

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



The 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 43 and 68 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. In July of 2021, Mountain View initiated a plant-based eating program and plans to host plant-based eating events approximately quarterly.

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

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[Berkeley's Green Monday ordinance](#)

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

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

[Drawdown's Table of Solutions](#)

Regenerative Farming

Sustainable farming practices can help restore soil health, thereby capturing carbon and improving the water cycle.



The Impact

Regenerative farming, also called carbon farming, is defined as farming and ranching practices that put carbon from the atmosphere back into soil. Regenerative farming practices have the potential of drawing down more than 1 trillion tons of carbon dioxide from the atmosphere into the soil. In contrast to conventional farming and grazing, regenerative farming techniques can improve soil health, reduce

erosion, save water and enhance wildlife habitat. These farming practices also help increase crop productivity and build more nutrient-rich, resilient soil.

Where It's Been Implemented

Currently, several ranches and farms across San Mateo County (Calif.) engage in regenerative farming practices with a higher concentration in Half Moon Bay. Markegard Family Grass-Fed, a farm located south of Half Moon Bay, provides grass-fed beef and lamb and pasture-raised chicken and pork. The farm's grazing practices prioritize holistic, planned grazing in which no area is ever overgrazed. Rather, the health of the grassland and its regrowth is prioritized.

TomKat Ranch, an 1,800-acre grass-fed cattle ranch in Pescadero, hosts other regenerative farming programs, including a Fork to Farm partnership that accelerates the transition to regenerative agriculture and a data project that monitors the health of the local ecosystem. The San Mateo Resource Conservation District offers technical assistance in developing Carbon Farm Plans that help farmers and ranchers make their farms more productive and resilient.

Description

Regenerative farming addresses the challenges of reducing carbon emissions by capturing carbon from the atmosphere. The primary challenge farmers and ranches in San Mateo County face is the cost to transition to regenerative agriculture. Aid in financing such projects through fundraisers would help address this challenge and increase adoption of regenerative farming practices in the county.

Key Drivers

Engaging in regenerative farming practices promotes the health of the soil. One benefit is that it increases the water-holding capacity of soil, thereby reducing demand on local water sources. Crops and ranches in the county adopting regenerative farming will become more resilient to the challenges invoked by climate change and would reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Local wildlife and pollinator habitats will be less likely to be disrupted as well.

Key Factors for Success

Public purchasing from regenerative farms and ranches is pivotal to driving the adoption of regenerative practices. Educational campaigns can work to address this challenge. Since San Mateo County is not a predominantly agricultural county, having an engaged consumer population in urban areas can help fund farmers and ranchers sustain or transition to regenerative farming practices in rural areas of the county.

Key Obstacles

Since adopting new farming and ranching practices is expensive, farmers and ranch owners have cited cost as a key obstacle preventing the adoption of regenerative practices. Having a more robust infrastructure or funding source could help address this challenge. The San Mateo County Resource Conservation District is exploring ways to raise funds to support regenerative farming.

Timeline to Implementation

The transition to a regenerative farm, farmers can approach the transition with a holistic management framework. Farmers would need to evaluate the ecosystem processes of their land. Then, they can integrate regenerative practices that best fit the needs of their land.

References and Resources

Adria Arko, Climate and Agriculture Programs Manager & Agricultural Ombudsman, San Mateo County Resource Conservation District, adria@sanmateoRCD.org

[San Mateo County Resource Conservation District: Carbon Farming](#)

[TomKat Ranch](#)

[Markegard Family Grass-Fed](#)

Another Solution to Explore

Default Vegetarian Option



Default vegetarian options are an easy switch that catering, and dining services can make in order to be more sustainable. Under a default-veg program, plant-based food is the default option offered to customers and meat-based selections can be opted into.

While meat, aquaculture, eggs and dairy contribute to 57 percent of food's greenhouse gas emissions, only 18 percent of our caloric intake comes from those foods. Animal-based foods also may contribute to heart disease, stroke, obesity, Type 2 diabetes and various forms of cancer. Plant-based alternatives can help alleviate these conditions and promote better health overall.

Default-veg is therefore a more inclusive, sustainable and healthy option. This program drives consumers to change the way in which they address their food consumption. For universities or organizations hoping to meet a greenhouse gas emission target, switching to a default-veg option can be an innovative option to consider.

More information on how to transition to default-veg can be found [here](#). For more information on transitioning to default vegetarian options, please contact Amy Halpern-Laff, Director of Strategic Partnerships at the Factory Farming Awareness Coalition, amy@ffacoalition.org, 650-665-0266.