

The Sustainability Brochure

The Sustainability Brochure brought to you by the University of Amsterdam Green Office shows you the ins and outs of leading a sustainable life in Amsterdam! You can find volunteer opportunities, where to catch a sustainable meal or where you can find entire communities sharing your values. For updated information, additions to the lists of establishments, organizations and university policies as well as links to maps and a text-to-speech software-compatible version, check the online brochure on our website at uvagreenoffice.com!

Disclaimer

Some of the language in this brochure might resonate with the 'lifestyle environmentalism' outlook that centers individual choices in the battle against climate change. This outlook seeks better outcomes through individual consumer choices as it sees modern middle-class lifestyles as the primary driver of ecological destruction. Ecological footprinting is closely linked with this outlook. While it is important to lead more sustainable lifestyles shaped by our choices, it is also important to keep in mind that production also constrains consumption choices and establishing sustainability is not merely a matter of changing individual consumer choices. It is critical to remember that power over production is concentrated in the hands of those who control productive resources therefore it is not enough to simply change our personal consumption choices and hold only individuals accountable. This accountability should also be expanded on corporations, governments and supranational organisations through calls for systemic change.¹

University of Amsterdam

The White Paper published in 2021 highlights five main goals in UvA's route towards a more sustainable university: checking their ecological footprint and reducing it by 25% in 5 years, creating an active sustainability community, integrating sustainability to all degree programmes, providing opportunities for students to become pioneers in sustainability and encouraging research for a more sustainable future. You can read the White Paper in detail [on the UvA website](#).

To accomplish these goals, UvA has set in place many policies ranging from research programmes and initiatives to banning disposable cups and replacing them with reusable ones. You can find more about the UvA's sustainability policies [on the website](#).

¹ <https://catalyst-journal.com/2019/07/ecological-politics-for-the-working-class>

However, at many points these policies fall short. For example, most research initiatives stay limited to natural sciences and business, and confined within neoliberal and mainstream parameters. Additionally, despite such policies, institutional attitude of the university displays something else, for example in working with ING, a bank that invests in fossil fuels, as their banking provider².

Overall, despite almost reaching the end of the policy period of the White Paper, the university has experienced a significant decrease of its sustainability ranking in the SustainaBul Benchmark Report – from #3 in 2023 to #18 in 2024³. There are many actions the student body can take to mobilize the university for a more widespread and critical approach to sustainability that will carry it closer to its goals. You can find out how you can contribute to changing the university for the better.

University of Amsterdam Green Office

The Uva Green Office is a student-run sustainability platform striving to make the university greener, encourage awareness and research into sustainability and establish a community among students centered around sustainability. Since 2016, we have been working towards raising awareness, providing education, and planning events and long-term projects that provide intersectional and interdisciplinary perspectives on critical sustainability.

The Green Office is made up of 4 teams focusing on different aspects of bringing critical sustainability into focus in the university. Our teams are Communications in charge of content creation, Research & Education in charge of fostering academic collaborations and research opportunities, Campus & Development overseeing the implementation of sustainability projects in UvA campuses, and Events & Community focusing on event-planning and community-building around critical sustainability.

The Green Office has put its name on a multitude of projects promoting sustainability for the UvA student body and will continue to do so this year. You can gain insight into some of our past and ongoing projects below.

You can also become a part of the Green Office as a volunteer for one of our teams and contribute to a greener university!

²https://en.milieudefensie.nl/news/an-extensive-study-of-ings-financing-of-the-fossil-fuel-industry/@@download/file/250203%20SOMO%20-%20MD%20-%20Uncovering%20fossil%20fuel%20financing%20-%20embargo%20Wed%20Feb%205th%2023_00.pdf

³<https://www.studentenvoormorgen.nl/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/Benchmark-Rapport-SustainaBul.pdf> ;
<https://www.studentenvoormorgen.nl/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/Benchmark-Rapport-SustainaBul-2024.pdf>

Get Involved!

There is a place for everyone in the Green Office. As a part of the Green Office you can gain a solid network in the university, learn more about sustainability both academically and (what would be an adjective here?) and of course, contribute to a greener university. So how can you get involved?

