
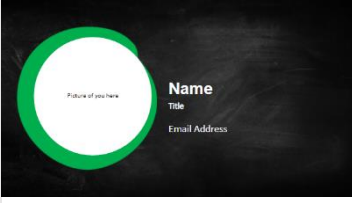




# Climate-Friendly School Food Presentation Script

This document is supplemental to the [Climate-Friendly School Food Presentation](#); it includes suggested talking points for each slide. Feel welcome to edit the script as you see fit!

	<p>1. Title Slide</p>
	<p>2. Introduce yourself!</p>
	<p>3. What is Climate-Friendly Food?        It means:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Foods that have a low carbon and water footprint. That means having more plant-based options on the menu, as well as more plant-forward options, where meat and dairy is a condiment, not the main event.</li> <li>• It also means food that is produced using sustainable production practices, including organic, regenerative and pasture-raised.</li> <li>• And we don't want food and food packaging ending up in the landfill, so this definition includes emphasizing zero waste solutions. We realize this is definitely more challenging during COVID, for school districts especially, but we ARE seeing some creative and promising solutions.</li> </ul>
	<p>4. Some of you might be wondering what exactly the difference is between the terms “plant-based” and “plant-forward.” Well, “plant-based” is defined as foods or meals that are entirely made up of plants, including fruits, vegetables, beans, legumes, grains, etc. “Plant-forward” is defined as foods or meals that are mostly made up of plants. For example, a blended mushroom-and-beef burger patty or a vegetable bean chili with a sprinkling of cheese on top would both be considered “plant-forward.”</p> <p>In the case of plant-forward eating, animal foods are treated as condiments, not the main event or dominant source of protein. Plant-forward menus and diets are key to significantly reducing carbon footprints.</p> <p><b>DISCUSSION QUESTION:</b> Now, what are some impacts of climate change that you all have seen?</p>



5. I'm sure you all remember the wildfires that ravaged the California, Oregon, and Washington landscape in 2020, just one year in a series of increasing wildfire years on record. For young people in particular, it is a scary time right now. Youth have inherited a climate crisis and might be worried about what the future holds.

Unfortunately, food is often forgotten as a driver of climate change, and therefore forgotten as a potential solution.

**QUESTION:** Who knows the #1 reason causing mass deforestation in the Amazon Rainforest? The primary reason for mass deforestation in the Amazon Rainforest is burning and clearing land to graze cattle. In other words, our demand for meat is destroying one of the world's most precious natural resources and spewing carbon into the atmosphere to clear land so that we can send methane into the atmosphere.

And this isn't an isolated example.

**QUESTION:** What % of all greenhouse gas emissions do you think is contributed to the food system? (First, ask for guesses. Answer: 24% -- see next slide.)



6. Food and agriculture is a major driver of climate change overall. This chart from the EPA (or, Environmental Protection Agency), shows that nearly a quarter of all greenhouse gas emissions in the world is tied to the production of food. This figure doesn't include the greenhouse gas emissions tied to the packaging, shipping/transport, or food waste. **In fact, the UN estimates that our global food system accounts for over a third (1/3) of all human-caused greenhouse gas emissions in the world.**



7. Globally, livestock alone accounts for 14.5 percent of greenhouse gas emissions—that is more than the tailpipe emissions from all the planes, trains, cars & trucks in the world combined!



8. This chart shows how animal products have a much higher carbon footprint than plant-based foods. Dry beans, flour, and chickpeas are far less carbon-intensive foods than cheese, beef, and pork, for example.

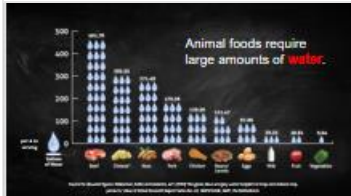
As you can see here and might have already heard, beef has a pretty bad reputation when it comes to climate. Beef has 15 to 100 times the carbon footprint of beans and lentils.

Can someone guess or explain why that is? **QUESTION:** Why is beef associated with the most greenhouse gas emissions in our food system? (See next slide for answer.)



9. Primarily, it is because of the methane gas generated by cow burps and cow farts. This methane is 30-80 times more potent than carbon dioxide. Beef is also more carbon intensive because it takes 6-10 pounds of grain feed per one pound of meat.

In a country whose food culture is largely centered around meat, it's no surprise beef alone accounts for 36% of US diet-related emissions.



10. Legumes also use less water, while carbon-intensive foods like beef and pork are incredible water hogs.

In places like California where we are rapidly running out of water, we are told to take fewer showers and conserve water, but cutting our meat and dairy production and consumption would make a much bigger difference.



