

What Can I Do with a Sustainable Food Systems Degree?

Sustainable Food Systems Management Track: Nutrition Department West Chester University

Major description: Students in Sustainable Food Systems Management train for jobs in food management, while promoting values for nutrition and public health, the environment, and fair food systems. Using ecological approaches and systems-based thinking, students develop understandings of local, regional, national, and international food systems and how food businesses and organizations function within them. Food systems training will focus on the community level and on consumer and post-harvest dimensions of the food chain. Courses engage students in critical issues in food management and sustainability as they learn best practices in creating solutions to challenges. Students in this major learn to be leaders and advocates for managing sustainable community food systems, using their skills in institutions, small businesses, and other organizations.

Program Outcomes

Upon successful completion of the BS Nutrition and Dietetics – Sustainable Food Systems Management concentration, the student will be able to:

1. Content: Describe and apply principles of food management and administration in areas including human resources; communication and marketing; business law; finances, budgeting and accounting; ethical and professional conduct; and planning events and daily operations management. (NTD 410, 416, 417, 425, 450)
2. Competence: Demonstrate entrepreneurial and social entrepreneurial skills in the context of sustainable food systems including the areas of leadership, strategic planning and organizing, collaboration, analysis, and systems-thinking. (NTD 325, 425, 426, 450)
3. Information Literacy: Evaluate differing conventional economic and business forms and develop understandings of alternatives working models such as: food and restaurant coops, the Triple Bottom Line, B-corps, and solidarity economies. (NTD 325, 425, 450)
4. Information Literacy: Critique the conventional food system and identify, create, and implement alternative solutions in food management, community nutrition, and health promotion programs and policies that include concepts of environmental sustainability and fair food systems. (NTD 325, 425, 426, 450)
5. Communication: Explain basic tenets and contexts of human nutrition, nutrition across the lifecycle, and population and community nutrition. (NTD 200, 303, 309, 325, 404)
6. Diversity: Identify scientific and cultural attributes of food in the context of sustainable food systems and human nutrition. (NTD 200, 205, 303, 309, 426)
7. Ethics: Define a food system and its impact on environmental sustainability including water, soil, energy, air, and food quality. (NTD 325, 277, 425, 426, 450)

Career Opportunities

Potential settings:

- Food management in local food businesses (e.g.: food coops, farmer's markets, local microbrews and restaurants)
- Corporate setting food management
- Institutional food management: schools, colleges, skilled nursing facilities
- Non-governmental organizations (e.g.: foodbanks)
- Communications, marketing, and nutrition promotion
- Advocacy (e.g.: Just Food, Philabundance, Food and Water Watch)
- Government
- Research
- Education
- Local agricultural settings (e.g.: artisan farms)

Specific positions could include:

- Manager or owner of small local food business focused on sustainability and community health
- Founder of NGO in sustainable food systems (social entrepreneurs)
- Manager of regional distribution systems that connect farm-to-table programs in schools, universities, and workplace settings
- Corporate food management with skills in healthy, sustainable food and menus and farm-to-fork experience
- Nutrition marketing and health/nutrition promotion of local artisan and sustainably grown foods
- Manager for local or regional farmer's markets
- Community food and nutrition educator with a major university, community college, or extension services
- Non-profit organization food and nutrition specialist such as Chester County Foodbank
- Sustainable food and nutrition educator for non-profit organizations
- Product developer for local or regional food businesses like Wegman's or Brandywine artisan farms
- Consumer communications with a food company
- Program director for a government education and outreach program, such as in the farm-to-table and community food systems of the USDA
- Food, sustainability, and nutrition journalist for electronic, social media, print and other media
- Event planner for food businesses, corporations, or other organizations

Job Examples:

Jobs in food management continue to grow and increasingly include sustainability as important content knowledge. The Green Restaurant Association offers certification in sustainability for food businesses, and the Global Compact through the UN is promoting measurable goals in sustainability, and food systems is central to the effort. Finally, the Bureau of Labor and Statistics received funding to start an initiative focusing solely on developing and promoting “green” jobs to help protect the environment and other natural resources.

1. School Foodservice manager

Foodservice managers in corporate and other workplace settings are increasingly asked to promote sustainable food practices in menus and purchasing. A career in this area can start at lower-level management and rise to upper-level management. These positions require good understanding of the management of resources (human, physical/food, financial) and effective communication skills. Careers may focus on kitchen or back-of-the-house food management, front-of-the-house management, or general management. Positions as director of food service for regional school districts can make considerably more. People in this career may also pursue an MBA to advance their career. Alternatively, they might pursue an MPA if they choose to work in nonprofit sector.

