

## **J. Food Services**

**1. Introduction:** A large expenditure of time, money and energy routinely goes into the growing, harvesting and preparing of food for the campus community. This area of campus operations consumes a significant portion of resources and generates large volumes of waste material. Due to its unique characteristics, this particular area of campus operations is an excellent candidate for the adoption of focused and appropriate sustainable practices. One distinctive aspect is that most of food services are provided through contractors, who could be asked to meet sustainability goals and performance standards. Contract negotiation periods (e.g. 2007-08) are a particularly important time for instituting reforms in dining services.



A wide range of approaches are being developed by producers to sustainably grow food. The American public is familiar with the health and environmental benefits of organic farming (avoiding artificial pesticides and fertilizers). They are less familiar with the benefits of locally-grown (avoiding environmental costs of transportation), humanely-grown (avoiding the diseases, pharmaceuticals, and ethical challenges associated with confined animal factories), or fair-trade (avoiding the oppression or deprivation of farmers and people who work on farms or in food processing factories). Heavy consumption of meat and dairy products deserve special attention in the US, as this activity is a leading source of water pollution (from animal wastes) and habitat loss (most U.S. grain is used for animal feed). The other special consideration for Americans is the rapid rise in the consumption of calories, which requires that more food be grown, processed, transported, and prepared – and is leading to a health crisis of truly large proportions. Thus campus food services have a crucial educational role (positive or negative) in teaching students that food choices matter for health, environment, and society.

**2. Goal:** Food Services will minimize the environmental and social impacts of their operations (including indirect impacts of suppliers) while continuously providing a variety of nutritious and sustainably –grown foods.

**3. History:** UW Food Services has already taken some steps towards the attainment of this goal. Listed below are some of the operational practices currently in place:

- a. Food is batch cooked to minimize food waste.
- b. Produce is purchased having already been cleaned. This saves water and keeps the produce fresher.
- c. The campus food committee has an education policy that encourages students to “eat what you want, but clean your plate” i.e., don’t waste food.
- d. The existing refuse/pulper system recycles and minimizes the use of water.
- e. There have been several purchases of new equipment, including a new dish washing machine that uses 30% less water and energy than the old machine.

f. There have been several renovation and improvements to interior lighting that have had a beneficial impact upon energy consumption. For instance, a new timer has been installed on interior lighting. In addition, they have removed and eliminated 60% of interior track lighting throughout the facility. Finally, they replaced halogen lighting to fluorescent lighting over the salad bar because it was heating the lettuce.

g. Fair trade, organic coffee is sometimes sold at the Reeve Memorial Union.

h. Due to a suggestion from a student group, Food Services offered an organic food night as a substitution to a premium food night (typically steak) in the Spring of 2007.

i. The Earth Charter Community Summit and other special events in Reeve Union have been able to order dinners made from fair trade, organic, and/or locally grown foods.

j. UW Food Services has begun to demonstrate an interest in purchasing fair trade, organic foods, and locally-grown foods, when available.

#### **4. Action Plan**

##### **Initial Consideration:**

- *Declare UW Oshkosh to be a Fair Trade University.*
- *The upcoming Dining Contract for campus food services should include sustainability goals, benchmarks, and timetables.*
  - *Discussions with dining services, Sodexo, and others, suggest this could involve: Shell eggs from free range chickens, Liquid eggs from cage free chickens; Organic milk from humanely treated cows; Fair trade coffee; Biodegradable utensils, flatware, and other disposable items.*
  - *Increase offerings of well-labeled, sustainably-produced foods (locally grown, organic, fair trade, humanely-grown), including fruits, vegetables, grains, dairy, eggs, and meat.*
  - *One goal should be to provide an a constant reminder that people have sustainable food choices.*
  - *Provide an organic option at all meals.*
  - *Institute a “Meatless Monday” or other programs campus-wide to educate students about healthy vegetarian options and potential to reduce their environmental impacts.*
  - *Purchase certified sustainable fish, using expertise of organizations such as the Monterey Bay Aquarium’s Seafood Watch Program and the Marine Stewardship Council.*
  - *Investigate the purchase of compostable flatware and plates for Reeve Union and Blackhawk Commons.*
  - *Purchase and utilize environmentally friendly cleaners and detergents throughout all food service operations.*

**Within Three Years:**

- *Develop a plan for the disposal of popular, and possibly sellable, food wastes (e.g., coffee grounds).*
- *Engage consultants (e.g., Food Service Technology Center) to provide a thorough review of our food services operations, and to provide recommendations for improvements and advice on the purchase of energy efficient equipment and processes.*

**Future Consideration (Five years or greater):**

- *Compost appropriate food wastes.*
  - *Identify an appropriate site to conduct composting operations*
  - *Establish a process to segregate appropriate materials for composting (e.g. minimal meat or oils) and transportation of materials to the site*
  - *Investigate the use of vermiculture (worm husbandry)*
  - *Use compost in campus gardens and greenhouses.*