Research, **impact** and **innovation** for tomorrow's food systems

THE FUTURE OF FOOD ON OUR PLATES

FOOD 2030

January 2026

Department of Food Science
Aarhus University

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DEPARTMENT OF FOOD SCIENCE

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AU FOOD 2030 VISION

"TO BE AN INDEPENDENT, GLOBALLY RECOGNISED CATALYST IN TRANSFORMING HOW WE CULTIVATE, PRODUCE, AND EXPERIENCE FOOD – ADVANCING HUMAN AND PLANETARY HEALTH."

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“We stand at a turning point for the global food system. AU FOOD has a responsibility - and an opportunity - to shape a more resilient, sustainable and health-driven future through knowledge and innovation.”

Anne Louise Dannesboe Nielsen,
Head of Department

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— IMPACT

Embedded in the agri-food system, we drive impact by bridging fundamental and applied research, educating future talent, and advancing a collaborative culture - enabling healthy, resilient, circular, and smart agri-food systems.

At **AU FOOD**, impact is created by turning our resources and expertise into meaningful change for society.

Our **people**, **culture**, and **infrastructure** enable activities in research, education, innovation, and policy advice that generate **strong scientific** and **practical outputs**.

These outputs shape outcomes in industry, governance, and society - and together they lead to **lasting impact** on **the future of food** on our plates.

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4 routes to impact

Research

Our research delivers new knowledge, methods, and technologies that push the boundaries of food science from field to consumer. By combining fundamental understanding with interdisciplinary and strong industry collaboration, we create knowledge and solutions that advance sustainability, quality, health, and circularity across the food system. This scientific foundation underpins the innovations, policies, and educated experts that drive long-term transformation.

Education

Through our degree programmes and researcher training, we guide the next generation of specialists, leaders and agents of change for the agri-food sector. Our education is grounded in cutting-edge science and shaped through dialogue with industry, ensuring graduates are prepared to lead sustainable and health-promoting transformation. By nurturing talent and strengthening their competencies with underpinning skills, we create long-lasting talent for the agri-food sector in Denmark and beyond.

Innovation

Our innovation activities translate research into solutions, cutting-edge technologies, knowledge, and intellectual property that support a more sustainable and competitive food sector. Through long-standing partnerships and our embedded position in the agri-food ecosystem, we help bring new ideas from the lab to practice and scale. This accelerates the uptake of sustainable production methods, new ingredients, and consumer-focused innovations that support healthier diets across value chains.

Policy advice

Our independent, science-based policy advice supports evidence-driven decision-making nationally and internationally. By providing robust analyses, assessments, and insights, we help shape regulatory frameworks and societal choices that drive healthier, more sustainable and resilient food systems. This ensures that knowledge from AU FOOD contributes directly to public value and long-term societal benefit.

