

From Farm to Fork: Sustainable Plant-Based Eating



Douglas College respectfully acknowledges that our campuses are located on the unceded traditional and ancestral lands of the Coast Salish Peoples, including the territories of the q̓íć'áy' (Katzie), q'w'a:n̓'ən' (Kwantlen), k'w'ik'w̓əł'əm (Kwikwetlem), x'w̓məθk'w̓əy'əm (Musqueam), and q̓iq'éyt (Qayqayt) First Nations.

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Problem Statement:

The animal agriculture industry is responsible for widespread deforestation, excessive water consumption, and nearly 15% of global greenhouse gas emissions (Conzachi, 2022); yet still, plant-based eating faces resistance due to cultural, economic, and dietary norms.

At Douglas College, where sustainability is a key institutional priority, advertising and promoting the already-present plant-based options should be implemented to see an increased interest in sustainable and healthy foods. A study at the University of Oxford found that adopting a plant-based diet can reduce food-related greenhouse gas emissions by up to 73%, yet without institutional support, many remain hesitant to make the transition (Poore & Nemecek, 2018).

Theoretical Connections:

This study applies Structural Functionalism to explain how traditional food consumption patterns contribute to social cohesion and cultural identity. By understanding how meat consumption serves societal roles, we can address the reasons behind resistance to plant-based diets and develop strategies for change. Structural Functionalism offers a lens to analyze how the persistence of these dietary norms might be sustained by cultural functions, social structures, and economic interests, thus identifying points of intervention for promoting plant-based eating.

Research Question:

How can Douglas College effectively promote plant-based eating to support sustainability goals?

Douglas College Sustainability Policy:

The college's commitment includes contributing to sustainability goals through education, processes, and practices and developing practices and processes that promote long term planning, professional development, mental wellness and adaptability. Through campus-wide education and collaboration with sustainability programs and Indigenous representatives, Douglas College can incorporate raising awareness about the environmental benefits within food menus.

Contribution:

This project is important to administration and students at Douglas College and local community organizations. It can lead to the promotion of plant-based options on campus, contributing to a healthier and more sustainable food culture. Potential partners include NGOs like PBFC- Plant Based Foods of Canada and the DSU- Douglas Students Union. Long-term involvement of these stakeholders can help keep a more sustainable food system, with broader benefits including reduced environmental impact and more community engagement. If successful, the project could serve as a model for other educational institutions.

UN-SDGs:

#13 Climate Action- Expanding plant-based options reduces the college's carbon footprint by lowering emissions from animal agriculture.
#2 Good Health and Well-Being- Increasing plant-based options promotes healthier eating habits.
#15 Life on Land- Reducing reliance on animal products helps prevent deforestation and biodiversity loss.

Action Plan:

Douglas College can expand plant-based options by collaborating with vendors to offer diverse, clearly labeled meals, and sourcing sustainable ingredients from local producers. Educational initiatives like workshops & cooking demos could raise awareness, while surveys would ensure offerings meet student and staff preferences. Marketing campaigns will promote plant-based choices, encouraging a healthier & more sustainable campus dining experience.

Findings:

According to the American Heart Association (2021), plant-based diets lower cholesterol, blood pressure, and inflammation, reducing the likelihood of cardiovascular disease. Adopting plant-based eating can combat climate change by reducing greenhouse gas emissions. Research by Poore and Nemecek (2018) found that shifting to plant-based diets could decrease food-related greenhouse gas emissions by up to 73%; this would significantly lessen the environmental impact of food production.

Literature Review:

American Heart Association. "Plant-Based Diets and Your Heart" *American Heart Association*, 2021.
Conzachi, Karlie. "It May Be Uncomfortable, but We Need to Talk About It: The Animal Agriculture Industry and Zero Waste" *Environmental Center*, University of Colorado Boulder, March 16, 2022.
Poore, Joseph, and Thomas Nemecek. "Reducing food's environmental impacts through producers and consumers." *Science*, vol. 360, no. 6392, 2018.
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United Nations. (n.d.). *Sustainable Development Goals*. United Nations. Retrieved March 21, 2025.