



SUSTAINABILITY · UVA
From the Grounds Up

UNIVERSITY OF VIRGINIA
**SUSTAINABLE FOOD
ACTION PLAN**
V1.0 October 2018

Contents

Introduction	3
University Sustainable Food Goals	3
Purpose of the Action Plan	3
Increase the Percentage of Sustainable Food and Beverage Options Available on Grounds	5
Improve access to community-based producers in UVA supply chain	5
Increase sourcing of local foods	5
Increase plant based options	5
Reduce Food Waste and Single-Use Food Serving Items Sent to the Landfill by 2030	6
Implement systemic change to minimize food waste in food preparation	6
Implement systemic changes to minimize food waste in food consumption	6
Implement systemic changes to minimize food waste with caterers serving UVA events	7
Reduce the Energy and Water Impact of Dining Operations	7
Explore Green Restaurant Certifications for feasible Dining locations	7
Increase Awareness of Sustainable Food Systems and Translate Heightened Awareness into Informed Choices	8
Develop a positive and comprehensive food messaging campaign to educate the UVA community	8
Strategically create events and use existing events to achieve goal	8
Develop signage to communicate sustainable food characteristics	8
Promote and facilitate food studies and research on grounds	8
Collaborate within UVA and the Region to Advance Sustainable Food Systems in the Broader Community	9
Form institutional partnerships in the broader community and share best practices	9
Grow the supply of local food available for UVA and partner Virginia institutions	10
Facilitate collaborative strategies for increased purchase of local foods	10

Introduction

University Sustainable Food Goals

In 2016, UVA launched its first [Sustainability Plan](#) and outlined both long-term goals and short-term actions through 2020. The Sustainability Plan, developed by the University Committee on Sustainability and facilitated by the Office for Sustainability, is based on ideas and recommendations from over one hundred students, staff, and faculty from across Grounds. The plan lays out a framework by which our educational, operational, and financial resources will be mobilized to achieve significant positive environmental and societal impacts across a broad range of scales from local to global. The framework is organized around three interrelated themes -- Engage, Steward, and Discover. Each theme includes a set of specific goals and objectives that will be addressed over the next four years, together with the corresponding approaches and timelines by which these objectives will be achieved. A lead unit or group is identified and will have primary responsibility for addressing each objective in collaboration with relevant stakeholders. The University Committee on Sustainability and Office for Sustainability will be responsible for overseeing implementation of the plan, including tracking metrics and reporting on progress.

The Sustainability Plan's Stewardship section highlights 5 important goals addressing sustainable food practices at UVA. The 5 goals are identified below:

- Increase the Percentage of Sustainable Food and Beverage Options Available on Grounds
- Reduce Food Waste and Single-Use Food Serving Items Sent to the Landfill by 2030
- Reduce the Energy and Water Impact of Dining Operations
- Increase Awareness of Sustainable Food Systems and Translate Heightened Awareness into Informed Choices
- Collaborate within UVA and the Region to Advance Sustainable Food Systems in the Broader Community

Purpose of the Action Plan

The primary purpose of UVA's Sustainable Food Action Plan is to bring alignment and clarity to UVA staff, faculty, students, and alumni actively and collaboratively implementing strategies within the plan. The Sustainable Food Action Plan also aims to provide the UVA community and its partners with a transparent roadmap of specific strategies for how the University plans to meet its Sustainable food goals. The Action Plan is and will continue to be updated as needed, to incorporate new and innovative ideas and technologies. Each version of the Action Plan will be presented to the University Committee on Sustainability for review. For each key area outlined in the plan, detailed implementation plans will be developed in order to fully realize projects.

This Sustainable Food Action Plan was developed by the Sustainable Food Strategy Task Force (SFSTF), facilitated by the Office for Sustainability and comprised of individuals across several disciplines in Dining, Academia, Facilities Management, and Events. This plan outlines five key goals that address sustainable food at UVA including procurement, waste, operations, awareness, and community partnerships.

