



## Environmental and Social Policy – Wahaca

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Last Reviewed: 15.10.24

### 1. Mission Statement

From day one our co-founders Mark and Tommi have always tried to prove you can create a truly sustainable, multi-site restaurant business. From composting all of our food waste from our first year to being the UK's first carbon neutral restaurant business in 2016 and one of the first restaurant chains to introduce a zero waste to landfill policy back in 2011. We will continue to strive to be the best we can in this area, always asking ourselves "How can we do this with an even lighter tread on the environment?".

We believe that we have a responsibility to the environment and its communities beyond legal and regulatory edicts. As a sustainable business, we are committed to reducing our environmental impact on the planet and continually improving our environmental performance as an integral part of our business strategy and operating model.

We aim to focus on three key areas that are relevant to our business:

Animal Welfare	Reducing Climate impact	Caring for the natural world
Investing in Free range chicken and pork	Carbon neutral since 2016 and on our journey to Net Zero	Promoting biodiversity. Mexico is officially classified as 'mega bio-diverse' which has inspired us to try to work with a diverse set of ingredients across our menus.
Choosing organic milk	Reducing Plastics and packaging	Investing in supply chain projects & ingredients which have a long-term benefit to the natural world
Choosing Free range Eggs	Reducing impact through our builds and operations	Working with organic and regenerative farmers where we can.

To do this we look to work with people who share our values whether employees, suppliers or even our customers, we need to have you on board with our charter and excited about what we can do together.



## 2. Responsibility

Carolyn Lum, our sustainability lead, is responsible for ensuring that the environmental policy is updated and implemented. However, all employees, stakeholders and suppliers have a responsibility in their area to ensure that the aims and objectives of the policy are met.

## 3. Policy Aims

We aim to:

- Comply with and exceed all relevant regulatory requirements.
- Continually improve and monitor environmental performance.
- Continually improve and reduce environmental impacts.
- Incorporate environmental factors into business decisions.
- Increase employee awareness and training.

## 4. Sourcing

We aim to source local, sustainable and ethical food products for our customers.

## 5. Sustainable seafood policy

We want to ensure that the seafood that we buy is caught in a manner that protects marine and freshwater ecosystems and that seafood does not come from unsustainable sources or overfished species. With this in mind, we choose to only source seafood that is certified.

### Farmed seafood:

- Must be certified as responsibly sourced by ASC, Global Gap, or BAP 4\*
- Must be rated 1-3 by the [Marine Conservation guide](#).

### Wild caught seafood

- Must come from [Marine Stewardship Council](#) (MSC) certified fishery or
- Must be rated 1-3 by the [Marine Conservation guide](#).

We will only source our seafood from reputable suppliers who have rigorous modern slavery policies and checks.

## Ethical Meat and Dairy

The standards we require for our meat supply are:

- Pork must be British free range\*
- Chicken must be free range.
- Beef must be British farm assured and predominantly grass fed.
- Our milk is organic.
- Where possible our dairy is British (unless they are Protected Denomination of Origin products like Feta or Parmesan).
- All eggs and third-party products containing egg shall only use free-range eggs
- We commit to using only soya (whether in animal food or not) that is sustainably certified, sustainable according to a recognised certification schemes such as the Responsible Soy (RTRS), ProTerra or equivalent by the end of 2025.
- We will introduce mechanisms to monitor the provenance and volume of soya sourced as animal feed in the supply chain by the end of 2025.

\*This currently excludes our Chorizo which is sourced directly from Spain by Brindisa.



### **Direct sourcing**

- We will only use fair trade or direct trade tea and coffee (otherwise must be approved to be equivalent by the SRA).
- We will only use fair trade sugar.
- Where possible, we choose to source our produce from within the UK.
- We do not buy palm oil as a raw ingredient. We consciously monitor palm oil in our supply chain, and aim to keep purchases at a minimum; any palm oil products we do carry require a RSPO certification to ensure it is sustainably sourced.
- We source our avocados from reputable sources, currently Minor Weir and Willis, the producers supplying avocados hold GlobalGap certification, key environmental impacts such as water usage are monitored at farm level and through the supply chain.

### **6. Menu Development**

- We will continue to innovate delicious and vibrant vegetarian dishes and commit to keeping the menu at least 50% vegetarian.
- We will look at alternatives to meat, and continue to follow the principle of less, but better quality meat.
- Our focus is on delicious vegetarian dishes from whole foods, not processed meat substitutes.
- We offer vegan alternatives to dairy.
- We have calculated the carbon count of our whole menu and we are looking at how we can keep reducing its environmental impact.

### **7. Carbon Neutral and our roadmap to Net Zero**

Since 2016 we have achieved CarbonNeutral® company certification in accordance with **The CarbonNeutral Protocol** working in conjunction with Climate Impact Partners.

We commit to reducing our carbon outputs on average by 4.2% per annum, in line with science-based targets with the goal to reach net zero by 2030.

We continually monitor our carbon footprint and are always looking for ways this can be reduced. However as a company we prioritise supporting progressive soil regeneration projects and food producers using these methods over carbon offsetting (see below).

