



Sustainable Food Policy

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Summary

This document outlines Wadham's Sustainable Food Policy. The Policy shares our current practices and commitments to operate sustainable, ethical and nutritious catering, and aligns with the targets set out in the College's Sustainability Strategy (<https://www.wadham.ox.ac.uk/about/green-wadham>).

At Wadham, we are committed to operating and promoting environmentally responsible and socially equitable food practices. We recognise the global impact of the food system on climate and ecosystems and are driving positive change for a sustainable future. To this end, we are collaborating with partner organisation to increase the use of local, seasonal and ethically sourced ingredients. We minimise environmental impacts through sustainable procurement, energy efficiency, water conservation, waste reduction and eco-friendly practices. We promote healthy eating and work with our community members to foster a healthy and socially-responsible environment. We participate in projects to develop tools to monitor and improve food sustainability, integrating research into our operations. Starting in 2026, we will publish an annual food sustainability report at the end of Trinity Term (mid-June), including key metrics on carbon emissions, food waste, plant-based meals and our local procurement spend.

Our Sustainable Food Policy will be reviewed annually.

1. Introduction

A food system gathers 'all the elements (environment, people, inputs, processes, infrastructures, institutions, etc.) and activities that relate to the production, processing, distribution, preparation and consumption of food, and the outputs of these activities, including socio-economic and environmental outcomes'.

(Source: HLPE (2017) *Nutrition and Food Systems: A Report by the High Level Panel of Experts on Food Security and Nutrition of the Committee on World Food Security*. Rome: CFS – High Level Panel of Experts on Food Security and Nutrition, page 23)

The present global food system is a major contributor to ecosystem destruction and climate change, creating considerable threats to humanity, economic stability and nature. The reasons for this include the massive expansion of farming, accompanied by more industrialized methods based on more land converted to growing crops and keeping animals; more monoculture crops; increased use of pest control chemicals; more irrigation; more fertilizers; more successful animal breeding methods; overexploitation of marine and terrestrial species and widespread pollution. The food system contributes around a quarter of the world's greenhouse gas emissions (<https://ourworldindata.org/food-ghg-emissions>), and is one of the gravest threats to the planet's life support systems.

Every year in the UK nearly 7 million tonnes of edible food is thrown away after contributing to global greenhouse gases from growing, harvesting and transporting food. Avoiding food waste where possible reduces the impact on climate change.

We are aware that there are technical and social challenges to feeding a growing global population where food is currently inequitably distributed. There are still many areas across the world where food poverty remains. Alongside this, climate-change impacts are more likely to disadvantage the most vulnerable in communities.

We recognise the considerable responsibility we have for the impact our operations have on communities and the natural environment. We are committed to driving positive change to bring about a sustainable food system that delivers food security and nutrition for all in a way that considers short, medium and long-term economic, social and environmental factors and does not compromise these for future generations.

Sustainability of different food products is complex and information is evolving on what is sustainable and what is not. We will continue to tailor our approach and keep this policy under review as more information becomes available through leading institutions and organisations.

2. Sourcing

Foodquad

We are a member of Foodquad (<https://www.foodbuy.co.uk/case-studies/the-colleges-of-university-of-oxford/>) a group purchasing organisation representing most Oxford colleges. Foodquad has appointed Foodbuy UK, wholly owned by Compass Group UK and Ireland. Foodbuy UK are working with Compass Group UK and Ireland to reach Climate Net Zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2030. They are constantly reviewing their supply chain, with a particular focus on ethical sourcing and how they can support suppliers in becoming more sustainable. They are also shining a spotlight on regenerative agriculture and a switch from animal to plant-based proteins, as well as further enhancing local and seasonal sourcing.

We will work closely with Foodquad and, where appropriate directly with Foodbuy UK, to ensure most of our suppliers are local and operate in the most sustainable way with verifiable outputs.

Provenance

We are working with Foodquad to understand where our ingredients come from and to ensure that this information is made available for all products at the point of ordering. It is very important that our supply chain is actively protecting the environment and operating justly and fairly. We are working with Foodquad to ensure these continue to be important principles during their appointment and ongoing evaluation of suppliers.

