

# UK Employee Experience Trends

The Impact of Food & Beverage Benefits

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# 2025



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# Food & Beverage Benefits in the Workplace

Recent research in the UK shows just how much food and drink perks can boost employee experience and engagement.

77%

of employees are more likely to attend the office if there is free food and drink<sup>1</sup>

76%

would appreciate free coffee, tea, drinks and snacks<sup>1</sup>

71%

said free meals are a great incentive<sup>1</sup>

These trends highlight how businesses are using food and beverage benefits to encourage staff back into the workplace, especially as **living costs** continue to rise<sup>2</sup>.

Beyond just being a nice benefit, these offerings help create a more **positive** work environment and build stronger employee **satisfaction** and **loyalty**.



# The Growing Emphasis on Employee Wellbeing & Perks

In the UK, there has been a noticeable shift towards prioritising employee wellbeing, with companies recognising that comprehensive perks are key to attracting and retaining top **talent**.

This trend encompasses not only traditional benefits, but extends to offerings that enhance daily work life, such as food and beverage services. Studies indicate that providing free or subsidised meals can significantly boost morale and job satisfaction.

- **92%** of office workers say that such perks are important to their job contentment
- **90%** of employees view their company's commitment to wellness more favourably when high-quality food options are available<sup>3</sup>

By integrating food and beverage offerings into benefits packages, employers not only promote healthier lifestyles, but foster an **engaged** and **productive** workforce.





# Key Trends in Food & Beverage Benefits

## Increase in Employer-Sponsored Meals & Snacks

In the UK, there's a growing trend of employers offering free or subsidised meals, snacks, and beverages to enhance employee **satisfaction** and encourage office attendance.

Eurest found that **39.2%** of workers indicated that subsidised lunches would motivate them to spend more time in the office<sup>4</sup>. These findings underscore the increasing recognition among UK employers of the value that food and beverage perks add to the workplace environment.



## Focus on Health & Wellness

Changing customer needs have led to an increased availability of **nutritious** food options in micro markets and vending machines. We've seen in the market that employers are recognising the role of healthy snacks in improving **wellbeing**, **productivity** and job **satisfaction**.

For instance, the introduction of healthy vending machines stocked with items like **protein bars** and **low sugar beverages** is becoming more common, catering to the rising demand for convenient, yet nutritious, on-the-go options<sup>6</sup>.



Companies are also offering **alternative milks** such as plant based, to account for dietary requirements, different tastes and sustainability.

These trends represent a broader movement towards integrating **health-conscious** options into workplace environments, aligning with the increasing consumer preference for **wholesome** and **environmentally friendly** food selections.



## Sustainability & Ethical Sourcing

There's a heavy focus on sustainability and ethical sourcing in the market, be it the food and drink itself, or the packaging it is displayed in. Employers are increasingly offering locally sourced, sustainable, and environmentally friendly food options to meet **employee demand** and reduce **environmental impact**.

When considering workplace food and beverage, these issues are a concern from both an **ethical** and business perspective.

27%

of UK office workers do not feel encouraged to reduce plastic use at work<sup>7</sup>

69%

of UK consumers believe using local produce is key to sustainability<sup>8</sup>

92%

of consumers actively take steps to minimise single use plastics at home and work<sup>7</sup>

Here, we can clearly see the **gap** between what employees want and what is physically available in UK workplaces - and it's a large one.

That being said, efforts are underway to **minimise** single use plastics in the workplace food and beverage industry. The UK government has implemented **bans** and **restrictions** on certain single use plastic items, encouraging businesses to adopt **reusable** alternatives<sup>9</sup>.

Companies are responding by providing **reusable** water bottles and coffee mugs, and installing **recycling** units to facilitate waste separation<sup>10</sup>. These initiatives not only support environmental sustainability but also resonate with employees who value eco conscious practices.



## Impact on Employee Satisfaction & Retention

**+70%**

increase in employee satisfaction, when food-related benefits introduced<sup>11</sup>

**+50%**

boost in employee retention rates<sup>11</sup>

**+48%**

to benefits scores when providing comprehensive benefits packages<sup>12</sup>

These stats highlight the significant impact on employee **engagement** and **productivity**, that introducing food and beverage benefits can have for a business.

