

Hospitality Services

## SUSTAINABILITY COMMITMENT REPORT

November 2024

### PURPOSE

Hospitality Services at Western believes that sustainability is essential for cultivating a healthier future. We are committed to making a positive impact on our environment and community through mindful food choices, responsible sourcing, waste reduction and active collaboration. Our mission is to foster a sustainable dining experience that aligns with our values and reflects our dedication to responsible practices and continuous improvement. We envision a vibrant campus where sustainability is at the heart of our dining culture.

### MEASURING IMPACT

We are committed to supporting Western's goal to [maintain or exceed Gold rating](#) in the **Sustainable Tracking Assessment and Rating System (STARS)**, operated by The Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education (AASHE). In the Food and Dining category, we received a score of 3.29 out of 8 in October 2021, with full marks in *Sustainable Dining*, and a score of 1.29 out of 6 in *Food and Beverage Purchasing*. Notably, 38 percent of our food and beverage purchases were identified as plant-based or sustainably/ethically sourced, reflecting our commitment to responsible procurement practices.

Additionally, we support Western's standing in the **Times Higher Educations Impact Rankings**, which measures universities' commitment to social and economic impact as per the UNSDGs. In 2023, [Western ranked ninth in the world](#), scoring 95.8 out of 100 among more than 1,700 universities from 115 countries and regions.

### GOALS

Support Canada's commitment to the United [Nations Sustainability Development Goals \(UNSDGs\)](#) by focusing on:

- [Enhancing operational practices](#): Support sustainable food systems and promote responsible food choices, ensuring our operations reflect a commitment to protecting global food chains
- [Fostering education and engagement](#): Provide educational opportunities for our campus community members about sustainable practices and benefits, encouraging active participation in our sustainability initiatives.
- [Monitoring and improving initiatives](#): Regularly assess our sustainability initiatives in partnership with the Office of Sustainability to identify successes and areas for improvement, ensuring our practices align with the UNSDGs and the university's sustainability goals.

The UNSDGs are a universal call to action to end poverty, protect the planet and improve the lives and prospects of everyone, everywhere. The 17 sustainable development goals were adopted by all United Nations' Member States in 2015 as part of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which set out a 15-year plan to achieve the goals.

Hospitality Services recognizes the importance of the UNSDGs to inform work happening across campus and is committed to advancing all aspects of sustainability, including economic, social and environmental. We play an important role in helping Western achieve its global standing and contribute to Western's sustainability efforts through:

- Responsible Sourcing
- Sustainable Dining
- Education, Awareness & Collaboration
- Waste Reduction, Diversion & Recovery

This report highlights departmental projects, practices and commitments that support sustainable and ethical stewardship of resources and operations.

## #1. RESPONSIBLE SOURCING

Hospitality Services continues to make significant progress through Western's [Sustainable Procurement](#) program, which emphasizes the social, environmental and ethical impacts of our procurement practices.

We prioritize partnerships with local food providers, source seasonal produce to support our community and actively work to reduce our carbon footprint. Of our top 100 food suppliers, 32 are local, providing products produced in London or across Ontario.

We support sustainable fishing practices and are committed to sourcing seafood from [Marine Stewardship Council \(MSC\)](#), [Ocean Wise](#), and [Best Aquaculture Practices](#) certified suppliers. In 2023, we purchased 13,155 lbs of seafood from these organizations, which accounted for 50% of all seafood purchases. This ensures that our seafood is responsibly harvested, contributing to the protection of our oceans for future generations.

We enhance our operational efficiency and environmental responsibility by sourcing packaging from local distributors, ensuring that all materials are either recyclable or compostable. Our investment in high-efficiency equipment has led to substantial energy savings. For example, our Rational Combi ovens reduce energy consumption by over 28%, while our Turbo Chef ovens operate at an energy cost as low as \$2.08 to \$5.66 per day. Additionally, our Energy Star rated dishwashers are designed to minimize water usage, utilizing just 0.48 gallons per rack during the final rinse.

Compostable and recyclable containers have been implemented throughout our operations, replacing conventional single-use plastics.