A commitment to advancing food justice cuts across all five goals. The SFSTF understands food justice to extend far beyond the issue of access to food. It implies a holistic understanding of the rights of communities to shape the production, distribution, preparation, and enjoyment of healthy, culturally reflective food. It relates the health of individuals to the stewardship of natural resources and the rights of workers. Advancing food justice requires taking

leadership from historically marginalized communities and continually assessing the potential for negative impacts of initiatives on these communities. The SFSTF acknowledges that our nation's current food system was shaped by histories of genocide, slavery, and segregation, and that structural inequities persist into the present day. Given the depth and pervasiveness of harm across generations, a commitment to advancing food justice must be a permanent and fully embedded core value within the Sustainable Food Action Plan.

This Action Plans complements strategies within the Greenhouse Gas, Water, Materials and Waste, and Nitrogen Action Plans.

Increase the Percentage of Sustainable Food and Beverage Options Available on Grounds

The University of Virginia strives to be a leader in sustainable food and beverage procurement. Currently, 8 percent of UVA's dining purchases is considered sustainable by the Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education (AASHE) standards. This percentage is significant given the quantities of food purchased by the University. **UVA wishes to increase its percentage of sustainable food and beverage purchases to 20 percent of total purchases by 2030.** In 2017, UVA Dining achieved an impressive 2 percent increase in sustainable food purchases from 6.7 to 8.6 percent, and wishes to continue this trend. To maintain consistent progress towards this goal, the Sustainable Food task force is aiming to help UVA Dining continuously **increase sustainable food purchases by 2-3 percent annually until 2030.** It also hopes to establish similar metrics for dining services at Darden Business School and UVA Health System. By increasing sustainable food and beverage options on Grounds, UVA hopes to also reduce the social and environmental impacts of food production, foster local economies and food security, improve soil and water conditions, support sustainable farming practices, protect the health of animals, and secure livelihoods for farmers.

To track this progress, UVA Dining has adopted [AASHE STARS metrics](#) to measure changes in annual sustainable purchases. AASHE STARS will also allow UVA to benchmark its success in relation to comparable institutions regionally and nationwide.

To help increase sustainable food and beverage purchases, UVA will implement the following strategies:

Improve access to community-based producers in UVA supply chain

- Work with local distributors to increase access to small farms that have achieved Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) certification. This certification is required by most commercial scale food buyers to ensure food safety standards have been met.
- Increase local vendor pop-ups to bring local products onto Grounds and increase support of local food entrepreneurs.
- Continue hosting farmers markets on-Grounds at events such as Earth Week and Sustainability Days, with the goal of increasing frequency to at least 2 times per academic semester.

Increase sourcing of local foods

- Streamline sourcing ability from Local Food Hub to improve ease of ordering for dining locations. Work with approved distributors to modify ordering system to be more user friendly to increase frequency of locations choosing to order local produce.
- Set purchasing goals by dining location to increase overall sustainable purchasing across Dining.
- Work with locations to ensure local produce is ordered during peak of season through monthly communication of available produce in Virginia.
- Collaborate with other Virginia universities to strengthen our regional food system to help small meat, produce and dairy farmers compete with the volume and price points of larger producers.

Increase plant based options

- Research Menus of Change (<http://www.menusofchange.org>), a framework for implementing more sustainable menus in institutional dining environments. UVA Dining personnel will attend the Summer 2018 Menus of Change symposium and bring lessons learned and innovative ideas back to Grounds.

- Apply Menus of Change concept to Castle dining when it reopens in the Fall of 2018, and then use in at least 1 other dining venue, possibly a residential dining facility, in 2019.
- Test and implement the use of the “blended burgers” as a substitute for 100% beef burgers (blended burgers are 80% local Virginia beef and 20% mushrooms, inspired by James Beard Foundation) at all residential dining facilities. Explore expansion to other UVA dining facilities.
- Expand meat-free options option at each food station at more dining locations. Explore expansion to other UVA dining facilities.
- Explore introducing Meatless Monday options on a regular basis in dining facilities.
- Educate students about both the environmental and health benefits of plant-based eating, and how to maintain a plant-based diet while maintaining proper nutrition.

