

University of Denver Sustainable Food Policy

Vision

This Sustainable Food Policy (the “SFP”) creates concrete sustainability goals for all aspects of the University of Denver’s food system. The SFP aims to connect students, faculty, staff, and the greater DU community through education and operational practices as a way of improving the opportunity for campus food to be more inclusive, healthy, and sustainable, benefitting regional health, economy, and ecosystems.

“Food is often considered the ‘great connector.’ Food connects us to our cultures, the stories of our ancestors, and the recipes of our grandparents. Food also connects us to the land where it is grown and to the people and businesses who grow, transport, prepare, sell, or share it. Food is what brings us together as family, friends, and strangers.” – Denver Food Vision 2017

Introduction

Campus food systems play a critical role on campus and in the community. Food provides an opportunity to include all campus users in an educational process that builds a framework for a just and sustainable future for those who grow, process, and consume food. This Sustainable food policy prioritizes inclusive campus dining experiences for all community users and their cultures, the education of employees in sustainability best practices, the education of consumers on health and wellness, local and sustainable purchasing as an anchor institution that supports a healthy local economy and ecosystem and examining the full lifecycle of food on campus. We feel these priorities best align the campus sustainability approach.

The sustainable food policy directly addresses campus sustainability goals (“25x25 Goals”) and aligns to city and regional goals. It provides a set of achievable, measurable goals in a number of categories (Table 1). The policy defines a clear partnership between the University and the food service provider. Oversight of the goals and metrics in this policy will be performed annually by the food committee of the Sustainability Council. Reporting responsibilities will include the food service providers, the Center for Sustainability, student organizations and the Food Committee of the Sustainability Council.

In this policy we acknowledge the need for education and tools around sustainability labeling by food producers. Procurement best practices fall along a complex scale of impact that varies with the priorities of an institution. Terms like Organic and Fair trade are third party certified and contain clear meaning. Other terms associated with food products such as “all natural” are not third party certified and therefore have no meaning. Certifications and benefits are also often confused. In terms of procurement, top priorities for the University of Denver include local, organic, and other sustainability certifications, in that order. We recommend the Yale Sustainable Food Purchasing Guide as a tool for understanding what these priorities mean for procurement of various food categories.

Overview

The University of Denver commits to the following principles for its primary food service provider:

- I. **Procurement:** Focus food purchasing on local, organic, and other sustainable certifications (ecological, human, and fair). Aspiring to 30% local or sustainable food purchases across for residence dining hall operations by 2025 and to see growth year over year of sustainable food items available for consumer purchase in retail and catering services;
- II. **Inclusivity:** All food service operations will focus on increasing culturally relevant menu items for a diverse student body, incorporating cultural events into the dining experience, and engage in social justice practices to address hunger on campus and in the community; Reporting will include number of relevant meal offerings and events;
- III. **Supply Chain Impact:** Understanding the life cycle impact of food on the campus operations and goals, waste diversion will be an area of focus, contributing to the campus goal of zero waste by 2035. Reporting will include pre-consumer and post-consumer waste minimization and diversion;
- IV. **Education:** Engaging food service staff and consumers, educational efforts for staff will focus on food preparation, wellness and sustainability ambassador training, food marketability to promote Sustainable food, food preservation to better incorporate seasonal food, and waste minimization techniques. Consumer education will focus on procurement, culturally relevant meals, and waste practices. Reporting will include number and type of training and assessment to determine effectiveness;
- V. **Wellness:** The food service provider is expected to implement training programs for consumers, to include information on general nutrition, plant-based proteins, and food labels. Reporting will include number and type of training and assessment to determine effectiveness;
- VI. **Community Participation:** The University will encourage representation in Denver Institutional Food Procurement and the Denver Food Vision groups to participate in economies of scale from working with other large institutions while emphasizing the influence of the University on the community. Reporting will include information sharing and reporting on meetings attended;
- VII. **Research:** A commitment to continuing to enhance these sustainability goals will be reflected in the review and testing of new approaches for improving the sustainability of campus food systems. Reporting will include summary of research and its outcomes;
- VIII. **Operational certifications:** The University and the food service provider will certify at least one dining facility through one of the following third-party green

business certification programs: (1) Denver Green Kitchen Certification or the city of Denver's "green business" program, (2) Green Seal's Restaurants and Food Services Operations certification program, or (3) the Green Restaurant Association certification program. Reporting will include certificate of completion of certification;

