

# Green Mondays

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



*(Photo courtesy of mondaycampaigns.org)*

## **The Impact**

According to Project Drawdown, eating a plant-rich diet is the third best way to reduce carbon emissions, and it's something that individuals can do to contribute to reducing their carbon footprint. Drawdown's science-based strategy for drawing down emissions shows that if 50 to 75% of the global population reduced overall meat consumption, between 54 and 78 gigatons of carbon dioxide emissions can be avoided by 2050.

## **Description**

The Green Monday program is an initiative 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. The Green Monday program shares the same mission as the Meatless Monday movement, which promotes skipping meat-based meals on Monday.

## **Where It's Been Implemented**

Cities around the world, including several California cities, have adopted resolutions encouraging various versions of this practice. Introduced in 2018, 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.

### **Key Drivers**

According to the Green Monday U.S. website, animal agriculture is responsible for more greenhouse gas emissions than the transportation sector. This industry is behind 80% of the Amazon's deforestation and has led to the clearing of 260 million acres of U.S. forests for growing feed for animals. 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 a person's diet can reduce that person's carbon footprint by more than 70%.

### **Key Factors to Success**

The Green Monday resolution 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% 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 resolution 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.

### **References and Resources**

- Amy Halpern-Laff, Policy Director at the Factory Farming Awareness Coalition, amy@ffacoalition.org, 650-665-0266
- [Berkeley's Green Monday resolution](#)
- [Green Monday U.S. governmental program](#)
- [Green Monday U.S. corporate program](#)
- [Drawdown's Table of Solutions](#)

Document last updated January 2024