

School Food & the Environment



www.healthyschoolfood.org * 914-630-0199

School meals are almost always based on animal products.

The [United Nations Food and Agricultural Organization 2006 report "Livestock's Long Shadow"](#) states that raising animals for food causes more global warming than all transportation combined, causing 18% of all global warming. The newest report on global warming and animal product consumption by the World Bank, [Livestock and Climate Change: What if the Key Actors in Climate Change Are... Cows, Pigs, and Chickens?](#) released in November 2009, states that previous figures were severely underestimated and that the **production of animals and their products for food contributes to a whopping 51% of global warming**. A plant based diet has the smallest environmental footprint. Meanwhile, a new analysis of previous research on cancer and diet states "Most of our foods should come from plant sources" since 35% of cancer deaths are caused by diet, and we know from peer reviewed medical research published in major medical journals that heart disease and type 2 diabetes can be reversed with a very low fat vegetarian diet. When we think about the environment, it's important to consider the environmental impact of animal based foods, which cause more environmental destruction and greenhouse gas emissions than all the other environment/food related issues, including those listed below, combined.

School meals contain a great deal of highly processed foods.

The closer foods are to the way they are grown, the healthier and more eco-friendly they are.

Farm to School programs support good health and farmers.

When children eat fresh local food, it tastes better. Farm to school programs are growing but please encourage your school to participate by purchasing from local farmers!

School Gardens teach an appreciation for nature and good food.

Children who grow food gain an appreciation for nature and where food comes from, and are much more likely to try it. Turning the garden bounty into a meal results in higher meal participation.

Schools use disposable trays and utensils.

This costs less than maintaining a washing machine and paying a staff person to wash the dishes. Multiply all the trays and utensils by all the students for every school day! In NYC, it's approximately 153 million trays per year, and at least that many utensils. See www.sosnyc.org, a site dedicated to eliminating Styrofoam waste in NYC schools.

School food travels many food miles.

There is currently no financial or legal incentive in place to encourage local and organic foods.

Get involved with your local school system to encourage foods that are healthy and local!