



PLANTPURE COMMUNITIES FOOD-CLIMATE CONNECTION CAMPAIGN

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COALITION BUILDING INITIATIVE

The Challenge: While greenhouse gas emissions are typically associated with the transportation sector, energy and fossil fuels, studies going back more than 10 years by environmental specialists with the World Bank Group concluded that, when taking full account of land committed to animal agriculture and deforestation, animal agriculture accounts for a major portion of the annual worldwide emissions of greenhouse gases. Yet few know about this report. Indeed, though half the world's population views climate change as a threat, most do not make the connection with their food choices.

The Oct. 2018 [report](#) from the UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) has put the food-climate connection squarely on the public agenda and makes the Food-Climate Connection Campaign particularly timely. The UN IPCC report projects that we have until 2030 to limit global warming to 1.5°C if we wish to avoid a significantly heightened risk of extreme heat, droughts, floods and poverty affecting hundreds of millions of people around the world. In the context of these dire predictions, the report highlights the direct connection between climate change and animal agriculture, [recommending that everyone immediately reduce their consumption of animal products by 30%](#). This report is important, and reflects a growing recognition of the connection between our food choices and climate, but there remains an enormous gap - despite the work many groups have been doing on this issue, it has not yet gained much traction. The time is now ripe to close that gap by building a powerful coalition of organizations and prominent individuals, drawn from both the nutrition/health and environment/climate arenas, to come together and develop a synergistic strategic plan for scaling up the shift away from animal-based food through a plant-based diet.

The 501c3 nonprofit PlantPure Communities (PPC), with its strong roots in the food/nutrition/health arena and a leadership team with a track record of building consensus on thorny environmental issues, is uniquely positioned to serve as the catalyst for such a coalition building process. (See background on PPC below.) To amplify the impact of this growing understanding of the food-climate connection, the coalition building initiative will seek to develop common language, a set of shared principles and a range of synergistic strategies on the basis of which the coalition members will take effective on-the-ground action that produces measurable outcomes.

The importance of having a coalition of both nutrition/health leaders and climate/environmental leaders is that even when people understand that their food choices have a climate impact, they have a hard time taking the very significant step of reducing animal-based meals in their diet, but when the health consequences of eating a meat-heavy diet are added to the equation, it significantly adds to the motivation. The goal of the coalition building initiative is to amplify and shift the public's understanding of both the climate and health impacts of eating a western meat-heavy diet, in particular targeting i) the millions of people suffering from food-borne diseases, such as [diabetes](#), obesity, [heart disease and hypertension](#), and otherwise concerned about their health; and ii) those concerned about climate change. The potential for positive change is enormous.



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Strategy Overview: On Aug. 8, 2018, PPC hosted a [webinar](#) on the climate impacts of our food choices, featuring a dialogue with Nelson Campbell, founder of PlantPure Communities; and Peter Lehner, Senior Strategic Advisor at Earthjustice. The webinar laid the groundwork for the coalition building process, which is bringing key stakeholders together around the basic fact that many of our most urgent problems stem from our animal-based western diet. Potential allies include environmental groups, food/nutrition groups, health groups, farmers, food justice entities, climate justice organizations, hunger advocates, local communities, animal rights groups and science groups, among others.

The coalition building initiative is a one-year process, kicked off in [November 2018](#), culminating in a face-to-face gathering of the core coalition members in May 2019, by invitation only, at the Pocantico Center of the Rockefeller Brothers Fund. Strategic projects will be developed and implemented along the way and into the future.

The coalition building process is expected to involve the following steps:

Step 1: Outreach, Identification of Key Stakeholders & Interviews

Step 2: Development of a Coalition Steering Committee

Step 3: Strategic Questions & Conduct Research to Develop Common Language

Step 4: Development & Adoption of Shared Principles

Step 5: Identification of Strategies & Priorities

Step 6: Implementation of Strategic Priorities by Coalition Member Groups

The Details:

Step 1: Outreach, Identification of Key Stakeholders & Interviews – This will involve outreach to key stakeholders that have national (or international) reach and can bring value to the coalition, such as reputation, membership reach, political acuity, depth on science, etc. PPC will conduct one-on-one discussions to i) identify like-minded and potential like-minded entities to invite to participate in the coalition; ii) clarify obstacles to participation, such as perceived donor resistance for environmental groups; and iii) identify and create a list of key 'leverage points' - i.e., opportunities for impact, such as how to anticipate and address critical news coverage from biased sources, on television, social media and other places the public gets its information.

It will be important to know where the minefields are in order to determine how to work around them. PPC will continually communicate that we are interested in bringing people together to develop new, out-of-the-box and collective thinking that no one person or group can do on their own, a fresh set of eyes with the goal of identifying paths that will create breakthroughs. The underlying assumption here is that all will be enriched and ownership of potential solutions will grow and open doors for successful strategies (and also hopefully greater funding possibilities as funders see how the coalition has been formed and the potential power created).

Step 2: Development of a Coalition Steering Committee - A core group of people will be identified to serve as the Steering Committee who will develop a set of working principles.