### **6b. Biodiversity and the environment**

We strongly believe that producing food without the use of herbicides, pesticides and fungicides will have an important long-term impact on the environment, improving water ways and drought and flood management; improving soil quality and its ability to process carbon, absorb water and grow food; and reversing the decline in biodiversity and wildlife. Where possible we will invest in food producers with a like-minded approach to nature restoration.

### **8. Waste**

- We will only use 'zero to landfill' waste collectors.



- All waste will be segregated into general waste; glass; cardboard; food and mixed recycling to maximise our recycling efficiency. Our target is to recycle 80% of our waste which we will monitor monthly.
- All used cooking oil is recycled, and we invested in oil filtration systems with the aim of monitoring our restaurants' oil usage and reducing it by 30%, using 2022 as a baseline.
- We will monitor and reduce the amount of **food waste** produced. We offer diners compostable 'doggy boxes' to help reduce waste and as a business we focus on smaller plates and portion sizes so we believe that our food waste is already relatively small but we continue to ensure that this is at the forefront of our development of new dishes, always considering the edibility of every ingredient.
- We engage with our suppliers about packaging to try and reduce the amount of packaging used.
- In 2021 we transitioned to resurfacing chopping boards to reduce plastic waste.
- We train our teams on plastic reduction within the business.
- We request that suppliers use materials that are biodegradable (non-plastic based) or recyclable.
- We will minimise the use of paper in our operations.
- We will register our company every year with a compliance scheme partner before the 1<sup>st</sup> of February for the current year (currently Valpak).
- We will submit a detailed account of how much waste we've handled before the 1<sup>st</sup> of February each year to our compliance scheme partner.
- We will buy PRNs (Packaging waste recovery notes) via our compliance scheme partner to fulfil our packaging waste obligations.

## 9. Energy, water and natural resources

- From April 2021 all energy contracts within our control will be sourced from 100% renewable electricity.
- We have set targets to reduce our electricity consumption by at least 5% YOY, and track usage on a weekly basis through energy monitoring.
- Since 2011 all restaurants use LED lighting and sensors to reduce the use of resources.
- Lights and electrical equipment will be switched off when not in use.
- Heating will be adjusted with energy consumption in mind.
- The energy consumption and efficiency of new products will be taken into account when purchasing.
- We use water efficient dishwashers.
- We have an eco-water purification system and offer free filtered water to all diners, our bottled water comes from a charitable water company.
- We use recycled paper and Forest Stewardship Council certified printers for menus, printer paper, blue roll and toilet paper.
- As of April 2022, 96% of our take-away packaging is home compostable (predominantly bagasse) or recyclable; we aim to retain this level as our minimum standard.



- From April 2021 we have promoted a team of sustainability champions across all restaurants to drive the sustainability agenda and encourage behavioural change to reduce our energy and resource consumption at site level.

#### **10. Transportation**

- We have reduced the need to travel with technology such as SharePoint, e-mails and video/phone conferencing.
- We consolidate produce through a third-party distributor to reduce individual journeys.

#### **11. Maintenance and Cleaning**

- When we are building a new site, we have a “SKA Retail” environmental assessment, SKA helps us identify where we can reuse materials, specify materials with high recycled content, install energy efficient equipment, use low voc paints and ensure that all timber is certified as sustainable. Our newly built restaurants have been rated with a Gold SKA rating.
- For every new restaurant, we aspire to achieve SKA Gold.
- The core cleaning products we source will be environmentally friendly.
- We will only use contractors who are F gas compliant for refrigeration maintenance.
- Materials used in new restaurant fit outs and refurbishments will be compliant with SKA gold criteria.

#### **12. Monitoring and Improvement**

- We will comply with and exceed all relevant regulatory requirements.
- We will continually improve and monitor environmental performance.
- We will incorporate environmental factors into business decisions.
- We will increase employee awareness through team member training and reinforcing the messages contained in the Green Charter.
- We will review this policy and any related business issues at our quarterly management meetings.

#### **12. People**

- We ensure that we pay all our team members at least the National Living wage (currently £11.44.) or above plus tronc, irrespective of their age.
- We offer each team member a free meal and coffee per shift.
- We have a Tronc system, with an independent Tronc Master, which ensures that all tips and service charges are distributed fairly among team members.
- We educate our employees on the provenance and quality of the produce and products we purchase through our online training portal CPL and through the Orguloso bible (I am Proud). We test them on the sourcing and preparation of menu items during menu changes.



- We will involve teams in the implementation of this policy, for greater commitment and improved performance.
- We will provide teams with sustainability training to inspire and drive behavioural change.
- We will work with suppliers, contractors and sub-contractors to improve their environmental performance.
- We will run quarterly staff surveys to gauge staff happiness. Their feedback is reviewed and actioned by the Board to ensure our teams are happy and engaged.
- We have invested in training key managers on Mental health awareness and how to support their Teams. ~~and have invested in a Wellness platform for all of our teams.~~
- We have a zero-tolerance approach to modern slavery and will only engage with reputable suppliers who agree with our expectation of staff treatment and code of conduct with regards to employment practices.
- We stand against any type of harassment and train our teams and managers on how to prevent and report unwanted behaviours.
- We will review update this policy at least once annually in consultation with team members and other stakeholders where necessary.