- IX. **Oversight and Communication:** The food committee of the Sustainability Council will continue to meet quarterly to assist with measurement, review plans, progress, and update goals. Reporting will include an annual update of recommendation to the Sustainability Council each September;
- X. **Reporting:** Food service providers will provide quarterly reports on all aspects of the policy described here, quarterly and annual reports and goals will be shared with the Sustainability Council, and the Dining Advisory Committee. This report will be shared on the Sustainability website, food service provider website, in dining halls, and through other university communications. New goals will be set annually by the food committee as interim steps to campus diversion rate goals.

Table 1: Sustainable Food Policy Categories, Metrics and Goals

	Metric	Goal
Procurement		
Defining sustainable food	Local (250 mi) Grown OR Processed	Determine baseline for RFC + Sustainable food Goal of 30% local or sustainable food purchased by 2025
	Ecologically certified	Goal of 30% local or sustainable food purchased by 2025
	Humane certifications	Goal of 30% local or sustainable food purchased by 2025
	Fair certifications	Goal of 30% local or sustainable food purchased by 2025
Inclusivity		
Culturally representative menu	Meals per week as tagged in menu cycle per hall*	Determine baseline in first year
Cultural events	Number per year*	Determine baseline in first year
Social justice	Food provided to students with hunger on campus (pounds donated, meals donated)**	Determine baseline in first year
Supply Chain Impact		
Food diversion	Pounds diverted to address hunger (FRN)**	Decrease donations by 5-10% over prior 3 yr average
	Pre-consumer waste per person (Lean Path)*	Determine baseline in first year
	Post-consumer waste per person (Weight the Waste)**	Decrease per person
	Compost (Alpine Waste and Recycling)**	Increase overall compost collected, year over year
Education		
Formal Staff training on: 1) food preparation, 2) wellness and sustainability ambassador training, 3) food marketability to promote Sustainable food, 4) food preservation to better incorporate seasonal food,	Description of annual plan**	Implement educational programming

5) waste minimization techniques		
Student education: 1) waste reduction and 2) cultural food	Description of annual educational events*	Implement educational programming
Wellness (consumer focused)		
Plant based protein options	Measure number of options at every meal*	Option available at every meal*
Food labeling	Percentage of food with nutritional info *	Labeling available for all meal options *
Education	Number of programs or materials shared on food and wellness*	One per quarter per dining facility
Community Participation		
Farm to Institution working group	University representation, participation**	Attend meetings
Denver Food Vision working group	University representation, participation**	Attend meetings
Research		
Review technology and research new opportunities to increase sustainability	Number of projects reviewed by committee**	At least one new technology or opportunity evaluated annually, implemented when appropriate
Operational Certifications		
Certifiably Green Denver	Venues certified**	One venue certified (could include HRTM)
Oversight and Communication		
Food committee will continue to meet quarterly to assist with measurement, review plan, progress, update goals	Annual update recommendation to Sustainability Council in September**	Update presented annually
Reporting		
Sodexo and HRTM will provide a quarterly report on items in this matrix (*), Center for Sustainability will assist on some of the items (**)	Report completed *,**	Report shared quarterly on Sustainability website, Sodexo website, scorecard in dining halls, list serv
Case study/story of successful program	Story completed*,**	At least one story shared broadly annually
Quarterly and annual reports, and goals will be shared with the Sustainability Council, and the Dining Advisory Committee	Reports completed*,**	Reports shared quarterly

* indicates responsibility of food service provider

** indicates responsibility of University of Denver, Center for Sustainability and Facilities Planning and Management

- I. **Procurement:** Focus food purchasing on local, organic, and other sustainable certifications (ecological, human, and fair). Aspiring to 30% local or sustainable food purchases across for residence dining hall operations by 2025. Goal of 40% local or sustainable food items available for consumer purchase catering services. Begin baseline reporting of plant based materials purchased.
- a. **25X25 goals:** Purchase 40% of food from local or sustainably certified sources.
- b. **Description:** Locally raised or produced and/or sustainably certified food contains many benefits. These benefits range from economic (local or community based), to environmental benefits to ecosystems or other species (Certified bird friendly, organic, rainforest certified, etc), to benefits to workers (Fair Trade Certified, Fair Food Program, etc), or to animals through humane treatment (AGA certified grassfed, Animal Welfare Approved, etc). Third party certifications that qualify for sustainable food are identified below. Local and community-based products must be verified by the University of Denver, using parameters defined below.
- c. **Parties Responsible:** Sodexo and HRTM

