VINAYAKA MISSION'S
RESEARCH FOUNDATION
(Deemed to be University under section 3 of the UGC Act 1956)



Ethical Sourcing Policy for Food and Supplies

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ETHICAL SOURCING POLICY
FOR FOOD AND SUPPLIES

Drafted by	Dy. Director-Research
Verified by	Director I/c, Accreditation & Ranking
Passed by	Vice-Chancellor
Approved by	Executive Council
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INDEX

S. No	Contents	Page No
1	Preamble -	3
2	Short Title and Commencement	3
3	Purpose	3
4	Scope and Applicability	3
5	Policy Statement	4
6	Objectives	4
7	Definitions	5
8	Core Principles	5
9	Supplier Selection and Due Diligence	7
10	Supplier Code of Conduct	8
11	Procurement, Delivery and Acceptance	8
12	Waste Prevention and Responsible Disposal	9
13	Roles and Responsibilities	9
14	Monitoring, Non-Compliance, Records, and Reporting	9
15	Training and Awareness	10
16	Review and Amendment	10
17	Indicative Performance Measures	10
18	Approval and Commencement	11
19	Annexure I — Supplier Ethical Sourcing Declaration	11

VINAYAKA MISSION'S RESEARCH FOUNDATION
(DEEMED TO BE UNIVERSITY)
ETHICAL SOURCING POLICY FOR FOOD AND SUPPLIES

1. Preamble:

Vinayaka Mission's Research Foundation (Deemed to be University) [VMRF(DU)] is committed to responsible, transparent and sustainable procurement practices. This Policy promotes the sourcing of safe, quality and ethically produced food and supplies while encouraging fair labour practices, local sourcing, resource conservation and waste reduction. It supports responsible consumption and production in alignment with Sustainable Development Goal 12 (SDG 12) and applicable laws and University procurement procedures.

2. Short Title and Commencement:

1. This policy shall be called as **"Ethical sourcing policy for food and supplies**" in University Operations.
2. This policy shall come into force from the date of approval of the Executive Council of the University.

3. Purpose

Vinayaka Mission's Research Foundation (Deemed to be University) [VMRF (DU)] recognizes that purchasing decisions affect public health, working conditions, local livelihoods, resource use and the environment. This Policy establishes a consistent framework for sourcing food and other supplies responsibly, transparently and in accordance with applicable Indian laws, institutional procurement procedures and sustainability objectives.

4. Scope and Applicability

This Policy applies to procurement undertaken by or on behalf of VMRF (DU), including academic and administrative departments, laboratories and research units, libraries, hostels and residential facilities, canteens/cafeterias, events and conferences, stores, maintenance and housekeeping, and other University facilities. It applies to relevant suppliers, vendors, contractors, caterers, distributors and outsourced service providers.

Covered categories include, as applicable:

- Food and beverages, including grains, pulses, fruits, vegetables, dairy products, meat, poultry, fish, packaged foods and ingredients.
- Catering, kitchen, food service and hospitality supplies.
- Cleaning and housekeeping products, toiletries and sanitation supplies.

- Stationery, paper, printing, office consumables and educational materials.
- Furniture, equipment, uniforms, packaging and other operational supplies.
- Construction, maintenance and facility-related materials where procurement is governed by University procedures.

Emergency purchases and specialized clinical, laboratory or research purchases remain subject to their applicable technical, safety, statutory and procurement requirements; ethical and environmental considerations should be incorporated where feasible.

5. Policy Statement

VMRF (DU) shall seek value for money while considering quality, safety, legality, ethical conduct, social responsibility and environmental impact throughout procurement and supply chains. The University will work with suppliers and service providers to encourage fair labour, traceable and safe food, responsible use of resources, reduced waste and practical alternatives to unnecessary single-use materials. Sustainability preferences shall not override mandatory safety, quality, statutory or academic/clinical requirements.

