

To: [Name of Your City] School Board

From: _____

Subject: Adopt a resolution of Vision 2025 to replace 50% animal derived food with healthy and climate friendly plant-based foods in [Name of Your City] Unified School District’s meal program by 2025.

RECOMMENDATION

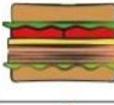
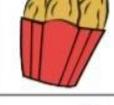
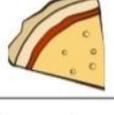
Adopt a resolution of Vision 2025 to replace 50% animal derived food with healthy and climate friendly plant-based foods in [Name of Your City] Unified School District’s meal program by 2025.

BACKGROUND

The COVID-19 pandemic and climate crisis have intensified inaccessibility to healthy foods, while half of Americans already suffering from diet-related diseases.¹ Now, it is more urgent than ever to make healthy and climate-friendly food accessible in schools. California School Districts spend \$1.5 billion annually to provide meals to nearly four million students.¹ Many of these students come from low-income families. Therefore, food that we decide to serve has profound impact on students’ health, their educational outcomes and our planet.

A. State of School Meals

Friends of the Earth analyzed lunch menus of California’s 25 largest school districts and found that 94% of entrees feature animal proteins, 25% entrees contain cheese and 16% of meals include processed meats.¹ Beef, chicken and cheese are most frequently offered menu items and plant-based proteins are notably limited. Red meat dishes make up 4 of 10 most commonly

1		Chicken sandwich	6		Bean and cheese entrées
2		Chicken bowls	7		Ground beef dishes
3		Meat pizza ♦	8		Meat deli sandwich ♦
4		Cheeseburger	9		Chicken strips/tenders
5		Cheese pizza	10		Hot dog ♦

♦ Entrée contains processed meat

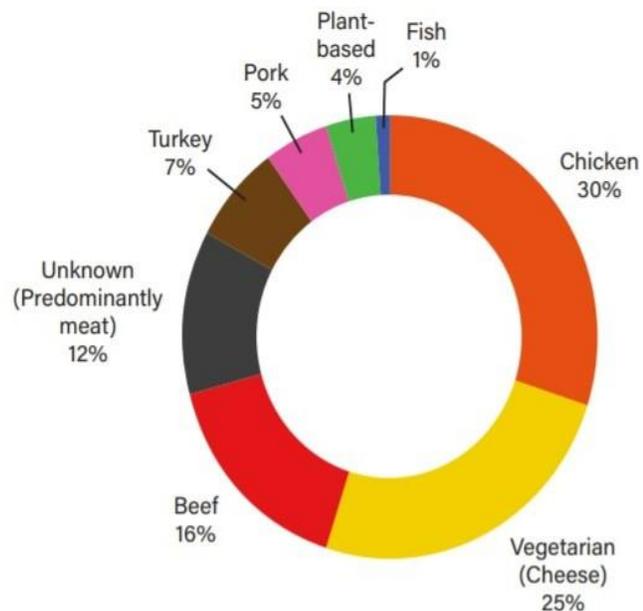


Figure 1: Top menu items in California’s school lunches.¹

offered entrees.¹ Moreover, three of most frequently offered menu items contain processed meats. These food items are rich in saturated fat, sodium and nitrite that are associated with increasing risk of several chronic diseases and recommended to reduce them in healthy dietary pattern by United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Dietary Guidelines.

B. Healthy Students and Families

1. Food and Health

According to USDA Dietary Guideline, 41% of children and adolescents are either obese or overweight and the prevalence is higher among non-Hispanic Black and Hispanic families.³ Youth with obesity are susceptible to high cholesterol, blood pressure and impaired glucose tolerance. These conditions significantly increase the risk of cardiovascular disease and type-2 diabetes as soon as the teenage years. Therefore, USDA Dietary Guideline recommends increasing consumption of vegetables and plant-based proteins for all children.³

