

How Can You Reduce NYC's Climate "Foodprint"?

Foodprint (n): our food system's contribution to greenhouse gas emissions and global climate change

Globally, an estimated one-third of all human-caused greenhouse gas (GHGs) emissions are from our food system and land use changes, which include GHGs emitted to grow, process, package, transport, store and dispose our food.

A New York City food system that is more focused on local and sustainable food production would allow the City to better achieve its established goals for reducing GHG emissions while improving the environmental, health and economic needs of New Yorkers.

City Council passage of a global warming "foodprint" resolution is a first and crucial step to ensuring our food system better meets these goals. **Get involved!!**

Six Ways You Can Reduce NYC's Foodprint!

1. Support the Foodprint Legislation

Despite the enormous role our food system has on climate change, this has yet to be addressed in City responses to global warming. Neither PlaNYC, Executive Order 109 nor GreeNYC address food and agriculture, thereby limiting our response to the major environmental and economic challenge of our times.

- Join the campaign for the Foodprint Resolution!

2. Expand Urban Agriculture and Green Jobs

Urban agriculture is key to addressing a range of environmental, social, economic and health challenges, including sprawl, malnutrition and preventative health care, swelling landfills and food security. The nearly 20,000 members of NYC's gardens grow food for their own consumption, their neighbors, emergency food programs, and for sale at market. Food grown at these sites often uses organic methods and converts compost to fertile soil, thereby bypassing the emissions generated by food production, transport and waste. This also improves our urban environment as green vegetation can reflect as much as 20% to 25% of radiation from the sun, thus reducing the "heat island effect" in cities and cooling the climate in urban areas.

- Join and support a community garden
- Start a community group to launch a new garden in your neighborhood
- Grow your own food in home, yard, windowsills and/or rooftops
- Compost your food waste, and sign the online petition to reinstate the NYC Composting Program, www.gopetition.com/petitions/bring-back-composting-to-nyc.html
- Conduct a community food assessment
- Urge your City Council Member to support expanded urban agriculture opportunities in your community
- Call City Council Speaker Christine Quinn and voice your support for Resolution 1033 to give gardens in New York City permanent status, www.nyccgc.org
- Support honeybee pollination of urban parks, farms and gardens by signing the online petition to legalize beekeeping in New York City, www.gopetition.com/petitions/legalize-beekeeping.html
- Advocate for increased green jobs and labor rights in food processing, packaging and service work

3. Expand and Protect NYC's Foodshed

US-grown produce alone travels 1,500 miles from farm to plate. This figure does not include calculating domestic animal-based food transport, or imported foods which comprise 18% of US food consumption, adding on transport-related emissions to the American meal. NYC's foodshed currently provides city residents—largely through Farmers Markets and Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) programs—one of the most direct routes from farm to fridge, avoiding many of the GHG emissions associated with the transport, packaging, and selling of produce and offers healthy, fresh, local, and often organic food at lower prices than many supermarkets.

- Join or start a CSA in your community, www.justfood.org/csa
- Advocate for labor rights and immigration laws that support local agricultural workers

- Support your local farmer's market
- Urge your supermarket to "buy local"

4. Reduce or Eliminate Animal Food Consumption

The United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) calculated that the global livestock sector is responsible for 18% of all global GHGs, more than the transportation sector (14%). Globally, the US is responsible for the greatest emissions of methane from farm animal manure, nearly 1.9 million tons. Almost 58% of GHGs from food are from meat, poultry, eggs, fish and dairy. A Cornell University study found that food production for a low-fat, plant-based diet would require less than half an acre of New York State land per person each year, while a diet high in fats and meat requires nearly five times as much land, or 2.11 acres per person.

- Reduce or eliminate the amount of animal products in your diet

5. Support Organic Agriculture

Studies have shown that organic agriculture systems emit 48–66% less carbon dioxide per hectare (about 2.5 acres) than conventional farming systems that rely on chemical pesticides and fertilizers. Organic farming methods also often employ methods of soil management that result in the capture, instead of the release, of GHGs, particularly CO₂. However, only 0.5% of U.S. cropland was certified organic in 2005, and New York State was ranked sixth nationally in the number of certified organic operations (less than 500). In 2001, the last year for which the Environmental Protection Agency has published data, 675 million pounds of chemical pesticides, which contribute to GHG emissions both in their manufacturing process and in their transportation, were used in U.S. agriculture.

- Support local, organic farmers by using our dollars and food stamps at farmers markets and CSAs
- Encourage supermarkets and bodegas to stock fresh, organic foods

6. Manufacturing and Refrigeration

In the US, about 80% of energy used in the food supply system goes for food processing, packaging, storage and distribution to retail stores. Much of that energy goes for transport from farm to processors to wholesalers to retailers. The refrigeration and air conditioning equipment of supermarkets containing hydrofluorocarbons (HFCs) produces the equivalent of two million tons of CO₂ every year. Grocery stores, food markets, and convenience stores emit approximately 85 pounds of GHGs per square foot of floor space, and fast food establishments, restaurants, and cafeterias emit about 75 pounds of GHGs per square foot of floor space.

- Reduce or eliminate your purchases of processed foods
- Buy local foods to reduce transportation and storage refrigeration emissions. Patronize your local farmers' markets, join or start a CSA, or grow your own food in community or home gardens

Glossary

Community Supported Agriculture (CSA): an urban-rural partnership that allows city residents to buy fresh, often organic food directly from a local farmer

Cool food: a food that is produced with minimal greenhouse gas emissions, the 'coolest' of which are organic, local and unprocessed foods, particularly produce

Food miles: the distance food travels from production to consumption

Foodprint: our food system's contribution to greenhouse gas emissions and global climate change

Foodshed: an area which can, or is sufficient to, provide food for a given location

Heat island effect: the condition in which an urban area is much warmer than its surrounding rural areas

Global warming: an average increase in the temperature of the Earth's near surface air, which can cause changes in the global climate

Greenhouse gas (GHG): chemical compounds that trap heat in the Earth's atmosphere, most common of which are carbon dioxide, methane, nitrous oxide, ozone, chlorofluorocarbons and water vapor

Greenhouse gas emissions: the release of gas contaminants into the atmosphere—which often occurs from human activity—that can cause an increase in the global temperature and climate fluctuation

Green jobs: work in agriculture, industry, services, and administration that contributes to preserving or restoring the quality of the environment

Local: a component of food security, in which food is produced within a limited distance of its consumption

Organic: food produced emphasizing the use of renewable resources and conservation of soil and water

For more information on these actions, the proposed resolution or to contact supporting organizations, contact Nadia Johnson, Just Food—212.645.9880 ext. 237, nadia@justfood.org