Local produce/environmentally-friendly farming/agroecological food producers

Where possible we support local food and beverage producers to reduce our food miles and support local communities.

Wadham is one of the participating colleges in Good Food Oxfordshire's Farm to Fork initiative. [OxFarmToFork](https://goodfoodoxford.org/ox-farm-to-fork/) (https://goodfoodoxford.org/ox-farm-to-fork/) is a collaborative project that connects Oxford colleges and other institutions in Oxfordshire with local agroecological food producers. The initiative prioritizes local, seasonal produce and sustainable farming methods.

Each week the producers add available produce into a simple online platform. Wadham and other buyers can look at what is available that week and place their orders. Orders are sent to the producers to pack and are collected by the zero-emissions, logistics company to organise into deliveries. Orders are delivered into the city by a cargo bike service once or twice a week after being picked up from the producers the previous day – ensuring the freshest and best quality produce.

1. An example of food produce delivered from some local farms.



Although we are increasing what we buy from OxFarmToFork, most of our food is purchased through FoodBuy's procurement platform – see Foodquad above.

Seasonal Produce

We ensure that all our menus reflect the seasons where possible. We are also looking at ways to monitor the use of non-seasonal produce where we can. Through OxFarmToFork we are working directly with local farms and producers who can supply seasonal produce. We have their seasonal produce lists to guide our menu planning. Our rotating menus each term consider what is in season and our supply chain. Some of our menus allow flexibility so chefs can swap ingredients depending on seasonal availability. We promote local and seasonal produce in our communications to the College community, visitors, and external guests.

Plant-based foods

Our menus provide diners with choice. We offer plant-based and vegetarian options at every meal service. We promote sustainable plant-based dishes by featuring them first on the display screens in our Refectory and displaying them most prominently on our hot serving counters. Our Students' Union adopted 'Meat Free Mondays' over 15 years ago. We will continue to look for ways to further increase the consumption of plant-based foods on our menus.

Red meat and dairy

There are significant differences in the carbon footprint of different foods. According to the [Our World in Data](https://ourworldindata.org/carbon-footprint-food-methane) website, citing scientific research, beef and lamb production, in particular, generate much higher greenhouse gas emissions than chicken, pork, or plant-based alternatives (<https://ourworldindata.org/carbon-footprint-food-methane>). Cattle and lamb are what are called 'ruminants' and they produce a lot more methane in the process of digesting food. Methane is a greenhouse gas that is a powerful, short-term warming agent – about 28 times more potent at trapping heat than carbon dioxide on a gram for gram basis (Mihre, G. et al. Anthropogenic and Natural Radiative Forcing. 731 (IPCC, Cambridge, UK, 2013)). Whilst dairy is not as intensively produced as red meat, cow milk and cheese produce significantly more greenhouse gas emissions than alternatives such as tofu and soy milk per litre (Poore, J and Nemecek, T. "Reducing food's environmental impacts through producers and consumers." Science 360 (2018): 987-992, doi:10.112/science.aaq0216.)

We have reduced red meat, particularly beef and lamb, in our menus and will continue to find ways to decrease the amount further.

All the eggs we purchase are local and free-range, and all cow milk comes from British dairy farms. We offer non-dairy milk as an alternative to cow milk, and some of our dishes use plant-based cheese alternatives using bases such as soy or coconut.

We offer a range of plant-based alternatives to meat whilst also being careful to avoid offering too much processed food, particularly as some of these can be high in fat/sugar/salt. We are aware that not all plants are sources of complete protein (meaning they do not contain all the amino acids that a body needs). However, we ensure that we offer a variety of plant foods with different types of amino acids for diners who have decided to go without meat in their diet.

Animal welfare

Foodbuy review suppliers' animal welfare policies, practices and performance during the tender process. Suppliers must provide evidence that they are managing animal welfare appropriately and audits are carried out to ensure compliance.

We are committed to ensuring that animal welfare practices are high in our supply chain and that there is evidence to prove this. We will continue to purchase high-welfare meat and dairy products to promote animal welfare and reduce environmental impacts.

