



UNIVERSITY OF
BIRMINGHAM

Food
Fellows

Food, Beverage and Retail

Sustainability Roadmap 2026-28



Introduction

Sustainability is how we meet our needs without negatively affecting future generations. This can be achieved by reducing the resources we use and using them as efficiently as possible, which helps minimise carbon emissions and reduce our impact on the environment.

Food, Beverage and Retail (FBR) services within University of Birmingham have been identified as a key area for reducing emissions by favouring local produce and reducing waste.

As part of the University's commitment to reach net zero carbon, Scope 1&2 by 2035 and Scope 3 by 2045, the department is striving to map and reduce scope 3 carbon emissions that emerge from food and catering practices. For the 2024/25 academic year, food and catering operations were estimated to have produced 271 tonnes of CO₂e.

We recognise the importance of providing healthy food and the environmental, economic, and social impacts surrounding food systems. This document seeks to outline initiatives and special projects that will demonstrate our passionate attitude, and bold ambitions, which align with the three pillars that underpin our **Food Story**: inclusivity, sustainability and authenticity.

Moving to more sustainable food systems will have a positive impact on climate and biodiversity and meet the needs and expectations of our stakeholders. Our structured and managed approach will address the wider impacts of our food systems and

highlight the positive contribution we can make in this area.

Food systems are inherently connected to the wellbeing of individuals and communities involved in production and consumption of food and more broadly, the wellbeing of ecosystems and non-human communities.

Campus Services recognises its responsibility to the environment and carries out its activities in an environmentally and socially responsible manner as we strive to incorporate environmental and social considerations into all its operations.

Key sustainability drivers are:

- To deliver an accessible, affordable, healthy and sustainable food offering to the highest standard
- Maintain our reputation as a sustainable and socially responsible organisation
- Maintain legislative, regulatory and stakeholder compliance
- To show continued leadership through the delivery and maintenance of our Fairtrade University status, and other sustainable food accreditation schemes



Shaun Craig
Associate Director of Culinary and Development
Food, Beverage and Retail



We believe that fostering fair and sustainable food for all is a powerful way to tackle the environmental crisis and we are committed to ensuring that this remains a core focus across all areas of our work.

Governance

This roadmap and associated policy are owned by Food, Beverage and Retail (FBR) at University of Birmingham. Implementation will be overseen by the FBR Senior Leadership Team, with support from Procurement, Sustainability and Estates colleagues. Progress will be measured against agreed sustainable procurement objectives and reviewed annually with the Sustainability Steering Group (SSG). This area of work also feeds into the Net Zero Carbon Action Group and the Sustainable Food Procurement Policy 2025.

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In parallel, Campus Services is developing a Campus Services Sustainability Strategy, including an overarching roadmap and clear targets (such as carbon reduction), setting out delivery over the next three to five years. The Campus Services Sustainability Strategy will be formally signed off by the Director of Campus Services.



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The story so far

Since 2018, the Food, Beverage and Retail (FBR) team has implemented a structured and increasingly ambitious programme to reduce environmental impact, improve supply chain sustainability, and support the University's broader net-zero goals.

They moved from informal sustainable practices (pre-2018) to a fully structured, data-driven sustainability programme aligned to net-zero targets. Their progress reflects:

- Reduced environmental impact through informed procurement and waste reduction
- Stronger governance, reporting and planning
- Improved sustainability culture across staff, suppliers and customers

Bottled water purchasing decreased by **30.5%**



Too Good To Go in **over 50%** FBR outlets



Local West Midlands wine and beer available in bars and drinks packages

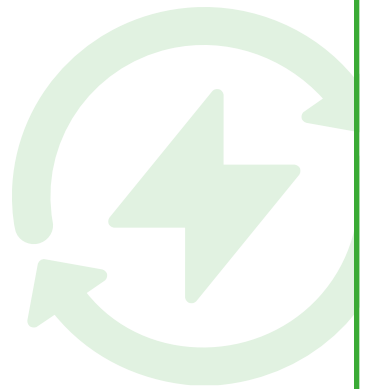


Gained **Bronze Food for Life** accreditation from the Soil Association for our biggest restaurant Vale Infusion

