

Food and Agriculture

Solutions for sustainable and ethical localized food systems



Green Mondays

Highlight plant-based meal options one day per week to decrease carbon emissions



Impact

According to Drawdown, eating a plant-rich diet is the third best way to reduce carbon emissions, and it's something that individuals can do easily. Drawdown's study shows that if 50 to 75 percent of the population reduced overall meat consumption, between 64.8 and 91.5 gigatons of carbon dioxide emissions can be avoided by 2050.

Description

The Green Monday program is a proclamation that encourages eating no (or less) animal-based products one day a week; encouraging local stores, restaurants and schools to offer more plant-based choices; and educating the public about the environmental and health benefits of a plant-based diet.

Where It's Been Implemented

Cities around the world have adopted resolutions encouraging various versions of this practice, including several California cities. Berkeley's resolution is one of the oldest and most comprehensive, stating that all food served at any city facility, meeting or event must be completely plant-based on Mondays. Emeryville was the second city in the U.S. to adopt the Green Monday program. Mountain View approved a similar policy in October 2019, and Los Gatos started Green Mondays in December 2019, the first two jurisdictions in Santa Clara County to do so.

Key Drivers

According to the Green Monday U.S. website, animal agriculture is responsible for more greenhouse gas emissions than the transportation sector. It's the cause of 80 percent

of deforestation in the Amazon, and it has already cleared 260 million acres of U.S. forests for raising animals and growing feed. In addition to emissions and land use, the water footprint of producing one pound of beef is 1,800 gallons of water. To put that in perspective, McDonald's sells 2.36 billion burgers every year. That requires almost 17 trillion gallons of water. Completely cutting meat and dairy from your diet can reduce your carbon footprint by more than 70 percent.

Key Factors to Success

The Green Monday ordinance itself needs the support of a City Council because it only applies to council and city events. For it to have the most impact, however, businesses and restaurants within the city should be on board and willing to highlight plant-based meals one day per week.

The Green Monday program suggests rewarding businesses that adhere to these guidelines with certificates and Green Monday stickers that can be displayed in windows. Other incentives for businesses to take action might include community awards, press coverage of restaurants that participate or increased business due to Green Monday deals (for example, a 10 percent off coupon for a plant-based special). Businesses also may find that their costs go down when they have to buy one day less of meat.

Key Obstacles

After the Green Monday ordinance was passed in Berkeley, it didn't gain as much momentum as originally hoped because of limited incentives for businesses to participate, along with other more pressing issues taking priority over Green Monday.

Timeline to Implementation

Green Monday U.S. works with City Councils around the U.S. to help implement solutions that fit each jurisdiction's needs. Not all of the solutions are branded under the Green Monday name, but they share the same principles of encouraging more plant-based eating. For example, in Berkeley the Green Monday team reached out to several restaurants in the area to first gauge interest in how likely they would be to adopt a similar policy at their business following the city's example. The City Council also implemented Green Mondays on the heels of Berkeley's declaration of a climate emergency, so the timing definitely helped with the momentum and impact of the policy.

Next Steps

Green Monday U.S., run by the Factory Farming Awareness Coalition (FFAC), is currently working with the New York City Council to pass an ambitious ordinance that would require restaurants to serve completely plant-based options one day per week, and implementing a robust educational campaign focused on the benefits of plant-based diets.

References and Resources

Amy Halpern-Laff, Director of Strategic Partnerships at the Factory Farming Awareness Coalition, amy@ffacoalition.org, 650-665-0266

[Berkeley's Green Monday ordinance](#)

[Green Monday U.S. governmental program](#)

[Green Monday U.S. corporate program](#)

[Drawdown's Table of Solutions](#)