

Sustainable Food Action Plan 2023-25– End of Year 1 Report

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The University’s Sustainable Food Steering Group has worked all year on implementing the first year of our ambitious 2-year Sustainable Food Action plan which brings together our work as a Right to Food University, our catering strategy and our progress towards embedding sustainability into every part of catering from procurement to how we operate our kitchens.

Overall, we have achieved 20 out of the 36 objectives in the plan and have partially achieved a further 8 while we are still working towards the remaining 8 objectives. Highlights have included the ongoing success of the cost-of-living meal and progress in increasing the number, variety and quality of Plant-Based meals on offer.

Objective 1- Guarantee the affordability and availability of healthy and sustainable food

No.	Actions	End of Year 1
1a	Guarantee a lower price or price parity of vegetarian or vegan meals compared to meat options	Achieved
1b	Offer up to 2 portions of veg with every meal at Rutherford	Achieved
1c	Offer a price competitive (within 10% of on-site competitor option) lunch meal deal with sandwiches handmade on site and sustainable packaging. Fruit based snack available as part of meal deal in all participating outlets.	Achieved
1d	Continue to offer a cost-of-living subsidised meal to students and staff (term-time only), ensuring that these are equal in nutritional content to other menu options.	Achieved
1e	Monitor the amount of processed meat e.g. burgers, sausages bought and set a target to reduce this.	Partially Achieved

Narrative

As a Right to Food University, we have been working to ensure that our staff and students have access to regular, affordable, fresh and nutritious meals. Our cost-of-living meal is incredibly popular and during the last academic year we sold over 50,000 of our £3 hot meals where at least 2 portions of veg are always available. We also introduced our own in-house produced sandwich meal deal at a lower price than the co-op equivalent and ensured that fresh fruit is always an option for the snack.

Case Study

1) 100,000th Cost of Living Meal sold

The University of Kent's commitment to supporting students through rising living costs has reached an exciting new milestone. On Tuesday 24 September 2024, Rutherford Dining Hall served its **100,000th cost of living hot meal**, marking another success for the initiative that has been a lifeline for many students since its launch in November 2022.

This term, customers have been introduced to new vegetarian and plant-based dishes, including Sweet Potato Chilli, Cauliflower Cheese Lasagne, and Tandoori Sweet Potato with Lemon Pilau Rice. The cost-of-living hot meal scheme has made a significant impact by offering nutritious, budget-friendly meals to the Kent community. With new dishes being trialled, this initiative continues to evolve to meet students' needs during challenging times.

<https://www.kent.ac.uk/right-to-food/36838/kent-celebrates-100000th-cost-of-living-meal>

2) Kent Giving Week

In February 2024, we celebrated one year as a Right to Food University! To kick start our celebrations, we held a free breakfast for students, funded by last year's Kent Giving Week, which raised £18,000 to provide meals for students facing hardship.

As well as supporting over 350 students with a free hot breakfast, the money will also help provide meals and other financial support for students who need it the most thanks to a collaborative approach between the university's student support and wellbeing services and Kent Union.

<https://www.instagram.com/reel/C30fz7vMlbJ/?igsh=MWhlZDRuMWZ4b2F5dA%3D%3D>

Objective 2: Adopt a plant-forward approach.

No.	Actions	End of Year 1
2a	Increase veg / pulse to meat ratio on our menus ensuring that a 1/3 of all main meals offered across our outlets are plant-based or customisable to be plant-based.	Achieved
2b	Monitor sales of meat-based meals separating out ruminant, chicken & fish creating a baseline.	Achieved
2c	Monitor the proportion of meat-based protein that goes into on site prepared meals	Achieved
2d	Inform customers of availability of plant-based milks within outlets (move away from dairy by default) and review which milks we offer and pricing based on environmental impact.	Partially Achieved
2e	Continue, ensuring availability of cards, the loyalty card scheme that rewards customers for choosing plant based main meals.	Achieved
2f	Source <u>less but better</u> meat and dairy <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Minimum Red Tractor standard for fresh meat - MSC Certified Sustainable Seafood - ASC Certified farmed fish - No purchasing of fish/shellfish on the red list - Free range fresh eggs - Ethically sourced Coffee, suppliers able to demonstrate transparency within supply chains 	Partially Achieved

Narrative

We have made progress in transitioning towards more Plant-Based diets. At the beginning of the 2023/24 academic year under 1/4 of our main meals sold were vegetarian or vegan but by the end almost 1/3 meals sold did not contain meat. We hope to improve on this figure in the coming year focusing on our cost-of-living meals where 3/4 of the meals offered will be vegetarian (11%) or Plant-Based (65%).

