

POLICY DOCUMENT

ETHICAL FOOD AND PROCUREMENT POLICY

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Purpose:

This Policy is designed to establish a comprehensive, coherent, and institution-wide framework governing all food-related procurement activities at Mingachevir State University (MSU). It sets out clear principles, operational standards, and governance mechanisms to ensure that the sourcing, selection, purchasing, delivery, and management of food products and related services are conducted in a fully ethical, transparent, accountable, and sustainable manner.

MINGACHEVIR STATE UNIVERSITY

ETHICAL FOOD AND PROCUREMENT POLICY

Fairness. Sustainability. Responsibility.

At Mingachevir State University, we are dedicated to promoting ethical, sustainable and responsible practices in all aspects of the sales and procurement procurement. Our Ethical Food Procurement Policy is designed to ensure that all food and purchased practices align our values of fairness, sustainability and responsibility. This policy aims to educate, guide and implement best practices for the welfare of our community and the environment.

- FAIR TRADE SOURCING**
Prioritizing fair trade products to ensure farmers and workers receive equitable compensation and work in safe conditions.
- SUSTAINABLE SOURCING**
Sourcing products that are environmentally sustainable promoting organic, local, and seasonal foods whenever possible.
- HUMANE TREATMENT**
Ensuring that all animal products come from suppliers that adhere to high animal welfare standards and humane treatment.
- TRANSPARENCY & ACCOUNTABILITY**
Maintaining transparency in supply chains and holding our suppliers accountable to ethical standards through rigorous auditing and monitoring.

ETHICAL CHOICES ARE THE FOUNDATION OF A SUSTAINABLE, HEALTHY, AND FAIR WORLD.

- FAIR TRADE SOURCING**
Prioritizing fair trade products to ensure farmers and workers receive equitable compensation and work in safe conditions.
- SUSTAINABLE SOURCING**
Ensuring ethical choices are environmentally sustainable promoting organic, local, and seasonal foods whenever possible.
- HUMANE TREATMENT**
Ensuring that all animal products come from suppliers that adhere to high animal welfare standards and humane treatment.
- MINDFUL CONSUMPTION**
Reducing food waste and encouraging mindful consumption by promoting reusable, compostable, and recyclable items.

A key purpose of this Policy is to strengthen institutional integrity within procurement processes by minimizing risks related to corruption, conflicts of interest, unfair competition, and non-compliance with established procedures. In doing so, the University seeks to ensure that all procurement decisions are based on merit, value for money, quality assurance, and long-term sustainability considerations rather than informal influence or subjective preferences.

At the same time, the Policy aims to promote responsible consumption patterns within the University environment by encouraging the procurement of safe, nutritious, and environmentally sustainable food products.

Mingachevir State University (MSU) recognizes that food procurement extends beyond a routine administrative function and represents a significant element of institutional governance, public responsibility, and sustainability performance. Within the modern higher education environment, procurement practices—particularly those related to food sourcing and supply chains—are increasingly viewed as indicators of institutional transparency, ethical maturity, and commitment to sustainable development. In recent years, higher education institutions across Azerbaijan, as well as globally, have placed growing emphasis on sustainability, responsible sourcing, and ethical procurement practices. This shift reflects broader societal expectations regarding environmental protection, food safety, social responsibility, and accountable public resource management. MSU acknowledges these evolving expectations and seeks to align its internal systems with both national priorities and internationally recognized standards in higher education governance.

Within this context, the University integrates ethical, environmental, and social considerations into its food procurement framework. This integration ensures that all food-related services, including purchasing, contracting, and supplier engagement, are managed in accordance with principles of fairness, transparency, quality assurance, and sustainability. Special attention is given to ensuring that procurement decisions contribute positively to environmental protection, support responsible consumption patterns, and promote equitable treatment of suppliers.

Moreover, this Policy has been developed as part of MSU's broader institutional development strategy aimed at strengthening governance structures, improving operational efficiency, and enhancing institutional accountability. By formalizing ethical standards in food procurement, the University reinforces its commitment to minimizing risks associated with non-transparent practices, while simultaneously promoting a culture of integrity and professionalism across all relevant structural units.



