



## LIVERY CLIMATE ACTION GROUP SEMINAR ON FOOD AND THE IMPACT ON CLIMATE CHANGE 28 June 2021

The Third Seminar hosted in this series was introduced by **David Smith, Master of the Worshipful Company of Cooks** who rightly set out the challenge and breadth of the topic on the agenda. In his wide-ranging talk he spoke about an initiative by the Cooks Company to look at the repurposing of unused food to those in need. Food waste being a difficult term as most food can be reused in some way so it would be wrong to term it waste. His overview led usefully into the three presentations.

The **Master Farmer, Richard Whitlock** gave a presentation about food supply from farmers. Reminding us that the primary aim of the farmer is to produce food and maintain the economic viability of the farm and manage the natural environment, he gave us some good statistics about the shelf life of items and the way that processing produces co-products that can all be usefully repurposed. The farmer will seek to create an efficient process without waste. The shopper can, however, be demanding of the look of items in the shops and so individuals need to be aware of the impact that this consumer demand can make on the supply. This supply chain is complicated and can lead to over or under supply – strawberries in summer may be too plentiful if the sun does not shine and there is no Wimbledon tennis! However, what is unfashionable to eat on one country can be utilised for other global culinary preferences leading to exports ensuring that there is no absolute waste. In an efficient and “always available” supply chain there will always be surpluses. WRAP estimate that of the 10 million tonnes of food waste created each year, 7 million tonnes are wasted in the home. Richard provided some solutions to these issues including improving demand forecasting, accepting some lower standard ( eg wonky vegetables), finding alternative uses for the by products and eating only local and seasonal food. Other solutions include greater use of taxes and subsidies and finally giving food away ( provided it does not distort the market).

UK farms produce 45.6 tonnes of carbon emissions per annum and that is 10% of the UK’s emissions. The National Farmers’ Union have an ambition to reduce this to net zero by 2040.

**Juliane Caillouette-Noble of the Sustainable Restaurant Association** spoke about the choices that we all have to make in eating out and that we can chose food that does not “cost the earth”. In tackling the difficult topic of meat and dairy consumption, Juliane made it clear how we could all help reduce the emissions in this sector that currently account for 60% of farming’s emissions and 16.5% of total global emissions. She also spoke about the challenge to reduce our use of plastic since of the plastic pollution in the world the top 10 waste products found make up 75% of that pollution and 6 of those 10 are food related. Pursuing a circular economy would help us reduce this pollution and there are trials underway to do this. Juliane gave us 5 actions to take away – 1. Fight for seasonal and local menus, 2. Consider where to cut back on meat and dairy and make it special, 3. Rethink what

abundance looks like (over stocked buffet tables can lead to waste), 4. Understand your waste streams and use appropriate materials and 5. Vote with your fork and put your money towards sustainable choices when dining out so that restaurants know that you, as a consumer, are concerned about these issues

**Laura Winningham from City Harvest** was the third speaker and was keen to point out that in London each year 13.3 million meals are wasted whereas there are 10.2 million meals needed to feed our City. The charity, City Harvest, is part of the way that good food can be distributed to where it is needed. Their model takes food from a variety of places and redistributes it to a very wide range of organisations. Laura busted lots of myths about redistribution and showed how with an efficient collection and redistribution system then pretty much all food can be reused. It does not need to be in huge volumes and chilled food can be reused etc.

Some excellent questions were raised as a result of the talks. Reference was made to the National Food Strategy led by Henry Dimbleby that was due to be published in the next couple of weeks.

Attendees broke into smaller rooms to discuss issues around Livery Company attitudes to food and general food issues. Points made included:

In response to a question about whether Livery Companies enquired about seasonal food or sustainable food, it seems that very few Livery Companies considered this currently and that the caterers did not seem to provide much information or encourage this. However many felt that the issues raised at the seminar might encourage that enquiry at future meals. Some companies were taking steps to reduce wine waste. Some concern was expressed about moving away from traditional meat for a main course and that less popular cuts of meat were difficult to sell to the Livery. Some suggestion was made to try a totally vegetarian meal as an experiment or a vegetarian meal with meat as an option.

There was quite a bit of discussion about the role of retailers and the role of the consumer with a lack of clarity as to who was leading whom.

A strand of discussion on the Zoom chat and in the rooms arose around the fact that grass fed cattle have less impact on the environment and the UK climate is best placed to provide this. Cattle fed by other substitutes are less environmentally acceptable.

Another room talked about young people and obesity and a lack of understanding of food and diet which led to a positive need for more education in this area.

A general consensus was that Livery Companies needed more information on this topic.

Before the seminar caterers known to provision the Livery Halls and Guildhall/Mansion House were asked to supply details of their sustainability policies and these were circulated to the attendees.

Alderman Alison Gowman