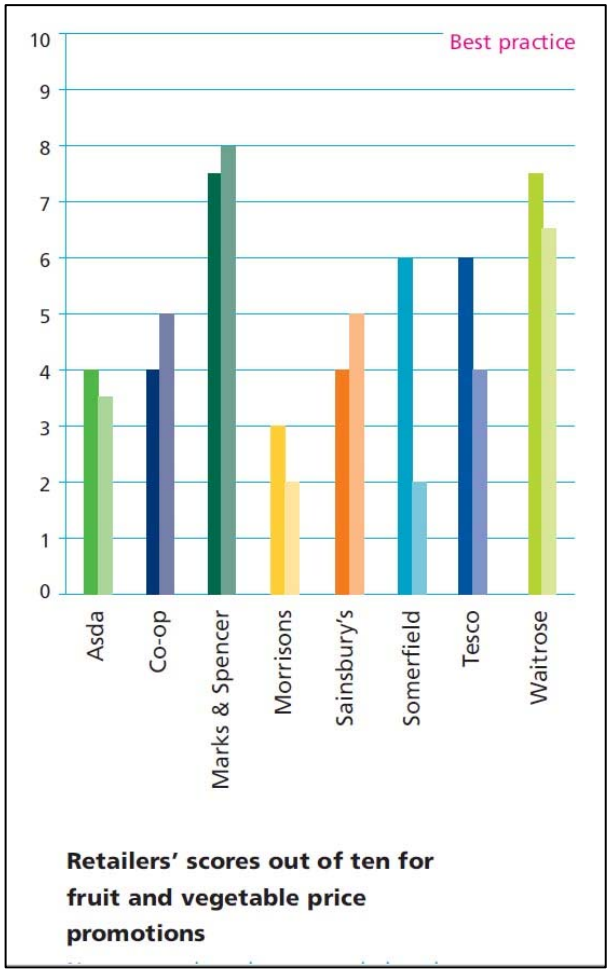
As it happens, in the *Daily Mail* today, there is a report from the University of East Anglia who have done a very similar survey of 6,000 products in the UK's biggest supermarkets. It shows, unsurprisingly, that a very high proportion of the products on price promotion (such as BOGOF deals and special offers) are the least healthy ones. Looking at the types of products listed, that's probably because a lot of them contain very little actual food – they're often mainly sugar and water, or sugar and refined white flour.

What do we learn? It's cheaper to buy bad food. It's cheaper to go to a supermarket and not buy fresh fruit and vegetables. Why do we let them get away with it? Why do we allow government to leave health policy to the industry? The supermarket industry's British Retail Consortium (that renowned upholder of nutritional values and heart health) said in response, "There's no such thing as an unhealthy food, only an unhealthy diet." [pause, while Kath parps a horn] Every time I hear that phrase, it makes me need to make a loud and rude noise. I may parp that horn again if anyone says it. So be warned.

There has been some progress – with children's food marketing, fruit & veg promotion, mandatory nutrition labelling and salt reduction as notable successes.

But take a look at this graph – it compares supermarkets on their balance of promotions – the proportion of different foods being promoted, according to their categorisation in the

Balance of Good Health. It shows that some supermarkets push junk on people much more than others. Comparing supermarkets like this – numerically – is part of the job of the third sector (charities, NGOs, whichever term takes your fancy). We don't have many other powers, but we can expose bad practice and madnesses of the food system. It encourages punters and policy-makers to have an opinion, and it provides the case for action.



Retailers' scores out of ten for fruit and vegetable price promotions

In the face of such evidence, why don't we legislate? Why aren't we being more brave about what we ask government to do, for the good of us all? What's going on here that we let them get away with it? The graph shows that if you shop in Morrisons, you will be presented with more incentives and opportunities to buy bad food. If you shop in Morrisons, you will have fewer incentives and opportunities to buy fresh fruit and vegetables cheaply. And we know that Morrisons serves a population from a lower socio-economic demographic, who are more likely to suffer from heart disease and other diet-related diseases. Why don't we legislate on sugar, salt and saturated fat in supermarket products and promotions? Just as we do for contaminants and carbon, that are also present in the things that we buy and are prioritised as components that need to be reduced, as a matter of public policy, not left to narrow-minded and ineffective 'individual choice'.

Download the original National Consumer Council supermarket reports at www.sustainweb.org/publications (search under 'Supermarkets, health and sustainability).

