



May 5, 2021

Senator Alessandra Biaggi
New York State Senate
via jonesjj@nysenate.gov; reppy@nysenate.gov

Assemblymember Patricia Fahy
New York State Assembly
via egloffj@nyassembly.gov

Re: SUPPORT for S. 740/A. 6241

Dear Honorable Senator Biaggi and Assemblymember Fahy,

On behalf of the Center for Biological Diversity - and our 87,186 New York state members and supporters – I thank you for the introduction of S. 740 and A. 6241, which would track greenhouse gas emissions from New York’s food purchases and commit to reduce these emissions by 25% by 2030. The Center strongly **supports** this legislation.

The Center for Biological Diversity is a leading, international conservation nonprofit with nearly 2 million members and supporters. Our expertise is grounded in a staff of scientists and legal experts tackling crucial issues like climate change and effective mitigation strategies. Food emissions are a substantial part of global and national human-induced greenhouse gas emissions.

Studies show we cannot meet climate mitigation targets without tackling emissions from the food and agriculture sector, and namely by shifting diets toward lower emissions foods. The agriculture sector accounts for as much as [37%](#)¹ of global greenhouse gas emissions. This legislation recognizes that New York state food procurement is an important opportunity to reduce consumption-driven emissions.

Each year, New York State spends hundreds of millions of dollars on food procurement but does not track the greenhouse gas emissions associated with these foods or ensure that purchasing is aligned with the state’s strong climate goals.

The proposed legislation will build on a long-established New York framework of using procurement to support environmental goals. Asking state agencies and public universities to report on emissions related to food purchasing and to reduce those emissions by 25% by 2030 is in line with similar efforts made regarding recycled and sustainable products and local food. New York University, for example, along with other institutions, representing a total of 940 million meals, is already tracking food-related emissions, and has committed to a 25% reduction by 2030.

Most emissions come from only a few types of foods. The foods with the highest emissions are [meat and dairy](#) products.² Meat and dairy products are responsible for approximately half of all food-related emissions. The overproduction (and consumption) of meat and dairy come with a high cost to the

¹ Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (2019). Special Report on Climate Change and Land Use. <https://www.ipcc.ch/srccl/>.

² Our World in Data (2020). Environmental Impacts of Food Production. <https://ourworldindata.org/food-choice-vs-eating-local>

[climate](#),³ as well as to [water](#)⁴, [land](#)⁵, and [biodiversity](#)⁶. Tracking institutional food purchases and shifting toward climate-friendly foods is a crucial climate solution that also has health and other environmental benefits.

The [2018 Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change](#)⁷ affirmed that we have only a decade left to avoid irreversible climate damage. New York must do all it can to mitigate the emissions associated with our government's own operations, including our food purchasing.

New York could meet a 25% reduction goal by reducing food waste and with a moderate shift toward climate-friendly menus. Meat and dairy production are responsible for [16%](#)⁸⁹ of global greenhouse gases. This fact has led states, municipalities, and even national guidelines to include meat and dairy reductions as key factors in emissions reductions and sustainability policies.

Sustainable food policies can also increase climate resilience, help eradicate poverty, improve public health and equity, and protect biodiversity. The urgency of these issues and the health of the planet demand action to transform destructive, industrial, and unsustainable food systems. Yet the need to address overconsumption and overproduction of animal-based foods remains largely absent from climate commitments. This is an opportunity for New York to be a climate leader.

In short, S. 740/A. 6241 is a critical step forward in addressing New York's food-related emissions. The Center for Biological Diversity **strongly supports** this legislation.

Sincerely,

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³ University of Michigan. Center for Sustainable Systems (2017). Carbon Footprint Factsheet.

http://css.umich.edu/sites/default/files/Carbon%20Footprint_CSS09-05_e2020_0.pdf.

⁴ Water Footprint Network (2021). Water Footprint of Crop and Animal Products: A Comparison.

<https://waterfootprint.org/en/water-footprint/product-water-footprint/water-footprint-crop-and-animal-products/>.

⁵ Carbon Brief (2021). Interactive: What is the Climate Footprint of Eating Meat and Dairy? CarbonBrief.org.

<https://interactive.carbonbrief.org/what-is-the-climate-impact-of-eating-meat-and-dairy/>.

⁶ Center for Biological Diversity (2021). Extinction Facts. TakeExtinctionOffYourPlate.com.

⁷ Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (2018). Special Report on Global Warming of 1.5c. <https://www.ipcc.ch/sr15/>.

⁸ Calculated using the 2017 online update to the FAO 2013 GLEAM assessment that estimates the livestock sector emitted 8.1 GT CO₂eq in 2010 (using 298 and 34 as global warming potentials for N₂O and CH₄, based on the IPCC 2014 report). The IPCC 2014 report estimates total anthropogenic GHG emissions in 2010 of 49 GT CO₂eq. See: FAO, Global Livestock Environmental Assessment Model (GLEAM) [online], Rome, www.fao.org/gleam/en/ and IPCC [Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change], Climate Change 2014: Synthesis Report. Contribution of Working Groups I, II and III to the Fifth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, [Core Writing Team, R.K. Pachauri & L.A. Meyer (eds.)], IPCC, Geneva, Switzerland (2014), http://www.ipcc.ch/pdf/assessment-report/ar5/syr/SYR_AR5_FINAL_full_wcover.pdf.

⁹ Gerber, P. J., Steinfeld, H., Henderson, B., Mottet, A., Opio, C., Dijkman, J., ... & Tempio, G. (2013). Tackling climate change through livestock: a global assessment of emissions and mitigation opportunities. Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO). <http://www.fao.org/3/i3437e/i3437e.pdf>.