

# UL Food Philosophy: Guiding Principles



# Table of Contents

## Introduction & Context

|    |                                           |
|----|-------------------------------------------|
| 06 | Foreword                                  |
| 10 | Mission & Vision                          |
| 12 | Aligning with UL Sustainability Framework |
| 13 | Additional Internal Guidance              |
| 14 | Key External Guidance                     |
| 15 | Agrihood Campus                           |
| 16 | Core Values                               |
| 17 | Current UL Food Ecosystem                 |

## Enabling Implementation

|    |                         |
|----|-------------------------|
| 34 | Transition Pathways     |
| 36 | Digital Twin Technology |
| 38 | Call to Action          |

## Appendix

|    |                                        |
|----|----------------------------------------|
| 42 | UL Catering Committee Members          |
| 43 | Action Plans, Strategies, and Policies |
| 44 | Checklist for Potential Partners       |

## Guiding Principles

|    |                                 |
|----|---------------------------------|
| 22 | Overview                        |
| 23 | Health and Wellbeing            |
| 24 | Responsible Sourcing Practices  |
| 25 | Local Partnerships              |
| 26 | Sustainable Consumption         |
| 27 | Inclusive and Affordable        |
| 28 | Transparency and Accountability |
| 29 | Campus Cultivation              |
| 30 | Academic Integration            |

This document has been co-created by **UL Catering Committee, Plassey Campus Centre Group, Healthy UL** and **UL Centre for Sustainable Futures & Innovation**, in collaboration with our strategic partner **Studio Saol**. It was created through an open and participatory process, ensuring the diverse range of perspectives and disciplines within our university were included at each stage of development.



# 01 Introduction





“Our ambitious mission will evolve how we engage with food. It will prioritise healthy produce from our local bioregion and preserve and protect our environment while leading the way forward in the university sector implementing ambitious change.”



**John O'Rourke**  
Chief Operations Officer (Interim)  
Plassey Campus Centre Group

## Foreword from the Chief Operations Officer (Interim), Plassey Campus Centre Group and Chair of the UL Catering Committee - John O'Rourke

I am delighted to present our ambitious and holistic vision and roadmap for food at UL. The UL Food Philosophy brings to life the cultural change required to move to a sustainable future where our students, staff community and the environment in which we operate are at the heart of its guiding principles.

To date we have developed a range of social, recreational and dining spaces on campus across a food ecosystem featuring 17 venues to support the growing needs of a global university. We recognise that we must commit to take active responsibility for how we source, produce, consume and create awareness around food in a diverse and growing campus community.

Our ambitious mission will evolve how we engage with food. It will prioritise healthy produce from our local bioregion and preserve and protect our environment while leading the way forward in the university sector implementing ambitious change. The UL Sustainability Framework 2030 inspires us to achieve our goals and embrace its sustainability missions as we transition towards a carbon neutral campus.

The UL Food Philosophy vision is one of lifelong health where we are committed to provide access to nutritious food and protect the health and well-being of our students, staff and visitors to our vibrant campus. Our core values of accessibility, affordability, sustainability and inclusivity are at the foundation of the UL Food Philosophy. Our guiding principles are developed to operationalise our core values and provide a structured approach and framework towards realising our vision and integrate those values into

the wider culture of food at UL. This will enable us to develop progressive policies, impactful programmes and engage with our community and campus partners where as a collective we will make positive impact for the future. The UL Food Philosophy was led and developed by the UL Catering Committee in association with the UL Centre for Sustainable Futures and Innovation and our strategic partner Saol. The UL Catering Committee is a campus wide representative working group which includes key stakeholders such as Healthy UL, UL Student Life, UL Postgraduate Students Association, UL Global, UL Buildings and Estates, UL Finance, UL Procurement and Unite. I want to express my sincere thanks to our campus stakeholders for their unstinting passion for food, nutrition and the lifelong health and well-being of our campus community. The continued synergistic approach amongst our campus stakeholders will not only realise our vision but drive systematic change that is beneficial to us all.

Lets embark on this exciting journey together as collective change agents and lead the transformation of our food culture at UL.



“Nutrition is a cornerstone of individual well-being and academic success. As stewards of education and societal progress, it is our responsibility to ensure that every member of our university community has equitable access to nourishing and affordable food choices.”



**Dr Catherine Norton**

Associate Professor and Registered Dietitian  
University of Limerick

## Foreword from the Deputy Chair of Healthy UL - Dr Catherine Norton

Across the nation, almost 246,000 students are enrolled in tertiary education<sup>1</sup> and more than 25,000 people are employed by these institutions. For the hundreds of thousands of people who spend their days working and learning on college campuses, where they consume countless meals, snacks, and beverages, the quality and healthfulness of the foods and beverages available are important.

The years spent at university for our students are a time of transition from adolescence to adulthood and while beginning university is an exciting time it can also be stressful for many. Students face the challenges of adapting to changes in academic workloads, support networks and a new environment, with many being away from home for the first time. Concurrent with these changes, our students have new responsibilities, more freedom, and control over their lifestyle than perhaps previously. This transitional period presents an opportune time to establish healthy lifestyle behaviours<sup>6</sup> as health behaviours formed during young adulthood may have a sustaining impact on health across later life.

Higher education institutions are working to provide opportunities for health and wellness for campus communities. Many of these institutions participate in the Healthy Campus Initiative through the Healthy Ireland framework. More have their own guidelines that focus on specific aspects of the food environment, such as increasing healthy food and beverage offerings. The University of Limerick strives to be the first university in Ireland to enact a campus-wide nutrition policy. University nutrition policies are a useful step toward improving the food environment (the places we procure or purchase; prepare; and consume foods and drinks) for students, faculty, and staff, leading to improved health outcomes for the campus community. This Food Philosophy outlines the campus-wide nutrition mission and values which will inform specific policy objectives and the strategies to develop, implement, monitor and evaluate them.

Health education alone—in the absence of change to the food environment—does not always produce lasting behavioural change. A food philosophy and nutrition policy will make it easier to find healthy options for all on the UL campus; this is one of the most effective environmental strategies to improve the diet and health outcomes of the campus population and consequently prevent chronic disease. Our shared mission is to ensure that healthy food and beverage choices are available in retail food service operations and markets, vending machines, and University-sponsored meetings and events in a manner that is accessible, affordable, equitable, sustainable and inclusive. This mission focuses on making the healthy choice the easy choice, rather than taking choices away.

In crafting this pioneering UL Food Philosophy, we embark on a journey that transcends institutional boundaries and establishes a transformative standard for all HEIs. Guided by principles of accessibility, affordability, equity, sustainability, and inclusivity, this philosophy is a testament to our commitment to fostering a thriving and holistic learning environment.

Nutrition is a cornerstone of individual well-being and academic success. As stewards of education and societal progress, it is our responsibility to ensure that every member of our university community has equitable access to nourishing and affordable food choices. This policy goes beyond traditional approaches, aiming to create a sustainable and inclusive framework that reflects the diversity of our campus.



# Mission and Vision: Cultivating Collaborative Change

### Vision:

Our mission is to commit to the provision of high quality, accessible, affordable and sustainability sourced and delivered foods which support the health and well-being of our diverse and growing university community.

### Mission:

Our vision is to provide equitable access to nutritious food and beverages across campus which are nutritious, high quality and consistently meets the needs and expectations of our diverse and growing community.

