

# Planning Sustainable Menus



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Planning menus is where sustainable food for early years begins. Most settings will plan meals and snacks for a number of weeks at a time to ensure that a good variety of dishes are served.


### Key principles for planning sustainable menus:

- Have fewer meat dishes. Serve less meat and meat products. The national guidance for early years settings in England suggests early years settings have at least one meat free day a week.
- Use sustainable fish. Serve oil rich fish once a week and buy from sustainable sources.
- Avoid including processed foods in menus. For example, readymade cakes, biscuits, puddings, processed meat and meat dishes such as sausages and pies and readymade sauces.
- Use seasonal produce. Plan menus around the produce that will be in season.
- Base meals and snacks on local starchy foods. Potatoes and bread are local and sustainable source of energy in the UK and should feature regularly in menu plans.
- Peas, beans and lentils are sustainable foods and very versatile in meals and snacks.
- A variety of meals and snacks across each week will make it easier to meet children's nutritional requirements and provide a good variety of colours, textures and flavours.

### Key terms for sustainable food are:

Introducing sustainable food to Early Years settings is an opportunity to connect children, staff and families to more environmentally friendly habits and to nurture a sustainable food culture.

Sustainable food is about food culture and how decisions made about growing, buying, storing, cooking and wasting food today will impact future generations.



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**Positive terms:** seasonal, organic, sustainable, local food, food chain,

**Negative terms:** intensive farming, greenhouse gas emissions, environmental damage, food chain

**The benefits:** Benefits of providing more sustainable food in early years settings is an important aspect of encouraging better food for everyone as the food provided and eaten will impact on the children, the carers and the health of the planet. By providing sustainable food an Early Years setting can make a positive contribution to society, the economy and the environment.