CHUKWUEMEKA ODUMEGWU OJUKWU UNIVERSITY

POLICY ON SUSTAINABLE FOOD PRODUCTION AND PROCUREMENT

1. Preamble

Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University (COOU) recognises that the sustainability of food systems is essential to human health, environmental protection, climate resilience, food security, responsible consumption, teaching, research and community development.

The University is committed to promoting food production and procurement practices that conserve soil and water resources, protect biodiversity, minimise pollution and waste, reduce greenhouse gas emissions, support responsible livelihoods and provide safe, nutritious and affordable food to members of the University community.

This Policy establishes an institutional framework for sustainable food production on University-controlled land and the responsible sourcing, procurement, preparation, sale and consumption of food on University campuses and at other University-controlled facilities.

The Policy shall operate consistently with the laws of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, applicable Anambra State requirements, food safety standards, the University's statutes and regulations, and relevant national policies and guidelines.

2. Purpose

The purpose of this Policy is to:

a. promote sustainable agricultural practices in food produced on University land or through University-supported initiatives;

a. ensure that food purchased, supplied, prepared or sold on campus is sourced, as far as practicable, from producers and suppliers using environmentally responsible and socially fair practices;

a. protect soil health, water resources, biodiversity and ecosystem services associated with food production;

a. encourage climate-smart, resource-efficient and resilient agricultural systems;

a. promote safe, nutritious, diverse and affordable food for students, staff, visitors and other campus users;

a. reduce avoidable food loss, food waste, packaging waste and pollution across the campus food system;

a. support local farmers, cooperatives, small and medium-sized agricultural enterprises, women and youth in sustainable food value chains;

a. integrate sustainable agriculture into teaching, research, student projects, extension and community engagement; and

a. establish clear responsibilities, procurement requirements, monitoring arrangements and reporting mechanisms for implementation.

3. Scope

This Policy applies to all University campuses, faculties, departments, institutes, centres, farms, demonstration plots, hostels, staff facilities and other premises under the University's control. It applies to:

a. food crops, livestock, poultry, fisheries, aquaculture and other food products grown or raised on University-controlled land;

a. food procured, contracted, donated, distributed, prepared or sold by the University or on its behalf;

a. campus restaurants, cafeterias, canteens, kiosks, food vendors, catering contractors and event caterers;

a. suppliers, farmers, aggregators, distributors and contractors providing food or food-related services to the University;

a. staff and students involved in University-supported food production, procurement, research, training or outreach; and

a. University-funded or University-branded food programmes and agricultural projects.

Where food outlets or suppliers operate independently under licence, tenancy or concession arrangements, the University shall incorporate relevant requirements of this Policy into contracts, licences, service-level agreements and renewal conditions, subject to applicable law.

4. Definitions

a. Sustainable food production: Production of food in ways that maintain or improve environmental quality, use natural resources responsibly, support viable livelihoods and provide safe and nutritious food over time.

a. Sustainable sourcing: Purchasing food from suppliers who can demonstrate responsible environmental, social and food-safety practices in their production and supply chains.

a. Climate-smart agriculture: Agricultural practices that seek to improve productivity and resilience while reducing or avoiding greenhouse gas emissions where practicable.

a. Integrated pest management (IPM): An approach that prioritises prevention, monitoring, cultural, biological and mechanical controls and uses approved pesticides only when necessary and responsibly.

a. Food loss and waste: Food intended for human consumption that is lost or discarded at production, storage, distribution, preparation, serving or consumption stages.

a. Local supplier: A producer or supplier operating within Anambra State or another nearby Nigerian state, as may be defined in University procurement guidance.

a. Traceability: The ability to identify the origin, production or handling history, supplier and movement of a food product through relevant stages of the supply chain.

5. Guiding Principles

a. Environmental stewardship: Protect soil, water, air, biodiversity and ecological functions.

a. Food safety and nutrition: Sustainability shall not compromise food hygiene, quality, safety or nutritional value.

a. Precaution and prevention: Prevent contamination, land degradation, excessive chemical use and avoidable environmental harm.

a. Resource efficiency: Use water, energy, land, fertilisers and other inputs efficiently.

a. Fairness and inclusion: Promote decent working conditions, fair dealing and opportunities for local and small-scale producers.

a. Evidence and transparency: Base procurement and production decisions on verifiable information and maintain appropriate records.

a. Continuous improvement: Set measurable targets in stages, review performance and improve practices as data and resources permit.