In the review of the types of products promoted in those 10,000 pieces of data, the same names came up again and again. Coca-Cola, Walkers Crisps, Pringles, Mr Kipling Cakes, McVities biscuits. You are more likely to be presented with piles of cheap and unhealthy food if you live on a low income, and if the supermarket you shop in has decided this is the sort of food and special offers to present you with. And the reason is because these types of products contain cheap ingredients – CAP subsidised calories, mainly in the form of highly refined sugar, fats and flour – jazzed up with food additives to make them appealing. So there's plenty of cash left over for the manufacturers to pay for the promotions.

Nobody in public health policy-making seems to want to touch this stuff in any serious way. NCC had a social marketing department for a while. That died. The Department of Health's roundtable on promotion other than TV advertising limped to a halt – several of you here devoted many hours of your time to that shambles – I'm so sorry. The Responsibility Deal has gone nowhere near changing the balance of pricing and reducing the promotion of junk

food. It's frighteningly too close to the home truth that to achieve a health population, we need to tackle the underlying economic forces that make bad food so cheap and ubiquitous.

Looking at all of this, I've got a nasty sensation at the moment of slipping back down the mountain. I rather naïvely thought that 5-a-day labelling standards were done and dusted – several people in this room invested many hours of their lives sitting on the committee that defended the 5-a-day logo from appearing on junk food, and set the standards for its use.

I thought we had created and defended the policy space to move on to more intractable problems – but also obvious areas for priority concern – such as the dominance of soft drinks. At the Food Commission and with influential bodies such as the Consumers Association (now called Which?) and Sustain's Children's Food Campaign, in the early days of 5-a-day, we did our routine exposure of awful products. Memorably, BBC-endorsed Teletubbies Heinz pasta aimed at toddlers contained twice as much salt as a toddler should eat in a single day. Shock. Horror. Great BBC Breakfast News fodder – self-flagellation by a public institution that should have known better.

Guess what the British Retail Consortium said in response? "There's no such thing as an unhealthy food, only an unhealthy diet." [pause, while Kath parps a horn] Enough of that!

Standards swiftly followed. The Department of Health and the Food Standards Agency had more balls then, and saw themselves as having a legitimate interventionist role in the nutritional quality of food served to children.

But we took our eye off the ball. The standards have slipped. We have given in to what I call "corporate nutritionism". The rather boring logo didn't get adopted enthusiastically by industry and the momentum has tailed off. Public money for promotion is gone, along with the staff to pursue it. Processed food companies had always been chomping at the bit to put the 5-a-day logo on composite foods to give these profitable items a healthy halo and secure their guilt-free place in the shopping basket. The naïve bit on the part of the government is the failure to recognise that companies prefer proprietary labelling and to adopt their own standards. We've seen it in Guideline Daily Amount (GDA) labelling, health claims, pesticides, carbon reporting, corporate reporting – why do we never learn? The point is if you want to uphold public values, then you have to have public standards.

Here are some examples of the problem of leaving it to the industry to make nutrition standards for themselves. Some of these Lidl ready meals contain 3g of salt per portion and are promoted as part of your healthy 5-a-day. What the hell is the 5-a-day promotion doing on products such as these?! The answer is that they meet industry (IGD) guidelines for a 5-a-day composite product. When challenged, the Department of Health says that's perfectly fine, the industry can manage this, it's OK. Well, it isn't OK. The 5-a-day message was never about eating more salt. Remarkably, I find myself fantasising about having John Krebs back,

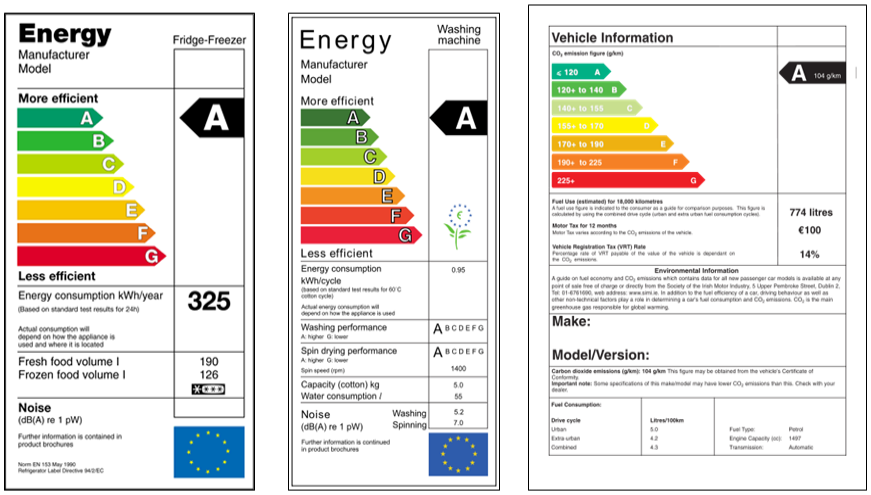
to fight this industry madness! Would he have complied with the Responsibility Deal approach that leaves us in a long waiting game of achingly slow, drip-by-drip improvements as individual companies wake up to nutrition voluntarily, but usually only after media exposure? Is that really an answer to addressing heart health, obesity and cancer?