This is because this investment reflects a tangible **commitment to employee wellbeing**. By integrating food and drink benefits into their offerings, employers not only cater to their staff's **nutritional** needs but also foster a more **engaged** and **loyal** workforce, strengthening **talent** attraction and **retention** strategies.





# AMAZON FILTERS - A Case Study

Operating 24/7, Amazon Filters supply filter solutions around the globe. They reached out to Connect Vending in 2017 to improve their existing offering.

## Challenges

- A canteen was only available for daytime shifts
- Costly to hire staff to manage the canteen
- Would need to build in a new kitchen
- Location of organisation to external facilities
- Low quality instant hot drinks
- Large workforce



## Our Solution

- ✓ **Fresh Food & Snacks:** Sandwiches, salads, crisps, cereal bars and more
- ✓ **Freezer:** Nutritious frozen meals and ice creams in the summer
- ✓ **Self Service Kiosk:** A simple, 24/7 checkout system
- ✓ **Food Delivery:** Our fresh food with regular delivery, management and re-stocking
- ✓ **Fresh-brew Espresso:** Using exceptional quality 100% Arabica illy coffee beans

## Results

After installation, Connect Vending hosted an **engagement day** where staff enjoyed complimentary coffee, shared their feedback and participated in a prize draw.

- ✓ Respondents praised the **coffee quality**, rating it 4 stars and above
- ✓ Achieved 24/7 access to food and beverage
- ✓ Expanded **frozen ready-meal and ice cream** options, catering to seasonal needs
- ✓ Enhanced employee **satisfaction** through a modern, user-friendly experience

*“The bean to cup coffee machine consistently delivers rich, aromatic coffee, making every cup a delightful experience... the [micro market]’s range of fresh food and snacks is both impressive and satisfying.”*

- Rebecca Andrews, HSE & Facilities Manager at Amazon Filters

# Challenges & Considerations

Implementing food and beverage benefits in the UK workplace presents several challenges that employers must carefully navigate.



**Cost**



**Planning**



**Sustainability**



**Nutrition**



**Variety**



**Quality**



**Supply Chain**

Striking a balance between offering diverse, high-quality, nutritious and sustainable food options while managing costs and logistical constraints can be a challenge, especially when delivering to a budget.

**Take time to consider what is right for your business. Some initial considerations;**

- How many staff are on site?
- Are there a mix of office and warehouse staff?
- Is there a need for 24/7 access to food and beverage?
- Are you planning to offer free vends, paid vends or a mix of paid and subsidised?

