

OP 7: Food and Beverage Purchasing

6 points available

Rationale

This credit recognizes institutions that are supporting sustainable food systems through their food and beverage purchases. Institutions can do this by prioritizing the purchase of plant-based and sustainably or ethically produced food and beverage items. These actions reduce the social and environmental impacts of food production and help foster food security, improved conditions for farm workers, healthier soils and waterways, and secure livelihoods for farmers.

Applicability

This credit applies to all institutions that have dining services (e.g., on-site dining halls, catering services, or food service outlets) operated by the institution, a contractor, or a franchisee.

Criteria

Institution's dining services purchase food and beverage products that meet at least one of the following criteria:

- *Sustainably or ethically produced* as determined by one or more of the standards listed in Standards and Terms.
- *Plant-based*.

An institution with Real Food Calculator results that have been validated by the Real Food Challenge (U.S.) or Good Food Calculator results that have been validated by Meal Exchange (Canada) may simply report its Real/Good Food percentage as the percentage of expenditures on sustainably or ethically produced products. The percentage of expenditures on plant-based foods is reported separately.

Required documentation

For transparency and to help ensure comparability, a completed [STARS Food and Beverage Purchasing Inventory template](#) or equivalent inventory must be provided to document purchases that qualify as sustainably or ethically produced. The inventory must justify each product's inclusion and include, at minimum, the following information:

- Product name, label, or brand
- Product description/type
- Recognized sustainability standard met (e.g., third party certification or ecolabel)

It is not required that products that qualify solely as plant-based be documented at the same level of detail.

Scoring

An institution earns the maximum of 6 points available for this credit when the weighted cost of products that are sustainably/ethically produced and/or plant-based is equivalent to 100 percent or more of total

food and beverage expenditures. Points earned are automatically calculated in the Reporting Tool as follows:

Criteria	Factor		Percentage of total annual food and beverage expenditures on products that meet each criterion (0-100)		Points earned
Sustainably or ethically produced	0.06	×	_____	=	
Plant-based	0.03	×	_____	=	
Total points earned →					Up to 6

A purchase that is both sustainably/ethically produced and plant-based is counted in both categories. This means that the maximum points available may be earned in a variety of ways, for example when:

- 50 percent of purchases are sustainably/ethically produced and 100 percent are plant-based,
- 62.5 percent of purchases are sustainably/ethically produced and 75 percent are plant-based, or
- 75 percent of purchases are sustainably/ethically produced and 50 percent are plant-based.

Reporting Fields

Required

- ☐ Percentage of total annual food and beverage expenditures on products that are sustainably or ethically produced (0-100)
- ☐ Percentage of total annual food and beverage expenditures on plant-based foods (0-100)
- ☐ An inventory of food and beverage purchases that qualify as sustainably/ethically produced (upload)
(Provide completed [STARS Food and Beverage Purchasing Inventory template](#) or alternative documentation that meets the minimum requirements outlined in Criteria and Measurement.)
- ☐ A brief description of the methodology used to conduct the food and beverage inventory/assessment (Include the timeframe and how representative samples accounted for seasonal variation, if applicable.)
If reporting Real/Good Food Calculator results, provide:
 - Website URL where the institution's validated Real/Good Food Calculator results are publicly posted
- ☐ Which of the following food service providers are present on campus and included in the inventory/assessment?
 - Dining operations and catering services operated by the institution
 - Dining operations and catering services operated by a contractor
 - Student-run food/catering services
 - Franchises (e.g., regional or global brands)
 - Convenience stores
 - Vending services
 - Concessions
- ☐ Total annual dining services budget for food and beverage products (as reflected in the inventory/assessment) (US/Canadian dollars)
 - \$10 million or more

- \$5 million - \$9.9 million
- \$1 million - \$4.9 million
- \$500,000 - \$999,999
- Less than \$500,000

Optional

- A brief description of the institution's sustainable food and beverage purchasing program (Include how the sustainability impacts of products in specific categories are addressed.)
- Website URL where information about the food and beverage purchasing program is available
- Additional documentation to support the submission (upload)
- Data source(s) and notes about the submission
- Contact information for a responsible party (an employee who can respond to questions regarding the data once it is submitted and available to the public)

Measurement

Timeframe

Report the most recent data available from within the three years prior to the anticipated date of submission.

