

RUTGERS DINING SERVICES



SUSTAINABLE FOOD SERVICE



Outline

- Rutgers University Office of Climate Action
- Food Systems' Impact On The Environment
- Rutgers Dining Services: How We Are Helping
 - Tracking Food-Related GHG Emissions
 - Sustainable Food Sourcing and Purchasing
 - Sustainability Within Operations
- How You Can Help
 - Dietary Actions
 - Reduce Food Waste
 - Reuse & Recycle



“The science is clear: **climate change is real**, humans are responsible for it, and it is having increasingly severe impacts throughout the world, including here in New Jersey.”

Climate Change

“The only way to **stabilize the global climate** is to bring net human-caused **carbon dioxide emissions to zero.**”

Rutgers University Office of Climate Action



1. Carbon Neutral by 2040: to become carbon neutral & carbon-negative, no later than the university's 275th anniversary in 2041.



2. Just Equitable Adaptation: Work across campus and within communities to establish comprehensive plans for just and equitable climate adaptation.



3. Culture of Sustainability: Build a culture of sustainability that integrates climate action into multiple areas across Rutgers' campuses.

***Rutgers Dining Services is actively involved in the the Food Systems Climate Action Group.**

How Food Systems Can Impact The Environment



Approximately **26% of global greenhouse gas emissions** (GHGs) are associated with **food production**



This can be broken down into emissions derived from **supply chain (18%), livestock and fisheries (31%), crop production (27%)** and **land use (24%)**



Food production has additional environmental impacts on **freshwater use, eutrophication of waterways, and biodiversity**



Our Pledge

“Rutgers Dining Services will contribute to sustainability by reducing its environmental footprint while enhancing its contribution to the social and economic capital of New Jersey, the nation and the world.”

Dining Services by the Numbers

Rutgers Dining Services is **one of the largest, self-operated student dining services in the nation**

We Serve:

- 36,000 meals daily
- 3.7 million meals yearly

Meal Plans:

- 14,500 meal plans in the Spring 2025

Catering:

- 3,589 events catered in 2024-2025

Employees:

- 564 employees Spring 2025 (full + part-time)
- 395 student employees Spring 2025

Food Purchased in 2024-2025:

- 251,464 pounds of chicken
- 66,427 pounds of dry pasta
- 147,127 fresh apples
- 148,920 fresh bananas



How Are We Helping?

Dining Services is guided by reducing the environmental impact of all decisions related to food, packaging, serving, and waste options

Major Sustainability Focus Areas



**Tracking Food-Related
GHG Emissions**



**Sustainable Food Sourcing
and Purchasing**



**Sustainability Within
Operations**

**“FOOD IS THE
SINGLE
STRONGEST
LEVER TO
OPTIMIZE
HUMAN HEALTH
AND
ENVIRONMENTAL
SUSTAINABILITY
ON EARTH.”**

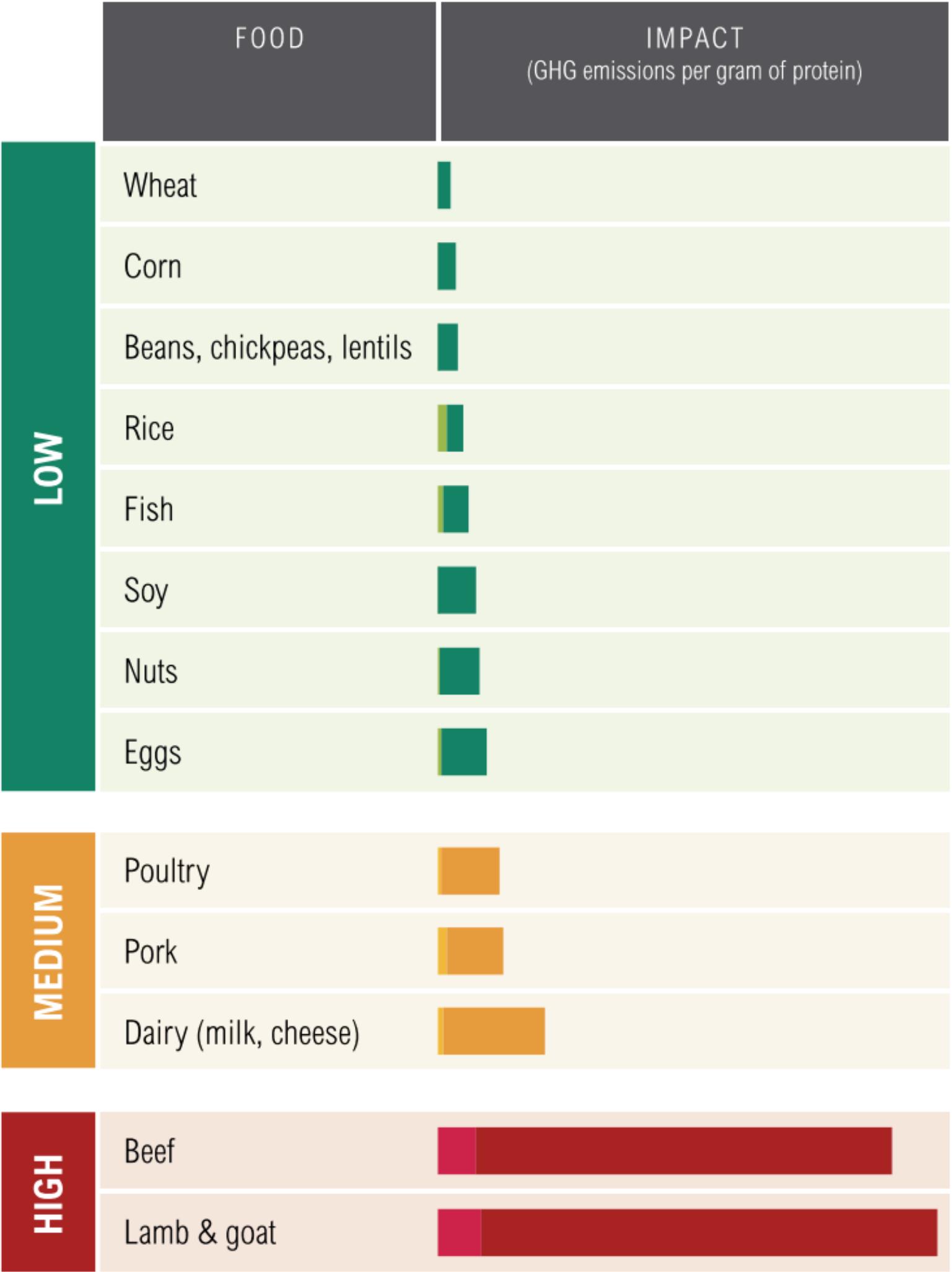


-The EAT-Lancet Commission on Healthy Diets from Sustainable Food Systems

Food-Related GHG Emissions

The Impact of Food

"A diet rich in plant-based foods and with fewer animal source foods confers both improved health and environmental benefits."

