

# Initial Work Plan for Establishing a Sustainable Catering System in Tsinghua University Tsinghua University Student Research Training

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“Building Sustainable Catering System in Tsinghua University: discussion and suggestions on the initial work plans” is a student-led research and practice project. Launched in September 2020, the project aims to evaluate the sustainability of the catering systems in Chinese universities, taking Tsinghua University as a typical case, and give a proposal for establishing a sustainable catering system based on the existing sustainable canteen case studies from China and abroad.

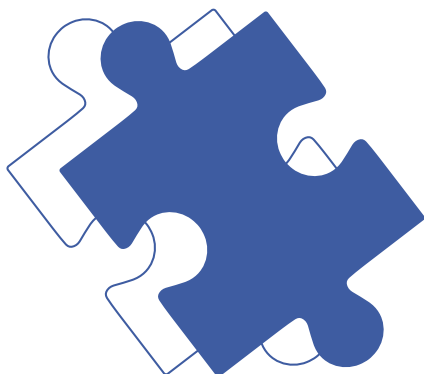
## Project Background

At present, as a representative case of Chinese universities, Tsinghua University generally implements policies related to “zero-carbon campus” or “green campus”. However, these policies often do not contain measures concerning on-campus food services (reference: Ministry of Housing and Urban-Rural Development of the People’s Republic of China “Green Campus Evaluation Standards”).

Therefore, this project hopes to:

**1.Demonstrate that food service policies play an important role in reducing carbon and increasing sustainability in Chinese universities, as it is necessary to be incorporated into sustainable university policies.**

**2.Provide a feasible initial work plan for relevant policies and reduce the threshold for university canteens to practice sustainability.**



## Chinese University Canteen Sustainability Index

The team first contacted the Tsinghua University Institute of Climate Change and Sustainable Development to direct the project. Under the guidance of the Institute, in order to understand the sustainable measures that Tsinghua University could take, the team first developed a “Chinese University Canteen Sustainability Index,” which can be used both as a definition of sustainability and also as evaluation criteria.

To define these indicators, the team referred to the *People & Planet University League 2019, 2021 Dietary Guidelines for Chinese Residents Scientific Report, 2016 Dietary Guidelines for Chinese Citizens, Nutritional and Healthy Canteen Construction Guidelines*, and other authoritative materials. The evaluation indicators are divided into four main parts: operation, nutrition and health, energy, and education. The team ensured that each indicator can quantitatively evaluate the sustainability of university canteens.

The specific contents of the indicators include: canteen-related environmental policies and plans, environmental audit and management systems, carbon management, waste treatment, whether the canteen meets the nutritional and dietary health needs of university staff indicators, canteen energy consumption, energy conservation measures, canteen’s promotion of healthy nutrition and sustainable diets, and more.

In the next few months, the team will interview Tsinghua University logistics department staffs. They will first understand the policy implementation and status of the Tsinghua University canteen system at all levels (administration, funding, food procurement, cooking, sales, etc.), as well as multi-stakeholder material flows, cash flows, information flows, and policies. Next, they will obtain relevant data for evaluating the sustainability of the canteens.

## Collection of excellent canteen cases

In addition, in order to facilitate the discussion of

measures that can be taken, the team collected cases of sustainable university canteens in China and abroad that have achieved positive results, prioritizing Global University Climate Change Alliance members, and conducted a wide search in several major regions around the world. Finally, the team selected the following universities: Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Yale University, University of California, Berkeley, Cambridge University, London University of Politics and Economics, Clusius College in the Netherlands, and the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro.

Through these case studies, the team found that:

- Most universities in the United States and Britain pay attention to sustainable catering and disclose detailed measures and benefits online. They often establish a special sustainable food office to implement relevant catering policies, conduct research, promote food literacy education, and propose suggestions and work plans to senior management;
- Among the sustainable food policies of these universities, the more typical ones are: increasing the proportion of plant-based foods, reducing food waste, selecting local organic ingredients, etc. The universities also have clear objectives for reducing food waste, carbon emissions, and other indicators, as well as the implementation benefits of other sustainable foods;
- Most of the canteens of these universities are outsourced to catering companies. These companies will list all menus and give examples of their efforts to provide sustainable food publicly and clarify the prices of various meal plans.

These cases provide many new ideas for the sustainable catering of Chinese colleges and universities (for example, it is possible to set up a department specializing in sustainable campus catering, referring to the catering policies of other universities aimed at reducing emissions, etc.), but they also raise the question of whether the catering policies that work abroad can be successfully implemented in China. This problem needs to be

resolved through discussion and adjustment after the action plan has received feedback and opinions from all stakeholders.

After obtaining relevant data of the university canteen through interviewing the logistics personnel, the team will use existing data of other universities obtained online to complete the information that cannot be obtained from the interviews. After compiling all the data, the team will evaluate the sustainability of university canteens according to the Chinese University Canteen Sustainability Index and get a clear picture of what can be improved.

Then, the team will focus on these areas for improvement and match them with corresponding effective policies implemented by domestic and foreign universities. Through this process, the team will compile a first draft of the initial work plan.

The team will use questionnaires and interviews to investigate the views of the students, the university and other stakeholders on the first draft, use feedback to make necessary modifications to the proposal, complete the final draft, and then seek the feedback of university personnel on the final draft.

## Expected results

1. Produce three reports: “Case Collection of Successful Sustainable Canteens in China and Abroad,” “Tsinghua University Catering Management Policies,” and “Proposal for the Initial Work Plan for Establishing Tsinghua University Sustainable Catering System.”
2. Submit the initial work plan proposal to the university to initiate the implementation of sustainable university canteen policies.