Without publicly held standards and enforcement, Mars gets to say that their salty Dolmio pasta sauce is part of your 5-a-day, General Mills gets to say that canned sweetcorn with added salt is part of your 5-a-day, and very chocolatey, fatty and sugary biscuits can still qualify as a 5-a-day under industry guidelines (as a recent episode of the Channel 4 TV series *Dispatches* brilliantly showed).

Researchers for *Dispatches* made a half-chocolate coated biscuit (shown in the picture) and tested it against Institute of Grocery Distribution (IGD) 5-a-day guidelines. As Dispatches reports, they discovered that, "Each of our biscuits can contain up to 40% of our GDA of salt, and up to 30% of sugar and saturated fat. After dipping in chocolate, whilst sticking to industry guidelines, we can still say that each biscuit contains half a portion of your 5-a-day."

Why didn't we – collectively – defend such an important health message? In similar vein, why didn't we go for mandatory traffic light labelling right from the start? The carbon lot did! There is mandatory European-standard traffic light labelling for fridges, washing machines and even cars. If they've got traffic light labelling on cars, why can't we have it on sausages?! It's madness. We have a lot to learn from carbon. I've long wanted to conduct a comparative study of what we can learn from carbon, to apply to food.

Download Sustain's report on 5-a-day labelling: www.sustainweb.org/publications/?id=236



Mandatory traffic light labelling for fridges, washing machines and cars. But not food! What can we learn from carbon?

Over the last few months, we have had significant wins on traffic light labelling. At last, after nearly a *decade*, Tesco has joined the fold (noting that they described themselves as taking a 'leadership role' in their accompanying press release, which is laughable). But we have a government who still insists on taking this step by painful step, company by painful company. Why aren't traffic lights mandatory?

It's the simplest of policy measures, with robust evidence of success and consumer acceptance, and yet we're wasting so much time on it.

I lay a lot of the responsibility at the door of the government's impoverished refusal to sort this out for once and for all. The Food & Drink Federation bears responsibility too, and most especially the Biscuit, Cakes, Chocolate and Confectionery Alliance and the British Soft Drinks Association, who know most of their products will be red, red, red. So they will fight to the end. But I also blame ourselves. Why don't we find a way to say, enough is enough. Why don't we wield our combined power more often?

So there have been many useful steps forward – most of the foundations of which were built by people in this room, or associated with our movement. Food culture does change, but it takes a long time. Twenty years after the NACNE report, in 2003, my father had a triple bypass operation in the newly built Southampton hospital. That packet of Flora margarine obviously didn't do the trick – pro-bloomin-activ or not. He took a while to recover, so I had many opportunities to sample Southampton hospital's catering.

Here is a picture of the Burger King in the foyer of Southampton hospital. Feeding families of patients who – presumably because of their presence in a heart hospital – have some degree of predisposition to heart disease, which will be exacerbated by junk food diets.

Next door, there was a WH Smiths – another franchise in the foyer of this heart hospital – giving discounts for 400g chocolate bars if you bought a newspaper – often with headlines about the parliamentary committee inquiry into obesity then underway – the irony did not pass me by. Each day, I asked: "Do you have anything healthy?" My least favourite reply was, "I'm not a bloody doctor."

Here is today's Facebook page for the Burger King in Southampton hospital. It has 107 'likes'. I can assure you I am not one of them!

