

*People are a vital part of the Chesapeake Bay ecosystem. Actions we take today can revive the Bay's health tomorrow and into the future.*

## Eat Less Meat

According to the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization, livestock is responsible for 18% of the world's global warming.<sup>1</sup> One of the best things you can do for the health of the planet is to adopt a plant-focused diet. Eating less meat and more plant-based foods preserves precious land and water resources.<sup>2</sup> Climate change experts also describe plant-based diets and eating less meat as a major opportunity for lowering greenhouse gas emissions and addressing climate change.<sup>3,4</sup>

### What You Can Do to Help

You don't need to quit eating meat altogether to make an environmental impact. Simply eating fewer meat-based meals per week adds up and makes a big difference. Instead of always choosing meat, learn to cook with other types of proteins, and make fresh fruits and vegetables a bigger part of your diet. Learning to live with a lighter carbon footprint is a journey. Talking with others who are also exploring eating less meat makes it easier and fun!



Figure 1  
<https://www.fastcompany.com/40407528/eating-meat-is-bad-for-the-planet-but-what-about-just-eating-less-meat>

***Here are some of the environmental and health benefits to eating less meat and more plant-based meals.***

### 1. Curbs greenhouse gas emissions.

The livestock sector creates as much greenhouse gas emissions as all cars, truck and automobiles combined.<sup>5</sup> If Americans reduced consumption of beef, pork, and chicken by 25% (about two dinners per week), we could reduce our annual greenhouse gas emissions by 1% annually.<sup>6</sup> Climate scientists say this is one of the easiest pathways to create that much of emissions reduction.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.greenamerica.org/eat-less-meat-cool-planet>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.mondaycampaigns.org/meatless-monday/about>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.nature.com/articles/d41586-019-02409-7>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.nature.com/articles/d41586-019-02409-7>

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.fao.org/3/i3437e/i3437e.pdf>

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/08/21/climate/what-if-we-all-ate-a-bit-less-meat.html>

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.nature.com/articles/s41598-019-46590-1>

## 2. Promotes more efficient use of land for food production.

Cattle ranchers have clear-cut millions of acres of forests for grazing pastures. This destroys “carbon sinks,” which are natural systems that suck up and store carbon dioxide from the atmosphere.<sup>8</sup> In addition, producing animal-sourced food (e.g., meat and dairy) emits a larger amount of greenhouse gas than growing crops, especially in intensive, industrial livestock systems.<sup>9</sup>

Another challenge is farm waste. For most of our country’s history, meat and dairy products came from small, independent farms. Today, however, animal farming is controlled by giant companies that have large animal feeding operations. Known as ‘factory farms’, these farms can produce a lot of waste runoff (i.e., the toxic chemicals that come from animal waste and seep into our rivers and streams) that makes our water unhealthy.<sup>10</sup> Factory farms also generate a lot of emissions.

Alternatively, eating plant-based proteins – such as beans, lentils, and peas — offers an incredibly sustainable source of protein. Plant-based proteins don’t have the same toxic waste challenges as animal farms, and require less nitrogen fertilizer compared to other crops, which results in a lower carbon footprint. They also require less water to grow, and many types of beans, legumes, etc., can grow in dry environments.<sup>11</sup>

---

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.greenpeace.org/usa/sustainable-agriculture/eco-farming/eat-more-plants/>

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.ipcc.ch/srccl/faqs/faqs-chapter-5/>

<sup>10</sup> [https://www.epa.gov/sites/production/files/2015-09/documents/ag\\_runoff\\_fact\\_sheet.pdf](https://www.epa.gov/sites/production/files/2015-09/documents/ag_runoff_fact_sheet.pdf)

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.nbcnews.com/better/lifestyle/can-your-diet-save-planet-ncna1044126>