Plant-based milk substitutes offered **free of charge**



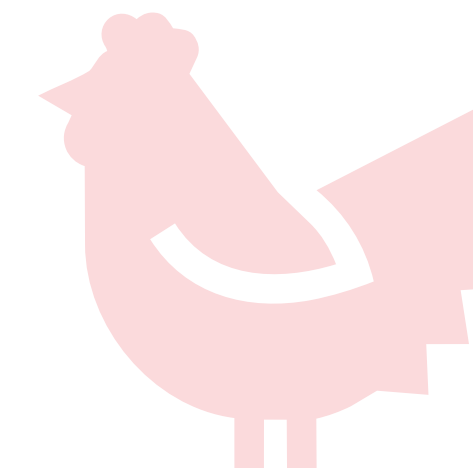
New Energy and Water **Reduction Plan** created



Trialled a **reusable cup-only** café



All eggs **free range**



10% reduction in sugar content of foods we retail, prepare and serve



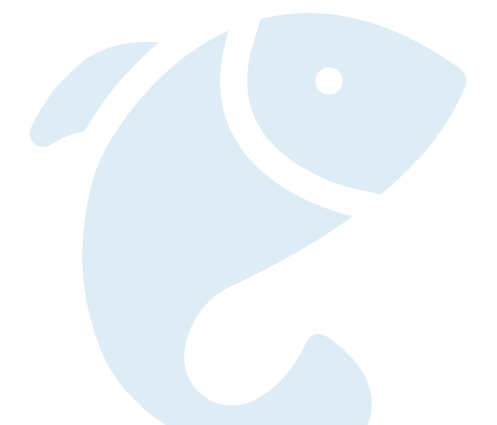
Fairtrade bananas, tea, confectionary and limited drinks



Carbon A-rated Green Events now the default catering option for conferences



Only **MSC-accredited** fish served



Our pillars

The purpose of our Food Story is to deliver the framework in which to align with when we conceptualise, design and mobilise food and beverage operations throughout the University campus.

It supports the attainment of optimal wellbeing, social, ecological, operational and commercial outcomes for the outlets themselves and the University which will include its Guild of Students.

Our Vision is underpinned by three key values, or what we call pillars:



Inclusive

Food at University of Birmingham is accessible, considerate and affordable. Through tolerance and consideration, we will seek to understand how our communities develop their food attitudes, behaviours and beliefs. We respond accordingly to these evolving food needs and will be driven by considerations relating to culture, religion, activity levels, allergen needs, dietary preferences and diverse lifestyle choices.

[Discover our latest inclusive campaign](#)

Authentic

To be authentic is to be original, genuine and honest. The food experience on campus will echo these values through the dining concepts, menu composition and food delivery across campus. The culinary team will engage with local food partners and subject experts to guide, discover and drive knowledge and diversity. In-house learning and development programmes will deliver an inspirational food experience to continually develop a culture that encourages and fosters passion and innovation.

[Discover our latest authentic campaign](#)

Sustainability

FBR will remain aligned with green values expressed by customers and the University community. Our kitchens will utilise latest technology applications to measure and monitor food waste and deliver farm-to-fork provenance through online app platforms. University of Birmingham will nurture a sustainable workforce through training, empowerment and career pathways advancement. Finally, supported by expert procurement partners, we will continue to develop local supply partnerships and position seasonality to the forefront of the food-sourcing approach.

[Discover our sustainability campaigns](#)

Sustainability, ethics and security

The story since 2018

Customer feedback
channel introduced



Regular student food surveys
and feedback forums



Mystery shopper evaluation



Sustainability, ethics and security

We strive to provide a structured and open environment to evaluate and review policy, direction and operational aspects provided by the University's Food Waste Agenda.

We collaborate with our peers and share knowledge and best sustainability practice.

Our objectives are:

- To monitor the quality of food service operations by developing and evaluating audit tools such as customer surveys, benchmarking, mystery shopping etc.
- To bring forward ideas around environmental sustainability of food service operations.
- To discuss ideas for outreach and programming activities, and/or participate in the planning of such activities (e.g., cooking classes, cultural events involving/highlighting our food services, etc.).
- To ensure an open channel of communication for members of the University community to register feedback about food on campus.
- To receive and discuss requests and suggestions made by students/schools/colleges/staff with regards to food services at UoB.
- Advise the Director of Food, Beverage and Retail on the issuance of tenders, requests for proposal and selection of vendors for services on campus.

