

# Constitution Paper Eating City Ambassador Program



Eating City Initiative  
CP AP 1

November 2019, By Robert Gourlay

**Together to share a new vision of public food services**

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## **AN INTRODUCTION TO EATING CITY**

The Eating City International Platform was founded in 2010 by Maurizio Mariani, Isabel Lacourt and Arie van den Brand. It is co-funded foremost by the CLM Foundation for the Human Progress (FPH) , in Paris, and by other public and private partners. While its principle aim is to stimulate social and business dialogue, it also produces guidance and research for a more sustainable food system in the public sector.

The Platform has an international reach with truly global connections working with young professionals, academics and influencers in the food sector. Through Eating City, early career managers, food producers, specialists and students involved in the food system, aged 22 to 32, gain firsthand knowledge of sustainable food systems and how to implement them.

There is a particular focus on Public Foodservice. This means those businesses, civic institutions, and companies responsible for meals prepared outside the home including restaurants, schools and hospitals and in many other publicly funded situations.

Eating City is interested in all of these while its primary focus is schools and welfare catering which is the largest and perhaps most influential sector; it challenges how and where the food is procured, the nature of food that is sourced, menu design, how food is prepared and consumed and how it can be used to produce a multiple benefit for society, the economy and the environment as the 3 pillars of Sustainable Development.

The role of government and civil society, policy and practice for public procurement and catering operations as the key levers for change is destined to be at the heart of Eating City's future work.

## **MISSION AND VISION**

In recent decades, power and control over food has become highly concentrated. Large, profit-oriented multinationals organise how food is produced, traded and marketed at the expense of jobs and sustainability.

The Eating City Mission is to introduce into business and public discourse '*Social Dialogue for a more sustainable food supply chain*' that aims to help citizens, food businesses, Governments and Cities reconceptualise food issues where feeding people is buttressed by a deeper systemic understanding of the impact of food on health, the environment and the economy.

The key Vision that Eating City holds is to empower people early in their working lives to become the actors who will shift the paradigm of "*business for businesses*" to champion "*business for people*" which Eating City believes is a maxim for sustainable food systems transformation. This Vision underpins the work of The Eating City International Platform.

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## **THE EATING CITY SUMMER CAMPUS**

To become an **Eating City Ambassador** requires that an individual has attended a Campus.

The annual Eating City Summer Campus is one of its most established and impactful projects. It has been held each year since 2013 at the Ecocentre of La Bergerie de Villarceaux, north of Paris which is owned by the CLM Foundation. Here the most enthusiastic young talent from the food sector, NGOs, universities and other forward-thinking organisations are joined by international experts and leading thinkers from the world of Foodservice, government agencies, academia, and NGOs who all participate fully at the Campus. All Eating City teachers, Counsellors and the Steering Committee Group give their time and experience pro bono for public good. Eating City meantime meets the cost for each participant attending the Campus including travel, accommodation, meals, resources and learning. The high number of applicants wishing to attend the Summer Campus make this increasingly competitive.

During the 7 to 10 day period participants from different countries and backgrounds are immersed in a Campus program that consists of lectures, workshops, food labs, informally occurring and structured discussion groups. Incrementally, each of these widens understanding and builds confidence of how to deal with the complex issues related to urban food systems and the delivery of Public Foodservices. While the Campus is structured to encourage debate, elicit critical thinking and the sharing of innovative 'sustainable solutions' this is always reinforced with a pragmatic edge for good business practice.

Regardless of the level of experience, all attendees learn together as equals form expert insight, test the feasibility of ideas, and share experiences. Previous Campuses have welcomed guest speakers, from Nobel Prize laureate to experts from international governments, universities, foundations and leading organisations active in the food sector. Each speaker has cutting edge, lived experience from around the world of advancing sustainable food policies and participants are able to learn at first hand how to deal successfully with the challenges of implementing Sustainable Development and apply this to commercially oriented Foodservice environment. Broadly, the Campus sets food in the frame of 'Commons'. Particularly for Social Foodservices, it proposes food as public good over the commodification of food where the prevailing industrial food system has clearly proven its unfitness to feed us adequately in a sustainable way.