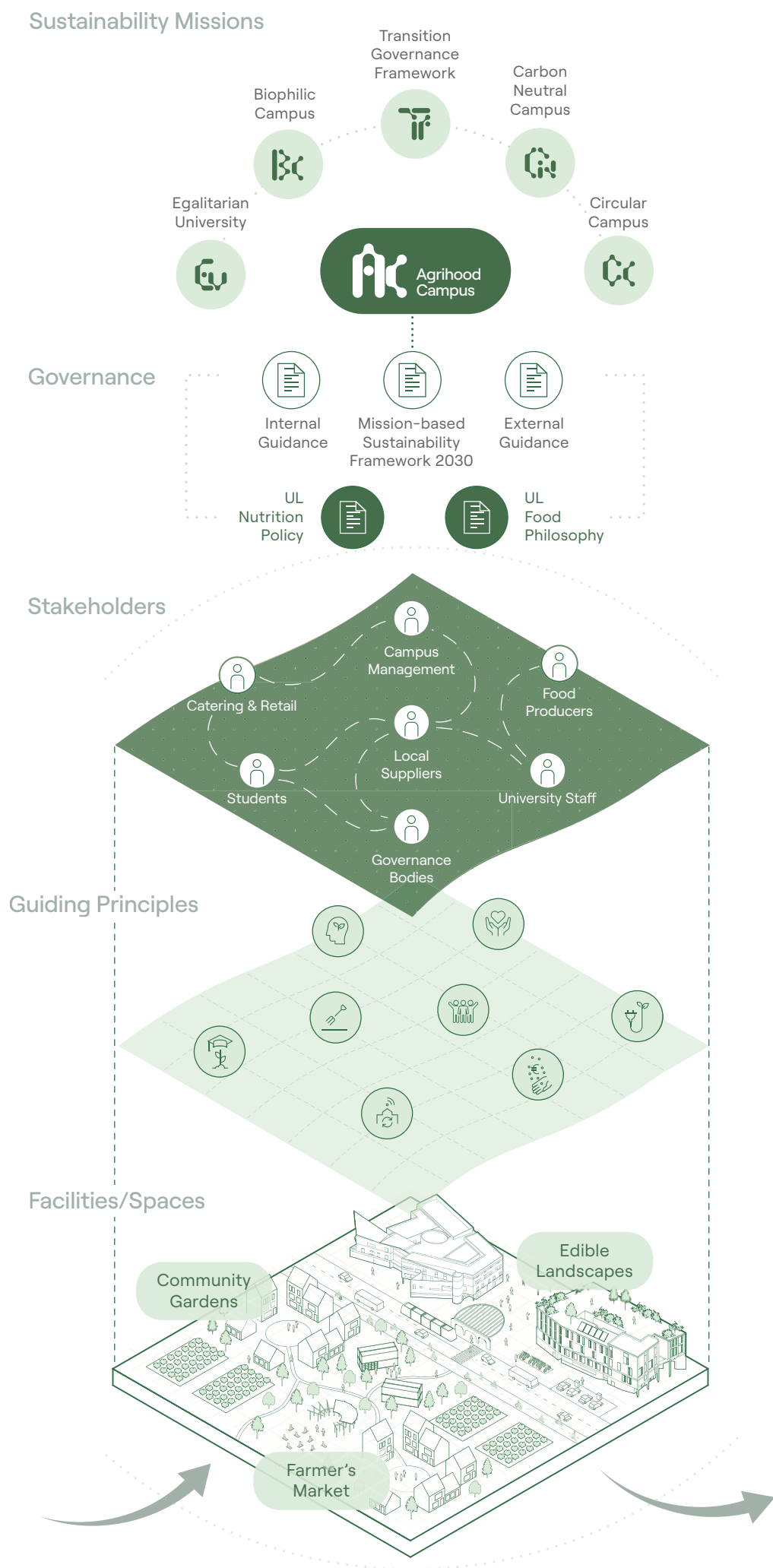
The UL Food Philosophy aligns with the Agrihood Campus mission set out in the UL Mission-based Sustainability Framework 2030 and aims to contribute significantly towards developing thriving communities and a resilient bioregion.

### Purpose of the Document:

The UL Food Philosophy serves a dual purpose:

- To guide the policy and actions of our internal community, and to clearly articulate our aspirations to partners beyond the campus boundaries.
- To invite collaboration and innovation from those who wish to join us in transforming our food system into one that reflects our vision.

In essence, this document is more than a set of guidelines, it is an expression of our desire to cultivate a campus that supports and reflects the diverse needs of its inhabitants, ensuring that every meal contributes not just to the sustenance of individuals, but also to the sustainability of the community and surrounding natural ecosystems at large.





# Aligning with UL Mission-based Sustainability Framework 2030

**The UL Food Philosophy strongly aligns with the ambitions set out in the UL Mission-based Sustainability Framework:** a systems-wide vision for weaving sustainability into the very DNA of our university.

By establishing a food ecosystem led by sustainability and wellbeing, this food philosophy underpins and propels multiple sustainability missions. The philosophy recognises the intrinsic value of food as a universal connector within our campus community, while also acknowledging its profound impact on broader environmental ecosystems.

**This philosophy is holistic in its approach, giving equal prominence to the ecological, social, and economic domains of sustainability.** Ecologically, it contributes to the urgent matters of climate response, waste management, and biodiversity enhancement, aligning with the university’s

strategic goals for a reduced carbon footprint and a more biodiverse campus landscape. Socially, it is committed to fostering a culture of health, wellbeing, and cultural richness, offering a diverse array of food that caters to the dietary preferences and nutritional needs of our community. Economically, it strives to champion local and indigenous businesses, driving innovation and creating avenues for employment.

With every initiative—from locally harvested produce to the selection of international suppliers—the mission-driven approach of the UL Food Philosophy ensures that every food-related decision on campus contributes to the thriving of our university community and the surrounding bioregion.

**In doing so, the UL Food Philosophy is not just a document, but a declaration of our commitment to a more sustainable future.**

## UL Sustainability Missions



Mission Lab



Open Loop University



Campus Tribe



Earth Guild



Active Mobility Campus



Mission Driven Learning



Transition Governance Framework



Student LiveLearns



Egalitarian University



Citizens Mission Council



Agrihood Campus



Self Powered Campus



Digital Campus Commons



Biophillic Campus



Circular Campus



Fab Campus



Revitalised River Shannon



Carbon Neutral Campus



Mission Impact Hub



Clean Water Campus



Biodiverse Campus



# Additional Internal Guidance

The UL Food Philosophy is guided by the 'Healthy UL', a healthy campus initiative and the 'UL Environmental Committee'. Their guidance ensures this food philosophy enhances health and wellbeing across campus while promoting environmentally sustainable practices.

## Healthy UL

[www.ul.ie/healthy-ul](http://www.ul.ie/healthy-ul)

The overall aim of the **'Healthy UL'** framework is to make a meaningful difference to the health and wellbeing of students, staff and the wider UL community. The framework objectives are:

- To improve human and environmental health and wellbeing, which are determinants of learning, productivity and engagement;
- To build on UL's strengths, identifying and supporting existing actions to improve health and wellbeing across the University;
- To consolidate and collectively enhance these actions, while simultaneously ensuring that UL has a comprehensive response to the Government's Healthy Ireland framework;
- To promote research, innovation and evidence-informed action;
- To strengthen relationships, partnerships and collaborations with local authorities, communities, health authorities and other partners.