Become a volunteer

You can become a volunteer for all 4 of the Green Office teams and contribute in a manner you find the most interesting and engaging! Be on the lookout for our volunteer applications on our website and instagram.

Become a sustainability ambassador

As a sustainability ambassador, you will be the representative of the Green Office in your own faculty! You will be in charge of overseeing sustainability projects in your faculty and implementing new ones, organizing events that relate sustainability to your field and being the bridge between the students in your faculty and the Green Office.

Pitch your idea

Do you have an idea on how to platform sustainability in the university? We are always open to students sharing their ideas, project pitches and research initiatives with us. If you have an idea, don't hesitate to contact us through our social media channels, our e-mail or by visiting us in the office, and we can carry your idea to fruition together.

Subscribe to our newsletter:

You can contact us via greenoffice@uva.nl or come visit us at our office in Roeterseiland Campus B0.05b!

Relevant Organisations in the University

As a student of the University of Amsterdam, you can pick from the variety of organisations based in the university to both find a community of students mobilized for the same cause and contribute to sustainable change in the university.

Vegan Student Association

VSA Amsterdam aims to bring vegan students or those who are interested together to build and maintain a supportive community, bring attention to veganism as a way of helping animals and the planet and create a facilitating environment to make veganism easier, more enjoyable and affordable.

Plant-Based Universities

Following from the movement originating in the UK, PBU calls for the university to transition into 100% sustainable, plant-based catering in regards to the climate crisis.

ORCA

ORCA consists of students and staff of the University of Amsterdam dedicated to pushing for the abolishment of systems contributing to the global climate crisis and enabling a just and fair future for everyone, and everything.

Anti Kantine

Anti Kantine is an UvA-based student movement advocating for sustainable, affordable and democratic canteen which serves nutritional, plant-based food that is within the budget for students.

Sustainable Eating in Amsterdam

Check out our [Sustainability Map of Amsterdam](#) to see what's in your area!

Our consumption patterns have a massive impact on the planet, therefore it is critical to consider where our food comes from. Additionally, supporting sustainable food establishments uplifts counter-institutions and displays consumer demand for a systemic change, as well as putting pressure on non-sustainable establishments. Amsterdam has plenty of spots that strive for sustainable eating through tackling food waste, sourcing their ingredients locally, and serving vegan food.

Explanation of criteria:

Locally sourced

Meals prepared from locally sourced ingredients have less carbon emissions as they do not need to travel long distances.

Plant based, vegan and vegetarian

A plant-based diet has a considerably lower carbon footprint than carnivorous diets.

Community kitchen

Most community kitchens in Amsterdam are plant-based and source their ingredients locally, therefore supporting such establishments across the city both lowers the ecological impact of our meals and encourages systemic change in the gastronomical industry.

Zero waste

In the EU, over 59 million tonnes of food waste is generated annually⁴. Eating meals that use all parts of the ingredients using the 'root to leaf' principle lowers this food waste.

Cafe de Ceuvel

Cafe de Ceuvel is located in De Ceuvel, a creative workplace built on a former shipyard. They source their ingredients from local and small businesses, serving vegan meals and coffee off the carbon grid!

#locally sourced #plant-based

De Sering

De Sering is a community kitchen that serves vegan dinners and lunches for affordable prices throughout the week and aims to foster a community resting on diversity and inclusivity.

#plant-based #community-kitchen

Mediamatic

Mediamatic houses TestTafel, a restaurant dedicated to a plant-based menu centering seasonal and locally sourced ingredients. TestTafel is an extension of De Sering and as an organisation they strive to contribute to De Sering's mission of community building through accessible food and free space for neighborhood initiatives; therefore dining at TestTafel is not only sustainable, but funds De Sering's broader mission.

#plant-based #locally sourced

Gartine

At Gartine, a bakery at the heart of Amsterdam, you can enjoy locally-sourced food that comes directly from Gartine's own garden!

#locally sourced

Margo's

A cruelty-free bakery bringing fresh plant-based, sustainably and fair-trade sourced baked goods every day

#plant-based #locally sourced

⁴ https://food.ec.europa.eu/food-safety/food-waste_en

Wasteless Wednesdays

Every Wednesday at Dokhuis Galerie, Taste Before You Waste volunteers prepare a delicious vegan meal using surplus food from grocery stores in Javastraat.

