SmartFood GUIDE

A WHOLE SCHOOL APPROACH TO EATING WELL

Section 3. Management

This is a section of the SmartFood Guide

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You can access other sections of the Guide on the School Food Matters website: www.schoolfoodmatters.org.au



MANAGEMENT

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The role of a school food service

A school food service exists to:

- provide a food service to students and the school community
- provide nutritious food and drinks at the lowest unit cost
- support food and nutrition messages in the curriculum, teaching and learning
- provide an opportunity for students to develop life skills
- support other health promotion programs such as Move Well Eat Well, Stephanie Alexander Kitchen Garden Program, community or school garden, 24 Carrot Gardens Program or Family Food Patch
- provide equity and food security.

Like any business, a school food service requires good management to be efficient, financially viable and achieve its desired aims. Effective management requires that:

- the school's goals and objectives are reflected in the food service operations
- there is a clearly documented arrangement to manage the food service
- staff and volunteers are adequately trained to comply with relevant legal requirements regarding food safety, food preparation and occupational health and safety standards
- staff and volunteers are supported to undertake efficient stock management, accounting and financial procedures.

The SmartFood Program is a school food service improvement program which offers a model of best practice for food service management. The program also recognises the school's dedication to the health and wellbeing of the school community. Achieving a SmartFood Award provides reassurance to the wider school community that the food service is providing a high quality and safe food service for students and staff.

Running an effective food service

Diagram 1 provides a step by step guide on how to effectively run your school food service. These steps may also help to review the operation of an established school food service.

Identify which of the steps you have already completed to work out where to start on the diagram.



Diagram 1: How to establish or review your school food service through inquiry cycles (plan and assess, prioritise, develop and plan, act and review)

getting started

- 1. Form a school food committee
- **2.** Gather information
- **3.** Talk to school community
- ······
- **4.** Promote your food service
- 5. Check existing policies

planning the changes

- 6. Develop a draft policy
- 7. Plan for change

making the changes

- **8.** Introduce nutritious food choices
- 9. Make lasting changes
- **10.** Link the food service with the school community

evaluating the changes

- **11.** Get feedback
- **12.** Review the food service
- **13.** Communicate success
- IS. Communicate success



1. Form a school food committee

The school community could establish a school food committee or use an existing committee that already has food as a focus area, for example a Move Well Eat Well committee. This group could include representatives from:

- school teaching / administration staff
- food service staff and volunteers
- the school association
- student council.

A carefully selected committee can:

- ensure efficiencies in the way the school food service operates
- provide an opportunity to hear about the needs of the school community
- share the workload involved in organising the food service and planning the menu
- assist with linking the food service with other programs such as Move Well Eat Well, Stephanie Alexander Kitchen Garden Program and 24 Carrot Gardens Program.

Duties

The committee should aim to develop good communication with other members of the school community, such as the principal, lead teachers or the food service manager. Teamwork will bring the best results.

Duties may include:

- developing a school food policy
- training and supporting paid and volunteer food service staff
- promoting and raising the profile of the school food service – by keeping people up to date with the latest developments through avenues such as School Council meetings

- making decisions on what foods to sell and at what price
- establishing the need for a profit margin and budget control statement
- developing activities that link the food service to a whole school approach to food and eating
- ensuring a stock-take is carried out (at least annually)
- presenting regular financial statements
- ensuring that the premises, staff and volunteers are meeting the requirements of Tasmanian food safety legislation.

2. Gather information

Finding out what your school community has and what they want is very important. You may be already providing nutritious, tasty and affordable food and only a few tweaks are necessary.

The SmartFood Guide is a great starting point to gather information. For useful websites and resources go to the Overview section of the SmartFood Guide. SFM can provide resources to help you gather information from your school community, such as parent and student surveys.

3. Talk to the school community

There are numerous ways of collecting information and engaging support from the school community. For example:

- run a school food service survey. Students can help design the survey and collect results.
- canvass views about what the food service is (or should be) offering. Use the school newsletter or social media to invite comments.
- arrange discussions for students, staff and parents in a variety of settings to try

and build agreement about food service management and the menu.

Ensure that any discussion about the preferred range and types of food available on the food service menu is guided by accurate nutrition information. Go to the Food and Nutrition or Menu section of the SmartFood Guide for more information.

