Poverty Amongst Students in Merseyside

It is appropriate to believe wholeheartedly that everyone should be able to access and succeed in the education system. The Merseyside figure obtained by the House of Commons Library in 2017/18’s financial year provided 63,000 people in Merseyside (comprising of 24,000 children) three days’ emergency food. However, this is only a fraction of the child poverty estimates relative to low income households. 29% of children in Merseyside are living in poverty (93,000) and there is clear evidence that the poverty attainment gap has a direct impact on school leaver destinations and young people’s future job market success. Low educational attainment is both an indicator of child poverty and a factor that increases the chances that poverty is sustained through the teenage and adult years. Even for these struggling teenagers who are successful enough to enrol at Liverpool University, the opportunity poses challenges which they will be all too familiar with. Costs of University-owned accommodation is now 110% of the average maintenance loan (according to the Guild of Students) – risking students to being pushed into serious financial hardship due to their rent. The guild are running a student campaign named ‘CUT the RENT’ to relieve the pressure on the students so that they can use their government funding more appropriately with links to academia in order to purchase books, aid printing expenses or fund extracurricular activities beneficial to the individual. The cost of the housing disproportionately affects students from working class backgrounds who often don’t get help from significant others like ‘well-off’ students do, forcing the working class to retrieve additional funding through part time jobs which inevitably reduce hours of dedication to their studies.

So, how can we tackle the poverty with students in Merseyside? The petition is available to sign on the following link: https://www.liverpoolguild.org/thestudentvoice/cut-the-rent. Also, there are food and clothes banks across the university which are always happily accepting donations to help those lesser than us. Many local business always need an extra pair of hands especially around the upcoming Christmas time, if you find yourself looking for things to do, try something new and help the local community through volunteering. Opportunities can be found online or through the Liverpool Guild on their website.

Liverpool’s Green Guild challenge Food waste

According to Recycling Works, the average student disposes of 64kg of food every year. This forms part of the total of 5 million tonnes of food waste thrown away by UK households – whilst 1 in 8 go hungry. This year, Liverpool Green Guild are introducing the FareShare Food Donations Scheme which aims to build on the success of Leave Liverpool Tidy, which has been a huge success over the past nine years in massively reducing waste on campus. The Guild now hopes to extend this initiative to food waste. We aim to do this by partnering with FareShare, a UK charity that reduces food waste and fights hunger by redistributing surplus food. Last year, FareShare was able to redistribute 16,992 tonnes of this food – the equivalent of 36.7 million meals. Students and staff can help contribute to this massive achievement by donating at our FareShare collection points, which will be placed in the receptions of Green Bank and Crown Place as well as the Guild. Additionally, we will be organising scheduled collection times in Melville and Tudor from the 10th – 14th of December.
What a Wasteful World

Each year November welcomes the return of the European Week for Waste Reduction; an initiative aiming to highlight the burden waste places on our planet. Perhaps one of the easiest places to start is food waste; a culprit at the forefront of the global waste predicament. You’ve probably heard of the term ecological footprint, but have you ever stopped to consider your foodprint? The average UK household generates 330 kg of food waste each year; if we total this up for all the households across the UK, a staggering 8.3 million tonnes of food and drink is wasted each year. Shocking right? What is perhaps more shocking is that nearly two thirds of this waste is actually avoidable. The financial cost of the food waste problem is just as scandalous with £13 billion worth of food is wasted each year in the UK. The real question is can we afford to waste such a substantial sum of food when 815 million people worldwide are chronically undernourished?

Ensuring the entire population has access to both a wholesome and balanced meal, not only relies on the actions of consumer goods companies and the government, but on the entire population. So, how can reducing your own foodprint actually combat zero hunger. Reducing food waste is perhaps the most important and feasible approach in achieving sustainable and efficient food production. By diminishing your own ‘foodprint’ you help achieve food security through reducing the overall demand for food production, with the added benefit of relieving the burden food production places on natural resources.

Put simply reducing the global scale of food waste is critical in achieving the elimination of global hunger and the overall goal of sustainable development. However, it is not only the quest for zero hunger that is accomplished following a reduction in food waste. Reducing food waste and achieving zero hunger, is coupled to better global wellbeing and freedom from poverty, alongside improved access to clean water and is vital in achieving SDG 12 responsible production and consumption. If we eliminated just a ¼ of the global food waste, there would be sufficient food to feed every single individual on the planet. Kickstart the reduction of your own food waste and help zero hunger become more than a goal; help it become a reality.

An End to Furniture Poverty—10,000 children in Liverpool lack a bed of their own

Liverpool charity FRC Group has been working hard to End Furniture Poverty for 30 years, operating social businesses that collect preloved furniture and sell new furniture to social landlords around the country. Over the past three decades, they have reused over one million items of furniture, giving most of it away to local families in need, as well as recycling over 29,000 tonnes.

They have now launched a new venture, Amazing Mattresses, the first project of its kind in the world, using an intensive six step ‘Ultraclean’ process to deep clean the preloved mattresses they collect. It brings them up to a fantastic standard, ready to be given away and sold at low prices with single mattresses costing just £20 and double mattresses £30. Every mattress they collect through Bulky Bob’s, the bulky household waste collection service they operate for Liverpool City Council, and mattresses collected through commercial contracts by Bulky Bob’s Office & Commercial Waste, is checked to see if it suitable for reuse. Those that are up to the required standard are thoroughly cleaned, then steam cleaned, treated with infra-red heat and ultra-violet light, vacuumed with an industrial vacuum, and deodorised, turning them into Amazing Mattresses. Any mattress that is not up to the required standard is totally deconstructed with every component part recycled, diverting thousands of mattresses from landfill.

