

ANNUAL REPORT



Data for People and the Planet:
Moving Towards Thriving

FY2026



OPENING STATEMENT

Putting together this annual report allows for the important practice of reflection. I am grateful as I think back on the work over the last year! I also want to acknowledge that it was a hard year with the loss of a colleague to domestic violence, a reality that deserves our attention. We continue to hold her in our hearts and let it serve as a reminder to redouble our efforts to take care of each other, which at its core is the work of Sustainability.

Each year the Dining Sustainability team is able to advance initiatives in ways that evolve with the times and put something new into action. A gift of this work is that we invite and create space for imagining a future where everyone thrives and then we collectively take a stab at designing solutions that head us towards that generative vision.

This past year we expanded our work with MetaFoodX food tracking system. We have integrated systems into routine operations in every dining common and the campus center to monitor consumption and overproduction. With the added attention and information, we are beginning to see progress in reducing food waste. We have also expanded our data analysis and reporting efforts, exploring important connections between data sources to get a better, more accurate accounting of the data itself, what it is telling us, and how to make it actionable.

This report is also an opportunity for us to recognize our partnerships on campus and in the broader community! We were proud to participate again in the Community Involved in Sustaining Agriculture's Climate Change and Farming Week last September by hosting a panel discussion and featuring a seasonal menu showcasing local ingredients. We also hosted two Indigenous Culinary Professionals from Maine and Connecticut Tribes for a dialogue and curated dinner as part of our "What Indigenous Foodways can teach us about Climate Action", an annual series that has been running since 2020. The special events our team organized and hosted last year also centered areas of focus in Climate Friendly Dining and Sustainable Seafood.

As part of the evolving and innovating nature of our work, it is exciting to launch new projects! Last year that included UMass Fresh 2Go, funded by the Kendall Foundation New England Food Vision Prize to increase local ingredients in retail dining and catering operations on campus. And at the Earth Day Extravaganza, a culminating event for the spring semester, the re-launch of the Student Sustainability Innovation Fund managed by the School of Earth and Sustainability announced its awards, of which three of the six projects include the Dining Sustainability Team.

As you can see, it has been another fruitful year. The work of integrating the value of sustainability, emphasizing interconnectedness, and building toward a hopeful, joyful, and regenerative future across all the divisions of Auxiliary Enterprises has evolved and grown in wonderful ways. For now, the format of this report is a familiar thread from last year. You will find a sample of our impact data, highlights, and a glimpse into some of the things on the horizon for the year ahead. Our hope for this report also remains consistent. May you find inspiration in something of what you read here that peaks your curiosity enough to move you to reach out, learn more, and connect with us about new ideas and opportunities to collaborate.

With Kindness,

Kathy Wicks, Director of Sustainability (center)

Monica Guzik, Sustainability Manager (left)

Dan Bensonoff, Permaculture Garden Manager (right)

“Without leaps of imagination or dreaming,
we lose the excitement of possibilities.

Dreaming, after all is a form of planning.”

— Gloria Steinem



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STUDENT VOICES

The priorities students shared in FY25 remained clear in FY26: they care about environmental issues, expect meaningful climate action, and want those commitments reflected in their dining experience.



91%

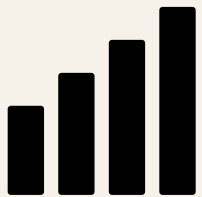
of surveyed students believe sustainability is an important issue, nearly 90% recognize the environmental impact of the food system, highlighting strong support for climate conscious dining.

WASTE REDUCTION REMAINS ONE OF STUDENTS' HIGHEST CONCERNS



74%

of students reported being very or extremely interested in initiatives that reduce food waste, plastic waste, and single-use packaging.



70%

of students are aware of carbon ratings, but only 38% report occasional influence on food choices, highlighting the need for additional education and engagement.

“ *"If we could get to see more of the processes behind food preparation, decisions in making food choices, and food disposal, I feel that students can contribute more to the dining sustainability at UMass."* **”**

Student suggestion from the FY26 Climate Conscious Dining Survey

FY26 HIGHLIGHTS

This year's Dining Sustainability Highlights reflect continued growth and steady progress across our core initiatives. Together, these efforts strengthen our foundation of waste reduction, climate-conscious dining, and community engagement while supporting ongoing innovation in how we track and advance sustainability across campus.



