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How Green Is Your Menu?

A new report compares the environmental footprint of 19 common catering options. The numbers may surprise you.

[Sue Hatch](#) | Dec 04, 2019

Arguably one of the most significant conventions of the year, COP25, is underway in Madrid. The Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Convention on Climate Change is a global summit that convenes annually to build consensus around how to respond to the world's climate emergency. While its big-picture negotiations on greenhouse gas emissions and other issues continue through December 13, it's a good time to consider what steps can be taken to reduce the carbon footprint of meetings and conventions. A new report from the Center for Biological Diversity on the positive impact of plant-based catering can help.

Understanding that food production—especially meat and dairy production—produces about 30 percent of the world's greenhouse gas emissions, and that catering sales topped \$11 billion in 2018, the Center researched the environmental impact of common event menus and their plant-based alternatives. What researchers found was remarkable.

According to the Center's report, [Catering to the Climate](#), replacing conventional menu choices with a "low-impact" menu at events with 500 attendees can save "five acres of habitat from animal agriculture, avoid greenhouse emissions equivalent to those created by driving a car 22,000 miles, prevent 17 tons of manure pollution, and conserve nearly 100,000 gallons of water from irrigation and food processing." The report includes a chart (below) that compares the environmental costs of menu items in terms of the land and water used to produce them, and the amount of CO₂ generated.