4. Promote your food service

Members of the school community should be aware of the role of the school food service in encouraging healthy food choices. Promoting the food service through social media and the school newsletter can help to build awareness. Linking with existing programs and promotions around health, nutrition or physical activity such as Move Well Eat Well, Stephanie Alexander Kitchen Garden Program or health awareness events such as healthy bones week will help to increase the community's awareness.

5. Check existing policies

Find out if there are any existing school policies that include details about food and eating at school, for example:

- the school food service or other programs where food is eaten, such as a breakfast program or fruit and vegetable classroom break
- the type of food provided at school celebrations, events and activities
- the eating environment such as where students eat, the timing of meal breaks and how this is supervised
- how food is used in celebrations and social settings
- how food and eating is integrated into the curriculum, teaching and learning

- the expectations of school staff and volunteers as role models for food and eating
- how the school community communicates and provides information about food and eating to the broader school community.



6. Develop a draft policy

A school food policy that documents a coordinated whole school approach to food and eating gives direction and supports the work of food service staff and volunteers involved in implementing changes. A school food policy sets goals for the food service and clarifies the school community expectations of the food service. For a sample school food policy that can be modified to meet your school's need, go to the Templates section of the SmartFood Guide.

7. Plan for change

The draft school food policy should be widely circulated to the school community for comment and discussion. This may lead to amendments or additions to the policy before it is ready to be assessed by the SmartFood Program team. The types of changes you might make to your school food service depends on your funding, how many days per week food is served or available for purchase at school, availability of food preparation facilities and the school's policy on a whole school approach to food and eating.

Changes that the school may take include:

- making menu changes gradually
- gaining input from the students, staff and the wider school community and communicating to them about why the changes are necessary

- marketing and promoting the positive aspects of the menu changes
- advertising and promoting these changes well in advance
- not drawing attention to the removal of certain foods
- remaining positive about the need for change.

8. Introduce nutritious food choices

making the changes

New choices that promote everyday foods are easier to introduce:

- after school holiday breaks by reopening the food service with a new menu.
- by trialling new, nutritious foods using theme days or food specials. If they are popular, they can then be added to the regular menu.
- when AMBER and RED foods are offered in small quantities on limited occasions. This can encourage children to choose more nutritious options first. For more information, go to the Menu section of the SmartFood Guide.
- by removing RED items from the menu.

A menu that offers everyday foods served in interesting and appealing ways makes it easy for children to choose more nutritious options.

When planning a menu:

- keep the menu small, but provide variety by having a daily or weekly special such as a hot main meal
- have GREEN food and drinks as the main choice
- choose reduced fat and wholegrain options
- use low fat cooking methods such as oven baking

- read labels, especially looking at the saturated fat, sugar, sodium (salt) and fibre content and check that recipes are based on GREEN ingredients
- ensure that good quality seasonal fruit and vegetables are included daily
- choose meals that are easy and safe to prepare, using inexpensive ingredients that need little packaging
- be aware of any food allergies. Go to the Food and Nutrition section of the SmartFood Guide for more information.

9. Make lasting changes

A school food policy is the key to maintaining the success of providing nutritious food in the school food service. A school policy ensures sustainability and a long-term commitment to a whole school approach to food and eating.

10. Link the food service with the school community

Link the school food service with a whole school approach to food and eating. This ensures that students and families are given consistent messages about food and eating across all aspects of the curriculum, school environment, activities and events. This will not only ensure that changes to the menu and food service are successful and sustainable, but that they will be more effective in promoting a whole school approach to healthy eating.

evaluating the changes

11. Get feedback

Once changes have been made to the school food service menu, it is important to evaluate their success. The school food committee should evaluate and review the school food policy and plan for continuous improvement. Information should be gathered throughout the year. Do this as simply as possible. Below are some examples of what can be done.

Students can assist by:

- developing, implementing and collating surveys aimed at fellow students and parents to determine their likes and dislikes of school food throughout the school year
- interviewing other students or writing feedback letters to the school food service staff (as part of English classes)
- preparing graphs on the sales of different foods over time, for example pre and post healthy changes (as part of mathematics classes).

Assess the success of the changes by answering questions such as:

- did sales increase, decrease or stay the same once a healthier option was introduced?
- what are the menu's best sellers?
- were there any food safety or stock issues throughout the year?
- did the school food service invest in any new equipment? Was this beneficial?