Dining Sustainability team serves as Operational Leads for three of the inaugural Student Sustainability Innovation Fund projects. Learn more about the projects [here](#).



Received Food Vision Prize funding from the Kendall Foundation for the UMass Fresh2Go Project that increases local procurement in the Blue Wall.



Rolled out Metafoodx food waste tracking systems across an additional 5 Dining locations for a total of 16 systems across 6 unique locations.



Expanded SPARE Beef product offerings. Franklin and Hampshire Dining Commons are now exclusively serving SPARE Beef.



Hosted 3 special events with guest speakers, a film screening, a dinner event and food truck take-over, and numerous workshops with the Permaculture Initiative.



Provided essential data for the AASHE STARS Report. UMass maintained Gold certification with the latest 3.0 version



OUR IMPACT

Our work across local and sustainable sourcing, climate-conscious dining, permaculture, and waste reduction continues to have measurable outcomes. Through data-informed decision-making, hands-on initiatives, and strong campus and community partnerships, we are consistently tracking, refining, and strengthening our impact over time.

LOCAL & SUSTAINABLE PROCUREMENT

\$7.27 Million

purchased from local, regional and sustainable farms and producers

\$4.8 Million

purchased from New England farms and producers

\$2.8 Million

purchased from Massachusetts farms and producers

FARM TOUR HIGHLIGHTS

MI TIERRA TORTILLAS

Springfield, MA
October 2025

DIEMAND FARM

Wendell, MA
October 2025

ATLAS FARM

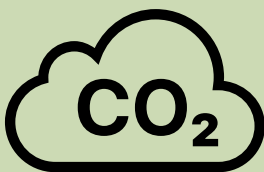
S. Deerfield, MA
May 2026



OUR IMPACT

CLIMATE CONSCIOUS DINING

From everyday menu swaps and Carbon Ratings on the menu to more sustainable purchasing practices, Climate-Conscious Dining encourages small, practical choices that, together, contribute to a more climate-friendly food system.



3.10 kgCO₂e

Average carbon intensity of food purchased

Nearly flat despite a 3% increase in food purchases

237 Metric Tons CO₂e

Estimated emissions avoided

by using SPARE beef blend instead of conventional beef at Hampshire and Franklin Dining Commons



EQUIVALENT TO:



595,000
miles driven



≈ 200
round trips from
Boston to Los Angeles

OUR IMPACT

WASTE REDUCTION & DIVERSION

Reducing Food Waste for Bigger Impacts.

We're working to reduce food waste across campus and turning what we can't prevent into something beneficial.



LESS WASTE PER MEAL SWIPE

7.33 oz/swipe → 7.19 oz/swipe
from FY25 to FY26



TONS DIVERTED TO ANEROBIC DIGESTION

Practicing circular systems by keep food waste out of landfills



FOOD WASTE TRACKING & RECOVERY

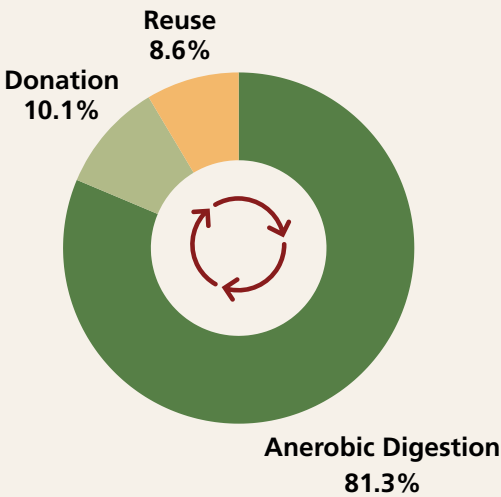


1.79M lb

TOTAL FOOD PRODUCTION
TRACKED WITH METAFODDX

Using Metafoodx, we tracked production, consumption, and overproduction across 6 unique locations and 16 individual tracking systems

Overproduction Destinations (lbs)



Donation =
Food Back to Our
Campus Community



Through our partnership with the student-led Food Recovery Network, over 6,000 lbs. of food was donated to feed members of the UMass community.



OUR IMPACT

PERMACULTURE INITIATIVE

GROWING MORE THAN FOOD

Edible Landscapes • Hands-On Education
• Community Engagement

From its largest harvest yet to new opportunities for youth education, the UMass Permaculture Initiative continues to connect students and community members with regenerative agriculture, seasonal food, and hands-on learning.