Ethical Procurement: The process of acquiring goods and services in a manner that ensures full compliance with principles of fairness, transparency, accountability, and legality.



Sustainable Food Sourcing: A procurement approach focused on minimizing negative environmental impacts while promoting the use of locally produced, seasonal, environmentally responsible, and resource-efficient food products.



Supplier Integrity: The obligation of all suppliers and service providers to adhere strictly to ethical, legal, and environmental standards defined by national legislation and institutional requirements.



Conflict of Interest: Any actual, potential, or perceived situation in which personal, financial, familial, or institutional interests may improperly influence, or appear to influence, procurement decisions.



Transparency: The principle of openness and accessibility in all procurement activities, ensuring that decisions, procedures, criteria, and outcomes are clearly documented, traceable, and subject to review.

Scope of Application

This Policy applies institution-wide and establishes binding requirements for all structural units of Mingachevir State University (MSU) without exception. It governs every activity related to food procurement and associated supply chain processes, ensuring that ethical, transparent, and sustainable practices are consistently implemented across the entire University system.

The scope of this Policy includes all administrative and academic units of the University, regardless of their functional role or operational level. This covers central administration, faculties, departments, research centers, and all supporting service units involved directly or indirectly in food procurement, distribution, or consumption-related activities within the University environment. In this context, all internal processes related to planning, budgeting, requisition, approval, and monitoring of food procurement fall under the provisions of this Policy.

In addition, the Policy is fully applicable to all student-related service structures, including canteen operations, catering services, dining facilities, and any other food provision arrangements within the campus. All service providers operating within these areas are required to comply with the ethical standards, procurement principles, and sustainability requirements defined herein, regardless of whether services are delivered through internal arrangements or outsourced contracts.

Furthermore, the scope of this Policy extends to all external stakeholders engaged in food procurement and supply chain activities with the University. This includes suppliers, vendors, contractors, subcontractors, and service providers responsible for the delivery of food products, catering services, or related logistics. All contractual relationships with external parties are subject to compliance with the ethical, legal, environmental, and quality standards established by the University.

Ultimately, this Policy establishes a unified regulatory framework that binds all internal and external actors engaged in food procurement at MSU, ensuring consistency, integrity, and sustainability across all levels of operation.

Transparency and Accountability

Procurement activities within the University are required to follow a fully transparent framework in which all stages—ranging from planning and specification to evaluation and contract management—are properly recorded, verifiable, and open to audit.

Sustainability

Environmental considerations are embedded into procurement decision-making, with emphasis placed on reducing ecological impact throughout the food supply chain. Preference is given, where operationally feasible, to locally sourced, seasonal, and environmentally responsible products.

Quality and Safety

Compliance with national food safety legislation and quality assurance standards remains a fundamental requirement for all food procurement activities.

Ethical Conduct

Integrity is maintained as a core operational requirement, with strict prohibition of corruption, bribery, nepotism, and any form of undue influence in procurement processes.

Social Responsibility

Consideration is given to the broader social impact of procurement decisions, including the promotion of fair labor practices, ethical employment standards, and community well-being.

Strategic Objectives



Strengthening ethical governance in food procurement systems: A more robust institutional framework is established to ensure that all food procurement activities are governed by integrity-based decision-making, clear accountability lines, and strict adherence to ethical standards across all administrative levels of the University.



Ensuring compliance with national procurement legislation and international standards: Full alignment with the legal requirements of the Republic of Azerbaijan, as well as internationally recognized procurement and sustainability frameworks, is maintained through continuous monitoring, regulatory updates, and internal control mechanisms.



Increasing the proportion of locally sourced and sustainable food products: Procurement priorities are gradually oriented towards local agricultural producers and environmentally responsible suppliers, contributing to regional economic development while simultaneously reducing transportation-related environmental impacts and supporting seasonal food consumption patterns.



Enhancing transparency and digitalization of procurement procedures: Digital procurement tools and standardized documentation systems are further developed to ensure real-time traceability, improved data accuracy, reduced administrative risks, and greater accessibility of procurement information for internal audit and oversight functions.