Third party certified

Recognized food and beverage sustainability standards

Ecologically Sound

- Certified Bird Friendly (coffee)
- Certified Local Sustainable (Canada)
- Certified Organic under an IFOAM-endorsed standard, e.g.:
- Canada Organic Biologique
- EU Organic
- Red Mexicana de Tianguis y Mercados Org.nicos
- USDA Certified Organic
- Demeter Certified Biodynamic
- Food Alliance Certified
- Marine Stewardship Council certified
- Monterey Bay Aquarium Seafood Watch “Green - Best Choices“ (if unavailable, “Yellow - Good Alternatives“ and “Recommended Eco-Certifications” will count)
- Protected Harvest Certified
- Rainforest Alliance Certified
- Salmon Safe Certified
- Sea Choice “Green - Best Choice” (if unavailable, “Yellow - Some Concerns” will count)

Fair

- Ecocert Fair Trade certified (EFT)
- Equitable Food Initiative certified (EFI)
- Fair Food Program (Fair Food Standards Council / Coalition of Immokalee Workers) (tomatoes)
- Fair for Life and other IMO certifications
- FAIRTRADE Mark (e.g. Fairtrade Canada, Fairtrade America)
- Fair Trade Certified (Fair Trade USA)
- FairWild Certified
- Food Justice Certified (Agricultural Justice Project)
- Small Producers' Symbol (FUNDEPPO)

Humane

- AGA-Certified Grassfed
- Animal Welfare Approved
- Certified Humane Raised and Handled
- Demeter Certified Biodynamic
- Global Animal Partnership Certified (Steps 3-5+ only)
- PCO Certified 100% Grassfed
- Institutions located outside the U.S. and Canada may use equivalent credible sustainability claims and
- certifications to identify ecologically sound, fair and humane products.

Local

The product is grown, raised or caught within 250 miles of the institution. All production or processing occurs within 250 miles. Meat and dairy products from Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations may not be counted as local.

Community-Based

Community-based producers are independently or cooperatively owned enterprises engaged in growing, raising, harvesting, processing and/or manufacturing food or beverage products. Distributors, bottlers, and packers are excluded. The majority owner(s) of the enterprise must be local community members with full autonomy and decision-making authority with respect to business practices. Distributors, bottlers, and packers are excluded

Plant-based food and beverage products include:

- Unprocessed or minimally processed fruits, vegetables, whole grains, legumes, mushrooms, nuts, seeds, herbs, and spices (including cereal grains and flours; plain oatmeal, pasta, and noodles; fruit or vegetable juices without additives; tea and coffee).
- Processed culinary ingredients derived from the plant-based foods listed above or from nature (e.g., vegetable oils crushed from seeds, nuts, or fruits such as olives;

starches extracted from corn and other plants; sugar and molasses obtained from cane or beet; honey extracted from combs and syrup from maple trees; salt mined or from seawater; soy sauce and vinegar).

- Processed vegetarian vegan products made essentially by adding culinary ingredients to the plant-based foods listed above or that are designed to replace animal products (e.g., canned or bottled vegetables, fruits, and legumes; salted or sugared nuts and seeds; fruits in syrup; wine, beer, and cider; breads; cereal products such as flavored oatmeal; tofu and tempeh; meat and dairy alternatives).

Short food supply chain

Short food supply chains (SFSCs) are defined as supply chains with a minimal number of intermediaries (ideally, no more than one) between identified farms, boats, or harvesters, and an institution. SFSCs pass transparent information about the origin, production method, and sustainability of the product to the consumer and provide full traceability through all stages of production, processing, and distribution. Examples include direct sales, contract production, regional food hubs, regional farm-to-institution programs, organic growers' cooperatives, and community-supported fishery programs.

For more information, see the [Short Supply Chain Knowledge and Innovation Network \(SKIN\)](#) and [Short food supply chains and local food systems in the EU](#) (European Commission).

