

December 11<sup>th</sup>, 2024

Honorable Governor Wes Moore and Honorable Lieutenant Governor Aruna Miller  
100 State Circle  
Annapolis, Maryland 21401-1925

Dear Governor Moore and Lieutenant Governor Miller:

On behalf of the undersigned organizations and their members and supporters in Maryland, we are writing to urge you to leverage the State of Maryland's immense food purchasing power to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and expand healthy, climate-friendly food options for Marylanders. To achieve the state's ambitious climate targets, we must utilize every tool available, including practical, cost-effective shifts in food purchasing. Specifically, **we request that the State of Maryland establish a target of reducing emissions from the food it purchases by 25% by 2030.**

In making this commitment, Maryland would fulfill a 2022 recommendation of the Maryland Food System Resiliency Council<sup>1</sup> and join the 75+ institutions and governments who have signed onto the Coolfood Pledge. The Coolfood Pledge is a science-based target to reduce food-related emissions by 25% by 2030. It is an initiative of the World Resources Institute, United Nations Environment Programme, and six other leading climate-focused organizations aimed at curbing the outside climate impact of food procurement, in line with the goals of the Paris Climate Agreement.<sup>2</sup> Some of the pledge's signers include the University of Maryland College Park, Johns Hopkins University<sup>3</sup>, Aramark, and ChristianaCare Union Care (in Elkton), as well as the governments of Washington, DC, and New York City.<sup>4</sup>

We commend your administration's commitment to addressing the climate crisis. We are also enthused that state agencies have recently developed climate implementation plans to reduce Scope 1 and 2 greenhouse gas emissions by 60% below 2006 levels by 2031.<sup>5</sup> While these efforts largely do not address emissions associated with food procurement (classified as Scope 3 or "indirect" emissions<sup>6</sup>), we appreciate that the Maryland Department of General Services (DGS) has recognized this opportunity. In its plan, DGS included a request for a new full-time employee (FTE) for the Green Purchasing Committee to expand green purchasing specifications and tracking to include the climate impacts of food products and waste.

While Maryland does not currently track the emissions associated with food consumed in the state, recent estimates suggest the food system – including agriculture, fisheries, and all stages of the food supply chain through to disposal – accounts for an estimated one-third of greenhouse gas emissions globally.<sup>7,8</sup> A multitude of peer-reviewed scientific studies have warned that we cannot meet the Paris Agreement targets without adopting healthier, plant-rich diets.<sup>9,10,11</sup> Institutional food procurement is a powerful lever that can

help make the sustainable choice the easier, default choice while reducing government spending on food and providing consumers with a wider array of health-promoting options.<sup>12</sup> **Maryland should leverage the millions of dollars it spends on food to advance climate goals and expand healthy choices for Marylanders relying on public foodservice.**

In recent years, there has been a growing movement for values-based food procurement, which seeks to align government purchasing with policy goals including climate mitigation, worker well-being, equity, public health, and resilient local and community-based economies. This is a promising and feasible strategy for Maryland. **Shifting some of the foods purchased by the state—primarily for healthcare facilities, correctional facilities, and public universities — to more climate-friendly options offers a clear path to reduce food-related emissions and achieve co-benefits for health and cost savings.** Shifting just a fraction of animal-based foods to plant-based proteins could achieve multiple benefits for the state. A 2019 analysis of menus provided by the Maryland Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services (DPSCS) found promising results: Reducing emissions by 25% for the 25 million meals per year provided in Maryland’s state correctional facilities alone would save over 43,700 metric tons of CO<sub>2</sub>e per year, or the equivalent of taking 10,416 cars off the road.<sup>13,14</sup> The analysis also found that people who are incarcerated and receiving meat-based meals are receiving twice the weekly maximum amount of meat, poultry, and eggs recommended by the *Dietary Guidelines for Americans*.<sup>15</sup> Shifting to a more climate-friendly, plant-forward menu would also increase alignment with nutrition recommendations to consume diets high in whole grains, fruits, vegetables, legumes, seeds, and nuts and low in red and processed meat.<sup>16</sup> It would also create more inclusive menus for Marylanders following religious diets, who are lactose-intolerant, or have other dietary restrictions.