Since 2018, the University has delivered measurable reductions in single-use plastics across food and drink operations, including:

- 30.5% decrease in purchases of single-use plastic bottled water, achieved through reducing availability and encouraging reusable alternatives.
- Reduction of overall packaging waste as part of a broader campus initiative.
- Introduction of a 25p charge for meals served in disposable packaging at the Medical School Café and Campus Infusion restaurants to encourage customers to bring their own reusable containers.

2018

Strategic procurement partnership enabling long-term sustainable supply-chain transformation.

2020

Detailed carbon accounting for food operations (271 tCO₂e baseline) and alignment with net-zero targets.

2022

University declares climate emergency, boosting sustainability expectations for all operations including FBR.

2023

Comprehensive FBR Sustainability Roadmap published—formalising waste reduction, procurement, packaging, energy efficiency and behavioural change initiatives.

Ongoing:

Delivery of sustainable food for retail, events, and conferencing, supported by local sourcing and certified ethical standards.



Although the University does not publicly publish a granular, item-by-item description of its internal food-waste monitoring systems, the verified documents do show that food waste monitoring is an established, ongoing, structured process within the Food, Beverage and Retail (FBR) department.

Procurement

The story since 2018

We have developed a network with local suppliers to keep down food miles



Local West Midlands wine and beer available in bars and drinks packages



Reduced single use plastics



Minimised products packaged in unsustainable materials



[Meet our suppliers](#)

Procurement

We will take a data-led approach to food procurement, using insights from waste monitoring to better align purchasing with actual demand. By integrating waste data generated through menu design, portion control, and waste-tracking tools, we will continually refine ordering practices to minimise surplus and reduce food waste across our operations.

Food miles

A summary estimation of food supply greenhouse gas emissions is approximately 80% production, 10% transport and 10% storage at wholesale and retail level. Transport emissions are dominated by the upstream emissions of moving foodstuffs to production facilities, with the remainder of transport emissions coming from delivering final products to wholesalers and retailers.

Reducing these transport emissions can help, but only if it makes sense in the context of the food's entire footprint. Foods for which transport is a significant factor are often those which are shipped by air due to their perishing quickly and having high value per unit weight - this leads onto the notion that seasonal products will be considered where possible and be sourced as close to the University site as possible.

Local produce

Sourcing locally wherever possible will be the driver of our procurement strategy. Supporting our local producers and suppliers creates a sustainable economy, benefits the community through job creation and critically reduces food miles. The University will positively encourage local suppliers to compete for its business by developing a simple and transparent procurement process that is not only driven on price alone - and will identify and create opportunities for local sustainable businesses to secure opportunities to supply us.

Our University procurement team will support developing long-term symbiotic partnership relationships with our local supply chain by investing in and developing local food and beverage suppliers and producers through supply chain integration and ongoing contractual commitments.

Industry awards and accreditations

Our procurement partners will continually review and implement new sustainable food schemes and ensure we maintain the following accreditations:

- Fairtrade
- Good Egg Awards
- Soil Association Food for Life bronze award at The Shack, Vale Village
- Green Conference Award



Waste



The story since 2018

Food waste reduced by 40%



Reduced single use plastics



100% kitchen food waste now anaerobically digested



100% coffee grounds recycled



Waste management technology installed in all student restaurants



Too Good To Go in 15 outlets



General waste now sent to energy recovery plant



Waste

Reverse logistics

Efforts to reduce supply chain packaging will be realised through the redesignation of food delivery and production methods and implementation of returnable/reusable logistics solutions. It is intended the principle of Reverse Logistics will be adopted so that any packaging utilised during the delivery process is removed, recycled and environmentally disposed of by the supplier. This includes items such as bulk cardboard, foam protection, thick plastic sheeting, metal strapping and pallets. The Reverse Logistic requirement will be a mandatory component of the University procurement process.

The effective collection and disposal of waste is achieved through the efficient, simple and achievable waste streaming.

