



## Getting an ROI out of true sustainability

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Consumer demand for sustainable food is growing as more information becomes available. Recent research has discovered that 90 percent of today's diners are willing to pay more for food produced using these practices.

Restaurants are smart to answer by embracing ingredients that are "fresh," "organic" and "local."

Oregon-based [Truitt Brothers Inc.](#) explores the most effective ways for operators to implement initiatives that strongly influence consumer decisions regarding sustainability in a new guide published on [FastCasual.com](#), [PizzaMarketplace.com](#) and [QSRweb.com](#).

The guide, "Responsible Restaurants: How Operators Can Leverage True Sustainability to their Advantage," covers measuring the impact (of sustainability), mitigating the impact, the social life of food, sharing the sustainable story and the ROI of sustainability.

According to the guide, one of the bigger challenges for operators is in understanding which attributes of food have the closest connections to sustainability. To do so, they need to examine the path their food takes en route to the table. Taking a deeper look at the supply chain will help operators assess the true impact of their ingredients.

Buyers should be looking for not only the lowest price, but also ingredients that are produced, processed and packaged using sustainable methods. Accordingly, third-party certifications, self-audits and life-cycle assessments are important tools to consider in finding the right suppliers.

"With third-party certifications, a buyer can quickly and easily determine if the producer is adhering to sustainable practices," said Scott Exo, executive director of the Food Alliance, a nonprofit organization that provides such certification.

According to the guide, promoting sustainability requires education and transparency. It's important to seek out reliable third-party certifications and avoid businesses that "greenwash," or embellish claims about their environmental efforts.

Partnering with suppliers that conduct life-cycle assessments on products is beneficial, as they require objective third-party examination. For suppliers, such as Truitt, a life-cycle assessment comprises of inventory, impact analysis and improvement analysis.

"Life-cycle assessments provide a realistic, measurable, objective look at a product, from cradle to grave," said Peter Truitt, president of Truitt Bros. Inc. "Certifications and assessments might be somewhat expensive, but the integrity of the source is an integral part of sustainability."

The guide outlines how embracing a philosophy around sustainable food can yield a strong ROI, as evidenced by chains such as Burgerville, Panera Bread and Chipotle. Its companies like this that are helping to spearhead industry-wide change.

Read the entire guide: "Responsible Restaurants: How Operators Can Leverage True Sustainability to Their Advantage" [here](#).

*Cover photo: Truitt Brothers Inc.*