**Shifting some of the foods purchased by the state—primarily for healthcare facilities, correctional facilities, and public universities — to more climate-friendly options offers a clear path to reduce food-related emissions and achieve co-benefits for health and cost savings.** Climate-friendly food purchasing can be a cost-saving strategy that will allow the state to reach its goals around procuring local foods through the Maryland Certified Local Farm Enterprise Program. For example, when Oakland Unified School District shifted some of their animal product purchases toward plant-based options, they achieved a 14% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions and were able to direct cost savings toward locally produced meat, dairy, and produce.<sup>17</sup> Even after those investments, they saved \$42,000 per year on food costs and increased student meal satisfaction. DPSCS also reported lower per-meal costs on vegetarian meals relative to meat-based meals, suggesting that cost savings could be reinvested in higher quality, locally sourced meat, dairy, and produce for incarcerated Marylanders.<sup>18</sup>

We also already have leaders doing this work in Maryland. The University of Maryland College Park has been tracking its food-related GHG emissions since 2019 and has reduced its per-plate emissions by 16% from their baseline. Further, there is precedent in

Maryland for using public procurement to support environmental and social values. For example, state agencies give preference to recycled paper, compost on public lands, locally grown foods, and American-made goods. Your administration also issued Executive Order 01.01.2023.03 to increase economic opportunity and participation for minority and women-owned firms in state government procurement.<sup>19</sup>

In conclusion, **we respectfully urge you to establish a target for reducing our state's food purchasing-related emissions by 25% by 2030 and to track and report on progress toward that goal.** Now more than ever, Maryland must be willing to use every tool available to meet the state's ambitious climate targets—and that includes cost-effective shifts in food purchasing. The organizations listed are ready to support you and provide any technical assistance needed to the Department of General Services and other agencies with a role in food procurement.

Thank you for your consideration.

Best Regards,

A Well-Fed World  
Alliance of Nurses for Healthy Environments  
Balanced  
Bethesda Green  
Cedar Lane Unitarian Universalist Environmental Justice Ministry  
Center for Biological Diversity  
Clean Water Action  
DE-MD Synod, ELCA  
Delaware-Maryland Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran in America (ELCA) Creation Care Ministry  
Earthjustice  
Environmental Leadership Program  
Environmental Students Association (at Salisbury University)  
Faith Lutheran Green Team  
Friends of the Earth  
Frederick County Food Council  
HoCo Climate Action  
Indivisible HoCoMD Environmental Action  
Interfaith Partners for the Chesapeake  
Interfaith Power & Light (DC.MD.NoVA)  
Johns Hopkins Center for a Livable Future  
Kate Farm Club  
Less Plastic Please  
Maryland Legislative Coalition  
Maryland Legislative Coalition – Climate Justice Wing  
Maryland Pesticide Education Network

Mobilize Frederick  
Moon Valley Farm  
Montgomery County Food Council  
Potomac Riverkeeper Network  
Salem Lutheran Church  
SMCM Sustainability Club  
St. Mary's College of Maryland Vegetarian Co-op  
Unitarian Universalist Legislative Ministry of Maryland

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<sup>1</sup>Maryland Food System Resiliency Council Interim Report to the Maryland General Assembly (2022). <https://mdem.maryland.gov/Food%20Security%20Council%20Minutes/2022%20FSRC%20Nov.%201%20Report%20-%20Final.pdf>.

<sup>2</sup>Waite, R., Vennard, D., & Pozzi, G. (2019). Tracking Progress Toward the Cool Food Pledge: Setting Climate Targets, Tracking Metrics, Using the Cool Food Calculator, and Related Guidance for Pledge Signatories. Technical Note. World Resources Institute. <https://www.wri.org/research/tracking-progress-toward-cool-food-pledge>

<sup>3</sup> Johns Hopkins University Climate Action and Sustainability Plan (2024). Objective 8.1. [https://sustainability.jhu.edu/wp-content/uploads/2024/10/Final-Sustainability-Plan\\_10.15.24-compressed.pdf](https://sustainability.jhu.edu/wp-content/uploads/2024/10/Final-Sustainability-Plan_10.15.24-compressed.pdf)

<sup>4</sup>Coolfood Pledge: Collective Member Progress through 2023. <https://coolfood.org/news-and-updates/2023-coolfood-pledge-progress/>

<sup>5</sup>Governor of Maryland (2024). Executive Order No. 01.01.2024.19: Leadership by State Government: Implementing Maryland's Climate Pollution Reduction Plan. [https://governor.maryland.gov/Lists/ExecutiveOrders/Attachments/52/EO%2001.01.2024.19%20Leadership%20by%20State%20Government-%20Implementing%20Maryland%27s%20Climate%20Pollution%20Reduction%20Plan\\_Accessible.pdf](https://governor.maryland.gov/Lists/ExecutiveOrders/Attachments/52/EO%2001.01.2024.19%20Leadership%20by%20State%20Government-%20Implementing%20Maryland%27s%20Climate%20Pollution%20Reduction%20Plan_Accessible.pdf)

