

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-0529

January 27, 2015

Dear Colleague:

As Americans take a growing interest in where our food comes from and how it is produced, I am sure you have become keenly aware of the issues associated with animal welfare and the humane treatment of the animals used to feed us. Last year, my staff and I made the decision to join the global Meatless Mondays movement.

Meatless Mondays is not a new idea. During the first half of the 20th Century, particularly throughout the years of World War I and II, millions of American families pledged to observe Meatless Mondays in an effort to conserve resources to support our troops and allies fighting abroad. Now, Meatless Mondays have taken on new significance – our fight against obesity and climate change.

The production of meat employs a tremendously wasteful amount of resources. Raising livestock for food causes the destruction of open space in favor of factory farms, the release of millions of tons of greenhouse gases, and the consumption of valuable drinking water. Research by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) shows the livestock sector contributes to 15 percent of all human-related greenhouse gas emissions. Such findings are behind the FAO position that “Livestock are one of the most significant contributors to today’s most serious environmental problems,” with the United Nations recommending we “Eat less meat, poultry, and fish” as a way to make a difference that can curb climate change. By choosing to go meat-free even one day a week, we can help conservation efforts and take one more action to help mitigate the threat of global climate change.

Meatless Mondays can also help improve our health and wellbeing. In fact, a December 2014 draft of the Department of Agriculture’s new dietary guidelines urged a shift towards more plant-based foods. The American Heart Association says, “Going meatless at a meal every now and then can help you lower your cholesterol and may reduce your risk for cardiovascular diseases.”

The adoption and awareness of Meatless Mondays continues to grow. Some of the nation’s largest school districts, workplaces and public figures are signing up to start the week off by taking a day off from eating meat. Going meat-free means enjoying delicious vegetarian options at restaurants and trying out new recipes at home.

I hope you will join me and my staff in observing Meatless Mondays and I hope that you will encourage our other colleagues to also participate.

Sincerely,



TONY CÁRDENAS
Member of Congress