

# MAY MEAT CHALLENGE

Breeding and killing billions of animals for human consumption requires vast amounts of land, water, and fossil fuels. According to the United Nations, animal agriculture is responsible for more greenhouse gas emissions than all modes of transportation combined, or as high as 51% if greenhouse gases (GHG) from transportation, refrigeration, deforestation, etc, that are typically categorized separately but are a direct consequence of animal agriculture, are taken into account. To reduce our own GHG footprint and set a better example for others, a shift to plant-based foods is essential to preventing a climate catastrophe.

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

Occupy Sonoma County has been collaborating with vegan climate activists and local farmers to create a campaign to educate the public as well as 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 produced in ways that capture more carbon in the soil than are emitted into the atmosphere and by supporting and educating people in making 80-100% plant-based organic and biodynamic food choices.

## **Some farmers are taking action!**

Some conscientious farmers are taking important steps to reduce GHG. Composting is a very important tool to reduce GHG. Compost decomposition provides a slow release to the soil which leads to increased plant growth. More plants leads to an increased transfer of carbon dioxide through the plants into the soil, yielding additional soil carbon and water holding capacity. Grains and vegetables raised using compost instead of chemical fertilizers add carbon to the soil. Grass diets produce healthier meat if the cattle are not fattened with grain. No till farming results in less GHG. Some farmers are reducing GHG on their farms in a variety of creative ways. Richard Hughes of Hughes Dairy in Bodega created a closed system to separate free-ranging cattle excrement then using the solid waste as fertilizer and the liquid to water grazing lands. Straus Family Creamery of Marin developed a larger system using anaerobic digesters to convert manure to electricity, then using the electricity to run their trucks. Stemple Creek Ranch in Tomales is practicing carbon farming. Niman Ranch, originally in Marin and now across the US, reduces GHG 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 the GHG problem is simple. Eat less meat, dairy, eggs, and fish. The May Meat Challenge is aimed to reduce GHG by encouraging people to reduce their consumption of animal products. For some this might mean becoming a vegan or vegetarian, or moving in that direction. Others may make significant changes when they come to realize that the Standard American Diet (SAD) is not sustainable for the planet, is not healthy for humans, and contributes to a vast divide between the people who can afford an expensive diet and the people who can't. Processed foods are energy consumptive and create poor health. We 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.

## **What You Can Do**

- 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 the shopper's guide on our website.
- 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!**