6. Sustainable Food Production on University Land

Any food production undertaken on University-controlled land or with University resources shall, as appropriate to the site and production system:

a. use land in accordance with its suitability and approved land-use plans, avoiding unnecessary conversion of natural habitats or areas of ecological importance;

a. maintain or improve soil health through practices such as crop rotation, cover cropping, mulching, composting, appropriate organic matter management and erosion control;

a. use fertilisers and soil amendments according to crop needs and good agricultural practice, avoiding excessive application and nutrient runoff;

a. prioritise integrated pest management and the use of approved, properly labelled crop-protection products only when justified, following all label, safety, storage and application requirements;

a. conserve water through efficient irrigation, rainwater harvesting where feasible, soil-moisture management and prevention of water pollution;

a. avoid the use of untreated wastewater, contaminated water or unsafe organic materials in food production;

a. promote suitable indigenous, locally adapted and climate-resilient crops and varieties, while respecting applicable seed and plant-health requirements;

a. use energy and farm machinery efficiently and consider renewable energy where technically and economically feasible;

a. manage livestock and poultry responsibly, including adequate housing, clean water, appropriate feed, veterinary care, biosecurity and humane handling;

a. manage manure, crop residues and agricultural waste safely, prioritising composting or other beneficial use where appropriate;

a. protect pollinators, beneficial organisms, riparian areas, trees and other biodiversity features; and

a. maintain production records, including crops or animals produced, inputs used, water use, harvests and relevant incidents.

The University may establish demonstration farms, gardens, orchards, agroforestry plots, protected cultivation systems and other sustainable food-production facilities for teaching, research, food supply and community engagement.

7. Sustainable Food Procurement and Supplier Standards

The University shall progressively integrate sustainability criteria into food procurement and supplier selection. Procurement decisions shall continue to comply with applicable public procurement, financial and food-safety requirements.

As appropriate to the food category, value and availability, suppliers seeking to provide food to the University shall be required to:

a. identify the farm, producer, processor or principal source of the food supplied and provide reasonable evidence of origin;

a. demonstrate compliance with applicable food safety, hygiene, plant health, animal health and product registration requirements;

a. confirm that food is produced without prohibited pesticides, veterinary drugs or other prohibited substances and that approved inputs are used responsibly;

a. demonstrate appropriate soil, water, waste and pollution-management practices;

a. avoid sourcing from production activities involving unlawful land clearing, destruction of protected habitats or other serious environmental harm;

a. maintain appropriate records to support traceability and respond to reasonable University verification requests;

a. observe applicable labour laws and avoid forced labour, child labour, exploitation and unsafe working conditions; and

a. notify the University promptly of material food-safety incidents, product recalls, contamination or significant changes in the source of supplied food.

Where food quality, safety, price and reliability are comparable, the University shall give reasonable preference to seasonal food, locally produced food and suppliers who can demonstrate stronger sustainability performance. Local origin alone shall not be treated as proof of sustainable production.

The University may use supplier declarations, farm visits, documentary checks, recognised assurance schemes, independent audits or other proportionate verification methods. Certification may be considered as supporting evidence but shall not be the only means by which small-scale producers can demonstrate responsible practices.

8. Food Safety, Quality and Nutrition

All food produced, procured, stored, transported, prepared, served or sold on University premises shall comply with applicable Nigerian food safety and hygiene requirements, including relevant NAFDAC regulations and guidance.

The University and its food-service operators shall, as applicable:

a. ensure that food is obtained from identifiable and suitable sources;

a. maintain hygienic premises, equipment, water supplies, drainage, storage and preparation areas;

a. prevent cross-contamination and control pests effectively;

a. maintain appropriate temperature controls during storage, transport and preparation;

a. ensure that food handlers receive appropriate hygiene and safety training;

a. maintain procedures for complaints, traceability, withdrawal and recall of unsafe food;

a. provide accurate information on food products and relevant allergens where required; and

a. promote nutritious, diverse and balanced food choices, including adequate availability of fruits, vegetables and other locally appropriate nutritious foods.

No sustainability claim, local-sourcing preference or cost consideration shall justify the purchase, preparation or sale of food that is unsafe, adulterated, unfit for consumption or otherwise non-compliant with applicable requirements.

9. Water, Soil, Energy and Biodiversity Protection

The University shall promote agricultural and food-service practices that minimise pressure on natural resources. Measures may include efficient irrigation, rainwater harvesting, soil testing, erosion prevention, nutrient management, renewable energy, efficient equipment, protection of trees and pollinator habitats, and prevention of chemical or biological contamination of surface water and groundwater.

Food production and related infrastructure shall be planned to avoid adverse impacts on sensitive habitats, drainage channels, wetlands and other ecologically important areas. Where risks are identified, appropriate mitigation or alternative site selection shall be required.

