

Written Submission for the Pre-Budget
Consultations in Advance of the Upcoming
Federal Budget

By: Vancouver Humane Society

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- Recommendation 1: That the government dedicate any emergency funding for the agricultural sector, as well as future funding, on phasing out industrial livestock operations and assisting farmers and farm workers in transitioning toward a more sustainable, ethical and equitable plant-based food system.
- Recommendation 2: That the government prioritize grants focused on assisting public institutions, including but not limited to schools and hospitals, in transitioning menus toward more plant-based offerings.
- Recommendation 3: That the government shift subsidies away from the industrial animal agriculture industry and toward plant-based food production that is more sustainable and resilient.

Shifting government funding, grants and subsidies serves to support and incentivize the food system change that's necessary to better protect animal welfare; meet our climate and public health goals; and create a more resilient food system in a post-COVID setting.

A growing body of evidence concludes that a significant reduction in global consumption of animal products is necessary to keep global warming below the danger level of two degrees Celsius.ⁱ Last summer, the federal government declared a national climate emergency. Similarly, in November of 2019, a group of 11,000 scientists from 153 countries also declared a climate emergency and noted six critical steps that governments and policy-makers should take in response. In regards to food, the scientists recommended that eating mostly plant-based foods while reducing the global consumption of animal products can improve health and reduce emissions.ⁱⁱ Animal agriculture is a principal driver of not only climate change, but also of air and water pollution, water use, land degradation, deforestation, ocean degradation and biodiversity loss.ⁱⁱⁱ This is a result of animal-based foods being typically more resource-intensive and environmentally impactful to produce than plant-based foods.^{iv} In fact, research suggests that shifting Western diets to plant-based eating patterns has the potential to reduce food-related greenhouse gas emissions by up to 70 percent and land use by 80 percent.^v

Today's industrial animal agriculture system typically involves the keeping of large numbers of animals in cramped and unnatural conditions that compromise their welfare. Practices and conditions surrounding transport, auction and slaughter processes can also present significant welfare challenges.^{vi} A growing number of Canadians are increasingly concerned about the humane treatment of animals and are looking to reduce their consumption of animal products and incorporate more plant-based meals into their diet.^{vii} Meanwhile, experts have also raised concerns surrounding the risks of zoonotic disease in relation to the food system. The United Nations Environment Programme states that approximately 60 per cent of human infections are believed to have an animal origin. It's also noted that human demand for animal protein is one of the most likely disease drivers and a recommended policy response includes phasing out unsustainable agricultural practices.^{viii}

Canada's revised Food Guide also recommends eating more plant-based meals and choosing protein foods that come from plants more often. It notes that many of the well-studied healthy eating patterns

include mostly plant-based foods.^{ix} The guide also states that food and beverages offered in publicly-funded institutions should align with Canada's Dietary Guidelines.^x

The science-based "Planetary Health Diet", which EAT-Lancet researchers identified as the optimal diet for people and the planet, is a mostly plant-based diet consisting of vegetables, fruits, whole grains, plant protein sources, unsaturated plant oils and optionally, modest amounts of animal protein. For North Americans, it requires a significant reduction in the consumption of animal products and an increase in plant-based foods. This global reference diet is flexible and allows for adaptation to dietary needs, personal preferences and cultural traditions.^{xi}

In conclusion, shifting government funding in this direction will not only help improve public access to plant-based foods, but it aligns with a variety of government priorities, as outlined above, as well as the National Food Policy's objective of developing a food system that is resilient, innovative, and environmentally and economically sustainable.

ⁱhttps://www.chathamhouse.org/sites/default/files/publications/research/CHHJ3820%20Diet%20and%20climate%20change%2018.11.15_WEB_NEW.pdf

ⁱⁱ <https://academic.oup.com/bioscience/article/70/1/8/5610806>

ⁱⁱⁱ <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2019/jan/16/new-plant-focused-diet-would-transform-planets-future-say-scientists>

^{iv} <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2018/may/31/avoiding-meat-and-dairy-is-single-biggest-way-to-reduce-your-impact-on-earth>

^v <https://journals.plos.org/plosone/article?id=10.1371/journal.pone.0165797>

^{vi} <https://www.worldanimalprotection.ca/news/canada-gets-failing-grade-global-test-animal-welfare-leadership>

^{vii} https://globalnews.ca/news/4608410/canada-reduce-meat-consumption/?utm_expid=.kz0UD5JkQOC6yMqxGqECg.0&utm_referrer=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.google.com%2F

^{viii} <https://wedocs.unep.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/32860/ZPKMEN.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>

^{ix} <https://food-guide.canada.ca/en/healthy-eating-recommendations/make-it-a-habit-to-eat-vegetables-fruit-whole-grains-and-protein-foods/>

^x <https://food-guide.canada.ca/en/>

^{xi} <https://eatforum.org/learn-and-discover/the-planetary-health-diet/>