It is important to hold regular school food committee meetings to check progress towards your school achieving or maintaining a SmartFood Award.

12. Review school food policy

The SmartFood team will ask if your school has reviewed its school food policy. The school food committee should review the information gathered throughout the 24-month SmartFood Award cycle and decide whether changes to the policy are needed. The committee may need to change statements, set new goals or address particular issues in the updated policy. They may decide that the policy is still adequately representing the school's values. This could be done every 12 months.

13. Communicating success

Communicating the success of the changes and achievements within the school food environment is a very important part of the change process.

Being positive about achieved outcomes will help to build continuing interest and commitment from the school community and ensure ongoing success.



Ensuring a viable food service operation

A school food service should not run at a loss unless this is factored into the school's operations policy. Food service providers, school food service managers and principals need to recognise the difference between low profits, a loss that results from inefficiencies and a loss that results from deliberate pricing policies.

An efficient school food service can return a small profit, as it should aim to receive a gross profit of around 25% of sales to cover employment costs and ingredient costs and have a small surplus, where applicable.

Adequate reserves should be maintained to meet future costs, such as equipment replacements, training, maintenance, staff replacements and long-service leave as well as potentially supporting food education within the classroom and through curriculum in the school produce garden if there is one.

Funds raised from the operations of a school food service can be a significant source of revenue for some schools, but this should not be at the detriment of serving nutritious food and drink options. Consequently, it is important that food items are attractive to students and are offered at an affordable price – meeting the needs of the students as well as covering costs of labour and ingredients. Menu items made from fresh, seasonal ingredients are often less expensive than highly processed ready to eat foods and therefore allow a greater profit from the markup. While nutritious food doesn't mean more costly food, some recipes can take longer to prepare. One way to manage this is to offer a smaller menu.

Some schools outsource their food service due to many reasons. Even so, it is still the school's

responsibility to have a food service that is nutritious and meets students' needs. The food service should be accredited with SFM.

SFM can provide assistance in operating your school food service efficiently and effectively.

Food service types

Food provided at school can be in a variety of ways. 2020 SFM data of school lunch provision in Tasmanian Schools (242 Govt and Non-govt schools with a school lunch service) indicated the following:

- 196 (81%) of schools employ food service staff, usually through a school resource package
- 34 (14%) of schools have an outsourced food system
- 3 (1%) of schools have a volunteer only system, and
- 9 (4%) of schools have other arrangements.

All food service types need a similar management style. They all need to have, as central to operations, food and drinks that are nutritious, enjoyable and are prepared in a safe food environment.

Often schools request that the operation of the school food service covers the costs of the food service manager's wage and overheads.

Good management practices will be needed to ensure that the school's food policy and food service procedures are carried out effectively and any areas of concern can be monitored. This can be done by:

- having and maintaining appropriate canteen equipment
- adhering to food safety requirements
- developing a good volunteer base, as needed

- having a good connection to local growers and suppliers
- having an adequate pricing system that promotes healthy options
- having sound serving, packaging, recycling and composting practices.

The school principal has responsibility on what the school food service offers and how it is offered, and that the food is not 'treat' focused. Schools must reserve the right to have input into the menu to ensure that only nutritious foods are made available to students and staff.

It is recommended that your school become a member of SFM , who can provide support, guidance and accredit your school food service through the SmartFood program.

Volunteering at the school food service is always encouraged, as it is a great way for parents and carers to be involved with the school. Volunteers must:

- obtain a Working with Vulnerable People card
- sign in and out as a volunteer at the school administration office, to ensure that they are covered by the school's insurance
- complete food safety training, either delivered by the school food manager or preferably, the local council online food safety training.

Food service finances

The food service manager and school business manager are responsible for the overall financial management of the school food service and the way it is monitored. A process to identify the income and expenditure of the school food service is essential.

Insurance

Food service managers employed by the school are covered by workers compensation policy. Volunteers must sign the volunteers' book in schools to be covered by appropriate workers compensation and public liability insurance as per school requirement.