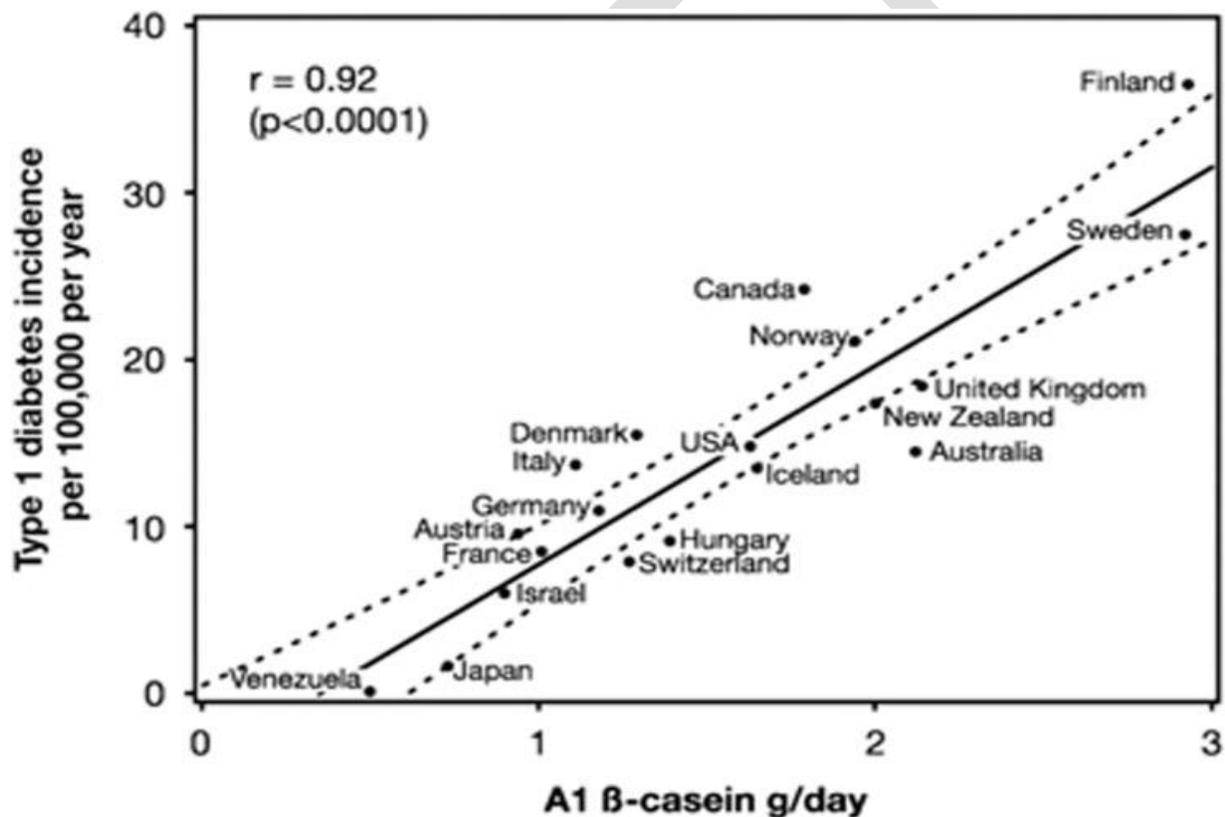


Figure 2: A1-β Casein association with diabetes type-1 incidence among the children of age 0-14 years across 19 countries.¹¹

Cardiovascular disease is the leading cause of the death in the U.S. The incidence of cardiovascular disease is strongly correlated with red meat consumption from high levels of saturated fats and the presence of Trimethylamine N-Oxide (TMSO).⁴ Moreover, a recent study with 74,578 participants reported that pro-inflammatory foods like red and processed meats can increase the risk of cardiovascular disease by 38% compared to a diet rich in anti-inflammatory

foods like green leafy vegetables, whole grains and fruits.⁵ On the other hand, plant-based food is associated with lowering the risk, preventing and even reversing heart disease.⁶

According to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), 34.2 million Americans, over 1 in 10, live with diabetes.⁷ We are seeing a significant increase in new cases of diabetes type-1 and type-2 among youth.⁷ If this trend continues, the CDC projects that 1 in 5 Americans will be living with diabetes by 2025.⁸ Diets rich in animal-derived products are associated with an increased risk of diabetes. Researchers in Cambridge University reported that daily egg consumption increases the risk of diabetes by 60%.⁹ A recent meta-analysis of 28 studies concluded that people consuming the most amount of meat, red meat and processed meat increased type-2 diabetes risk by 33%, 22% and 25%, respectively.¹⁰