Seafood

We use demonstrably sustainable fish wherever possible to support healthy marine and freshwater ecosystems. We exclude fish species identified as most at risk by the Marine Stewardship Council (MSC).

Grow fruit/vegetables/herbs on site

Our main kitchen uses grapes and apples grown in our gardens. Image below shows our grapevine.

2. Our grapevine.



We have set up two raised beds specifically for cultivating herbs and vegetables, and we are actively seeking additional opportunities to expand the range of produce and fruit grown within our gardens.

3. Environment

Suppliers

Through FoodBuy, we encourage our suppliers and contractors to minimise negative environmental, ethical and social impacts associated with the products and/or services they provide.

We are working on ways to reduce the number of food deliveries to the College and are exploring options to increase storage capacity.

Energy consumption

Our kitchen and service areas include energy-efficient equipment. We only turn on equipment when it is in use and it is turned off as soon as it is not required. Equipment is serviced and maintained to ensure that it operates efficiently. Our energy-efficient Rational ovens report on energy consumption, have a half energy setting and provide energy messages. The lighting in our kitchen, Refectory and Hall is LED.

We have plans to replace the gas hobs in our main kitchen as soon as funding is available. This is a costly and operationally challenging project as it will involve the reconfiguration of the central island unit in addition to the purchase of the electric induction hobs.

Water

All our catering staff are given guidance on water-saving practices. Our practices include minimal rinsing before putting items in dishwashers and avoiding taps running when they are not being used. Our dishwashers include technologies to save water, energy and detergent with every run and are regularly serviced to ensure they are operating efficiently. Any leaky taps are repaired as soon as possible.

Free tap water is available in reusable jugs in our Refectory and Hall. A water refill station is also available in the Refectory where diners can fill their reusable water bottles.

We refill our own glass bottles with water, including making our own sparkling water, for our catering service.

Food waste

We operate practices to minimise food waste as much as possible. Our procurement practices include careful forecasting and menu planning to avoid over-purchasing. We use the 'first-in, first-out' method to ensure older ingredients are used before they expire, including clearly labelling items and organising the storage areas to ensure older stock is in front. We ensure our food storage areas are at optimal temperatures, and are checked in line with food safety standards, and undertake regular inventories to check stock levels.

Our meal booking system is used for SCR/staff lunch in the Refectory and Old Library and student/SCR dinner in the Refectory/Hall to enable the kitchen to cater accurately for the number of diners signed in. Signs are displayed in the Refectory encouraging diners to reduce food waste. Fruit and vegetable trimmings, eggshells and egg boxes, from the main kitchen are composted on-site and the compost is used in our gardens.

3. Vegetable trimmings from the main kitchen to be composted on-site.



We donate our leftover cooked food to charities wherever possible to prevent it from going to waste. For example, we are partnering with Food Rescuers Oxford (<https://livewell.oxfordshire.gov.uk/Services/6949>), a student-run society, to donate our leftover cooked food at the end of the Refectory lunch service. The society distributes the leftover food to the homeless community.

4. Student volunteers from Food Rescuers Oxford collecting leftover food.



We encourage diners to put their plate waste into food waste bins, rather than general waste, through various communications, including information to students in Freshers' Week, signage and food waste posters.

Unavoidable food waste that is not suitable for onsite composting, including plate waste, is sent to a local anaerobic digestion facility for processing into bioenergy. The facility near Cassington (<https://www.stgreenpower.co.uk/where-we-operate/cassington-ad-facility>) is operated by Severn Trent Green Power and generates 2.1MW of electricity.

We record data on food waste from the main kitchen and dining areas. From January 2026, we will make this information available in our Refectory.

We organise an end-of-term collection of students' unused food stuff by Hearty Earth three times a year. The food is used in Hearty Earth's surplus curries or goes to their community larders for distribution to local people (<https://heartyearth.org/>).

Packaging

Most of our fruit and vegetable supplies are delivered to the College in reusable crates or packaging. Cardboard and other recyclables from all parts of our catering operation are put into our mixed recycling bins which are then collected for sorting by a materials recovery facility based in Kent.