How to market your food service

If the food service is to be a success, promoting and marketing nutritious foods on the menu is essential. The different aspects of marketing these choices on the menu can be described by the 4 Ps:

- Product
- Place
- Price
- Promotion

Product

'Product' means not only the foods that are sold, but also the image of the school food service as a whole – the service, the environment, how foods are promoted and how well connected the food service is with the school community. Below are some suggestions to help you:

- Create an identity for your school food service – consider running a competition in your school community to come up with a name.
- Give menu items appealing names that also make it clear what they are or add a description on the menu. For example, a 'baked bean bomb' (hot bread roll with baked beans and melted cheese).
- Carefully choose your fresh fruit and vegetables. If possible, use a small local greengrocer as they usually provide the best advice on quality and price their items according to seasonal availability. They may also be able to deliver regularly to ensure freshness.

• Use standardised recipes and serve consistent sizes. Ensure recipes and serving guidelines are kept in an obvious place to assist staff and volunteers when preparing and serving foods.

Go to the SFM website for some great GREEN and AMBER recipe ideas: www.schoolfoodmatters.org.au.

Place

'Place' refers to the environment and the way food and drink are arranged for sale. The point of sale should be an attractive, appealing place that everyone enjoys visiting. When planning layout and appearance, consider whether it is easily accessible, spacious, clean and appealing. Below are some suggestions:

- Placing some tables and chairs, and plants around the food service environment to create a nice eating atmosphere. Some schools have created an outdoor eating area with chairs and tables under umbrellas or a sail. Utilise any spare ground near the eating area for a small herb or vegetable garden or use pots. This not only provides a pleasant area for eating but also provides quick and easy access to fresh herbs when preparing foods.
- Students could design and paint murals on the walls or colourful menu boards as art projects. A clear, well placed menu will make it easier for students to select foods for counter sales.
- Place GREEN choices at the students' eye level. For example, position appealing colourful food such as wraps, fruit salad or sushi at eye level.
- Rotate the position of products regularly to generate interest. Try stocking GREEN foods in multiple places to encourage optimal sales.
- Consider selling both over the counter and via pre-orders. Many schools encourage

families to pre-order using an app, such as Qkr, as this helps with time management, reducing waste and minimising cash handling.

- Provide a catering service for morning and afternoon tea for staff meetings and other external meetings and events that may be held at the school. For example, a morning tea at \$4.00 per head, depending on ingredients.
- Consider extending a catering service for other school events, for example, professional development days, school sports days and school excursions and camps.
- Consider the food service operating hours. Could these hours be easily extended? Could a breakfast service be added before school? Some school food services offer a whole breakfast menu, but it could be as simple as offering a small selection of appropriate foods that are already on the menu.

Price

The right product at the right price is important. Children will often look for something to fill them up at the cheapest price. They will also consider how much change they will have for 'extras'. When introducing a new menu item, base your price decisions not only on what is likely to be appealing but also on what you can realistically charge. If the price appears to be high, consider some variations which may bring the price back to a reasonable level. Below are some suggestions:

- Ensure that the food service offers a selection of low cost, filling, nutritious items such as raisin toast, baked beans, dinner rolls or small corn cobs.
- Price food simply, for example \$1.50 instead of \$1.45, so that it is easier for students to pay and easier for food service staff to give change.
- Before trialling a new product, compare

the price of your product with the price in local shops.

- Make GREEN options affordable and preferably cheaper than AMBER or RED options.
- Offer reduced prices on slow selling items or include these items in a meal deal which is priced for value.
- Use competitive prices as the focus point for advertising, for example, stocking 50c snack packs.

Promotion

Promoting your products is one of the most important factors in encouraging healthy choices. Below are some suggestions:

- Advertise new items or specials in your school newsletter, social media or communication apps. This can also be a chance to thank volunteers for their valuable contributions or to share recipes or offer handy hints about nutrition.
- A large noticeboard, with items and prices clearly shown, is an excellent way to ensure that children know what is available for sale over the counter.
- The saying 'out of sight out of mind' is particularly relevant to the sale of foods. If your food service has a product which does not sell as well as you would like, ask yourself the following questions:
 - is the food displayed attractively on the front counter or is it hard for the children to see?
 - is it packaged so that children can see what is inside (e.g. in plastic wrap or seethrough containers)?
- Show off the colour of sandwich fillings by slicing sandwiches in half or into fingers, placing one on top of the other and wrapping them in plastic wrap.
- Consider trying some of the techniques

used by supermarkets, such as arranging certain products so that they are easily noticed. While most food services do not have a lot of room for displays, you can still:

