

PROCLAMATION



City and County of Denver

Proclamation No. 23-0881

A Proclamation Celebrating CASR on Their Adoption of an Equitable and Sustainable Catering Policy

WHEREAS, Industrial food production is one of the single largest human pressures on Earth, threatening local ecosystems, driving a sixth mass extinction of species, and impacting the stability of all of Earth's ecosystems; and

WHEREAS, Agriculture has already cleared or converted 70% of grasslands, 50% of savannas, 45% of the temperate forest, 27% of tropical forests, and 50% of wetlands, largely for grazing cattle and feed crop production to feed animals on Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations (CAFOs); and

WHEREAS, The EAT-Lancet Report found that even if every other sector—energy, transportation, buildings—became completely carbon-neutral by 2050, the current food system alone would take us past 1.5 degrees C of warming by 2050; and

WHEREAS, Within the food system, animal agriculture has an outsized environmental impact, and the world's top 5 meat and dairy companies now emit more greenhouse gasses than ExxonMobil, Shell, or BP; and

WHEREAS, Irrigation of cattle-feed crops is the single largest user of fresh water at both regional and national scales, accounting for 23% of all water consumption nationally, 32% in the western US and 55% in the Colorado River basin; and

WHEREAS, Shifting from growing feed for livestock to growing crops for direct human consumption could increase available food calories by as much as 70%, which could feed an additional 4 billion people (more than the projected 2–3 billion people arriving through population growth); and

WHEREAS, Of all antibiotics sold in the United States, approximately 80% are sold for use in animal agriculture, and there is growing evidence that antibiotic resistance in humans is promoted by the widespread use of non-therapeutic antibiotics in animals; and

WHEREAS, CAFOs produce large amounts of air pollutants, such as particulate matter, ammonia, and hydrogen sulfide, which all pose risks to human health, such as respiratory problems and chronic lung disease, and according to the American Chemical Society, livestock production is one of five human activities responsible for half of air-pollution-related deaths in the United States; and

WHEREAS, CAFOs can produce more than 1.6 million tons of manure a year, often polluting groundwater and surface water with chemicals, heavy metals, and bacteria, posing threats to safe drinking water; and

WHEREAS, Industrial animal agriculture is a cause of environmental, racial, and social injustice as CAFOs are disproportionately located in communities of color and low-income communities who are subjected to air and water pollution, poor public health, plummeting property values, and political disempowerment; and

WHEREAS, Plant-based meals have, on average, a 63% lower carbon footprint than animal based meals, and the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) has recognized switching to a plant-based diet as among the most effective ways for individuals to reduce their carbon footprints; and

WHEREAS, Current food norms make it challenging, especially for communities of color, people with cultural and religious dietary restrictions, and people with certain allergies or medically prescribed diets, to feel included at meetings and events where meat and dairy tend to be at the center of every plate; and

WHEREAS, Serving plant-based foods by default (with the option to opt into meat and dairy) includes everyone by default, such as the 30-50 million Americans who are lactose intolerant (who are predominantly BIPOC), people with religious restrictions, young people who are eating more plant-based foods, and people of color (a third of whom have reported reducing their meat consumption in the past year compared to a fourth of Americans overall); and

WHEREAS, Plant-based defaults have proven to be a tremendously effective yet simple strategy to support people toward adopting more healthy and sustainable foods, increasing their uptake by about 60 percentage points, thereby reducing catering's water, land, and carbon footprints—without taking away anyone's choice to eat meat or dairy, and while being inclusive of all dietary needs and preferences; and

WHEREAS, Plant-based foods are often less expensive than animal based meals, which allows the excess funds to be spent on buying higher quality, more humanely-raised, locally produced meat from Colorado producers; and

WHEREAS, The members of the Denver City Council believe that food purchased with taxpayer money should protect the health of frontline communities and help address the climate crisis; that government agencies should be models of justice and sustainability; and that all religious, cultural, ethical, and medical dietary preferences and restrictions should be respected at city agency meetings and events.

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT PROCLAIMED BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY AND COUNTY OF DENVER:

Section 1. That the Council of the City and County of Denver applauds the Office of Climate Action Sustainability and Resiliency (CASR) of on their adoption of a plant-based default policy that reads as follows:

For all of its events and meetings, Denver's Office of Climate Action, Sustainability, and Resiliency (CASR) commits to serve plant-based meals by default, giving diners the choice to opt in to meals with animal products. Plant-based defaults are an enormously effective way to reduce our water, land, and carbon footprints, while being inclusive of all dietary needs and protecting diner choice. Crucially, through this commitment, CASR will model and help usher in a shift toward more sustainable eating in our community. To meet this food policy, CASR will:

- Make plant-based entrees the default option for catered meals.
- Put plant-based entrees at the beginning of the menu or buffet.
- Offer at least two plant-based options for every animal product option.

Section 2. That this Council supports other Denver agencies in adopting plant-based defaults at internal events and meetings where food is offered (and allowing people to opt-in to meat/dairy if they wish), and that through this effort Denver would reduce its overall carbon footprint, while ensuring equitable access to culturally relevant foods for people from all religious, cultural, and racial backgrounds, and folks with health-related dietary restrictions.

Section 3. That the Clerk of the City and County of Denver shall affix this seal of the City and County of Denver to this proclamation and that a copy be delivered to the Office of Climate Action, Sustainability and Resiliency.

PASSED BY THE COUNCIL June 26, 2023

PRESIDENT