11. Now this is pretty groundbreaking. This was the headline of an article in the Washington Post, highlighting a new study that came out stating that agriculture production in the United States results in 17,900 deaths every year simply due to air quality. Animal agriculture is the worst emitter, researchers said, responsible for 80 percent of deaths from air pollution related to food production—that's 12,700 deaths *every year*. Gases associated with manure and growing animal feed produce small, lung-irritating particles capable of drifting hundreds of miles. **The study concluded that these emissions now account for more annual deaths than air pollution from coal power plants.**

Air pollution is the largest environmental risk factor for mortality in the United States and worldwide – and now we have data showing how agriculture is a major contributor of air pollution, which also means it can be a potential solution *if we change the way we grow food.*



12. For years now, scientists have been urging us to focus on our food system. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) released a special report in 2019 stating that **in order to combat climate change, we must urgently revolutionize what we eat, how we grow it and the way we use land in the world NOW.**

The report warns that transforming to clean energy, clean transport and clean industry alone will not cut global emissions enough to avoid dangerous warming beyond 1.5 degrees Celsius.

Changes to land management, deforestation and food production are necessary to combat climate change. In addition, the authors point to less-meat-intensive diets and eliminating food waste as key priorities to help forestall a climate catastrophe.



13. Another reason to eat and buy more climate-friendly food is that it's healthier for people.

Balanced nutrition is essential for young people, who have growing bodies and minds. But too many children are eating too much processed food and meat, and are not eating the foods they need to thrive: fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and legumes.

In fact, 93% of children under age 18 aren't getting the recommended amount of vegetables, 80% don't eat the recommended amount of beans, peas and lentils and 60% don't eat the recommended amount of fruit, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The 2015 Dietary Guidelines for Americans specifically urges teenage boys and men to eat less meat.



14. Climate-Friendly School Food is also a matter of justice. Providing healthy, plant-based school meals is a vital tool for mitigating racial health disparities. With low-income students and students of color at a much higher risk for diet-related illnesses, school meals are a critical intervention to address racial and socio-economic health disparities, particularly for children who lack access to healthy food at home.

The majority of the global population (~68%) cannot digest lactose, and students deserve options that are culturally relevant and meet their dietary needs.



15. Just like not all protein is created equal, the same is true for production systems. Production methods matter when considering impacts on our own health, soil, climate change and water resources.

Agriculture has the potential to be a huge part of the climate solution if we shift production away from energy-intensive monoculture and toxic pesticide use to more diverse, ecological and climate-friendly mixed crop and livestock production systems. Using natural practices instead of chemicals to cultivate the land help build soil fertility, protect water supply, increase biodiversity and protect pollinator habitats. Organic practices like composting, cover crops, crop rotations, and rotational grazing deliver many benefits—particularly in terms of sequestering carbon and reducing overall emissions from agriculture.



16. But why focus on school lunch?



**School lunch has a profound impact on student health and the health of our planet.**

- \$14.2 billion dollars a year on school lunch
- 5 billion lunches served annually
- 30 million students served every day, mostly low-income and students of color
- Over 75% of meals are served free or at a reduced-price

17. Because with 7 billion meals—and 30 million students are served in schools across the U.S every day. Changing school food can help fight climate change, while improving the health of students.

Schools can leverage their massive purchasing power to demand food that is produced according to a set of values. Schools have a stake in helping shift our corporate controlled food system towards health, justice, sustainability, equity, and community power.



**The State of School Lunch in California**  
**Research Report**

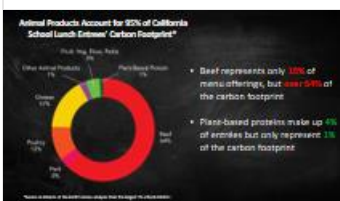
- Analyzed school lunch menus in California
- Calculated carbon footprints
- Made policy recommendations

18. Friends of the Earth recently published a report that analyzed the school lunch menus of all the top 25 school districts in California. They looked at the most common dishes offered and food purchasing trends throughout the state and calculated the relative carbon footprints of the top menu offerings. Based on their research, they made a series of policy recommendations as well. What did they find?

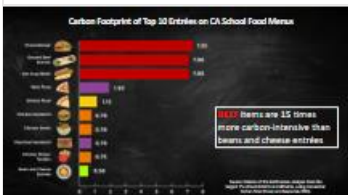
**QUESTION:** Can anyone guess what % of school lunches offered were plant-based items? (Answer on next slide.)



19. They found that the vast majority, 94%, of school lunch entrées offered in California, feature animal protein. Only 4% of all entrées were plant-based, the majority of which were pre-packaged PB&J sandwiches. Also, 16% of entrées contained processed meat, which is particularly concerning because "processed meats" - meaning deli meats, bacon, and pepperoni frequently featured on school menus - are classified as carcinogenic according to the World Health Organization.