- place items you want to promote near popular lines
- make maximum use of attractive food displays at the children's eye level.
- Consult with food packaging suppliers about their range of bags, cups and trays etc. Buying in bulk often results in considerably cheaper prices. However, be careful not to tie up money by holding too much stock. If you are a small school, consider getting together with other local schools and placing the one order. The stock can then be split to meet the needs of each school. With there being a need to reduce packaging and waste, using reusable mugs, plates and bowls could work at your school.
- Even if a pre-order system is used for most items, it is still a good idea to display any new items. When children are buying their drinks for example, they may be tempted to try the new items on display next time they have money to order lunch, instead of buying the usual choice.
- Free samples can stimulate sales, just as they can in a supermarket. Many children will not part with their money for a food they have never tasted.
- Bite-size pieces of frozen fruits can be used to introduce frozen fruit to the menu.



• Having regular food items on different days of the week can help provide variety without having to offer a large menu every day. It also helps to maintain children's interest. For example, in addition to a limited selection of regular items, the daily specials board might read:

Monday	Hot cheese, parsley and corn rolls
Tuesday	Chicken or vegetarian sushi
Wednesday	Hot bean and salsa wraps
Thursday	Tropical chicken burgers with cheese, pineapple and lettuce
Friday	Hot pasta bake and salad

Special Days

Special days offer a chance to add variety to the menu and involve community members who may not be involved in the school food service on a regular basis. Parents who may not be able to volunteer on a regular basis may be able to help at a one-off special day. Special days can be profitable fundraising events, below are some suggestions:

- Foods such as chicken burgers, jacket potatoes, pizzas, meals in a cup e.g. fried rice, soup, spaghetti bolognaise, fruit salad and milkshakes may be suitable for special days.
- Featuring seasonal fruit and vegetables can promote and encourage children to enjoy eating these foods. Including fruit and vegetables when they are in peak season will ensure they are high quality, tasty and in plentiful supply and therefore well priced. School have had success with berries, pear and peach days.
- Multicultural days offer the opportunity to add variety to the menu and celebrate the

cultural diversity of the school community. Sharing food from different cultures can create a learning opportunity and demonstrate an inclusive school culture.

• Offer a special day menu from the food service to link with other activities happening in the school, for example:

Special Day Suggestions:

Sporting events such as the Olympic Games, football finals, school swimming or athletics carnival

Fundraising activities such as KSPCA Cupcake Day or Australia's Biggest Morning Tea

Sustainability activities such as Clean Up Australia Day, Keep Australia Beautiful Week, National Recycling Week

Celebration events such as Mothers or Father's Day, Harmony Week or Book Week

Volunteers

There are many reasons why people volunteer with their school food service. This may include:

- being part of the school community
- contributing something to the school
- learning about food and nutrition
- increasing knowledge and skills in the areas of cooking and food preparation, food hygiene and safety, nutrition, customer service and cash handling
- making new friends and enjoying opportunities to socialise with other families at the school.

Coordinating the volunteer program

Volunteers can be parents, grandparents, people from the wider community and students. The food service provides a rewarding opportunity for family members to be involved in their child's school. It is important that someone is responsible for the coordination and management of volunteers.

Some schools allow their students to volunteer at the canteen. It is very important that students comply with environmental health requirements at all times. Some schools organise for volunteer students to complete food safety training as part of the SmartFood Program and submit this as one of their examples of classroom learning in the Whole School Approach section of the program.

It is important to have realistic expectations of volunteers by:

- allowing them time to adjust to their role, gain confidence and improve their skills
- being prepared to do most of the work until they understand the tasks
- being a good role model
- communicating clearly.

Coordinating a volunteer program involves:

- recruiting volunteers
- retaining volunteers
- maintaining and recognising volunteer involvement.

Recruiting volunteers

This can involve:

- Identifying how many volunteers you will need to make a regular commitment and how many you will need to provide casual assistance. It's a good idea to plan for the year where possible, but definitely prior to each term.
- Assuming that volunteers will come and go. Develop a list of interested volunteers

who will fill casual positions and prevent an unexpected shortage of assistance.

