

REVISED MOTION BY SUPERVISORS LINDSEY P. HORVATH January 07, 2025
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Expanding County Action to Reduce Greenhouse Gas Emissions through Food Procurement

The global food system is responsible for over 30% of human-caused greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, with animal-based foods being a primary culprit. In fact, animal-based products produce about twice the GHG emissions than their plant-based counterpart. Animal-products have been linked to higher risk of chronic diseases such as cardiovascular diseases and diabetes. Climate experts and scientists agree that the ‘best available food’ approach in policy should provide preference to plant-based products over animal-based products due to their health benefits and low GHG emissions. Within the County, there is an urgent need for transformative and systematic change towards making this shift.

In February 2024, the County of Los Angeles Board of Supervisors took decisive action by unanimously approving the motion “[Reducing Greenhouse Gas Emissions through Food Procurement](#)” to reform the County’s food procurement policies and mitigate GHG emissions. The Motion directed the Department of Public Health (DPH) to help increase plant-based food options, collaborate with other County departments to

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boost participation, and align efforts with the LA County Food Equity Roundtable's Action Plan. Additionally, the Department of Health Services (DHS) was tasked with reporting on the total amount of animal-based food and plant-based food currently contracted to DHS vendors.

Since the Motion, DPH and DHS have provided illuminating reports on the County's food procurement practices. In July 2024, DPH released a [report](#) (Attachment 1) summarizing findings from a County departmental survey and convening to assess current attitudes towards purchasing animal- and plant-based foods. County departments showed interest and openness to purchasing plant-based foods and some had already taken steps in that direction. County departments also noted key challenges to expanding plant-based options including cost, taste/texture, cultural acceptability, and provided ideas and input on potential strategies to address these challenges. County departments also identified barriers to reducing animal products that included food taste, existing contractors, and consumer resistance.

In May 2024, DHS released its [report](#) (Attachment 2) on the total volume of animal- and plant-based products contracted through its vendors. The findings echoed trends from the departmental survey, highlighting a significant disparity between animal- and plant-based product purchases. At Los Angeles General Medical Center, for example, the County purchased nearly 234,000 pounds of meat and poultry annually compared to just 7,822 pounds of plant-based meat. Similarly, it bought 43,732 gallons of cow's milk versus 5,004 gallons of alternative milk.

Also, in response to the motion, DPH revised its *Standards for Prepared Foods, Snacks, and Beverages* to promote plant-based foods. The revised guidelines now

recommend a 2:1 ratio of plant-based to non-plant-based entrees and require daily plant-based entrée offerings. They also encourage food service operations to default to plant-based dairy alternatives. A comparison of the DHS purchasing report and the revised Standards highlights the substantial changes required in the County's food procurement policies to align with the new guidelines.

These reports underscore the urgent need for change within the County. According to "HowGood", food procurement by DHS generates 742,111.7 kg CO₂e annually—equivalent to nearly 2 million miles driven by a car. The time for action is now, and the County is not alone in this effort. Across the nation, similar initiatives are gaining momentum. This year, the City of ~~Los Angeles~~ West Hollywood passed a resolution to increase plant-based food procurement at city-sponsored events, and Washington D.C. enacted the Green Food Purchasing Action to cut food-related GHG emissions by 25% by 2030. There are also a number of organizations dedicated to creating a lower-carbon food system, like the World Resources Institute (WRI). WRI developed the "Coolfood Pledge" to help organizations commit to reducing their climate impact of the food served, providing analytical services like annual climate impact reports and research-based solutions. With over 110 food service contracts, the County has a tremendous opportunity to advance health outcomes and combat climate change. **WE, THEREFORE, MOVE**, that the Board of Supervisors

1. Direct the Department of Public Health (DPH) and the Chief Sustainability Office (CSO), in coordination with the Chief Executive Office (CEO), the Internal Services Department (ISD), and County Counsel (where applicable) to do the following:

- a. Work with County Departments to develop a protocol for amending existing contracts if feasible, and to integrate DPH's updated *Standards for Prepared Foods, Snacks, and Beverages* in all new and renewing County food service solicitations and contracts.
- b. Develop evaluation criteria for use in food service RFPs. New criteria should encourage plans and/or proposals that incorporate more plant-based food options and prioritize local growers, such as local farmer's market providers, when fiscally feasible.
- c. Collect annual food purchasing data from County departments that purchase, serve, or distribute food. In all new and renewing food service contracts, County departments shall develop contract language that requires all food vendors to share annual food purchasing data.
- d. Provide an annual report on the total amount of meat, poultry, fish, dairy and egg products, and the total amount of plant-based food products for all County departments that purchase, serve, or distribute food, including County vendors. The annual report should include a section highlighting annual changes, the status of contracts that have been updated with the new food standards, and progress towards emissions reduction goals. The first report back to the Board in writing should be in 180 days and include any potential cost impacts of the new food model and related to the development of an annual report.

2. Instruct the Chief Sustainability Office (CSO) and the Department of Public Health (DPH), in coordination with the Internal Services Department (ISD), to do the following:
 - a. Establish a baseline level of GHG emissions and, when feasible, identify additional environmental and social impacts related to County food products. Explore incorporating the food-based emission data into the County's municipal greenhouse gas inventory.
 - b. Using the established baseline, create food-based emissions and impact reduction targets for the next decade, consider aligning targets with the World Resources Institute's "Coolfood Pledge" and adding the targets as part of the OurCounty Sustainability Plan update.
 - c. Using the annual purchasing report from directive one, generate an annual climate impact report and post it publicly on an online dashboard on the Department of Public Health's website. The report should track progress towards reduction targets and consider using sources like WRI.
 - d. Create and disseminate educational materials to County departments on ways to meet the food-based emissions targets. The materials should be informed by the 2024 Departmental survey and include information related to animal-based products' environmental and social impacts.

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