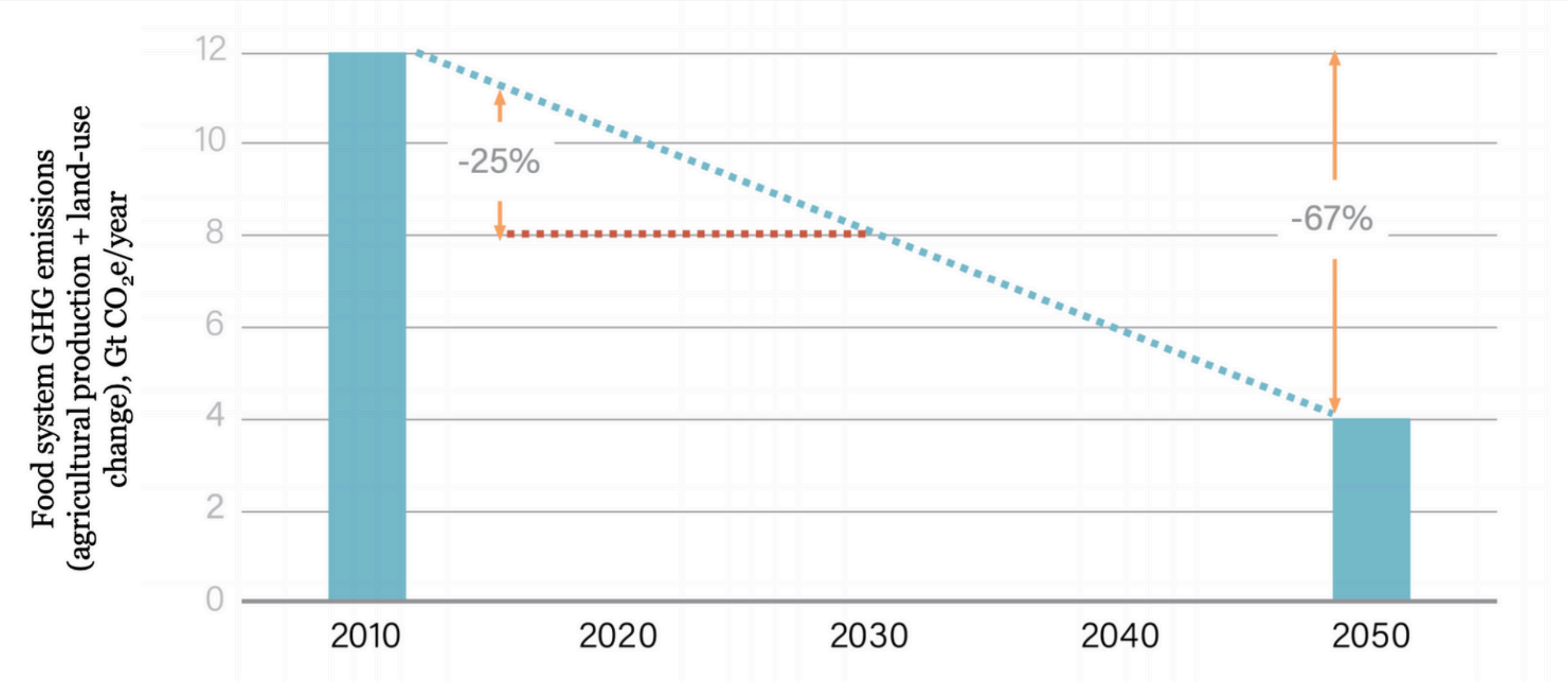


Note: GHG emissions per gram of protein
 Note: Lighter shade shows emissions from production, darker shade emissions from land-use change
 Source: WRI (2016). EAT-Lancet Summary Commission Report (2019)

Collective Goal

FOR REDUCING FOOD-RELATED GHG EMISSIONS

In line with keeping global warming below 1.5°C, Rutgers Dining commits to the collective target of **reducing the GHG emissions associated with the food we provide by 25% by 2030**



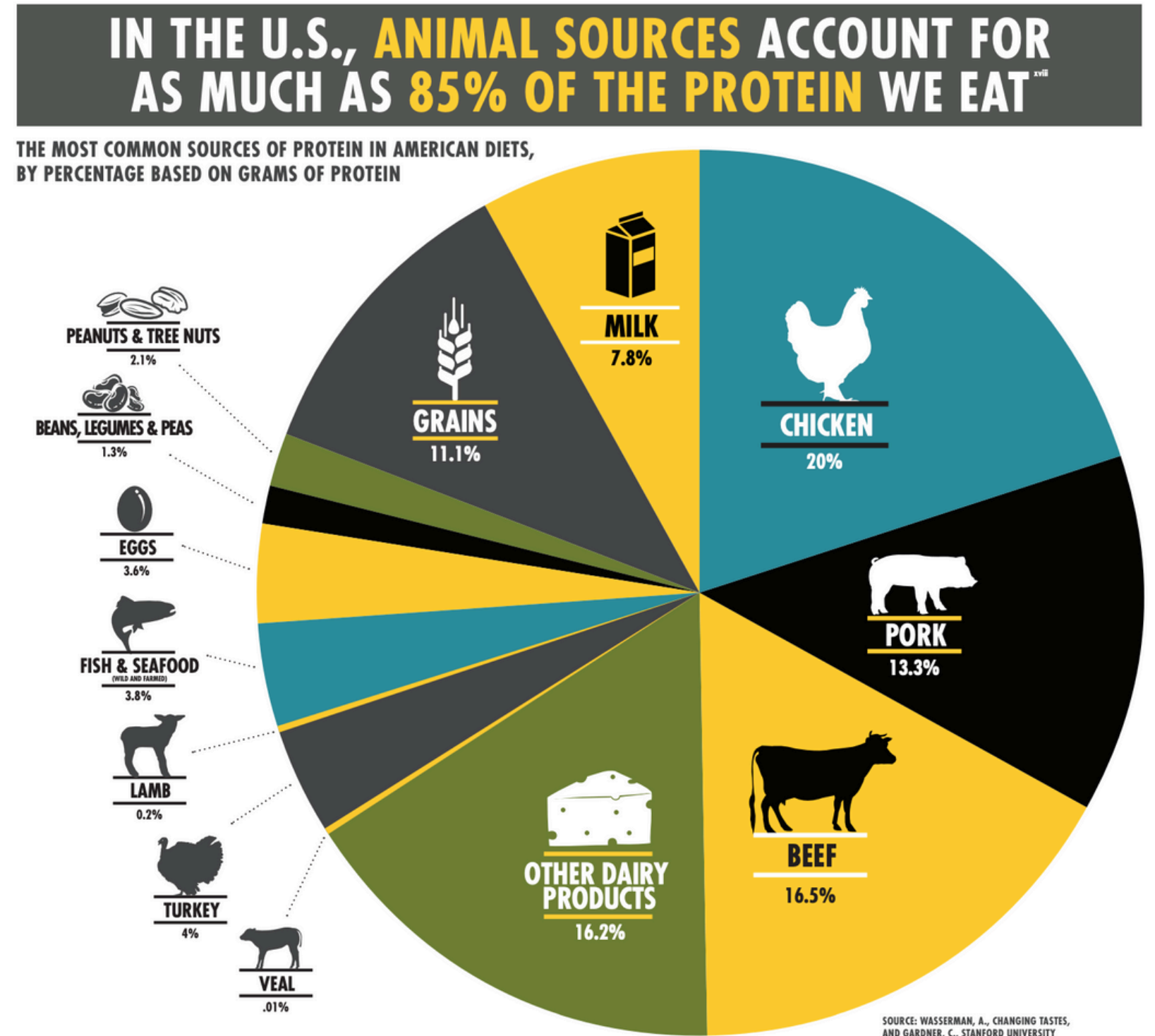
Sources: Searchinger et al. (2019), Science Based Targets Initiative (2019).

