

Joint Letter to The Climate Group and the City of New York on Corporate Influence at Climate Week NYC

September 29, 2022

Dear Climate Week NYC Organizers,

On behalf of the undersigned organizations, we're calling on the Climate Group and the City of New York to commit to ensuring that Climate Week NYC is based on the best available science for real-world climate action and does not promote industry-driven false solutions.

For 14 years, Climate Week NYC has gained attention as a global event to drive urgent action in the face of the climate crisis. But the continued inclusion of industry-sponsored events promoting beef as a climate solution calls into question whether Climate Week represents an ambitious path forward or merely an opportunity for polluter propaganda. The Climate Week 2022 session *Choosing a climatarian diet: the case for including beef* underscores the risk of corporate influence distorting the conversation, misleading attendees and overshadowing the positive work featured at the event. We were disappointed to see an event blatantly promoting climate-intensive beef featured on the agenda, especially in light of the success of the Eat for Climate Week program, which recognizes the climate benefits of shifting away from high meat consumption.

Beef production is a leading driver of agricultural emissions. Two-thirds of agricultural emissions come from grazing livestock, with cattle responsible for the largest contribution.ⁱ Globally, about one-third of methane emissions come from livestock, primarily cattle.ⁱⁱ Animal agriculture is the largest source of methane in the United States, driven by enteric fermentation from cattle.ⁱⁱⁱ The IPCC has acknowledged the urgency of addressing greenhouse gas emissions from food and agriculture in order to meet climate goals.^{iv} Reducing beef consumption and production is the most important step we can take to rapidly reduce diet-related emissions.

While animal agriculture practices vary widely, the evidence indicates that even the most promising efforts toward carbon sequestration or methane reduction cannot be broadly applied,^v provide minimal emissions reductions at best, and come with environmental trade-offs such as increased land use. According to Project Drawdown, shifting toward plant-rich diets is the third most impactful climate solution, with the potential to reduce more emissions than practices like improved manure management, improved cattle feed, managed grazing, and silvopasture can achieve combined.^{vi}

In fact, without significant reductions in beef consumption and production, these practices are not feasible without devastating consequences for ecosystems and the climate. One study estimated that if the entire U.S. beef supply were converted to grass-fed production, existing pasture land could only support 27% of current demand and, due to the necessary increased herd size, total U.S. methane emissions would rise by 8%.^{vii}

Yet panels like the one sponsored by the National Cattlemen's Association promote false solutions by failing to address the overwhelming evidence of beef's role in the climate and extinction crises, the limitations of cattle as a climate solution, and the fact that none of the proposed best practices are feasible without dietary shifts toward plant-based eating.

Climate Week NYC has the potential to bring together communities, businesses, and government to advance urgent solutions to the climate crisis. But this can only be achieved if the event agenda is free from corporate influence. While we understand that corporate sponsorships may be necessary to make this event possible, we urge you to take the following steps to ensure evidence-based, transparent dialogue at Climate Week 2023:

- a) Appoint an independent review board of climate scientists, non-governmental organizations and community leaders to review and approve event programming.
- b) End corporate and industry sponsorships of specific official Climate Week sessions, including presentations and panel discussions.
- c) Align food and agriculture panels with the values of Eat for Climate Week by emphasizing the solutions to aid the shift toward climate-friendly plant-rich diets.

Representatives from our organizations are available to provide further information and work with you on implementing these solutions.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

50by40
A Well-Fed World
Biggest Little Plant Pod, Northern Nevada
Brighter Green
Center for Biological Diversity
Coalition for Healthy School Food
Eat for the Earth
Eat Wisely
Fair Start Movement
FOUR PAWS USA
Green Rev Institute
Meat Free Monday Korea
Physicians Against Red Meat (PhARM)
Plant Based Capital Region
Plant Based Nutrition Movement
Plant Pod Cymru (Plant Pure Communities)
Plant-Based Eating Advocates
ProVeg International
RealFoodSystems.org
Salt Lake Thrive

SEED: Strategies for Ethical and Environmental Development, Inc.
The Lentil Intervention
The Planetary Health Collective
The Raven Corps
World Animal Aid
World Animal Protection

ⁱ FAO. 2020. Livestock and environment statistics: manure and greenhouse gas emissions. Global, regional and country trends, 1990–2018. FAOSTAT Analytical Brief Series No. 14. Rome.

ⁱⁱ United Nations Environment Programme and Climate and Clean Air Coalition. 2021. Global Methane Assessment: Benefits and Costs of Mitigating Methane Emissions. Nairobi: United Nations Environment Programme.

ⁱⁱⁱ The White House. 2021. The White House Office of Domestic Climate Policy, U.S. Methane Emissions Reduction Action Plan 6. <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wpcontent/uploads/2021/11/US-Methane-Emissions-Reduction-Action-Plan-1.pdf> (citing EPA, Inventory of U.S. Greenhouse Gas Emissions and Sinks: 1990-2019 (2021)).

^{iv} IPCC. 2019. Summary for Policymakers. In: Climate Change and Land: an IPCC special report on climate change, desertification, land degradation, sustainable land management, food security, and greenhouse gas fluxes in terrestrial ecosystems. [P.R. Shukla, J. Skea, E. Calvo Buendia, V. Masson-Delmotte, H.- O. Pörtner, D. C. Roberts, P. Zhai, R. Slade, S. Connors, R. van Diemen, M. Ferrat, E. Haughey, S. Luz, S. Neogi, M. Pathak, J. Petzold, J. Portugal Pereira, P. Vyas, E. Huntley, K. Kissick, M. Belkacemi, J. Malley, (eds.)].

^v Garnett, Tara, Cécile Godde, Adrian Muller, Elin Rööös, Pete Smith, Imke de Boer, E. K. H. J. zu Ermgassen et al. "Grazed and confused." *Food climate research network* 127 (2017): 522.

^{vi} Project Drawdown. 2020. "Table of Solutions." February 5, 2020. <https://www.drawdown.org/solutions/table-of-solutions>

^{vii} Hayek, Matthew N., and Rachael D. Garrett. "Nationwide shift to grass-fed beef requires larger cattle population." *Environmental Research Letters* 13, no. 8 (2018): 084005.