

## GOVERNING DOCUMENT

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Annex to: Decision of the SLU Board on SLU's strategy 2026–2030

## SLU's strategy 2026–2030

### SLU's mission, the role of the strategy and other operational planning

SLU's strategy has been approved by the SLU Board and is intended to serve as an internal governing document for the period 2026–2030. It provides guidance for the planning and prioritisation of activities within the university as a whole.

SLU's mission is to conduct research and provide education at the third-cycle, second-cycle and first-cycle levels in the fields of agriculture and horticulture, landscape planning, food production, nature conservation, forestry and wood-based raw materials processing, fishery and aquaculture, as well as veterinary medicine and animal husbandry. SLU has also been tasked with conducting environmental monitoring and assessment [SFS 1993:221]. Our mission is described in full in the public service agreement that governs our activities. SLU has solidified this in our mission statement:

*SLU conducts education, research and environmental monitoring and assessment in collaboration with society at large. Through our focus on the interaction between humans, animals and ecosystems and the responsible use of natural resources, we contribute to sustainable societal development and good living conditions on our planet.*

The strategy covers areas of a general nature and applies across faculty, department and subject boundaries. It shows what SLU is focusing on during the strategy period in order to create the best possible conditions for the organisation to develop in accordance with our vision:

*SLU plays a key role in development for sustainable life, based on science and education.*

The strategy sets out priority objectives and ambitions for the current five-year period. Prior to the previous strategy period, 2021–2025, extensive work was carried out with input from students and staff. The objectives and priorities in the previous strategy, rooted in this preparatory work, are still relevant, which is why this strategy should be seen as an update and a supplement based on an updated view of the world around us, a *next step* towards achieving our vision.

The strategic objectives and ambitions expressed in the document are intended to be achieved by formulating concrete operational objectives and activities in operational plans at various levels within the university's faculties and the university administration.

### **Core values**

SLU is bound by the core values shared by all government employees, which are grounded in the laws that Swedish government authorities are required to follow: democracy, legality, objectivity, freedom of opinion, respect for the equal value of all people, and efficiency and service. At SLU, we have applied a broadly anchored process over a number of years to supplement these with four fundamental values that guide us in our daily work, in our relationships within the university and in our role in society:

### **Scientific approach**

The free pursuit of new knowledge is at the heart of the university's activities. At SLU, we safeguard scientific integrity and good research practice.

### **Creativity**

Creating new knowledge requires creative thinking and the challenging of entrenched ways of thinking. At SLU, we are convinced of the importance of establishing a creative environment and that this is fostered by openness, freedom within clear frameworks, curiosity and embracing diversity.

### **Openness**

Collaborating with others, both internally and externally at national and international levels, and being a part of a community are essential for the success of activities characterised by academic freedom. SLU's activities are characterised by curiosity, communication that fosters contact, and accessibility.

### **Responsibility**

The drive and ambition of individuals and groups to develop and achieve good results are key to a university's success. Everyone is part of each other's work environment, is considerate and takes responsibility for ensuring that they and others can feel a sense of job satisfaction and commitment.

## World view

SLU's role as a university is to create new knowledge and educate for the future in our fields through excellence in research, education and environmental monitoring and assessment. Our efforts contribute directly to solving some of the greatest societal challenges of our time – from sustainable food production and biodiversity to climate adaptation and wise use of natural resources.

We are driven by curiosity and a desire to make our scientific results and education relevant to the development of society. As part of the global academic community, we are involved in developing, managing and disseminating knowledge – a fundamental prerequisite for a sustainable future.

We live in a rapidly changing world, which creates new and complex challenges and opportunities. The external challenges that affect us are:

- **Climate change and resource needs**

Climate change is one of the greatest challenges of our time. Access to important natural resources such as water, land and ecosystem services is changing, which in turn affects the conditions for sustainable living. Long-term efforts are needed to develop new knowledge and sustainable solutions. SLU plays a key role in analysing the consequences of climate change and developing strategies for climate adaptation, resource use and ensuring the functioning of ecosystems.