6. Objectives

- To ensure food, beverages and other supplies are safe, fit for purpose, genuine and compliant with applicable requirements.
- To use fair, transparent and documented supplier selection and purchasing processes.
- To avoid suppliers known to engage in unlawful child labour, forced or bonded labour, human trafficking, discrimination or other serious labour abuses.
- To encourage local and seasonal sourcing where feasible and consistent with quality, food safety, availability, price and procurement rules.
- To reduce avoidable packaging, single-use products, food loss and material waste; favour durable, reusable, recyclable or otherwise environmentally preferable options where practical.
- To promote responsible resource use, traceability, supplier accountability and continual improvement, supporting the intent of UN Sustainable Development Goal 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production).
- To raise awareness among students, staff, contractors and suppliers about ethical purchasing and responsible consumption.

7.Definitions

Ethical Sourcing: The procurement of goods and services in a manner that considers legal compliance, fair labour practices, product quality, social responsibility and environmental impact.

Responsible Procurement: The process of purchasing goods and services while considering value for money, safety, quality, ethical conduct and sustainability.

Supplier: Any individual, business or organization that provides goods or services to VMRF(DU).

Sustainable Sourcing: Procuring products that minimize environmental harm, conserve resources and support responsible production and consumption.

Local Sourcing: Procuring goods, particularly food and agricultural products, from suppliers within the local or regional area, where feasible.

Fair Labour Practices: Employment practices that comply with applicable labour laws and respect workers' rights, safety, dignity and non-discrimination.

Food Safety: The handling, storage, transportation and supply of food under conditions that prevent contamination, adulteration and foodborne illness.

Supply Chain Traceability: The ability to identify and verify the source, movement and relevant handling records of goods throughout the supply chain.

Supplier Due Diligence: The process of verifying a supplier's credentials, legal compliance, product quality, labour practices and relevant environmental standards before or during procurement.

Corrective Action: Measures taken to address identified non-compliance, prevent recurrence and improve supplier performance.

8.Core Principles

8.1 Integrity and fair competition

- Procurement shall follow approved University procedures, delegated financial powers and applicable laws.
- Specifications and evaluation criteria shall be relevant, proportionate and documented; conflicts of interest, bribery, collusion, falsified documents and improper inducements are prohibited.
- Supplier selection shall consider total value, quality, reliability, service, compliance and relevant sustainability factors rather than price alone.

8.2 Labour and human rights

- Suppliers shall comply with applicable labour and employment laws, including requirements relating to wages, working hours, employment conditions and occupational health and safety.
- Forced, bonded or involuntary labour, unlawful child labour, human trafficking, harassment and discriminatory employment practices are unacceptable.
- Suppliers should provide safe working conditions, suitable personal protective equipment and training where relevant.

8.3 Food safety, hygiene and traceability

- Food suppliers and caterers must hold valid licences/registrations and comply with applicable Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) requirements and other relevant laws.
- Food must be handled, transported and stored hygienically at appropriate temperatures, with measures to prevent contamination, adulteration, spoilage and pest infestation.
- Where applicable, suppliers shall provide invoices, product labels, batch/lot details, expiry or use-by dates, source/origin information, and relevant test reports or certificates.
- Expired, damaged, contaminated, adulterated or otherwise non-conforming food shall be rejected, isolated and handled safely; suspected food-safety incidents must be reported promptly.

8.4 Responsible environmental sourcing

- Consider environmental impacts across production, transport, packaging, use and disposal when comparing suitable products.
- Where practicable, prefer products that are durable, repairable, refillable, reusable, recyclable, energy- or resource-efficient, or made with responsibly sourced materials.
- Encourage local and regional suppliers and seasonal produce where feasible, without compromising food safety, quality, availability or fair procurement.
- Avoid unnecessary packaging and favour packaging that is reusable, recyclable or otherwise environmentally preferable where suitable local collection and processing arrangements exist.
- Do not assume that a product labelled biodegradable or compostable is automatically preferable; consider its verified characteristics and whether appropriate disposal infrastructure is available.