Improving supplier accountability and performance monitoring mechanisms: Supplier evaluation systems are strengthened through regular performance assessments, compliance checks, and feedback mechanisms, ensuring that contractual obligations, quality standards, and ethical requirements are consistently met throughout the cooperation cycle.

Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)

Objective	Indicator (KPI)	Baseline (2024)	Target (2027)	Timeline	Responsible Unit
Increase ethical procurement compliance	% of procurement processes fully documented and audited	65%	90%	2027	Finance and Procurement Department Legal Specialist
Improve local sourcing	% of food products sourced locally	40%	65%	2027	Finance and Procurement Department Legal Specialist
Strengthen supplier compliance	% of suppliers meeting ethical standards	70%	95%	2027	Finance and Procurement Department , Internal Control Department
Reduce environmental impact	Reduction in single-use packaging (%)	20%	50%	2027	Sustainability / Environmental Unit Finance and Procurement Department , Internal Control Department
Enhance transparency	% of tenders published publicly	75%	100%	2027	Finance and Procurement Department , Internal Control Department
Improve food quality monitoring	Number of inspections per year	2	6	2027	Finance and Procurement Department , Internal Control Department
Increase stakeholder satisfaction	Satisfaction rate (staff & students)	68%	85%	2027	Department of Public Relations and Marketing

Implementation Mechanism

The effective implementation of this Policy is ensured through a structured and multi-layered procurement governance system that integrates clear procedures, defined responsibilities, and institutional oversight mechanisms. At the operational level, all procurement activities are guided by standardized procedures that align with the national public procurement legislation of the Republic of Azerbaijan, ensuring consistency, legality, and procedural integrity across all University units.

A key component of the implementation framework involves the use of digital documentation and electronic procurement systems. These tools enable accurate record-keeping, real-time tracking of procurement processes, and improved accessibility of information for authorized personnel. Through digitalization, the University enhances transparency, reduces administrative errors, and strengthens internal control over procurement activities.

In practice, competitive tendering serves as the primary method for supplier selection, ensuring fairness, equal opportunity, and value for money. Clearly defined evaluation criteria, formalized bidding procedures, and documented decision-making processes are applied to guarantee objectivity and prevent any form of bias or undue influence. Where exceptions are required, such cases are justified, documented, and subject to additional oversight.

Continuous operational monitoring is carried out through internal reporting systems, which provide regular updates on procurement performance, compliance levels, and potential risks. These reports are reviewed by relevant structural units, enabling timely identification of inefficiencies, irregularities, or non-compliance issues. Corrective actions are implemented as necessary to maintain alignment with the Policy's principles.

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Governance and Responsibilities

Structure / Role	Responsibilities
Scientific Council	Provides strategic oversight and approves policy direction
Vice-Rector for Scientific Affairs	Ensures institutional alignment and overall coordination
Ethics and Disciplinary Committee	Monitors compliance and investigates violations
Procurement and Supply Unit	Implements procurement procedures and manages supplier relations
Internal Audit Unit	Conducts periodic audits and performance evaluations
Quality Assurance Unit	Ensures food quality and safety standards are met

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Monitoring and Evaluation

Continuous oversight of procurement activities is ensured through a structured monitoring system that combines internal audits, supplier performance assessments, and regular reviews of procurement processes. This integrated approach allows the University to maintain real-time awareness of compliance levels, operational efficiency, and potential risks associated with food procurement practices.

At the institutional level, internal audit mechanisms play a critical and continuous role in ensuring that procurement activities are conducted in full compliance with established procedures, legal requirements, and ethical standards. These audits are carried out on a periodic basis and encompass all stages of the procurement cycle, including planning, tendering, contracting, and contract execution. Audit findings are systematically documented, analyzed, and formally communicated to relevant structural units, enabling timely corrective and preventive actions. This process not only strengthens accountability but also enhances transparency and institutional integrity by ensuring that any deviations are promptly addressed and lessons learned are integrated into future practices.