There is always a dark humour about such situations. Next to the Burger King, there was a pillar displaying a 1975 MAFF poster extolling the virtues of eating vegetables. In a vegetable free zone. This is nutrition education at its very worst. A pathetic leaflet in the face of

entrenched global market forces that serve cheap meat, cheap fat, polystyrene-style bread and large amounts of sugary and empty-calorie-laden cola. Let us remind ourselves that Burger King's pathetic 2012 Responsibility Deal – on which all public health policy is now supposed to rest when tackling the junk food industry – has so far dealt *only* with calorie labelling, transfat and physical activity, and *not* salt, fat, sugar, fruit or vegetables. And yet we let them have 15- or 20-year tenancy agreements – retail franchises – in hospitals. Surely we have reached a point where we recognise that serving food in hospitals is a privilege, and that we can use the power of tenancy agreements to specify the nutritional quality of food that will be served. That would be a 'Responsibility Deal' to be proud of.

However, for me – sadly – this is a pretty good summary of current government policy on food. Leaflets against the free market.

I have a campaigning story to tell, to inspire us to think differently. In 2002, nearly 30 years after NACNE, Croydon NHS kicked out the Burger King from their University Hospital. Good on them. It reminds me of the great epidemiologist Jon Snow (a story first taught to me by Tim Lang) who removed the handle from a water pump to prove that the pump was the source of a cholera epidemic. It cost Croydon NHS £24,000 to get out of the 15-year-old commercial contract signed with the contract caterer Compass, the biggest caterer in the world that came with an entrenched Burger-King contract.

This is just one example of the thing that we know. Bad food is still entrenched, contracted, supported, incentivised… At the heart of it is leaving companies and accountants to set nutrition policy. At the heart of it is how feebly the public values of food policy are being defended by policy-makers. And at the heart of it is how we still allow money to dominate food decisions, rather than values. My lesson is that we've got to get better at understanding the money.

I'm with Croydon North MP Malcolm Wicks, when he welcomed the removal of Burger King from Croydon's hospital. He said: "From the first time I saw the wretched burger joint, I was upset about it. Advertising and selling fast food, which is generally unhealthy, really grates with what a modern hospital is about. I've badgered successive chief executives about getting rid of the thing, so I wouldn't criticise the hospital for finally taking the right decision, though the costs are substantial."

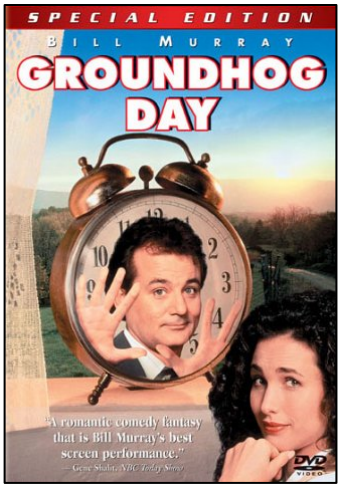
You know the craze at the moment for online crowd-sourcing of money to help enterprises and ideas get off the ground? Well, why don't we crowd-source the money to get rid of all the Burger Kings in hospitals? What fun it would be to present a cheque to the NHS to pay for the costs of kicking them out. At the moment, we think there are about ten Burger Kings or McDonald's in NHS premises. Quick back of the envelop calculation – that's a quarter of a million quid to kick them out. What a great campaign tactic that would be! And even the threat might be enough to stop the accountants and companies letting junk food franchises spread in the NHS.

I've sat on a lot of standards committees in my time, as have many of you. As the fairytale says, you've got to kiss a lot of frogs in this business before you get your handsome prince. I've sat on standards committees such as the Conservative Party Food Procurement Taskforce, Ben Bradshaw's hospital food group, the London 2012 Olympic food standards advisory group, we have also contributed repeatedly to reams of guidance issued by successive governments such as the Public Sector Food Procurement Initiative…

But know what? We could be talking about government food procurement in 20 years time, and we would have made no further progress, particularly on school food and hospital food. That's what I've learned from the last 15 years. We won't make progress unless collectively we say, "Enough is enough. It's a waste of time and it's a waste of money. Stop issuing guidance. Stop writing government recipes and recruiting celebrity chefs to promote them. It didn't work before, and it won't work now, so stop it."

