

# HKUST Sustainable Food Operation Policy

*Last Reviewed: September 2024*

## Introduction

HKUST strives to become a global leader in sustainability education by transforming the Clear Water Bay campus into a living laboratory for experiential learning, demonstrating cutting-edge research and sustainable operations within a vibrant and engaged community. With the significant demand for food among the campus community, HKUST recognizes its responsibility to address sustainability impacts arising from food and catering. This policy is for all food procurement and disposal on campus, covering caterers, offices, and events. This Policy is supported by the University's [Sustainable Catering Policy](#), the [Sustainable Office Standards & Guidelines](#), and the [Sustainable Events Guidelines](#).

This Policy addresses the following Sustainable Development Goals:

SDG 2 – Zero Hunger

SDG 3 – Good Health and Wellbeing

SDG 8 – Decent Work and Economic Growth

SDG 11 – Sustainable Cities and Communities

SDG 12 – Responsible Consumption and Production

SDG 13 – Climate Action

SDG 14 – Life Below Water

SDG 15 – Life on Land

## 1. Sourcing

The University values the environmental and social impacts of food procurement and processing and realizes ethical and sustainable sourcing.

### 1.1. Sustainably harvested food from aquatic ecosystems

- Caterers must utilize the WWF-Hong Kong Sustainable Seafood Guide (<https://seafoodguide.wwf.org.hk/en/seafood-guide>) and not offer any species that are listed in the “Avoid” category.

### 1.2. Sustainably and ethically farmed food

- Caterers must ensure that farmed products or those harvested from terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems, such as timber, food and drink products, are ethically, sustainably and/or locally sourced where possible.
- Caterers are encouraged to use fair trade or organic ingredients in their products where the use of these foods does not add to the environmental cost of transportation.

### 1.3. Sustainably farmed food on campus

- All campus community farms and gardens are required to abide by sustainability principles, including the use of organic practices. Caterers are encouraged to participate in these farms or explore other opportunities to grow organic food resources on campus to demonstrate sustainable food systems to HKUST students and staff.

## 2. Environment

The University collaborates with caterers and other stakeholders to minimize the environmental impact of food catering management and operation.

### 2.1. Sustainable catering operation

- Caterers must produce a sustainable food practices plan, explaining their general approach – as well as specific steps and/or commitments – to reducing environmental impacts and operating in a sustainable manner. This plan will be posted and accessible by the HKUST community.
- Caterers must undertake all measures necessary to minimize energy and water consumption through selecting best-in-class efficient equipment, as well as strategies for efficient food preparation, storage and cooking methods. Caterers must ensure that equipment (including fans, fan coil units, refrigeration coils, and exhausts, etc.) remain at optimal levels.

- Catering outlets must utilize Environmentally Preferable Cleaning Chemicals (EPCC) that are consistent with campus standards and must comply with the criteria established by the Hong Kong Green Label Scheme, or be certified by one of the following green labeling organizations: Ecologo; Green Seal; US EPA Design for the Environment; or China Environmental Label.

## 2.2. Plastic waste reduction

- Caterers must undertake measures to reduce the use of plastic, particularly one-time use disposable plastic. Efforts should include eliminating the free provision of plastic items (e.g., straws, utensils) and adopting measures to reduce the overall amount of plastic packaging. Where plastic is consumed, additional measures should be in place to ensure that it is separated, collected, and recycled to reduce the overall landfill load.
- Following the HKSAR government's introduction of ban on certain types of single-use plastic, restaurants including all campus food outlets will no longer be allowed to offer customers polystyrene products, disposable plastic straws, stirrers, cutlery or plates for dine-in and takeaway.
- Water may not be sold on campus in plastic containers less than one liter. Caterers and event organizers should provide clean, filtered water in ways that do not necessitate disposable plastic water bottles.
- During one-time events, caterers must arrange required facilities to separate and recycle materials and provide food and drinks in reusable (washable) containers.
- Caterers should undertake measures to reduce waste from eat-in and take-away orders by adopting reusable dining wares for dine-in, providing biodegradable ware or reusable containers for takeaway orders, encouraging customers to bring their own reusable wares through incentives and charges for disposables, and ensuring that any disposables used can be collected and recycled or composted.
- The university's strategies in the action plan to reduce plastic waste includes (i) institute strategies to eliminate disposables from the campus eating establishments, and (ii) utilize the purchasing power of the University to motivate vendors to reduce the amount of packaging materials brought to campus.

## 2.3. Events Catering

- Organizers should ensure that food waste is minimized by ordering the right amount and taking home any left-over food.
- When ordering food, ask for reusable cutlery, mugs and tableware to reduce disposable items. If disposables are necessary, request biodegradable materials
- Contact FMO housekeeping team to arrange the extra recycling bins/stands for caterer use, and recyclables collection arrangement. Arrange volunteer

ambassadors if needed to encourage participants to separate waste properly with signage guidance. For Food waste, contact CSO for options and arrangement of food waste collection and recycling.

- Develop a plan for what to do with any left-over food, including request to caterer for donation to food charities like Food Angel or Feeding Hong Kong
- Avoid bottled water. Provide tap water or use bulk water dispensers with reusable mugs for participants and guests. Encourage participants to bring their own reusable bottles to refill.
- Avoid carton beverages. Provide beverages in bulk containers. Clean, separate and recycle beverage containers, including cans, PET bottles and glass bottles.
- Offer vegetarian meals or organic food options. Source seasonal food ingredients from locally grown or neighboring area, such as mainland China, to reduce food miles of carbon footprint produced during transportation.
- Consider cutting down on the list of items at buffets.

### 2.4. Hazardous waste and discharge

- Adhere to environmental standards set by the Environmental Protection Department and conducts regular monitoring and analysis.
- Prohibit the disposal of hazardous materials into the sewer system and therefore reduce marine pollution.
- Maintain guidelines to protect water resources and the environment, and prevent contaminations from entering water bodies, safeguarding water quality, ensuring access to clean water and sanitation for everyone.
- Adhere to environmental standards set up by Environmental Protection Department and conducts to draw, use and discharge seawater back to marine environment with treatment.
- Prohibit the discharge of effluent into storm water drains and adhere to relevant standards if exception is made.

## 3. Society

HKUST ensures the work safety and fair treatment of food catering employees, and actively engage with the community on sustainable catering.

### 3.1. Wages protection

- All offices must adhere to HKUST's Living Wage Policy which extends to

contractors when sourcing services. This wage is higher than the government's statutory minimum and ensures a sustainable and reasonable level of life based on family size and geography for individuals employed in service of the University.

### 3.2. Education

- Caterers should participate in efforts to highlight sustainable catering through promotional materials and education campaigns.
- Caterers must recognize that this campus is a “learning laboratory,” whereby students gain experience and understanding from observation, research, and on-site experimentation. Therefore, based on mutual agreement, caterers are expected to meet with students or faculty members, share data and experience, and arrange on-site visits where reasonable, to support courses and learning objectives.

### 3.3. Trainings

- Caterers should empower canteen staff to deliver sustainable catering practices through regular training, building responsibility, effective communications and feedback on improvement.
- The Cleaning Steering Committee ensures workers who handle campus waste are given training on their wellness and safety working practices under extreme weather events.