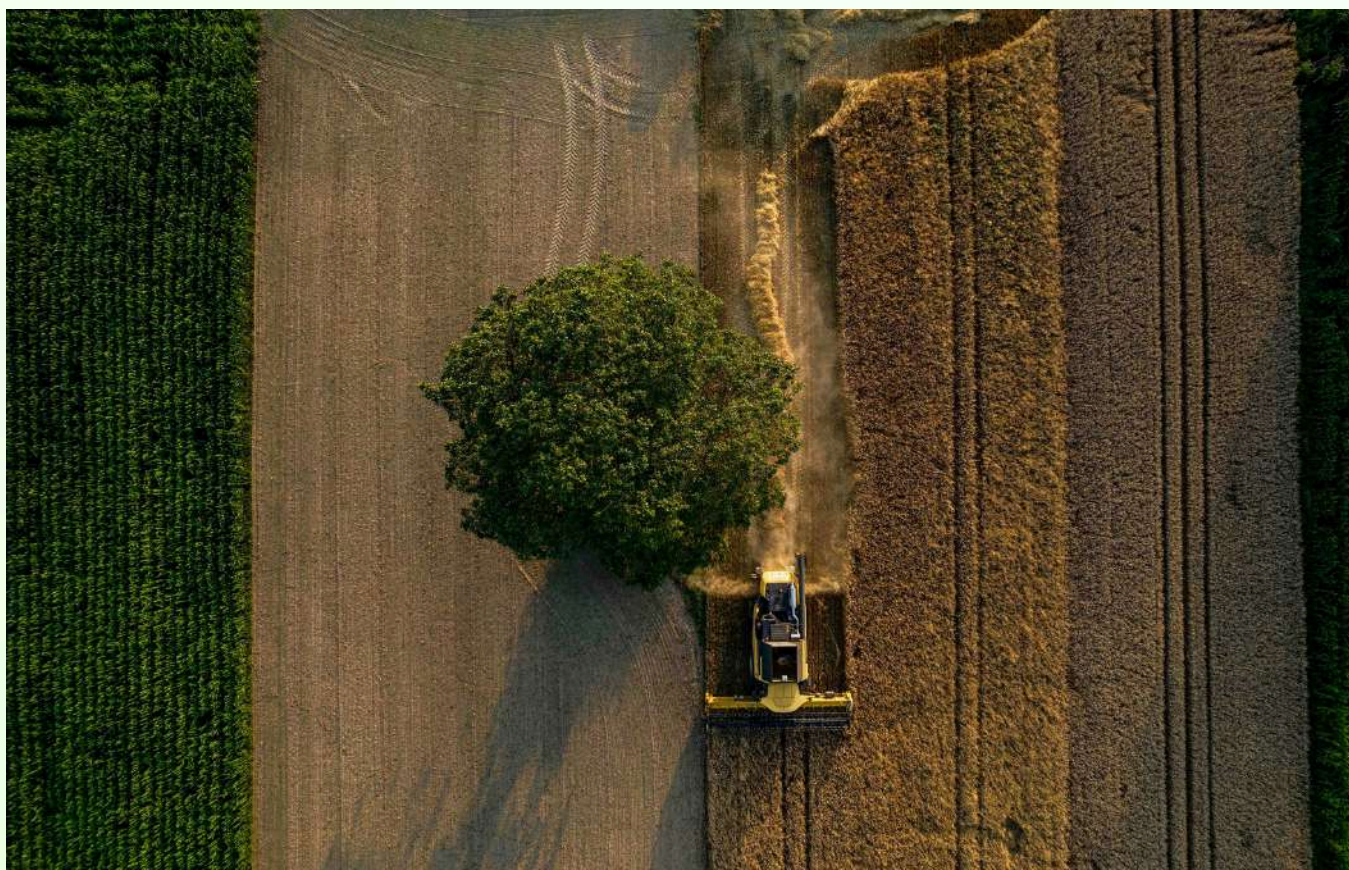




# Future Outlook

The landscape of workplace food and beverage benefits in the UK is changing, driven by shifting employee **expectations** and governmental **policies**<sup>13</sup>.

Employers are recognising that offering high quality, sustainable meal options can enhance employee satisfaction and wellbeing. **Government** initiatives are shaping these trends. The UK's food strategy emphasises **sustainable** farming and **healthier** food choices, which may influence workplace food and drink offerings<sup>14</sup>.



Additionally, policies restricting promotions of **high fat, sugar, or salt** (HFSS) products could lead employers to prioritise healthier options<sup>15</sup>.

It's not just health and environmental concerns. **Inflation** peaked for the UK in October 2022 at 11.1%, the highest rate since 1981<sup>16</sup>. Expenditure for the average household, particularly food and energy bills, increased<sup>17</sup>. Although inflation has declined since then, households continue to feel the strain<sup>18</sup>.

Offering subsidised food and drink increases **enjoyment** and **alleviates cost pressure** for employees. When it's commercially viable for the business and a benefit to staff, it's a win for everyone.



# Conclusions

Integrating food and beverage benefits into the workplace has emerged as a strategic approach to enhance employee **satisfaction** and **retention**. Companies offering subsidised meals have observed notable improvements in productivity and long-term cost savings<sup>19</sup>.

Providing food has been linked to increased job **satisfaction**, with employees feeling more **valued** by their employers<sup>21</sup>. Beyond mere sustenance, shared meals foster **collaboration** and a sense of **community** among employees, contributing to a positive workplace **culture**<sup>20</sup>.

As organisations continue to navigate the evolving landscape of employee wants and needs, food and beverage programmes stand out in cultivating a **motivated** and **engaged** workforce.



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