

Locally Sourced Food

I recently wrote to the main supermarkets about customers being able to buy more locally and UK sourced food. I have received the enclosed responses from Morrisons, Tesco and Asda which they said I could share with you. I am happy to reproduce the other replies if they wish when I receive them. I encourage any UK based food retailer to do a good job selling and promoting UK produced food. They are in alphabetical order. Tesco gave the most rapid response.

Asda

“Thank you for your email regarding British sourcing. As a company established by a group of Yorkshire dairy farmers, this is an important issue for Asda. We keep our fish sourcing under review, but due to the need of having to maintain a sustainable supply, this does sometimes come from overseas. However, we do support small suppliers, such as Downies of Whitehills Cullen Skink and ScottyBrand Smoked Salmon. Some of our seafood is UK sourced, including Atlantic Herring, Mackerel and Edible Crab. We have a dedicated local sourcing team, who enable small suppliers to supply Asda stores, including the facility to be stocked in a single local store. This covers a wide range of different products. As you may be aware, Asda has recently had a change in ownership. With this change, we have pledged to source 100% British beef, 100% British dairy and increase our sourcing of bread wheat to 100% British. You may be interested in the results of a recent customer insight survey we carried out, where we asked about attitudes to buying British. This showed a divide in attitudes depending on age, with 56% of 18-34 year old customers saying it is important, rising to 81% of 55+. The overall importance of buying British was listed as the eighth biggest issue for our customers, with them viewing recycling, reducing food waste and tackling antisocial behaviour as their biggest issues. While this does show differing attitudes towards British sourcing, we are keen to do all we can to support small British suppliers throughout our stores, and constantly keep sourcing under review.”

(their survey showed 76% thought buying British was important.)

Morrisons

“Morrisons is committed to buying British and giving our customers a great – and growing – choice of locally sourced food and drink.

We are the nation’s largest fresh food manufacturer and operate our own abattoirs, food manufacturing sites, and produce pack houses. We have recently added to this capacity with the acquisition earlier this month of Falfish, a family-owned processor of sustainably sourced seafood based in Cornwall.

For customers, this acquisition will mean further improvements to the range, quality and availability of fresh fish and shellfish at our in-store counters. Following the deal over 80% of Morrisons fish and shellfish – both in our 497 stores and in our online business – will come from Morrisons wholly-owned seafood operations (Morrisons already owns two seafood processing sites close to the docks in Grimsby).

This deal is a real commitment to the South West fishing industry which we believe will benefit the local economy as well as offering our customers an improved range of freshly caught fish and an investment in our in-store fishmongers.

You also asked about local produce. One of our core priorities is ‘local integration and serving the community’ and we have made positive strides on this in recent years. Prior to the pandemic, our buyers were touring the nation and hosting ‘local foodmaker’ events which offered local producers the opportunity to showcase their products. Through our ‘local foodmaker’ programme we have now surpassed a key milestone of 1,000 new, local products (from 220 local suppliers) which we have sourced from 37 events held across Britain in the last few years. This programme continues although with the onset of Covid we have been forced to hold events online.

Many local food producers are continuing to expand their geographic reach through their relationship with Morrisons and more of our stores have local products on offer. As an example, our store at Lake, Isle of Wight, is one of our most integrated stores so far, stocking locally supplied milk, cheese, cream, coffee, eggs, meat, tomatoes, biscuits and garlic.”

Tesco

“At Tesco, our ambition is to be British agriculture’s most trusted partner, helping to secure a successful future for farming, food and fisheries.

As part of our commitment to a competitive and productive UK agriculture sector, we’ve set up a number of Tesco Sustainable Farming Groups (TSFGs). The Groups, led by our suppliers, farmers and Tesco colleagues, are organised by sector and are central to our work of building long-term relationships with our farmers. We’re also supporting new entrants and young farmers through our Future Farming Foundation, which each year provides 50 young farmers from across the UK and Ireland with guidance, support and training.

In store customers will find that all of our milk is British, sourced from

British dairy farmers who are guaranteed a fair price for every pint through our Fair for Farmers Guarantee. We support our dairy farmers through the Tesco Sustainable Dairy Group, which was the first of the TSFGs to be set up in 2007, and now represents the largest group of dairy farmers working with a retailer directly. In addition to this, 100% of our beef, chicken, eggs and cheese is British and Irish. Alongside this we have a dedicated local sourcing team to evaluate and identify locally-sourced products, which are then sold in store – giving customers access to top quality, British products.

Recognising the demand from our customers for homegrown, seasonal produce, we work with trusted growers across the UK to deliver this all year round and include our Best of British Union Jack on packaging to help customers identify fresh fruit and vegetables which are 100 per cent homegrown. We are also using this partnership approach to foster innovation across all sectors, including our Incubator Programme which is helping suppliers to grow their brands and bring new, innovative products to market.”