



A Toolkit for Incorporating Plant-Based Protein Measures in Municipal Climate Action Plans

*Equipping municipalities to increase the availability of
plant-based proteins and engage the public on their benefits*

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Municipal Climate Action Plans

- Urban areas have an outsized carbon footprint and are on the frontlines of adapting to climate change.
- Many U.S. cities have developed Climate Action Plans (CAP).
 - 35 out of the 50 largest U.S. cities have CAPs (Ballotpedia 2022).
 - Global Covenant of Mayors for Climate and Energy (GCoM) has over 13,000 participant cities worldwide.
- CAP development processes, content and format vary widely.



Municipal Climate Action Plans (continued)

- Common approaches (e.g., GCoM participants) include:
 - Conduct a greenhouse gas emissions inventory using the *Global Protocol for Community Scale GHG Emission Inventories*;
 - Develop mitigation targets and adaptation goals; and
 - Identify actions to achieve targets and goals.
- CAPs typically do not contain actions to reduce emissions associated with food (aside from food waste).



Municipal Climate Action Plans (continued)

Global Protocol for Community-Scale GHG Inventories



Does not include emissions embedded in the goods and services consumed in the city that are imported from outside (Scope 3 emissions).



Encourages cities to “seek to address their consumption-based emissions” in order to:

“take a more holistic approach to tackling climate change by assessing the GHG impact of their supply chains;” and

“identify areas of shared responsibility for upstream and downstream GHG emissions.”

Toolkit Purpose

- Food accounts for an estimated 25 percent or more of U.S. households' consumption-based emissions.
- Plant-based proteins contribute *the least* to protein food-related emissions (i.e., low carbon footprint per gram of protein).
- Municipalities can leverage plant-based proteins for climate action, while achieving a range of other benefits.
- Because few CAPs include plant-based protein actions, the Toolkit is intended to address this gap.
- The Toolkit is designed to make it easier for municipalities to include CAP actions to:
 - *increase the availability of plant-based proteins; and*
 - *engage the public on their benefits.*



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Structure of the *Toolkit*

The *Toolkit* consists of two parts:

- **Part 1**—Menu of Plant-Based Protein Actions
 - Over 40 actions ranging from ambitious to incremental
- **Part 2**—Key Considerations
 - Climate benefits
 - Co-benefits
 - Challenges
 - Legal and policy considerations

Toolkit Methodology

- Researched sustainable food-related actions in municipal CAPs and food system/sustainability plans from 36 geographically and size-diverse U.S. cities to identify best practices and gaps.
- The Menu includes over 40 actions, ranging from ambitious to incremental.
 - Identified examples in existing plans and provided links.
 - Created novel actions.
- Conducted interviews and vetted drafts with experts.

Municipalities can tailor the example actions to their specific contexts, depending on stakeholder priorities and available resources.

Menu Categories



1. Emissions Targets and Tracking: Establishing food-related GHG emissions reduction targets and measuring progress



2. Increased Availability: Increasing the number of meals served or offered that contain plant-based proteins



3. Municipal Procurement: Increasing the procurement of plant-based proteins by municipalities



4. Public Awareness: Educating and engaging the public on the climate benefits as well as the many co-benefits of plant-based proteins



5. Leadership and Recognition: Recognizing and rewarding businesses and organizations that demonstrate leadership in increasing the availability of plant-based proteins and engaging the public on their benefits



6. Incentives, Funding, and Technical Assistance: Supporting businesses and organizations seeking to expand plant-based protein offerings and to facilitate access to plant-based proteins, especially in communities that lack adequate access.



7. Cooperation and Pledges: Endorsing international, national, and state initiatives that promote plant-based proteins

Sample Menu Page

2. INCREASED AVAILABILITY

Actions to increase the number of meals served or offered that contain plant-based proteins (Some of these actions implicate and can be strengthened by actions from Category 3, Municipal Procurement.)

	Action	Examples	Resources	Outreach Tools
2.A.	Institute weekly menu initiative (e.g., Veggie Tuesdays, Green Mondays, Plant Powered Fridays) for municipal operations; encourage semi-autonomous and quasi-governmental entities (e.g., correctional facilities, public schools, hospitals, convention centers) to institute their own.	Seattle, WA (p.71) Portland, OR (p.81) Escambia County, FL Pittsburgh, PA (p.67) Blacksburg, VA (p.21) Dallas, TX (p.159) Santa Ana, CA Lee County, FL	Johns Hopkins Center for a Livable Future, Evaluation of the Meatless Monday Campaign at New York Presbyterian The Monday Campaigns, Marketing Plant-Based Menu Items The Behavioural Insights Team, Menu for Change (p.45) Daphene Altema-Johnson et al., Dietary Changes Among People Practicing Meatless Monday.	Santa Ana Unified School District, Santa Ana Unified School District Launches Plant-Based Wednesday Menu Option <i>Promotional Video</i>



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Key Considerations: Benefits and Challenges

- **Part 2** of the *Toolkit* outlines:
 - Climate benefits
 - Co-benefits
 - Challenges
 - Legal and policy considerations.

Climate Benefits of Plant-Based Protein Actions

- Producing the average U.S. resident's diet is estimated to generate 2.5 tons of carbon dioxide equivalent annually.
- Most plant-based proteins have a comparatively small carbon footprint, because plants require less in the way of resources and energy to grow, harvest, and distribute.
- For this reason, Project Drawdown concluded that “plant-rich diets” have enormous climate mitigation potential and can “be adopted incrementally with small behavioral changes that together lead to globally significant reductions in greenhouse gas emissions.”

Co-Benefits (continued)

- *Expanded consumer choice*
 - Expanded food options for different dietary requirements (e.g., lactose intolerance)
- *Environment*
 - Reduced water footprint and water and air pollution
- *Health*
 - Increased adherence to Dietary Guidelines and potential prevention of certain chronic illnesses
- *Resilience and food security*
 - Diversified protein sources and expanded urban agriculture
- *Equity and inclusion*
 - Increased meaningful community involvement and increased food access
- *Animal welfare*
 - Expanded options for those concerned with farm animal welfare

Potential Challenges

Considering Drivers of Behavior Change

- Key lessons from the literature
- Awareness campaigns might not suffice
- Consider spillover effects

Behavioural Insights Team, A Menu for Change: Using behavioural science to promote sustainable diets around the world

Estimating Cost

- Action estimates
- Potential for cost savings
- Public perception of Costs
- State and federal funding

Quantifying GHG Emissions

- Action estimates
- Consumption-based inventories

Legal and Policy Considerations



- Identification of Governance Tools
 - Voluntary Versus Mandatory Action
- Determination of Scope of Municipal Legal Authority
 - Role of state and federal law
 - Semi-autonomous and quasi-governmental entities
- Compliance with Municipal Procurement Requirements
- Alignment of Actions with Municipal Policies, Programs, and Plans

Municipal policymakers should consult with municipal legal counsel or other local legal experts on a case-by-case basis.

Thank you!



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