Small producer

Consistent with [FLOCERT](#), Fairtrade International, and the World Fair Trade Organization (WFTO), a small producer or small-scale producer is “a producer who is not structurally dependent on permanent hired labour” and who manages their production activity mainly with a family or owner-operator workforce.

- Metrics:*** Amount of local and/or sustainable food that is purchased, in total cost and as a percentage of the total food spend.
- Goals:*** 30% food from local or sustainably certified sources in dining halls, 40% local or sustainably sourced options on catering menu.

- II. **Inclusivity:** All food service operations will focus on increasing culturally relevant menu items for a diverse student body, incorporating cultural events into the dining experience, and engage in social justice practices to address hunger on campus and in the community;
- a. **25X25 goals:** Provide training in sustainability through a social justice lens for all students and employees.
 - b. **Description:** Inclusivity is the intentional act of including people who might otherwise be excluded or marginalized. Creating an inclusive environment for students and university employees helps create a more unified campus through fostering an environment of compassion and understanding. Inclusivity helps students relate to others of different races, nations, and religions, and helps create greater awareness of social problems. Students who perceive their campus climate as inclusive and nondiscriminatory show greater willingness to accept intellectual challenges. Food service operations can help accomplish this in three ways: 1) having a culturally representative menu; 2) hosting cultural events in the dining halls; and 3) addressing hunger on campus through a social justice lens.
 - c. **Parties Responsible:** Sodexo and Center for Sustainability
 - d. **Metrics:**
 - 1) Culturally Inspired Representative Menu: Meals per week as tagged in menu cycle per hall
 - 2) Cultural Events: Maintain or grow number per year and maintain or grow year over year participation
 - 3) Social Justice: Maintain programs that provided food to students, campus employees, and community members with hunger on campus (pounds donated from catering, meals donated, food pantry access)
 - e. **Goals:** All goals will be determined later based off the baseline created by the first year this policy is implemented.

- III. **Supply Chain Impact:** Understanding the life cycle impact of food on the campus operations and goals, waste diversion will be an area of focus, contributing to the campus goal of zero waste by 2035;
- a. **25X25 goals:** Achieve a 70% diversion rate, on the way to a waste-free campus.
 - b. **Description:** Food waste is an issue not only in college campus dining halls but across America in general. Food waste not only is a social justice issue but an environmental one as well. Curbing food waste is not an easy task, but one that may be solved through many different approaches. The University may curb food waste in four ways: 1) diverting food waste to address hunger in the Denver metro area; 2) diverting food waste to compost; 3) decreasing the amount of food waste per person pre-consumer; and 4) decreasing the amount of food waste per person post-consumer. By diverting food waste to address hunger through the DU Food Recovery Network or by diverting it to compost, DU invests back in the community and the environment addressing both the social justice and environmental issues created by food waste. Educating food service staff and using Lean Path and other programs to track how much food should be prepared in the dining halls or other food service outlets will help cut down on food waste before it even may be purchased by consumers. Educating students on how much food is wasted after being purchased will help involve students in making better choices on how much food they should purchase. All of these approaches help involve students, employees, and the community in lowering the amount of food wasted across the DU campus.
 - c. **Parties Responsible:** Sodexo, Facilities Planning and Management, Center for Sustainability
 - d. **Metrics:**
 - 1) Pounds diverted to address hunger (Food Recovery Network or like organizations)
 - 2) Pre-consumer waste per person (Lean Path)
 - 3) Post-consumer waste per person (Lean Path and Weigh the Waste)
 - 4) Compost (Alpine Waste and Recycling)
 - e. **Goals:**
 - 1) Decrease donations by 5-10% over prior 3-year average
 - 2) Goal will be determined later based off the baseline created by the first year this policy is implemented.
 - 3) Decrease per person post-consumer food waste
 - 4) Increase overall compost diversion rates, year over year

IV. **Education:** Engaging food service staff and consumers, educational efforts for staff will focus on food preparation, wellness and sustainability ambassador training, food marketability to promote sustainable food, food preservation to better incorporate seasonal food, and waste minimization techniques. Consumer education will focus on procurement, culturally relevant meals, and waste practices.

a. **25X25 goals:**

- 1) Purchase 40% of food from local or sustainably certified sources;
- 2) Achieve a 70% diversion rate, on the way to a waste-free campus by 2035.

