

Joint Sustainability Committee

RECOMMENDATION 20240228-XXX

Date: February 28, 2024

Subject: Recommendation on supporting pro-climate food choices in the Austin Food Plan

Motioned By:

Seconded By:

Recommendation:

The Joint Sustainability Committee supports the work being done to develop the Austin Food Plan and recommends that a goal be added to “Support increasing awareness of the importance and benefits choosing pro-climate, pro-health foods and address barriers to accessing pro-climate, pro-health foods.” Strategies to achieve this goal should include education campaigns, partnerships with grocery stores and other food providers, incentives for plant-based alternatives to carbon-intensive foods, and changes to city purchasing policies.

Rationale:

The Joint Sustainability Committee supports an increased emphasis on encouraging and promoting pro-climate eating because:

1. Animal food products are responsible for at least between 11% and 20% of global greenhouse gas emissions.
2. There is a policy gap at all levels of government when it comes to addressing greenhouse gas emissions from food choices.
3. Awareness of the importance of food choices in mitigating climate change is lower compared to other climate solutions, such as switching to renewable energy.
4. Changing personal behaviors is possible but can be challenging and requires a dedicated effort.
5. While federal policies are a significant driving force behind the increased consumption of high-emission, unhealthy foods, food choices ultimately occur at the local and individual level. Local efforts can address information and accessibility gaps.
 - a. Pro-climate, pro-health foods are available but are often not featured as prominently as high-carbon, unhealthy food options in local grocery stores.
 - b. Pro-climate, pro-health foods are available, but some are more expensive.