

What is a Right to Food University?



- **Dr Philip Pothen**, Director of Engagement,
University of Kent
- **Tilda Ferree**, Citizen Engagement Project
Officer, The Food Foundation



Creating a Right to Food University

The University of Kent, in partnership with the Food Foundation

Dr Philip Pothen, University of Kent

Tilda Ferree, Food Foundation

Why a 'Right to Food' University

- 1) We want to move away from a narrative that sees **food as a commodity**, but as something that is integral to community and a good life.
- 2) A rights-based approach puts forward **good food as an entitlement**, no matter who you are or what your circumstances are.
- 3) We want to promote **change across the food system**, rather than focus on individual responsibility.
- 4) We want to ensure a **democratic and collaborative process** is taken to decide together what good food looks like.
- 5) We are joining the **"Right to Food" movement** that is being taken up by organisations, councils and governments across the country and internationally.

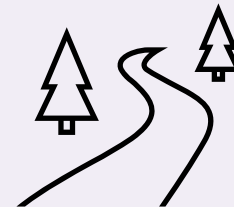
"Food is not just a commodity, it is the result of a set of practices. It is part of the rhythm of everyday life. We give meaning to life through how and what we eat, who we eat with establishes the bond that create kin and community."

Michael Fakhri, UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food, [at University of Kent Centre for Critical International Law, March 2022](#)



Why should universities promote the Right to Food?

1. Universities have a civic responsibility and can act as anchors in their communities and regions.
2. Research and innovation brings new knowledge, insights and real-world application to our understanding of food systems across a wide range of disciplines.
3. Pathfinders: by sharing learning at a local level, we can create a blueprint for food system change that can be shared across the UK and internationally.
4. As education institutions, universities can inspire students to become future food activists.



A RIGHT TO FOOD UNIVERSITY.



MISSION 1:
Putting the Right to Food on the World Stage

The University of Kent will be a hub for knowledge sharing, innovation and learning on food systems, one that inspires universities across the UK and internationally to commit to the Right to Food.



MISSION 3:
Tackling food insecurity, while promoting a healthy and sustainable food community at the University

The University is taking action to protect students and staff from food insecurity and to promote access to healthy and affordable food that is good for us and the planet.



MISSION 2:
Transforming Food Systems through teaching and research

We want to establish the University of Kent as a leading provider of education and research into the role of food within the promotion of human health and a fair society.



MISSION 4:
Addressing food inequality in our region.

Kent is known as the Garden of England, with acres of land dedicated to food production. However, many communities in Kent continue to face food insecurity. We will use our influence to connect and support our region.



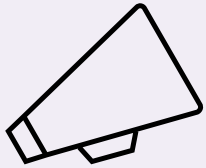
Mission 1

Putting the Right to Food on the
World Stage

Goals:

- To host an annual Food Summit, bringing together partners across business, research and civil society to learn more about the Right to Food University mission and provide a platform for collaboration.
- Host learning visits about what being a Right to Food University means and how it can be achieved.
- Develop a blueprint that inspires and mobilises other universities and organisations in the UK and internationally.

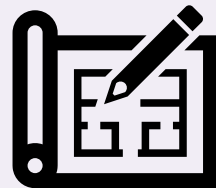
So far...



In February this year we launched the project, making a public commitment to start implementing actions that will support our four missions.



We are keen to support an official visit by the UN special Rapporteur on the Right to Food, to shine a light on the issues of food insecurity and sustainability in the food system in the UK.



We are recording and sharing the progress of the project as it advances, building a narrative and blueprint that we hope will inspire others.

Goals:

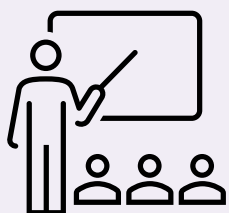
- To develop training on food insecurity for professional courses, such as social work.
- To develop a transdisciplinary course on food systems transformation.
- To offer applied learning opportunities for students including study work placements and volunteering opportunities through partnerships with local organisations and businesses.