#zero waste #plant-based

Morris and Bella

A circular and slow fine-dining experience where the ingredients are locally sourced and meals are prepared with the 'root to leaf' principle, meaning there is zero waste!

#zero waste #locally sourced

Eetcafé ADM Noord

Located in Het Groene Veld in Amsterdam Noord, the eatery provides affordable plant-based meals sourced from their own garden, organic wholesale markets and local suppliers. You can also volunteer at both the Eetcafé and Het Groene Veld to help with their sustainable initiatives.

#plant-based #locally sourced

Find out more yourself!

By checking <https://radar.squat.net/en> you can find many locations in Amsterdam serving delicious vegan vokus most days of the week! Voku is short for Volksküchen, literally 'people's kitchen', cooking affordable vegan meals usually to raise funds for causes. So by frequenting at such vokus you can both eat sustainably, support the establishments hosting the vokus and make sure your money is contributing to a valuable cause.

Volunteering Opportunities

<https://maps.app.goo.gl/qr1WXspw1aXZHU1NA>

If you are looking to get your hands dirty in your free time, while also forming a lovely community and contributing to a greater cause, Amsterdam provides you with plenty of options! From community gardens to harvest to zero-waste dinners to prepare, there is plenty to choose from if you want to volunteer!

Kaskantine

An off-grid organisation currently located at Slotervaart which hosts (recurring) events relating to sustainability such as composting, food rescue market, and several workshops. They also take in seeds and books.

Taste Before You Waste

Battling food waste and organising wasteless dinners every Wednesday.

Anna's Tuin en Ruigte

A social and educational permaculture project with a vegetable garden, food forest, dye garden, bee & butterfly garden and a large section of wilderness. Volunteers do the harvest.

De Sering

De Sering is a community centre, kitchen and public space. The community kitchen provides affordable vegan meals. Volunteers help prepping the ingredients and cooking & serving the meals.

Bloei & Groei (Nelson Mandela Park)

Volunteers can help with gardening, chores, hosting or handing out flyers in this urban gardening center.

Stadsboerderij van West

On Saturdays, volunteers can attend activities, socialize and help with gardening and farming.

Het Groene Veld (The Green Field)

At Het Groene Veld you can engage in a wide range of volunteer activities such as helping in the bar, the kitchen, chores and the garden. You can work with GreenAss Garden to both help mend the garden and take part in their workshops.

Serve the City

Organizes weekly volunteering activities in Amsterdam with the aim of serving the people of the city, ranging from green to social volunteering and include park cleanups, helping out in neighborhood gardens, building food forests and more.

Afvalpaleis

Aiming to make Amsterdam Oost the most sustainable district in Amsterdam, Afvalpaleis offers people to become part of a sustainable future. They work bottom up and create information sessions and projects to involve anyone.

Sustainability Around Amsterdam

There are many sustainable establishments and initiatives you can visit in Amsterdam, ranging from museums to clothing stores. Check out the list for more information!

Het Groene Veld

In this cultural center, you can find the plant-based community kitchen Eetcafe ADM Noord, the gardening collective Green Ass Garden, multiple event venues, and more!

The Swapshop

An initiative aiming to address overconsumption and clothing waste through clothes-swapping where you can hand in your old clothes and get discounts in their stores.

Bike Kitchen

At the Bike Kitchen located in the underground bike garage in Roeterseiland Campus, on Mondays, Wednesdays and Thursdays you can learn how to repair and maintain your bike, as well as attending monthly workshops.

Klimaat Museum

Klimaat Museum is a pop-up museum aiming to make sustainability accessible and inspiring through bringing together art and science.

Droppie

Droppie encourages consumers to separate recyclables at home and return clean materials to their waste lab, for a fee per kilogram of waste. This model ensures waste processing not only becomes more environmentally friendly, but also financially attractive for the participants.

Organizations You Can Join in the Netherlands

Are you already getting antsy over becoming a part of something bigger? There are plenty of organisations across Amsterdam and the Netherlands that you can join to find a community of like-minded and diverse people to work together towards a common cause. By becoming a part of such an organisation you can both work towards a greener, more equal and critically sustainable world; and find a welcoming community at the same time.