Tracking GHG Emissions

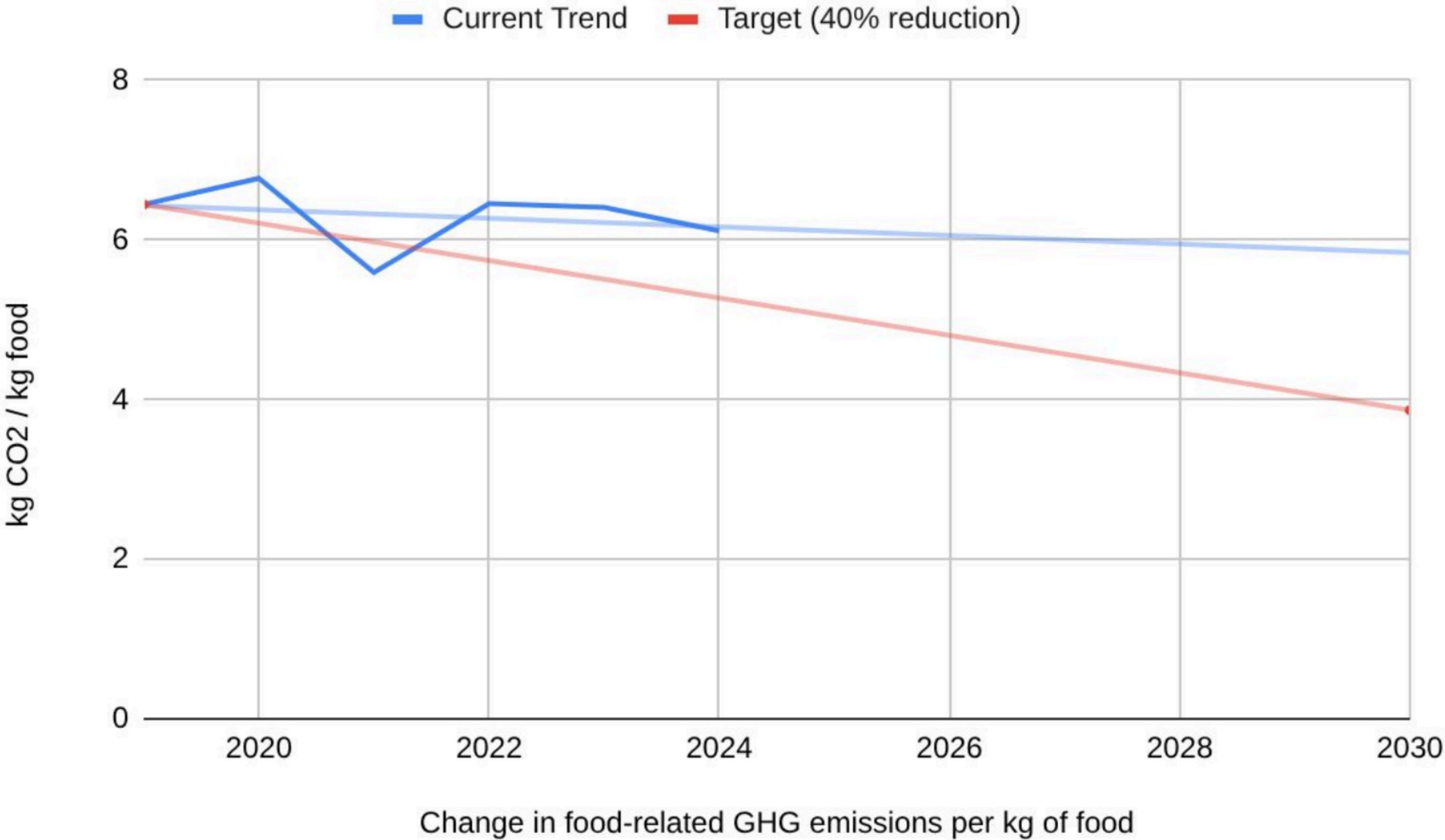
The Menu of Change University Research Collaborative (MCURC)

Collective Impact Initiative:

- A **strategic initiative** of data collection and impact analysis to **track protein purchases and associated food-related GHG emissions** over time
- **Protein** has been determined to be the **single most important area of change** with respect to advancing healthier, **more sustainable menus**