In this spirit, I recently compiled a commentary on all the failed government-sponsored voluntary initiatives to improve hospital food over the past ten years, published as part of Sustain's Campaign for Better Hospital Food. We also totted up the wasted budget – it came to £54 million and still counting – it took two pages even to list the initiatives simply by name. It reads as a catalogue of the pathetic inability of governments to look back over recent history and stop repeating the same old mistakes. You can read the report on our website at: www.sustainweb.org/publications/?id=181 and you can lend your weight to the Campaign for Better Hospital Food (please do!) at: www.sustainweb.org/hospitalfood/

The common pattern was that a hospital food initiative would be launched either after some form of food- or farming-related crisis (such as Foot and Mouth disease); or after adverse media coverage of research showing (once again, as it seems always) that hospital patients are malnourished; or after the appointment of a new minister, keen to grab a positive headline. The other common pattern was that the budget each time would be slightly less than the time before. And the final piece of the pattern was that the initiative would soon fade into nothing, once the initial media coverage and flurry of activity had died away. Whatever happened to the government's Healthier Food Mark, for example? Whatever happened to the Nutrition Action Plan? Whatever happened to the recommendation from the Public Accounts Committee that it would be a really good idea to have nutrition standards in public sector food because it would save money down the line?



Undertaking this sort of review made me think that we are all stuck in an extended episode of the film *Groundhog Day*, and I have said as much to civil servants and ministers. I even began to hear the theme tune in my head when I attended government meetings about issuing yet more public sector food guidance. We need to be saying "Enough is enough."

Standing back and examining policy progress (or lack of it) changed how Sustain approaches public food procurement. It's classic alliance territory. Now we are throwing our collective

weight behind standards. We no longer get beguiled by government guidance and celebrity chefs. What did I say was to be learned from previous wins? Food has to be a serious policy issue. There has to be big enough and acute enough public concern for politicians to take action. There need to be publicly held standards and values, and these need to enforced and inspected and held to account, by paid staff whose job is to uphold values, no matter how boring the negotiations and meetings we have to go to, to make it happen. (As a side note, my 13-year-old self would be amazed to see me standing up here talking about public procurement and publicly accountable standards!) Here are examples of progress:

Government Buying Standards now cover one third of food in the public sector. It took a lot of campaigning (coordinated by my wonderful colleague Alex Jackson – that's him in a fish costume taking the sustainable fish message to parliament!), to achieve specific wins within those standards. The reason I show a picture of Whiskas is to illustrate the lengths you have to go to, in order to win standards – even the most eminently sensible of standards. We took a can of Marine Stewardship Council certified sustainable fish Whiskas to the Defra Minister, plonked it down on his mahogany table, and said, "Your fish procurement standards are worse than for cat food!" and then we sent a letter signed by Greenpeace and Hugh Fearnley-Whittingstall's Fish Fight and got the same message into the *Daily Mail* and *The Guardian*. Top-notch sustainable fish standards soon followed, and yet still only for one third of public sector food.

It doesn't always work. I experienced the worst day of my professional life in the stranger's gallery in parliament. I sat for five hours watching our parliamentary bill supporting health and sustainability standards for all public sector food being 'talked out' – filibustered by three Conservative MPs who have little opinion of food (and certainly not well informed opinion, from what I heard!) but they do passionately hate regulation. It's an experience that provoked me to anger – a small minority of vocal individuals deliberately wasting time and in the process preventing millions of children and NHS patients being served good food.

Sadly, the bad news is that we're losing the battle on school food! How did that happen?! Education secretary Michael Gove recently announced proudly that a million children (easily well over a million children by the time of this lecture) are now in Academies. But Mr Gove has also removed Academies from the obligation to comply with national nutrition standards, and with it any hope of robust standards, values, inspections or holding him or anyone else to account. Is the return of junk food vending machines into our schools now on the cards? So we're back in campaign territory, and it feels like stepping back in time, but we must make the biggest fuss possible. Please join in! www.sustainweb.org/sos/

Jamie Oliver Foundation · Children's Food Campaign · food for life PARTNERSHIP · LACA · SCHOOL FOOD MATTERS

When it comes to hospitals and care homes – another third of public sector food – there's a very frustrating history and very little progress to report, for food served to some of the most

vulnerable people in the country. The recent step forward is a new set of "principles" supported by Age UK, Patients Association, Hospital Caterers Association, Royal College of Nursing, Soil Association, BAPN (British Association of Parenteral and Enteral Nutrition) and the British Dietetic Association. I wonder why any of these bodies think that these "principles" (yet more guidance, by another weasel name!) will be adopted any more enthusiastically than any of the other previous guidance that basically said the same thing, but failed to improve hospital food.