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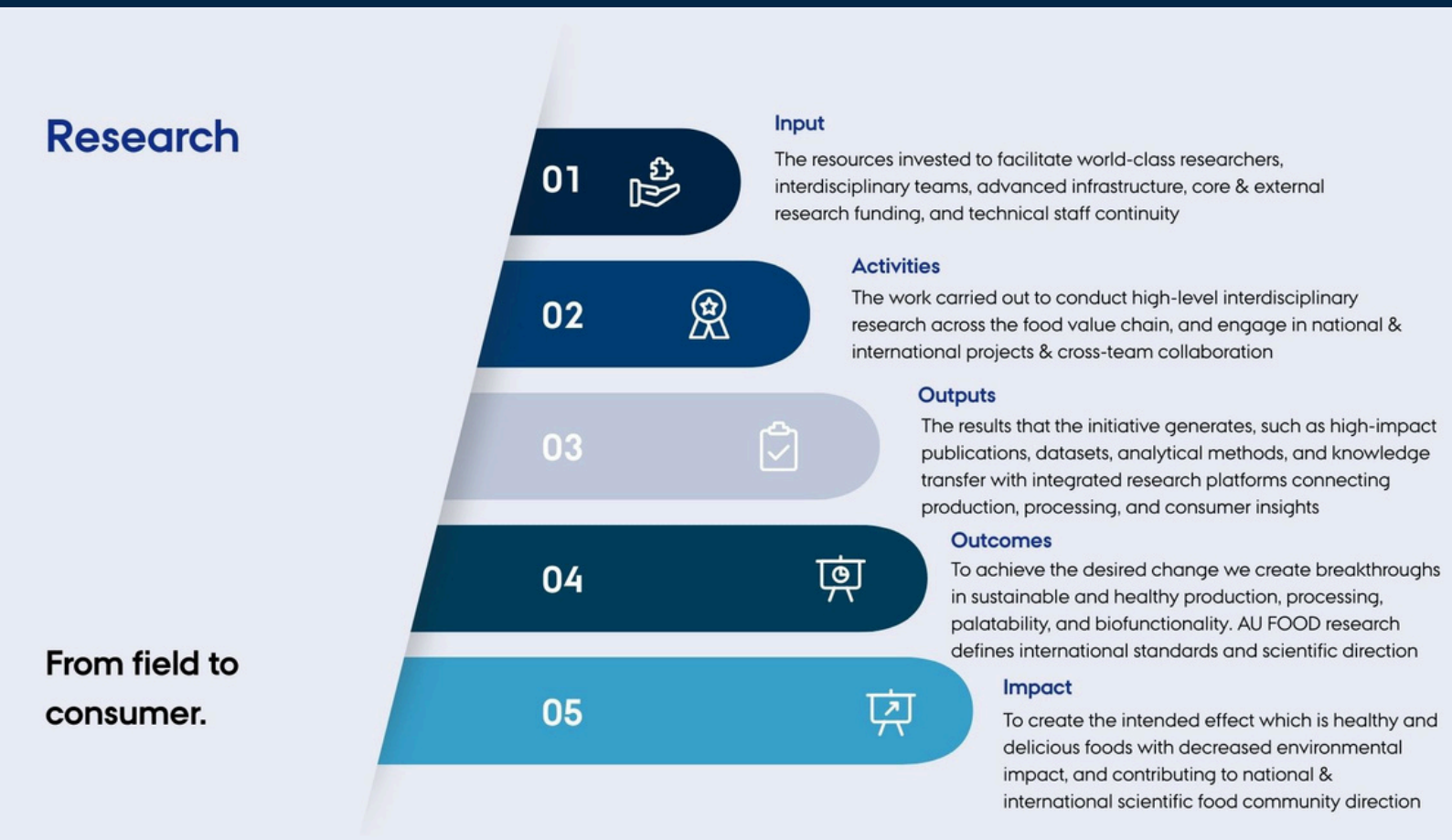
Impact logic

Research

Our logic track of research impact shows how **world-class expertise**, **infrastructure**, and a **strong interdisciplinary culture** enable high-quality scientific activities from field to consumer.

These activities generate robust knowledge, methods, and technologies that shift scientific understanding and industry practice - forming **the foundation for long-term societal transformation** across the agri-food system.