b. **Description:** Educational efforts in food service are meant to be expansive, with a focus on both staff and customers. On the staff side, professional development and trainings will better prepare staff to meet sustainability goals, while also providing them the tools to talk to customers about food, especially in terms of wellness and sustainability. These trainings will include best practices in food preparation and food preservation, with an emphasis on providing high quality food options that include local, seasonal foods. A focus on wellness and sustainability attributes of food will allow staff to better describe these characteristics to better inform customers. Best practices in waste will continue to be a focus of staff trainings in order to progress on university waste diversion goals, ensuring effective recycling and composting out of all dining facilities.

Customer education will continue to be a means of highlighting dining sustainability initiatives. This education will focus on three main areas. Purchasing goals and accomplishments will be emphasized through labeling and education about local and sustainably certified food. Education regarding waste goals will target post-consumer (front of house) waste by measuring and informing customers about food waste per person, with programming to reduce this waste. Cultural food and events will continue to be used to educate customers on food and practices from around the world, stressing food as a connector.

c. **Parties Responsible:** Sodexo and Center for Sustainability.

d. **Metrics:** Description of annual educational plans

e. **Goals:** Implement educational programming for staff and customers

- V. **Wellness:** the food service provider is expected to implement training programs for consumers, to include information on general nutrition, plant-based proteins, and food labels. These are to include assessment in time to determine effectiveness;
- a. **25X25 goals:** Engage the entire DU community in sustainability programming or practice.
 - b. **Description:** Sustainability and wellness are closely linked. A sustainable food system not only supports a healthy local economy and ecosystem, but also ensures food security and access to high-quality, nutrient-dense foods at the population level. At the consumer level, individuals can adopt eating patterns that have health benefits for themselves as well as the greater environment. For example, eating more fruits and vegetables while eating less meat and processed foods increases fiber and nutrient intake and decreases saturated fat, trans fat, and caloric intake while decreasing greenhouse gas emissions and energy usage required for food production. Eating organic foods can decrease consumers' intake of pesticide residues while helping to maintain and improve soil quality. Last, eating mindfully and eating smaller portions can help decrease overeating while minimizing food waste. The dining facility environment, including food options and nutritional information provided as well as educational initiatives can help consumers eat in a way that benefits personal and environmental health.
 - c. **Parties Responsible:** Sodexo and Center for Sustainability
 - d. **Metrics:**
 - 1) Number of plant-based protein options at every meal.
 - 2) Percentage of food labeled with nutritional information.
 - 3) Number of educational programs or materials shared on food and wellness.
 - e. **Goals:**
 - 1) At least one plant-based complete protein vegan option at every meal.
 - 2) Nutrition label 100% available for all food in dining halls (online/phone app).
 - 3) One educational program or material on food and wellness shared per quarter per dining facility.

- VI. **Community Participation:** The University will encourage representation in Denver Institutional Food Procurement and the Denver Food Vision groups to participate in economies of scale from working with other large institutions while emphasizing the influence of the University on the community.
- a. **25X25 goals:** Advance DU's role as an anchor institution by supporting and investing in local, women and minority owned, and alumni-owned businesses.
 - b. **Description:** Modern food systems are complex. An underlying goal of this policy is to develop and support a robust local food system. Given the size and value of annual food procurement, the University has the opportunity to affect major change in the regional system. Participating in city and regional discussions on procurement will amplify economies of scale and align DU with broader efforts in improving food systems, from production, to processing, to distribution. Participation in these discussions will also provide valuable educational opportunities regarding institutional procurement practices. Participation in these discussions may be by food service staff, sustainability staff, or students. Sharing of information will occur in committee meetings and written reports. Participation in procurement or development opportunities will be reviewed as they are identified.
 - c. **Parties Responsible:** Sodexo, Sustainability Council, Center for Sustainability
 - d. **Metrics:** Participation in city and regional meetings.
 - e. **Goals:** Participation in city and regional meetings and sharing the results of these meetings across campus stakeholders and in annual reports.