- **Geopolitical instability and competition for resources**

The global arena is characterised by shifting power dynamics and increased competition for both natural resources and expertise, which can affect both democracy and academic freedom. Universities play an important role in safeguarding scientific principles and providing knowledge that strengthens resilient social structures.

- **Rapid, disruptive technological development**

Rapid advances in automation, artificial intelligence and precision technology are creating new opportunities in SLU's areas of expertise. At the same time, new challenges are emerging in areas such as cyber security, information reliability and digital integrity, which require robust strategies to protect and quality-assure research, education and data that is important to society. SLU needs to develop and implement new technology and work to ensure that this is done responsibly and sustainably.

- **Changing conditions for academia**

Research policy and views on academic autonomy are changing, both nationally and globally. Higher education institutions are affected by factors such as changing funding models, resource-intensive research infrastructure, increasing administrative demands and a change in trust in science and academic institutions. For SLU, it is crucial to remain a strong and independent player that ensures that our activities maintain quality, relevance and long-term sustainability.

## SLU's objectives, ambitions and path forward

SLU's activities are vital. In a changing world that demands solutions to complex challenges, there is a need for SLU to strengthen its role and be a driving force for sustainable living by understanding and analysing changes and actively working to ensure that our knowledge and expertise contribute to a positive future.

Our objectives, ambition and path forward are based on two overarching principles/approaches and three prioritised focus areas.

The two overarching principles are

- quality
- resource efficiency.

They strengthen our ability to act sustainably, responsibly and with a high degree of legitimacy. At SLU, quality stands for excellence and relevance in our activities. Resource efficiency at SLU means that we economise with time, money, expertise and the environment, and we use our resources where they are most beneficial.

This is the basis for sustainable development, financial responsibility and innovation.

The three prioritised focus areas are

- SLU's next steps towards sustainable development
- SLU and the data-driven present and future
- One SLU – We at SLU.

The focus area *SLU's next steps towards sustainable development* is based on SLU's deep knowledge of the interactions between humans, animals and ecosystems, and the responsible use of natural resources. With this as our foundation, we are taking the next steps as a key player in sustainable societal development. Through education, research and environmental monitoring and assessment, we contribute to good living conditions – locally and globally.

The focus area *SLU and the data-driven present and future* addresses the challenges and opportunities of digital transformation, as well as the prerequisites in terms of infrastructure. By integrating digital tools and artificial intelligence into research, education, environmental monitoring and assessment and operational support, we contribute to innovation, quality and sustainable societal transition. Digital transformation is a crucial prerequisite for meeting society's complex challenges – and SLU will be a key player in data-driven solutions within our areas of expertise and operations.

The focus area *One SLU – We at SLU* relates to SLU as an organisation, workplace and study environment, where a shared culture of commitment, quality and resource efficiency is crucial to our joint success. By facilitating and strengthening collaboration across geographical and organisational boundaries and between research, education and environmental monitoring and assessment, SLU develops the potential of its organisation. This strengthens our collective capacity to be the driving force needed to achieve our vision.

## SLU's next steps towards sustainable development

*Based on SLU's deep knowledge of the interaction between humans, animals and ecosystems and the responsible use of natural resources, we are taking the next steps as a key player in sustainable societal development. Through education, research and environmental monitoring and assessment, we contribute to good living conditions – locally and globally.*

SLU has a special responsibility and mission to contribute to sustainable societal transformation and development of the land-based sector. For a society to be sustainable, it must meet global challenges in biodiversity, food security and the bioeconomy. With scientific integrity and academic freedom, SLU contributes to problem-solving and development. High quality in education, research and environmental monitoring and assessments are our strengths, and by building on them, SLU is developing its role in the transition.

International collaboration, recruitment and exchanges are crucial to increasing quality and relevance. SLU already has a high level of internationalisation and will continue to develop collaborations, particularly for increased capacity development in a low-income context, a continued increase in EU projects and internationally competitive education.