Our commitment to fair trade practices has expanded, with a focus on tracking the sales of Fair Trade (FT) items such as coffee, tea, ice cream, bananas (25,373 lbs) and chocolate. Our [on-campus Farmers' Market](#), running from June to October every year, exclusively features locally grown and made products.

In partnership with [My Emissions](#), we have implemented a Climate Impact Menu Labelling System that evaluates the environmental impact of all recipes in our four-week residence dining menu cycle. Recipe grades are featured in [Nutrislice](#), our online menu platform, providing students with informed choices.

## **Future Commitments**

Looking ahead, we plan to expand our selection of fair-trade products (e.g. sugar), strengthen partnerships with sustainable seafood vendors to achieve 90% sustainable sourcing and re-launch our on-campus honeybee program. We remain dedicated to reducing single-use packaging by increasing the use of compostable and recyclable containers.

Future goals also include replacing existing cooking equipment with high-efficiency units, electrifying our fleet of delivery vehicles for catering on campus, and moving towards a self-sustainable production and distribution model. Additionally, we plan to launch a self-sustainable container farm on campus to grow and harvest leafy greens and vegetables year-round, further enhancing our local food systems and sustainability efforts.

## **#2. SUSTAINABLE DINING**

At Western, we prioritize sustainable dining initiatives that enhance the wellbeing of our students while aligning with environmental goals.

Through our commitment to Forward Food, our [residence dining menu cycle](#) now includes 47% plant-based offerings, supporting both health and sustainability. In addition, Western proudly introduced [Canada's first on-campus Odd Burger franchise](#), offering exclusively vegan fast-food options to further expand plant-based choices for our community.

In partnership with [My Emissions](#), we provide emissions ratings in our online menu platform, [Nutrislice](#), for our four-week menu cycle and Fresh To-Go pre-made items in residence, empowering students to make informed choices about their environmental impact. Each item is also marked with allergen and dietary information, ensuring accessibility for students with specific dietary needs.

Our [Choose2Reuse Ecotainer Program](#), available across all residence dining halls, distributed 6,800 reusable containers in 2023–24 academic year, contributing to significant waste reduction on campus. Furthermore, our comprehensive Allergen Risk Management plan offers strong support for students

managing their dietary needs by ensuring allergen-safe and inclusive dining options. Each meal in our four-week residence dining menu cycle includes choices that are made-without-gluten, as well as halal, vegan, vegetarian and allergen friendly options. In the 2023–24 academic year, 584 first-year students living in residence identified as having allergies or dietary restrictions; each of them received one-on-one consultation with our Registered Dietitian to explore available options, learn how to dine safely, and understand where to seek additional support.

To further support food security and affordability, this fall we launched the [Value Picks](#) program and [Mustang Meal Plan](#) (tax-free), which make balanced, nutritious meals accessible across campus.

Sustainable and diverse food options are a priority across all campus eateries, with offering such as Marine Stewardship Council MSC certified sushi and a variety of vegan choices.

### **Future Commitments**

Looking forward, we are committed to several initiatives to enhance sustainable dining across campus:

- Developing an audit program to evaluate the availability of sustainable, local, vegan, vegetarian foods at all campus dining locations
- Increasing plant-based offerings to 50% in the residence dining program
- Extending allergen training to all sessional and continuing staff members
- Broadening emissions tracking to cover all food offerings across residence dining and campus eateries (in-house concepts)
- Expanding the Mustang Meal Plan (tax-exempt) user base to reach 25% of on-campus sales, supporting food security and affordability
- Adding more healthy and sustainable options to campus vending machines
- Implementing standard operating procedures for handling halal food offerings to meet community needs
- Ensuring access to culturally inclusive menus that support our diverse campus population

### **#3. EDUCATION, AWARENESS & COLLABORATION**

At Western, education, awareness and collaboration are essential components of our sustainability journey. Partnering with Western's [Office of Sustainability](#), Presidents Advisory Committee on the Environment and Sustainability (PACE), we actively contribute to campus-wide sustainability efforts.

