



Healthy Food, Healthy Planet

Climate change could have an impact on the food we eat. According to the United States Department of Agriculture, “climate change is very likely to affect global, regional, and local food security by disrupting food availability, decreasing access to food, and making food utilization more difficult.”ⁱ Food and water insecurity resulting from climate change-connected drought and temperature changes could lead to malnutrition, rampant hunger, and intensify civil unrest and conflict in some regions of the world. Aquatic life could be endangered by warming oceans and higher carbon concentrations, and marine biodiversity may be compromised. Agricultural practices, use of fertilizers, land-use changes, and food-related transport contribute to greenhouse gas emissions. According to the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization, the livestock sector is responsible for 14.5% of human-induced greenhouse gas emissions.ⁱⁱ Health care facilities can switch to more environmentally sustainable food products in their cafeterias and vending machines, reduce and compost food waste, and select filtered tap water instead of bottled water when possible, to help combat climate change.

Health Care Without Harm and Practice Greenhealthⁱⁱⁱ recommend the following interventions:

- **Reduce the amount of meat protein on menus** – *The livestock sector and meat protein production is a substantial source of greenhouse gas emissions.* Facilities can reduce their greenhouse gas footprint by offering a broader variety of healthy foods like local fruits and vegetables.
- **Buy local and seasonal food** – *reduce long-distance food transport leads to lower emissions.* Facilities in California^{iv}, Maryland^v and elsewhere have participated in farm-to-hospital initiatives, purchasing produce and other food from local farmers. The cafeteria at St. Luke’s Hospital in Duluth, Minnesota serves fish, meat, and baked goods purchased from local sources.^{vi}
- **Compost food waste** - *Creates a recycled product (compost) that can replace fertilizer.* St. Luke’s Hospital in Duluth, Minnesota composts 40,000 pounds of food a year; through this and other measures, the hospital has reduced its waste pick-up costs by 15%.^{vii,viii}

- **Eliminate bottled water** – *Encouraging tap water use will reduce waste.* In addition to reducing bottle waste and energy use related to bottle transportation and production, switching to non-bottled water could cut water waste: the Pacific Institute, calculates that it takes 3 liters of water to produce 1 liter of bottled water in 2006.^{ix}

Case Study: Palomar Health's (San Diego, CA) Sustainable, Local, Organic Food Initiative

- The facility staff worked with local produce vendors to purchase seasonal and bumper crops at reasonable prices.
- Hired a sustainability program manager to work with relevant departments, help set and follow-up on goals, and coordinate activities.
- Hospital leadership organized a Healthy Food Council that included members of the food service, sustainability, wellness, and human resource teams.
- Educated food service team, leading to better buy-in and promotion efforts.
- Increased purchasing of sustainable, local, organic (SLO) food; 13% of total food purchasing is now SLO.
- Resulted in higher cafeteria revenue.^x

Resources

Health Care Without Harm: Healthy Food in Health Care <https://noharm-uscanada.org/issues/us-canada/healthy-food-health-care>

Health Care Climate Council: <https://climatecouncil.noharm.org/>

ⁱ Brown, M.E., J.M. Antle, P. Backlund, E.R. Carr, W.E. Easterling, M.K. Walsh, C. Ammann, W. Attavanich, C.B. Barrett, M.F. Bellemare, V. Dancheck, C. Funk, K. Grace, J.S.I. Ingram, H. Jiang, H. Maletta, T. Mata, A. Murray, M. Ngugi, D. Ojima, B. O'Neill, and C. Tebaldi. 2015. Climate Change, Global Food Security, and the U.S. Food System. 146 pages. Available online at http://www.usda.gov/oce/climate_change/FoodSecurity2015Assessment/FullAssessment.pdf.

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- ⁱⁱ Gerber PJ, Steinfeld H, Henderson B, Mottet A, Opio C, Dijkman J, Falucci A, Tempio G. Tackling climate change through livestock—a global assessment of emissions and mitigation opportunities. Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), Rome. 2013. Accessed at <http://www.fao.org/3/i3437e.pdf>
- ⁱⁱⁱ <https://practicegreenhealth.org/pubs/toolkit/reports/ClimateChange.pdf>
- ^{iv} Sachs E and Feenstra G. Emerging Local Food Purchasing Initiatives in Northern California Hospitals. UC Sustainable Agriculture research and Education Program, Agricultural Sustainability Institute. University of California at Davis. Accessed at <http://asi.ucdavis.edu/programs/sarep/publications/food-and-society/farmtohospitalinitiativesweb.pdf>
- ^v United States Department of Agriculture. Farm to Institution Initiatives. <http://www.usda.gov/documents/6-Farmtoinstitution.pdf>
- ^{vi} Duluth News-Tribune. St. Luke's hospital recognized for its efforts to buy organic and locally produced food. . Duluth News Tribune. May 30, 2008. Accessed at <http://www.duluthnewstribune.com/content/st-lukes-hospital-recognized-its-efforts-buy-organic-and-locally-produced-food>
- ^{vii} World Health Organization. Healthy Hospitals, Healthy Planet, Healthy People: Addressing climate change in health care settings. Discussion Draft. Accessed at http://www.who.int/globalchange/publications/climatefootprint_report.pdf?ua=1
- ^{viii} State of Minnesota. 2008 Governor's Awards for Waste and Pollution Prevention. Accessed at <https://www.pca.state.mn.us/sites/default/files/govaward2007.pdf>
- ^{ix} The Pacific Institute. Bottled Water and Energy Fact Sheet. February 2007. Accessed at <http://pacinst.org/publication/bottled-water-and-energy-a-fact-sheet/>
- ^x Healthier Hospitals and Practice Greenhealth. Case Study: Healthier Food Challenge; Sustainable, Local and Organic Food Purchasing. Accessed at http://healthierhospitals.org/sites/default/files/IMCE/palomar_health.pdf