How will the "principles" be checked or enforced? If Health secretary Jeremy Hunt (pictured) were here, we could ask him. But he isn't, so he shows us by his body language.

Let me be clear that I'm not against guidelines *per se*, and many of you in this room have written expert guidelines, some of which have been adopted into law. And that's precisely the point. Guidelines are written by specialists with no elected power, to show the way that those in power can best apply them. People in power should apply the guidelines. That's why we elected them, why we pay their salaries.

There have been some great voluntary initiatives. But they thrive where there is a foundation of standards to make them relevant, unarguable and inspected. As my friend Stephanie Wood from School Food Matters so rightly says, "Standards are a catalyst for excellence."

Sitting on the London Food Board as I do, I'm rather proud of the progress that has been made in London on public sector food procurement. Working with our member organisations, Sustain has recently put efforts into mapping that progress.

The above map is a review of the uptake of the Food for Life Catering Mark (www.sacert.org/catering) by local authorities and the caterers that supply school food, noting that Food for Life requires participants to comply with national nutrition standards for school meals. It is a map indicating the quality of London school food provision, looking at both health and sustainability, such as seasonal food and food grown to recognised environmental standards, sustainable fish, fair trade, animal welfare, drinking water being available. There is a ladder of progress. So orange boroughs are at Bronze level, dark red at Silver, and bright red at the top level – Gold. The grey boroughs are the laggards. Many of these schools and local authorities are also working with the Food for Life Partnership – Health Education Trust, Garden Organic, Focus on Food and the Soil Association (www.foodforlife.org.uk) – an integrated approach to food skills, food education and food growing, as well as the Catering Mark to improve school meal standards and procurement.

The slide demonstrates that voluntary initiatives don't replace standards. They enhance them. There must be the baseline of unarguable nutrition and environmental standards on which excellence can be built. Because there are standards, schools have to think about it and not ignore the issues through bias or lack of knowledge. It's got to be somebody's job. Somebody seems to have forgotten that. His name is Michael Gove. I seem to have chosen a picture that makes him look as if he's about to throttle the standards. Which seems rather apt, given the present policy circumstances.

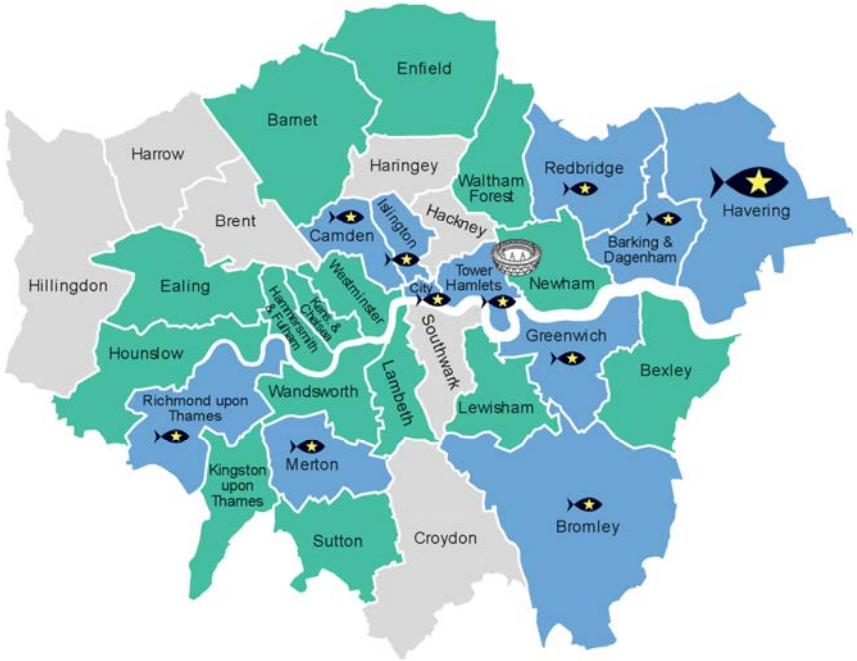
This slide also takes me back to the point I made earlier about our need to get better at understanding the money. Camden and Islington joint food procurement £900k, enough to pay for two children's centres. And the reason there is a big fat gold star on the map for the London Borough of Havering is because there is a superstar food procurement manager there called Gerry Clinton, who is creating collaborative contracts across the foodservice contracts for at least six London boroughs, which make it financially viable to achieve healthy and sustainable food for large numbers of schools. This is fabulous, but it's also sounding suspiciously as if we are having to re-invent the wheel. Wasn't collaborative procurement the job of the old Inner London Education Authority (ILEA), back in the 1970s and 1980s? What we're painfully re-learning is that when food buying is devolved down to non-ring-fenced budgets and individual schools, then it is not economically viable to buy good food, and all the progress gets lost. It is very expensive for individual schools to buy and prepare their food, and hire the consultants to show them how.