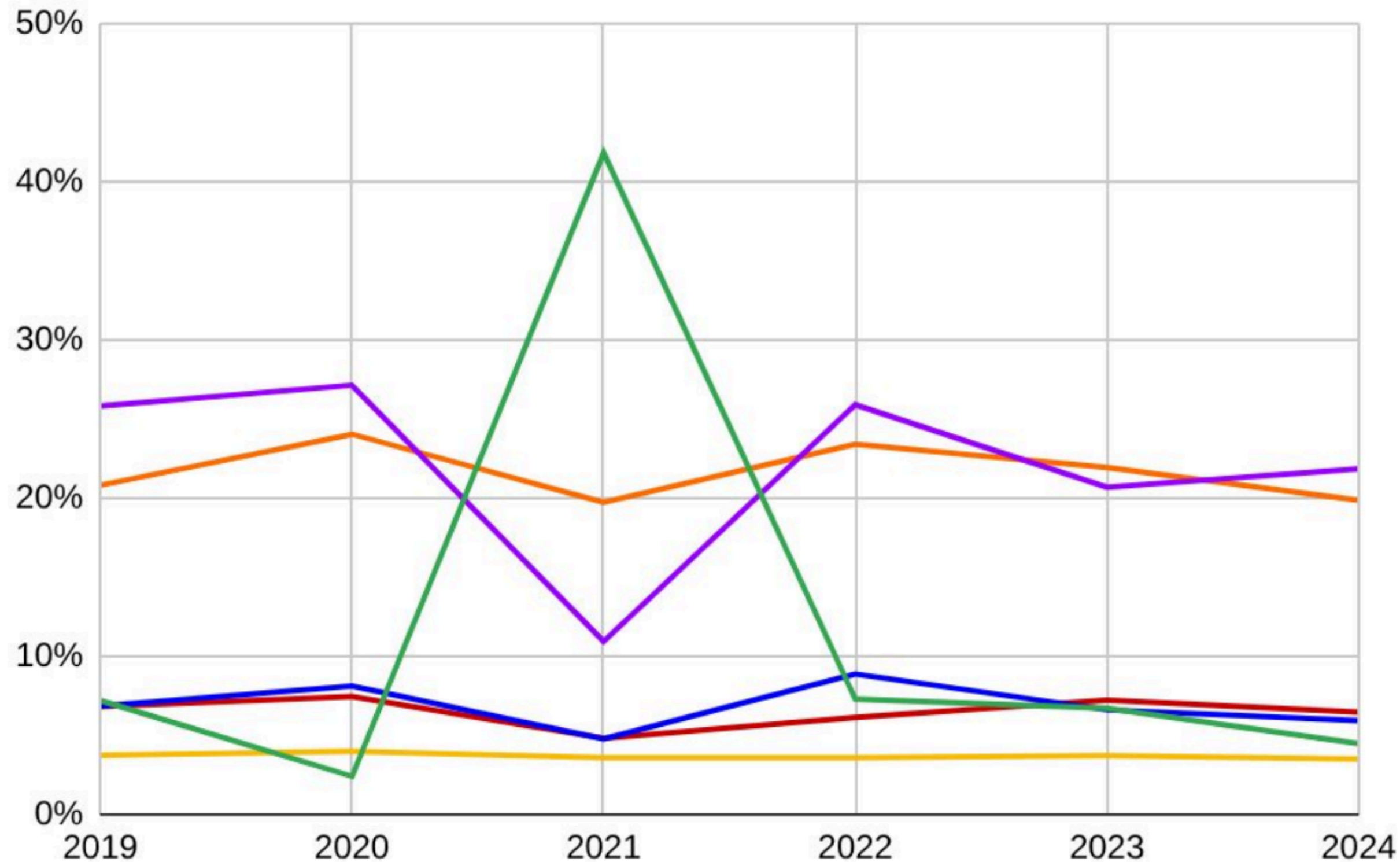


Rutgers Dining Yearly GHG Trend Analysis



*Figure provided by the
Menus of Change
University Research
Collaborative

Rutgers Dining Percent Total Food Purchases Over Time

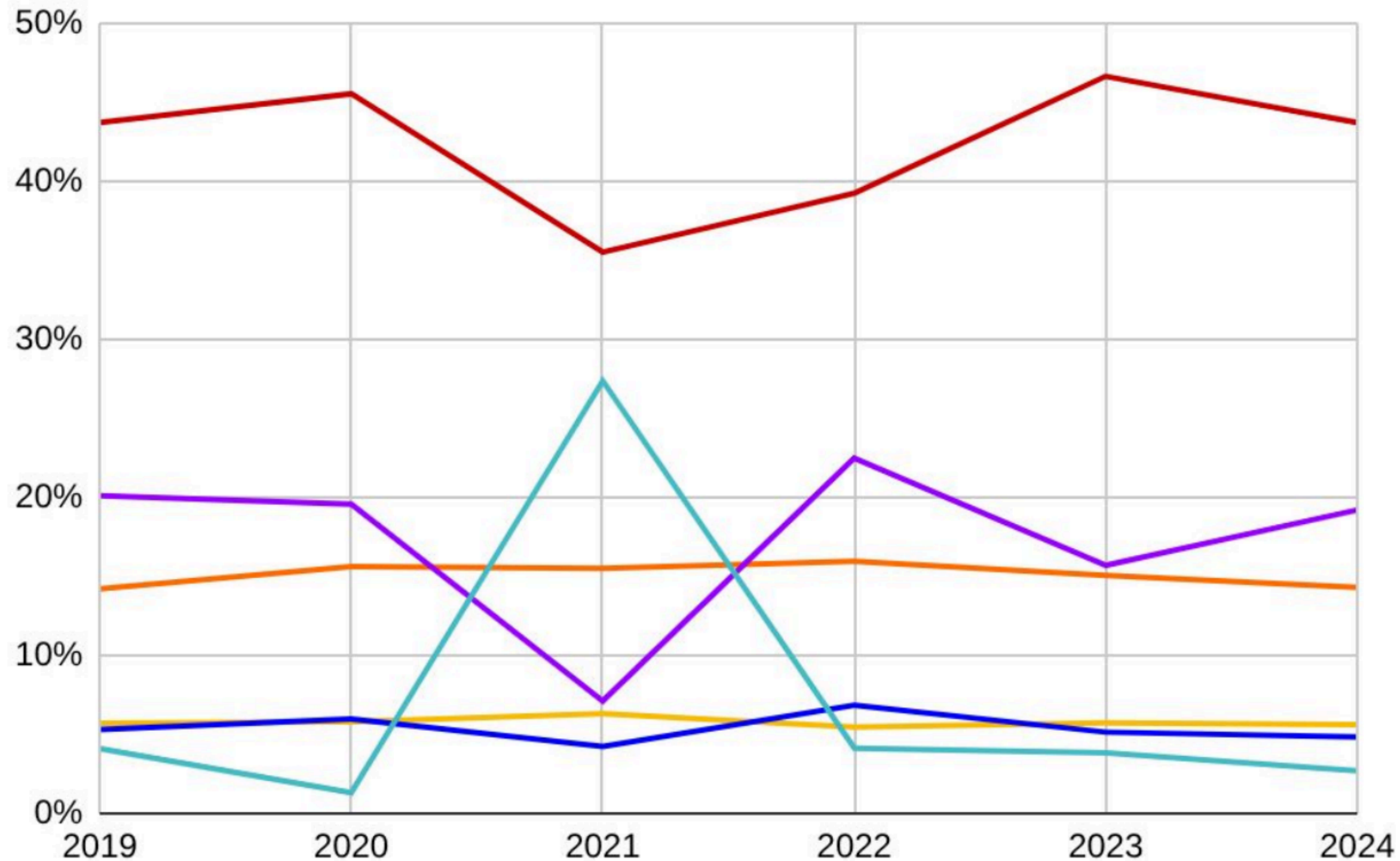


- Beef
- Poultry
- Pork
- Seafood
- Dairy
- Eggs

*Figure provided by the Menus of Change University Research Collaborative

% of total food purchases (kg) over time by food category (protein portfolio only)

Rutgers Dining Percent Food-Related GHG Emissions Over Time



*Figure provided by the Menus of Change University Research Collaborative

% of food-related GHG emissions (kg CO2) over time by food category (protein p...