<sup>6</sup>U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (n.d.). Scope 3 inventory guidance. <https://www.epa.gov/climateleadership/scope-3-inventory-guidance>

<sup>7</sup>Crippa, M., Solazzo, E, Guizzardi, D., Monforti-Ferrario, F., Tubiello, F.N. & Leip, A. (2021). Food systems are responsible for a third of global anthropogenic GHG emissions. *Nature Food* 2, 198–209. <https://doi.org/10.1038/s43016-021-00225-9>

<sup>8</sup>Tubiello, F. N., Rosenzweig, C., Conchedda, G., Karl, K., Gütschow, J. Xueyao, P., Obli-Laryea, G., Wanner, N., Yue Qiu, S. & De Barros, J. (2021). Greenhouse gas emissions from food systems: Building the evidence base. *Environmental Research Letters*, 16(6). <https://doi.org/10.1088/1748-9326/ac018e>

<sup>9</sup>Clark, M.A., Domingo, N.G.G., Colgan, K., Thakrar, S.K., Tilman, D., Lynch, J., Azevedo, I.L. & Hill, J.D. (2021). Global food system emissions could preclude achieving the 1.5° and 2°C climate change targets. *Science* 370,705-708. DOI:10.1126/science.aba7357

<sup>10</sup>Ivanovich, C.C., Sun, T., Gordon, D.R. & Ocko, I.B. (2023). Future warming from global food consumption. *Nat. Clim. Chang.* 13, 297–302. <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41558-023-01605-8>

<sup>11</sup>Springmann, M., Clark, M. Mason-D’Croz, D., Wiebe, K., Bodirsky, B.L., Lassaletta, L., de Vries, W., Vermeulen, S.J., Herrero, M., Carlson, K.M., Jonell, M., Troell, M., DeClerck, F., Gordon, L.J., Zurayk, R., Scarborough, P., Rayner, M., Loken, B., Fanzo, J., ....Willett, W. (2018). Options for keeping the food system within environmental limits. *Nature* 562, 519–525. <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41586-018-0594-0>

<sup>12</sup>The Federal Good Food Purchasing Coalition. (2023). Measuring and Modeling Climate, Environmental, and Social Impacts of Federal Food Procurement. <https://www.fedgoodfoodpurchasing.org/resources/impact-analysis-full-report>

<sup>13</sup>EPA Greenhouse Gases Equivalencies Calculator- calculations and references. <https://www.epa.gov/energy/greenhouse-gases-equivalencies-calculator-calculations-and-references>.

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<sup>14</sup>Maryland Food System Resiliency Council Interim Report to the Maryland General Assembly (2022). <https://mdem.maryland.gov/Food%20Security%20Council%20Minutes/2022%20FSRC%20Nov.%201%20Report%20-%20Final.pdf>.

<sup>15</sup>This carbon footprinting analysis was conducted by a Life Cycle Analysis consultant hired by Friends of the Earth, and the full analysis can be shared upon request. It is based on two weeks of menus provided by the Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services. It assumes no back-of-the-house food waste and uses North American data from: Poore, J. & Nemecek, T. (2018). Reducing food's environmental impacts through producers and consumers. *Science* 360 (6392), 987-992. DOI: [10.1126/science.aag0216](https://doi.org/10.1126/science.aag0216).

<sup>16</sup> Johns Hopkins Center for a Livable Future (2022). The Connections Between Diet, People and Planet. <https://clf.jhsph.edu/sites/default/files/2022-02/gmm-the-connections-between-diet-people-and-planet.pdf>

<sup>17</sup> Hamerschlag, K. & Kraus-Polk, J. (2017). Shrinking the Carbon and Water Footprint of School Food: A Recipe for Combating Climate Change. Friends of the Earth. <https://foe.org/resources/shrinking-carbon-water-footprint-school-food/>.

<sup>18</sup> Friends of the Earth (2019). Scaling up healthy, climate-friendly school food: Strategies for success. <https://foe.org/resources/scaling-up-healthy-climate-friendly-school-food/>

<sup>19</sup>Governor of Maryland (2023). Executive Order No. 01.01.2023.03: Reporting of Procurement Activity and Minority Business Enterprise Compliance. [https://governor.maryland.gov/Documents/3544\\_001.pdf](https://governor.maryland.gov/Documents/3544_001.pdf)