We aim to increase waste segregation to aid removal off-site to be reused, recycled and recovered. The actual waste streams we're adopting are influenced by the sustainability approaches and credentials of the appointed third-party waste contractor but, as a guide, will fall under the following four waste segregation streams:

- **Organic**
- **Mixed recyclable**
- **Residuals**
- **Paper and cardboard**

The aspiration is to ensure packaging waste, particularly front of house, is not residual waste and is recyclable. Best practice dictates the utilisation of colour-coded bins for both back of house and front of house, and it is desirable that all front-of-house packaging will feature on-pack disposal icons, to stimulate correct streaming and avoid waste contamination. We have a diverse, youthful customer base and it's been an ongoing challenge to convey clear expectations about what can and can't be recycled. We continue to work on creative solutions to promote behaviour change, via signage, videos and communications.

It is important that FBR staff are educated, trained and monitored on the importance of adhering to the segregation of waste without contamination. A similar approach of clear messaging and education of all University management, staff and visitors about the importance of correct, uncontaminated waste is vital.

Coffee grounds

Coffee grounds generated across campus are recycled through the following sustainable waste streams:

- **Customer re-use**
Collected grounds will be made available in coffee shops for customers to use for personal purposes, such as home composting and gardening
- **Community support**
Grounds will be donated to local charities to enhance hyper local soil quality, including use in community gardens and allotments
- **Supplier collaboration**
We will work with key suppliers to support local agricultural initiatives by incorporating recycled coffee grounds into farming compost systems



Packaging

Packaging

Waste Hierarchy principles provide a recognised graduating framework to help determine the approach to sustainable FBR packaging here:



The first two levels relate to the avoidance and reduction of waste, the final four levels consider the disposal of waste sustainably, where waste is unavoidable.

The hierarchy follows an order of sustainable preference applicable to the desirability of types of packaging. Reusable packaging should be considered first, followed by recyclable, then recoverable (compostable), and as a last resort packaging and consumables recoverable via waste-to-energy technologies.

Use of returnable and reusable cups and containers encouraged across all FBR outlets to further reduce residual waste and reducing the need for recycling processes – compostable packaging materials will only be procured if an effective waste collection and treatment journey can be identified.

Pre-packaged products

It is recognised that some FBR products - such as beverages, snacks and sweets - are procured and sold, pre-packed to the end user. The packaging for these products will adhere to national regulatory controls, including labelling. However, most pre-packaged FBR products are likely to be established, national and international foodstuff brands that will already comply with guidelines and legislation.

Consumables packaging

Our procurement team will sustainably source and acquire consumable packaging that will align to the designated waste streams. The following gives an example of these types of items grouped into seven sub-categories:

The design of the packaging needs to be storage efficient, reflecting the constraints on storage within most of our FBR operational areas. Furthermore, the packaging consumable items will feature clearly visible and internationally understandable disposable icons, directly linked to the waste-streaming options.



Food

The story since 2018

Milk substitutes introduced free of charge



Sugar reduced in foods we retail, prepare and serve by 10%



Ruminant meat reduced by 50% off student-facing menus



All bananas Fairtrade



All meat now British and Farm Assured



Only MSC accredited fish served



All eggs free range



Reduction of animal-derived proteins



Food

Menu composition

The culinary team has developed menus that deliver a portfolio of seasonal cuisine, offering customers a full choice across a range of food encounters, avoiding repetition and rotation fatigue. There is a strong ambition to satisfy multiple customer preferences, considering modern lifestyle choices, with health, wellbeing and food provenance to the fore.

Furthermore, we ensure menu design and food production is underpinned by the desire to serve optimum portion sizes. There is even scope to offer the concept of a 'go less' portion approach, acting as a direct counterpoint to the 'go large' philosophy prevalent within modern fast-food culture, and directly contributing to reducing food waste and promoting healthy lifestyles and nutritionally balanced meals.

Local food ingredients

Modern lifestyles now equate the terms 'local food' with 'sustainable food'. This makes 'local' a synonym for characteristics such as fresh, healthy, and produced in an environmentally and socially responsible manner. 'Local' has no legal definition but is often thought as food which has been produced relatively close to where it's sold. Nonetheless, the term doesn't provide any indication of carbon footprint of production practices and can't be used as a reliable indicator of sustainability. A more useful indicator for sustainability in this instance would be seasonal fruit, vegetables and grain-based produce.

Animal-derived protein

Overwhelmingly, agriculture's sustainable hotspots are red meat and dairy production. This is due to the inefficiency of eating higher up on the food chain. It takes more energy, and generates more greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, to grow grain, to feed it to cows, and produce meat or dairy products for human consumption, than to feed grain to humans directly.