Rutgers Dining Reduced GHG Emission Equivalents

The Impact of Rutgers' GHG Emission Reduction is equivalent to:

2.4 million lbs of CO₂ reduction (1.1 million kg)



1,760 round trips
between NY and SF



240 cars
taken off the road for a year



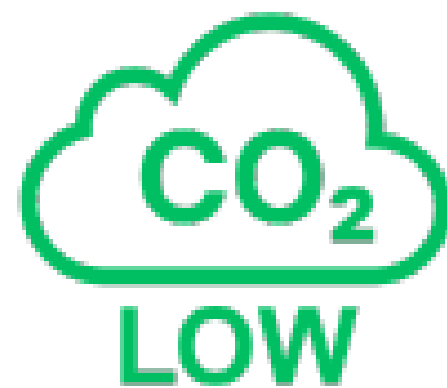
23 U.S. households
emissions for a year

Climate Labeling on Online Menus

Carbon Footprint Icons

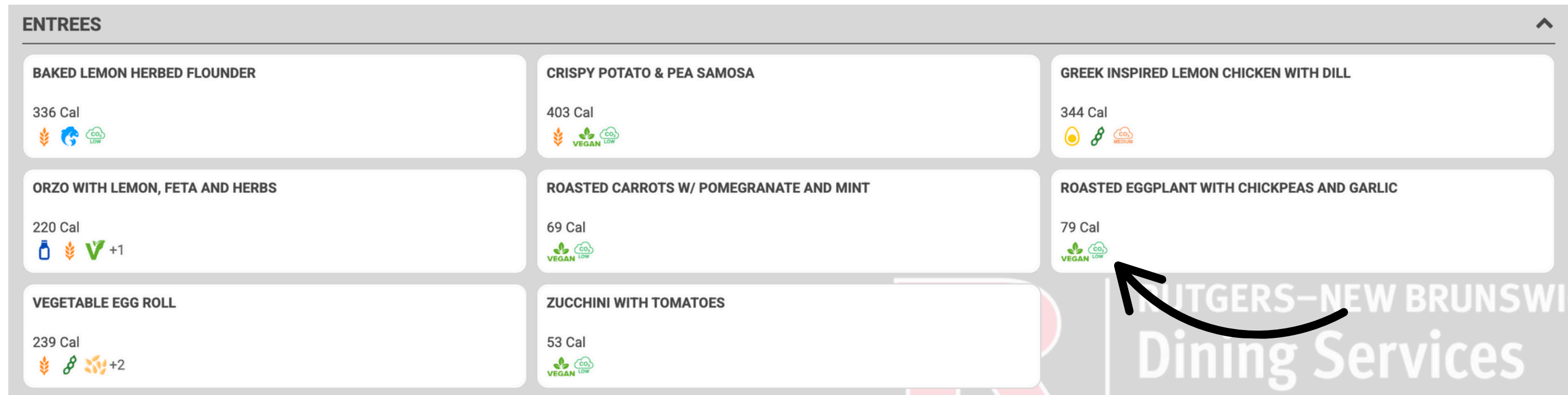
In 2024, as part of an ongoing sustainable menu initiative, Dining Services added carbon footprint icons to online menu entrees served in the four main dining facilities.

The carbon footprint icons act as an educational tool to help students make more sustainable food choices. The icons also serve as a metric for tracking menu sustainability over time.



Climate Labeling in Action

See the Climate Icons in action on Dining Service's online menus and on the digital labels found in person at the Busch Dining Hall.



-- ENTREES --

- BAKED LEMON HERBED FLOUNDER
 - GREEK INSPIRED LEMON CHICKEN WITH DILL
 - ORZO WITH LEMON, FETA AND HERBS
 - ROASTED CARROTS W/ POMEGRANATE AND MINT
 - ROASTED EGGPLANT WITH CHICKPEAS AND GARLIC
- A black arrow points from the "ROASTED CARROTS W/ POMEGRANATE AND MINT" item to a digital label in the background.



Filter Menu Items by Sustainability

Filters and Highlights

Dietary Preferences
Choose your dietary preference(s). Vegan: Plant-based, no animal products. Vegetarian: No meat, poultry, or fish. Items that meet your chosen preference(s) will be highlighted in yellow on the menu.

Sustainability
Use these icons to filter by environmental impact. Low Carbon: Environmentally friendly choices. Medium Carbon: Moderate environmental impact. High Carbon: Higher environmental impact. Menu items matching your selection(s) will be highlighted in yellow.

Clear all

*Consumer Responsibility. Ingredients and nutritional content may vary. Manufacturers may change their product formulation or consistency of ingredients without our knowledge, and product availability may fluctuate. While we make every effort to identify ingredients, we cannot assure against these contingencies. Therefore, it is ultimately the responsibility of the consumer to judge whether or not to question ingredients or choose to eat selected foods. Food-allergic guests and those with specific concerns should speak with a

Filters Messages Print Carb Counts

SOUPS

DELI BAR ENTREE

EGG SALAD
275 Cal
🥚 🌱 +1

ENTREES

BAKED LEMON HERBED FLOUNDER
336 Cal
🌱 🌿 🌿 +1

ORZO WITH LEMON, FETA AND HERBS
220 Cal
🌱 🌿 +1

GREEK INSPIRED LEMON CHICKEN WITH DILL
344 Cal
🥚 🌱 🌿

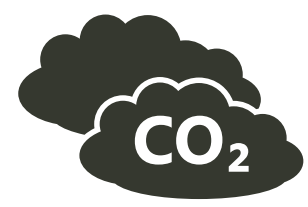
ROASTED EGGPLANT WITH CHICKPEAS AND GARLIC
79 Cal
🌱 🌿

1. Select the **“Filters”** button on menu tool bar.
2. Select the **“Low Carbon Footprint”** option under Sustainability.
3. View the most sustainable menu items, which will now be **highlighted in yellow** on the online menu.