Reduce Food Waste and Single-Use Food Serving Items Sent to the Landfill by 2030

UVA seeks to **decrease the amount of food waste landfilled from its dining facilities and events on-Grounds by 2030**. In addition to this food waste goal, UVA is working towards reducing total waste sent to the landfill to 2,000 tons annually by 2035 as well as reducing the total tonnage of waste generated at UVA 50 percent below 2014 amounts by 2035. Any progress made towards reducing food waste will also help UVA achieve these other sustainability goals.

Currently, the University does not have a strong grasp on the amount of food and food-related items (e.g., plates) it landfills each year. The first step in addressing this goal is to perform periodic landfill audit of its dining facilities to determine the amount of food waste and single food service items that are disposed of within Dining’s facilities. Ideally, a landfill audit of dining will determine current waste of the following items:

- Single service items that are non-recyclable such as: plates, cups and plastic utensils.
- Storage waste (food that expires in storage).
- Both back of house (pre-consumer) and front of house (post-consumer) food waste.

By performing this audit UVA will be able to benchmark its food waste in these distinct areas, develop a measurable reduction goal, and begin tracking its food waste reduction strategies over time. This effort will include stakeholders from both UVA Recycling and UVA Dining to ensure the results of this audit will be used to encourage behavioral change in dining facilities. Food waste reduction strategies include improved education and messaging for staff, students, and faculty, as well as implementing more responsible waste practices for dining staff and catered events. For more information on UVA waste reduction strategies in general, please refer to the Waste and Materials Action Plan on the UVA sustainability website at <https://sustainability.virginia.edu/news/reports.html>.

Implement systemic change to minimize food waste in food preparation

- Educate food service personnel about importance of minimizing food waste.
- Improve methods of food preparation and distribution.
- Encourage use of food waste tracking tools, such as LeanPath, to inform future reduction strategies.

Implement systemic changes to minimize food waste in food consumption

- Increase food waste education efforts aimed at students by placing clear messaging by waste bins so waste reduction can occur front of house.
- Provide samples of new food and more customizable options in the dining halls by piloting at themed meal days. Weigh waste to see if food waste decreases on days when samples are available. Pilot this at least two times this semester.
- Explore how to establish a metric for measuring reduction in contamination of composting due to new signage in partnership with Black Bear.
- Work with Global Sustainability professors and students to develop recommendations for signage to reduce contamination and increase composting practices.

Implement systemic changes to minimize food waste with caterers serving UVA events

- Continue to improve production planning to have little or no excess food leftover after large events.
- Improve marketing and awareness of catering companies' ability to make events Zero Waste.
- Research the concept of a diminishing buffet as a way to reduce food waste and test the concept with pilot projects.

Reduce the Energy and Water Impact of Dining Operations

Dining operations at UVA occur in a number of multi-use buildings across Grounds including dining halls and student activity centers. These operations require a significant amount of energy and water each day to run equipment and effectively serve students, staff, and faculty food. Overall, dining operations on grounds use approximately 130 million kBtu and 12 million gallons of water per year, or 3 percent UVA's total annual energy and water use. A reduction in the energy and water impacts of dining operations will help UVA meet its sustainability goals for energy, water, and nitrogen reductions.

Several of the strategies that have been identified to improve the energy and water impacts of dining operations are already published in the University's Greenhouse Gas Action Plan and Water Action Plan, respectively. These strategies include systematic energy and water technology rollouts within buildings, a focus on incorporating more renewable energy into UVA's purchased electricity, and behavioral change activities in buildings that will focus on reducing both energy and water. For more information on these strategies, refer to the GHG and Water Action Plans on the UVA sustainability website at <https://sustainability.virginia.edu/news/reports.html>. In addition to the strategies already published, UVA will implement the following strategies:

Improve Energy and Water Accounting

- Explore the possibility of sub-metering energy and water usage of dining operations in mixed-use buildings.

Explore Green Restaurant Certifications for feasible Dining locations

- UVA Dining previously partnered with the Green Restaurant Association to review and rate O'Hill Dining, Fresh Food Company and the Fine Arts Café. This association identified opportunities for energy and water savings in these locations. Where feasible, UVA will explore additional options to partner with the Green Restaurant Association, contract with other third-parties, or use in-house expertise, to audit the remaining dining facilities and identify dining-specific energy and water reduction opportunities.