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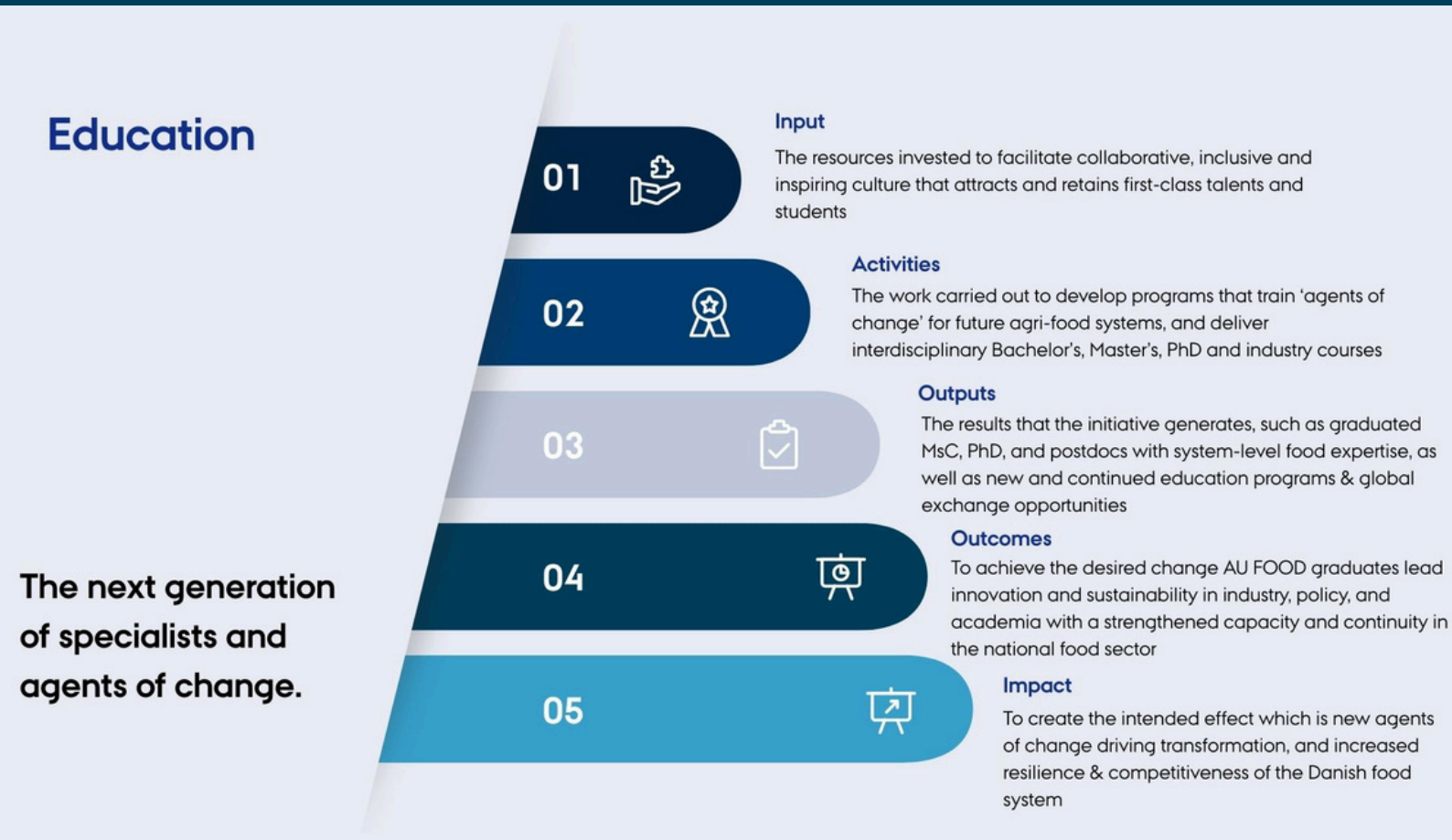
Education

Our education track illustrates how **engaged teaching staff**, **research-based learning environments**, and **collaboration with industry and society** develop the next generation of specialists and agents of change.

These activities produce graduates with the competencies to lead sustainable and consumer-centric transformation, **strengthening capacity and resilience** across the agri-food sector.



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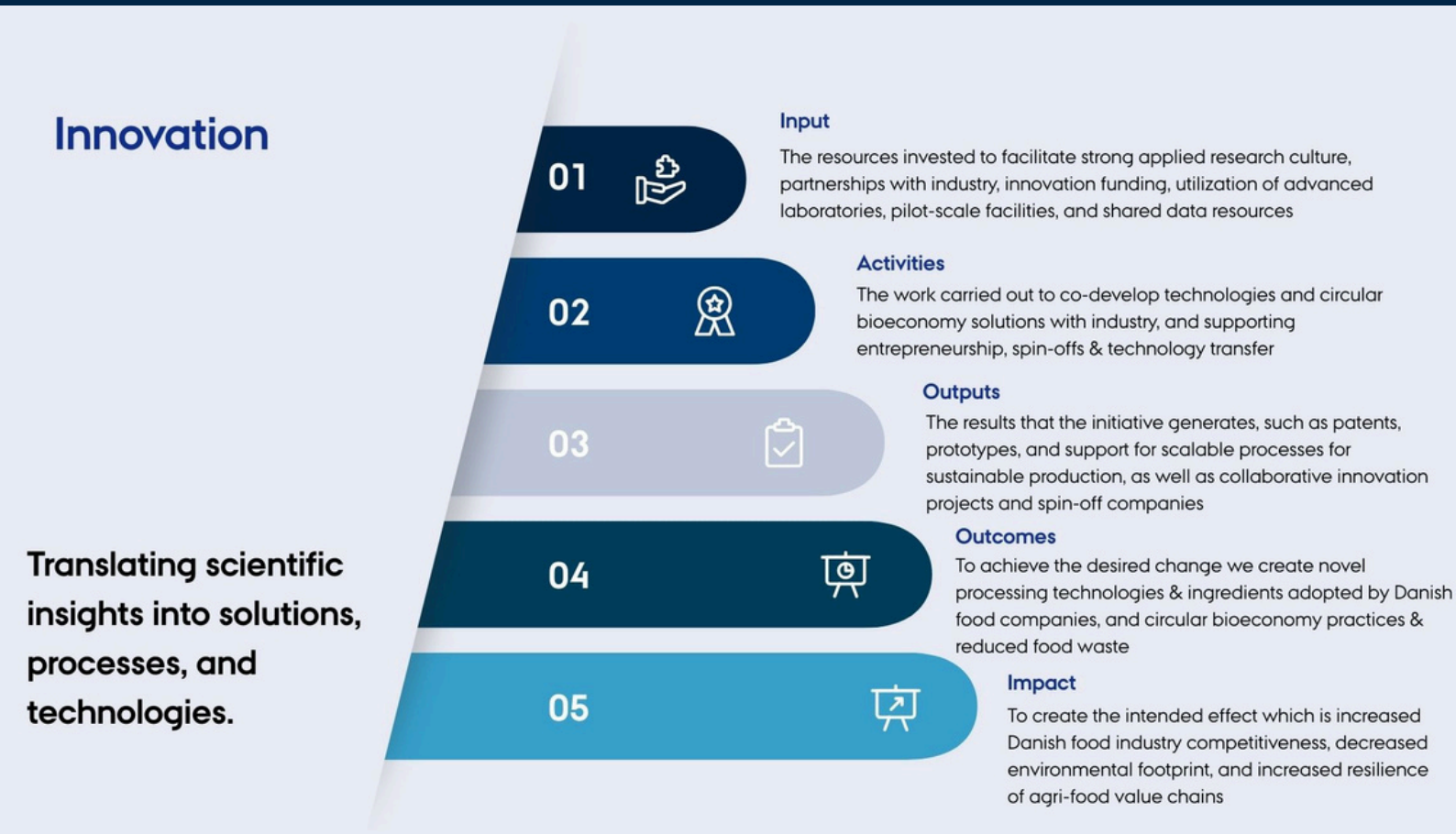
Innovation