10. Food Waste, Packaging and Circularity

The University shall promote prevention and reduction of food waste throughout the campus food system. Relevant measures shall include:

a. planning food purchases, menus and catering quantities to reduce over-ordering and avoidable surplus;

a. monitoring food waste from kitchens, serving areas, events and other relevant operations;

a. safe redistribution of suitable surplus food, where legally permissible and supported by appropriate food-safety controls;

a. segregating food waste from general waste and other recyclable materials;

a. composting suitable food and agricultural residues or directing them to other safe, approved recovery processes;

a. preventing the discharge of oils, fats, chemicals and food waste into drains and watercourses;

a. reducing unnecessary single-use packaging and encouraging reusable, recyclable or lower-impact packaging where food safety permits; and

a. ensuring that animal feed or other reuse of food residues is undertaken only where safe and legally permissible.

11. Campus Food Outlets and Catering Contractors

All University-managed food outlets and contracted catering operators shall comply with this Policy and related University requirements. Contracts and operating licences shall, as appropriate, include provisions on sustainable sourcing, food hygiene, waste prevention, packaging, record keeping, staff training and cooperation with inspections.

The University may require food outlets to display relevant sourcing information, identify seasonal or locally sourced options, maintain records of major suppliers and report food waste or other sustainability indicators. Any public sustainability claim shall be accurate, specific and capable of verification.

12. Education, Research and Community Engagement

The University shall encourage faculties, departments, research centres, students and relevant external partners to contribute to sustainable food systems through:

a. research on climate-smart agriculture, soil health, sustainable livestock and fisheries, post-harvest technology, food safety and food-waste reduction;

a. student farms, gardens, demonstration plots, internships, service learning and practical agricultural training;

a. extension programmes and knowledge-sharing with local farmers, cooperatives, food vendors and communities;

a. collaboration with relevant government agencies, agricultural research institutions, professional bodies, civil society organisations and responsible private-sector partners; and

a. public education on healthy diets, sustainable consumption, food safety and responsible waste management.

13. Responsibilities of the University

The University shall:

a. incorporate sustainability requirements into relevant food procurement, farm management, catering and campus operations;

a. designate an appropriate office, committee or unit to coordinate implementation of this Policy;

a. provide reasonable guidance and training for relevant staff, suppliers, food handlers and contractors;

a. encourage sustainable food production and procurement within available resources;

a. maintain appropriate records and monitor compliance;

a. investigate credible reports of non-compliance and require corrective action where necessary;

a. promote collaboration among relevant faculties, departments, student bodies and external stakeholders; and

a. publish or otherwise communicate relevant information on implementation and progress.

14. Responsibilities of Suppliers, Food Operators and University Personnel

Suppliers, farmers, food vendors, catering contractors and other operators covered by this Policy shall:

a. comply with applicable laws, food-safety requirements, contract conditions and relevant provisions of this Policy;

a. provide accurate information about food origin, production methods and handling practices;

a. maintain records and permit reasonable verification by authorised University representatives;

a. ensure that employees and food handlers receive appropriate training and work under safe conditions;

a. report food-safety incidents, contamination, recalls or significant breaches promptly; and

a. implement corrective actions within the time specified by the University.

University staff and students involved in food production, procurement, handling, research or oversight shall act responsibly, follow relevant procedures and report observed risks or breaches.

15. Monitoring, Evaluation and Performance Indicators

The designated coordinating office shall establish a monitoring framework and maintain records sufficient to assess implementation. The University shall establish baseline information before adopting numerical performance targets and shall review those targets periodically.

Monitoring indicators may include:

a. the proportion of food suppliers assessed against the University's sustainability criteria;

a. the proportion or value of food procurement for which the origin and principal producer can be identified;

a. the quantity or proportion of food sourced from verified sustainable or responsible producers, where reliable data are available;

a. the area of University land managed under documented sustainable production practices;

a. soil and water management measures implemented on University farms;

a. the number of farmers, vendors, food handlers and students trained in sustainable food practices;

a. food waste generated, prevented, redistributed, composted or otherwise recovered;

a. compliance with food hygiene requirements and the number and resolution of food-safety incidents; and

a. research, outreach and community partnerships supporting sustainable food systems.

Monitoring shall be proportionate to the scale and risk of the activity. The University shall avoid making unsupported claims about the sustainability of food products or suppliers.

16. Non-Compliance and Corrective Action

Where a supplier, contractor, food outlet or University unit fails to comply with this Policy, the University may require corrective action, additional documentation, training, a site inspection or other proportionate measures.