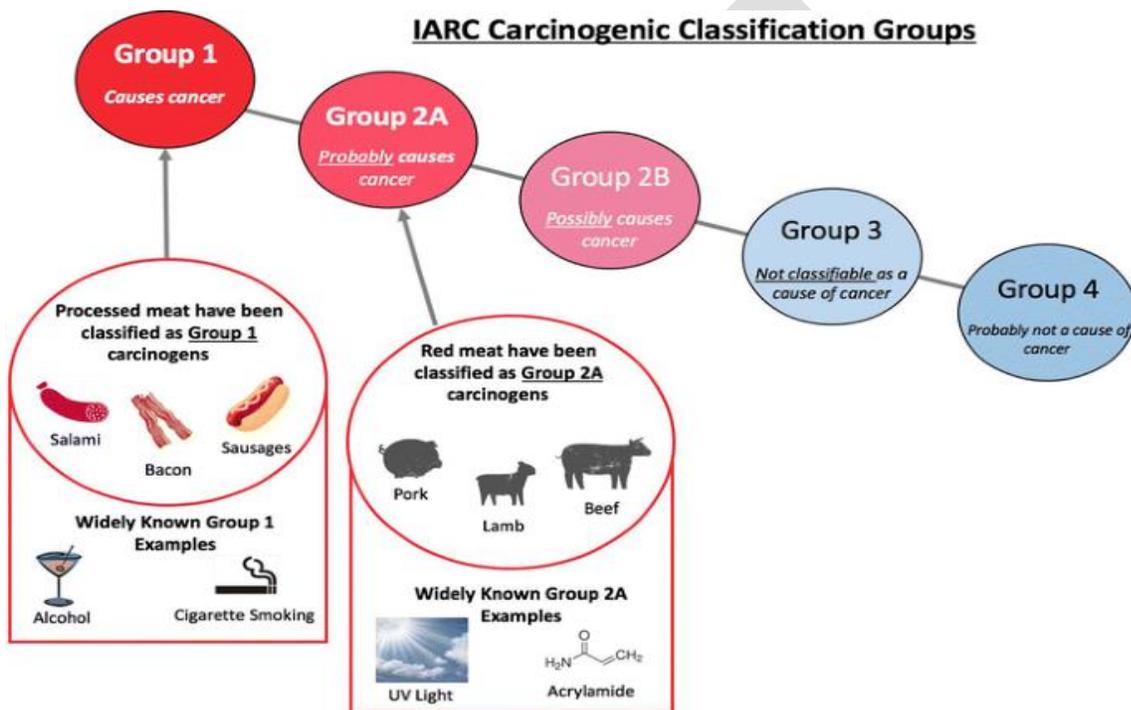


Figure 3: Carcinogenic classification of red and processed meats.¹⁵

In the case of dairy, A1- β Casein (cow's milk protein) is shown to be a primary trigger for diabetes type-1 among individuals with genetic risk factors.¹¹ A1- β Casein is associated with diabetes type-1 incidence among the children of age 0-14 years across 19 countries.¹¹ Dairy is considered to be a healthy option in many western societies. But growing scientific evidence is now raising concern over dairy consumption. Recently, the Canadian government actually removed the dairy category from their recommended dietary guidelines.¹² Like previously mentioned plant-based health benefits, a plant-based diet is associated with preventing, managing and even reversing type-2 diabetes.¹³ In 2019, the Harvard School of Public Health published a meta-analysis from 307,099 participants including 23,554 type-2 diabetes cases and concluded that people consuming predominantly plant-based food had 23% lower type-2 diabetes risks.¹⁴

Moreover, the International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC), a cancer research arm of the World Health Organization, has reviewed more than 800 cancer research studies and found that processed meat and red meat are carcinogenic and probable carcinogenic, respectively.¹⁵ Colorectal cancer (CRC) is the second leading cause of the U.S. cancer related deaths.¹⁶ The IARC reports that 50g of processed meat consumption per day alone increases CRC risk by 18%.¹⁵ Several studies also link consumption of red and processed meats with other types of cancers, including pancreatic cancer, prostate cancer and breast cancer.¹⁵ While cutting back on meat reduces the risk of cancer, the intake of vegetables, fruits, grains and legumes helps prevent cancer. In the case of CRC, the intake of just three servings of whole grains can reduce the disease risk by 17%.¹⁷

2. Health Equity and Inclusiveness

Nearly 60% of California students participating in the National School Lunch Program are eligible for Free and Reduced-Price Meals.¹ These students depend on school meals for half of their daily nutrition. The animal derived foods are associated with higher rate of obesity, diabetes, heart diseases and various forms of cancers, which are experienced at higher rates among people of color.¹ In California, Black and Latinx adolescents experience obesity at rates three times higher than their white classmates.¹ Leading health organizations recommend replacing red and processed meats with plant-based foods for reducing the rate of chronic illnesses. Moreover, the National Institute of Health estimates that majority of Asian Americans, African Americans and American Indians are unable to process lactose.¹ Therefore, plant-forward school meals are the key strategy to reduce health disparities.

Students also have the right to food that aligns with their cultural, religious, philosophical and social preferences. Today, plant-based diets are increasingly adopted based on a variety of life styles and belief systems. [Name of Your City] is a diverse community that not only embraces various spiritual and ethical values, but also takes pride in creating an inclusive culture. Therefore, plant-forward school meals can reflect the City's values of being inclusive of different religious, cultural and social identities.

C. Healthy Planet

1. Climate Change and Greenhouse Gas (GHG) emissions

According to Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), the food sector is responsible for 21-37% of anthropogenic GHG emissions.¹⁸ University of Oxford's most comprehensive meta-analysis on the food sector's environmental impact reports that animal derived products are responsible for nearly 60% of the food sector's GHG emissions, while providing only 18% of global calorie supply.¹⁹ The United Nation's Farm and Agriculture Organization (FAO) has also long warned about the environmental impact of animal agriculture and concluded that the livestock industry generates more GHG emissions than direct fuel burning from the entire transportation sector.²⁰

Meat and dairy heavy meals in California schools account for significant amount of GHG emissions. According to Friends of the Earth, 95% of the GHG emission from California school lunch entrees are associated with meat and cheese.¹ The 16% of California's school menus offered beef accounting for 64% of the GHG footprint, while plant-based protein represented in

4% of meals accounting for only 1% of the GHG footprint.¹ [Name of Your City] Unified School District provides vegetarian options by mainly replacing meat with cheese.² However, these cheese dishes are neither healthier nor climate-friendly.

