

Climate Friendly Communal Catering

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1. Introduction

Approximately one third of the ecological footprint and a fifth of all greenhouse gas emissions are due our food system (Jungbluth, 2000). Catering with organic, regional, and seasonal food, waste reduction and smaller meat servings all have an impact on sustainability (Institut equalita et al., 2012). Also, re-establishing the connection between people and the origin of their food is regarded as an important means to bring sustainability concepts into action (Risku-Norja and Mikkula, 2010). Therefore, in many European countries efforts to implement sustainability objectives in communal catering have been made. The Austrian province of Lower Austria (NÖ) has realised a percentage of 30 % organic food in communal catering (Amt der NÖ Landesregierung, 2009). In this context, the goal of the project „Climate Friendly Communal Catering“ (CFCC) was to define and implement criteria for „climate friendly“ meals in public catering in NÖ, and to communicate the resulting changes to the patrons.

2. Material and methods

The project was undertaken for and with the NÖ Landhausküche, a kitchen that provides daily meals to 1500 public employees, and whose head chef took a strong personal interest in offering more ecological meals. The intervention was carried out from 2011 to 2012.

2.1. Criteria for Climate Friendly Catering

Since many years, the Landhausküche has been using regional and ecological produce. However, as a recent analysis has shown (Daxbeck, 2011), there was still potential for CO₂-reduction. In a first step, the problem areas were identified, and organisationally and economically feasible criteria for CFCC were defined.

2.2. Implementation in the kitchen

Actions taken were: switching to regional ecological food suppliers, optimising menus and recipes, as well as providing weekly short trainings for the kitchen staff.

2.3. Communication concept

The acceptance among the patrons was aided by employing an offensive communications strategy, including the „tip of the week“, the description of the „eco-product of the month“, also short quizzes coupled with positive messages, which were provided via the intranet. It was important to provide the information in an easily accessible, fun-oriented way, so that the patrons enjoy reading it rather than being put off. Messages were placed in the intranet directly on the menu page, since this page is typically visited several times per day by the employees. Additionally, already at an early stage of the project we involved trade-union representatives by including them in the communication loop.

3. Results and discussion

For all menu and catering lines the following goals were formulated and eventually attained: The percentage of ecological components has risen to 65 %, even to 100 % for meat, poultry, potatoes and seasonal vegetables. Produce coming from within a 150 km radius are preferred. The serving size for meat was reduced, fish comes exclusively from Austrian lakes and rivers. All drinks (except tap water) are offered only in refillable bottles. Coffee, tea, bananas, orange juice and chocolate bars come to 100 % from "fair trade" sources. Because menu 1 is the most frequently chosen, suitable adaptations of this menu line will have a pronounced climate protection effect. For this reason, additional criteria were implemented for this menu line. Most importantly, the size of meat servings was reduced. To increase the acceptance among the patrons, they could choose the size of the side dish servings themselves. In addition, no frozen or processed ingredients were to be used in the preparation of menu 1. All patrons, who choose this menu, would also get – as a small bonus - an apple or some other fruit from ecological production. These measures became very popular among the kitchen staff, the trade-union representatives and the patrons and were hence made permanent.

4. Conclusions

In the project „Climate Friendly Communal Catering“ (CFCC) we defined and implemented criteria for „climate friendly“ meals in public catering. Of particular importance was the offensive communications strategy to ensure a high acceptance among the patrons.

5. Acknowledgement

We would like to thank Karl Gröbler, the head chef in the NÖ Landhausküche.

6. References

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