Of course, Michael Gove will no doubt ensure that he is photographed in individual schools who are achieving great things through the personal efforts of individual superhero caterers, which conveniently back up his ideological message of the Big Society. But sadly, not every caterer is or can be a superhero. We have to keep on exposing the fact that this approach is economic stupidity. With the wider cuts, we're seeing many local authorities start to talk about dropping their school catering services altogether. Michael Gove is sending schools back to the bad old days of the temptations of vending machines that provide £3k immediate profit for schools, I can only think because he believes the effects of the saturated fat consumption are far off, and anyway are for the NHS to pick up later.

I also add a note here that I see little point in looking at nutrition without look at sustainability in tandem. They are – or should be – inseparable. As an example, there is no point insisting on serving fish in schools for heart health if that fish then runs out. We want permanent heart health. So serve fish, but make sure it is from sustainable sources. Job done.

Which leads me neatly on to talking about my latest obsession, which is indeed fish. I find fish a useful policy lens or analogy through which to understand coherent policy. We can learn a lot from fish to apply to other areas of public health and food policy

For sustainable fish, standards are one tool in a box of systematic policy approaches. We need marine parks where fish can be left to do their thing. We need sensible limits on capture of wild fish, equitably shared so that people can make a good living and will understand and champion the value of sticking to the rules. That needs to be championed in European policy. And we need a principled market place that makes it attractive and reliable for fishers to invest in change. That takes action at a national and local level.



The map showing progress on principled fish buying by London's local authorities is shown below. Havering gets another gold star for the economically savvy procurement manager who specifies Marine Stewardship Council certified sustainable fish for school food contracts across six boroughs. The boroughs shown in green are taking critically endangered species off their menus. You'd think this would be an obvious thing to do, but it really isn't, as the grey boroughs signify – those local authorities that have as yet failed to take action.

But there is not yet any sustainable fish policy for hospital food. There is a "principle", but no requirement. Jeremy Hunt has moved from shrugging his shoulders on enforcement to keeping his fingers crossed. Eyes shut. Finger crossed. Perhaps the principles will be accepted. Perhaps that the campaigners will go away. Meaning that £17m of fish per year is bought with our money but no sustainability standards, and nobody told to check. At a time of unarguable global crisis in fish sustainability, with the UN saying that 80% of the world's fish stocks are now fished to maximum capacity or severely overfished.

I've talked a lot about the public sector. But it's very much less clear to me what the policy path is with food served in the commercial sector, and I would welcome your ideas. What tools do we have to fix the nutrition and sustainability standards of the very large amount of food provided by companies in commercial outlets, workplaces and on the high street? The campaign tools lots of us have used so far include awards, celebrations, pledges, celebrity endorsement, press releases, lists on websites and league tables. But these don't seem to me to be sufficiently effective to warrant our continued efforts over the long term. They are good for rallying supporters and troops, and to set in motion a change in public opinion, but in the face of a global fish crisis and a global obesity crisis – they aren't good enough to solve the problems. We need a serious conversation about developing better policy tools for commercial food.

Government policy on company food policy isn't just "fingers crossed" it's more "arm's length" and handing companies the blank page on which they can write their own rules. The ghastly Responsibility Deals are effectively asking companies to state what limited action they are prepared to take, and then to receive government endorsement for doing so. The definition of what counts as "good" has also been handed over to the companies – on nutrition and sustainability. Meanwhile, government is conveniently ignoring the fact that companies are required by company law to do the most profitable thing, not the most beneficial, which are sometimes – frequently – diametrically opposed.

Two things strike me. We need a coalition campaign to change company law to take account of health and sustainability. Make it a requirement to report on these, to make companies accountable. And second, I've heard that company reporting law is about to change so that they need to report on risk. Let's take that as an instruction to ourselves and raise the level of risk to company reputation if they fail to serve healthy and sustainable food. Professor Philip James once told me that that we need to be more brave. It isn't our job to seek popularity. It's our job to win. We do our cause a disservice if we are over-cautious.