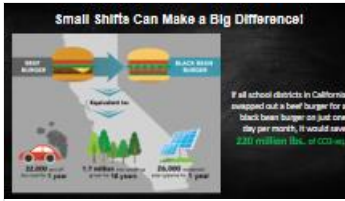
20. Among the different proteins offered on school district lunch menus, beef was the main protein in 16% of entrées offered but made up over 64% of the carbon footprint. On the other hand, plant-based proteins made up 4% of entrées but represented only 1% of the carbon footprint.



21. This next figure compares the relative carbon footprint per serving of the ten most widely served entrées. Beef entrées by far carry the largest carbon footprint and are also among the most frequently offered menu items. Beef items are typically 15 times more carbon-intensive than the bean and cheese entrées.

This is clearly a big climate impact.





22. On a positive note... Friends of the Earth also found that by shifting school lunch menus, there is a tangible way to bring change.

This image shows that if all school districts in California swapped out one beef burger for one black bean burger just ONCE A MONTH, they would save 220 million pounds of carbon dioxide-equivalent, the same as taking 22,000 cars off the road for a year, growing 1.7 million tree seedlings for a short period of time, or converting 26,000 residential solar systems for a year. And that is just one swap. Imagine if they swapped out a meat dish for a plant-based item once a week!



23. Here are some examples of school districts in California that are prioritizing climate-friendly meals and food service. From left to right, there's a tofu marinara pasta at Escondido Union Elementary School District, the Instagram-worthy Thai Basil Lentil Burger at San Luis Coastal Unified School District, and a buffalo cauliflower dish from San Diego Unified.



24. **QUESTION:** What do you think you can do to support climate-friendly school food?



25. Here are 5 simple steps for advocating for more plant-based meals and creating a campaign at your school district:

1) Gather a group of like-minded people and decide on your goals. Are there local student clubs or parent committees you can reach out to that would care about serving more climate-friendly school food? Do you want to add one plant-based menu option to the lunch menu once a week? Every day?).

2) Meet with your district food service director to build a connection and get a good understanding of your district meal program's needs and concerns. Come prepared with questions that honor their hard work and offer your support for making the shift toward healthy, climate-friendly meals.

3) Develop your plans or campaign strategy based on your knowledge on what is possible at your school district.

4) Implement your plans! Be sure to collect feedback along the way and adjust your plans depending on the response you get from the food service team.

5) Reflect and plan for the future – start an organization or get an existing organization to take on this issue so that you can create lasting change at your school district.

**Campaign Ideas**

- Circulate a student pledge encouraging students to choose plant-based.
- Give presentations to peers to encourage students to choose plant-based menu options.
- Create a student survey (taste-testing is a great incentive!) to gather feedback on plant-based menu options.
- Organize a speaking panel, sustainability fair, or other event to promote plant-based foods as a climate solution.
- Engage your district school board in passing a Climate Action Resolution.



26. Here are some project ideas for anyone interested in starting a climate-friendly school food campaign. There are resources that describe these in greater detail on Friends of the Earth's website.

**QUESTION: Are you all interested in doing a campaign or advocating for plant-based food at your school district?**

**Discuss!**

What changes would you like to see in the school cafeteria?  
 What projects would you be interested in implementing?



27. Discuss! **QUESTION: What projects would you be interested in implementing?**

**Friends of the Earth's Food and Agriculture Program** works to rapidly transition our food system to one that is sustainable, healthy, and just.

**Its Climate-Friendly School Food Program** works to shift K-12 food service purchasing dollars to support local farmers and ranchers and drive market shifts and consumption towards healthier, plant-forward, sustainable food.

[climatefriendlyfood@foe.org](mailto:climatefriendlyfood@foe.org)

28. Friends of the Earth is a national non-profit that is available to help. Their **Climate-Friendly School Food Program** helps school districts make the shift toward healthy, delicious, plant-forward menus. They provide technical assistance and marketing materials, support students and community engagement strategies, and link school districts with the resources they need in order to be successful. Friends of the Earth also partners with school districts and non-profit organizations to advocate for state and federal policy change. You can reach them at [climatefriendlyfood@foe.org](mailto:climatefriendlyfood@foe.org).

**Resources**

- Student Engagement Video to share: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=...](#)
- Read up on the [Good Food Purchasing Program](#).
- Veg/Youth's Guide for Student Clubs: [https://www.vegyouth.org/...](#)
- School Food Toolkit for Change: [https://www.foe.org/...](#)
- Student Action Webpage: [https://www.foe.org/...](#)

29. Here are some helpful resources to help you get started! Friends of the Earth's [Student Action Webpage](#) is perfect for students looking to start a climate-friendly school food campaign or learn more.

**THANK YOU!**

Questions?  
 Contact:  
 Friends of the Earth!  
[climatefriendlyfood@foe.org](mailto:climatefriendlyfood@foe.org)



30. Thank you!