8.5 Animal welfare and responsible agricultural/aquatic products

Where animal-derived foods are procured, suppliers must comply with applicable laws and food-safety requirements. Where practicable, preference may be given to suppliers able to demonstrate responsible animal handling, lawful sourcing and responsible farming, aquaculture or fisheries practices.

8.6 Local and inclusive economic participation

Where feasible and consistent with transparent procurement rules, VMRF (DU) may encourage participation by local farmers, producer groups, small and medium enterprises, cooperatives and socially responsible businesses, including women-led enterprises. No preference shall be applied in a way that violates applicable procurement rules or compromises quality, safety or value for money.

8.7 Reusable cups and reduction of disposable materials

In support of the University's "My Cup, My Choice" sustainability initiative, departments and food-service outlets are encouraged to enable and promote the use of personal or institution-approved reusable cups and utensils. Where hygienically and operationally feasible, single-use cups, plates, cutlery and unnecessary plastic packaging should be reduced. Reusable items must be cleaned and handled safely; alternatives must meet relevant food-contact and safety requirements.

9. Supplier Selection and Due Diligence

Supplier evaluation shall be proportionate to the nature, risk and value of the purchase. Relevant checks may include:

- Valid business registration, tax documentation, licences and statutory approvals, as applicable.
- Product specifications, quality records, food-safety licenses, test reports and source information, where relevant.
- Evidence of compliance with labour, workplace safety and environmental requirements.
- Supply-chain transparency, delivery reliability, storage/transport arrangements and ability to maintain product integrity.
- Packaging choices, waste-management practices and resource efficiency.
- Relevant credible certifications or declarations, where applicable and verifiable.

The University may request supporting documents, supplier declarations, corrective-action plans or audits where justified. Certifications may support evaluation but shall not replace statutory compliance or the University's own quality and safety checks.

10. Supplier Code of Conduct

As a condition of doing business with VMRF (DU), suppliers are expected to:

- Provide accurate product information, invoices, certificates and records; never falsify documents or misrepresent origin, quality or sustainability claims.
- Comply with applicable laws governing food safety, labour, health and safety, tax, product quality and environmental protection.
- Not use unlawful child labour, forced labour or other exploitative employment practices.
- Maintain suitable hygiene, storage, transport and handling practices for supplied goods.
- Disclose material changes, recalls, contamination risks or compliance issues that may affect supplied products or services.
- Cooperate reasonably with verification, monitoring and corrective actions.
- Avoid bribery, kickbacks, collusion and conflicts of interest, and report any improper request connected with University procurement.

A supplier declaration may be attached to tenders or purchase orders where appropriate.

11. Procurement, Delivery and Acceptance

- Purchase requirements and specifications should be defined before sourcing, with avoidable over-ordering minimized.
- Competitive quotations/tenders and approvals shall be obtained as required by University procurement rules.
- Purchase orders or contracts should state relevant quality, delivery, packaging, safety and compliance requirements.
- Goods shall be checked on receipt for quantity, condition, labelling, expiry dates where applicable, temperature or storage requirements where relevant, and conformity with the order.
- Non-conforming goods may be rejected, returned, replaced or otherwise managed under the contract and applicable procedures; the reasons should be documented.
- Delivery planning should, where practical, reduce unnecessary trips and avoid damage, spoilage and excessive packaging.

12.Waste Prevention and Responsible Disposal

- Departments and food-service providers should plan purchasing and portions to reduce avoidable food waste.
- Reusable items should be preferred over single-use items when safe, practical and cost-effective; reusable cups should be encouraged through the “My Cup, My Choice” campaign.
- Waste should be segregated and transferred to authorised collection, recycling, composting or disposal arrangements as applicable.
- Expired food, chemicals, electronic items and other regulated waste must be handled and disposed of in accordance with applicable law and University procedures.
- Suppliers should be encouraged to reduce packaging and take back reusable transport packaging where practicable.