Programs like [Sustainability Workplace Ambassador Program](#) (SWAG), [Western Environment and Sustainability Network \(WE&SN\)](#), [WISE Case Competition](#) and student-led groups such as [EnviroUSC](#) foster engagement and collaborative problem-solving around environmental issues.

[Food Resources and Education for Student Health \(FRESH\)](#), our dietitian-led nutrition education program, promotes food literacy by enhancing students' knowledge, attitudes and skills around food, with a focus on healthy and affordable choices. FRESH also organizes student-led, interactive food demonstrations in

first-year residence dining halls, introducing students to nutrient-dense recipes like smoothies, yogurt parfaits, and chia seed puddings. This hands-on approach has already reached over 700 students in the 2023–24 academic year, empowering them to make nutritious choices.

We also host cultural events on campus and in residence to celebrate diversity, such as [Diwali](#), [Lunar New Year](#), [Oktoberfest](#) and International Week, promoting inclusivity and shared experiences through food. Through the CCUFSA Nutrition Professionals Network, we collaborate on best practices for managing allergens and dietary needs, while our Wellness Committee organizes wellness fairs and workshops to encourage health and wellbeing among staff and students.

As part of our commitment to food security, we participate in a Food insecurity working group and are continuously enhancing staff training on essential issues related to dining services. Our partnership with Forward Food brought [plant-forward culinary training](#) to our team, with a goal of further expanding plant-based options in residence dining program.

## **Future Commitments**

Looking ahead, we are committed to expanding allergen training to all sessional and continuing staff, broadening our MealCare partnership to include all campus eateries and holding quarterly meetings with the Office of Sustainability to advance shared priorities. We also aim to strengthen our community impact by becoming the top on-campus contributor to United Way, demonstrating our commitment to sustainability, awareness and collaboration in every aspect of our work.

## **#4. WASTE REDUCTION, DIVERSION & RECOVERY**

Our commitment to reducing waste and supporting a circular economy is reflected in a range of initiatives aimed at minimizing landfill impact, diverting waste streams and supporting local communities. The Choose2Reuse Ecotainer program in residence is a key element of our campus-wide drive towards zero-waste future. Through a [partnership with Second Harvest and MealCare](#), we recover salvageable food from residence dining and campus eateries and redistribute it to organizations in the London community. From May to October 2024, Western has donated over 8,000 meals to 20 non-profit agencies and saved more than 15 tonnes of greenhouse gas emissions.

By [eliminating bottled still water sales](#) on campus, we have prevented approximately 24,000 single-use plastic bottles—the number previously sold in 2023—from entering the waste stream. Great Hall Catering now exclusively use infused water dispensers and bulk water alternatives. Water refill stations are also conveniently placed in each dining hall and across the campus to promote reusable water containers.

Additionally, our commitment to waste reduction extends to small but impactful changes across campus dining locations. We have replaced plastic straws with paper ones, plastic stir sticks with wooden options and plastic bags with paper alternatives. Compostable cutlery and to-go dishware are available in all residence dining halls and at our catering events; and all disposable hot beverage containers are routed to the “organics” stream. We have implemented extensive back-of-house sorting in residence dining halls, ensuring all waste is properly routed through the correct streams. Clear and consistent [waste station](#) signage further helps students and staff sort waste correctly, maximizing our diversion efforts. Foot-powered deliveries by Great Hall Catering help to reduce greenhouse gas emissions on campus.

### **Future Commitments**

Looking forward, we are dedicated to expanding our waste reduction and recovery programs. Future commitments include implementing a comprehensive, traceable reusable container program, exclusively using compostable utensils and expanding composting options across all food service locations. We also plan to incorporate bio-digestion waste systems in all new dining halls, introduce advanced inventory management tools to reduce food waste and ultimately eliminate single-use serving vessels across campus.

### **CLOSING**

Hospitality Services plays an important role in this achievement through demonstrated waste diversion and food recovery efforts and by providing healthy, ethnically diverse, allergen-friendly and affordable food options. Together, these initiatives contribute to our university's impact and reinforce our commitment to sustainability.