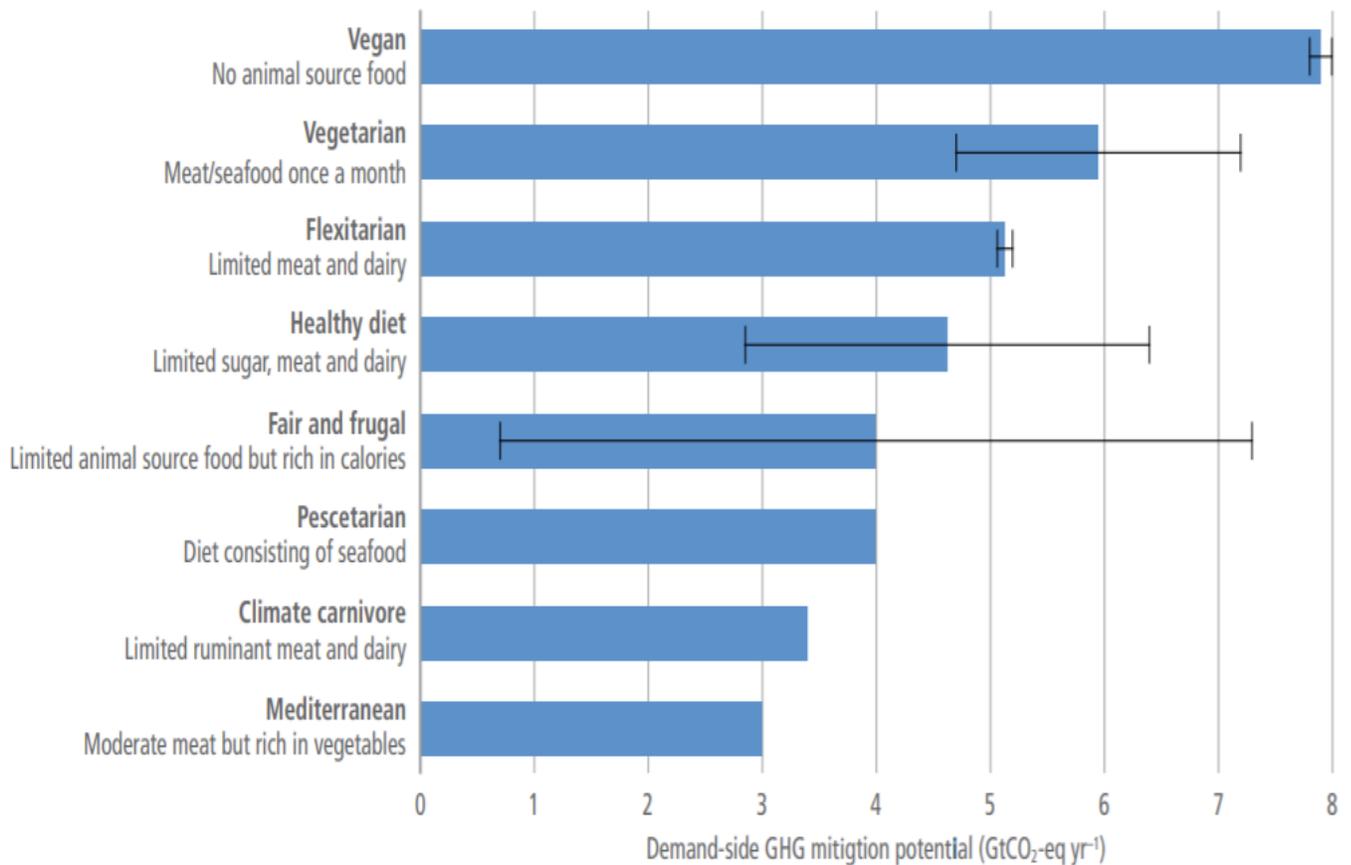


Figure 4: IPCC’s analysis of GHG mitigation potential of different diets.²¹

The global scientific community has emphasized the link between animal derived products and climate change for several years, indicating the importance of plant-based shift in our diet. The IPCC’s special report on Food Security finds that diets high in plant-based food can reduce GHG emissions up to 8 GtCO₂Eq per year.²¹ Despite this mounting evidence, the USDA projects an increase in the consumption of meat and poultry.²² According to researchers at University of Michigan, the U.S. diet will emit more than 650 million metric tons of CO₂Eq per year by 2030.²² Their report estimates that replacing 50% animal derived products with plant-based food can reduce up to 51% of the U.S. diet related emissions.²² In alignment with University of Michigan, the World Resource Institute (WRI) also reports more than 40% U.S. GHG emissions and land use reduction by achieving a 50% plant-based shift by 2050.²³

