To Patricia Espinosa
UNFCCC Executive Secretary
Martin-Luther-King-Strasse 8
53175 Bonn
Germany

December 2, 2018

Dear Secretary Espinosa,

Thank you for the extraordinary efforts of the secretariat in encouraging sustainability standards at UNFCCC conferences, particularly the guidance on providing daily plant-based meals and a weekly meat-reduced day. As civil-society organizations concerned about the climate crisis and the greenhouse gas emissions generated by animal agriculture, we believe it's critical for the climate impact of food to be acknowledged at these events, from the negotiations to the food being served.

Unfortunately, the menus being offered in Katowice represent a step backward from the progress that's been made, and we urge you create a stronger framework for catering at international climate conferences that emphasizes plant-based menu options in order for future host countries to reduce the climate impacts of food service at these events.

The global food system contributes up to 30 percent of anthropogenic greenhouse gas emissions, with about half of those emissions coming from animal agriculture.[1,2,3] If current trends continue, food production will nearly exhaust the global carbon budget for all sectors by 2050.[4] [5] Meat and dairy consumption and production must be significantly reduced to keep global emissions below 1.5°C to avoid the worst impacts of climate change.[5,6,7]

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[1] Vermeulen, S. J., Campbell, B. M., & Ingram, J. S. (2012). Climate change and food systems. Annual Review of Environment and Resources, 37.
[2] Garnett, T. (2011). Where are the best opportunities for reducing greenhouse gas emissions in the food system (including the food chain)?. Food Policy 36, S23-S32.
[3] Gerber, P. J., Steinfeld, H., Henderson, B., Mottet, A., Opio, C., Dijkman, J., ... & Tempio, G. (2013). Tackling climate change through livestock: a global assessment of emissions and mitigation opportunities. Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO).
[4] Bajželj, B., Richards, K. S., Allwood, J. M., Smith, P., Dennis, J. S., Curmi, E., & Gilligan, C. A. (2014). Importance of food-demand management for climate mitigation. Nature Climate Change, 4(10), 924-929.
[5] Springmann, M., Clark, M., Mason-D'Croz, D., Weibe, K., Bodirsky, B., Lassaletta, L., … Willet, W. (2018) Options for keeping the food system within environmental limits. Nature. https://doi.org/10.1038/s41586-018-0594-0
[6] Hedenus, F., S. Wirsenius & D. J. A. Johansson (2014): The importance of reduced meat and dairy consumption for meeting stringent climate change targets. Climatic Change. 124, p.79–91.
[7] Brent Kim et al. (2015): The Importance of Reducing Animal Product Consumption and Wasted Food in Mitigating Catastrophic Climate Change. John Hopkins Center for a Livable Future.

We applaud UNFCCC and the host countries for the catering menus at COP23 in Bonn and SB48-2 in Bangkok, which made a notable effort to feature plant-based options. However, in previewing the menus for COP24 in Katowice, we are concerned about the climate footprint of the event menus.

The catering menu for the main food court has twice as many meat-based entrees as plant-based entrees. Based on an analysis of common ingredients found in the entrees listed online, we found that:

· Meat-based options (4.1 kg CO_2e per serving) generate average greenhouse gas emissions more than four times higher than the plant-based meals (0.90 kg CO_2e per serving).
· The two dairy-free plant-based options generate one-tenth of the GHG emissions as the meat-based entrees and less than half of the emissions of the plant-based options with cheese.
· The pork and beef dumplings (7.7 kg CO_2e per serving) have more than 24 times the carbon footprint of the cabbage and mushroom dumplings (0.31 kg CO_2e per serving).
· The most carbon-intensive entree (beef with smoked bacon, 11 kg CO_2e per serving) contributes 35 times the greenhouse gas emissions of the least carbon-intensive entrée (cabbage and mushroom dumplings).
· Serving plant-based patties on the cheeseburger with Louisiana sauce could cut each burger's carbon footprint by 82 percent, or 6 kg of GHG emissions each.
· Replacing fish or shrimp with tofu could reduce emissions by over 50 percent for those entrees, or about 1 kg CO_2e per serving.
· If all of the conference attendees choose meat-based dishes during the 12 day conference, it would contribute almost 4,500 metric tons of CO_2e, the equivalent of burning about 500,000 gallons of gasoline or the greenhouse gas emissions attributed to 3,000 people flying from New York to Katowice.

We recognize that each host country faces unique challenges in hosting international conferences and that the UNFCCC does provide food sustainability recommendations to host countries. However, the existing guidance can be improved, for example by placing greater emphasis on the climate benefits of offering more plant-based options and fewer animal-based items (particularly beef), providing additional resources to aid host countries in sustainable menu planning that supports both environmental integrity and human rights, and including food in the climate neutrality section of Host Country Agreements.

Despite the clear need to transition away from overconsumption of animal-based foods toward more plant-centric diets as a key part of addressing climate change, food policy has been largely absent from international climate negotiations and commitments. UNFCCC and climate conference host countries have an opportunity to advance the dialogue around food-related climate solutions, starting with the food that's offered at the events.

As the UNFCCC notes in its handbook for hosting United Nations Climate Change Conferences, sustainable practices at the conference can provide important financial and social benefits in

addition to promoting a positive image, driving demand, raising awareness and inspiring change. In addition to these benefits and reducing the climate impact of the event, menus that emphasize plant-based foods are more inclusive to those who may have religious, health, or moral dietary restrictions.

Due to the urgency of the climate crisis and the environmental, public health, and food security benefits of diets higher in plant-based foods and lower in animal-based foods, we're calling on the UNFCCC and future host countries to work together to ensure that international climate conference menus minimize their climate impact and show leadership in advancing the transition toward more plant-centric diets.

Sincerely,

Brighter Green
Center for Biological Diversity
Farm Forward