Our innovation track highlights how **partnerships**, **applied research**, and **entrepreneurial support** translate scientific insights into solutions, processes, and technologies.

These outputs accelerate adoption in industry, scale sustainable practices, and contribute to **a more competitive, consumer accepted and circular** food system.



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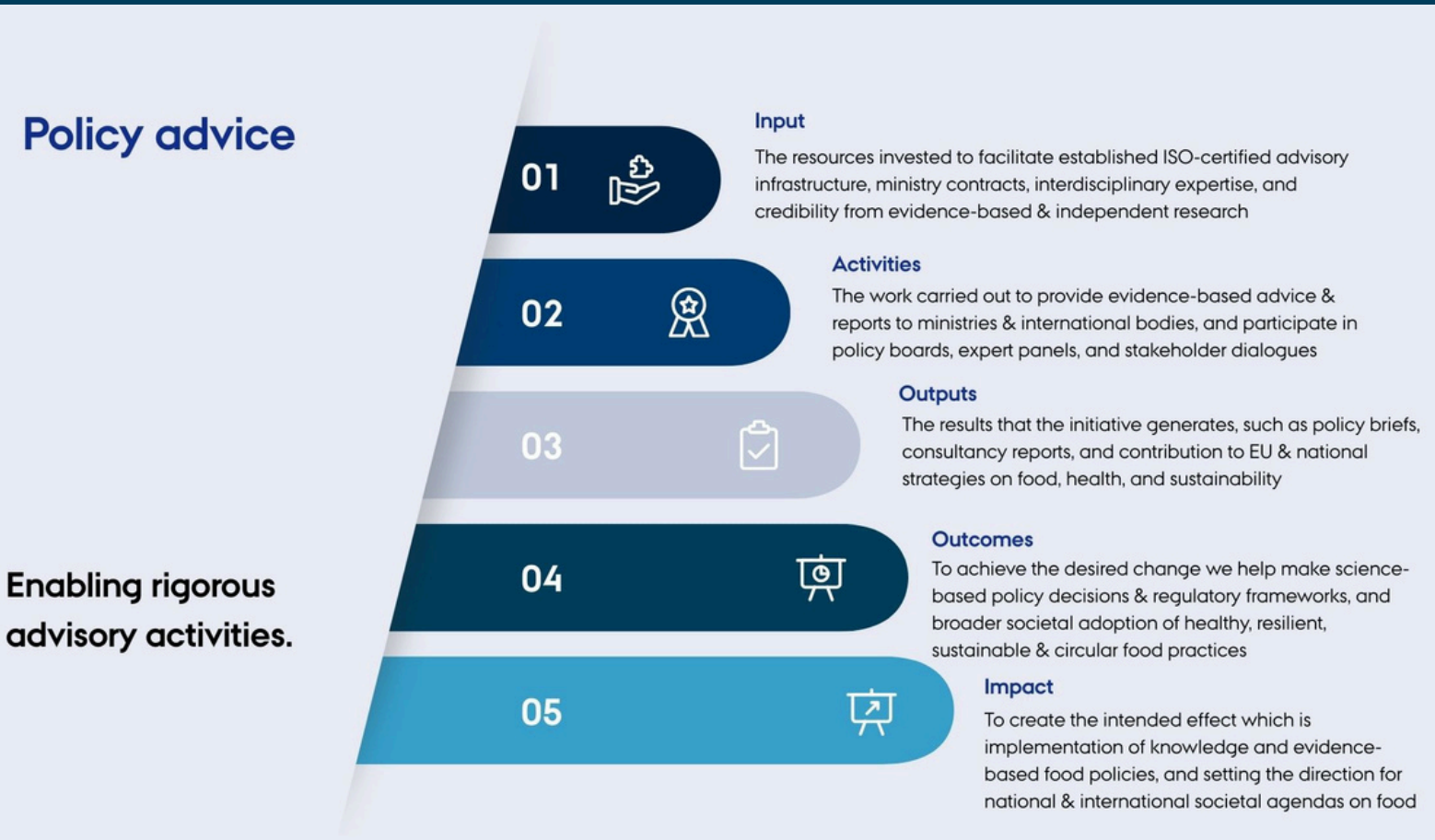
Policy advice

