

Sodexo's school meal carbon labelling helps Oasis students make climate conscious meal choices

3 years ago



Sodexo has introduced carbon-labelled school meals at 12 secondary academies in the Oasis Community Learning portfolio following a successful trial earlier this year which saw an uptake in low carbon options such as chickpea curry and white bean chilli.

The food industry accounts for around 30% of all greenhouse gases emitted around the world.* Studies suggest this figure could be cut in half if more people were encouraged to think about how much CO₂e they put on their plates, and adapt their diets to introduce more climate-smart food to mealtimes.

As a provider of more than 100,000 school meals per day around the UK, Sodexo has a responsibility, and a desire, to promote sustainable food choices and play an active role in empowering young people to choose more CO₂e friendly dishes.

Before launching carbon-labelled meals across all Oasis secondary academies, Sodexo carried out a trial using a CO₂e labelling application (Klimato) at two academies, Oasis Academy Arena in Croydon, south London and Oasis Academy MediaCityUK in Salford, Greater Manchester.

Sodexo uses the app to calculate the quantitative carbon footprint of each of the main courses on its secondary school menu and has created a traffic light system with 'low-medium-high' CO₂ emissions labels so the students can see at a glance the environmental impact of each dish.

To help educate its young diners on the carbon labelling Sodexo's marketing team developed eye-catching promotional artwork for the dining rooms, pull up banners, bunting, flyers and branded t-shirts to launch

the initiative at the two trial sites.

The campaign captured the imagination of the students and results from the initial months of the trial, show an increase in uptake of CO2e friendly options at both Oasis Academy MediaCityUK and Oasis Academy Arena.

- At both academies the number of students choosing low carbon meals (0.1-0.5 kg CO2e) increased
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- Oasis Academy MediaCityUK – 78% to 90%
- Oasis Academy Arena – 71% to 88%
- The average kg CO2e per meal reduced at both academies**
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- Oasis Academy MediaCityUK – 0.6 to 0.4
- Oasis Academy Arena – 0.5 to 0.4

The results from the trial are also helping to inform ongoing menu development. Chickpea curries and white bean chilli dishes are proving popular, whilst popular high CO2e recipes such as beef jollof, cottage pie and beef lasagne are being reviewed to replace part of the meat content with high quality plant-based protein alternatives to lower the carbon impact of that dish.

Steve Hawkins, Managing Director, Schools, Sodexo UK & Ireland said: *“Using the CO2e labelling helps pupils to make more sustainable choices and educate themselves about the carbon footprint of food more generally. We are equipping young diners to make the right climate conscious choices and encouraging them to try low carbon dishes to help minimise damage to our planet.*

“We have worked with Oasis to help educate its students on the impact food has on the environment. In the dining halls we have thought-provoking food facts about high CO2e foods such as beef burgers.

“Sustainability is a high priority for Sodexo and Oasis and together through initiatives like this we are helping make a better tomorrow for future generations. Opting to choose a more CO2e friendly lunch may seem like a small gesture for an individual but when people change their behaviours in large numbers it really adds up.”

John Barneby, Chief Operating Officer, Oasis Community Learning said: “As an education provider, Oasis Community Learning recognises its responsibility to protect the environment for the current and future generations. We are pleased with the success of Sodexo’s carbon-labelling trial which has been well-received and is contributing to our net zero journey.”

Sodexo’s global target – validated by SBTi – to reduce carbon emissions by 34% by 2025 (against a 2017 baseline) forms part of Sodexo’s Better Tomorrow commitment.

Having already exceeded this, the UK and Ireland business – which employs in excess of 30,000 people – has set its sights on becoming Carbon Neutral in its direct operations by 2025; by 2030 it aims to reduce carbon emissions across all three scopes by 50% and its long-term ambition is the decarbonisation of its business across all three scopes by 2045. Its [net zero plan](#) to achieve this includes increasing the number of plant-based meals and recipes to 33% by 2025.