



ACCESS

Achieving Circularity in Cities through
Environmental Sustainability of Sports

CHOOSING LOCAL FOOD SUPPLIERS

Support local producers



Professional sports have a prominent cultural position in societies across the globe and commercial organisations such as big food corporations have been making use of this to promote their products. Recently some sport organisations have decided to turn to local food suppliers for their bars and canteens. Choosing local suppliers and involving procurement managers to source them could improve the environmental footprint of the event by reducing food mileage and introducing sustainably grown and healthier products.

GENERAL DESCRIPTION OF THE PRACTICE

Manchester City FC realised that the food and beverage provided on match days across its Etihad Stadium (in the fan areas and concessions and in the restaurants and suites) is a major part of the experience of fans and visitors.

The Club works with the catering partner F3 (Fabulous Fan Fayre for the management of food at the Etihad Stadium).

F3 has launched a “Local Eats” scheme partnering with street food vendors who are contracted to operate in several mobile and fixed-point catering units. F3 works with talented artisan food traders using on site facilities and supported by the Club’s infrastructure. In this way, F3 is committed to providing employment to the local communities while at the same time offering locally and sustainably produced food.

F3 has also developed a Food Charter for Manchester City FC to ensure all partners comply with its principles - i.e. no MSG, additives and/or preservatives etc., contribute to thriving local economies and sustain the livelihoods of people working in the food sector, protect the diversity of both plants and animals and avoid damaging natural resources and contributing to climate change, provide social benefits, such as good quality food, safe and healthy products and educational opportunities.

The catering contractor works closely with local suppliers, finding partners who care about their produce and livestock, sourcing fresh local ingredients to reduce food mileage and serving its customers sustainable products with ethical welfare standards for livestock.

CHALLENGE

This practice addresses both environmental and health-related challenges.

Regarding the environment, the European Commission states that global transport generates nearly 20% of total CO₂ emissions from food. The transport of fruit and vegetables contributes 36% of food miles emissions – around twice the amount of greenhouse gases (GHG) released during their production. In addition, global foods often need more preservatives or additives to extend their shelf life.

Health-wise, big food corporations often offer unhealthy food and beverages full of sugars and additives. Concerns arise in particular when these companies selling unhealthy products sponsor children’s sport. In a review of the evidence presented to the WHO in 2006, it was shown that food and drink companies systematically target children, marketing chocolate, sweets, soft drinks, and other foods high in fat, sugar and salt. This kind of food promotion has been shown to influence children’s consumption and other diet-related behaviours and outcomes. Regular junk food intake leads to long-term health problems such as obesity and chronic illnesses in later life. A single fast-food meal could add 160 and 310 extra kilocalories to the daily caloric intake for teenagers and younger children. Lack of vitamins such as A and C, and minerals such as magnesium and calcium, encourage the development of deficiency diseases. The presence of hazardous food colouring agents and/or unhealthy trans fats in many fast-food items, and issues with food preparation safety, often complicate the issue further.

RESULTS

Choosing local suppliers for food and beverages in sports events has positive environmental and health implications, as well as cultural implications for the local community.

First, choosing local suppliers reduces the carbon footprint associated with transportation and logistics. By sourcing food and beverages locally, the need for long-distance transportation is minimized, resulting in lower greenhouse gas emissions. Additionally, supporting local farmers and producers promotes sustainable agricultural practices, such as organic farming and reduced pesticide use.

Second, local suppliers often provide healthier, fresher and higher-quality food and beverages compared to processed industrial foods full of sugars and additives provided by big food corporations. Locally produced ingredients are typically harvested or prepared closer to the event, ensuring that spectators and participants enjoy fresh and flavourful meals. This emphasis on quality raises awareness of the importance of a healthy nutrition among athletes, spectators and volunteers.

Third, by promoting local food suppliers, sports events can bring benefits to the territory by contributing to the growth and sustainability of local economies, helping to generate revenues and job opportunities within the community. Supporting local businesses leads to increased economic activity, tax revenue, and overall development.

Sporting events are often an opportunity to showcase the local culture and traditions. By partnering with local suppliers, event organizers can incorporate regional cuisine and specialty dishes, enhancing the overall experience of the attendees. This helps celebrate the local culinary heritage and adds a sense of identity to the event.

REPLICABILITY POTENTIAL

Replicating this practice depends a lot on various factors such as the availability of local products and suppliers for large events. As sports are taking place in all parts of Europe, with dates usually adapted to different seasons and type of sports (winter/summer), certain periods of the year can easily imply a lack of certain ingredients or merely provide seasonal ingredients. At the same time, certain aspects of food preparation need to be taken into account, too – nutritious and balanced and sometimes tailor-made meals for the athletes, large quantities of portions for corporate areas and at the same time a variety of food options for the visitors - affordable, quickly prepared and diverse. All these might limit the extent of locally sourced ingredients. Nevertheless, sport organisations should investigate the increasing number of farm to fork initiatives and at the same time adapt their menus to the various seasons. Finally, many labels and certificate exist, too, which could secure at least an environmentally friendlier value chain of the sourced food.





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This factsheet is a part of a larger collection of good practices available on the project's website

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The **ACCESS project** is one of the latest European projects which explores and challenges environmental sustainability and environmental management in sports. Co-funded by the European Union's Erasmus+ programme, ACCESS is looking at narrowing the gaps between the current environmental performances of sport organisations, their strategies, and practices on one side and strategies and targets of their respective cities or regions with the overall objective – making these sport organisations a reference point for sustainability in sports in their countries and turning them into replicators of solutions for achieving it.



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