2,753 lbs.

of food grown
from 5 campus
gardens in '25

**13 Farmers
Markets**

held in the 25-26
academic year

200 Vendors

participated in the
Student Farmers
Markets

The Initiative has continued to expand its educational impact in summer 2026, welcoming 36 campers from UMass Recreation and Wellbeing's new Discovery Camp. Campers participated in a garden scavenger hunt, hands-on herb processing, and a bike-powered smoothie station featuring local, seasonal fruit.

Looking ahead, the Initiative will welcome all five Amherst elementary school 2nd grade classes for hands-on garden field trips. Activities will include cider pressing, smoothie bikes, culinary demonstrations, harvesting, and planting, with two visits planned for fall 2026!



Read the 2025
Annual Report!



IMPACT SPOTLIGHT

Serving Up Better Beef with SPARE



Over the past two years, UMass Dining has steadily expanded the use of SPARE beef across select dining locations. By blending 70% grass-fed beef with 30% surplus vegetables, SPARE beef helps reduce food waste and lower the environmental footprint of popular menu items while maintaining the taste and quality students expect.



THIS ONE MENU CHANGE GENERATED HUGE IMPACTS. . .

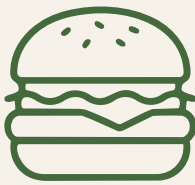
in 2025-2026 UMass Amherst used 58,550 LB of SPARE Beef and saved up to:



614,786 GALLONS
OF WATER
(Drinking water for 3,370 students for 1 year)



20,493 LB.
OF SURPLUS FOOD
(17,075 food pantry meals)



17,565 LB.
LESS BEEF
(93,680 fewer 3oz 100% beef burger consumed last year)

CAMPUS & COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Meaningful change happens through collaboration. Throughout the year, we worked alongside students, faculty, staff, community organizations, and local partners to create opportunities for learning, engagement, and action around food systems and sustainability. These partnerships helped extend our impact beyond dining operations and strengthen connections between campus and community.

6

Special Events

Bringing food, sustainability & the campus community together



4

Farm Tours with Culinary Staff and Students

21 Students Engaged

Directly through internships and special projects



1 Local Grain Workshop

connecting the UMass Bakery Team with local grains

5 Classroom Connections

Bringing sustainability into the classroom



"This internship gave me the opportunity to grow both personally and professionally as I prepare to graduate. I learned how collaboration, innovation, and small operational improvements can contribute toward larger sustainability goals."

Anushka Manik Kadam - Dining Sustainability Intern 2024-2026

LOOKING AHEAD

As we look to FY27, Dining Sustainability will continue building on the progress of the past year through practical, measurable action, while also contributing to the campus experience by leaning into the UMass Dining vision of creating extraordinary and inspiring experiences. Goals include reducing food waste by 10%, increasing local and sustainable procurement, advancing efforts to better understand and reduce Scope 3 emissions, and engaging more students, faculty, and staff.

We will also be growing our collaborations and alignment with other efforts on campus, including the work of the School of Earth and Sustainability to connect students with Living Lab opportunities, the campus decarbonization efforts, and campus wide sustainability reporting.

Projects for FY27 include:

- DEI Campus Climate Improvement project to bring the Land Acknowledgement to Life.
- Project in partnership with Gloucester Marine Station and Food Science Department to Build Healthy Meals and Resilient Coastal Communities supported by the CAFE Integrated Research and Extension Initiatives - Food, Health & Wellness grant.
- Two workshops hosted by the Permaculture Initiative and presented by community experts: "Forgotten Fall Fruits": Persimmon and Pawpaw Talk and Tasting and a basketry workshop, both held in collaboration with community experts.
- Growing the partnership with Ground Up Grain in Holyoke and the UMass Bake Shop to explore opportunities to bring more local grains into campus dining and baking.

We will keep that momentum going - strengthening partnerships, testing new ideas, and embedding sustainability even more deeply into the everyday operations and the campus community to support regional resilience and a thriving future.

"The collaboration with Kathy and her team has been an excellent addition to my class. . . This [collaboration] considerably raised my students' interest, enthusiasm and hope that they can act positively to make changes in their lives and on campus around food sustainability. I see Kathy Wicks and her team as valued community members and co-educators of our students."

- Madalina Akli, PHD, Senior Lecturer of International Studies, CHC



Stay connected with
UMass Dining Sustainability!



UMassAmherst
Dining Sustainability