## UL Environmental Committee

[www.ulsites.ul.ie/envirocom](http://www.ulsites.ul.ie/envirocom)

The **UL Environmental Committee** (ULEnviroCom) is a group of UL faculty, staff and students that advise the University President on environmental issues and promote environmental awareness in the University of Limerick campus community. The committee is responsible for proposing the adoption and implementation of environmental policies and evaluating implementation. The UL Food Philosophy will support the mission of ULEnviroCom in its aim to encourage conscientious environmental management and facilitate mitigation of the University's impact on the environment.

# Key External Guidance

The UL Food Philosophy aligns with key external frameworks to ensure our food philosophy meets global health and environmental standards.

## UN Sustainable Development Goals (2015-2030):

A set of 17 interlinked global goals established by the United Nations to achieve a better and more sustainable future for all.

## The Okanagan Charter (2015):

An international charter that aims to embed health into the culture, operations, and academic mandate of universities and colleges.

## Public Sector Climate Action Mandate: Irish Government Climate Action Plan (2024):

A directive from the Irish Government outlining strategies and actions for public sector bodies to address climate change and reduce emissions.

## Sharing the Vision: Irish Government Mental Health Policy for Everyone:

A comprehensive policy framework by the Irish Government to promote mental health and provide accessible mental health services for all citizens.

## Wellbeing Policy Statement: Irish Government Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice (2018-2023):

A policy statement that establishes a framework for enhancing well-being across various sectors in Ireland.

## WHO Global Action Plan on Physical Activity:

An initiative by the World Health Organization to encourage member states to increase physical activity levels in their populations through policy actions.

## Green Public Procurement Criteria:

Irish Government green public procurement criteria for food and catering services: Criteria set by the Irish Government to guide public procurement in choosing sustainable options for food and catering services.

## Healthy Ireland: A Framework for Improved Health and Wellbeing (2023-2025):

A national framework that provides guidance and actions to improve the health and well-being of people living in Ireland.

## Healthy Ireland at Work: A National Framework for Healthy Workplaces in Ireland (2021-2025):

A policy initiative focused on promoting health and well-being in the workplace within Ireland.

## Healthy Campus Charter and Framework Ireland:

A framework supporting health and well-being, specifically tailored for the higher education setting in Ireland.

## EPA Food Service Pathway to less food waste & better margins:

A strategic approach by the EPA to reduce food waste in the food service sector, enhancing sustainability and profitability.

## Ireland's National Food Waste Prevention Roadmap (2023-2025):

Ireland's roadmap to halve food waste by 2025 through prevention, education, and collaboration across all sectors of the food supply chain.



# Sustainability Mission: Agrihood Campus

The **Agrihood Campus** mission is a visionary commitment to cultivating a sustainable food system at the heart of the University of Limerick. **It envisions a future where the majority of food consumed on campus is healthy, sourced from within the local region, and where possible, grown directly on university grounds.** The Food Philosophy document is an embodiment of this vision, setting forth principles and actions that pave the way for a sustainable food ecosystem.

This document underscores the importance of **local sourcing**, ensuring that food choices support not only the health of individuals but also the health of the local community and its economy. By fostering direct connections with local producers and suppliers, this fod philosophy aims to create a resilient food network that is both environmentally sound and economically beneficial.

Our commitment to the Agrihood Campus mission is also evident in the initiatives we support for integrating **food growing** into the campus's physical and cultural fabric. Through educational gardens, collaborative projects with local farmers, and the introduction of innovative agricultural practices, we are laying the groundwork for a living, learning foodscape that enriches student life and promotes ecological stewardship.

As we continue on this journey, the concept of '**foodscapes**' become increasingly relevant. Foodscapes refer to the socio-cultural and

geographical landscape of food, encompassing how it is grown, distributed, accessed, and consumed within a particular setting. This term integrates aspects of food availability, accessibility, and sustainability, as well as the cultural practices surrounding food.

**In the spirit of the Agrihood Campus mission, the Food Philosophy not only serves as a guiding document but also as an invitation to the university community to engage with the food system in a meaningful way.** It calls upon us to consider our roles not just as consumers, but as active participants in a food system that is equitable, sustainable, and deeply interconnected with our local bioregion.

As we move forward, the Food Philosophy will continue to serve as a dynamic blueprint, evolving to meet the needs of our community and our planet. It is a declaration of our shared commitment to nurturing a foodscape that reflects our deepest values and aspirations—**a foodscape that sustains us today and for generations to come.**

# Core Values: Accessibility, Affordability, Sustainability, Inclusivity

**The UL Food Philosophy is guided by core values that are foundational to the transformation of our campus food system.** These values—accessibility, affordability, sustainability, and inclusivity—are the cornerstones upon which we construct our guiding principles. They are not just abstract ideals but are actively embodied in our pursuit of a sustainable, equitable foodscape. Together, they form a cohesive value system that informs every facet of our food philosophy and the overarching vision for the University of Limerick's campus food system.

## **Accessibility:**

Accessibility means ensuring that every member of our campus community can easily obtain nutritious, appealing, and culturally appropriate food. It's about breaking down barriers—whether they be physical, financial, or informational—to enable all individuals to partake in the campus food experience. By integrating accessibility into our food systems, we ensure that students, faculty, and staff have convenient access to food outlets and resources, making healthy food choices the easiest choices.

## **Affordability:**

Affordability is a commitment to economic inclusivity, ensuring that healthy, high-quality food is not a luxury but a standard available to all. We strive to provide a range of food options that cater to various economic backgrounds, ensuring that financial constraints are not an obstacle to nutritious eating. Our food philosophy adopts

pricing strategies that reflect this value, offering meal options and plans that support both the well-being of our community and their budgets

## **Sustainability:**

Our food philosophy is rooted in the principles of sustainable production and consumption, ensuring that each meal served on campus contributes positively to our local ecology. We are committed to practices that preserve biodiversity, support the regeneration of natural systems, and reduce our carbon dioxide emissions. From farm-to-fork, we aim to create a closed-loop system where resources are used efficiently to minimise waste. This value is not solely for environmental benefit; it's an opportunity to use food as a platform for instilling a culture of respect and responsibility for the planet in every member of our university community.