Use of single-use items

We have reduced the number of single-use items in our catering operation. We do not use single-use coffee cups or wooden cutlery in our Refectory. We do not sell water in plastic bottles. We use ceramic cups for hot drinks and glass beakers for free tap water. We are working on ways to eliminate all single-use items wherever possible.

Chemical use

We limit the use of cleaning chemicals as much as possible to minimise the impact on the environment. Where possible we use eco-friendly alternatives, for example eco-cleaning tablets for our Rational ovens, and refillable containers.

Fats, oils and grease disposal

We have clear procedures in place for dealing properly with fat, oil and grease disposal to avoid clogging pipes. Our waste cooking oil is collected and made into biofuel.

4. Society

Healthy Eating and Drinking

We are committed to offering and promoting healthy eating and drinking to empower diners to make better, more informed choices. Our menus use a variety of fruit and vegetables. We have reduced the amount of red and processed meat. We have fruit available at every breakfast service, and fruit, salad and vegetables at every lunch meal service. Vegetables and/or salad are available at every dinner meal service. Vegetables are cooked without the addition of butter or salt. We take care to order items with lower fat, sugar and/or salt content where possible whilst also considering nutritional content, taste

and quality. We offer sunflower spread, as an alternative to butter, in the Refectory. We also consider foods rich in wholegrain or fibre, dishes with beans and pulses, and sustainably sourced fish, including oily fish, when planning menus. Portion sizes are controlled, and diners can request smaller portions if they wish.

Soft drinks, including mocktails, are available in our bar.

We are continuing to work on ways to further promote health eating and drinking.

Fairtrade

Fairtrade is about improving the lives of farmers and workers in developing countries by changing the way trade works through better prices to achieve a fair deal, decent working conditions and empowerment. We are committed to Fairtrade as part of our sustainability goals. We sell Fairtrade products in our Refectory and bar and are committed to increasing the use of Fairtrade products.

Where possible, we ensure Fairtrade refreshments (tea, coffee and sugar) are available at all internal meetings and hospitality events served by the College's catering department.

We raise awareness of Fairtrade through campaigns and information available at the point of sale, on the College website and other appropriate material, to encourage College members to buy Fairtrade goods.

We promote and run events during Fairtrade Fortnight and collaborate with the University and other participating colleges to run joint campaigns where possible.

Our website contains information on our Fairtrade activities.

Human Rights

The Foodbuy contractual arrangements with suppliers include clauses on a commitment to internationally recognised human rights standards, a commitment to due diligence and the right to conduct evaluations to verify compliance.

Oxford Living Wage

We are an accredited Oxford Living Wage employer (<https://www.oxford.gov.uk/fairer-economy/oxford-living-wage>). The Oxford Living Wage was launched to help workers earn enough to meet the city's living costs, particularly given its status as one of the UK's most expensive cities. The rate is reviewed annually and set at 95% of the Living Wage Foundation's London Living Wage.

Investors in People

We are an accredited Investors in People organisation (<https://www.investorsinpeople.com/>). Investors in People is an internationally recognised accreditation for people management

and employee wellbeing. The award demonstrates the College's commitment to putting people first – for the benefit of every person in the workplace, increased productivity, and a stronger, healthier and happier society.

6. Engagement

Food Sustainability Action Group

Our Food Sustainability Action Group, separate from our Food Committee, exists to discuss and promote environmentally responsible, ethical and socially conscious food practices within the college community.

Key aims include:

- Continue to increase sustainable and nutritional food offerings in the College.
- Engage with students, staff and visitors, as well as suppliers, on the College's commitment to serving sustainable food.
- Investigate on-site food growing, such as vegetables, herbs and more fruit. A group of student and staff volunteer gardeners help with this at fortnightly sessions during term time.
- Ensure that the College's menus reflect the seasons where possible and monitor the use of non-seasonal produce.
- Ensure sustainability is considered in the awarding of contracts to food suppliers.
- Support environmentally-friendly farming, food/drink production and transportation in the selection of products.
- Ensure that meat and dairy is produced according to appropriate standards for animal welfare. Use demonstrably sustainable fish wherever possible.
- Reduce food deliveries to the College where possible.
- Maintain Fairtrade status, supporting local suppliers and sustainable food projects

Membership includes the Director of Sustainability, Head Chef, Head Butler, Deputy Domestic Bursar, Fellows (tbc) and student representatives from the SU and MCR. Other staff and students with an interest in food sustainability are welcome to join. Meetings are held termly and are chaired by the Director of Sustainability. Notes of the meetings are shared with the Sustainability Strategy Group.

