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SUSTAINABLE FOOD AND AGRICULTURE POLICY

US

UNIVERSITY
OF SUSSEX

SUSTAINABLE FOOD AND AGRICULTURE POLICY

This is the official University of Sussex policy on sustainable food and farming – including fishing. It forms an update to the 2014 Sustainable Food Policy.

PURPOSE

This policy document is designed to work alongside, and provide further guidance on, our strategic commitments around responsible food and water production and consumption, as set out in **Sustainable Sussex**, the University of Sussex Sustainability Strategy and **Action Plan**.

Ultimately, this policy is intended to help us realise our vision of being one of the most sustainable universities in the world by protecting biodiversityⁱ and aquatic ecosystemsⁱⁱ and reducing the greenhouse gas emissions associated with the catered food that we source and sell on campus. It also ensures that the supply chain for our on-campus catering has strong economic and social sustainability values.



OBJECTIVES¹

- I. Maintain the **Sustainable Restaurant Association** Three Star Award (the highest possible rating) for the sustainability of the food that we source.
- II. Ensure that at least 80% of our fresh produce, excluding dairy, comes from local suppliers with a focus on seasonally appropriate foods where possible.
- III. Ensure that the fish and animal produce sold at our catering outlets is sourced with high sustainability standards, including ensuring that all eggs are free range.
- IV. Continue to actively support sustainable food production and distribution on campus including the redistribution of surplus food.
- V. Seek to reduce consumer demand for meat with high associated environmental impacts.
- VI. Improve the quality of consumer information in relation to food sustainability, including piloting the introduction of a food sustainability traffic light system.
- VII. Review all catering outlets to identify their suitability for becoming net zero cafésⁱⁱⁱ and use the findings to select a number of locations to offer net zero catering.

¹The achievement of the objectives set out in this policy is subject to that normal supply of goods and services that may not always be possible in the event of major national emergencies related to the pandemic, Brexit or another force majeure.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

1. BENCHMARKED:

We don't want to tell you how sustainable our food is. We want others to confirm it and to hold us to industry leading standards where we are benchmarked against others. That is why we are committed to maintaining our Sustainable Restaurant Gold Award for the sustainability of the food that we procure and sell on campus.

2. LOCAL FIRST:

Our **Sustainability Strategy** commits us to ensuring that at least 80% of our fresh produce, excluding dairy, comes from local suppliers with a focus on seasonally appropriate foods where possible. This reduces the food miles associated with our food and helps to boost the local economy and predominance of sustainably farmed food in our local area.

3. HEALTHY:

Our meals are designed to promote good health and well-being, this includes but is not limited to minimising the use of preservatives, GMO[™] and salt content in the food sold.

4. VEGAN AND VEGETARIAN FRIENDLY:

We provide a high proportion of meat free food in our catering outlets – this constitutes over 50% of the food on our menus on campus. We will continue to maintain this level of vegetarian and vegan catering, or more, and promote the environmental benefits of low-meat and meat-free diets to students and staff.

5. FISHED RESPONSIBLY:

We support sustainable fishing and aquaculture^v and the protection of aquatic ecosystems. This includes but is not restricted to the following steps when purchasing and selling seafood:

- a) avoiding seafood categorised as 'fish to avoid' on the **Good Fish Guide** (as defined by the Marine Conservation Society (MCS))
- b) adhering to the **Sustainable Seafood Coalition Codes of Conduct** which requires annual risk assessments to be undertaken on all fisheries that our main catering provider procures from.

6. HIGH ANIMAL WELFARE STANDARDS:

Where meat, dairy, and eggs are used we ensure that they are produced according to high animal welfare standards and are sustainably sourced, including only using free range eggs, Red Tractor milk and meat that has RSPCA Freedom Food (or similar) animal welfare accreditation standards.

7. LOW CARBON:

We are committed to reducing the carbon impact of our food. That is why we are committed to:

- a) reviewing all University run catering outlets to identify their suitability for becoming net zero cafés and using the findings to select a number of locations to offer net zero catering where feasible
- b) reducing the amount of food sold with high embodied carbon emissions and associated environmental impacts via better consumer information and staff and student engagement to change patterns of demand. This includes but is not restricted to:
 - i. piloting a food sustainability traffic light system to educate and inform consumers of the environmental impact of their choices – akin to the salt, sugar and fat traffic light systems for supermarket products
 - ii. holding a citizen-style assembly to identify recommendations for changing consumer demand to support the campus consuming less meat and/or becoming beef- and lamb-free by 2023
- c) creating seasonal menus where possible to reduce the need for imported food with high food miles
- d) encouraging the use of low emission fleets to transport food to and from campus.

8. SOCIALLY AWARE:

We are committed to promoting social and economic sustainability. That is why our policy is:

- a) encouraging the use of social enterprises and local cooperatives within our supply chain
- b) using Fairtrade goods where relevant and possible (eg imported bananas and coffee)
- c) providing discounted coffee to staff and students participating in the University's active and sustainable travel rewards scheme
- d) paying catering staff a living wage
- e) supporting the redistribution of food that would otherwise go to waste, while simultaneously helping to tackle local food poverty and hunger. For example, donating food to food banks or people in need via the **TooGoodToGo** and/or **Olio** food redistribution apps.

9. RESPONSIBLY PACKAGED AND RECYCLED:

We encourage responsible consumption and production within our catering outlets through the following actions:

- a) offering free tap water in all of our catering outlets to encourage the use of reusable water bottles
- b) promoting the use of reusable cups over disposable hot drink cups - including the use of financial levers in our catering outlets to drive behaviour change
- c) providing fully compostable cutlery and take away food containers as standard to convert into compost via anaerobic or aerobic digestion – avoiding the need for it to go to landfill
- d) ensuring that used cooking oil is collected and recycled by our registered partner, **Ollecco**.

10. EXTENDED TO THE SUPPLY CHAIN:

We will ensure that our Sustainable Food Policy is always extended to our direct supply chain partners at the point of tendering and contract renewal and that performance in this area is followed up with robust key performance indicators, reporting and tracking. We also ensure that our supply chain actively support and engage with government and regulatory bodies such as the **Food Standards Agency** and the **Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs** to support initiatives which develop industry best practices.

Exclusions

Please note that this is a University of Sussex policy document that does not extend to the University of Sussex Students' Union, which is a separate legal entity. However, steps are being taken to ensure that both institutions work together to become co-signatories of a joint sustainable food and agriculture policy document, when this document is next reviewed.



¹ Biodiversity – the abundance and diversity of animals, plants, and the habitats they live in across a defined area.
ⁱⁱ Aquatic ecosystems – a community of plants and animals in, or close to, a body of water.
ⁱⁱⁱ Net Zero Café – a café which is run to reduce the carbon emissions produced as far as possible, by changing how the café is run, the products sold etc.
^{iv} GMO – Genetically Modified Organisms – foods that have been genetically engineered to produce preferable characteristics.
^v Aquaculture – the rearing of aquatic animals or plants for food.