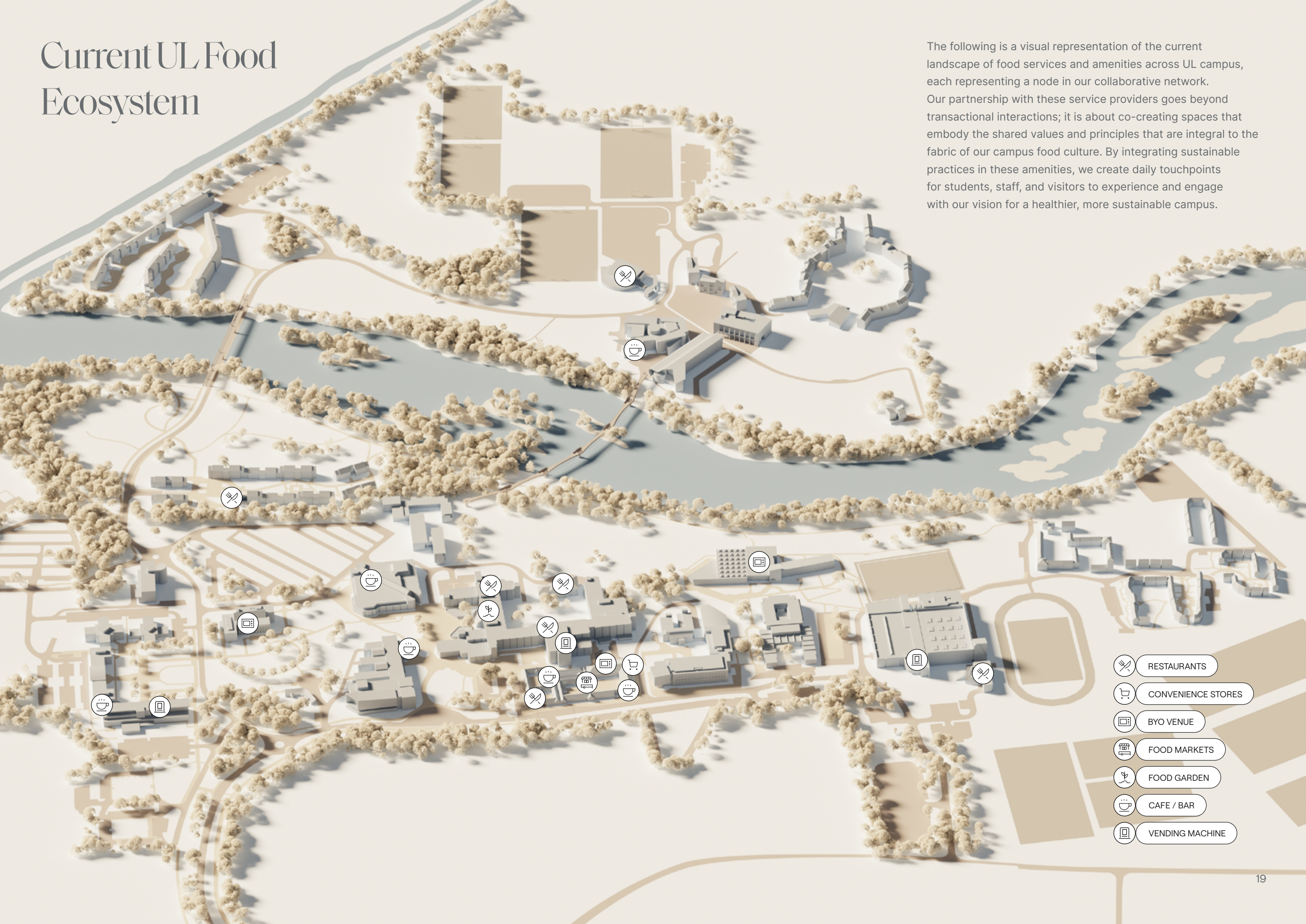
## **Inclusivity:**

Inclusivity in our food philosophy represents a holistic embrace of the diverse tastes, cultures, and dietary requirements within our university community. It's means creating spaces where food offerings are as varied and vibrant as the people they serve. We commit to designing menus and food initiatives that are welcoming to all, recognising and celebrating the wide range of identities and preferences that define our campus life.



# Current UL Food Ecosystem

The following is a visual representation of the current landscape of food services and amenities across UL campus, each representing a node in our collaborative network. Our partnership with these service providers goes beyond transactional interactions; it is about co-creating spaces that embody the shared values and principles that are integral to the fabric of our campus food culture. By integrating sustainable practices in these amenities, we create daily touchpoints for students, staff, and visitors to experience and engage with our vision for a healthier, more sustainable campus.



- RESTAURANTS
- CONVENIENCE STORES
- BYO VENUE
- FOOD MARKETS
- FOOD GARDEN
- CAFE / BAR
- VENDING MACHINE



## 02 Guiding Principles





# Guiding Principles

Guiding principles are the heart of UL Food Philosophy, encapsulating our aspirations and operationalising our values into the everyday fabric of campus life. They provide a structured approach to decision-making, ensuring that each choice we make is a step towards realising our vision for an accessible, affordable, sustainable and inclusive food system. It is within this framework that we craft policies, implement programs, and engage with our community and partners, making the guiding principles both a map and a measure of our success.



Enhance the physical and mental health of the university community through nutritious offerings.



Emphasise responsible sourcing practices that prioritise environmental and animal welfare.



Foster collaborative relationships with local food suppliers and the community.



Prevent, reuse, recycle, and recover food waste on campus.



Ensure food services cater to all through inclusive and affordable options.



Maintain clear communication and responsible practices in food services.



Promote biodiversity and hands-on education by cultivating food on campus.



Lead in sustainable food system practices through research and academic integration.



# Enhance the physical and mental health of the university community through nutritious offerings.



This commitment ensures that the health and well-being of students, faculty, and staff are improved through the food offered on campus. It aims to provide nutritious and balanced food options, increase awareness of and accessibility to healthy choices, and actively promote well-being through various educational initiatives.

**ACTIONS**

- Provide healthy options favourably over unhealthy options where healthy and nutritious foods have prominent display in all venues.
- Serve nutritionally balanced, freshly prepared food in all catering venues.
- Introduce menu labelling that highlights nutritional content and healthy options.
- Provide non dairy milks for hot beverages in all venues at no extra charge
- Collaborate with nutrition experts to curate balanced meals.
- Organise educational workshops on healthy eating habits.
- Enhance existing spaces to be more welcoming for students who bring packed lunches, alleviating the social stressors and stigma associated with bringing food from home.

**METRICS**

- Proportion of menu items classified as 'healthy' according to nutritional standards.
- Participation rates in healthy eating workshops and programs.
- Usage statistics of labeled nutritional information by the campus community.

# Emphasise responsible sourcing and production practices that prioritise environmental and animal welfare.



This commitment ensures that food offerings are sourced and produced in ways that are respectful to the environment and uphold ethical practices. It encompasses efforts to reduce the carbon footprint associated with food transportation, support local economies through responsible sourcing, and ensure that animal welfare standards are met.

**ACTIONS**

- Audit and minimise the carbon dioxide emissions of food sourcing and delivery.
- Establish a purchasing policy prioritising eco-friendly and locally-sourced products.
- Ensure all fish products are sourced from ASC, MSC and BIM certified fisheries and suppliers.
- Campus catering operators will use traceable food ingredients that minimise harm to the environment and align with the highest standards of animal welfare.
- Encourage vendors to adopt the EPA Food Service Pathway.
- Incorporate a diverse range of vegan and vegetarian options into menu planning to support sustainable diets.

**METRICS**

- Percentage of food products sourced from certified sustainable and ethical sources.
- Percentage of total food suppliers contracted that are local businesses.
- Reduction in carbon dioxide emissions from food sourcing and production activities.
- Percentage of menu offerings that are vegan or vegetarian.



# Foster collaborative relationships with local food suppliers and the community.



This commitment ensures that strong partnerships are created and maintained with local food producers and suppliers. By doing so, the university supports the local economy, ensures a supply of fresh and seasonal ingredients, and fosters community engagement with the broader food system.

