

SUSTAINABLE FOOD POLICY

Introduction

This document forms part of St Mary's University overall approach to food sustainability and covers all outlets and food served by the Catering Services Department. Catering Services recognises its responsibility to provide healthy and sustainable food to its customers and takes their environmental responsibility seriously.

To that end our Catering team achieved the Soil Association Bronze Award in July 2024 and also continues to promote Fairtrade products on campus. The University is signed up to (the Soil Association) Cool Food Pro carbon calculator. It helps us to focus and move towards key areas namely, better quality but less meat, seasonal, organic & local produce and reducing food waste impact. The service has also partnered with Carma Earth which makes social and environmental impact simple and affordable by planting trees around the world.

Our aims

Sustainable food systems are those that produce and distribute food in a way that is environmentally, socially, and economically viable, ensuring food security and nutrition for all without compromising future generations. This means minimising negative impacts on the planet, promoting fair labour practices, and ensuring economic viability for producers. We work with our suppliers and contractors to minimise negative environmental, ethical and social effects, and provide a range of products which are healthier for the people and the planet.

We aim to:

- provide a choice of healthy and sustainable food options to our students, staff, commercial clients and visitors;
- maintain standards of the Soil Association Bronze award and work towards Silver and Gold Standards;
- continue promotion of Fairtrade products as part of Food for Life;
- achieve higher reduction in CO2 generation from our food business by incorporating the five principles of Cool Food Pro;
- create a more positive social & environmental impact by engaging our customers to care for the planet and its people by planting more trees with the help of our partnership with Carma Earth;

- constantly look for new initiatives to reduce waste, and re-use/ recycle more and minimise the impact of waste on the environment;
- help the University better its sustainability credentials and goals.

Procurement

We currently use the services of Pelican Procurement. They are a supply chain specialist with over 30 years of knowledge within the food service and catering sector. Pelican are committed to sustainable procurement. [Click here](#) for more details. The University reviews its procurement partners every few years and is closely aligned to TUCO. [Click here](#) for more details.

Sustainable and ethical procurement are embedded into the supply tendering criteria. We are also committed to ensuring that there is no modern slavery or human trafficking in the supply chains or in any part of the business. The service also supports the work and various catering related projects run by the [Bakhita Centre](#) for research on slavery, exploitation & abuse. TUCO is also committed to improving practices to combat trafficking and slavery. [Click here](#) for more details of the TUCO statement.

We have the following requirements for all food outlets and services provided:

- catering and bar services use nominated suppliers from within the approved Pelican / TUCO purchasing supplier network;
- offers vegetarian or vegan options at each service, and promotes National Vegetarian Week, Veganuary and other healthy eating initiatives;
- use of fresh vegetables and fruit from British suppliers;
- use of British Free-Range Eggs, and meat that is produced according to high animal welfare standards like Red Tractor. Where British free-range eggs are not available, then EU free-range eggs are ordered;
- catering services serve MSC (Marine Stewardship Council) certified sustainable fish.

Soil Association Food for Life

We were audited and achieved the Soil Association Food for Life Bronze Award in July 2024 for food produced and served in the main kitchen and restaurant – the Refectory. The main criteria are as follows:

- at least 75% of the food is freshly prepared onsite from unprocessed ingredients.
- all meat is from farms that satisfy UK animal welfare standards like Red Tractor.
- all fish is MSC certified.
- eggs are from free range hens.

- no undesirable additives or artificial trans fats are used. No genetically modified goods are used.
- free drinking water is available in all outlets.
- menus are seasonal and in-season produce is highlighted for customers to choose from.

We are committed to this scheme and we are working towards achieving higher standards of silver and gold by using more organic and Fairtrade produce.

Fairtrade Status

We have been a Fairtrade supporter since 2011. We promoted the value of Fairtrade and actively celebrated Fairtrade fortnight every year. The University was last re-awarded University Fairtrade Status from July 2022 to July 2024. We also support the use of other ethically and sustainably sourced products and we purchase a range of organic and Rainforest Alliance certified products. We continue to support and promote Fairtrade products like tea, hot chocolate and a range of confectionary and soft drinks. We are aiming for Soil Association Silver and Gold standards which will also complement our use of Fairtrade products.

Transport, deliveries and packaging

Our catering service now uses a fully electric catering van for transporting goods across campus. Deliveries are being reduced and we are working with suppliers to see how the use of greener vehicles like electric or clean bio diesel vehicles is possible. Delivery containers and packaging are being reduced to a minimum and must be either re-useable or recyclable where possible.

Cool Food Pro

The catering service has committed to reducing its carbon footprint and it has started using the [Cool Food Pro](#) web application in May 2025 to monitor its food waste from the main kitchen and plate wastage after each service. The tools on the website help us to focus and move towards five key areas namely; better quality but less meat, seasonal, organic & local produce and reducing food waste impact.

Carma Earth

We signed up to Carma Earth in December 2024 to help make a greater social and environmental impact. Carma does this in a simple and affordable way by planting trees around the world. Customers using Catering outlets can buy three types of trees that can be planted by Carma: Kenyan Mangrove, Canadian Kelp or a range of trees in the UK. Customers that have plant-based meals get loyalty stamps and for every 5 plant-based meals purchased they can get a voucher to purchase a tree to be planted by Carma. We ask customers to help us achieve our goal of planting

20,000 trees (to save approximately 6,000 tonnes of CO₂) in the next five years. Together we can create a greener, more sustainable future, one meal at a time.

Too Good To Go

We have partnered with Too Good To Go (TGTG) since September 2021 which has helped to save hundreds of meals each year.

TGTG is a social impact company on a mission to inspire and empower customers and food businesses to fight food waste together. This also gives our students and staff an opportunity to enjoy good food at reduced prices.

Waste management

We have two waste streams in all public areas – mixed recycling and general waste. We work closely with the local authority and our waste removal contractor to minimise our environmental impact.

- None of the waste from catering outlets goes to landfill. General waste is converted into fuel by the current waste disposal contractor.
- All our waste cooking oil is taken offsite and converted into biodiesel for road transport and to heat and power systems.
- Cardboard from delivery packaging is compacted on site and recycled.
- Glass bottles from the events and delivered hospitality is recycled.
- Food waste from both food production and consumer food waste is collected and converted into agricultural fertilisers.
- We actively try to reduce the use of single use plastics and offer customers incentives for using suitable alternatives. All restaurants and cafes have 'eat-in' glassware and chinaware and have recyclable/ compostable food and drink carrier options for those who choose to 'eat out'. The service will be switching to the latest award-winning sustainable packaging by [NotPla](#) from August 2025. This is biodegradable plastic free packaging made from seaweed. We continue to offer a 10% discount on hot beverages if a customer uses their own re-usable mug. We are also looking to introduce a cup-deposit/return scheme.

Other Initiatives

- New dishwashers, ovens and catering equipment are being phased in that are designed to minimise power and water usage.
- The service is currently using a range of environmentally friendly cleaning products and chemicals.

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