In parallel, supplier performance is subject to rigorous and ongoing evaluation based on clearly defined and measurable criteria. These criteria include, but are not limited to, compliance with quality standards, consistency and reliability of delivery, adherence to ethical and anti-corruption principles, and commitment to environmental sustainability. Performance assessments are conducted using structured evaluation tools and documented evidence, allowing for objective and data-driven decision-making. As a result, supplier selection, renewal of contracts, or termination decisions are based on verified performance records, ensuring that the University maintains long-term partnerships only with responsible, high-performing, and compliant suppliers.

On an annual basis, comprehensive evaluation reports are prepared to assess overall procurement performance against established Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) and strategic objectives. These reports integrate quantitative metrics—such as cost efficiency, procurement cycle time, and contract compliance rates—with qualitative insights derived from stakeholder feedback and audit observations. This combined approach provides a holistic and nuanced understanding of procurement effectiveness, highlighting both achievements and areas requiring improvement. The reports also serve as an important tool for benchmarking progress over time and aligning operational outcomes with institutional goals.

Stakeholder Engagement

Active involvement of stakeholders is recognized as a fundamental pillar of effective procurement governance at Mingachevir State University. The University adopts a structured and inclusive approach to stakeholder engagement, ensuring that the views, expectations, and experiences of students, academic staff, administrative personnel, and external partners are systematically incorporated into procurement-related planning, implementation, and evaluation processes. This approach reinforces transparency and ensures that procurement systems remain responsive to the real needs of the university community.

To operationalize this commitment, the University establishes diverse and accessible feedback mechanisms. These include regular satisfaction surveys, digital complaint and suggestion platforms, open consultation sessions, and periodic stakeholder meetings. Such channels enable stakeholders to actively communicate their concerns, share practical experiences, and propose constructive improvements, particularly in relation to food services, supplier performance, and overall procurement practices. The consistent use of these tools ensures that feedback is not incidental but institutionalized within governance processes.

Beyond feedback collection, stakeholder engagement is embedded within participatory dialogue and collaborative problem-solving frameworks. The University actively encourages the involvement of stakeholders in discussions related to service quality, supplier standards, and sustainability considerations. Insights obtained through these interactions are systematically analyzed and integrated into procurement decision-making, contributing to evidence-based improvements and innovation in service delivery. This participatory approach enhances not only efficiency but also the relevance and quality of procurement outcomes.



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Alignment with Sustainable Development Goals

Emphasis on food quality and safety further supports **SDG 3** – Good Health and Well-being, ensuring that procurement practices contribute positively to the health of students and staff.

In addition, the adoption of sustainable procurement principles aligns with **SDG 12** – Responsible Consumption and Production, encouraging efficient resource use, waste reduction, and environmentally responsible sourcing.

Furthermore, the Policy reinforces **SDG 16** – Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions by promoting transparency, accountability, and ethical governance within procurement systems. Collectively, these alignments demonstrate the University's commitment to integrating global sustainability objectives into its operational and strategic frameworks.

Evidence and Reporting

Comprehensive and well-structured documentation constitutes the cornerstone of accountability, transparency, and effective governance within the procurement system of Mingachevir State University. All procurement-related activities are systematically recorded, classified, and securely stored within the University's centralized Document Management System. This ensures full traceability of processes, ease of access for authorized users, and strict compliance with both institutional regulations and applicable legal requirements. The digitalization of records further enhances data integrity, reduces the risk of information loss, and supports efficient monitoring and audit processes.

The scope of recorded evidence is extensive and covers the entire procurement lifecycle. This includes procurement planning documents, tender announcements, bidding documentation, bid evaluation and scoring reports, signed contracts, supplier performance evaluations, correspondence records, and internal as well as external audit findings. Such comprehensive documentation provides a robust and verifiable evidence base for internal reviews, external inspections, and quality assurance procedures. At the same time, it facilitates institutional learning by enabling the analysis of past procurement practices and identification of best practices and recurring challenges.

Responsibility for reporting is primarily assigned to the Procurement Unit, which plays a central role in consolidating and analyzing procurement data. The unit prepares detailed annual and, where necessary, periodic reports that summarize procurement activities, financial and operational performance, compliance with established procedures, and key risks encountered during implementation. These reports are formally submitted to the Vice-Rector for Scientific Affairs and serve as a critical input for high-level oversight, strategic decision-making, and policy refinement within the University.