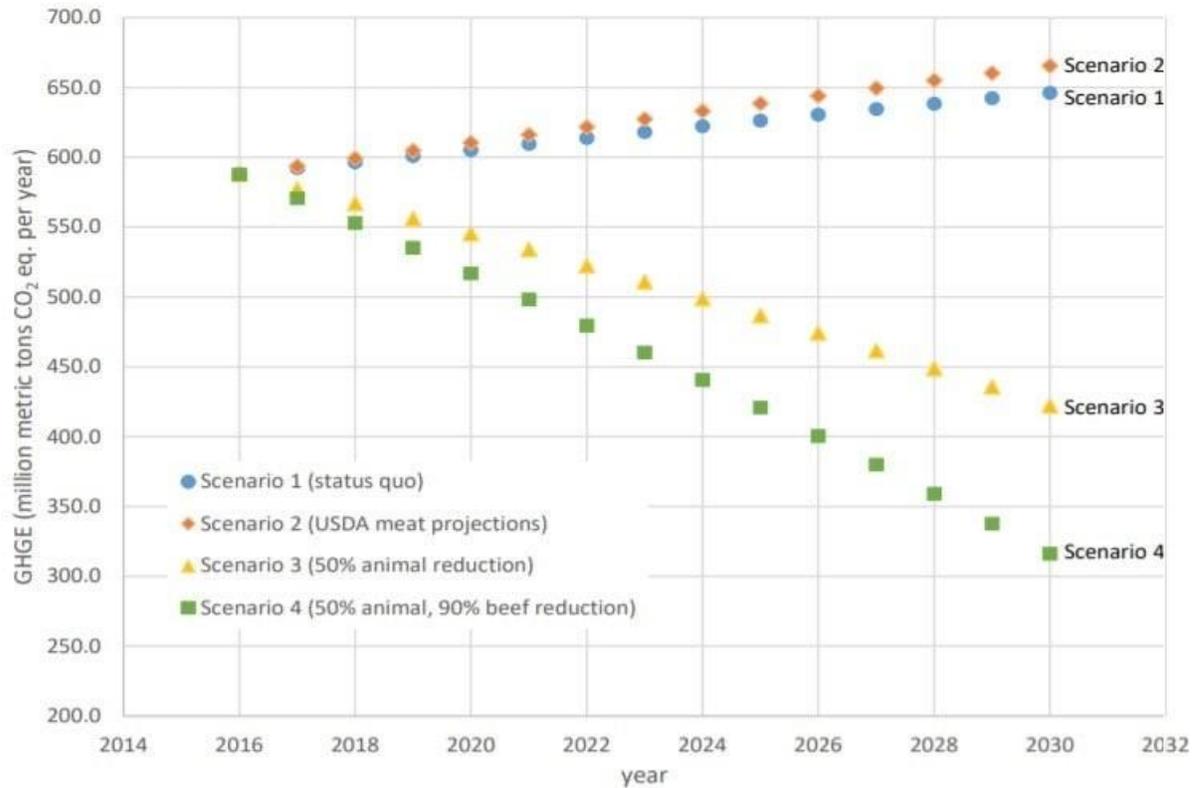


Figure 5: U.S. food emissions with different diet scenarios by 2030.²²

2. Environmental Equity

Production of animal derived food is also responsible for significant water and air pollution with subsequent health impacts for local communities.^{24,25} Many of the factory farms are located in low-income black and brown communities and, therefore, the air and water pollution disproportionately impacts marginalized families of color.^{24,25} The U.S. Environment Protection Agency (EPA) found a linear relationship between race/ethnicity and industrial animal agriculture in their investigation of complaints against North Carolina's industrial hog facilities.²⁶ The EPA's analysis provides detailed accounts of oppression of marginalized African Americans, Latinos and Native Americans, including threats, intimidation and harassment by national pork representatives and swine facility owners.²⁶

Annually, the livestock industry produces 1.37 billion tons of waste. That is up to 20 times more than human waste in the U.S.²⁴ According to the CDC, livestock manure contaminates surface and ground water with pathogens and nitrates.²⁴ Elevated nitrate concentrations hinder red blood cells, impacting the body's ability to carry oxygen which can cause blue baby syndrome and possible death. Nitrate contamination can also lower blood oxygen levels in adults, leading to birth defects and miscarriages. Tulare County, California has experienced nitrate water contamination from intensive agriculture systems. It harbors more than 1 million cattle, double the human population, producing more dairy milk than any other U.S. county.²⁷ In Tulare County, where 65% of residents identify as Latino or Hispanic, more than 20% of the public water systems provide water with nitrate concentration levels higher than the federal limits.²⁷

