

## Food and Climate Change Fact Sheet: Take Action Now

1. **If every American chose one plant-centered meal a week instead of meat, the cut in greenhouse emissions could be equivalent to taking more than five million cars off our roads.<sup>i</sup>**

**Take Action Now:** Meatless Mondays... or Tuesdays, Wednesdays, Thursdays, and Fridays. Try cutting out meat or dairy for one meal a week or more. And, if you choose meat and dairy reach for local and sustainably raised products. For inspiration, check out [www.meatlessmonday.com](http://www.meatlessmonday.com).

2. **Each man, woman, and child in America consumes on average 222 pounds of red meat and poultry each year, roughly three times the global average and providing much more protein than our bodies need or can use.<sup>ii</sup>**

**Take Action Now:** Put Plants on Your Plate. The plant kingdom is rich in nutrients and protein. Reach for combinations of legumes (beans, peas, and lentils) and grains (rice, wheat, and barley) and nuts and seeds.

3. **Producing a pound of beef in a feedlot generates nearly 15 pounds of carbon dioxide—more than 36 times the carbon dioxide-equivalent greenhouse gases emitted producing a pound of asparagus.<sup>iii</sup>**

**Take Action Now:** If you choose meat and dairy, reach for the real meat and dairy of organic, sustainable, and humane origins. Visit [EatWellGuide.org](http://EatWellGuide.org) and discover local producers at your nearest farmers market.

4. **Producing a half-pound hamburger patty, the size of two decks of cards, releases as much greenhouse gas as driving an average compact car 10 miles.<sup>iv</sup>**

**Take Action Now:** Put Plants on Your Plate. Move plants to the center of the plate. If you choose animal products, go for those raised humanely and sustainably, looking for the organic seal or grass-fed certifications.

5. **Every year, schools throw away millions of pounds of food, which adds to our nation's landfills generating greenhouse gas emissions. Stanford University students pushed for change and now the school composts much of its food waste, diverting 1.2 million pounds from the garbage to the garden in 2008.<sup>v</sup>**

**Take Action Now:** Finish Your Peas... the Ice Caps Are Melting.

- Push for composting food waste from your school's cafeteria.
- Go tray-less. No more big piles of uneaten food!
- Connect with your community, sharing extra food with local food banks, for instance.

**6. To get just one year's supply of out-of-state tomatoes to just one state, New Jersey, uses enough fossil fuel to drive an 18-wheeler around the world 249 times.<sup>vi</sup>**

**Take Action Now:** Live La Vida Loca(l) Support your local food economy.

- Push for local sourcing in dining facilities.
  - Shop at locally stocked supermarkets or your nearest farmer's market.
  - Grow your own and get involved with your school's farm or garden—or start one!
- To learn more, visit [www.realfoodchallenge.org](http://www.realfoodchallenge.org).

**7. Fresh peas can be produced with only 40 percent of the energy required to produce frozen peas, and 25 percent of the energy needed to package peas in an aluminum can.<sup>vii</sup>**

**Take Action Now:** Reach for Real Food. Go for whole foods, not processed foods. When you shop, use author Marion Nestle's (*What to Eat*) advice and stick to the outer aisle of the grocery store to avoid all the processed foods that flood most of the shelves.

### Questions and Answers:

**1. Which of the following emits the most greenhouse gases globally?**

- A. Livestock**
- B. Transportation**
- C. Landfills**

A. According to the United Nations, the livestock sector is responsible for 18 percent of the world's total greenhouse gas emissions. That's more than the emissions produced by the entire global transportation system—every SUV, steamer ship, and jet plane combined.<sup>viii</sup>

**2. Why choose organic food?**

- A. Organic farming helps reduce the global warming**
- B. Farmers and eaters avoid pesticide exposure**
- C. It's richer in nutrients**

A, B, and C! (A) The U.N. says that organic farming emits from two thirds to only one third of the greenhouse gases of industrial farming;<sup>ix</sup> (B) 355,000 farm workers worldwide are poisoned by pesticides every year;<sup>x</sup> (C) Organic food on average is 25 percent more nutrient dense than non-organic.<sup>xi</sup>

