



In collaboration with:



Weekly #SportPositive Twitter Chat

Tuesday, May 5

Food: How can professional sports support & encourage health and wellness, as well as the consumption of less carbon-intensive foods?

Please note we have just taken salient points that were added in the discussion and have not given attribution. This document is to give a flavour of the Twitter Chat, it is not a transcription. If you wish to see who wrote points that resonate with you, to pick up a discussion, search #SportPositive on Twitter and you will be able to see the original tweets.

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Q1: Being a sport spectator is frequently associated with less healthy food consumption. Do you think it's possible to change perceptions of sport being associated with these carbon-intensive, less healthy foods like hot dogs, burgers & meat pies?

Yes, entirely possible. The London 2012 Food Vision was an excellent example of providing variety, choice, quality and affordability. Some individual sport cultures may be harder to shift, but I think this change is already happening.

https://sustainweb.org/publications/for_starters_the_london_2012_food_vision/...

Also, the Sustainable Fish Cities initiative arose as a London 2012 legacy:

<https://sustainweb.org/sustainablefishcity/...>

Music Festivals are one step forward ATM, sports could learn a lot from them. First action must be to offer minimum one vegetarian/vegan menu (No excuse) on top of the rest, then progressively add more and more to reverse the order.

-> Any particular music festivals to look at? We know DGTL is a great one around all facets of sustainability - <https://dgtl.nl/sustainability>

—> We Love Green [Paris] and Paleo Festival [Switzerland] are both doing a lot on the subject of sustainable food.

Perfectly possible. Simple bagged snacks full of protein, or cereal bars like (which can even be 1 of 5 per day) would be an easy kick off.

-> This solves the immediate problem, but generates environmental impacts. It's critical to approach all solutions as broadly as possible, considering implications on the environment (like waste), in addition to addressing the positive benefits to people!

Following the COVID19 pandemic, the narrative on health and wellness is elevated. As spectators return to live sports, teams (& their athletes) can offer food that aligns to their diets to stay fit/healthy. Adjusting the contracts is a different story....

Agree - perfectly possible - thinking of Wimbledon and strawberries!

Can tournaments (especially) across all sports look at what food is local, healthy and in season and make it as iconic as Wimbledon and strawberries? That's a campaign to consider...

-> I asked someone who managed all the catering vans at a test match about this - why he only sold burgers, bacon and sausage - and he claimed it was for speed. No options like how you'd like your egg to slow them down. I suspect profit margin was the real reason.

Certainly. We see a jump of local food joints serving @ stadiums & events - these include meat-alternatives. Like with tobacco, you see sports organizations defaulting to the highest \$ in sponsorships including fast food, sodas, alcohol, fossil fuel. Find new \$

Q2: Especially considering COVID-19, do sport organisers now have more of a responsibility to provide healthier (ergo lower-carbon and ideally local) food on match day?

It's going to be more and more difficult to justify not going for local food. Now that digitalisation has made it simpler for supply & delivery, this should also help in the balance. In the public debate, there is still space needed for healthy food & its role on immune system

-> Fully agree - it is becoming an expectation and makes sense financially and logistically.

All venues, not just sports venues have an obligation. Plant based and vitamin rich foods don't have to be boring. Local doesn't necessarily mean lower carbon. Omnipork and Beyond Meat are a huge hit with younger fans. Let's stop carbing out during sport!

Not sure if 'responsibility' is the right word. I've been wondering if the mental health benefits of 'comfort food' (in moderation) can outweigh the calories or bad fats of traditional stadium food and how much people will gravitate towards those after the pandemic

-> Maybe at least a responsibility to ensure there are plentiful healthy options for people who wish to make better choices. Plus, a responsibility to ensure food is locally sourced with minimal footprint from transport

At the PRSL Pro League we offer options: some choose alcapurrias, some choose plant-based burgers. We should offer good options and let people decide what lifestyle they choose. We will not decide for our fans, we'll give them options.

Q3: How can athletes, clubs and federations engage and educate fans on health and wellness issues more prominently, as well as (where credible) the benefits of a plant-based diet, without preaching or detracting from fan experience?

One example: UEFA with World Heart Federation and Healthy Stadia was the Eat For Goals: Football Players recipes for children and all: <https://world-heart-federation.org/programmes/our-work-with-uefa/eat-for-goals/...>

Just get on and provide the choice and make it good quality. Don't need to make a song and dance about it, just integrate plant-based food into the general offer (of course label it clearly)

-> Totally agree. I've been doing very unofficial Instagram surveys of my followers on my personal account. The other day, 79% of respondents said that they'd 'at least try' plant-based options at a sporting event

—> It's a question of offering the choice. I suspect in future even sports crowds will be more discerning about the food offer, but yes, some essence of it being a treat will continue to drive uptake of 'unhealthy' options

If anyone goes to Forest Green Rovers and meets Paula Brown they will come away as an advocate for plant based. What Forest Green Rovers do really sends your taste buds into overdrive. More broadly don't overprice healthier options otherwise it's hotdogs all round

Forest Green Rovers in the UK have fit reasonable coverage. <https://fgr.co.uk/our-ethos/100-vegan>

Calorie counts on menus is an effective step to promoting informed decision-making. 'Nutrition Facts' for the environment & other hidden health implications would provide opportunity for more informed decisions. Right now, it's easy to overlook or ignore

Obvious example here is Forest Green Rovers - didn't make it a choice, weathered a backlash, proved it didn't impact, and to some, improved the experience. Has done a lot to move other clubs in that direction too.

