



## Executive Summary

With dramatically rising food costs, mounting concerns over food and agricultural impacts on climate change and growing demands on intense animal farming practices, the window of opportunity to evaluate current dietary trends appears to be ripe.

In 2020 the [Vancouver Humane Society \(VHS\)](#) produced a report evaluating the City of Vancouver's institutional procurement activities. The report included recommendations on a plant-based procurement policy that could improve the City's carbon footprint and reduce animal suffering, all while proving economically efficient. A motion acknowledging the multiple co-benefits of shifting toward increased plant-based procurement and to explore policy recommendations outlined in the VHS's report was approved unanimously by Vancouver's City Council in 2021.

The Vancouver Humane Society is now applying a similar lens in researching *individual consumer habits* across BC residents – specifically in the Lower Mainland – and presenting the learnings and recommendations in this report.

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The VHS is looking to understand BC (Lower Mainland specifically) residents' dietary behaviours and attitudes as they pertain to animal-based and plant-based foods, and make recommendations on how individuals can reduce emissions, save animal lives, and save on their grocery bills with small or significant changes in their diets.

### The Research

The VHS designed and distributed a survey pertaining to food consumption habits, attitudes toward plant-based diets, and perspectives on rising food costs to BC residents. With data obtained from the survey, calculations were conducted to understand financial costs and greenhouse gas emissions associated with typical respondent diets. Models replacing 25%, 50%, or 100% of animal-based products with common plant-based alternatives were then run to understand potential savings across emissions, costs, and animal lives.

### Results

#### **Attitudes and Behaviours:**

The majority of surveyed British Columbians feel the impact of rising prices on their finances and are looking for ways to save on groceries. Most respondents agreed they would consider buying more plant-based alternatives to reduce grocery bills. Two-thirds of respondents acknowledged that they have already reduced their animal product consumption, though primarily for personal health reasons. The top ranked reason for hesitation in consuming plant-based items was concerns for taste and enjoyability of the product or meal.

## **Emissions, Cost and Animal Lives Savings Potential**

A reduction in emissions was experienced when substituting plant-based alternatives for *each* animal-based food type. These savings were most significantly experienced with reductions in beef and seafood products.

Cost savings were seen when replacing *most* (56%) of animal-based food types with plant-based alternatives. Cost savings were also seen most significantly with reductions in beef and seafood products.

Emissions and cost savings were typically greater when plant-based alternatives were whole food options (e.g. lentils), rather than processed items (e.g. nut-based cheeses).

Individual animal life savings were unable to be reliably calculated based on survey results. However, based on Statistics Canada consumption data, it is likely that millions of animal lives could be saved with even small changes in the diets of residents across the province.

## **Recommendations**

The VHS recommends that consumers subscribe to the 3 R's of animal product consumption: Replacement, Reduction and Refinement, with a particular focus on the *Replacement* principle as it provides the greatest potential for ensuring animal

welfare, reducing consumer emissions, and saving costs. Across a diet consisting of equally consumed animal-based products, the VHS would recommend reductions in beef and seafood products to achieve optimal emissions and cost savings. In reducing animal suffering, the VHS recommends that consumers consider the number of animal lives used to supply consumption habits as well as the amount of hardship a particular animal will face in their short lifetime. The VHS recommends that readers evaluate their own dietary habits and utilize the information provided in this report to make informed decisions on how to achieve maximal impacts from any dietary changes.

## **Considerations**

The plant-based alternatives suggested in this report are only meant as examples for potential substitutions for commonly consumed animal-based products. There are many other suitable plant-based options that may achieve varying results across emissions and cost saving potential. Readers are encouraged to select alternatives that appeal most to their preferences, cultures, and budgets, as well as calculate the potential for cost and emissions savings using calculators and documents listed in the *Resources* section of this report.