**3. How many baths could you take with the water used to produce one pound of U.S. beef?**

- A. 20-60**
- B. 100-150**
- C. As many as 400**

C. Agriculture uses about 80 percent of the water in the U.S. and much of the grain and soy fed to livestock is grown with irrigation; it is estimated that 2,500-12,500 or more gallons of water are used to produce one pound of U.S. beef, and the average bath requires 30 gallons of water.<sup>xii</sup>

**4. If all U.S. colleges and universities were to shift 20% of their school food purchases to “real food”-- sustainably raised, grown with fairness, and from local and regional farms-- how much annually would be shifted to sustainable food purchases?**

- A. \$1 million**
- B. \$20 million**
- C. \$1 billion**

C. The Real Food Challenge asks schools to pledge to shift 20 percent of school food to “real food” by 2020. Already over 300 schools are on board and students are hoping to grow that number to 1,000 within a year. Learn more and join the network at [www.realfoodchallenge.org](http://www.realfoodchallenge.org).<sup>xiii</sup>

**5. How many gallons of water will be saved annually at the University of California, Santa Cruz just from eliminating trays in the dining hall?**

- A. 100,000 gallons**
- B. 500,000 gallons**
- C. 1 million gallons**

C. In response to student campaigning, UC Santa Cruz cafeterias went “trayless” to address the pile-on phenomenon: students grabbing more food than their stomachs can hold. No trays means less washing, of course, and the campus has also seen its food waste decline by one-third!<sup>xiv</sup>

For more tips, tools and resources visit [www.smallplanet.org](http://www.smallplanet.org) and [www.slowfoodusa.org](http://www.slowfoodusa.org)

## SOURCES

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- <sup>ii</sup> United States Department of Agriculture Economic Research Service, "Agricultural Baseline Projections: U.S. Livestock, 2009 --2018," (Washington DC: USDA ERS, 2009).  
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Available online at [http://www.eurekalert.org/images/release\\_graphics/pdf/EH5.pdf](http://www.eurekalert.org/images/release_graphics/pdf/EH5.pdf)
- <sup>iii</sup> Nathan Fiala, "The Greenhouse Burger" *Scientific American*, February 2009
- <sup>iv</sup> Nathan Fiala, "The Greenhouse Burger" *Scientific American*, February 2009
- <sup>v</sup> Anna Lappe, "Cafeteria Consciousness" *The Nation*, September 21, 2009
- <sup>vi</sup> From a Rutgers University study that found that 635,000 gallons of fuel was needed annually to import tomatoes into New Jersey, generating 6,616 metric tons of carbon dioxide, requiring nearly a 1.5 square miles of forest to absorb.
- <sup>vii</sup> Norberg--Hodge Helena, Todd Merrifield and Steven Gorelick. *Bringing the Food Economy Home*. (Bloomfield, CT: Kumerian Press, 2002), p. 20
- <sup>viii</sup> Henning Steinfeld et al., *Livestock's Long Shadow: Environmental Issues and Options* (Rome: Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, 2006), xxi.  
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<http://www.epa.gov/methane/sources.html>
- <sup>ix</sup> United Nations, "Organic Agriculture and Climate Change," 2005. FAO Corporate Document Repository, <http://www.fao.org/DOCREP/005/Y4137E/y4137e02b.htm> (accessed June 2008). See also, Nadia El-Hage Scialabba and Caroline Hattam, "Organic Agriculture, Environment and Food Security," Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (Rome, 2002), <http://www.fao.org/docrep/005/y4137e/y4137e00.htm>
- <sup>x</sup> <http://www.worldbank.org/>
- <sup>xi</sup> As reported by The Organic Center, March 18, 2008 [http://www.organic-center.org/news.pr.php?action=detail&pressrelease\\_id=22](http://www.organic-center.org/news.pr.php?action=detail&pressrelease_id=22)
- <sup>xii</sup> Matthew McDermott "From Lettuce to Beef, What's the Water Footprint of Your Food?" *Treehugger.com* June 11, 2009 <http://www.treehugger.com/files/2009/06/from-lettuce-to-beef-whats-water-footprint-of-your-food.php>; David Pimentel, Laura Westra, and Reed Noss, editors, *Ecological Integrity: Integrating Environment, Conservation and Health* (Island Press, Washington, D.C., 2001.)  
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- <sup>xiii</sup> Anna Lappe, "Cafeteria Consciousness" *The Nation*, September 21, 2009
- <sup>xiv</sup> Anna Lappe, "Cafeteria Consciousness" *The Nation*, September 21, 2009