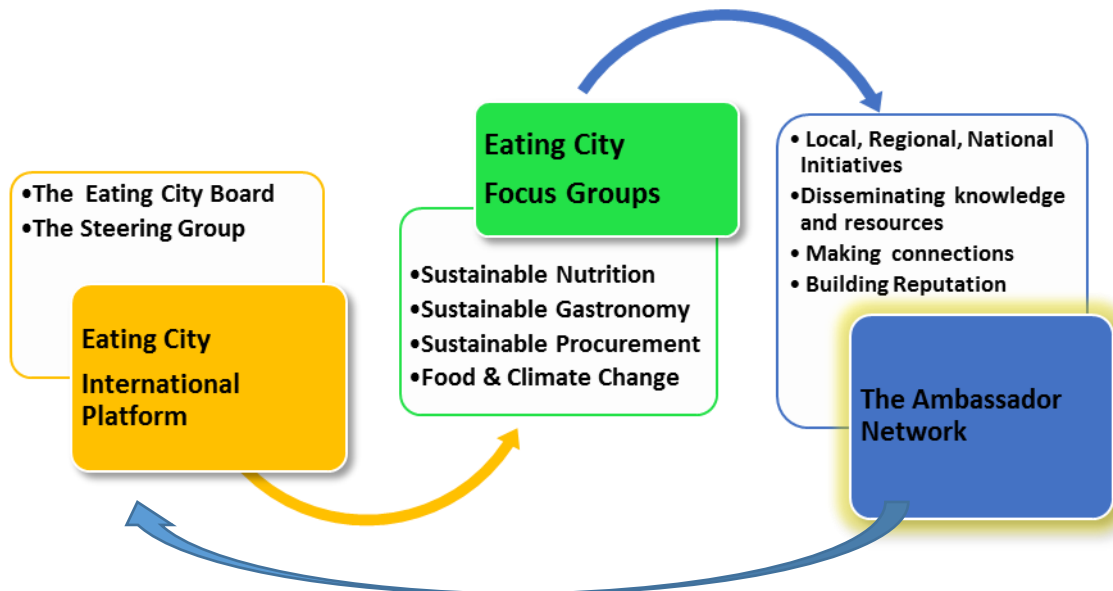
The Campus culminates in delegates producing a '*Villarceaux Declaration*', according to the collective learning and values that participants have assimilated at the Campus, this is then widely disseminated internationally to influential fora. Eating City is also attuned to the potential contribution of Foodservice for the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

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## THE EATING CITY AMBASSADOR PROGRAMME

The Ambassador Program is a new initiative of Eating City created to sustain longer-term association with young professionals who are the next generation of social leaders and innovative thinkers in food sector.

Participation at the annual Eating City International Campus is a prerequisite for becoming an Eating City Ambassador. By establishing a global network of Ambassadors, Eating City aims to extend the impact its work, and of the forward momentum of the Campus.



After attending a Campus, delegates are able to apply to become Eating City Food Ambassadors. In turn they will be helped and encouraged to work on their own initiatives or make use of the power of the Eating City network to contribute to those initiatives already in existence.

Approaching 200 participants with an average age of 26, selected from across 57 countries are eligible to join the Eating City Food Ambassador Network.

For many attendees the lived experience of the Eating City Campus has proved to be formative in the professional and personal journey followed since. Many who are in employment return to set about creating change from within, energising their business environment.

Looking into future, Eating City would like to mobilise and connect its Campus Alumni so that they also have a stake in the long-term development of the Eating City mission.

**Ambassadors** will also be able to look toward Eating City's new training centre being built in Savoie, in the Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes region of France which is destined to become a Centre of Excellence and learning hub for innovative and sustainable food-related practices and ideas.

## THE CHALLENGE

The Eating City Alumni represent the next generation of young leaders who are passionate about working across the food spectrum and can help to transform it for the better, but it will be a difficult task. Food has evolved from a common good and local resource to a national asset potentially traded as an international commodity. At the same time the momentum in Public Foodservice is of reducing budgets and cost cutting, resulting in more processed food and lower employment levels in the supply chain and in social services kitchens, largely with only a rhetorical regard to the application of sustainable business strategies.

Young professionals will be supported by Eating City to facilitate change as E.C. Ambassadors in their respective communities at local and national level. The Ambassadors will identify needs and potential actions on the ground where the goals of Eating City could have positive effect, and disseminate the knowledge and resources produced in Eating City, by:

- Establishing connections and introducing a social dialogue with strategic partners at appropriate levels (e.g. municipality, food business, university or a farmer's network);
- Fostering and disseminating the Eating City manifesto and the *Campus Villarceaux Declaration*;
- Creating or supporting grassroots educational and behavioural change initiatives which have the potential for meaningful social or business impact
- Providing advisory inputs at the local, regional and international level; and
- Ambassadors creating their own food supply chain initiatives that can help society and businesses move toward Eating City's mission for 'more sustainable food supply chains'.

## CONCLUSIONS

Eating City gathers together emerging talent from around the world at its Summer Campus. The Platform therefore has an international reach with truly global connections through a potential network of 200 young professionals in over 50 countries.

The proposed Ambassador Program or Alumni is an opportunity to build a lasting connection which aims to support members into the future *and* extend the impact of the Eating City mission to create '*Social Dialogue for a more sustainable food supply chain*'.

National, Regional and Municipal governments funding Public Foodservices have the potential to 'link' health, environmental and economic key objectives through sustainable menus and procurement practice, the Eating City philosophy is also attuned to the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

The Eating City vision challenges the notion of 'business for businesses to one of 'business for people'. Business efficiency and commercial viability can be aligned with progress for sustainability.

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**Why else?**

Many past participants have expressed a desire to follow through on the Campus learning and experience in situations across the world. Eating City believes that there is a duty to respond positively to this and establish a long-term engagement with young professionals who are the next generation of managers, social leaders and innovative thinkers in food sector.

Eating City Ambassadors have the interest, knowledge and understanding of sustainable food systems transformation. Accordingly, with ongoing support Ambassadors can carry forward the Eating City vision to empower people early in their working lives to become the actors who will shift the paradigm of *“business for businesses” to champion “business for people”* and create *‘Social dialogue for a more sustainable food supply chain’*.

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This Program is directed by Robert Gourlay, Board Member of Eating City and managed by Valentin Luigi a youth former participant at the Eating City Summer Campus.

This decision was undertaken in the Board of Directors meeting in Turin on November 11 -12 of the year 2019.