- ACTIONS
- Create partnerships with local farms for fresh produce supply.
  - Organise farmer's markets on campus to support local vendors.
  - Engage in community initiatives promoting food education.
  - Menus will celebrate food and drink produced in Ireland and the local bioregion which supports small to medium size businesses where possible.
  - Eden Restaurant will feature a regular local artisan 'pop up' food showcase which celebrates local produce and supports small producers in the region.
  - Initiate a community-supported agriculture (CSA) programme that connects students directly with local farms.

- METRICS
- Number of active partnerships with local farms and suppliers.
  - Number of farmer's markets held on campus to support local vendors.
  - Number of community initiatives promoting food education that vendors/PCC/UL participated in.
  - Percentage increase in procurement budget spent locally.
  - Feedback scores from community and local suppliers regarding partnership effectiveness.
  - Percentage of menus that celebrate food and drink produced in Ireland as a percentage of all menus and as a proportion of the products on offer.

# Prevent, reuse, recycle, and recover food waste on campus.



This commitment ensures that a culture of sustainability among the campus community is fostered through responsible consumption habits. It involves banning the use of single-use plastics, promoting recycling and composting, and advocating for the use of reusable materials to minimise waste and environmental impact.

- ACTIONS
- Provide free tap water in all catering venues and encourage the use of tap water over bottled water.
  - Mandate reusable dining ware and cutlery as the only method of serving food on campus.
  - Implement waste processes in the following order of priority: prevention, reuse, recycled, and recovered.
  - Implement energy-efficient cooking appliances and practices.
  - Ban the use of single-use plastics in all catering and retail operations/facilities.
  - Cease using disposable cups, plates, and cutlery in food premises.
  - Eliminate single use items from events on campus including those organised/ funded by UL or external entity.

- Use waste collection services that are segregated into a minimum of three streams: general, recycling, and organic.
- METRICS
- Tonnage of food and catering waste prevented, reused, recycled, and recovered on campus.
  - Availability of single use items in food premises on campus.
  - Number of events which used single-use items.
  - Number of eateries with a minimum of three-streams waste collection services as a proportion of all eateries on campus.
  - Number of new contract arrangements related to food services, including events and conferences, that include measures targeted at addressing food waste.



# Ensure food services cater to all through inclusive and affordable options.



This commitment ensures that food services are inclusive, respect cultural and dietary needs, and provide affordable options for all members of the university community. It represents a dedication to diversity, inclusivity, and financial accessibility in food offerings.

**ACTIONS**

- Offer diverse meal plans to accommodate varying budgets where all venues on campus offer an affordable healthy and nutritious daily student special
- Respect cultural and dietary preferences with menu diversity.
- Continuously adapt services to diverse needs through a feedback system.
- Introduce a Student Pantry initiative – a food redistribution centre on campus which provides unspoiled/surplus food which students could avail of free of charge and reduce contribution to food waste.
- Designate indoor and outdoor nonmarket dining spaces across the campus to facilitate and encourage 'bring your own' (BYO) food options.

- Offer competitively priced menu items for special dietary needs.
- Make Halal food choices available and clearly identifiable every day.

**METRICS**

- Diversity score of menu options available.
- Affordability index score for meal plans and menu items.
- Satisfaction ratings from the campus community regarding inclusivity and affordability.
- Track usage rates of BYO spaces and gather feedback on their accessibility and comfort.

# Maintain clear communication and responsible practices in food services.



This commitment ensures transparency and accountability in food service operations. It involves regularly communicating food service practices and policies, engaging with the community for input and feedback, and upholding responsible practices throughout all aspects of food service delivery.

**ACTIONS**

- Publish annual sustainability reports detailing food service practices.
- Facilitate regular open forums for community input on food services.
- Establish and uphold clear guidelines and standards for food service providers.
- Implement a food waste tracking system and establish reduction targets.
- Regularly report on commitments, targets, and performance.
- Ensure consistent campus implementation of the UL Food Philosophy action items in all catering and retail venues on campus.

**METRICS**

- Compliance rate with sustainability reporting guidelines.
- Frequency of open forum sessions and community engagement activities.
- Effectiveness score of food waste tracking and reduction efforts.



# Promote biodiversity and hands-on education by cultivating food on campus.



This commitment ensures that ecosystem biodiversity across campus is enhanced through practical agriculture and educational initiatives. By involving students and staff in the cultivation of food, the university aims to provide experiential learning opportunities, foster a sense of community, and directly link academic learning with real-world practices.

- ACTIONS
- Develop edible gardens as living labs for students.
  - Integrate food cultivation into relevant academic curricula.
  - Host workshops and volunteer opportunities in campus gardens.
  - Organise seasonal planting and harvesting events to engage the campus community with the agricultural cycle.
  - Create a seed library to preserve biodiversity and encourage the sharing of plant varieties.

- METRICS
- Increase in the number of edible garden plots and participating individuals.
  - Quantity of campus-grown produce used in campus dining facilities.
  - Number of educational events or workshops related to biodiversity and gardening held annually.

# Lead in sustainable food system practices through research and academic integration.



This commitment ensures UL lead by example through integrating sustainable practices into the university's research and teaching. It includes funding research on sustainable food systems, incorporating these concepts into relevant courses, and forming partnerships to pilot and adopt innovative food technologies.

- ACTIONS
- Integrate the principles of the Healthy UL mission into all relevant curricula, ensuring that concepts of health and well-being are embedded in educational programs across disciplines.
  - Fund research projects focused on sustainable food systems.
  - Raise awareness of healthy options to help the campus community to make informed choices.
  - Integrate sustainability concepts into hospitality and nutrition courses.
  - Partner with innovation hubs to pilot new food technologies on campus.

- METRICS
- Number of academic programs incorporating principles related to sustainable food systems, health, and well-being.
  - Number of funded research projects on sustainable food systems.
  - Integration rate of sustainability concepts in relevant courses.
  - Number of new food technologies tested and implemented on campus.