A large portion of GHG emissions associated with meat and dairy production takes the form of methane and nitrous oxide - greenhouse gases that are respectively 23 and 296 times as potent as carbon dioxide. Methane is produced by ruminant animals (cows, goats, sheep, and the like) as a by-product of digestion and is also released by the breakdown of all types of animal manure. Nitrous oxide also comes from the breakdown of manure, as well as the production and breakdown of fertilisers.

No matter how it is measured, on average red meat is more GHG intensive than all other forms of food, responsible for about 150% more emissions than chicken or fish. In this same study the second largest contributor to emissions was the dairy industry. With that in mind we have reduced animal-derived protein in all our recipes since 2024.

Plant-based options

Our approach to developing recipes without animal-derived protein isn't dictated by lifestyle choices and food trends. While our focus has been on increasing our vegan and vegetarian offer, the environmental and nutritional impact of our decisions are the driver as we increase the use of pulses, beans, legumes and natural soya-based ingredients in our recipes.

60% of our recipes are now plant based.

An edible campus

Our University campus covers an area over 26 acres with considerable green space. As landscaping continues, we will weave into the green strategy edible planting such as fruit trees, herbs and heritage vegetables. We have already built on our community kitchen gardens at Winterbourne House and local community allotments using seasonal produce in our recipes and menus.

Organic food

Organic agriculture reduces non-renewable energy use by decreasing agrochemical needs. These require high quantities of fossil fuels to be produced and contribute to mitigating the greenhouse effect and global warming through its ability to sequester carbon in the soil. Wherever possible, and provided sustainable practices are adopted, we will source and use organically produced ingredients.

Dairy-free products

Plant-based 'milk' drinks offer an alternative to dairy and we will stock a range of lactose free and plant-based alternatives at no extra cost in all our Food Fellows and branded outlets.

People



People

Team enrichment

As we deliver our successful FBR sustainability plan, we continually train our teams to both understand the meaning of sustainability and, critically, empower them to actively achieve our goals in day-to-day operations. Our culinary training and team development academy will focus on ensuring our workforce are skilled and confident in their duties, whilst delivering the sustainability message to our guests and stakeholders.

Sustainable workforce

By creating career and personal advancement opportunities we will develop our people and, in shaping a positive workplace culture, will create and nurture a loyal team. We will focus on building our team skills set and encouraging further education through specialist qualifications.

Flexible working hours for all will deliver a work-life balance and ensuring open and confidential access to physical and mental health support will give our colleagues confidence and reassurance that we genuinely value their hard work, contributions and personal wellbeing.

Student food experiences and knowledge

The continued health and wellbeing of our FBR family is paramount and we will seek to educate and develop our students' skills through cook-at-home food and recipe boxes supported by online cooking videos. Also, to increase transparency and champion traceability, we will develop an online nutritional, allergen and farm-to-fork provenance information portal where information on our production methods, procurement strategy and supply chain partners is available, open and honest.



Equipment and resource

The story since 2018

Worked with Estates to create an Energy and Water Reduction Plan



All new equipment purchased is first assessed on full life cost



Free water from zip taps mapped for students and visitors



Free utilities on campus

Equipment and resource

Food production

Any approach to sustainability within a food operation needs to include the impact of kitchen equipment.

The following recommendations will be considered as a checklist for any future FBR equipment purchases:

- Equipment in commercial kitchens is often only 50% energy efficient. Low capital cost can drive the choice of equipment with little consideration for the whole lifecycle cost of the product.
- The procurement team must examine the use of more energy-efficient equipment and cooking techniques; innovations in food preparation; and storage.
- When selecting equipment, we'll consider less-obvious factors which influence energy consumption such as preheat energy utilisation, idle energy rate usage, production capacity, operating hours per day and maintenance and disposal costs.
- Before the implementation of energy saving strategies, measurements should be set in place to monitor and target energy usage.
- The production and evaluation of benchmarks provide a mechanism for the long-term management of energy use, and the ability to identify underperforming areas that can be targeted for action.