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Step 3: Strategic Questions & Conduct Research to Develop Common Language - This step involves the identification of key strategic questions, which might include:

- Addressing discrepancies among various sources that have reported on the GHG emissions/impact of animal agriculture.
- How government policy and political agendas might facilitate or impede progress on food-focused approaches to climate change.
- What are the leverage points for getting the word out? Where might we have impact?

Step 4: Development & Adoption of Shared Principles - A key step will be the generation of principles, largely led by the steering committee, that all coalition members will subscribe to and articulate. Folks will be gathered to discuss (in person and via video calls) the principles. The goal is to develop a large coalition around those principles; and it is also anticipated that some will decline. Once the majority of stakeholder groups sign on, the principles will be adopted, the coalition will be formally created, and each coalition member group will be expected to adopt those principles. Subsequently, the coalition can be enlarged as other stakeholder groups adopt the principles.

Step 5: Identification of Strategies & Priorities - At a face-to-face gathering at the Pocantico Conference Center of the Rockefeller Brothers Fund in May 2019, PPC will produce a white paper, prepared in advance, in which key obstacles and strategic options are laid out, as the backdrop to discussions among coalition groups about what direction(s) might be taken. The goal is to bring people together to help see opportunities for impact with limited resources. This might include: utilizing the power of the masses, such as via a mass procurement initiative; focusing on the future Farm Bill; nationally scaling a successful on-the-ground local initiative; cultivating existing coalition member relationships with mass media, influencers or key constituencies, etc. The gathering will be used to lay out a detailed strategy utilizing the array of opportunities and strengths offered by coalition members. For example, one stakeholder group might have cultivated relationships with mass media and they can take the lead on a specific task; and another group might have a close relationship with doctors, and can activate that constituency.

Step 6: Implementation of Strategic Priorities by Coalition Member Groups

Background on PPC: The 501c3 nonprofit organization, PlantPure Communities, Inc. (PPC), was formed as an outgrowth of the 2015 film, *PlantPure Nation*, produced by Nelson Campbell, which documents the suppression of taxpayer-funded scientific nutrition research conducted by his father, T. Colin Campbell, PhD., as detailed in his book, *The China Study*. The film includes a call-to-action which resulted in hundreds of thousands of people joining groups (known as 'Pods'), and connecting with the PPC Pod Network. The Pods are the backbone of the global grassroots movement, led and supported by PPC, that is helping to shift people from the standard American Diet (SAD) to a whole food, plant-based (WFPB) lifestyle. (The Pods are growing exponentially, with over 150,000 people already participating in 500 Pods, including 50+ Pods outside the U.S.)

PPC offers a wide range of support to strengthen and grow the Pods, including virtual [toolkits](#) used to undertake targeted campaigns covering healthy school lunches, community gardening, vegfests, etc. Pods choose the issue of greatest concern and likely impact, and the toolkits provide the roadmap. Through on-the-ground, locally based actions, the Pods are achieving real change in their communities, and along the way, shifting notions of what is normal. Once they understand the nutrition science, people feel empowered and desperately want to share the health message with family, friends and community.



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It is estimated that each person who moves from the SAD to a WFPB diet brings three people with them. PPC anticipates impacting 1.5 million people in 2020. As the Pods grow, PPC's Advocacy Council is guiding activation of Pod members on local, national and international issues. This includes a global [PPC Restaurant Campaign](#) to increase healthy menu options; targeted activation of the Pods on SNAP (formerly known as food stamps) and state-level legislation; a collaborative initiative to provide nutrition education in medical schools; and this Food-Climate Connection Initiative.

PPC is uniquely positioned to carry out the coalition building initiative because of its growing global network of Pods; its unique connections in the nutrition sphere via Dr. T. Colin Campbell, PhD. (who serves on the PPC Board of Advisors); and also by the track record of its senior management team finding common ground on thorny environmental issues. PPC Executive Director Jody Kass led a consensus-building process which resulted in landmark brownfields legislation in 2003 that is still paying dividends in neighborhoods impacted by toxic waste sites in New York State and beyond. In addition, Allen Zerkin, JD, a professional facilitator out of the Wagner Graduate School of Public Service at New York University with extensive experience coordinating multi-stakeholder coalition- and consensus-building processes, is helping to design and implement this initiative.

Conclusion: The coalition building initiative will bring people together with similar perspectives and interests, even if those are not entirely consistent. The expected outcome is that there will be substantial agreement, and that such agreement will allow for the creation of an active coalition that will carry out strategic projects of significant impact. It is also anticipated that funders (donors and philanthropic foundations) will find the prospects of an ongoing coalition that is committed to working together to be something that is very powerful and worthy of support.

Many of our most urgent problems are interconnected - they stem from our animal-based standard American diet (SAD). If all the people struggling with food-borne chronic disease and all who care about climate, moved toward a plant-based diet, it would improve the immediate and long term prognosis for our planet. People often feel disconnected and powerless to impact climate change; but nothing is more personal than health. Growing the grassroots Pod movement and amplifying the food-climate connection offers true hope for our planet, and it will also significantly improve the health of our population, and greatly shrink healthcare costs.