Environmental Benefits of Buying Local

Dining Services **primarily** sources and purchases **local foods**



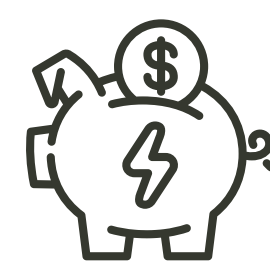
Reduces CO2 Emissions

Purchasing local food reduces CO2 emissions by reducing food miles — the distance food travels from farm to consumer



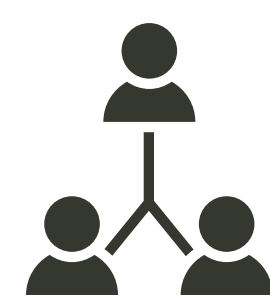
Preserves Green Space

Supporting local farmers helps preserve green space within the community



Aids The Local Economy

Purchasing local food aids the local economy and helps keep local producers in business



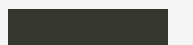
Creates Community

Local food creates community and helps to build meaningful human connections

Sustainability Within Operations

DINING SERVICES EMPLOYS MULTIPLE SUSTAINABILITY PRACTICES WITHIN ITS FOODSERVICE OPERATIONS AND DINING SPACES

This includes kitchens that support energy and water efficient equipment, environmentally friendly food waste management systems, and landfill reducing programs, to name a few.





Reusable Bags + Bottles

Rutgers Dining Services strives to **'Feed People, Not Landfills.'**

Bags & Bottles

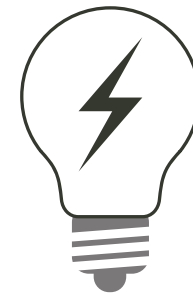
During many Dining Services events, including New Student Orientations, **reusable bags and bottles are provided** to students. Plastic bags and paper cups are no longer provided at takeout locations.

- Using reusable bottles helps **save cups, straws and lids from going into landfills**
- Switching to reusable bags on average **saves 300,000 bags** from going to landfills per semester

LED Light Bulbs

Dining Services stopped buying incandescent light bulbs and instead, uses LED (light-emitting diode) bulbs whenever possible

Benefits of LEDs



Energy Efficient

- Can reduce energy use by >80%
- Efficient lighting demands **less electricity**, helping to **reduce power plant emissions**



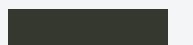
Long Lifespan

- Can last about 25 times longer
- LEDs are replaced less often, producing **less waste** and helping to **conserve resources**



Food Waste Digesters

- In order to help reduce food waste sent to landfills, Dining Services rents **5 Food Waste Digesters**
- **Food waste is broken down by enzymes** and converted into environmentally friendly **“liquid waste”** that safely enters the sewer system
- **Most food waste** generated by the kitchens at **Busch Dining Hall, Livingston Dining Commons,** and **Henry’s Diner** is currently being “digested”

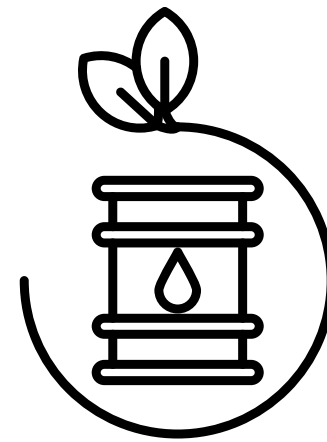




Renewable Energy Source



- **Food waste is picked up** at all of our operations in **Student Centers** across the New Brunswick Campus as well as the **Neilson Dining Hall**.



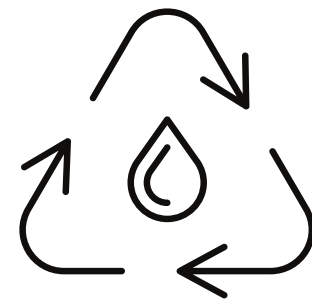
- This food waste is taken to a **composting facility** where **biofuels are generated and put back into the energy grid**.

Bulk Oil Recycling Program

Dining Services will be partnering with Restaurant Technologies to install closed-loop automated oil management systems in three of our facilities, Busch and Neilson Dining Halls and The Atrium.

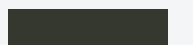
Benefits Include:

- **Reduction of landfill waste** by discontinuing the need for 35lb plastic containers of fryer oil.
- In 2018 Restaurant technologies automated oil systems helped **eliminate more than 13.6 million plastic jugs from going into landfills.**
- **Recycled oil** will be **turned into biodiesel** by Restaurant Technologies



Food Recovery Program

- Dining Services makes the most of all foods purchased by **efficiently producing quantities needed** to feed the thousands of students in the dining halls on a daily basis
- When any extra wholesome, edible foods remain, not suitable for future menu offering, Dining Managers **collect and provide these portions to recognized agencies to feed those in need**
- By redirecting extra food portions to locally recognized agencies', **Dining supports local community feeding programs and reduces environmental impact**



How Can You Help?

As members of the Rutgers Community, we all have the responsibility and opportunity to take action and make changes that benefit our shared environment

Daily Sustainability Practices



Dietary Actions



Reduce Food Waste



Reuse & Recycle

DIETARY ACTIONS

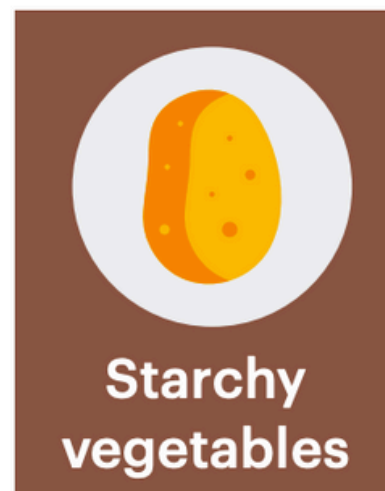
“Transformation to healthy diets by 2050 will require substantial dietary shifts... A diet rich in plant-based foods and with fewer animal source foods confers both improved health and environmental benefits.”



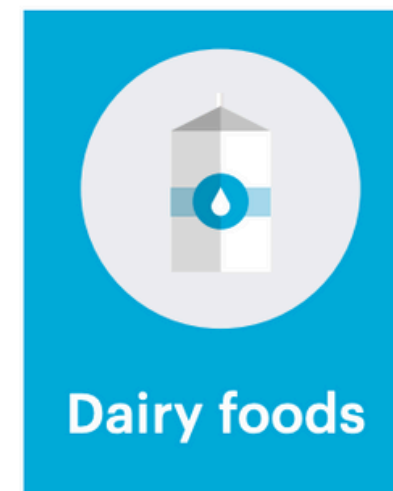
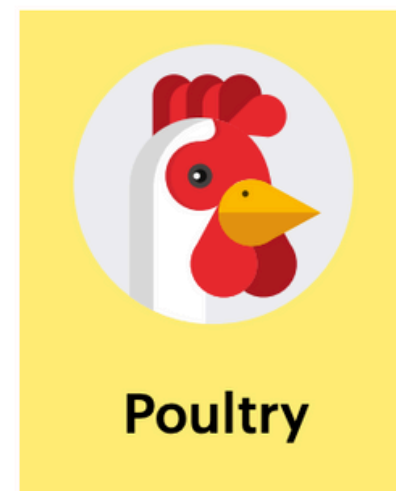
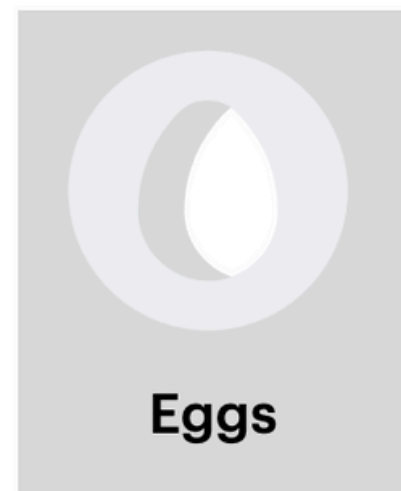
The Planetary Health Diet:

