



# SUSTAINABLE FOOD POLICY AND ACTION PLAN

## Overarching Aims

As a self-funded service of the University, we are committed to consistent improvement around sustainability in a manner that is financially sustainable to allow us to invest in this area. It is noted and understood that different individuals and groups will have different interpretations and views on how to achieve this, therefore we are committed to being open and transparent on our progress by reporting on our achievements annually. Providing healthy, seasonal, local and responsibly sourced food for staff, students and visitors is critical to the University's drive to uphold its reputation as a responsible institution. The University's catering outlets, services and products need to reflect its core values and provide opportunities into the wider institutional culture and practice, supporting positive experiences of living, working and learning at the University of Exeter for students, staff, partners and visitors.

The Sustainable Food Policy has been developed by the Commercial, Residential and Campus Services directorate with consultation from the Commercial Operations Coordination Group and Environmental and Climate Emergency Board. This policy covers the University in-house foodservice outlets. Crucial contribution is received from Heads/Directors of Service, the Environmental and Climate Emergency Team, Fairtrade and University Society Representatives. This policy applies to the University managed and operated catering outlets and services on Streatham and St Luke's campuses.

## Strategic Objectives

The University of Exeter recognises its responsibility to carry out its procurement and service delivery activities in an environmentally and socially responsible manner, while encouraging and promoting healthy eating. We recognise our responsibility to engage our suppliers to minimise negative environmental and social impacts associated with the manufacture of their products and services. We are committed to only buying through reputable supply chains that have the ability to engage and welcome micro, small, and medium sized local and regional enterprises directly, or through appointed distribution routes.

The policy reflects the principles of the University's procurement strategy, sustainability goals, and climate emergency recommendations along with commitments contained within our Fairtrade University and Colleges Award.

In 2019, the University declared an Environmental and Climate Emergency and is currently aiming towards being carbon neutral by 2030. Sustainable food plays an important role in these plans as it is a way that everyone can actively engage in climate mitigation measures on a daily basis. Through raising sustainability awareness through food, we can help to facilitate a change in culture which is critical in supporting our goal to reduce our wider impact on the environment.

## Wellbeing, Food and Dietary Requirements

Food systems are inherently connected to the wellbeing of individuals and communities involved in production and consumption of food and more broadly, the wellbeing of ecosystems and non-human communities. These are also interconnected with climate change, as food systems are both affected by and can impact climate change. This, in turn, may have an impact on health and wellbeing of individual communities. Sustainable food needs to be beneficial to the health of the planet as well as individuals. Therefore, nutrition as well as environmental concern should be considered when determining how sustainable a food practice is.

The University will be innovative with food that is produced and will seek to be well informed on global food trends and consumer intelligence. We are aware that there are a wide variety of dietary requirements and expectations across the diverse University community; these must be met due to a wide range of reasons including freedom of choice, health, wellbeing, cultural preference and faith.







## Sourcing

- Promote a procurement ethos of buying locally to support UK producers and the South West Regional economy.
- Ensure that sustainability criteria are included in specifications to suppliers and used in the award of all contracts.
- Give preference to products and services that can be manufactured, used, and disposed of in an environmental and socially responsible way.
- Work with our suppliers to increase our range of Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) accredited sustainable fish.
- Promote our Fairtrade University Award status and continue to follow the Fairtrade principles.
- Promote our Sustainable Restaurant Association (SRA) accreditation status and continue to maintain these principles.
- Adoption of two vegetarian and whole foods suppliers, providing a wider range of health, vegan, and vegetarian products.
- Monitor supplier compliance against the Sustainable Food Policy, which covers industry intelligence and new initiatives through regular contract account performance reviews.
- Reduce waste cooking oil through approved conversion into bio diesel for reuse in supplier vehicles.
- Cardboard from all delivery packaging is recycled and we actively encourage further work by suppliers to reduce packaging at source.
- Reduce deliveries on campus by limiting outlets and services to capped deliveries per week.
- Food packaging for items prepared on site is biodegradable, compostable or recyclable.
- Work closely with our suppliers to further our sustainable food agenda.
- Food waste is collected for anaerobic digestion by our nominated waste contractor.
- Provide a broad range of offers and items within retail environments to reduce deliveries onto campus by third parties.
- We are a member of TUCO and access their purchasing frameworks in addition to our own contracted agreements.