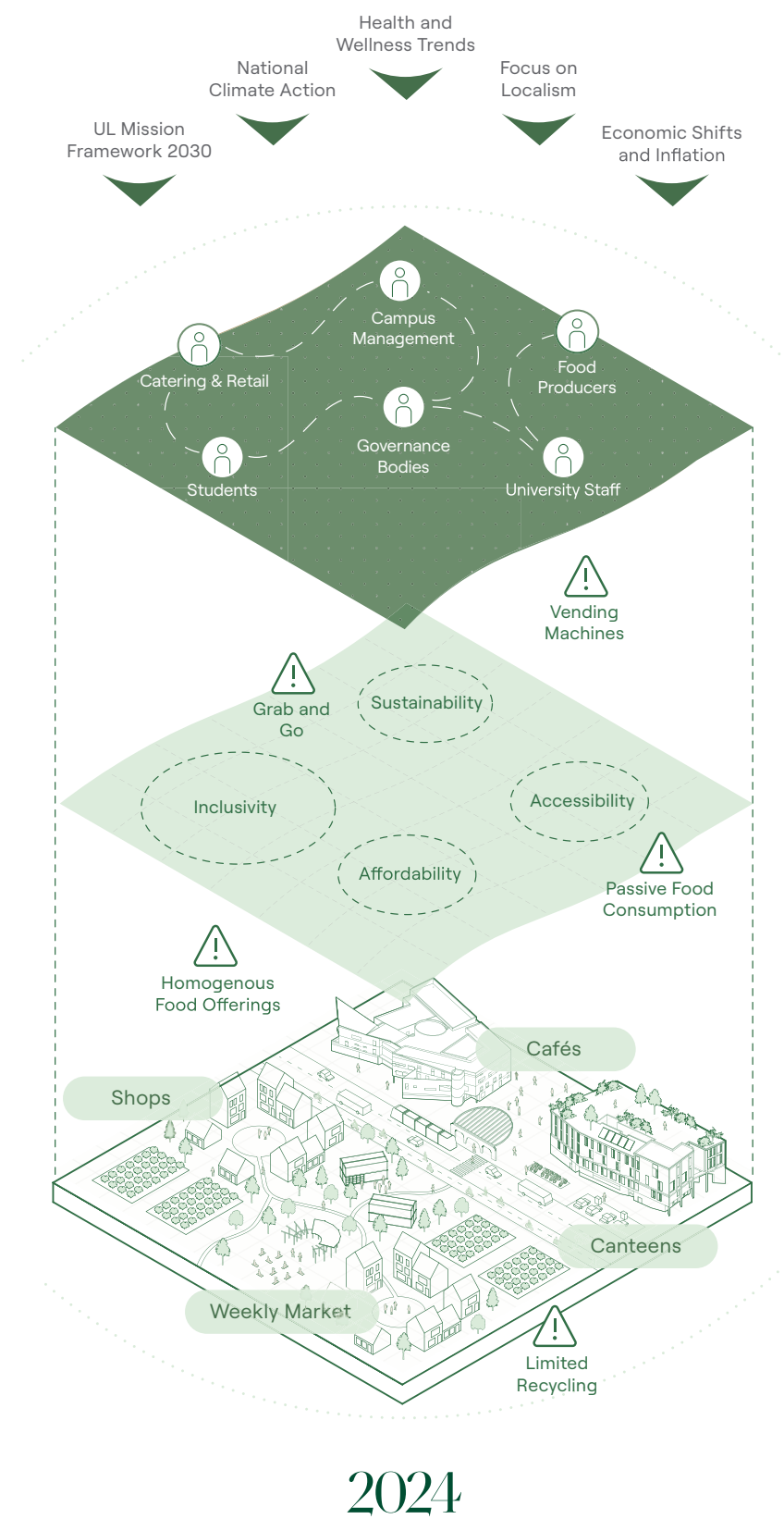


## 03 Enabling Implementation



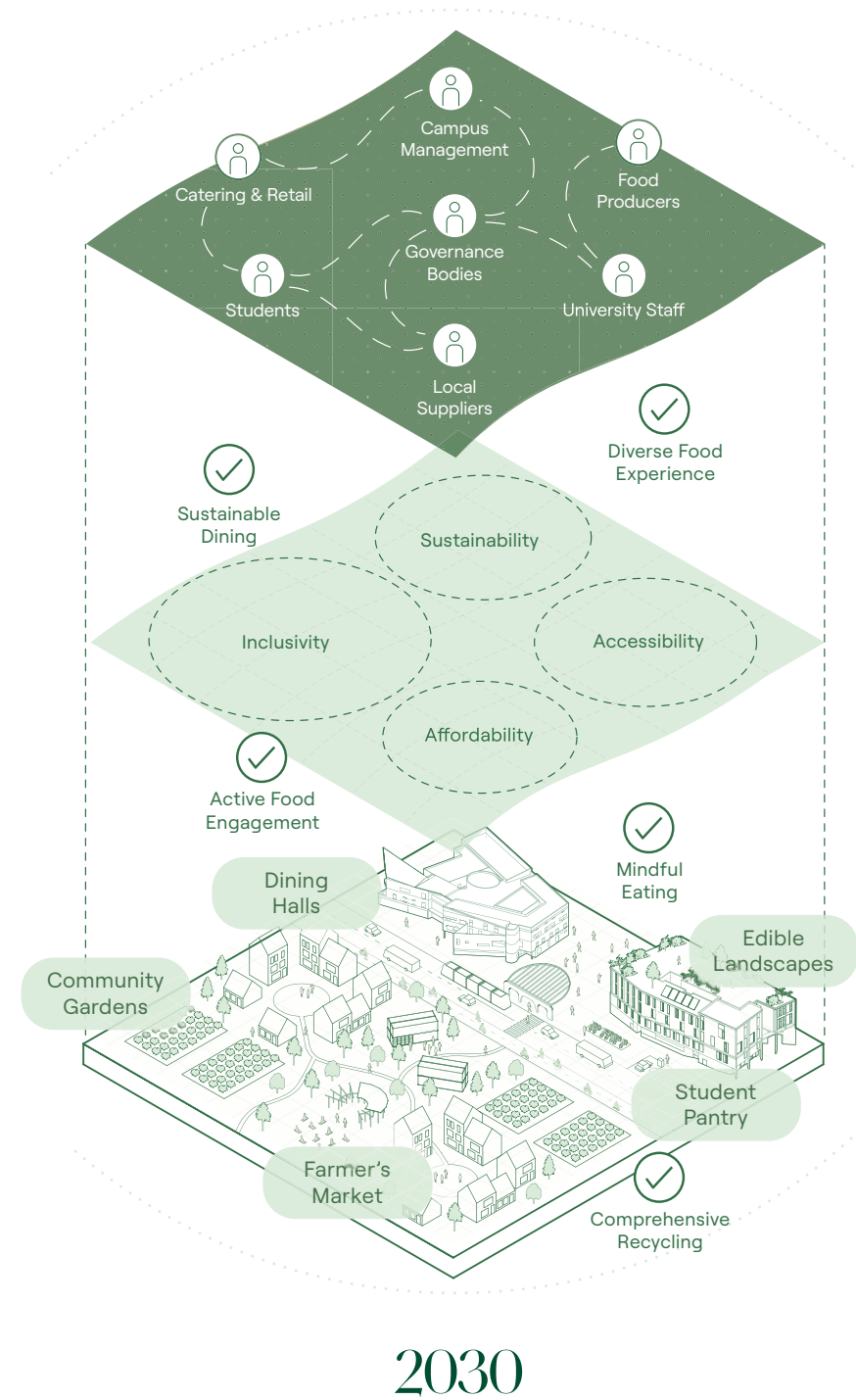
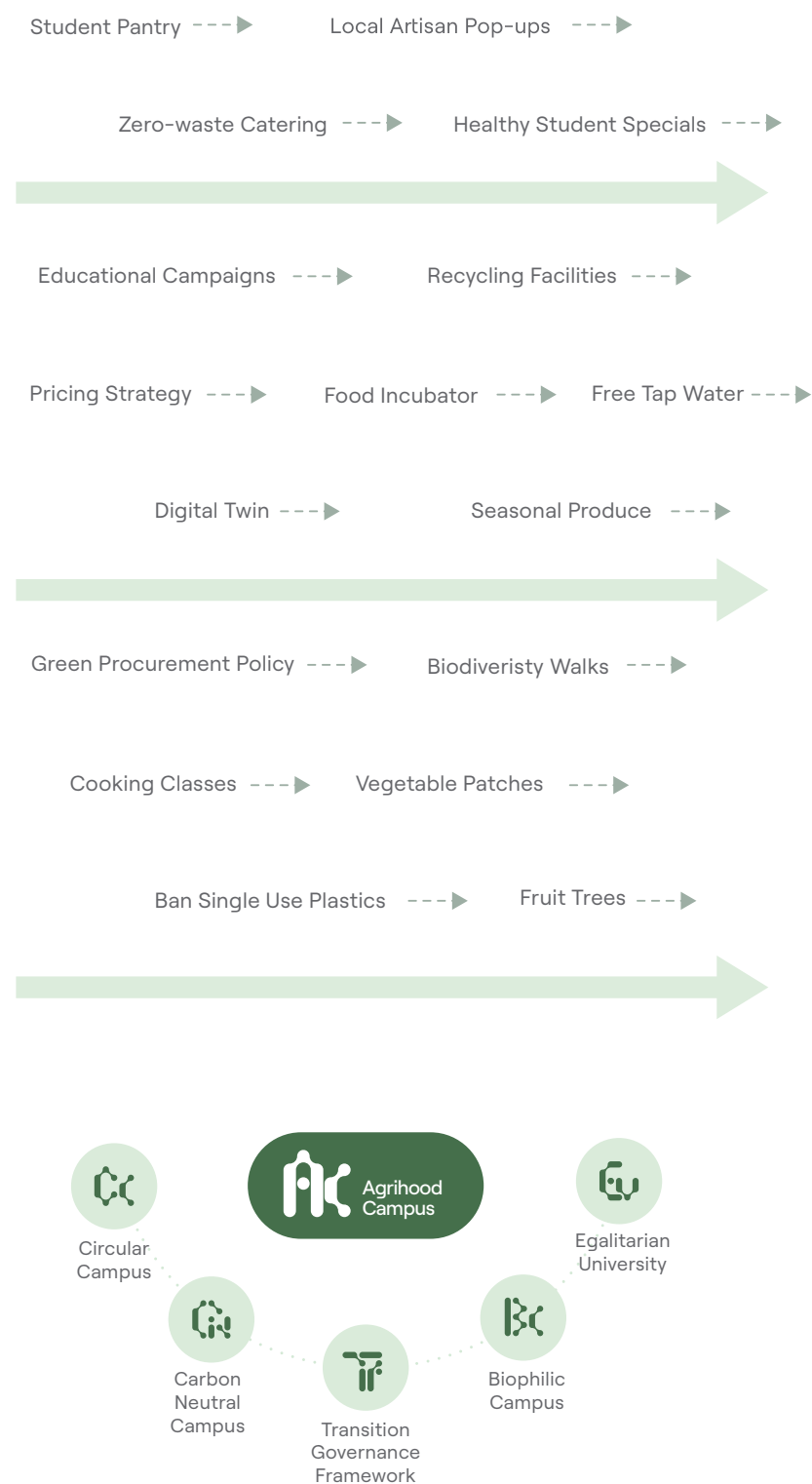