Increase Awareness of Sustainable Food Systems and Translate Heightened Awareness into Informed Choices

Raising awareness for sustainable food systems is critical to allow the UVA community to make knowledgeable food decisions that impact on our environment, health and economy. Concerted educational campaigns promoting the sustainable food options being incorporated into the daily dining experiences at UVA, will help alter cultural norms and develop a food system that better reflects the sustainable values of the community.

To establish a baseline and measurable goal related to increasing awareness of sustainable food systems and encouraging informed choices, the Food Strategies Task Force plans to conduct a biennial survey of student awareness, preferences, and willingness to pay more for sustainably sourced foods. The survey results will be analyzed and used to create targeted information campaigns, and set annual milestones for increased awareness and literacy. These results will be made available the UVA community.

Develop a positive and comprehensive food messaging campaign to educate the UVA community

- Collaborate with stakeholders to develop consistent messaging that can be used by all dining facilities including those managed by Aramark, Darden, and Morrison.
- Utilize sustainable food survey results to introduce a targeted annual food campaign that runs for at least 1 month every year. This campaign would include specific outreach and social media strategies to cover food waste, purchasing, supporting and connecting to local food community. Timing options include September, the beginning of the semester and the Office for Sustainability's designated food month, or April, which is regarded as Food Justice Month. Ideally, a post campaign survey will also be administered to measure the campaigns success and inform future engagement efforts.
- Increase coordination and linkages between sustainability's online presence including the Office for Sustainability and the Food Collaborative websites as well as social media platforms. The Food Collaborative website will also be the archive for student information and research.
- Collaborate with student-run Contracted Independent Organizations (CIOs) that have overlapping goals to support their efforts and to enhance our own through partnerships.

Strategically create events and use existing events to achieve goal

- Garner greater involvement from student organizations for the Food Film Forum, and always include at least 1 student on panel discussions, provide food.
- Develop food-specific events or symposia that have an educational component. Participants will be provided with clear ideas of actions or choices they can make or events they can attend (food for thought and action). As an example, UVA will create a UVA Food Research Symposium that includes researchers, local grounds, and student leaders. The research presented at the Symposium will be posted on the Food Collaborative website.

Develop signage to communicate sustainable food characteristics

- Create awareness among faculty by providing tours of dining facilities and discussing sustainable goals.
- Continue to study the impact of Sustainability Food Labels on consumption patterns, and then implement them across dining locations.

Promote and facilitate food studies and research on grounds

- Identify opportunities, such as research projects and surveys that can examine effectiveness of signage, staff communication, and information available in dining locations.
- Incorporate and mentor food research into student projects and curriculum, particularly by involving Morven Kitchen Garden (MKG) and the Student Garden.
- Define and begin tracking metrics (e.g., the number of student projects that incorporate food research, the number of curriculum requirements that incorporate food research) to measure success at the University.

Collaborate within UVA and the Region to Advance Sustainable Food Systems in the Broader Community

UVA seeks to transform its relationship with the Charlottesville and surrounding region through intentional and deliberate actions to serve and support the community. One pathway for UVA to serve and support its broader community is to support a vibrant, thriving, and just local food system that attracts and retains new farmers, protects our environment, and provides equitable and affordable access to healthy foods. UVA offers a wealth of resources that can be used for this purpose - research, curricular, education and outreach, as well as its own food procurement.

UVA Dining serves 67,000 meals each week in 30 locations, UVA Health System serves 56,251 meals each week, and Darden dining serves between 3,500 to 5,000 guests each week. Thus, a small shift in UVA's food supply chain carries enormous economic power to impact the regional food and agriculture economy, and offers an unusual opportunity for providing positive long-term support to the regional food system. This goal articulates a clear intention by UVA to serve and support a vibrant, thriving and just local food system through intentional and deliberate action that is taken in collaboration with, and support of, its local and regional food system.

To support the advancement of sustainable food systems in the University's local and regional food system, and to build a relationship of trust and partnership with the community, the SFSTF has adopted these goals.