Serious or repeated breaches, including deliberate misrepresentation, unsafe food practices, prohibited chemical use, falsification of sourcing records or failure to address significant environmental harm, may result in suspension or termination of a contract, withdrawal of an operating licence or other action under applicable University procedures and law.

Any action taken under this section shall follow the relevant contractual terms, University procedures and principles of fairness.

17. Governance and Oversight

The Vice-Chancellor shall provide institutional oversight for the implementation of this Policy and may assign coordination to an appropriate existing committee or designate a Sustainable Food Systems Committee.

The coordinating body shall:

a. coordinate implementation across relevant University units and campuses;

a. advise on sustainability criteria for food procurement and campus food operations;

a. review monitoring reports and recommend corrective or improvement measures;

a. support the development of baseline data and measurable targets;

a. promote training, research and stakeholder engagement; and

a. submit periodic implementation reports to the appropriate University authority.

Relevant responsibilities may be assigned to the offices responsible for procurement, physical planning, works and maintenance, health services, student affairs, security, environmental management, agriculture-related academic programmes and campus commercial services.

18. Publication, Review and Revision

This Policy shall be made publicly accessible through the official University website and communicated to relevant staff, students, suppliers, contractors and food-service operators.

The University shall maintain an official version showing the approval authority, approval date, effective date, review date, responsible office and current policy version.

This Policy shall be reviewed at least once every three years or earlier where required by changes in law, food-safety standards, agricultural practice, environmental conditions or University priorities. Each review and any approved amendment shall be formally documented.

Signature:  Date: 24/10/2024

Prof. Kate Azuka Omenugha, Fnipr
Vice Chancellor

APPENDIX I: SUSTAINABLE FOOD SUPPLIER DECLARATION

Suppliers seeking to provide food to the University may be required to complete this declaration and provide supporting information.

Name of supplier/business: _____

Contact person and telephone/email: _____

Food products supplied: _____

Farm/producer/source location(s): _____

Are production and handling practices compliant with applicable food-safety requirements? Yes / No

Are fertilisers, pesticides and veterinary medicines used in accordance with applicable requirements? Yes / No / Not applicable

Are soil, water and waste-management practices in place? Yes / No / Not applicable

Can the supplier provide records identifying the origin of products? Yes / No

Does the supplier have procedures for reporting contamination, food-safety incidents or product recalls? Yes / No

Additional sustainability information/evidence: _____

Declaration: I confirm that the information supplied is accurate and undertake to notify the University of material changes.

Name and signature: _____ Date: _____

APPENDIX II: CAMPUS FOOD OUTLET AND CATERING COMPLIANCE CHECKLIST

a. Valid approvals, licences and registrations applicable to the food business are maintained.

a. Food is obtained from identifiable and suitable sources.

a. Food storage, temperature control, preparation and serving practices are hygienic.

a. Food handlers have appropriate hygiene training and facilities.

a. Water, drainage, cleaning and pest-control arrangements are adequate.

a. Food waste is measured or monitored and avoidable waste is reduced.

a. Food waste and recyclable packaging are appropriately segregated.

a. Major suppliers and product origins can be identified.

a. Sustainability claims displayed to customers are accurate and verifiable.

a. Incidents, complaints and product withdrawals are recorded and addressed.

APPENDIX III: IMPLEMENTATION NOTE

The University should begin implementation by identifying campus food outlets, catering contracts, University food-production sites and major food suppliers. A baseline assessment should then establish current sourcing patterns, supplier traceability, food-safety compliance, agricultural practices and food-waste levels.

Following the baseline assessment, the University should adopt a phased implementation plan with responsibilities, timelines, resources and measurable targets. Initial priorities should include incorporating sustainability and traceability clauses into new and renewed food contracts, assessing high-volume suppliers, improving food-waste segregation and supporting sustainable production on University-controlled land.

The University should not describe all food served on campus as sustainably farmed unless it has sufficient evidence to substantiate that claim. Progress should be reported transparently, distinguishing verified outcomes from activities still being developed.

REFERENCES AND POLICY FRAMEWORK

Federal Ministry of Health and Social Welfare, Nigeria. National Policy on Food Safety and Quality and Its Implementation Plan (2023).

National Agency for Food and Drug Administration and Control (NAFDAC). Food Hygiene Regulations (2025).

National Agency for Food and Drug Administration and Control (NAFDAC). Guidelines for Food Hygienic Practices (NGFHP) (2024).

Federal Republic of Nigeria. National Agricultural Technology and Innovation Policy (NATIP), 2022–2027.

Applicable Nigerian and Anambra State laws, regulations and standards relating to food safety, agriculture, environmental protection, labour, procurement and public health.