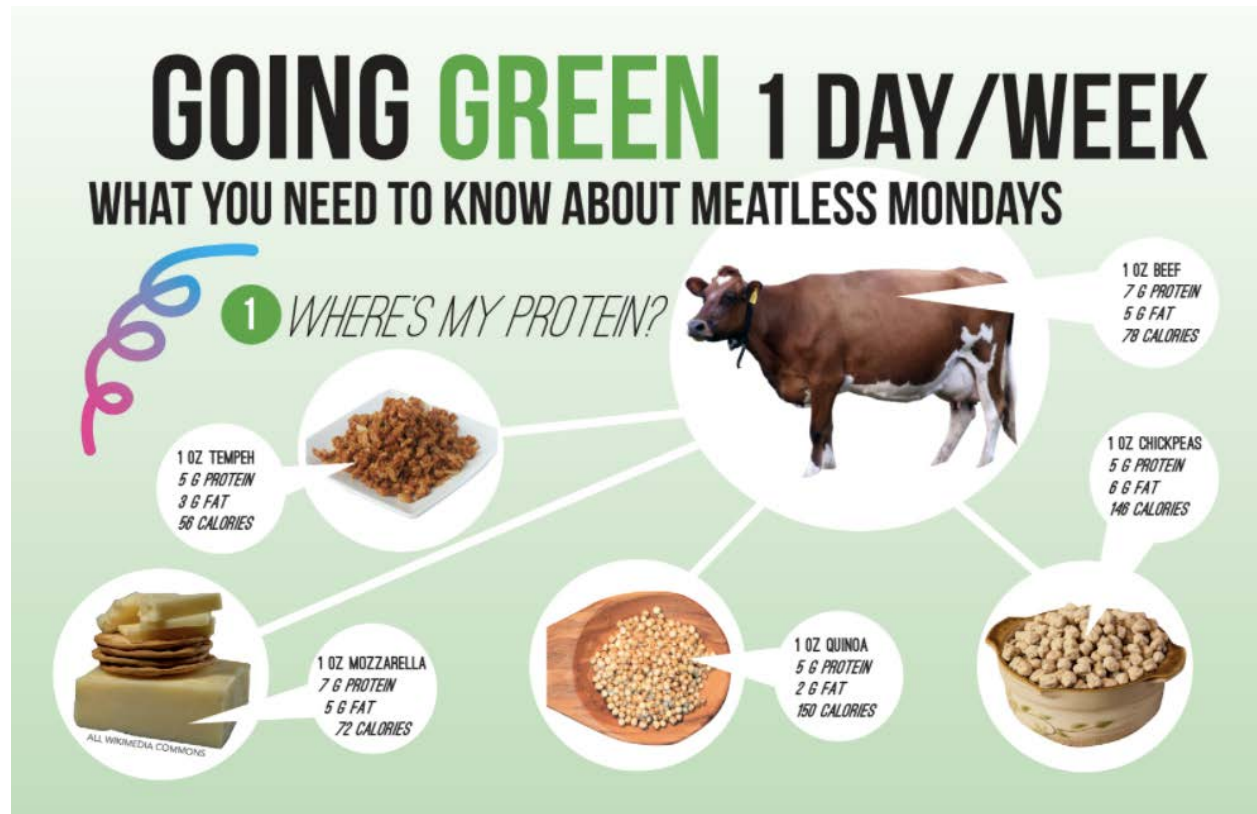


Figure 2 <https://harkeraquila.com/35473/features/going-green-for-a-day-what-you-need-to-know-about-meatless-mondays/>

**3. Prevents chronic disease.**

The American Heart Association (AHA) notes that vegetarian and vegan diets tend to be lower in fats and cholesterol than the average U.S. diet. As a result, the AHA says, “Many studies have shown that vegetarians seem to have a lower risk of obesity, heart disease, high blood pressure, diabetes, and some forms of cancer.” Other studies indicate that many of these benefits occur even when people replace some of the meat in their diet with plant-based protein alternatives.<sup>12</sup>

Factory meat farms use many antibiotics to keep animals healthy and promote growth—eight times more antibiotics by volume than humans consume.<sup>13</sup> The World Health Organization notes this high use of antibiotics is contributing to antibiotic resistant “supergerms,” resulting in hard-to-treat diseases in humans and animals alike.

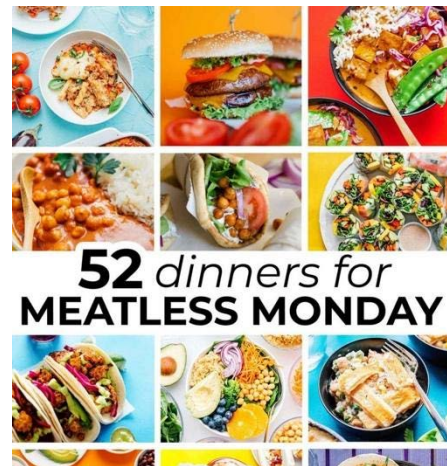


Figure 3 <https://www.liveeatlearn.com/meatless-monday-recipes/>

**Websites for More Information**

<sup>12</sup> <https://www.nbcnews.com/better/lifestyle/can-your-diet-save-planet-ncna1044126>