- Planning rosters so that volunteers know how much time is required and the length of commitment expected.
- Developing a job description for the volunteer positions so that volunteers know what is expected of them. This should include a list of specific tasks to be completed and skills and training required.
- Offering a range of tasks or jobs for volunteers to choose from. For example, a volunteer may not feel comfortable dealing with students, but is happy to be involved with food preparation or washing up.
- Advertising regularly and widely to keep the school community informed and aware of volunteer opportunities. Avenues for advertising include: the school newsletter, school website, social media and school orientation information for new parents. Hint: some workplaces, such as the State Public Service, allow a certain number of hours per year for their staff to partake in volunteering opportunities. Promote the school food service as a viable volunteering opportunity.

Retaining volunteers

This can involve:

- Providing a positive and rewarding work environment so that volunteers feel comfortable and appreciated. It is important that volunteers are welcomed and introduced to food service and school staff on their first day, given a tour and have policy and procedures explained.
- Providing new volunteers with a volunteer information kit. A customisable toolkit is available from SFM. It should contain:
 - an introductory letter
 - the roster
 - the food service policy
 - the menu
 - food hygiene information.

- Providing volunteers with information about:
 - where the roster is located
 - where to locate contact numbers, including emergency contacts
 - school times, including lunch and recess
 - the layout of the food preparation and serving areas (label drawers and cupboards with contents; have recipe binders on the wall or at easy access points)
 - time based schedules, such as when to place items in the oven
 - how to operate machinery and equipment (have instruction books near work benches for easy reference)
 - food hygiene requirements (have food hygiene reminders at appropriate locations)
 - emergency drills and evacuation procedures
 - how to handle difficult students
 - how to handle compliments and complaints
 - procedures to follow if they are ill when rostered on.

Maintaining and recognising volunteer involvement

This can involve:

- ensuring that volunteers have adequate breaks
- providing volunteers with morning tea and/or lunch
- providing volunteers with a variety of tasks
- providing the opportunity for volunteers to develop additional skills to increase their job satisfaction and prevent boredom
- running a 'bring a friend' day
- celebrating the role of volunteers by providing recognition of their volunteering work – go out for dinner or have a sit-down lunch, organise for students to create a simple morning tea or lunch for food service volunteers.

Pricing arrangements – How to mark-up

A fair price for hand-made items such as sandwiches, rolls and wraps should consider the cost of the ingredients, the cost of paid labour and if possible, a mark-up of approximately 25%. SFM has information and examples of how to price items appropriately.

Commercial items such as yoghurt, pasta dishes, milk drinks and fruit juices usually have a recommended price. It is recommended that schools charge this amount. The mark-up on these items ranges from 20 to 40%.

Food safety requirements

A school food service is considered a food business under Tasmanian food safety legislation. You will need to budget for the costs incurred in complying with this legislation, which is a small fee paid to the local council.

Liaise closely with your local council EHO to ensure that your school food service complies. Plan for any identified improvements that are within the constraints of your school's budget. See the Food Safety section of the SmartFood Guide for more information.

Food service equipment

When planning what equipment to buy, consider the following issues:

- what you want to do with it
- how often it will be used
- how much it costs
- how easy it is to maintain.

The right equipment is important. What you have in your kitchen influences what you can prepare, cook and serve. A list of essential equipment is available from SFM.

The purchase of additional equipment and repairs to existing equipment in a school food service is, in most cases, funded from profits. In the financial statements, some provision should be made for the purchase or replacement of equipment.

The possibility of hiring equipment should not be overlooked. A properly recorded inventory of all equipment should be compiled that clearly indicates ownership. Be mindful not to accept offers of equipment that has sponsorship that contradicts your school food policy.

Sustainability practices

If your school has an existing sustainability program like a compost system, worm farm or recycling bins consider how your school food service can be involved. Below are some suggestions:

- Use coloured bins to collect different types of waste such as paper, glass and plastic, compostable goods and general rubbish.
- Consider swapping throw away items for reusable items such as ceramic mugs, plates or steel cutlery. If this isn't viable consider cardboard, bamboo or compostable plastics.
- Consider menu items you can make in house rather than buying pre-packaged such as popcorn or icy poles.
- Consider how you can change your menu to include in-season, locally grown produce to reduce food miles e.g. how far food has travelled from paddock to plate.

Go to the Whole School Approach section of the SmartFood Guide for more information.