# Adopting a Systems Approach to Campus-wide Change



UL's mission-based approach to sustainability is underpinned by a systems approach to campus-wide change. This approach recognises that our transition to a sustainable food system on campus requires us to overcome multiple, complex challenges. To do so, we must collectively cohere our efforts and avoid the trap of addressing issues in isolation; instead intervening across multiple areas of change in parallel.

Through a dynamic portfolio of interconnected interventions, we aspire to actively engage in collaborative projects that range from enhancing local food procurement to advancing zero-waste catering and promoting sustainable consumption. Each initiative, while valuable on its own, is part of a larger, concerted effort to reshape how we think about, interact with, and ultimately consume food on campus.



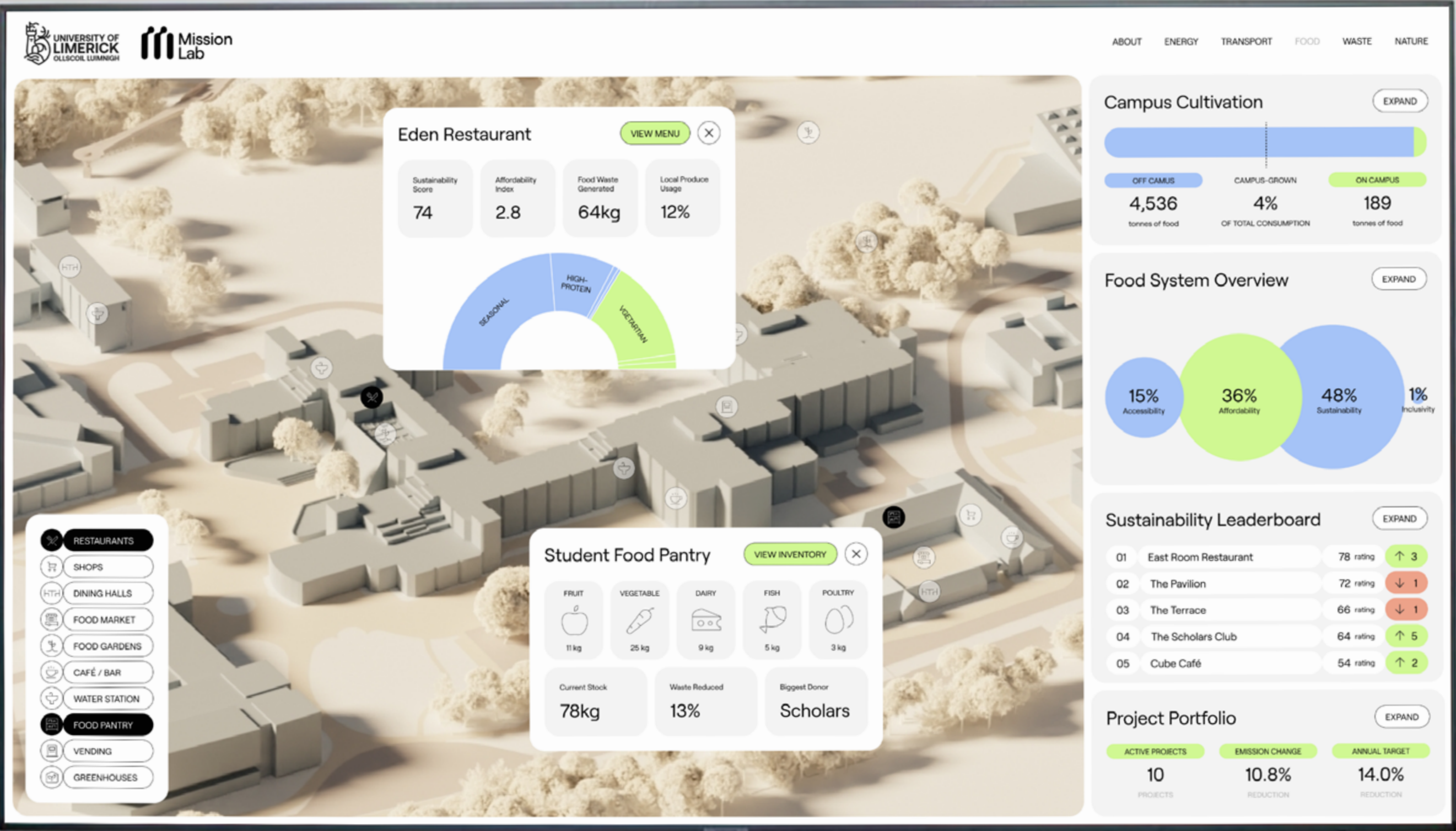


# Digital Twin Technology: Fostering a Culture of Accountability and Transparency

UL is pioneering the use of digital twin technology to revolutionise our approach to systems change. Building on our pilot project for energy systems, this technology will also be capable of serving as a virtual replica of our food systems, providing real-time insights into consumption patterns and the carbon emissions associated with food.