## Environment

- Reduce consumption of ruminant meat within Retail Catering environments through menu development innovation and compliance to the "meat second" operating procedure.
- Reducing overall meat content within recipe cards through the addition of items such as protein substitutes, pulses, grains, and sauces.
- Reduce consumption of meat dishes through promotion of non-meat dishes as part of a balanced diet. Menus will consist of at least 50% vegetarian, vegan, or plant based meals.
- Reduce end of day food waste through a pilot of a national food waste initiative.
- Reduce waste of single use hot beverage cups with the implementation of a 40p levy in 2020/21, an increase of 20p vs previous years.
- Reduce single use plastic bottle wastage by providing free access to drinking water in our catered outlets so water bottles can be refilled.
- 100% reduction in non-compostable single use food-to-go packaging.
- List only fresh, free-range, locally sourced eggs.
- Provide a broad range of produce from sustainable resources in the catering outlets and on hospitality menus.

## Society

- Reduce ruminant meat consumption through product placement, marketing and point of sale nudge, education and behavioral techniques.
- Implement a pricing architecture that differentiates between ruminant main meal meat dishes and vegetarian / vegan dishes to encourage nudge, education and behavioral techniques when consumers make their selection.
- Targeted use of a Greenhouse Gas Footprint Calculator to highlight high impact choices enabling nudge, educational and behavioral techniques.
- Showcase seasonal produce throughout our menu development and hospitality service delivery.
- Communicate our aims and commitment to serving sustainable, regional food to our customers.
- Engage clients, stakeholders and students on a quarterly basis by showcasing our new products and actively seeking feedback before new menus are finalised via the Food and Drinks Insights Group.
- Raise employee awareness of relevant environmental and social effects through appropriate training, guidance and relevant product information to staff members to allow them to select sustainable products and services.
- Actively engage and work towards a sustainable food framework.
- Provide casual employment for the student population across both campuses.
- All outlets and services rate five star for food safety.