Sampling and Data Standards

At a minimum, the figures provided must include food and beverage purchases for campus dining halls and catering services operated by the institution or the institution's primary food service provider (e.g., Aramark, Bon Appétit Management Company, Chartwells, Sodexo). Outlets that are unique to the institution or its primary contractor (e.g., retail concepts developed and managed by the institution or contractor) should be included. On-site franchises (e.g., regional or global brands), convenience stores, vending services, concessions, and de minimus purchases by other entities may be excluded at the institution's discretion to simplify reporting.

An institution that does not have dining halls or catering services should report on whatever type(s) of food service outlets are present to the extent that a representative portion of total campus food and beverage expenditures are included.

Institutions may choose to track food and beverage purchases for a 12-month consecutive period or use a representative sample that includes data from a full academic term or similar period. When using samples, institutions must accommodate seasonal and other variations in food and beverage availability and purchasing, for example by including an equal number of months within and outside the local growing season.

This credit is based on total food and beverage expenditures in the following categories (the examples provided are not exhaustive):

- Meat: beef, lamb, pork, game (including products that are frozen or canned)
- Dairy: fluid milk, cheese, yogurt, ice cream
- Poultry: chicken, turkey, other fowl
- Fish/seafood: fish, shellfish (including products that are frozen or canned)
- Eggs: shelled eggs, liquid egg product, powdered egg
- Produce: fresh, cut, or frozen fruits and vegetables

- Baked goods: breads, pastries, sweets
- Grocery/staples: spices, oils, sugar, grain products, vegetarian/vegan meat alternatives, most products that are boxed, bottled, jarred, or canned
- Tea and coffee: hot and cold coffee and tea products (including bottled beverages, coffee beans, loose and bagged tea)
- Other non-dairy beverages: soft drinks, sports drinks, milk alternatives, wine, beer

To the extent feasible, all of the product categories and types outlined above should be included in the total food and beverage expenditures figure. If data tracking limitations make it necessary to exclude a product type or category, all products of that type or category must be excluded from both the numerator (expenditures on products that meet credit criteria) and the denominator (total food and beverage expenditures). Exclusions must be documented in the public “Data sources(s) and notes about the submission” field.

To simplify reporting and/or address data tracking limitations, an institution may elect to report on a subset of plant-based foods (as defined in Standards and Terms). For example, an institution may choose to only report produce and other single-ingredient commodities that are not dairy, meat, poultry, eggs, or fish/seafood as plant-based foods. Under this approach, multi-ingredient products would not be considered plant-based or animal-based, and would not earn points.

Products sourced from a campus farm or garden, but not purchased, may be accounted for based on estimated market value.

Guidance for aggregated and multi-ingredient products

Products that are sustainably/ethically produced and products that are conventionally produced must be reported separately to the extent possible. In cases where a single-ingredient product is gathered from multiple farms or boats and aggregated prior to distribution (e.g., fluid milk), a purchase may qualify as sustainably/ethically produced if the distributor is able to verify that more than 50 percent of the product (by volume) meets the criteria.

A product from a secondary processor (e.g., artisan, baker, brewer, cheese/yogurt maker, coffee roaster) qualifies as sustainably/ethically produced if the predominant/defining raw ingredient (or more than 50 percent of ingredients, by weight, salt and water excluded) is sustainably or ethically produced. Examples of predominant/defining raw ingredients include the flour in bread, the milk in cheese, and the tomatoes in tomato sauce.

A multi-ingredient product may qualify as plant-based if it is composed primarily of unprocessed or minimally processed plant-based foods and plant-based culinary ingredients OR it is a vegetarian/vegan alternative to meat or dairy. Ultra-processed foods do not qualify as plant-based (see Standards and Terms).