Form institutional partnerships in the broader community and share best practices

- Form institutional partnerships in the broader community and share best practices. These partnerships will include working with the Charlottesville Food Justice Network and other local NGOs to explore ways to elevate awareness about and to address issues of food justice and equity at the University and in the community, including the enduring legacy of harm of a food system dependent on enslaved labor. Partnerships also will be nurtured with organizations that are supporting and growing the regional food and agricultural system, such as the Local Food Hub, Virginia Food System Council, Virginia Cooperative Extension, and others.
- The Morven Food Lab at Morven Farm will be both a physical space and an organizational structure that is set to bring together food-related initiatives across the University, including the UVA Food Collaborative, the University's Sustainable Food Strategy Task Force, the Morven Summer Institute and the Morven Kitchen Garden. The Morven Food Lab will host student research as well as collaboration with community based organization such as the Local Food Hub, City Schoolyard Garden and CFJN.
- Continue to work with MKG to offer opportunities for students to learn, lead, and engage in issues relating to sustainable food systems. SFSTF members will work with MKG to promote these exciting opportunities and reach a larger audience. Opportunities include weekly volunteer workdays where students, faculty, staff, and community can work in the garden, student leadership positions on our MKG Executive Board, an expanded garden internship program that provides both paid and for credit educational opportunities year round (spring and fall semester in addition to summer) and events at the garden that promote sustainable

agriculture and local food such as Gazpacho in the Garden in the fall and a Garden Open house in the spring.

- The UVA Food Collaborative will list all food-related classes on its website, to highlight the broad educational opportunities for students interested in food system studies.

Grow the supply of local food available for UVA and partner Virginia institutions

- Perform outreach to a wide variety of local food producers, processors and distributors to explore ways that more local and sustainable foods might be made available to students. These local food organizations will include local meat slaughterhouses such as Seven Hills Food Inc., Grayson Natural Foods, T&E Meats, Appalachian Meats, as well as Homestead Dairy, Local Food Hub, and others. The SFSTF will support UVA Dining in making these connections by arranging meetings and providing research support as needed, to explore barriers and opportunities.
- Continue to foster the relationship between UVA Dining and MKG to select, grow, and sell produce that can be used in Dining Hall meals. MKG will maintain their Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) certification through paperwork and yearly audits. GAP certification is a requirement for all foods purchased by UVA Dining.
- MKG will continue its summer and fall season CSA (Community Supported Agriculture) Program which offers both the UVA and Charlottesville community an opportunity to purchase MKG produce and support student agriculture. To increase UVA community involvement, MKG's weekly pickup site is on-grounds and both student and full size shares are offered.
- Work with 4VA Virginia universities to identify common challenges and barriers to increasing access to sustainable and local foods at all campuses. This might be accomplished by attending symposia or workshops held by other 4VA universities or by hosting these events at UVA, on supply chain issues relating to sustainable foods. Some desired outcomes from these events would be the identification of specific common challenges and ideas for how the challenges might be addressed. Another important outcome from these events would be the identification of possible pilot studies and/or possible joint action for realizing economies of scale in purchasing local and sustainable foods.
- Work with the 4VA consortium of Virginia universities to support inter-university research on increasing access to sustainable and local foods at Virginia universities. One avenue would be to pursue funding for joint research that could lead to publication on how institutions such as universities can collaborate successfully to increase their access to sustainable and local foods. Another avenue would include supporting the development and launching of the Virginia Food System Leadership Institute (VFSLI), a four-week, four-credit summer course for students drawn from the 4VA Virginia universities and elsewhere. VFSLI will support rising leaders in the area of sustainable food systems by combining content knowledge in food systems, competency development in leadership, and direct experience helping re-localize Virginia's food systems. A key component of the VFSLI curriculum will be for students to undertake research directly related to the research questions identified at 4VA symposia/workshops that seek to address the barriers and challenges to bringing sustainable and local foods to Virginia campuses.

Facilitate collaborative strategies for increased purchase of local foods

- Facilitate collaborations between UVA dining providers to explore possibilities for realizing shared economies of scale in purchase of local foods. In addition, facilitate connections between UVA dining providers and community partners to advance innovative strategies for purchasing, and building education and awareness around sustainable food systems.