<sup>13</sup> World Watch Institute

- The Meatless Monday Campaigns and Johns Hopkins Center for a Livable Future – [Meatless Monday](#)
- Green America – [Eat Less Meat, Cool the Planet](#)
- Frontline – [Modern Meat](#)
- [Black Vegetarian Society of Maryland](#)
- [Vegetarian Resource Group](#) – Baltimore-based
- Christian-based Initiative to Promote Animal Welfare – [Be Creature Kind](#)
- [Saint Francis Alliance](#) – Catholic Care for Creation Initiative

### Behavior Change Campaign Examples

It is common to find it challenging to change dietary habits, including eating less meat. Common barriers include:

- **Lifetime routine.** People are used to eating meat daily because it's part of their culture. They also are not as knowledgeable about meat substitutions or other types of proteins because these foods are new to them.
- **Cooking skills:** People might not feel equipped to prepare tasty and healthy vegetarian meals.<sup>14</sup>
- **Getting family member buy-in.** If family members are not on board with changing their meat consumption, it might be challenging to cook different food for the same meals, one with meat and one without.
- **Values, beliefs and motivation.** Believing this single action matters and has an impact on protecting the environment is a motivating driver.

#### ❖ Monday Campaigns and the John Hopkins Center for a Livable Future – Meatless Monday

[Meatless Monday](#) is a global movement that encourages people to reduce meat in their diet for their health and the health of the planet. The campaign was started in 2003 by Sid Lerner, the founder of the Monday Campaigns, in association with the Johns Hopkins Center for a Livable Future.

- Meatless Monday's simple message to "skip meat once a week" works because it provides a regular cue to take action on Monday, which research shows is the day people are most open to making positive changes. Starting each week practicing Meatless Monday can lead people to eat

---

14

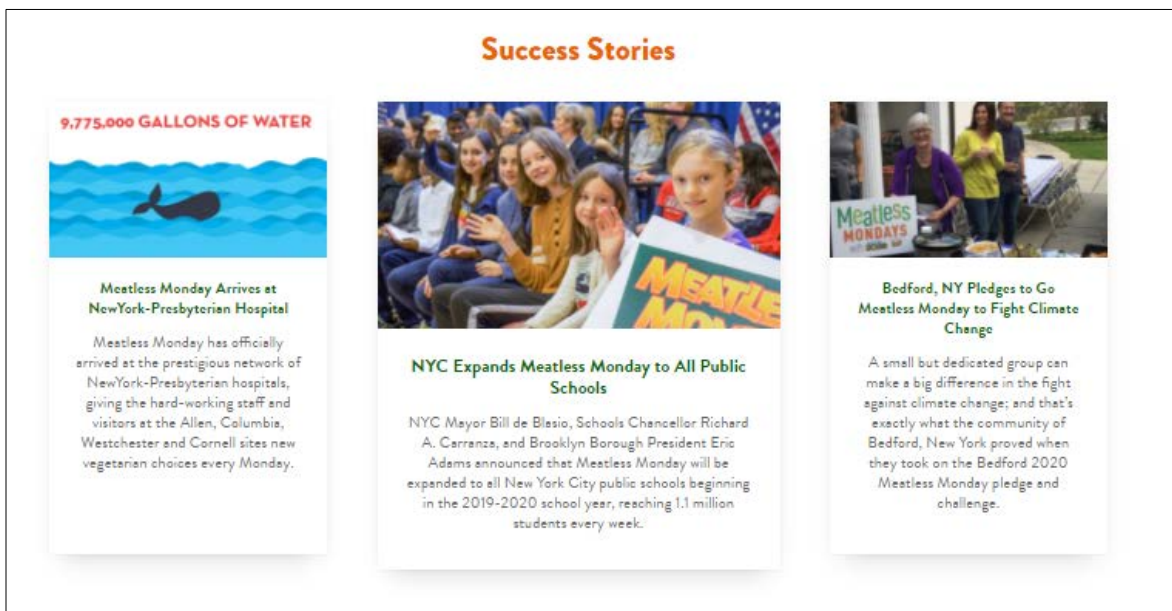
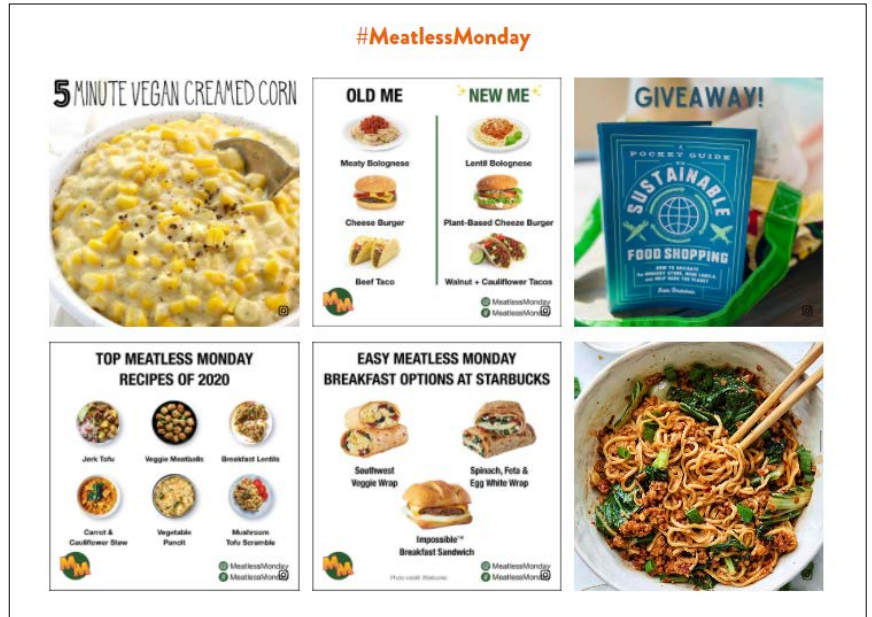
[https://www.researchgate.net/publication/341253607\\_Meat\\_Reduction\\_Practices\\_in\\_the\\_Context\\_of\\_a\\_Social\\_Media\\_Grassroots\\_Experiment\\_Campaign](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/341253607_Meat_Reduction_Practices_in_the_Context_of_a_Social_Media_Grassroots_Experiment_Campaign)