P.S. Some of these organisations may require knowledge of Dutch to be a part of them, so be on the lookout for any warnings!

ASEED

ASEED (Action for Solidarity, Equality, Environment and Diversity) is a grassroots organisation fighting the structural causes of social and environmental injustice in food systems. They advocate for an alternative food production through movement-building, skill shares, workshops, actions and more. Their main focus lies in opposing fossil fertilizers in industrial agriculture and uplifting local alternatives.

Gira Holanda

Gira Holanda is a solidarity organisation born from the Zapatistas in Chiapas, Mexico that strives to contribute to the fight for climate and life. They organise actions, reading groups, documentary screenings, discussion spaces and more.

MilieuDefensie

Milieudefensie aims for a safe and healthy environment, equitable distribution and access to the natural wealth of our planet and respect for nature. Their solution strategy lies in climate justice to tackle the unequal distribution of money through standing up for workers and locals living in the vicinity of polluting companies in the Netherlands.

Fossiel Vrij NL

The Dutch branch of the Fossil Free movement aims to build a strong, community-based movement to break the power of the fossil fuel industry and encourage the transition to 100% renewable energy for all. Within this framework, they have been working on many projects including pressuring the Dutch banking giant ING and suing the aviation company KLM.

Fashion Action NL

Fashion Action is a group of fashion justice activists based in the Netherlands acting against the ecologically exploitative fashion industry through resisting overconsumption and overproduction.

Extinction Rebellion

The Dutch branch of the global Extinction Rebellion movement advocates for climate justice for all, revealing the truth about the climate crisis and making people aware of its urgency, mobilising to prevent the loss of biodiversity and reduce emissions, and promote a democratic approach for a fair and equitable transition.

Stichting Boerengroep

Stichting Boerengroep (Peasant Foundation) is a foundation at Wageningen University that aims to connect the university with the reality and challenges of farmers in the Netherlands and worldwide. In this way we fight for social, just and sustainable food production.

Digital Sustainability

In recent years, our digital landscape has evolved rapidly and became integrated into our lives as students. Due to this deep integration, it is critical to be informed on digital sustainability and use the digital technologies available to us in environmentally conscious ways.

Emails

Emails feel weightless, floating from one computer to another – but in actuality, they require data centers to store and process the data. These data centers use a lot of energy and can cause digital pollution, the environmental damage caused by electronics and other digital technology. This includes air, water and land pollution from the release of hazardous substances and CO₂ and other greenhouse gases from burning fossil fuels.

Considering the immense amounts of email traffic occurring daily, there needs to be increasing amounts of energy and storage space to deliver and store these emails. A singular email is stored in four different locations – the server of the sender and the receiver, and the device of the sender and receiver ⁵. Maintaining the availability of this data requires considerable energy that carries an environmental impact, and results in electronic waste.

That is quite depressing - so what can we do about it?

1. Delete the useless mail from your mailbox including junk, sent and trash folders. Store your mail locally on your computer instead of a server.
2. Limit the attachments to your email to reduce server space needed – also reduce recipients in CC and BCCs to decrease the amount of servers the email is stored in!
3. Unsubscribe from all unneeded subscription services to keep your inbox clean and tidy

⁵GreenCo. (2023, March 28). *Ten Tips for cultivating more sustainable email habits and reducing digital Pollution* - GreenCo.

<https://greenco-project.eu/ten-tips-for-cultivating-more-sustainable-email-habits-and-reducing-digital-pollution/>

4. Avoid forwarding emails unless necessary
5. Use plain text format instead of HTML

Search Engines

A search engine is perhaps one of the most frequently-used digital aids today – just consider how many times during the day you look something up. What if you could do some good with each search? By switching to eco-friendly search engines, you can make your internet inquiries count towards a cause! Some options are Ocean Hero, which uses ad revenues for the collection of ocean-bound plastic with approximately 5 searches cleaning 1 plastic bottle; or Ecosia, the web browser of the Berlin-based non-profit organisation that uses ad revenues for climate action and planting trees.