Perhaps inspired by The Last Dance talk about your diet and prove it in competition. One of the greatest things I think teams can do is offer seasonal food options - team chefs can offer cooking videos and leverage team social media and reach in other ways. Healthy and tasty food options will spread by word of mouth - a strong reputation for awesome food can go hand in hand with the game day experience. No need to preach or force it.

Now's the time to do it as there's so much focus on the benefits of healthy lifestyle; make sure it's delicious and don't overprice.

This is an example from a London 2012 menu board - note panel at top right informing about product standards:



-> That is a great menu. So many matches we've been to in the UK have been...burger, hot dog, pie, sausage roll, bags of sweets, crisps, beer selection. Give us options!

Would be interesting to see an NBA G-League team go vegan-only a la Forest Green Rovers. Find a sponsor - Impossible Foods? - to fund it, tell the stories - positive, negative, whatever. Most likely positive.

Q4: Sport has the capacity to directly influence fan behaviour when it comes to food available at sporting events. In what ways could sport organisers support or incentivise positive food choices during sports events and more broadly?

Instead of having one veggie option, reversing the order and having only one meat option could be an idea. Then including 'fake meat' as 'non-alcohol beers' without promoting it could work as a nudge.

-> I like that. My biggest wish on trains (and if planes ever come back) would be for vegan (& tasty) as standard, and you have to opt out to get animal protein. So, default choice is carbon reduced. And no beef ever!

A great example is Lewis Hamilton with Neat Burger. I could suggest that clubs & federations make a tie up with Netflix which has an extensive library of food education films or YouTube. It's where so many young people decide to change their diet

Some incentives may not be seen - teams could drop the cost for healthy & local vendors. This can make it more accessible for these choices to enter the event/facility. Support local farmers (and ranchers - sorry) like the Sacramento Kings and Golden 1 Center

Partner with Farmers Markets and local vendors. Create a Healthy Eaters club (points when a fan buys healthy items; benefits upon accruing a certain amount of points). Obviously messaging key here.

-> Love this. Could healthier food options be twinned with discounted beer...from the likes of Toast Ale that has a strong sustainability story...? A lot of people we know would take the incentive of a discounted/free beer!

—> Yeah or New Belgium brewing in Colorado

We've seen shifts in corporate catering. Could fan power stimulate a change?

Increase the healthy options, have a hero offer of veggies or fruit (here I go with my Wimbledon strawberries again!), offer what the athletes eat - 'eat like an athlete here'

-> 'Eat like an athlete' is a great one...The nutrition of athletes' people have gone to watch vs. some of the unhealthy menus people have to eat is a bit ironic!

Best to ensure an excellent event experience for all and that includes food offer. Not so much a direct comms issue as one of demonstrating / leading through positive examples

We need more athletes like those in The Game Changers to disrupt the mindset globally.

Teams could buy a local farm and then sell the produce on game day. Eliminating middlemen should make price more affordable

-> The Stubhub Centre in Los Angeles has on site market garden, beehives etc and sells its own produce on match days

There are community partners like Sysco that provide healthy meals to lower socio-economic sport leagues in cities - education on personal, residential, or urban gardens is helpful. Promoting new foods or options in house is also helpful

Q5: What challenges must sport overcome, to transition to a larger offering of healthy and plant-based food options being available to spectators at sporting events?

The sentimental associations with live sports and carbon-intense foods is a huge challenge. These shifts must shift through all 5 senses - I anticipate that overcoming those familiar ballpark sights and scents will be as much of a challenge as flavor

Local tastes will be slow to change and difficult to overcome. Consumer preferences in-stadium will dictate what is served, but healthier options need a fair shake and strong placement to gain attention and traction

As we see more & more urban gardening, stadium rooftops, sidewalks, etc. could embed more & more green food which could then be served locally.

I think it is more opportunity than challenge now. In post-Covid world people are more conscious of health and wellbeing and will be more open to (indeed expecting) better and more varied catering options at events. One potential consideration might be tendency for more people to want to bring their own food to events, to avoid queuing and to be more sure of what they are eating

More focus is needed on concessions from a healthy options standpoint and, more broadly, to increase concession sales throughout a match or event to increase revenues

Colour and aroma will always get the punters to part with good money for more sustainable food! Don't make healthy food beige, which venues often do

Big challenge - sports food & beverage all about alcohol and starch. Sustainable eating can include more sustainable protein (even from animal sources!) and alcohol free, sugar free, plastic free premium mixed drinks. Fresh, fun and delicious for a big match

Through our research and work with stadia catering teams we advise the following:

- 1) Price healthier options competitively - undercut less healthy by 20%
- 2) Promote & position prominently at concessions
- 3) Don't market as health food - use 'fresh' & 'healthy'

Not your average sports event fare, but this olive stall was popular at London 2012:



Thank You!

If you contributed to the #SportPositive Twitter Chat this week, thank you for being a part of it! If you didn't, I hope you find this document useful, and mark your diaries now to join us next week, **Tuesday, May 12th at 4-5pm UTC.**

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