more fruits, vegetables and plant-based meals throughout the rest of the week.

**(Communications)**

- The campaign offers free resources, marketing materials, how-to-guides, and recipes to support people in practicing Meatless Monday at home and implementing it in different settings.

Meatless Monday has been adopted by a wide range of participants, including home cooks, schools, hospitals, restaurants, media and whole communities in over 40 countries around the world. **(Social Diffusion)**



**MEATLESS MONDAY**

**THE HUMANE SOCIETY OF THE UNITED STATES**

**What a difference a day makes. HERE IS WHY...**

The percentage of human-caused global greenhouse gas emissions caused by animal agriculture: **18%**

How much less "flexitarians" (people who often replace meat with vegetarian foods) may weigh than the average American: **8 LBS**

It can take about 50 times more water to produce meat than plant-based foods.

**500 MILLION TONS:** How much manure factory farmed animals in the U.S. produce annually.

How much lower the odds "flexitarians" are to have diabetes than the average American: **31%**

**285:** The number of animals killed for food in the U.S., every second of every minute of every day.

**FACTORY FARMING (not a pretty sight)**

Mother pigs are crammed into tiny crates so small they can't turn around, chickens are crammed into tiny barren cages, and more.

**MEAT-FREE MOMENTUM**

**12%:** How much America's meat demand dropped between 2007 and 2012.

**57%:** The percentage of Americans who have cut back on meat.

**3,500:** The number of schools, hospitals, and restaurants participating in Meatless Monday!

**Top public figures** like Bill Clinton, Oprah Winfrey, Al Sharpton and Ellen DeGeneres now tout the benefits of eating more plant-based foods.

**SKYROCKETING SALES**

**40%:** The increase in new food products labeled as "vegetarian" over a five-year period.

From veggie burgers at Denny's to Taco Bell's bean burritos, virtually every major restaurant chain now offers an array of animal-free fare.

**JOIN THE MEATLESS MONDAY MOVEMENT**

Visit [humane.org/meatlessmonday](http://humane.org/meatlessmonday) today for free recipes and tips.

**penney's** **TACO BELL**

Figure 4  
<https://www.pinterest.com/pin/74520568807329808/>

Congregation – Newsletter Messaging

Our Lady of Lourdes – St. Anne, in Rochester, NY, has a [Green Corner in their newsletter](#) to communicate information and tips regarding behaviors to protect the environment.


**(Social Norm)**

- Newsletter Section: In this newsletter issue, they tied committing to eat more plant-based meals to a New Year’s resolution. **(Commitment)**

*Care for God's Creation*

**New Year's Resolution #1: More Plant-Based Meals**

The beginning of a new year is often a time for resolutions to "eat right" and "exercise more." A resolution that will *help both the environment and the body* is to **make at least one dinner a week wholly plant-based** -- no meat! But how will that make a difference?