Our policy advice track shows how **independent expertise**, **analytical capacity**, and **strong ISO-certified infrastructure** enable rigorous advisory activities.

These outputs inform evidence-based decisions, shape regulatory frameworks, and promote societal transitions toward **healthier, more sustainable food systems**.



Sources:

Impact model: Balling, G.V., Fosse, H.B., Iversen, K.Z. et.al. Impact upfront: Novel format for Novo Nordisk Foundation funding. Health Res Policy Sys 23, 110 (2025). https://doi.org/10.1186/s12961-01385-x

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OUR STRENGTHS

Our strengths lie in **farm-to-fork research** that spans from plant production to consumer perception, carried by five specialized science teams.

What we do

Differentiated & Biofunctional Foods

We create knowledge that advances foods and ingredients with improved nutritional, sensory, and functional qualities from raw materials to final products. Our strength lies in combining sustainable production systems with advanced analytical methods to understand how foods influence health. Building on a strong legacy in product quality, bioactivity, and food–health interactions, our research spans cellular systems, animal models, and human studies, and extends to emerging food concepts such as cell-based foods, including cultivated meat.

Food Technology

We do research in advanced processing, packaging, and preservation solutions to improve food quality, stability, and shelf life. By studying how food components and structures respond to processing and storage, we promote sustainable, circular food systems. With recognised expertise in food structures, postharvest technology, and eco-design, we create technologies that reduce waste and enhance nutritional and sensory value.

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Food Chemistry

We study the chemistry of food components across plant, animal, and marine materials to understand how they behave through the value chain. Advanced analytical methods and biorefining approaches allow us to unlock new functionalities and high-value uses of raw materials and co-products. With deep molecular expertise, we contribute create impact by improving resource use, and enabling novel, climate-friendly foods.

Plant, Food & Sustainability

We develop sustainable solutions for fruit, vegetable and legume production by improving resource efficiency, reducing climate and environmental impacts, and ensuring high product quality with documented inner qualities. Our expertise in plant physiology, soil science, horticulture and agronomy helps us understand how crops interact with their environment across systems. Through work in cultivation techniques, crop quality, loss reduction, and circularity, we contribute to resilient and resource-efficient plant food systems.

Food Quality, Perception & Society

We study how people perceive, experience, and respond to food through sensory science, psychology, physiology, and consumer research. We explore how food properties, contexts, and individual differences shape taste, preference, appetite, and healthy eating behaviours. Rooted in advanced sensory methods and cross-disciplinary collaborations, we help design foods and eating experiences that are healthier, more enjoyable, and more meaningful.

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FOCUS THEMES

To realise our 2030 vision, we must direct our efforts toward the scientific and societal developments that will shape the future of food.

The following themes represent examples where AU FOOD has the expertise and opportunity to create **meaningful impact** across the food system.

