

AG Nachhaltigkeit and skuba's Demand Paper for the University of Basel's Cafeteria

We, the students of the AG Nachhaltigkeit, have put this document together in collaboration with the skuba, in the hope of influencing the cafeterias at the University of Basel to become more sustainable. Below, we have grouped our priorities and standards.

Animal Products

We acknowledge that the cafeterias at the University of Basel already ensure one meat-free option at each venue. This is an important step in enabling sustainable consumption for their clientele. That being said, this is by no means enough - we propose the following changes when it comes to the use and sale of animal products:

- **More local, more animal friendly:** According to the cafeteria's website, 90% of the meat used comes from Switzerland, however, only 60% can be considered to come from 'animal-friendly' sources. In our eyes, only the organic label "Bio Suisse" and even stricter labels such as Demeter can be considered 'animal-friendly.' It is important to the students and staff of the university that the percentage of 'animal-friendly' meat used at the university's cafeterias reaches 100%. Surveys at Swiss Higher Education Institutions have shown that they are happy paying more for better quality (1).

We are aware that experiments have been done in the past whereby only one third of the meals on offer contained meat, and that most people still opted for this option. We believe that this is for a host of reasons and can be solved accordingly:

- **Pricing:** Students often have a limited budget, and so cannot always afford to buy meat and other animal proteins. If the prices at the university cafeterias are the same, regardless of meat content, it is logical that students will make the most of the opportunity to eat something that is usually more expensive. We recommend subsidising the prices to incentivise buying the more environmentally friendly option. This has already been done by the ETH Zurich (2) and the University of Zurich (3). It should be natural that the University of Basel follows this good and necessary initiative.
- **Comparable nutritional and taste value:** The meat-free options need to have comparable nutritional values. It cannot just be the same meal but with meat left off the plate. Protein and other nutritional factors need to be considered. At the same

time, the meal needs to attract consumption. It can't just be presumed that people will eat it because it is more sustainable - certain efforts still need to be made to ensure its appeal (taste, aesthetic, etc.). This can partly be addressed by implementing meat-alternatives such as planted.chicken etc. However, this is not the only solution that should be pursued, as it suggests that meat is still an important part of a meal and needs meat-adjacent substitutions. For this reason, the majority of meals should employ proteins that are not animal products or highly processed alternatives. We suggest following the Planetary Health Diet as a guideline for the make-up of the dishes (for which we also have experts at the university) (4).

- **Informed consumers:** Not only should the meat and meat-free options be equal in nutrition and taste, but the environmental footprint also needs to be made public so consumers can make informed decisions. We recommend using a CO2 calculator for each meal, including the values on the screens and labels at each venue. An alternative, which was already tested in the Sustainability Week, is the use of "Umweltbelastungspunkte" (5).

Along with the above recommendations, we also suggest trying a new format of meal composition: instead of having three separate meals where one or two contain meat, all should be vegetarian or vegan (at the same price), with the possibility to 'add-on' a meat component (or alternative) in one menu for a realistic price. It should be ensured that the pricing is true to cost and that the meal would be well-rounded with or without it. This is currently the standard in the mensa at the University of Lucerne.

Locality

The SV Group prides itself on sourcing local food, with only spices being flown in by plane, which is already a large achievement. That being said, we stand behind the belief that the bounty of the regional produce (particularly from Baselland, Solothurn and Aargau) are not being taken advantage of to the extent that they could and should be. As mentioned above - clientele are happy to pay more if it means their meal will be of higher quality and more sustainable. The cafeterias should aim to narrow their radius of produce origins and build their menus around what is being grown in the northwestern part of Switzerland. When this is not possible, the radius can be extended to include all of Switzerland, but should not go further.

Packaging

We cannot comment on the amount of packaging used behind the scenes in food preparation. However, we do see a large amount of single-use packaging used by consumers which can be avoided - especially in the case of single-use coffee cups. We recommend completely replacing these with better quality cups that can be reused: this is made easier if the organisation can be outsourced to an external provider like recircle (used at the University of Zurich [6]), or kooky (7).

Consumer Contact and Satisfaction

In meetings with Jennifer Kimmel, we were made aware of a perceived lack of consumer appreciation for the efforts already being conducted in the area of sustainability. In order to ensure that all existing and future sustainable decisions are appreciated, we suggest the following measures:

- The main cafeteria needs to be open and more visible. This could include better signage and more online advertising, including on the university's website. In addition, the skuba would be happy to advertise weekly menus if the meals on offer comply with the above explained sustainability standards.
 - E.g. a weekly newsletter could be implemented, promoting the most sustainable menus of the week.
- Screens around the university could also be used to advertise the daily meals so as to both make people aware of what is on offer and what sustainability measures are being undertaken.
- More local partnerships could help to attract those that prefer to support local business. If regional farmers or platforms are supported, this could bring in a new set of consumers that would otherwise be eating in local restaurants and cafés. An example could be Lunch Idee (8), which advertises restaurants and businesses who offer only meat-free options on Wednesdays.

We acknowledge and appreciate the efforts being taken by the university's cafeterias so far, and hope that our recommendations will be considered seriously. We look forward to collaborating and co-creating the future of sustainable consumption on our campus.

Resources

- (1) <https://www.news.uzh.ch/de/articles/2021/mensapreise.html>;
- (2) <https://ethz.ch/services/de/news-und-veranstaltungen/intern-aktuell/archiv/2021/09/gastromomie-preisanpassungen-in-den-eth-restaurants.html>
- (3) <https://www.news.uzh.ch/de/articles/2021/mensapreise.html>
- (4) <https://eatforum.org/learn-and-discover/the-planetary-health-diet/>
- (5) Bundesamt für Umwelt BAFU: Die Methode der Umweltbelastungspunkte (UBP).
https://www.bafu.admin.ch/dam/bafu/de/dokumente/wirtschaft-konsum/fachinfo-daten/methode_der_umweltbelastungspunkteubp.pdf.download.pdf/methode_der_umweltbelastungspunkteubp.pdf
- (6) <https://www.news.uzh.ch/de/articles/2019/Mensa.html>
- (7) <https://kooky2go.com/de/>
- (8) <https://lunchidee.ch/#/>