Introduction

The majority of the food at the United States is produced via an industrial food production and distribution system, which is inherently unsustainable due to its resource-intensive, centralized nature (Teebi, 2004). This is particularly true for the higher education sector, which makes up a significant proportion of the United States’ food consumption (AASHE, 2013). In the United States, the majority of higher education institutions are located within the urban areas, which are characterized by high population densities and limited agricultural land. This makes it difficult for these institutions to produce their own food, and thus they rely heavily on the industrial food production and distribution system. However, this system is facing increasing criticism due to its negative environmental and social impacts, such as climate change, biodiversity loss, and social injustice.

The goal of this study is to assess the sustainability of the food system at Furman University, a private liberal arts and sciences university located in Greenville, South Carolina, United States. The study aims to understand the current state of the food system at Furman University, identify opportunities for improvement, and develop a comprehensive sustainability strategy.

Methodology

This study was conducted using a multi-method approach, including surveys, interviews, and content analysis. Surveys were administered to students, faculty, and staff at Furman University to gather information about their food consumption habits, attitudes towards sustainability, and knowledge about the university’s food system. Interviews were conducted with university officials, including the director of food services, the sustainability coordinator, and the campus dietitian, to gain insights into the university’s food policies and practices.

Table 1: The Sustainable Food Score Chart

| Local vs. Non-local | Main Campus, Regional, and National Purchases |

Table 2: Food Category Purchase Distribution

| Food Category Purchase Distribution | Local, Regional, and National Purchases for September 2016 |

Discussion

The study highlights several important findings. First, the university’s food system is heavily dependent on the industrial food production and distribution system, which results in high environmental and social impacts. Second, the university lacks a comprehensive sustainability strategy, which makes it difficult to improve the food system. Third, there is a lack of awareness and knowledge about sustainability among the university community.

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References