Additional documentation required for institution-affirmed production

To count a product under the exemption for institution-affirmed production (see *Standards and Terms*), the following documentation must be provided:

- Name of the farm, boat, or harvester
- Product description/type
- Source (direct purchase/trade or source-identified intermediary)

- Affirmation from the institution that the production methods are consistent with the principles of organic agriculture, responsible fisheries management, or fair trade
- Evidence on which the affirmation is based (e.g., site visits or documentation from the producer)

Standards and Terms

Plant-based foods

Consistent with Menus of Change, plant-based foods are defined as “fruits and vegetables (produce); whole grains; beans, other legumes (pulses), and soy foods; nuts and seeds; plant oils; and herbs and spices”, simple combinations of these foods and their derivatives, and *vegetarian/vegan* alternatives to meat and dairy:

<p>Unprocessed or minimally processed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fruits • Vegetables • Whole grains • Legumes • Mushrooms • Nuts • Seeds • Herbs • Spices <p>This includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cereal grains and flours • Plain oatmeal, pasta, and noodles • Fruit or vegetable juices • Tea • Coffee 	<p>Processed culinary ingredients derived from plants or nature, for example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vegetable oils crushed from seeds, nuts, or fruits such as olives • Starches extracted from corn and other plants • Sugar and sweeteners obtained from plants • Honey extracted from combs and syrup from maple trees • Soy sauce • Vinegar 	<p>Simple processed foods composed primarily of unprocessed or minimally processed plant-based foods and plant-based culinary ingredients, for example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Canned or bottled vegetables, fruits, and legumes • Tomato extract, pastes, or concentrates • Salted or sugared nuts and seeds • Fruits in syrup • Unpackaged freshly made breads • Cereal products such as flavored oatmeal • Tofu and tempeh • Fermented alcoholic beverages such as wine, beer, and cider 	<p>Vegetarian/vegan alternatives to meat and dairy, for example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plant-based ‘milks’ • Plant-based meat substitutes • Plant-based margarines and spreads
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Animal products (i.e., meat, poultry, fish, seafood, eggs, and dairy) and their derivatives, drinking water, and most ultra-processed foods do NOT qualify as plant-based foods. Examples of ultra-processed foods include:

- Sweet or savory packaged snacks
- Chocolate and candies (confectionary)
- Mass produced packaged breads and buns
- Cookies (biscuits), pastries, cakes, and cake mixes
- Instant sauces
- Many ready to heat products including pre-prepared pies and pasta and pizza dishes
- Powdered and packaged 'instant' soups, noodles and desserts
- Carbonated drinks
- 'Energy' drinks
- 'Fruit' drinks
- Distilled alcoholic beverages such as whiskey, gin, rum, and vodka

Short food supply chain

Short food supply chains (SFSCs) are defined as supply chains with a minimal number of intermediaries (ideally, no more than one) between identified farms, boats, or harvesters, and the institution. SFSCs pass transparent information about the origin, production method, and sustainability of the product to the consumer and provide full traceability through all stages of production, processing, and distribution. Examples include direct sales, contract production, regional food hubs, regional farm-to-institution programs, organic growers' cooperatives, and community-supported fishery programs.

For more information, see the [Short Supply Chain Knowledge and Innovation Network](#) (SKIN) and [Short food supply chains and local food systems in the EU](#) (European Commission).

Small producer

Consistent with FLOCERT, Fairtrade International, and the World Fair Trade Organization (WFTO), a small producer or small-scale producer is “a producer who is not structurally dependent on permanent hired labour” and who manages their production activity mainly with a family or owner-operator workforce.

Sustainably or ethically produced

To count as sustainably or ethically produced, a food or beverage product must meet one or more of the following standards. Certification/verification is required, however exemptions are provided for NGO-recommended seafood and institution-affirmed production, as outlined below.

Sustainable agriculture

International standards	Regional standards
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Biodynamic Certified (Demeter) • Bird Friendly Coffee • Certified Organic under any IFOAM-endorsed standard • Certified Sustainably Grown (SCS) • LEAF Marque (Linking Environment and Farming) • Naturland certified • Rainforest Alliance Certified (Sustainable Agriculture SAN Standard) • Regenerative Organic Certified • UTZ certified 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • American National Standard for Sustainable Agriculture (ANSI/LEO-4000) (Silver or higher) - U.S. • Bee Better Certified (Xerces Society) - U.S. • Biopartenaire label - France • Filière Biologique du Québec (BIO Québec, Aliments du Québec - Bio, and Aliments préparés au Québec – Bio) • Food Alliance Certified - U.S. • Participatory Guarantee System (PGS) verified (e.g., Certified Naturally Grown) • Protected Harvest Certified - U.S. • Salmon Safe Certified - U.S. • USDA Transitional Organic - U.S.