**MADE FROM PLANTS!**

Non-beef burgers include the *Impossible Burger* and the *Beyond Burger*. The latter contains mainly pea protein, canola oil, and coconut oil. Compared to a quarter pound of US beef, studies have shown a **positive environmental impact**. The Beyond Burger ...

- **Generated 90% fewer greenhouse gas emissions**
- **Required 46% less energy**
- **Had more than 99% lesser impact on water scarcity**
- **Had 93% lesser impact on land use**

That's great if you're concerned about the health of the planet! The dietary benefits, however, are less dramatic:

- 80% lean beef burger: **280 calories; 9 grams** saturated fat
- Beyond Burger: **250 calories; 6 grams** saturated fat
- Impossible Burger: **240 calories; 8 grams** saturated fat (due to the coconut oil)
- ✓ Turkey burger: **220-240 calories; 4-5 grams** saturated fat

**Other Options**

**Veggie Burgers.** A burger made with real veggies that does not try to taste like meat has **150-160 calories**, and about **1 gram** of saturated fat. Use your leftover veggies and legumes and help reduce food waste, too.

**Blended Burger.** Reduce your beef intake by swapping lentils or mushrooms for some of the meat, or use ground turkey instead of beef.

*† Environmental Ministry†*

## Example Messages

These messages can be incorporated into campaigns that encourage less meat consumption. Each message increases awareness of the behavior change benefits and focuses on an action to take.

1. **Here is a win-win environmental action that you can start today: Commit to going meatless once a week.** The Meatless Monday campaign has endless plant-based recipes, tips and resources. Sign up for their newsletter: <https://www.meatlessmonday.com/subscribe-to-our-newsletter/> (convenience)
2. **Act young. Eat less meat.** In the U.S., 1 in 4 millennials are vegetarians, a trend that has grown rapidly in recent years as more studies confirm the negative environmental and health impact of meat.<sup>15</sup> Start by committing to not eat meat one day per week. (social norm; humor)
3. **Take the pledge: serve meatless, healthy, plant-based meals once a week for 12 weeks.** Eating less meat, especially red and processed meat, offers many health benefits, including reducing the risk of type 2 diabetes, heart disease, and some cancers. In addition, scientific evidence shows that a diet rich in plant-based foods is much healthier for the planet, as meat production releases significant amounts of greenhouse gases into the environment and contributes to other environmental damage. (commitment)

The above messages could be used in various congregation outreach strategies, such as the following:

- **Include relevant information and tips in bulletins and newsletters.** Be sure to address well-known challenges by including the following cooking tips for filling, tasty and healthy meals:
  - **Protein:** Saying “I’ll just have a salad” isn’t enough. Prepare tasty and hearty dishes by choosing tofu, tempeh, beans, or lentils as a base.
  - **Veggies:** Consider adding vegetables to breakfast too, like tomato/salsa, avocado, spinach or broccoli. Also, experiment with less familiar vegetable varieties, like kohlrabi, garlic scapes, broccoli sprouts, sunchokes, or dandelion greens.
  - **Spice and seasoning:** Without salt, spices, and seasoning, veggies can taste bland; but, so does meat. Put effort into flavoring plant-based meals like any other dishes! Get creative with herbs and spices, taking advantage of bringing out the natural flavors of whole foods.
- **Cooking demonstrations.** To help folks make the transition to a more plant-based diet, offer live cooking demonstrations. An organized event can include providing guests with recipes and servings of three hearty vegetarian main dishes. Make it a family-friendly event to help all family members experience new plant-based meals.
- **Meatless options at congregation events.** Include a meatless main meal at the next congregation event to encourage plant-based meals. It may be an opportunity for attendees to try something new that they wouldn’t have tried at home.

---

<sup>15</sup> <https://dealsonhealth.net/vegetarian-statistics/>



- **Film nights.** Host a movie watch party and choose a film that will prompt dynamic discussion. A few movie ideas include *Nourish: Food and Community*; *Ingredients, dirt: The Movie*; *A Place at the Table*; *Fed Up: It's Time to get Real about Food*; and *Food, Inc.*
- **'Eating Less Meat' 101.** Many nursing and nutritionists' schools offer free or low-cost classes to the public. Invite a registered nurse or nutritionist to talk to your congregation about the health benefits of eating less meat and ways to achieve a healthier diet.