This results in extremely high rates of miscarriages and Sudden Infant Death Syndrome in Tulare County.²⁷

In addition to GHG emissions, factory farms also pollute air by generating harmful gaseous and particulate substances. When microbes decompose nitrogen compounds in the livestock manure, ammonia is released into the atmosphere.²⁴ Ammonia is a respiratory irritant that results in chemical burning of the respiratory track, eyes, skin and can lead to chronic lung disease.²⁴ Industrial animal farms also release particulate matter in the air from the feed, dry manure, poultry feathers and animal dander. Breathing particulate matter can lead to asthma, chronic bronchitis and other respiratory symptoms. Long term exposure also increases the risk of heart disease and cancer. A recent study published in the National Academy of Sciences reports that 12,700 annual deaths are associated with air pollution from the U.S. livestock industry.²⁸ Therefore, plant-forward school meals can provide demand side mitigation for reducing foods' environmental impact on vulnerable communities living near livestock farms.



Source: "Air quality-related health damages of food," Domingo et al.

Figure 6: Livestock production linked to 12,700 annual deaths from air pollution.²⁸

3. Animal Health

According to CDC, "One Health" is the concept that human health is connected to the health of animals and environment.³⁸ Industrial agriculture systems, for example, have ignored the welfare of both wild and domestic animals with subsequent consequences for environmental and public health. Agriculture is estimated to be the main threat to 86% of 28,000 species at the risk

of extinction.³⁹ The Chatham House, an independent research and policy institute, estimates that 38% of the Earth's habitable land has been cleared out for raising domestic animals for meat and dairy.³⁹ Therefore, a small number of farm animal species now dominate global biomass. Today, farm animals account for 60% of all Earth's mammal species compared to only 4% for wild mammals.³⁹ The expansion of agriculture lands into natural ecosystems also increases the risk of the spillover of zoonotic diseases like COVID-19.³⁹

The USDA's Wildlife Services reported killing 1.2 million native animals in 2019 for avoiding their interference with the livestock.⁴⁰ More locally, the conflict between the native Tule Elk and cattle ranchers at Point Reyes National Park demonstrates the impact of meat and dairy production on local wildlife. In Point Reyes, fences are placed to stop Tule Elk from competing for food and water with cattle.⁴¹ This captivity is depriving the native Tule Elk and resulting in their preventable deaths from starvation.⁴² In their defense, the Harvard Law Clinic has filed a lawsuit in the United States District Court on behalf of California residents and Animal Defense Fund.^{41,42} Therefore, shifting diets towards plant-based diet can significantly help protecting wildlife by ecosystem restoration.³⁹ It is estimated that U.S. dietary shift from beef to beans can free up 692,918 km², equivalent to 42% of U.S. cropland, for ecosystem restoration.³⁹