Department Sustainability Champions

Every department has at least one Department Sustainability Champion, including in the Kitchen Brigade and SCR/Hall team. Staff undertaking these roles advocate for sustainability in their areas, engage in sustainable actions, and communicate their department's sustainability achievements and challenges. All Department Sustainability Champions are members of the Department Sustainability Champions Action Group which provides a forum for networking, sharing news and discussing initiatives, including food sustainability.

Staff Training

Our staff are encouraged to attend training, talks and visit suppliers where appropriate to support their professional development, including opportunities to increase their knowledge on sustainable practices. They are also encouraged to share their ideas and take ownership in the implementation of new initiatives.

Communication and Education

We use our website, College newsletter and social media channels to highlight our sustainability initiatives, including our sustainable food practices, and encourage our community to get involved.

We collaborate with local partners to showcase local, seasonal food. For example, in October 2025, we invited representatives from OxFarmToFork to talk to students about the initiative and offer fruit and vegetables from local agroecological food producers to taste.

We will continue to look for further ways to engage our College community and wider through talks with experts, academic and student-led initiatives, partnerships with charities and offering sustainably themed events.

7. Research and Innovation

We are one of five colleges participating in the development of a new food metric toolkit. The toolkit will be a food eco-scoring software application which will enable colleges to set targets, monitor progress and suggest swaps for high scoring ingredients to eco-friendly alternatives. The toolkit will also identify potential cost savings of swaps.

We are looking for further ways to integrate education, research and innovation into our food operation, piloting initiatives and using the College's catering operation as a 'living lab'. We are keen to partner with academic departments to run coursework or dissertation projects on food systems, behavioural change, energy efficiency, or waste management. We will share insights with other colleges and the wider Oxford community.

8. Sustainable Food Targets

Target	Deadline
Procurement of sustainable food	
Incrementally increase the annual spend on food purchased through OxFarmToFork	Year-on-year Audit date: 31 July

Organise at least one event every year to showcase local agroecological food producers	End of Trinity Term
Track the number of food deliveries to the College and reduce the number year-on-year	Year-on-year Audit date: 31 July
Introduce College-grown vegetables, herbs and more fruit for the main kitchen (in addition to grapes and apples)	31 July 2027

Food waste reduction	
Review termly food waste data from the Kitchen, Refectory and Hall	Termly
Reduce the total weight of food waste sent from the catering operation by 50% by 2030 compared to 2025 baseline	31 July 2030
Continue to partner with local charities/organisations to redistribute surplus edible food where possible	Weekly (where possible)

Healthy options	
Introduce a campaign to highlight the Public Health England's Eatwell Guide (https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-eatwell-guide)	31 July 2026

Plant-based options/low-carbon menus	
Increase the uptake of plant-based options by 10% year-on-year based on 2025 baseline	Year-on-year Audit date: 31 July
Further reduce beef/lamb procurement by 10% compared to 2025 baseline	31 July 2030

Engagement	
Host a forum in Green Action Week on sustainable food. The forum will focus on how to encourage more ethical and sustainable choices.	Green Action Week, Hilary Term, every year
Organise at least one further event on food sustainability each academic year	End of Trinity Term
Undertake a survey on the College's sustainable food choices.	End of Trinity Term
Organise at least one Fairtrade Fortnight event every year	During Fairtrade Fortnight

Reporting	
Publish an annual food sustainability report including key metrics on food waste, plant-based meals and local procurement spend	End of Trinity Term
Scope 1 emissions	
Replace the gas hobs in our main kitchen with electric induction hobs	31 July 2028