

# Food



Don't be bullied on GM foods

## What we stand for

- Safe, healthy, affordable food, produced and transported without cruelty or exploitation, and with minimal damage to the environment.
- A food policy nationally and locally which balances the interests of producers and consumers, whilst putting both before the interests of multinational companies and big business.
- Local production for local needs where possible (promoting local jobs), combined with the promotion of fair trade.
- Supporting the expansion of small-scale organic farming, for which demand continues to grow; the promotion of small, independent local shops; and the flourishing of farmers' markets.
- We do not believe that the predominance of huge supermarkets is the best way to provide healthy food to everyone. They provide an anonymous, soulless shopping experience, and encourage car use while reducing proximity for the poor and elderly. Their buying and pricing policies are destructive for small farmers and producers and do not generally promote high quality, healthy food.

## What's happening now

Intensive farming is failing. It produces less nutritious food while causing cruelty to farm animals and damage to soil fertility and wildlife. It uses fertilisers, pesticides and animal antibiotics. These have led to new illnesses and resistance in animals and humans to antibiotics. The unnecessary introduction of genetically modified crops poses further threats.

Our food is transported from the far corners of the world seriously polluting the environment for the sake of luxuries such as out-of-season strawberries, whilst often exploiting the producers in "developing" countries. The government continues to make only token gestures towards supporting organic farming or developing a food policy which is not based on importing the same amount of many foods as we export to other countries!

Whilst interest in local food has grown considerably over recent years, and York's city centre farmers' markets are very popular, the Council has made little sustained effort to promote local food in a serious way.

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## What we would do

- Encourage organic conversion on farms within the City of York boundaries and further afield, working with neighbouring authorities and the Regional Development Agency to seek additional funding to replace lack of government action.
- Further promote and develop farmers' markets in the centre of York and in other locations in the city. These markets need to happen much more frequently than once a month (ideally on the same day each week) to enable shoppers to buy basic foodstuffs from them.
- Seek funding to support the development of sustainable local and regional food distribution systems, whereby local organisations of all kinds source as much as possible of their food purchases in the local area.
- Continue to oppose genetically modified (GM) crops and GM food, following up on a successful Council resolution proposed by Green Party councillors to make York a GM-free area.
- Encourage healthy eating initiatives in all of York's schools. All schools should study food and cooking in the curriculum including growing it in school gardens.
- Work through the Council's procurement strategy to maximise the amount of food used on council premises bought locally and fairly traded.
- Set targets for caterers (for schools, colleges, hospitals, work canteens etc.) to source food locally. Work through the various partnership bodies to proactively encourage this approach in other public and private bodies in the city.
- Oppose the fluoridation of water or school milk.
- Work through the planning system to ensure that all sizeable new developments (eg. York Central, Hungate) include local food shops rather than large-scale supermarkets.
- Support, protect and promote the use of allotments in the city. Develop new allotments where possible when there is local demand.

### Green councillors have:

- Brought a successful motion to Council to establish York as a GM Free Area. This means the Council adds its voice on a regular basis to Europe-wide campaigns against GM food.
- Brought a successful motion committing the council to oppose fluoridation of water and to raise public awareness of the health concerns of this measure.
- Campaigned through the Local Agenda 21 process for more action to be taken on promoting local food, including participating in the Food Festival selling surplus produce from local allotments.
- Supported campaigns for healthy eating including fresh fruit and vegetables in schools, through involvement as local councillors and as a school governor.
- Been involved in work on the (very slowly developing) council procurement strategy, and attempted to speed-up this process.
- Attended the Fair Trade City Steering Group, helping to develop availability of Fairly Traded goods in food shops and cafes across the city.