Mission 2

Transforming Food Systems
through teaching and research

So far...



We have carried out a **curriculum audit** and begun the process of engaging academics already working in teaching and research on food systems.



Through **Growing Kent & Medway**, we are supporting sustainability in food businesses.



Kent's Signature Research Theme **Positive Environmental Futures** has begun research collaborations with farmers on regenerative agriculture, revalorising food waste and engaging our communities in learning activities.



Mission 3

Tackling food insecurity, while promoting a healthy and sustainable food community at the University

Goals:

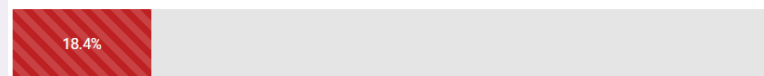
- To increase free or subsidised food provision, e.g. by developing a social supermarket and community fridges.
- To develop and track the progress University's Sustainable Food Action Plan with the catering and procurement teams.
- To turn Medway and Canterbury into 'Edible Campuses' setting aside green space for growing and learning about food.

So far...

Food Insecurity



51.8% of respondents have experienced food insecurity in the past month...



...compared to 18.4% of UK households experiencing food insecurity in September 2022 ([Food Foundation Food Insecurity Tracker](#)).

We have carried out a **cost of living survey** among students and staff to understand the scale of food insecurity.

£3
MEALS AT
RUTHERFORD

We are offering subsidised £3 meals for students (£3.60 for staff) at our main outlets.



We have expanded the university's growing space from Kent Community Oasis Garden, by developing the Jubilee Orchard of over 300 fruit and nut trees on the University's estate.



Kent Union have established The Campus Pantry, where students can access free food as well as advice and support.

Goals:

- We will engage with local authorities, charities, schools, farmers and communities across Kent to develop a plan to tackle food inequality across the county.
- The University of Kent will offer space to local food organisations to host events, training, innovation and fundraising, including establishing a Community Kitchen for food entrepreneurs and charities.
- We want to offer students opportunities, through placements and volunteering, to support local food charities and organisations tackling food insecurity.



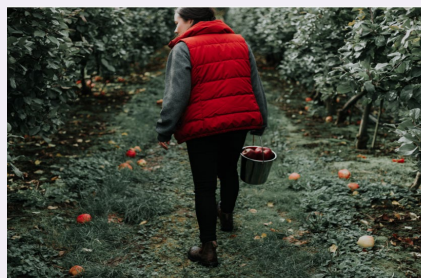
Mission 4

Addressing food inequality in our
region

So far...



We have offered kitchen space to a local food charity, so they can continue to provide nutritious meals to families via a network of community fridges.



We have launched a **gleaning project**, alongside Produced in Kent, Kent Union and the University.



The University has steering group membership on the Kent Food Partnership, which is part of Sustainable Food Places.

Stakeholder engagement

1. Forming a partnership with The Food Foundation
2. Forming a steering group with cross-university representation.
3. Engaging the wider university community and regional stakeholders.
4. Audit of existing food system activities.
5. Launching the project and making a public commitment.



Potential challenges



- Maintaining a focus on the whole food system, in the context of the cost of living crisis.
- Financial pressures on universities
- Time and staff capacity
- Monitoring our impact
- Engaging certain stakeholders: farmers, schools, colleges, seldom-heard groups.

Plans and next steps

- Action-planning against our objectives.
- Developing a blueprint or model that can be shared with other higher education institutions.
- Increasing our engagement, particularly with students, academics and regional stakeholders.
- Building a network of interested and engaged universities and sharing the journey of the project.

