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PRESS RELEASE

COOKING WILL RESTORE LINK WITH WHERE OUR FOOD COMES FROM

A recent survey says many British people have no idea where their food comes from. It is another sad indictment of the teaching about food and food technology in primary and secondary schools over the last 15 years. The Linking Environment And Farming (LEAF) organization research confirmed what has been said for years - that people are becoming disconnected from the food they eat and where it comes from.

The *Focus on Food* Campaign has been challenging the Government, over the past 10 years, to ensure that all young people leave school having been taught to cook from raw ingredients.

By using and learning about raw ingredients young people will discover far more about the origins of their food. But teaching in the past decade has been more concerned with the processing and technology of food production rather than the quality, production and best use of the foods grown on farms to create good, nutritious meals.

Consequently two generations of young people have left school since the introduction of the national curriculum unable to cook. Over-reliance on ready-made foods has not only contributed to the deskilling of parents and young people it has also divorced food production and farming from cooking.

Knowing how to cook is the pivotal connection between people making informed choices as critical consumers and the source and quality of the food they choose to eat. Cooking also connects individuals with issues about food production, animal welfare, fair trade, food rules, ethnic food cultures, local and regional foods, the use of pesticides and organic food production, for example.

The *Focus on Food* Campaign, through its work on its fleet of Cooking Buses (fully-equipped teaching kitchens) supported and sponsored by the Food Standards Agency, Yorkshire Forward and the Welsh Assembly Government, teaches 25,000 young people and over 1,000 teachers to cook every year.

The *Focus on Food* Campaign, through its partnership with the Helen Hamlyn Trust, Open Future Project, teaches children to cook food they have produced in their schools' fruit and vegetable gardens.

The Campaign is also a member of the Food For Life Partnership, linking with the Soil Association, Garden Organic and the Health Education Trust. The £17million Lottery-funded Partnership aims to wipe out food illiteracy in England in five years. Cooking will be a crucial part of that Partnership including teaching cooking skills on a fourth Cooking Bus.

Anita Cormac, Director of the *Focus on Food* Campaign, said: "Involving both pupils and their parents in practical food education is the key to winning support for healthier food in schools and beyond. Inspiring enthusiasm for cooking will encourage people to ask more questions about where their food has come from."



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Joe Harvey, director of Health Education Trust on 01789 773915.

Notes to editors:

The *Focus on Food* Campaign uses a fleet of Cooking Buses to teach cooking skills to pupils and train their teachers in thousands of primary and secondary schools across the country. Big Lottery funding will support a new Food for Life Cooking bus run by the *Focus on Food* Campaign.

The Partnership will launch a Food for Life partnership Mark in September 2007 to recognize the achievements of schools in revolutionising food culture across the whole school from healthy, fresh, local, organic school meals to practical cooking and growing skills and farm visits for pupils and the school community.