For Human Health & Environmental Sustainability

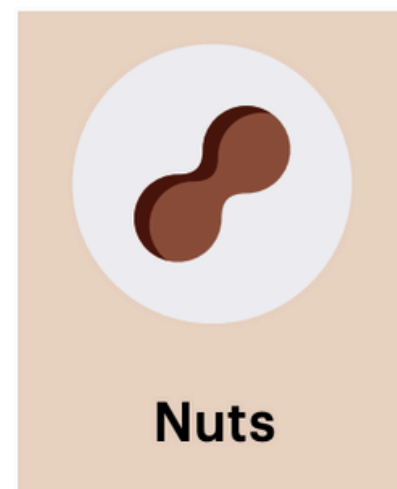
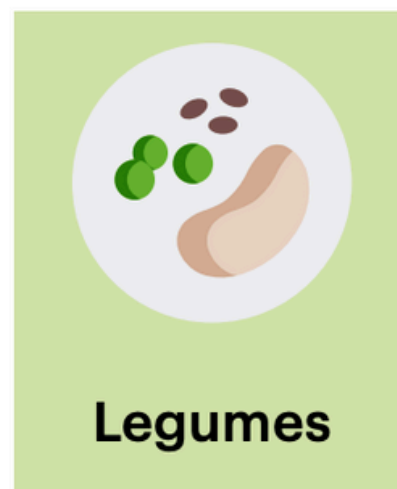
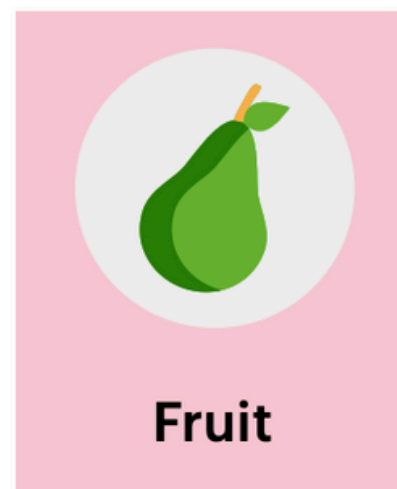
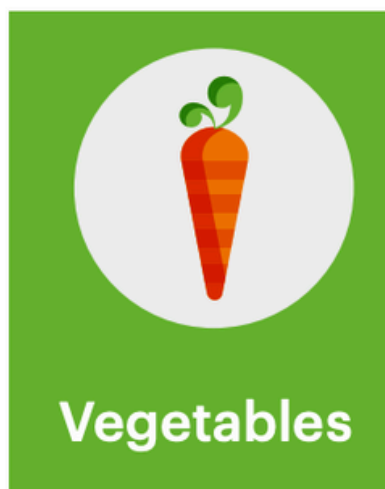
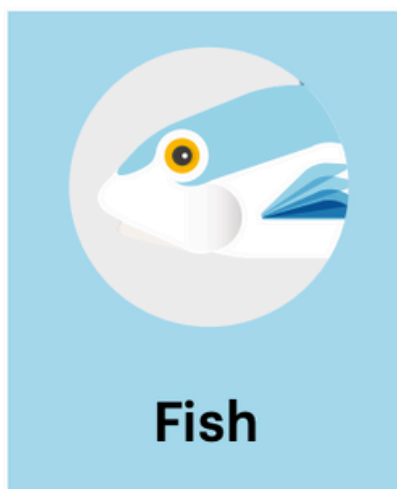
Limited intake



Optional foods



Emphasized foods



The EAT-Lancet Commission recommends a diet that **emphasizes plant foods** and **limits animal products** for promotion of **both health and environmental welfare**

**AMONG 80
SOLUTIONS FOR
REVERSING
GLOBAL
WARMING,
PLANT-
FORWARD DIETS
IS RANKED
NUMBER FOUR**

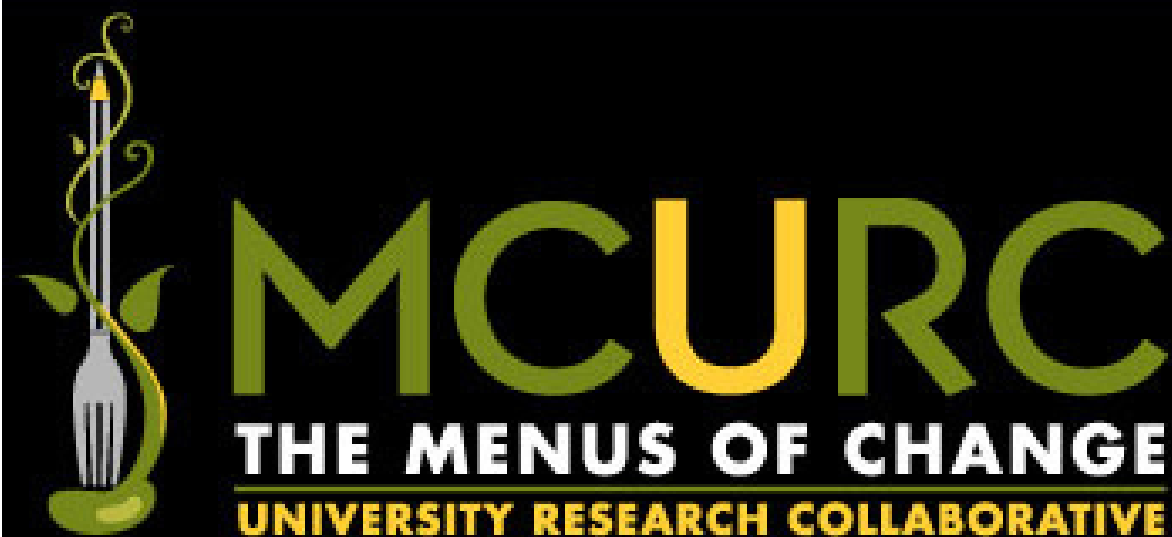




Plant-Forward Defined

“A style of cooking and eating that emphasizes and **celebrates, but is not limited to, foods from plant sources**—fruits and vegetables (produce), whole grains, legumes (pulses), nuts and seeds, plant oils, and herbs and spices—and **reflects evidence-based principles of health and sustainability.**” -Menus of Change

PROUD MEMBER



www.moccollaborative.org

Dining Services is a member of Menus of Change, which works towards many of the same health and sustainability goals as outlined by EAT-Lancet

“7 of the top 10 leading causes of death in the United States are from chronic diseases. **Eating a diet rich in fruits and vegetables daily can help reduce the risk of many leading causes of illness and death,** including heart disease, type 2 diabetes, some cancers, and obesity.”