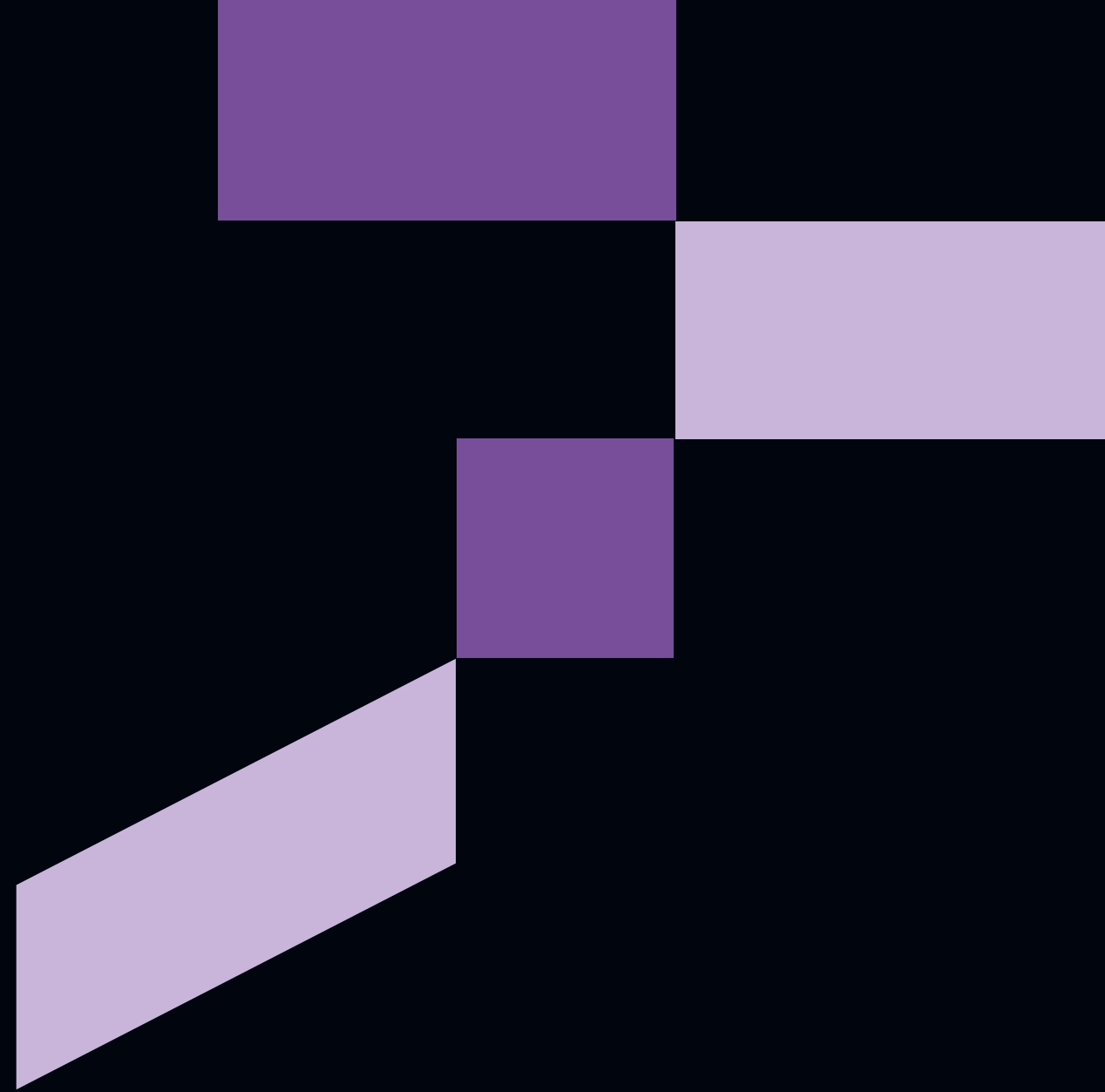


Get involved

- Please get in touch to find out more or share ideas, by emailing: righttofood@kent.ac.uk
- We'll be sharing news, updates and blogs on our website: <https://www.kent.ac.uk/right-to-food>
- JISCMail discussion list: right-to-food@jiscmail.ac.uk
- We'll be sending a monthly newsletter on the project's progress. We want to showcase what other universities are doing too, so please email us with your contributions!



**Thank
You.**



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