

Introduction

Linking education, health and food - for a sustainable future.

Good food is healthy food

- Healthy for the **individual**
- Healthy for **society**
- Healthy for the **environment**

Healthy food leads to a healthy world

An understanding of nutrition and of the impacts of food production and supply is needed if we are to make informed food choices, which will benefit individual, social and environmental health.

As individuals we can no longer sit back and leave our health to the health professionals. As members of society and inhabitants of the world we have to take an active role in deciding how our food is produced. We have to take responsibility for our own nutrition and for the impact of our food's production, but to do so we must be informed. We have to learn what constitutes a healthy diet, what are the hidden dangers of certain foods, what is sustainable and what we can only eat today at the great expense of tomorrow.

There are already several ways in which messages and guidance about healthy eating is being successfully communicated. The **5-a-day** initiative is encouraging the 86% of the population who don't yet eat five daily portions of fruit and vegetables to do so. An increasing proportion of the population is turning to organic produce for the reassurance it gives against pesticide residue and chemical contamination. **Organic** and **fair-trade** labelling gives us assurances that our food is being produced in ways that are environmentally and socially responsible. Choosing **locally produced** foods and **reduced packaging**, is helping to cut the environmental costs associated with the transportation and packaging of food products.

Through **education**, we can build on these messages to bring about a more complete understanding of the food production and supply system, enabling more complex and well-informed decision-making in the future.

Linking food and education

The production of this education resource pack has resulted from a partnership between **East Anglia Food Link** (EAFL) and **Cambridgeshire Environmental Education Service** (CEES).

As a central part of their **Eco Centres** awards, CEES' two environmental education centres at Stibbington and Upware are committed to sustainable practice. Both centres worked on a Department for Education and Skills (DfES) **Growing Schools** initiative during 2002-3 which led to the development of new educational activities designed to give pupils a better understanding

of how food is produced and of the sustainability issues involved in food production. In partnership with EAFL this work has been further developed during 2003, leading to the production of this pack.

Focus for the work has been at Stibbington Centre where pupils staying in the residential centre for a few days are involved in:

- helping to plant, grow and monitor food crops on site.
- finding out about where the food on Stibbington Centre's menu has come from, including local organically produced foods.
- monitoring their menu to check that their diet at Stibbington Centre is healthy.

EAFL is committed to promoting sustainable food production and supply systems amongst public sector caterers. Given its commitment to sustainability, Stibbington Centre was an ideal location for EAFL to set up a system for the supply of sustainably produced foods using the Eostre organic farmers co-operative. With support from the Directorate of Health and Social Care, EAFL's partnership with CEES at Stibbington was further developed through collaboration on the production of this 'Healthy Food - Healthy World' pack of educational materials for use by pupils at the centre - and at schools and other locations. EAFL has used its contacts with the farming community, knowledge of food systems, capacity for research and its photographic library to support the production of the pack. The materials follow some of the key ingredients of a day's meals through the entire process of production, supply and consumption, investigating issues of public, individual and environmental health at every stage.

The work at Stibbington is forging a real link between education and sustainable food production and supply systems. Today pupils visiting Stibbington Centre are gaining an understanding of where their food comes from, how it reaches us, how it should be stored and cooked, and the environmental impacts of food production. As decision makers in the future, this experience may help them to select good food, to be discerning, to eat healthily and to ensure that they make sustainable food choices.

Dissemination of this pack to a wider audience should help to spread knowledge and understanding of sustainable food choices.