Here's my last-but-one slide – a slightly more philosophical take on what has gone before. I think of government food policy as crisis management, not as a coherent plan. My image plays on the idea of food policy as a heart patient having a series of crises.

In World War II, it was all about food security. I recommend a trip to the Cabinet War Rooms to see the charts of what the war office were counting. The number of Spitfires, the amount of fuel and the number of young men and women available to fight, but also the grain stores, farm output, head of cattle and sugar. Food policy was all about food security – domestic production – volume of production – distributing surpluses – keeping farmers on the land – keeping the soldiers and the rearguard fed. Nutrition policy was about keeping everyone fit and healthy, and equitably, to ensure there was a population that could fight.

Recent food crises include E.coli, BSE, Foot and Mouth Disease (FMD). You tend to get a food policy response that suits the crisis. After FMD, we saw a sort of "buy British" campaign for public sector food, in the form of the Public Sector Food Procurement Initiative, with a few bits and pieces of sustainability bolted on.

Pushing the heart health analogy one step too far, I'd say that many of the policy initiatives have been temporary stents, clever little balloons inserted in diseased arteries to help maintain the healthy flow of the economy, and get the crises to go away – even if temporarily. With the latest banking crisis, I'd say that sensible food policy has fallen right off the chart – the food issues that are so dear to our hearts currently have little political currency. At least, not whilst we are failing to talk about jobs and profitability, and good, healthy, sustainably produced food being part of the green economy.

I was recently sitting in a meeting of NGOs (third sector, not-for-profits, campaign groups). And the suggestion came up that we should write a manifesto. Once again, the music from Groundhog Day came into my head. I thought, "What a perfect way to waste time." I tuned out of the details of the conversation and thought about what was happening. Here we are – a talented and tenacious group of people – thinking we have power. We do, but we need to understand the nature of our power to use it well. We have no legislative power and no fiscal power. Policy-makers don't even have a requirement to take our advice. We can lobby for change. But we have to be really canny, careful and efficient about how we do that.

So I've been thinking for a bit about what powers we do have.
This is not a definitive list, but it is a start. We can:

- Give evidence, measure progress
- Expose bad practice – "what's really going on"
- Create a compelling narrative
- Write the standards. Write the legislation
- Be the long memory (we've been in the job longer than them!)
- Educate – change culture
- Gang up, win friends, build alliances
- Embarrass, praise, attack, support, cajole, escalate, nag…
- And get very cross and never give up!

I think Caroline Walker and Frederick Accum might have found these principles familiar and agreed to come to the pub with us to discuss it – and hence campaign tactics – over a pint of fine ale – just as I hope to join with my friends here to discuss what to do next!

One final anecdote to close, illustrating the powers that we do have, and that we should use – especially to try and understand and shift economic policy. Here's a picture of my lovely colleague Alex Jackson, who runs the public food procurement campaigns at Sustain. You saw him in a previous slide dressed in a fish suit. He got us into the Treasury to talk about Government Buying Standards. It was a painfully dreadful meeting, but also a useful lesson in what I call "oppositism".

We used sustainable fish as our example. We said, "Please set standards for sustainable fish in government food buying." We set out the arguments. We gave them evidence. We were surrounded by bits of paper with all our arguments worked out. We talked about costs. We were polite. We wore our best suits. I took my camera. It was like a posh day out. Then one of the senior civil servants eventually clocked what we were talking about, and said, "You mean we'd have to exclude certain foods (or fish) on environmental grounds." I said "Yes, exactly, well done!" He looked shocked. He sounded shocked. He said, "We can't do that, we'd have to *skew the market*." "Skew the market" as if it were the worst thing in the world.

The treasury man's statement made me quite angry. But strangely, "skew the market" has become one of the most clarifying and motivating things I've heard, if you think about it in terms of its opposite. It's a guide to action. We need to push the market away from (for example) high salt food, unsustainable fish and high carbon production methods, and towards a sensible amount of salt, verifiable fish standards and *low* carbon production methods. So let's use our time well and talk realistically and enthusiastically about the tools and powers we have to make that happen, and in an economically advantageous way.

THANK YOU. It's a privilege to work with you.
Find out more about the work of Sustain at: www.sustainweb.org