However, it is important to keep in mind that these browsers are not perfect, and be critical of the claims of such green initiatives from a perspective of critical sustainability – for example being wary of decreasing reforestation revenues of Ecosia or concerns over employment of ethical reforestation⁶.

AI Usage

The rapidly increasing and uncontrolled use of GenAI softwares like ChatGPT, especially popular among students, pose a threat to the deteriorating environmental crisis. While GenAI usage can provide many benefits and efficiency, many are in the dark about the immense environmental costs that a simple ChatGPT inquiry imposes.

GenAI models run on data centers which host computing infrastructure. To perform the tasks of training and running GenAI models, data centers require immense amounts of energy. Training one AI model could consume up to thousands of megawatt-hours of electricity. While it is not only GenAI that runs on these data centers, these models are set apart by the power density they require as they might consume seven or eight times more energy than a typical computing workload. Training one model could consume up to thousands of megawatt-hours of electricity, which is mostly sourced through fossil fuels. With the current rate of usage, it is projected that the energy demand of AI will exceed the electricity consumption of countries like Belgium by 2026.

Additionally, most of this energy is converted into heat and requires a cooling procedure which can use water. Therefore, water resources are strained where the centers are located, especially in drought-stricken areas⁷. This displays the disproportionate impact

⁶ Choosegreener. (2025, January 14). *EcoSia Criticism & cons: A balanced perspective on the Eco-Friendly search engine*. Choose Greener.

<https://www.choose-greener.com/ecosia-criticism-cons/>

⁷ Kak, A., & West, S. M. (2023). 2023 Landscape: Confronting Tech Power. AI Now Institute. <https://ainowinstitute.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/AI-Now-2023-Landscape-Report-FINAL.pdf>

of AI usage on residents around data centers, who also suffer from increased electricity prices⁸. This also brings forth the blaring issue of climate coloniality in the environmental risks of AI where the negative effects on people are not equal. For example in 2022, Google operated its data center in Finland on 97% carbon free energy, whereas this number was between 4-18% for its data centers in Asia.

Therefore the uncontrolled increase of GenAI usage paints a grim picture for the environmental crisis, resting on a neo-colonial exploitation of resources and disproportionate impacts on communities. With this knowledge in mind alongside many ethical and accuracy concerns surrounding GenAI, as students we should cut our GenAI usage to its absolute minimum and not use it at all whenever possible.

References

- 1 Huber, M. T. (2019). Ecological Politics for the Working Class. *Catalyst Journal*, 3(1). <https://catalyst-journal.com/2019/07/ecological-politics-for-the-working-class>
- 2 *Digging Deeper Into ING's Climate Ambition: Uncovering a Multibillion-Euro Fossil Fuel Financing*. (2025). Milieu Defensie.
- 3 Liem, B., De Boer, F., & Voorsluijs, V. (2023). *Benchmark Rapport Sustainabil*. Studenten voor Morgen.; van den Dries, L., van 't Leven, S., & Bosters, E. (2024) *Benchmark Rapport Sustainabil*. Studenten voor Morgen
- 4 *Food waste*. (n.d.). Food Safety. https://food.ec.europa.eu/food-safety/food-waste_en
- 5 GreenCo. (2023, March 28). *Ten Tips for cultivating more sustainable email habits and reducing digital Pollution - GreenCo*. <https://greenco-project.eu/ten-tips-for-cultivating-more-sustainable-email-habits-and-reducing-digital-pollution/>
- 6 Choosegreener. (2025, January 14). *EcoSia Criticism & cons: A balanced perspective on the Eco-Friendly search engine*. Choose Greener. <https://www.choose-greener.com/ecosia-criticism-cons/>
- 7 Kak, A., & West, S. M. (2023). 2023 Landscape: Confronting Tech Power. AI Now Institute. <https://ainowinstitute.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/AI-Now-2023-Landscape-Report-FINAL.pdf>

⁸Ren, S., & Wierman, A. (2024, July 15). *The Uneven Distribution of AI's Environmental Impacts*. Harvard Business Review.

8 Ren, S., & Wierman, A. (2024, July 15). *The Uneven Distribution of AI's Environmental Impacts*.