

CLIMATE FRIENDLY EATING CHALLENGE

Raising trillions of animals for human consumption requires vast amounts of land, water, and fossil fuels. According to UN studies, raising livestock accounts for 14.5% of all greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. Including all the direct and indirect emissions from animal agriculture, that number can be as high as 51%. To reduce our own GHG footprint and set a better example for others, a shift to a plant-centric diet is essential to preventing a climate catastrophe.

What's on your plate? Is it 80-100% plants?

Sonoma County Climate Activist Network (SoCoCAN!) has been collaborating with climate activists and local farmers to create a campaign to educate the public, including other activists, about the GHG impact of animal agriculture and conventional food production. We promote healthy, environmentally-friendly eating for ourselves and the planet by choosing food that is carbon-neutral or carbon-negative, meaning it is produced in ways that capture more carbon in the soil than is emitted into the atmosphere. We also support and educate people in how to make 80-100% plant-based organic and biodynamic food choices.

Farmers are taking action!

Farmers are taking important steps to reduce GHG emissions. As a consumer, if you consume animal products, you can choose products that are local, **organic** and **regenerative**. Organic, regenerative agriculture protects the environment by prohibiting synthetic pesticides, fertilizers, and GMOs, while promoting soil health, water quality, and biodiversity through natural farming practices. By purchasing local and organic products you help reduce pollution, improve soil carbon storage, and create healthier ecosystems for wildlife and pollinators.

Regenerative animal agriculture rotates stock on an open pasture from birth to harvest, creating a closed system to separate free-range cattle excrement, using the solid waste as fertilizer and the liquid to water grazing lands. Some farms have developed large systems using anaerobic digesters to convert manure to electricity, then using the electricity to run their trucks. Some have also experimented with using a seaweed-derived feed additive called Brominata to reduce methane emissions from cattle. One local ranch reduces GHGs by having all their farms located within fifty miles of their processing facilities. Different systems work best for different levels of operation.

What's the answer?

The solution to reducing GHGs is simple: **eat less meat, dairy, eggs, and fish!** The Climate Friendly Eating Challenge encourages people to **make this change for the full month of May!** For some this might mean adopting a vegan or vegetarian diet, or moving in that direction. Others may begin by eating a smaller portion of meat at dinner with a larger helping of fresh, local veggies. We also challenge everyone to **consider where your food was grown** (was it shipped more than 10 miles from where you bought it?) and **how much energy and other resources were needed to create it.** By taking the challenge, you not only help protect the biosphere, but you will feel better by avoiding high intakes of red meat, processed foods, and sugar that is the staple of the Standard American Diet (SAD).

What You Can Do

- **Pledge to eat 80-100%** vegetables, fruits, legumes, and grains that are **certified organic** or **biodynamic certified** with minimal processing and packaging.

- **Use composting and gardening** at home to put carbon back in the ground.
- **Pledge to eat zero or less than 20%** animal products (meat, eggs, dairy, fish).
 - **Pledge to eat local foods** in season from environmentally conscious farms.

If you consume animal products, you can pledge to:

- **Eat 4 ounces or less** in a serving (palm-sized).
- **Purchase meat and dairy that is organic** and raised by farmers utilizing carbon sequestration practices.

Meat and dairy that is pastured, certified humane, and grass-fed/grass-finished is healthier for you.

- **Ask questions about your food** and use guidelines from Monterey Bay Aquarium and the Cornucopia Institute.
- **Purchase organic, sustainable, farm-raised fish** raised without toxic chemicals. Leave wild fish to replenish and feed ocean wildlife. Let the oceans recover from pollution and overfishing.

Conventional farmed fish might be more toxic than the styrofoam tray!

Take the 31-Day Challenge!

Climate Friendly Eating Challenge (check all that apply)

I am already eating an 80% organic plant-based diet.

I will participate by going 100% organic, local, and plant-based on or before May 31.

- I am currently eating a diet of animal products along with some fruits, vegetables, and other plant foods.

I will aim for an 80% organic, local, plant-based diet by May 31 and choose organic, grass fed/grass-finished, certified humane, pasture-raised meat, eggs and dairy and organic, sustainable, farmed fish that is raised without toxic chemicals. My food will be minimally packaged and will be grown by local farmers using carbon reducing sustainable practices.

- I am currently eating a diet of animal products along with some fruits, vegetables and other plant foods.

I will aim for a 100% organic plant-based diet by May 31. I will bring organic plant-based foods to all events I attend in May.

One Day Challenge (or in addition to 31 Day Challenge)

I will participate by eating an organic plant-based diet on Memorial Day and will learn good recipes for my favorite Memorial Day foods. If I attend a gathering on that day I will bring organic, local, plant-based foods and introduce them to the people at the gathering as my contribution to reducing greenhouse gases and initiate a conversation about this topic.

Long-term Challenge (in addition to 31 Day Challenge)

I will consider long-term changes to my diet that reduce greenhouse gases by eating more whole and unprocessed foods as well as shopping locally to support small organic and biodynamic farms with sustainable practices.

For more information go to SonomaCountyCAN.org

The Sonoma County Climate Activist Network (SoCoCAN!) is a strong and active network of 50+ local climate change groups and hundreds of individuals working together to address and reverse climate change. Our network shares information, coordinates efforts, and serves to support all organizations in the network to maximize our impact. When we support each other and work together we succeed.