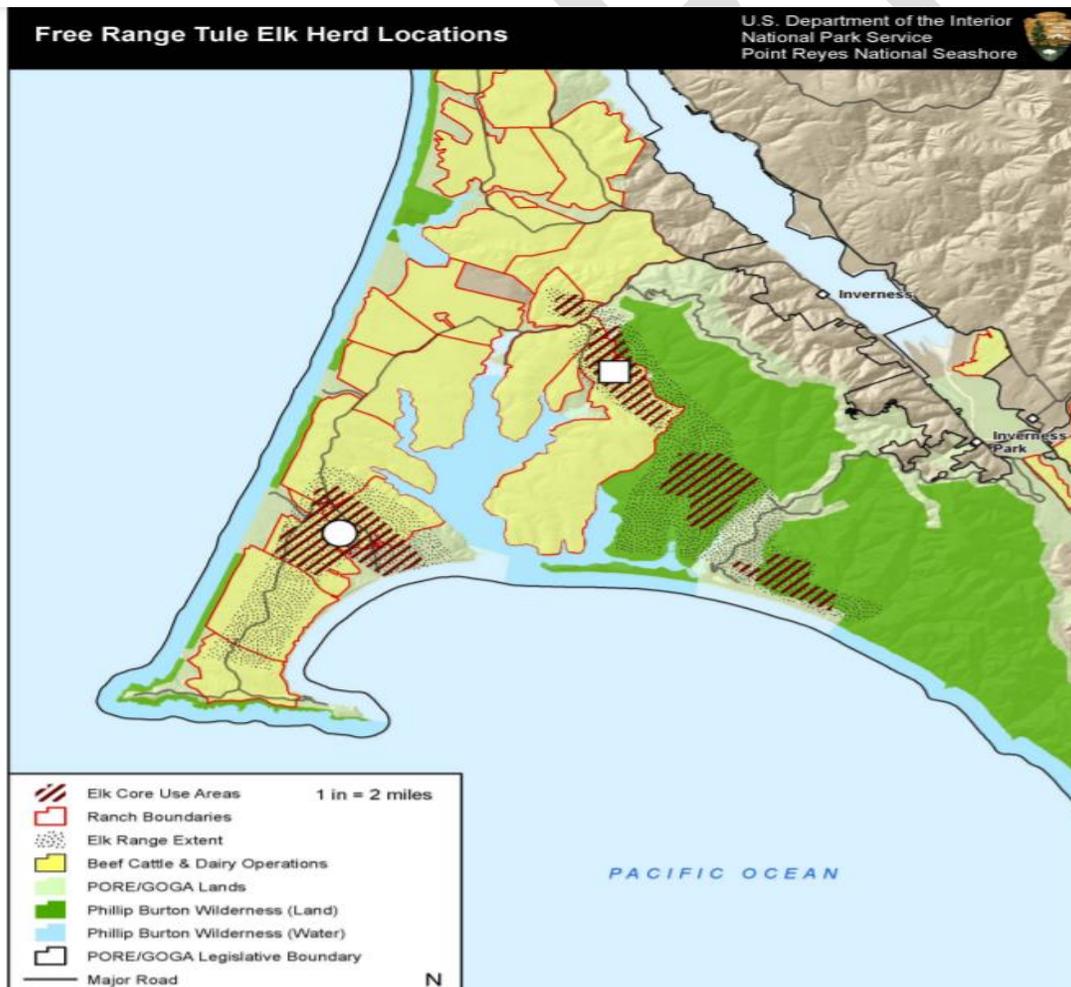


Figure 7: Point Reyes National Seashore map indicating locations of Tule Elk and beef and dairy operations.⁵²

Industrial animal agriculture also deteriorates the welfare of domestic animals. Each year more than 9 billion animals and birds are killed in the U.S., requiring meatpacking workers to slaughter hundreds of animals per hour.^{43,44} The fast pace work frequently violates the federal law, Humane Methods of Slaughter Act, requiring to stun animals before slaughter.^{45,46,47} According to USDA, over half a million chickens miss the stun bath and end up in scalding tank alive.^{48,49} Similar concerns of animal welfare are observed from industrial feedlots to transportation of these animals. Many animals don't live long enough through the pain and suffering of their life to reach the slaughterhouse.⁵⁰ Animal welfare concerns are heightened in the seafood industry with severe consequences for environment and biodiversity. According to the Oceana's report, global bycatch accounts for 40% of total catch, worth 63 billion pounds each year.⁵¹ Despite several conservation initiatives, the U.S. bycatch also totals 2 billion pounds each year, equivalent to the total annual catch of many fishing nations.⁵¹ Therefore, shifting to plant-based foods can significantly reduce the need to supply animal derived products at the cost of animal health.

D. Review of Existing Policies and Resolution Overview

In the U.S., 6 in 10 individuals live with at least one chronic illness and it is the leading driver of nation's \$3.8 trillion healthcare cost.²⁹ According to the CDC, poor nutrition is one of the major factors responsible for the epidemic of chronic illnesses³⁰ and a diet high in plant-based foods decreases the risk of several chronic illnesses, including heart disease, stroke, high blood pressure, diabetes and various forms of cancers.³¹ But the USDA Guideline 2020-25 finds that 80% of the U.S. population eat less plant-based foods like vegetables, fruits, legumes and whole grains than recommended, and nearly 70% of the population is consuming more meat, poultry



Figure 8: U.S. dietary intake compared to USDA recommendations.³

and eggs than recommended.³ Higher rates of animal product consumption harms the public health, environment and biodiversity. Therefore, plant-forward school menus are healthier for our students, environment and animals.

House Representative Nydia Velazquez and House Representative Jamaal Bowman have introduced the Healthy Future Students and Earth Pilot Program Act.³² This bill would create a grant program for school districts to provide healthy and climate-friendly plant-based entrée options to students. The California Assembly also has an active bill, Assembly Bill (AB) 558, to incentivize plant-based school meals.³³ Assembly Members Adrian Nazarian, Ash Kalra and Sharon Quirk-Silva have introduced AB 558, California School Plant-based Food and Beverage Programs that would allow local education agencies to apply for reimbursement of \$0.30 per meal with a plant-based foods and beverages. More locally, Oakland Unified School District decreased carbon footprint by 14%, water consumption by 6% and saved \$42,000 through increasing fruits, vegetables and legumes purchase and reducing meat and dairy consumption by 30%.³⁴ This low-carbon commitment by one of California's largest school districts has shown the potential for protecting the environment and natural resources through healthy and cost-effective plant-based food options.