- VII. **Research:** a commitment to continuing to enhance these sustainability goals will be reflected in the review and testing of new approaches for improving the sustainability of campus food systems.
- a. **25X25 goals:** Develop an Interdisciplinary Institute to serve as the backbone to support community engaged collective impact through curriculum and research.
 - b. **Description:** The enhancement of sustainability goals is done through the collection of data and research, the creation of opportunities for innovation and creativity to propose and test new systems, and the collaboration of students, university employees, and food service staff. Committing to continue to enhance these sustainability goals allows these goals to evolve with needs of the surrounding community, the diverse student population, and environmental needs of Colorado. Without this commitment, today's goals may become obsolete in a matter of years or even months. This commitment ensures that these goals will make a lasting impact on the DU campus for generations to come.
 - c. **Parties Responsible:** Center for Sustainability and Sodexo
 - d. **Metrics:** Number of technology and research projects to increase sustainability reviewed by committee
 - e. **Goals:** All goals will be determined later based off the baseline created by the first year this policy is implemented.

VIII. **Operational Certifications:** The University and the food service provider will certify at least one dining facility through one of the following third-party green business certification programs: (1) Denver Green Kitchen Certification or the city of Denver’s “green business” program, (2) Green Seal’s Restaurants and Food Services Operations certification program, or (3) the Green Restaurant Association certification program.

a. **25X25 goals:**

- i. Reduce carbon emissions by 24% by 2020 and 45% by 2025 from 2006 levels.
- ii. Achieve a 70% diversion rate, on the way to a waste free campus by 2035.
- iii. Reduce indoor water use by 30% from 2007 levels.

b. **Description:** Operational certifications provide ways to adopt best practices across all operations. These certifications examine energy, water, cleaning, waste and recycling, purchasing, building materials, wellness and education. By completing this certification, the food service provider will show compliance with top sustainability practices. These programs are voluntary and non-regulatory, and in most cases provide education and technical assistance on regional environmental issues. Benefits of participation often include reduced costs for energy and water, improved waste diversion rates, and buildings that are healthier for their inhabitants and employees. Certifying locations also allows them to advertise the certification at the food service location, and typically allows them to be listed publicly, providing clear identification and advertising.

c. **Parties Responsible:** HRTM or Sodexo, with Facilities Planning and Management and Center for Sustainability

d. **Metrics:** Number of venues certified

e. **Goals:** Certify at least one dining facility

- IX. **Oversight and Communication:** the food committee of the Sustainability Council will continue to meet quarterly to assist with measurement, review plans, progress, and update goals, providing an annual update of recommendation to the Sustainability Council in September.
- a. **25X25 goals:** Engage the entire DU community in sustainability programming or practice.
 - b. **Description:** The food committee should be comprised of at least: 2 Undergraduate Students; 1 Graduate Student; 1 Law Student; 1-2 Faculty Members; 1 Staff Advisory Council member; 1 Well @ DU staff member; 1 DU Health and Counseling Center staff member; 1 Housing and Residential Education Staff member; 1 Center for Sustainability staff member; 1-2 Food Service staff members; and 1-2 Sodexo staff members. The committee should not be limited to the preceding list and anyone who is interested in being part of this committee is welcome. Creating this committee helps engage the entire DU community in ensuring that this policy and these goals continue to grow and serve the needs of the DU campus.
 - c. **Parties Responsible:** Sustainability Council
 - d. **Metrics:** Annual update recommendation to Sustainability Council in September
 - e. **Goals:** All goals will be determined later based off the baseline created by the first year this policy is implemented.

- X. **Reporting:** Sodexo and HRTM will provide quarterly reports on all aspects of the policy described here, quarterly and annual reports and goals will be shared with the Sustainability Council, and the Dining Advisory Committee. This report will be shared on the Sustainability website, Sodexo website, a scorecard in dining halls, and other university communications. Goals will be set annually by the food committee as interim steps to campus diversion rate goals.
- a. **25X25 goals:** Engage the entire DU community in sustainability programming or practice.
 - b. **Description:** Reporting not only holds Sodexo, HRTM, and other key players accountable in the implementation of these goals but allows others in the DU community the opportunity to ask questions and spot potential issues in the implementation of these goals.
 - c. **Parties Responsible:** Sodexo, HRTM, Food Committee of Sustainability Council
 - d. **Metrics:** Share on Sustainability website, Sodexo website, scorecard in dining halls, and on listserv.
 - e. **Goals:** All goals will be determined later based off the baseline created by the first year this policy is implemented.