# ACTION PLAN

Plan Description	Status	Performance Indicator
<b>Sourcing</b>		
Promote a procurement ethos of buying locally to support UK producers and the South West Regional economy.		Tier 1 and Tier 2 supply contracts and purchasing frameworks in place. These agreements support local micro and SME businesses with approved purchasing lists featuring hundreds of SKUs. <a href="#">Our Suppliers</a> .
Ensure that sustainability criteria are included in specifications to suppliers and used in the award of all contracts.		Existing Tier 1 and Tier 2 supply contracts and purchasing frameworks in place. Sustainable criteria formed part of the tender process. <a href="http://www.tuco.ac.uk">www.tuco.ac.uk</a> , <a href="#">Our Suppliers</a>
Give preference to products and services that can be manufactured, used and disposed of in an environmental and socially responsible way.		Existing Tier 1 and Tier 2 supply contracts and purchasing frameworks in place. Sustainable criteria formed part of the tender process. <a href="http://www.tuco.ac.uk">www.tuco.ac.uk</a> , <a href="#">Our Suppliers</a>
Work with our suppliers to increase our range of Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) accredited sustainable fish.		MSC approved purchasing lists. Certificate. Invoice or letter from supplier confirming that all fresh fish supplied to the University are sourced from the MSC sustainable fish list.
Promote our Fairtrade University Award status and continue to follow the Fairtrade principles.		2020-2022 - achieved one star award accreditation. 2022-2024 - achieved two star awarded accreditation. 2023/24 - 303,364 Fairtrade items sold, a 26.1% increase from the previous year. 2024/25 - 323,281 Fairtrade items sold, a 6.6% increase. Re-accreditation due in 2026.
Promote our Sustainable Restaurant Association (SRA) accreditation status and continue to maintain these principles.		2021 - achieved two star accreditation. 2023 - achieved three star accreditation. 2025 - achieved three star accreditation.
Adoption of two vegetarian and ethical whole foods suppliers, providing a wider range of health, vegan and vegetarian products.		Vegetarian Express - <a href="http://www.vegex.co.uk">www.vegex.co.uk</a> Bidfood Vegan Kitchen - <a href="http://www.bidfood.co.uk/v-kitchen/">www.bidfood.co.uk/v-kitchen/</a> Suma Wholefoods - <a href="http://www.suma.coop">www.suma.coop</a>
Monitor supplier compliance against the Sustainable Food Policy which covers industry intelligence and new initiatives through regular contract account performance reviews.		Tier 1 Suppliers - QBR as per contract agreements Meeting minutes, reports and management information.
Collaborate with the University Grounds Team to develop a Kitchen Garden and produce on-campus grown fruit and vegetables for inclusion within menus.		2022/23 - Successful pilot of crop cultivation with ingredients used across campus catering services. 2023/24 - Developing crop rotation plan to produce all year round seasonal produce. 2023/24 - Continue collaboration with University grounds team enabling a budget for continual growth of the kitchen garden. 2024 - Increase yield production in excess of half a tonne, using traditional planting and hydroponics growing techniques. 2025 - Yield production in excess of two tonnes . Team collaboration strengthened further looking at crop cycles and regenerative agriculture techniques
Adopt the use of venison as a sustainable meat choice across our formats		2025 - Introduction of venison dishes within residences to reduce other ruminant meat choices.







## Environment

Reduce consumption of ruminant meat within Retail Catering environments through menu development innovation and compliance to the "meat second" operating procedure.		<p>2019/20 – Introduction of Meat second operating procedures.</p> <p>2020/21 – 50% reduction of ruminant meat choice on menu choices.</p> <p>2020/21 – 21% participation decrease in meat-based dishes sold.</p> <p>2021/22 – A further 9% decrease of meat-based dishes sold.</p> <p>2022/23 – 100% reduction of ruminant meat.</p>
Reducing overall meat content within recipe cards through the addition of items such as protein substitutes, pulses, grains, and sauces.		<p>2019/20 – 20% reduction of meat content in loose recipe cards.</p> <p>2020/21 – Increased usage of protein substitutes.</p> <p>2022/23 – Product development with local manufacturers to reduce animal proteins on specific SKU's by circa 10% (MCK).</p> <p>2023/24 – Working with Lentils.org to update recipes following chef development masterclass.</p> <p>2024/25 – Enhanced salad bar offering through recipe development within student residences.</p> <p>2025/26 – Working with manufacturers with recipe cards to reduce meat content with protein replacement with products like Quorn. Continue to test and trial products with consumer feedback.</p>
Reduce consumption of meat main dishes through promotion of non-meat dishes as part of a balanced diet. Menus will consist of at least 50% vegetarian, vegan, or plant based meals.		<p>2019/20 – All menus are written to contain at least this selection split.</p> <p>2020/21 – Data shows an improved participation split.</p> <p>2022/23 – 31.44% of menu choice through our 3 culinary formats are V or VG.</p> <p>2023/24 – 32.01% of menu choice through our culinary formats are V or VG.</p> <p>2023/24 – Veganuary: During January, we served 7,380 vegan meals in our retail outlets, representing 51.5% of all meals served that month.</p> <p>2024/25 – Veganuary -during January we served 5,325 vegan meals served in our Retail outlets, representing 50.74% of all meals served that month.</p>
Reduce end of day and unnecessary food waste through University internal and national food waste initiatives.		<p>2021/22 – Pilot commenced <a href="http://www.toogoodtogo.co.uk">www.toogoodtogo.co.uk</a></p> <p>2021/22 – Culinary team are using fermentation, pickling and de-hydrating techniques to utilize and reduce food waste on campus.</p> <p>2022/23 – Introduction of waste stations for visualisation of food plate waste in residences.</p> <p>2024/25 – Pilot of grounds team to collect produce trimmings for Kitchen Garden compost. Establish an integrated food-to-waste compost programme across campus that reduces waste, supports regenerative practices, and embeds circular-economy principles into everyday operations.</p>
Establish an integrated food waste-to-compost programme across campus that reduces waste, supports regenerative practices, and embeds circular-economy principles into everyday operations		<p>2025/26 – Invest in Ridan Composters – <a href="http://www.ridan.co.uk">www.ridan.co.uk</a></p>
Reduce waste of single use hot beverage cups with the implementation of a 40p levy in 2020/21 an increase of 20p vs previous years. The levy fee is re-invested into other sustainable initiatives.		<p>2018/19 – Commenced recording of the 20p Bevy Levy data.</p> <p>2019/20 – 49% Increase of reusable receptacles on campus.</p> <p>2020/21 – COVID restrictions limits progress.</p> <p>2021/22 – Increased Bevy Levy by a further 20p to 40p.</p> <p>2021/22 – 15% reduction in single use cups on previous year.</p> <p>2022/23 – 6% like for like improvement on previous year.</p> <p>2023/24 – Reusable cup sales mix has increased by 0.34%</p> <p>2024/25 – 130,899 reusable cups were used , diverting from single use refuge.</p>





