

Thoughtful Food: The sustainable inflight dining programme

Since 2014, Virgin Atlantic has been working with the Sustainable Restaurant Association to ensure that the 10+ million meals we serve each year are produced in the best way for people, animals and the planet. We have created a robust and comprehensive programme, which requires all our suppliers and caterers to meet standards that go well beyond regulatory requirements.

We call it 'Thoughtful Food'.

After five years of progress, Virgin Atlantic now leads the way in sustainable inflight dining, winning the Tourism for Tomorrow award in 2018 for our ground-breaking approach. We are encouraging the rest of the sector to join us in creating a better food system in the skies.

The Thoughtful Food programme works in five key areas – which translate into detailed technical standards for our caterers.

We work collaboratively with caterers across all the locations from which we fly to ensure that they are meeting these standards. When a caterer confirms that it meets all the required standards, The Sustainable Restaurant Association audits for compliance.



Fair
farming



Sustainable
fish



Forest
friendly



More veg &
better meat



Reducing
waste & plastic

Fair farming

Why this matters

The World Bank estimates that 700m people globally live on below \$1.90 a day. Around 65% are smallholder farmers and workers.

Agriculture is recognized as one of the most powerful engines for poverty alleviation.

Our goals and actions

We aim to ensure that all our coffee, tea, cocoa, sugar and rice are purchased along fair trade principles that provide a price premium to support sustainable development.

89% of our coffee, tea, cocoa, sugar and rice are certified as fairly traded.

Sustainable fish

Why this matters

WWF estimates that ocean populations of marine species have declined by 50% since 1970.

Continued overfishing is pushing fisheries to the point of collapse, particularly for 'The Big Five' species.

The Big Five are cod, haddock, tuna, salmon and prawns. They make up 75% of all seafood eaten in the UK.

Our goals and actions

Where possible, we encourage caterers to serve seafood outside of the Big Five.

We aim to serve fish from sources defined by the Marine Conservation Society or Seafood Watch as "Good to Eat" or "Best Choice" and (best of all) to offer wild seafood from sustainably certified sources.

We also support well-managed and certified aquaculture (fish farming).

95% of our fish is sourced from sustainable sources.

Forest friendly

Why this matters

Rainforests help to regulate global climate and are home to countless species of plants and animals.

Over half the world's tropical forests have already been lost to clearance. Much of this is for cattle ranching and farming for products like soy bean and palm oil.

Our goals and actions

We are reducing beef across all our menus, and have removed beef from main meals in economy (except where there are cultural reasons not to do so).

We purchase sustainable palm oil and soy credits from the Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil and the Roundtable on Responsible Soy to cover our entire supply chain.

We aim to avoid products from deforestation-prone regions unless they are appropriately certified.

We are moving towards buying 100% segregated sustainable palm oil.

More veg and better meat

Why this matters

The World Health Organisation and the UN advise a more plant-based diet to improve health and reduce your carbon footprint.

We want to make sure any animal products we use come from humanely treated livestock.

Our goals and actions

We aim for all our meat, eggs and fish to be from certified ethical sources. This includes 100% of eggs from cage-free sources, and 100% of chickens raised with access to outdoor space.

We're increasing our meat-free and alternative protein options, including our new 'Beyond Burger'.

Reducing waste and plastic

Why this matters

At least eight million tons of plastic end up in our oceans every year, threatening human and animal health. Species can become entangled by plastic debris, which causes severe injuries and deaths.

One third of all food produced is wasted. Food waste accounts for almost 10% of all human-caused greenhouse gas emissions.

Our goals and actions

We're developing solutions for removing, reducing or replacing single-use plastics onboard.

We're recycling uncontaminated plastic, aluminium and paper from flights into the UK.

We encourage customers to bring their own refillable water bottles onboard, and have launched our own range of reusable water bottles to support this goal.

Meal pre select is offered to premium and upper class travelling out of the UK. This means we can ensure customer first choice and reduce meal wastage.

Our progress

As of January 2019, all meals out of the UK met all the standards, all tea and coffee globally was fairly traded and 95% of all fish served globally was certified sustainable. Our goal is for over 95% of all meals to meet all the standards by the end of 2020.

Behind these headline figures there has been excellent progress around palm oil, beef reduction, waste reduction and buying from sources that support sustainable development.

Keep up to date with our progress in our annual Change is in the Air sustainability report:

<https://corporate.virginatlantic.com/gb/en/sustainability/resources.html>