Other sustainability standards and ISO Type I ecolabels developed/administered by a Global Ecolabelling Network or ISEAL Alliance member organization OR that meet or exceed the minimum crop production standards outlined in an IFOAM-endorsed organic program or IFOAM Common Objectives and Requirements of Organic Standards (COROS).

Sustainable seafood

<p>International standards</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Marine Stewardship Council blue ecolabel (paired with MSC Chain of Custody certification) • Monterey Bay Aquarium Seafood Watch (Best Choices, Good Alternatives, and Recommended Eco-Certifications) 	<p>Regional standards (for products not covered by the international standards)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Australian Marine Conservation Society (Green 'Better Choice') • Marine Conservation Society (Rating 1-2) - U.K. • Mr. Goodfish seasonal recommendations - Europe • Ocean Wise Recommended - Canada • Royal Forest and Bird Protection Society (Ranking A-C) - New Zealand • Sailors for the Sea Blue list - Japan • WWF/Good Fish Foundation (Green and Amber/Yellow list) - Africa, Asia, Europe
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Fair trade/labor

<p>International standards</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ecocert Fair Trade (EFT) • Fair for Life (IMO) • Fairtrade mark (Fairtrade International) • Fair Trade Certified (Fair Trade USA) • FairWild certified • Guaranteed Fair Trade (WFTO) • Hand in Hand (Rapunzel) • Small Producers' Symbol (SPP) 	<p>Regional standards</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Equitable Food Initiative certified - U.S. • Fair Food Program (Fair Food Standards Council / Coalition of Immokalee Workers) - U.S. • Fair Trade Federation member - U.S. and Canada • Food Justice Certified (Agricultural Justice Project) - U.S. • Milk with Dignity (Migrant Justice) - U.S.
<p>Other fair trade/labor standards developed/administered by a farmworker organization or a Global Ecolabelling Network, ISEAL Alliance, or WFTO member organization.</p>	

Humane animal care

<p>International standards</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Animal Welfare Approved (A Greener World) • Certified Humane Raised and Handled • Global Animal Partnership Certified (Step 2 and above) 	<p>Regional standards</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AGA-Certified Grassfed - U.S. • American Humane Certified (Laying Hens - Free Range and Pasture only) - U.S. and Canada • Bioland - Germany • BuyingPoultry (Best Choices and Better Choices) - U.S. and Canada • Label Rouge - France
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NOFA-NY or PCO Certified 100% Grassfed - U.S. • RSPCA Approved - Australia • RSPCA Assured - U.K. • SPCA Certified - Canada
Other animal welfare standards and ISO Type I ecolabels that exceed the minimum animal husbandry standards outlined in a relevant IFOAM-endorsed organic program or IFOAM COROS.	

Student-led verification programs

- Good Food. Products that have been designated as Community-Based, Ecologically-Sound, Humane, and/or Socially-Just by student researchers running the Good Food Calculator and validated by Meal Exchange (Canada).
- Real Food. Products that have been designated as Ecologically Sound, Fair, Humane, and/or Local & Community Based by student researchers running the Real Food Calculator and validated by the Real Food Challenge (U.S.).

Institution-affirmed production

An exemption from the certification/verification requirement is granted to producers who are engaged in sustainable production, but for whom certification is either not accessible or not cost effective (e.g., campus farms and gardens and small producers). To qualify, ALL of the following criteria must be met:

- 1) The product is single-ingredient (e.g., apples, coffee, or fish).
- 2) The product is sourced through a *short food supply chain* (SFSC) that provides full traceability from identified farms, boats, or harvesters to the institution.
- 3) The institution is able to affirm (e.g., through site visits or documentation from the producer or intermediary) that the production methods used are consistent with the [principles of organic agriculture articulated in IFOAM COROS](#), the [FAO Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries](#), OR the [10 principles of fair trade adopted by the World Fair Trade Organization](#) (WFTO).

Vegetarian/vegan

Consistent with V-Label criteria and European Vegetarian Union recommendations, “food and other products that do not contain animals or parts of animals are considered vegetarian”. Vegetarian products may be created with the help of living animals and animal-derived products (e.g., dairy, eggs, and honey). Vegan products are vegetarian products for which no ingredients, processing aids, or substances of animal origin have been used at any stage of production and processing.