## Environment

Reduce single use plastic bottle wastage by providing free access to drinking water in our catered outlets so water bottles can be refilled.		Openly available on request. 2021/22 – introduced tetra pack water solution.
100% reduction in non-compostable single use food-to-go packaging.		2020/21 – Single use plastic removed from the approved purchasing lists and replaced with compostable alternatives. 2022/23 – New industry products being developed continually and tested in partnership with our supply chains.
List only fresh, free-range, locally sourced eggs.		As per the approved purchasing list and supplier certificates and accreditations.
Provide a broad range of produce from sustainable resources in the catering outlets and on hospitality menus.		As per the approved purchasing lists, on the ordering platforms and through menus. Fresh Ideas, Eat & Shop.
Reduce waste cooking oil through approved conversion into bio diesel for reuse in supplier vehicles.		<a href="http://www.olleco.co.uk">www.olleco.co.uk</a>
Cardboard from all delivery packaging is recycled and we actively encourage further work by suppliers to reduce packaging at source.		Management information via nominated waste providers.
Reduce deliveries on campus by limiting outlets and services to capped deliveries per week.		As per the agreed standard operating schedule.
Food packaging for items prepared on site is biodegradable, compostable or recyclable.		2019/20 – Production packaging waste is recycled. 2020/21 – Only plant based wrap is used on our sealer.
Work closely with our suppliers to further our sustainable food agenda.		Meeting agendas, minutes and collaborative results. 2023/24 – Collaborative working group for a hospitality sustainable boxed solution. 2023/24 – Collaborative research and development project to divert sandwich byproduct waste into beer.
Food waste (production) is collected for anaerobic digestion by our nominated waste contractor.		As per the agreed contract schedule.
Provide a broad range of offers and items within retail environments to reduce deliveries onto campus by third parties.		As per the agreed standard operating schedule.