This digital twin will act as a transparent reporting tool, allowing us to monitor the environmental impact of our food-related activities. It will enable us to identify areas for improvement, optimise resource use, and reduce waste. The digital twin will inform data-driven decision-making processes, guiding us towards more sustainable policies and practices.

*Note: This image presents a conceptual mockup of a potential food digital twin for the campus. Further work will be carried out to identifying the most impactful data and establishing data collection methods.*





# Call to Action

Recognising that the journey towards a healthier campus requires the collective effort of all stakeholders, we advocate for the adoption of a systems-based approach. This ensures alignment of every aspect of our university, from procurement and dining services to curriculum design, with the principles of our Food Philosophy and Nutrition Policy. By fostering collaboration across departments, we aim to establish an integrated framework that bolsters the holistic well-being of our community.

We invite every member of our university community – students, faculty, staff, administrators, and visitors – to actively engage in this transformative food environment. Interact with our Food Philosophy and Nutrition Policy, offer your insights, and bring your unique perspectives to the table. Participate in workshops, attend events, and join committees dedicated to furthering our nutrition initiatives. Together, we can cultivate an environment that nourishes the potential of individuals, communities, and our planet





# 04 Appendix





# UL Catering Committee

## Members List

| Name                  | Title                                                   | Area Represented                                                |
|-----------------------|---------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------|
| John O'Rourke (Chair) | Chief Operations Officer (Interim)                      | Plassey Campus Centre Group                                     |
| Dr Catherine Norton   | Associate Professor and Registered Dietitian            | Department of Physical Education & Sport Science and Healthy UL |
| Ronan Cahil           | President                                               | UL Student Life                                                 |
| Roger Dsilva          | President                                               | UL Postgraduate Student Association                             |
| Dr Chris Fogarty      | Energy Manager                                          | UL Buildings and Estates                                        |
| Declan Hannon         | Financial Controller, Management Planning and Reporting | UL Finance                                                      |
| Catherine Fitzgerald  | Executive Committee Member                              | UNITE                                                           |
| Majella O'Gorman      | Head of Procurement and Contracts                       | UL Procurement                                                  |
| Yvonne Crosse         | International Student Engagement Manager                | UL Global                                                       |
| Deirdre Ryan          | Personal Assistant                                      | Campus Life Services                                            |
| Andrea Deverell       | Director                                                | Centre for Sustainable Futures and Innovation                   |
| Vicky Kelly           | Sustainability Engagement and Operations Manager        | Centre for Sustainable Futures and Innovation                   |

# Action Plans,

## Strategies and Policies

| Action Plan                                                                     | Link                       |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------|
| Healthy UL Framework                                                            | <a href="#">Click Here</a> |
| UL Mission-based Sustainability Framework 2030                                  | <a href="#">Click Here</a> |
| Okanagan Charter                                                                | <a href="#">Click Here</a> |
| Public Sector Climate Action Strategy                                           | <a href="#">Click Here</a> |
| Sharing the Vision: A Mental Health Policy for Everyone                         | <a href="#">Click Here</a> |
| Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice                           | <a href="#">Click Here</a> |
| WHO Global Action Plan on Physicial Activity                                    | <a href="#">Click Here</a> |
| Green Public Procurement Criteria for Food Procurement                          | <a href="#">Click Here</a> |
| Healthy Ireland: A Framework for Improved Health and Wellbeing                  | <a href="#">Click Here</a> |
| Healthy Ireland at Work: A National Framework for Healthy Workplaces in Ireland | <a href="#">Click Here</a> |
| Healthy Campus Charter and Framework Ireland                                    | <a href="#">Click Here</a> |
| EPA Food Service Pathway to less food waste & better margins                    | <a href="#">Click Here</a> |
| Ireland's National Food Waste Prevention Roadmap (2023-2025)                    | <a href="#">Click Here</a> |



# Checklist for Potential Partners

|    |                                                                                                                                                    |                                                       |
|----|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------|
| 1. | Have you developed a comprehensive strategy to minimise and measure waste in your operations?                                                      | <input type="radio"/> YES<br><input type="radio"/> NO |
| 2. | Can you demonstrate a commitment to sourcing food from local suppliers and aligning menus with seasonal availability?                              | <input type="radio"/> YES<br><input type="radio"/> NO |
| 3. | Can you deliver transparent reporting on your progress and effectively communicating with stakeholders each quarter?                               | <input type="radio"/> YES<br><input type="radio"/> NO |
| 4. | Have you integrated sustainable practices in food production and consumption to support campus-wide environmental goals?                           | <input type="radio"/> YES<br><input type="radio"/> NO |
| 5. | Do your menus offer a range of options catering to various dietary requirements, including vegetarian, vegan, halal, and allergy-friendly choices? | <input type="radio"/> YES<br><input type="radio"/> NO |
| 6. | Can you commit to initiatives to engage with the campus community and enhance their food-related experiences?                                      | <input type="radio"/> YES<br><input type="radio"/> NO |
| 7. | Can you provide a plan for educational initiatives that will inform and encourage healthy eating habits within the campus?                         | <input type="radio"/> YES<br><input type="radio"/> NO |
| 8. | Can your organisation actively participate in the university's vision of creating a sustainable, resilient, and forward-thinking food ecosystem?   | <input type="radio"/> YES<br><input type="radio"/> NO |

|     |                                                                                                                                              |                                                       |
|-----|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------|
| 9.  | Do you have measures in place to ensure the ethical treatment of animals in your supply chain?                                               | <input type="radio"/> YES<br><input type="radio"/> NO |
| 10. | Have you established procedures for regular reviews and improvements of your food offerings to align with the latest nutritional guidelines? | <input type="radio"/> YES<br><input type="radio"/> NO |
| 11. | Do you have strategies in place to reduce carbon emissions associated with your food services?                                               | <input type="radio"/> YES<br><input type="radio"/> NO |
| 12. | Can you contribute to the campus's agrihood mission through the use of campus-grown produce?                                                 | <input type="radio"/> YES<br><input type="radio"/> NO |
| 13. | Can you offer solutions for eliminating the use of single-use plastics and non-recyclable materials in your operations?                      | <input type="radio"/> YES<br><input type="radio"/> NO |
| 14. | Can you offer pricing structures which are available to all students, regardless of socioeconomic status?                                    | <input type="radio"/> YES<br><input type="radio"/> NO |
| 15. | Can you demonstrate collaborative efforts to support and enhance the existing food amenities on campus?                                      | <input type="radio"/> YES<br><input type="radio"/> NO |
| 16. | Can you demonstrate a commitment to continuous learning and adaptation in response to feedback and food service audits?                      | <input type="radio"/> YES<br><input type="radio"/> NO |
| 17. | Can you deliver food related events and programmes which will foster a sense of community and engagement?                                    | <input type="radio"/> YES<br><input type="radio"/> NO |