Energy and water

The team will seek to work with the Estates team to:

- Assess how much energy and water is used within the department and establish a plan for how this level could be reduced each year.
- Ensure that all new equipment purchased for the department is assessed on full life cost.
- Provide free drinking water to customers where possible, and signpost to free utilities on campus.



Retail outlets



Retail outlets

Introducing Co-op to campus

Co-op is one of the UK's **most sustainability driven retailers**, known for long standing commitments to ethical sourcing, climate action, community investment and transparent reporting.

The supermarket is recognised as a leader in sustainable retail thanks to its ambitious climate targets, ethical sourcing, transparent reporting and meaningful environmental actions. With validated net zero pathways, deep Fairtrade roots, strong biodiversity commitments and innovative sustainability linked finance, Co-op remains one of the UK's most progressive and responsible supermarket groups.

UoB Gift Shop

We commit to reviewing the range and having a transparent sustainability story that is clearly communicated in store and online by end 2026.

British Heart Foundation

On the back of the successful six-week pop-up store in November 2025 which raised over £10,000, we are exploring the possibility of a permanent BHF store on campus that not only will support the reduction in items to landfill but also promote and increase the volume recycled during the Junkbusters campaign at the end of year.

Hazaar

We have begun to work with Hazaar, a sustainability driven student marketplace founded in 2020 with a mission to make university life more affordable, accessible and environmentally responsible by embedding circularity into everyday shopping.

Built by a University of Birmingham graduate initially as a student to student trading community, Hazaar now partners with brands to give a second life to excess, imperfect or archive stock—ensuring no new products are created for the platform while preventing thousands of items from going to waste. Its business model is rooted in a zero waste, no postage approach and curated 'drops' tailored exclusively for students, helping them access high quality items at affordable prices while eliminating unnecessary packaging and transport miles.

Hazaar's mission is to empower students to shop sustainably without compromising on cost or convenience, and its commitment to sustainability is evident in its focus on reuse, waste reduction, ethical brand partnerships, and a fully circular resale ecosystem designed to reduce environmental impact across.



Roadmap milestones

How To Order

Salad bowls



Step 1:
Choose your salads



Step 2:
Choose one protein
or go half & half!
Add another for £1.50



Step 3:
Choose your dressing

Hot sandwiches



Step 1:
Choose your bread



Step 2:
Choose one protein
or go half & half!
Add another for £1.50



Step 3:
Add your salad



Step 4:
Choose your dressing

Cold sandwiches



Step 1:
Choose your bread



Step 2:
Add your salad



Step 3:
Choose one protein
or go half & half!
Add another for £1.50

Roadmap milestones

KPIs and measurable targets

To ensure accountability and progress tracking, the following KPIs have been defined for each initiative:

2026



Coffee cup/lid/liquid recycling: Implement in all units



100% plastic-free coffee cups and lids



Divert 100% of used coffee grounds to compost charity



Crockery introduction: Implement in 90% of seated units



Open new Co-op supermarket



Review UoB Gift Shop range for sustainability

By end of 2027



Upgrade 100% of aged equipment



Replace 100% of aged refrigeration units



Open British Heart Foundation charity store on campus



Reduce plastic bottled drinks by 75%

By end of 2028



Reusable cup scheme: achieve 80% adoption across all outlets



Reduce plastic bottled water purchasing to zero



Too Good To Go expansion from 50% to 70% of outlets

Roadmap milestones

Stakeholder responsibilities and timelines

Clear roles and responsibilities ensure successful implementation:

- **FBR Manager**
Oversee roadmap execution, monitor KPIs, and report progress annually.
- **Sustainability Champions**
Provide guidance on eco-friendly practices and compliance.
- **Outlet Managers**
Implement initiatives at unit level, track adoption rates.
- **Procurement Team**
Source sustainable materials and equipment upgrades.