Shaun Doran, FRC Group CEO, said: “We are always looking for new ways to get more essential items of furniture to people who need it and we have learnt many lessons over the past 30 years.

“We have built up our social businesses to be successful and profitable with all proceeds going into developing new ventures like Amazing Mattresses so we are delighted to now provide high quality preloved mattresses at low prices, as well as giving them away for free to people in crisis.”

The Amazing Mattresses are on sale in Bulky Bob’s Furniture World on London Road, as well as through other furniture reuse partners’ shops, with all profits going back into the operation. FRC Group works with around 200 referral agencies across Merseyside, including fellow charities and support agencies, who refer people in need of furniture on to FRC Group who give away the items for free –now including mattresses!
Limiting Hunger and Changing Diets

Alarming statistics like this are growing, the UK has the 5th largest economy in the world but still struggles to feed significant shares of its population, the equivalent population size of London have insufficient food levels across the UK. This highlights how hunger problems are not always further afield, many are closer than we think. Regardless of their location they need to be tackled and we can make a difference.

Tackling these supposed uncontrollable problems may seem impossible, however we can make small changes which could have crucial impacts, such as changing our diet. This can be done by simply choosing more efficient foods to consume, which can benefit our health, reduce food prices and help reduce the number of people in food poverty. Current diet choices than incorporate beef can be seen as highly inefficient. Beef results in large amounts of land being taken up to produce feed, when only 3% of this feed is converted into food, making it highly wasteful and land consuming. This land could be afforded to other forms of animal feed or alternate projects which are more efficient.

Worried About Protein? Eat Chicken…Or Plants…Just Not Beef

Research produced demonstrates how beef is also wasteful in providing protein, with protein conversion from feed at 3%. Other sources of protein can be seen are more efficient; for example chicken this provides a greater concentration of protein with a greater nutrient profile. The increased protein conversion efficient would mean significantly less land is required to provide the same amount of protein supplied by beef. This extra land can then be used to produce more poultry or alternate food sources. This can allow more food to become available to help reduce across the globe. Chicken provides a simple and easy transition which we can make in our diets, which is most realistic at this stage. However, changing our diets to increase plant-based protein sources will have even greater impacts, with plants being able to provide the same amount of protein with even greater efficiency, alongside numerous health benefits (Figure 2). Plants such Soya can produce a protein content of over 45% with less than half of the energy required to produce the same amount of beef.

So how can changing your diet help reduce food poverty...

The production of beef as stated is very inefficient when compared to other sources, therefore if changes were to occur land could then be used more efficiently. Recent studies have shown that changes in diet, adopting poultry as the main meat source could support increase the amount of food available by 520%, alongside producing approximately 380% more protein to feed the population. Even greater estimations are predicted for changes to plant-based diets. This demonstrates how changing diets can have a giant impact on the level of food insecurity within Britain.

The time to change is now, it will benefit you, your family, your friends; ultimately, everyone.

The Enactus Edit: Enactus Liverpool Tackle SDG2: Zero Hunger

The Enactus Liverpool social project GAIA works with refugee women. The team helps the refugees to learn and develop their English skills, as well as improve their employability by providing an opportunity to develop multiple valuable and transferable skills. The team are currently running fruit tea craft sessions, where the women can concoct their own fruit tea, and then sell the teas on with support from Enactus.
Can we meet the ever-growing, global demand for food? UoL takes on the challenge

Global food systems are fundamental in achieving the United Nations’ Sustainable Development Goals such as ‘Zero Hunger’ and ‘Good Health and Wellbeing’. However, they face a number of challenges. For example, the demand for food is increasing – driven primarily by population growth, changing consumption patterns, urbanisation and changes in income distributions, whilst increasing competition for global resources threaten the supply of food. In addition, climate change adds further pressure by influencing the supply, availability and quality of food.

The Centre of Excellence for Sustainable Food Systems (CESFS) joins together existing areas of research excellence within the University of Liverpool, to provide a hub for real-world research that addresses one of the biggest global challenges – how do we feed the growing population nutritious food that everyone can access and doing so in a sustainable manner? Interdisciplinary working will be an essential part in tackling this global challenge, our work is therefore organised into six research areas that cover the breadth of the food system:

The six research areas:

1. Crop sciences
2. Livestock and animal health
3. Supply chain management
4. Consumer behaviour
5. Public health and policy
6. Environment and climate change

One of the key projects currently being conducted in CESFS aims to understand more about local food systems and how they affect the environment and health, bringing in colleagues from across supply chain management, consumer behaviour and public health and policy. We will use the Merseyside region as a case study and will map the flow of food into the region and the food landscape, as well as engage with key stakeholders to understand more about the decision-making process behind food distribution, and determine how the food environment affects food choice, along with the implications of this on the environment and health of the region. The overarching objective is to provide local policy makers with interdisciplinary evidence to define future policies to improve local food systems that will deliver sustainable, healthy food for everyone in the Merseyside region.

The UoL’s Sustainable Development Achievements

The guild schools project allows students to get involved with societies and other people with similar interests to their own. It covers everything from mental health and meditation, to marine environments and engineering. All students are welcome and we encourage students to join in throughout the year!

The Liverpool University Marine biology, Oceanography and Ecology society (LUMOES) are hoping to teach children the importance of plastic pollution and the effect it has on marine environments. They have two exciting sessions planned to do this. The first involves making fish out of entirely recycled plastic. For the second, they are planning to build a greenhouse entirely out of plastic bottles; all provided by the students leading the sessions, and the pupils in the school that they are building it in. We are very much looking forward to seeing the finished products!

Do you have any stories or published any academic research linked to sustainability? Do you want to feature in the monthly newsletter, or interested in joining the team? Just email sustainability@liverpool.ac.uk, for a chance to feature and register your interest.