They are not a definitive list, but illustrations of where our strengths align with **emerging needs**, **new technologies**, and the **transition toward a more resilient, sustainable, and health-promoting** agri-food system.

Alongside these emerging themes, we will continue to **build on our long-standing research** in more sustainable foods of both animal and plant origin, leveraging our established strengths, expertise, and history to **create impact across the food system**.

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OPPORTUNITIES TOWARDS 2030

Resilient food systems

Building resilient food systems requires strengthening adaptive capacity and robustness across the agri-food system. Systems for fruit and vegetable production are combined from diverse, low emission and climate-adapted designs and technologies. This includes organic and regenerative practices and biosolutions to enhance sustainability, circularity and resilience of Nordic agri-food systems.

Less-processed foods

Whole food and minimally processed food can enable more sustainable and resource-efficient ways of producing nutritious foods, while reducing the level of processing. This approach supports consumer demand for cleaner, simpler foods while reducing waste across the value chain.

Precision fermentation & novel ingredients

Precision fermentation opens new possibilities for producing food components and functional ingredients with dramatically lower environmental footprints. A key challenge is transforming these components into foods that are safe, tasty, and nutritionally meaningful.

Hybrid food systems

Understanding and designing hybrid foods that combine animal, plant, fungal, cultivated, and other cell-based materials can unlock new nutritional and sensory possibilities. This area will play a key role in diversifying protein sources and reducing environmental burdens.

Large-scale food living labs & societal insights

Interdisciplinary, citizen-centred food living labs enable deeper understanding of how people eat, choose, and experience foods. These approaches help test new solutions in real contexts and connect scientific innovations to societal realities.

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We want to make AU FOOD the most inspiring and inclusive workplace in the world for people who shape the future of food.

OUR CULTURE

International & inclusive

Our community brings together diverse nationalities, backgrounds, and scientific perspectives, and we see this diversity as a strength that helps us stay inclusive and understand each other's viewpoints. Collaboration across disciplines is fundamental to how we generate new knowledge and educate the next generation of food scientists.

Open, transparent & trusting

We value openness in how we communicate, make decisions, and collaborate. Transparency and constructive dialogue help us understand each other's perspectives and create a shared direction. We also strive for openness in our interactions with external partners, because clear expectations and honest communication are essential for maintaining independence, strengthening trust, and enabling robust, high-quality science.

A workplace where people thrive

We create the conditions for well-being, development, and collaboration. This includes fostering mentoring, supporting career progression for all staff groups, encouraging deep scientific dialogue, and making space for social interactions that strengthen our community.

A fun & inspiring place to work

We believe that world-class research is strengthened by a workplace that is enjoyable, social, and engaging. Excellence flourishes when people feel inspired - and by fostering a fun, vibrant environment, we aim to elevate both the quality of our science and the experience of being part of AU FOOD.

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“We want to be the best place to work in the world!”

AU FOOD Staff

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NEXT STEPS

To turn our 2030 vision into reality, we are setting out a clear path from intention to action: a focused action plan, external insight through an advisory board, systematic impact tracking, and ongoing engagement with partners to ensure the strategy remains dynamic, relevant, and grounded in new scientific and societal developments.

What we're doing towards 2030

We will develop a detailed action plan that identifies the activities and investments with the highest potential to influence our impact indicators. This plan will guide how we prioritise efforts across research, education, innovation, and policy advice, ensuring that our daily work continually contributes to the long-term changes we seek to create.

Establishing an advisory board

In early 2026, we will form an advisory board composed of transdisciplinary voices from research, industry, NGOs, foundations, and authority. Their role will be to provide constructive external perspectives and help us stay attuned to emerging developments in the food system. The board will not determine our direction but will offer insight that strengthens our decision-making and supports independent, impactful science.

Tracking impact & progress

To evaluate how well our activities translate into societal value, we will implement a new impact measurement system built on our impact logic. This dashboard will track progress on key indicators, provide transparency, and allow us to continuously assess whether we are moving toward our 2030 goals.

Engaging our partners & people

Our strategy will remain a living document shaped through ongoing engagement with collaborators, students, staff, and external actors. By continually inviting perspectives from across the food system - not only through the advisory board but through broad dialogue and peer exchange - we ensure that our implementation remains informed, agile, and co-owned across AU FOOD.

Our focus now is on turning this strategy into clear actions and measurable outcomes.

Reach out if you want to contribute to our impact!

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AU FOOD 2030

JANUARY 2026

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MADE BY +100 GREAT COLLEAGUES!

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