

UK's largest caterer joins forces with UK tech company to accelerate decarbonisation of 180.9m meals in 4000+ locations

2 years ago



Compass Group UK & Ireland – the UK's largest food and support service provider – has announced a new strategic partnership with Foodsteps to support its 4000+ chefs deliver two clear objectives:

1. Target the reformulation of 90,000+ recipes to reduce the embodied carbon in menus across its estate
2. Support the industry through the development of pilots that focus on vital measurement metrics; reaching beyond carbon to cover priority areas such as biodiversity and water.

A new partnership between UK-based tech company, Foodsteps and Compass Group UK & Ireland – the UK's largest food and support service provider – will give its 4000+ chefs an improved capability to measure the carbon footprint of the 180.9m meals they deliver every year.

Foodsteps will provide Compass' operational teams with detailed, UK-specific data and analysis, offering both centralised and client-specific footprinting capability.

A key benefit of this work will be the support it affords Compass' chefs to experiment with different ingredients, measuring the impact of specific changes in pursuit of a centralised bank of recipes, as closely aligned to 1.5C as possible.

Analysis will be provided by the Foodsteps platform which draws on data synthesised from across peer-

reviewed life cycle assessment data and further research carried out by the Foodsteps team on thousands of food items.

While Compass' teams will be able to apply A-E labels to show customers the carbon footprint of their choices, the partnership is focused on the in-depth rigour and data quality Foodsteps provides.

In providing local and estate-wide analysis, every operational team will have access to the practical, specific levers needed to map the commercial impact of their decarbonisation efforts.

Such significant analytical insight will increase the pace and development of a large scale, in-depth data set. Foodsteps and Compass have already started to work together on how this analysis could help to inform and accelerate deep decarbonisation efforts already underway across the wider foodservice sector.

In addition to evidencing the positive impact achievable through better measurement and modelling, the partnership will also see Compass extend its support to industry-leading pilots focused on measuring environmental indicators such as biodiversity and water.

This is in recognition of the food system's impacts beyond carbon and of the need to work together to prevent further destabilisation of the systems universally relied on to trade, by Compass and by its clients globally.

Understanding this urgency, analysis of Compass' 90,000+ recipes has already started, with the high proportion of the caterer's footprint attributable to food and drink emissions – 77% of its FY19 baseline and 66% of its FY22 carbon footprint – making the challenge and the opportunity for targeted impact clear.

The menu was identified as one of its greatest allies for meaningful impact in the caterer's first [climate impact report](#), released earlier this year. The report, which charts 6 key areas of focus as part of its commitment to reach Climate Net Zero by 2030, timelines research and development work over the past 18 months, including trials with a number of footprinting tools, using different providers and methodologies, to support clients across the public and private sectors.

The trials saw A – E ratings applied to recipes, indicating their multi-variate eco score (drawing on 4 environmental indicators) and simple low, medium and high labels to show customers the embodied carbon on a plate.

Formalising this new partnership with Foodsteps is the result of learnings gained during this period of research and development, which has underlined the growing need for UK-specific data, to provide colleagues and clients with a consistent measurement model capable of greater accuracy and transparency.

The Foodsteps platform works by giving the teams access to carbon footprint scores for thousands of food items, drinks, recipes, and products, allowing them to develop lower impact menus in real time and at pace, via easily identifiable hotspots to measurably reduce the intensity of recipes using geographically accurate scores and taking into account different cooking methods.

Teams are being actively encouraged to pull on the three biggest decarbonisation levers in their gift to influence – ingredients, sales mix and suppliers – with a continued focus on nutrition and taste. Successful examples include the redesign of a Beef Wellington using mushrooms, which reduced its carbon footprint

by 93%, and replacing two-thirds of lamb with chickpeas in a tagine, which reduced its carbon footprint by 60%.

Foodsteps is also supporting Compass in two additional and interconnected data areas:

- its overall emissions reporting at the end of FY23, to ensure ongoing progress is publicly shared against validated science-based-targets
- the recruitment of a Director of Carbon Accountancy to help strengthen Compass' climate team and its six sectors as they continue to develop action plans across the UK and Ireland.

Commenting on the partnership, Carolyn Ball, Director for Delivery of Net Zero for Compass UK&I said: "Partnering with Foodsteps across our UK and Ireland business will help us to accelerate progress in a data-driven way that allows us to better support our clients and their employees. The increasing convergence towards one global, standardised, diet is unsustainable and underlines why the menu is such a powerful and important ally for meaningful change. Focusing on better data so our chefs and operational teams are informed, empowered, and recognised for the positive impact they can have in every single service, is what we're trying to achieve together."

Commenting on the partnership, Anya Doherty, founder and CEO of Foodsteps said: "Through this partnership, Compass and Foodsteps are driving change at scale. 90,000 recipes across over 4,000 sites represents a huge opportunity for change, and we are incredibly excited to be the partner supporting Compass' leading ambition to operate within planetary boundaries. What's at stake is a measurable reduction in GHG emissions, and we are truly honoured to be playing our part in this alongside the amazing team at Compass UK&I"