Tips for Eating Sustainably within Dining Services



Try dairy alternatives, such as soy or almond milk



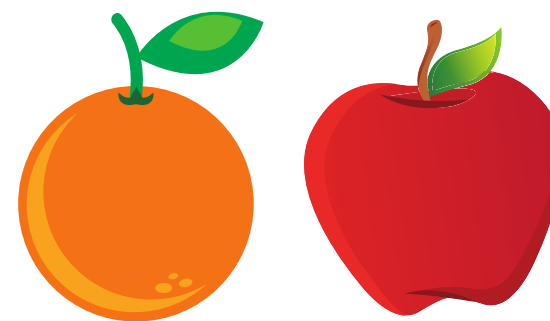
Swap red meat for plant-proteins (think: soy products, beans, lentils, nuts and seeds)



Fill half your plate with colorful vegetables



Choose whole, intact grains more often (think: brown rice, quinoa, and farro)



Grab a piece of fresh fruit on your way out for a quick snack later on








Fill up a reusable bottle at the filtered water stations to stay hydrated

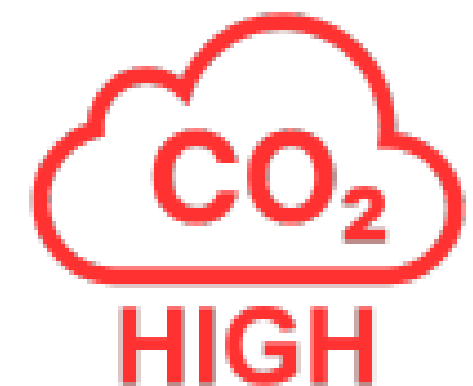
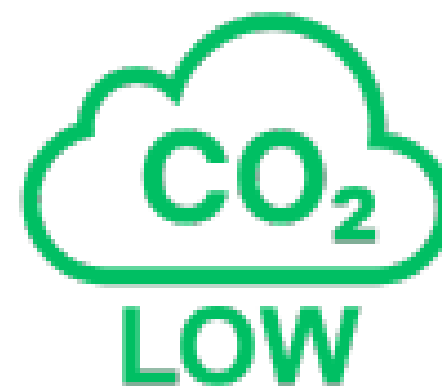
Climate Labeling on Online Menus

Use the Carbon Footprint Icons to make sustainable entree choices

- In 2024, Dining Services added carbon footprint icons to online menu entrees served in three of the main dining facilities.
- Try choosing **more** items with the **green** low carbon footprint icon and **less** items with the **red** high carbon footprint icon to make a sustainable impact.

-- ENTREES --

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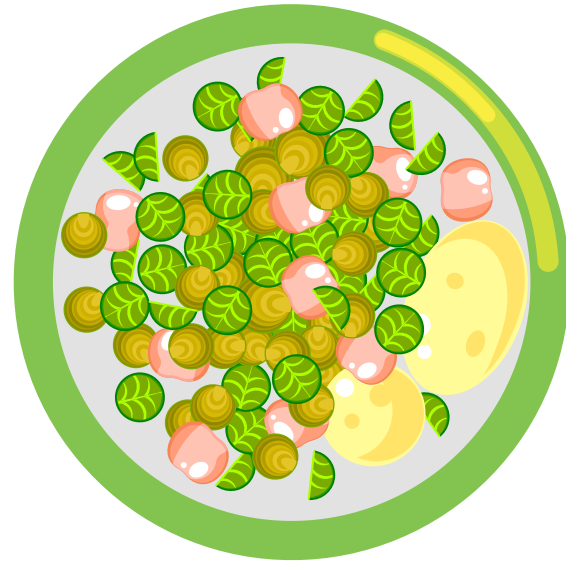
LET'S TALK TRASH

"IN THE UNITED STATES, **OVER ONE-THIRD OF ALL AVAILABLE FOOD GOES UNEATEN** THROUGH LOSS OR WASTE."

Uneaten food **wastes natural resources** such as energy, nutrients, and water



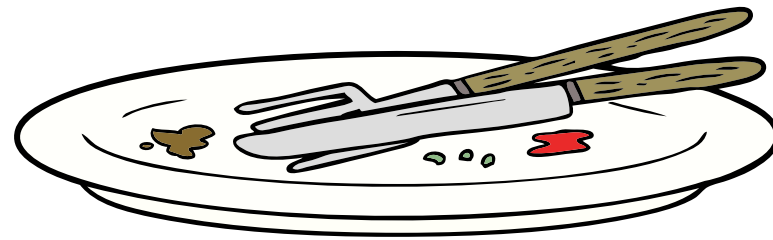
Tips for Avoiding Food Waste While Dining



1

Take Less

Avoid food waste by starting with smaller portions and opting for one plate of food at a time.



2

Assess Hunger

It can take about 15-20 minutes for your brain to realize your stomach is full. Take a break and reassess hunger before grabbing seconds.

Tip: stomach growling and feelings of emptiness are common hunger signs.



3

Store Extras

Take out portions too large for you to finish? Skip the trash can by properly storing leftovers in your fridge for later.

REDUCE, REUSE & RECYCLE

"REDUCING, REUSING, AND
RECYCLING CAN HELP
YOU, YOUR COMMUNITY,
AND THE ENVIRONMENT
BY SAVING MONEY,
ENERGY, AND NATURAL
RESOURCES"



Ways to Reduce, Reuse & Recycle with Dining Services



- Use **reusable bags and bottles** at take-out locations
- Bonus eco-points for using reusable over single use utensils



- **Limit buying single-use plastics** like bottled drinks & packaged snacks from vending machines
- Instead, fill up your reusable bottle and grab a piece of fruit before leaving the dining hall



- **Eat inside the dining halls** instead of getting take-out to avoid disposable containers and utensils
- Remember, take only what you need to prevent extra food and napkins from becoming waste



- Remember to **recycle your cans, bottles, plastics, and cardboard** after you finish eating take-out or packaged items

“You cannot get through a single day without having an impact on the world around you. **What you do makes a difference**, and you have to decide what kind of difference you want to make.”

- JANE GOODALL

**Let's make
a difference
together.**



Contact Us

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<http://food.rutgers.edu/>