### *Strategic objectives:*

1. SLU will meet the sustainable society's need for skills provision and knowledge through increased relevance and excellence in all three areas of activity: education, research and environmental monitoring and assessment. Based on the current skills needs in our areas, we create the conditions for sustainable skills provision. Efforts to strengthen the attractiveness of our degree programmes need to be further developed. Another priority is to continually ensure that the courses and programmes we offer and the formats they are made available in are relevant to students and society, and that they meet the needs of lifelong learning throughout a person's professional life.
2. SLU will be a leading source of knowledge for sustainable living. With our collective expertise and by promoting groundbreaking research, we contribute to competitiveness, food security and innovation for the bioeconomy of the future. With scientific excellence in our areas and with a particular focus on areas where there is a great need in the world around us, SLU strives to strengthen its international position. We intend to take a leading global position in resilient ecosystems, sustainable crop production systems of the future and One Health.
3. Through the power of change and innovative thinking, SLU will take the next steps in driving forward innovation and competitive solutions for sustainable living. Important tools include further developed meeting places, interdisciplinary working methods, a systems perspective and international collaboration.

## SLU and the data-driven present and future

*By integrating digital tools and artificial intelligence into research, education, environmental monitoring and assessment and operational support, SLU contributes to innovation, quality and sustainable change in society. Digital transformation is a crucial prerequisite for meeting society's complex challenges – and SLU will be a key player in data-driven solutions within our areas of expertise and operations.*

Digitalisation and the development of generative artificial intelligence are global societal changes that create many new opportunities, but also place new demands on what we do and how we relate to future developments. It affects both the pedagogy and methodology we use to educate, as well as how we use and integrate digital and AI-based tools in all our activities. Our next step in this area is therefore to use digital transformation to achieve increased quality and resource efficiency in our activities, thereby contributing to a more sustainable society.

*Strategic objectives:*

1. SLU will develop and implement data-driven solutions grounded in and informed by the areas in which we have our strongest digital expertise. SLU will also build on the strategic collaborations that are necessary to achieve this.
2. SLU will further and continually strengthen its digital infrastructure, system capacity, security and associated support expertise. Today's universities have a rapidly growing need for digital infrastructure, and SLU faces particular challenges in this regard with its geographically dispersed and varied activities and large volumes of environmental data. This will enable us to create broad conditions for innovation, development, quality assurance and resource efficiency in our activities.
3. SLU will responsibly integrate digital and AI-based tools into its programmes and courses, and also ensure that the experts of the future have the necessary skills. Today's teaching can be supplemented with innovative digital learning environments, interactive platforms and advanced visualisation techniques. Flexibility in terms of time and/or place can contribute to lifelong and individually tailored learning.

## One SLU – We at SLU

*By facilitating and strengthening collaboration across geographical and organisational boundaries and between research, education and environmental monitoring and assessment, SLU develops the potential of its organisation. This strengthens our collective capacity to be the driving force needed to achieve our vision.*

One SLU – We at SLU is about harnessing the strength of our different environments and faculties while developing the university as a whole. We have unique expertise and considerable resources, but we can become even better at using them effectively together to build strong profiles and make the most of new opportunities.

Our next step is to strengthen internal and external communication so that knowledge, experiences and ideas can be showcased and shared more easily across geographical and organisational boundaries. In this way, we can become an even more attractive workplace and meeting place, where employees can develop and see how their efforts contribute to the success of the university as a whole.

By further developing a culture characterised by openness, internal learning, dialogue and respect, we create the conditions for commitment, participation and long-term development – for both employees and students. An inclusive SLU is also a stronger SLU.

### *Strategic objectives:*

1. SLU will offer an inclusive work and study environment that fosters a sense of pride, commitment and participation throughout the university. By providing more equal opportunities for professional development for staff and students, and through clear leadership and employeeship, we promote cohesion and long-term skills provision and strengthen the university's attractiveness.
2. SLU will create conditions for shared responsibility and understanding of our common mission – from the local to the strategic level. SLU will also raise awareness and increase knowledge of our national mission in society. Strengthened, cohesive strategic communication increases the opportunities for everyone at SLU to make a contribution.
3. As a place of study and work, SLU will be a pioneer socially, financially and ecologically to ensure that sustainability work is better integrated into its activities. Through a balanced focus on the three pillars of sustainability in campus development, resource use, support processes and infrastructure utilisation, we create the conditions for high quality and long-term development.