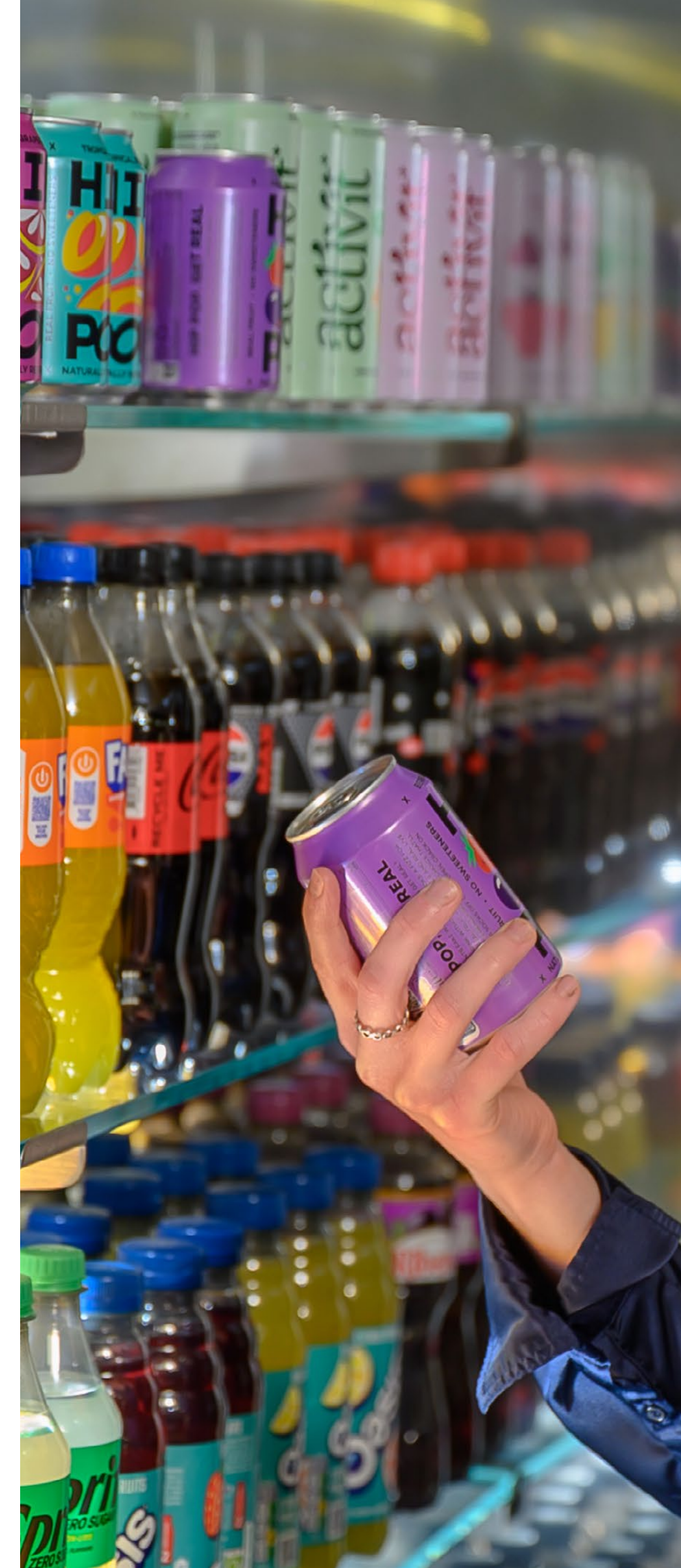
Risk assessment and mitigation strategies

Implementing the FBR Sustainable Roadmap involves potential risks that must be managed proactively. Below are key risks and mitigation strategies:

- **Supply chain delays**
Risk of delayed delivery of sustainable materials and equipment.
Mitigation: Establish multiple suppliers and maintain buffer stock for critical items.
- **Cost overruns**
Unexpected expenses during procurement and implementation.
Mitigation: Allocate contingency budget and conduct regular financial reviews.
- **Staff adoption challenges**
Resistance to new practices among staff.
Mitigation: Provide training sessions, clear communication, and incentives for compliance.
- **Regulatory changes**
New environmental regulations impacting planned initiatives.
Mitigation: Monitor regulatory updates and maintain flexibility in implementation plans.
- **Customer acceptance**
Potential reluctance from customers to adopt reusable schemes.
Mitigation: Launch awareness campaigns and offer discounts for sustainable choices.

Timelines

- **2026**
Plastic-free drinks, coffee ground recycling, cardboard lids, crockery introduction, water bottle reduction, recycling programs, Too Good To Go expansion, gift shop sustainability, Co-op supermarket, BHF store.
- **2027**
Equipment and refrigeration upgrades.
- **2028**
Full adoption and performance review. Launch reusable E-cup scheme.





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