The City of [Name of Your City] has been a leader of progressive solutions for establishing healthy and environmentally sustainable food system. Therefore, [Name of Your City] Unified School District will be in alignment with the City of [Name of Your City] by adopting Vision 2025 to replace 50% animal derived food with healthy and climate friendly plant-based foods in the school's meal program by 2025.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Staff time will be necessary to implement Vision 2025.

ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

The plant-based shift can significantly reduce [Name of Your City] Unified School District's GHG emissions, water footprint and protect ecosystems.

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 50. Iowa State University to Lead Research to Increase Pig Survivability https://www.cals.iastate.edu/news/releases/iowa-state-university-lead-research-increase-pig-survivability?fbclid=IwAR0MkJcupYHwBzYfskUuKfCuY-SrRrQl_EBb4zEEpWLjsJZfBOXUKesepA
 51. Oceana: Wasted Catch. https://oceana.org/sites/default/files/Bycatch_Report_FINAL.pdf?fbclid=IwAR2PyXbPEb5sITpKCtN8pmgtz_FaK_-UPVXQ4tBdTGUE8LIyze0sWVvAAzng
 52. Managing Free-range Tule Elk in Point Reyes National Seashore. <https://escholarship.org/content/qt5nn85365/qt5nn85365.pdf?t=q2cwxo>

RESOLUTION NO. _____

WHEREAS, California is one of the most “climate-challenged” regions in North America and climate change is making extreme weather conditions more frequent and severe; and

WHEREAS, the City of [Name of Your City] recognizes Climate Emergency for protecting our environment, human population and biodiversity; and

WHEREAS, [Name of Your City]’s consumption-based GHG inventory shows significant emissions associated with the City’s food system; and

WHEREAS, the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization reports that livestock sector account for 14.5-18% of total anthropogenic GHG emissions, and it is estimated to be higher than fossil fuel emissions from the entire transportation sector; and

WHEREAS, University of Michigan reports that 50% plant-based shift in the U.S. diet can reduce up to 51% of the nation’s food emissions by 2030; and

WHEREAS, the World Resource Institute estimates that a 50% plant-based shift in the U.S. diet by 2050 can reduce nation’s agriculture greenhouse gas emissions and land use by more than 40%; and

WHEREAS, California is one of the most drought-affected states, and almost 50% of Californian’s water footprint is associated with consumption of meat and dairy; and

WHEREAS, the U.S. pours significant agriculture resources to grows crops for feeding livestock and poultry while more than 800 million people are food insecure, and 45% of children die under 5 years of age due to malnutrition; and

WHEREAS, 83% of agriculture land is used for raising livestock and producing their feed, but meat and dairy only provide 18% of the world’s calories; and

WHEREAS, the WHO reports that 60% of all human disease originates in animals and the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) estimates 3 out of every 4 emerging infectious diseases come from animals; and

WHEREAS, the Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations (CAFO) risk spillover of zoonotic pathogens by confining animals and bringing human beings into proximity with them; and

WHEREAS, the CAFO negatively impacts the health of surrounding communities through air and water pollution, and the majority of these homes belong to low income communities; and

WHEREAS, Center for Disease Control and Prevention reports that poor nutrition is a major factor for 6 in 10 Americans living with at least one chronic condition, which contributes to nation’s \$3.8 trillion healthcare costs; and

WHEREAS, several studies have linked higher consumption of animal derived products with chronic illnesses like heart disease, diabetes and cancer; and

WHEREAS, the International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC) has classified processed meat like ham, bacon, hotdogs, sausage, and some deli meat as carcinogenic and red meat as a probable carcinogen; and

WHEREAS, United States Department of Agriculture's 2020-25 Dietary Guideline estimates that 70% of Americans consume more meat, poultry and eggs, and 80% of the population eat less vegetables, fruits, legumes and whole grains; and

WHEREAS, communities of color experience higher rates of heart disease, type 2 diabetes, and other chronic diseases; and

WHEREAS, nearly 60% of the California students participating in National School Lunch Program are eligible for Free and Reduced-Price Meals; and

WHEREAS, several health agencies recommend increasing intake of vegetables, fruits, legumes and whole grains in order to improve health and lower risk of chronic diseases; and

WHEREAS, plant-forward school menus offer significant benefits for students' health, environment, racial equity and animal welfare; and

WHEREAS, Oakland Unified School District has decreased carbon footprint by 14%, water consumption by 6% and saved \$42,000 through increasing fruits, vegetables and legumes purchase and reducing meat and dairy consumption by 30%; and

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, the Board of Education of the [Name of Your City] Unified School District hereby adopts Vision 2025, wherein the [Name of Your City] Unified School District will replace 50% of the annual animal-based food procurement with plant-based food in the school menu by 2025; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the [Name of Your City] Unified School District will annually report the amount of animal-based food replaced with healthy plant-based food; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the [Name of Your City] Unified School District will partner with community organizations, families and students for developing a strategy to promote healthy plant-based foods.