13.Roles and Responsibilities

- Competent approving authority: approve the Policy and significant revisions and provide institutional oversight.
- Procurement/Purchase Department: integrate relevant criteria into procurement documents, maintain supplier records and coordinate supplier evaluation.
- User departments and stores: define needs and specifications, verify deliveries, record non-conformities and avoid unnecessary purchases.
- Canteen/catering and food-service operators: comply with food-safety and hygiene requirements, maintain traceability records where applicable, reduce food waste and support reusable-cup practices.
- Administration/facilities and designated sustainability representatives: support waste reduction, environmental practices, awareness and monitoring.
- Suppliers and contractors: comply with applicable requirements, provide accurate evidence and cooperate with corrective actions.
- Students, faculty and staff: support responsible consumption, use reusable items where feasible and report genuine concerns through University channels.

14.Monitoring, Non-Compliance, Records, and Reporting

The University may periodically review supplier records, food-safety documentation, product quality, delivery performance, packaging practices, local sourcing, waste-reduction activities and

compliance with relevant contract clauses. Monitoring may include document checks, site visits, supplier assessments or audits proportionate to risk and available resources.

Where a concern is identified, the University may request clarification, corrective and preventive action, additional evidence or a time-bound improvement plan. Depending on severity, recurrence, legal obligations and contractual terms, responses may include rejection of goods, suspension of orders, removal from an approved supplier list, termination of a contract or referral to the appropriate authority. Decisions shall follow due process and applicable University rules.

Suspected fraud, bribery, serious labour abuse, unsafe food or environmental violations should be reported through the University's designated reporting or grievance channels. Retaliation against a person who raises a concern in good faith is not acceptable.

15. Training and Awareness

The University may provide periodic awareness or training for procurement personnel, stores staff, food handlers, contractors, suppliers and campus users on ethical procurement, food safety, fair labour, waste segregation, responsible consumption and reusable alternatives. The "My Cup, My Choice" initiative may be used to communicate practical ways to reduce single-use cups and promote a cleaner campus.

16. Review and Amendment

The policy should review at least once every three years, or earlier when required by changes in law, University priorities, audit findings or operational experience. Proposed revisions shall be submitted to the competent authority for approval.

17. Indicative Performance Measures

The University may establish baselines and feasible targets for measures such as:

- Percentage of food suppliers with valid applicable licences/registrations on record.
- Percentage of relevant procurement contracts containing ethical and sustainability clauses.
- Number of supplier assessments and corrective actions completed.
- Use of local/seasonal sourcing where practicable and documented.
- Reduction in single-use cups and other disposable items, including participation in reusable-cup initiatives.
- Food/material waste reduction, segregation and recycling/composting performance where data are available.

Targets and reporting intervals should be set only after baseline data, responsibilities and data-collection methods are agreed.

18. Approval and Commencement

This Policy shall come into effect from the date of approval by the competent authority of VMRF(DU). It shall be implemented in accordance with applicable laws, University statutes, financial rules and procurement procedures. Any amendments shall be subject to approval by the competent authority.

Annexure I — Supplier Ethical Sourcing Declaration

I/We, the undersigned supplier, declare that the information and documents provided to VMRF (DU) are accurate and that, to the best of our knowledge, our organisation:

- Complies with applicable laws and licence requirements relevant to the goods or services supplied.
- Complies with applicable food-safety and product-quality requirements.
- Does not knowingly engage in unlawful child labour, forced labour or other unlawful exploitative labour practices.
- Maintains appropriate worker health and safety practices and complies with applicable environmental requirements.
- Will provide accurate product/source information and notify VMRF (DU) of material safety or compliance issues.
- Will cooperate with reasonable compliance checks and corrective actions.

Supplier/Company name: _____

Authorised representative and designation: _____

Signature and seal: _____ Date: _____

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