

SUSTAINABLE FOOD POLICY

The far-reaching impacts of climate change, environmental degradation, and loss of biodiversity and natural resources make it imperative to pursue a green transition that is holistic, rapid, and equitable. This is a complex societal challenge in which ENLIGHT aims to play a leading role.

The complexity of sustainability issues requires a multidisciplinary approach and collaboration between all actors involved. Academics are among the key actors and position themselves alongside the other stakeholders to collaboratively develop sustainable and widely supported solutions through a co-creative process.

We need to familiarise our students with complex sustainability issues, equip them with the necessary competences and tools, and encourage their commitment. We should trust them to strengthen and enrich the transition. This also means that sustainability should be anchored not only in our research and education, but also in the way universities are governed and organise their operations. ‘Practice what you preach’ is crucial if we strive for providing education and setting a strong example for our students.

In addition to the efforts already made by ENLIGHT partners and the sharing of good practices, we want to lead by example with ENLIGHT activities. The launch of the ENLIGHT Sustainable Travel Policy in line with the ENLIGHT Sustainability Engagement Agreement exemplifies how our commitment to sustainability is put into practice. As the next step, we broaden our focus to include an environmentally conscious approach to catering at in-person events.

The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the need for a resilient food system that ensures access to affordable food in any situation. It has also underscored the links between health, ecosystems, supply chains, and consumption. As the [Farm to Fork Strategy](#) concludes, protecting human and planetary health requires reducing pesticides, antimicrobials, and excess fertilisation while expanding organic farming, improving animal welfare, and preserving biodiversity. Recurrent droughts, floods and wildfires, together with land degradation and the increasing risk of pests, contribute to the prevailing scarcity of fertile land. To ensure food security while promoting sustainable agriculture and biodiversity conservation, sustainable intensification of agriculture, a shift towards a more efficient food chain that minimises food waste and a switch to a predominantly plant-based diet is essential.

Published in 2019, [EAT-Lancet is the first comprehensive scientific report](#) on what constitutes a planetary health diet within a sustainable food system. The report focuses primarily on plant-based foods, with limited space for dairy products, meat, fish, and eggs. The IPCC (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change) also emphasises [the need for a more plant-based diet and reduced meat consumption](#). One proposed focus is on “low-carbon food systems” based on fruits, nuts, vegetables, and grains. The [WHO has stated that plant-based diets have the potential not only to reduce our negative impact on the environment, but also to improve human health](#). Additionally, the [Farm to Fork Strategy](#) underscores the impact of long supply chains and advocates for local and regional food to enhance sustainability and food safety.

Building on this and aiming for a more environmentally and health-focused approach, ENLIGHT commits to a shift from animal to plant-based proteins by prioritising a plant-based and/or vegetarian food selection for receptions, events, dinners, and work meetings, while still offering the option of meat upon request (similar to how vegetarian and other dietary preferences are currently accommodated). Additionally, prioritising locally produced and seasonal foods over imported options is recommended whenever possible.

In this way, we aim to take a step forward as ENLIGHT while also inspiring our partner institutions to implement similar initiatives in their internal event management.

References:

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