Outlook: (2016-2026) 9% job growth

Median annual salary: \$50,820*

2. Event planner for corporate dining

A career in event planning also is increasingly including sustainable food practices, pressured by corporate initiatives and customer pressure. Aramark currently has a sustainable food internship that employs a WCU graduate student. Here again, students can start at entry level planning positions, working for large corporations like Aramark, or can work in non-governmental organizations in fundraising events, or for their own business in event planning. Careers requires effective communication and planning skills, and students may work on handling and implementing actual food events or organizing and planning the events on a large scale. People in this career may also pursue an MBA to advance their position. Alternatively, they might pursue an MPA if they choose to work in nonprofit sector.

Outlook: (2016-2026) 11% job growth

Median annual salary: \$47, 350* <https://www.bls.gov/ooh/business-and-financial/meeting-convention-and-event-planners.htm>

3. Public Health (food and nutrition) educator

A career in public health and food and nutrition education, such as a job with extension services involves educating entire communities about health practices and implementing programs to help people live a healthier lifestyle. In this position, you'll develop programs for communities, schools, and conferences, collaborating with health specialists to assess community health needs. You may also provide insight on health education needs to organizations. People

pursuing this career may advance their career options with an advanced degree such as an MPH, or an MS in nutrition.

Outlook: (2014 – 2024): 9 – 13% job growth

Median annual salary (2015): \$51,960*

4. Marketing and promotions management in food and nutrition

Marketing of local food products and health marketing and promotion are potential career paths. Managers in marketing, advertising and promotion for large businesses earn a median of \$127, 560, and an entry level position is usually required before moving up to a manager position. Careers in this field required good analytical, communication, organization skills and creativity, and courses in management and economics are helpful to develop skills for the career. People in this position may also pursue an MBA to advance their position. Alternatively, they might pursue an MPA if they choose to work in nonprofit sector.

Outlook: (2016-2026) 10% growth

Median annual salary: \$127, 560* (<https://www.bls.gov/ooh/management/advertising-promotions-and-marketing-managers.htm>)

5. Product Development: Agricultural and Food Scientist

Careers in food product development can include jobs that require only a bachelor's degree, but often people in this career pursue an advanced degree in food science. Job salaries can range depending on the type of position acquired (wholesaler, product development). Jobs might include developing or testing products for regional retailers like Wegman's, for small local artisan farms, or for larger food businesses. Skills include critical and analytical thinking, creativity, and strong foundational knowledge of the science of food.

Outlook: (2016-2026) 7% job growth

Median annual salary: \$69,920*

**Data on salaries represents a national mean for the occupation and does not account for education. This data does not represent starting salaries and employment conditions may vary by region.*

Other Potential Careers

Extension Educator – provides research-based information and programs for growers, community members, schools, decision-makers, and stakeholders involved with local food production.

Food Shelf Manager – works in non-profit community food pantry services

Post-harvest Assistant – handling cooling, cleaning, sorting, and packing crop production

Policy Analyst – responsible for providing research and analytical support that informs decision-making processes and policy development pertaining to food and related citywide planning systems.

Sales Representative – working for a major food purveyor or a local farm. An example, U.S. Foodservice, Reinhart Foodservice, SYSCO, Gordon Foodservice, Ben E. Keith Foods, Performance Food Group

Sustainability Officer – responsible for providing an ongoing evaluation of company's profits, personnel, ecological outlook, and other factors that affect company performance. Manages company sustainability efforts and initiatives.

Organic Food Marketing – Market Fresh Produce is a great place to work. Responsibilities include organizing all industry tradeshow, company events, and meetings, creation and execution of all marketing materials and collateral, budgeting, marketing plans, and objectives. Issue company public communications and update social media on a daily basis as well as the creation and maintenance of the website. Assist in outside sales and visiting of repacking and vendor facilities.

Education Coordinator for Local Businesses
Farmer' Market Manager
Media Communications
Restaurant chef, owner, manager, distributor
Business consultant
Farm Manager
Community Garden Manager
Nursery Operator
Organic Farm Owner/Manager
Restaurant Consultant
Farm Hand Trainer and Organizer

Helpful Websites for Career Searches

[NAFSN](#)
[Indeed](#)