Case Study

1. Exciting vegan options on campus

<https://www.instagram.com/reel/CzGgtykMOjL/>

2. Plant-Based loyalty scheme

<https://www.kent.ac.uk/catering/sustainability#plant-based-loyalty-scheme>

Objective 3: Reduce food waste

No.	Actions	End of Year 1
3a	Ensure responsive and efficient procurement by centralising production and distribution of products, such as sandwiches and internal catering, in order to reduce food wastage in the production of meals on campus.	Achieved
3b	Segregate our food waste in outlets, monitoring our volumes sent to anaerobic digestion.	Achieved
3c	Trial food waste segregation in selected student accommodation with the ambition to implement a staged roll out pending review of trial.	Working Towards
3d	Trial sending food waste from an on-campus source to the KentCOG Rocket composter.	Achieved
3e	Support the Gleaning Project and Kent COG by offering storage space and capacity for redistributing produce.	Achieved
3f	Continue to offer free cooking masterclasses in our outlets to support food education	Achieved
3g	Redistribute surplus produce from the Gulbenkian and Grab and Go, through the Too Good to Go App and incorporate surpluses from other outlets	Partially Achieved
3h	Highlight/promote how food packaging can be disposed of correctly e.g. packaging design of internally produced sandwiches.	Working Towards

Narrative

Our catering teams have worked closely with staff from Sustainability and the Estates waste team to tackle food waste at every stage. Firstly, we regularly review our menus and stock ordering processes to ensure we only order what we will use. Switching to centralised production of meals and sandwiches has reduced the amount of waste from the production of meals on campus. Where we do produce food waste this is segregated and used either on-site in the Kent COG rocket composter or sent-off site for anaerobic digestion and this is monitored monthly to ensure we remain as efficient as possible.

Case Study

1) Gleaning

The University, in Partnership with Produced in Kent, have established the Canterbury-gleaning collective to collect produce from farms that would otherwise go to waste and redistribute it to those who need it.

<https://www.kent.ac.uk/student-life/sustainability/gleaning-project>

Objective 4: Support sustainability and local business through Procurement

No.	Actions	End of Year 1
4a	Create bespoke sustainability criteria and questions when tendering and choosing suppliers to work with on our catering provisions and products. We will ensure that zero tolerance to modern slavery is always a requirement.	Achieved
4b	Where the opportunities arise, we will invite students to be part of the tendering process to give their opinions on which companies/products they prefer.	Partially Achieved
4c	Identify and communicate how many of our suppliers are local, SMEs, B-Corps and/or Cooperative registered and monitor this figure annually.	Achieved
4d	Increase the access of lots to local SMEs of food/produce tenders and non-food consumables	Achieved
4e	Create minimum standards for fresh products e.g. meat, dairy, vegetables so that our suppliers and external contracts meet our expectations.	Partially Achieved

Narrative

The University is working towards encouraging SMEs and social enterprises to compete more effectively in tender processes. This will be reflected in our new internal procurement processes which will be informed by the new procurement regulations coming into force in early 2025.

We have embedded sustainability across our procurement developing bespoke questions relating to carbon emissions, supply chains, biodiversity, packaging and circular economy. We are also increasing the staff and student voice in how we choose our suppliers, holding supplier showcases and inviting staff and students to meet producers and suppliers.

Case Study

1) Garage Coffee

Local business garage Coffee is now the official coffee supplier for the University of Kent. This exciting partnership brings award-winning, locally roasted coffee to the university, supporting a popular independent business from Kent.

<https://blogs.kent.ac.uk/unikentfood/2024/08/15/kent-welcomes-garage-coffee-as-new-coffee-supplier/>

2) Kent Food summit

In October 2023 we hosted the Kent Food summit which saw over 100 key stakeholders come together to hear all about the newly established Kent Food Partnership, a cross-sector partnership between local government, education, public health, industry and community initiatives to help shape the future role of local, sustainable, healthy food in Kent. This event led to the development of the partnership's priority actions for 2024.

<https://www.sustainablefoodplaces.org/members/kent/>



Objective 5: Connect people to food

No.	Actions	End of Year 1
5a	Map local Kentish suppliers and processing units that we purchase from	Working Towards
5b	Promote local produce and food offering to clients for internal and external events as well as conferencing menus. Enhance the information available on the conferencing website about sustainable food.	Partially Achieved
5c	Utilise suitable kitchens on site as a community kitchen for local food entrepreneurs	Achieved
5d	Offer kitchen space for local food charities to use	Working Towards
5e	Source 50% of fresh herbs from university land growing space	Working Towards

Narrative

We promote food produced in our region in our outlets as well as celebrating Kentish produce through events. As sponsors of the Taste of Kent Awards we hosted the taste of Kent food festival in June 2024 showcasing over 50 amazing award finalists.

We have recently introduced a new Kentish banqueting menu as part of our internal catering offer featuring local cheeses, beef, fruits and juices.

Objective 6: Communicate and celebrate success.

No.	Actions	End of Year 1
6a	Improve the sustainability/provenance information about our menus and dishes, utilising all existing coms platforms and POS opportunities.	Working Towards
6b	Apply for Awards that support monitoring and sharing our progress.	Achieved
6c	Share best practice with Kent Food Partnership at quarterly steering group meetings.	Partly Achieved
6d	Produce a public annual report that showcases our progress to students and staff.	Achieved
6e	Actively highlight through comms and PoS advertising, cost saving promotions available within each outlet so they are obvious and accessible.	Achieved
6f	Design and seek out partnerships to support the delivery of a plant based and plant forward marketing campaign across our outlets.	Working Towards
6g	Investigate carbon labelling options for our menus/dishes.	Working Towards

Narrative

Over the last year we have regularly reviewed the promotions available and made sure these are promoted in all of our outlets. All outlets now have consistent messaging on discounts such as the 10% off hot drinks with a reusable cup and loyalty schemes such as the Plant-Based loyalty card.

We are working towards improving this over the coming year and exploring options to promote sustainability further across our outlets.

Case Study

The University of Kent have been shortlisted as finalists in the 2024 Green Gown Awards in the Benefitting Society category for our work on the Right to Food.

<https://www.greengownawards.org/university-of-kent1?cc=goldenyellow>