## Society

Reduce ruminant meat consumption through product placement, marketing and point of sale nudge, education and behavioural techniques.	<p>"Meat second" operating procedure, Go &amp; See Audits, visual merchandising, social media, digital media, nutrition, health and wellbeing marketing materials, menu design and symbolisation.</p> <p>2021/22 - Fully implemented with a mechanism to measure continual improvement. 2022/23 - 11.24% reduction in ruminant meat consumed. 2023/24 - 0.63% further reduction in ruminant meat consumed. 2024/25 - Residences, through our supply chain have reduced 235kg of ruminant meat</p>
Implement a pricing architecture that differentiates between ruminant main meal meat dishes and vegetarian / vegan dishes to encourage nudge, education and behavioural techniques when consumers make their selection.	<p>Retail Catering main meals tariff advertised with V/VE symbols will sit at a price point of at least 20p lower than their ruminant counterpart.</p> <p>2021/22 - 80% achieved across all foodservice 2022/23 - 100% achieved across all foodservice</p>
Pilot a Greenhouse Gas Footprint Calculator to highlight high impact choices enabling nudge, educational and behavioural techniques.	<p>Pilot to commence T1 2022/23</p> <p>2021/22 - Nutritics have developed Foodprint, however has been delayed. 2023/24 - Feasibility of using Foodsteps platform. 2024/25 - Targeted use of technology platforms to publicise information to consumers.</p>
Showcase seasonal produce throughout our menu development and hospitality service delivery.	<p>Using industry and sector intelligence to develop innovative desirable choices. Making informed decisions through operating system reporting data. Stakeholder engagements and consultation at development stage internally and externally.</p>
Communicate our aims and commitment to serving sustainable, regional food to our customers.	<p>Stakeholder engagement. UoE Networks, Societies &amp; Groups. Commercial Operational Coordination Group. 2023/24 - Students are invited to participate in insight groups, where they can contribute ideas and provide feedback which shapes our strategic sustainable priorities.</p>







## Society

Engage clients, stakeholders and students on a regular basis by showcasing our new products and actively seeking feedback before new menus are finalised.

Stakeholder engagement.

UoE Networks, Societies & Groups. Commercial Operational Coordination Group.

2021/22 – Thematic hospitality & catering forum chaired by commercial head of service.

2021/22 – Collaboration with a Ground up cookery school with fermentation, pickling and de-hydrating techniques with chefs up-skilling development driven by engagement with a University college and research group.

2021/22 – Go green week, plant power.

2022/23 – Food calendar campaigns delivered.

2022/23 – Meat alternatives blind tasting engagement.

2023/24 – Research Health and Life Sciences faculty vegan showcase event within the Forum Kitchen.

2023/24 – Cooking Demonstrations: Direct sessions where students learn sustainable cooking techniques and practical meal preparation.

2024/25 – Hospitality food and drink showcase to internal stakeholders highlighting sustainable choices.

2024/25 – As part of academic studies, students engage in consultancy projects that offer real-world insights into sustainable food services.

2025 – Vegan Voyage, a showcase in Veganuary within the Forum Kitchen for plant based food and Barisca drinks.

2025 – Forum Kitchen – 27.54% of vegan meals served in January representing a 9.5% increase year on year.

Raise employee awareness of relevant environmental and social effects through appropriate training, guidance and relevant product information to staff members to allow them to select sustainable products and services.

[www.tuco.ac.uk](http://www.tuco.ac.uk), [www.menusofchange.org](http://www.menusofchange.org)

provide insights and further training development.

Marketing materials e.g. posters, table talkers, digital media screens, social media, websites, ordering platforms and food calendar events.

2020/21 – COVID has restricted some development in this year.

2021/22 – Mandatory sustainability training for all staff.

2022/23 – Section added to the colleague guiding principles booklet for staff regarding sustainability and Fairtrade practices.

We will actively engage and work towards a sustainable food framework.

2021/22 – 14001 Environmental Management System – Compliant

Ranked 10th in the world in the THE impact rating 2023.

First award class in the UK for People & Planet

[Menus of Change](http://MenusofChange.org) collective.

2022/23 – Leadership team attended annual conference.

2023/24 – Leadership team attended annual conference.

2024/25 – Leadership team attended annual conference.

Provide casual employment for the student population across both campuses.

Casual employment accessibility to backfill open shift when surge and flexible working is required

All outlets and services rate five star for food safety.

[www.scoresonthedoors.org.uk](http://www.scoresonthedoors.org.uk)

