What is Default Veg?

DefaultVeg is an easy, research-based strategy that helps institutions, businesses, governments, and festivals offer healthier and more sustainable meals. **A DefaultVeg menu makes plant-based food the default option, while giving diners the choice to add or opt-in to meat or dairy upon request.**

Simply by changing the default, consumers are much more likely to choose a plant-based meal, even when meat and dairy options are available. Because DefaultVeg preserves individual choice, diners remain happy—they can still eat what they want—but are "nudged" toward choosing foods that are better for our bodies and for the planet.

WHY DOES THIS WORK?

Whether at the dinner table or in a movie, how food is presented plays a big role in what we choose to eat. Making good choices should be easy, but our norms have, for decades, centered unhealthy and environmentally destructive foods. **Defaults play a huge and often invisible role in our lives.** We tend to go with the status quo, both because it's easier and because it makes us seem more like we belong. In Germany—where citizens have to opt-in to be an organ donor—less than 20% of people are organ donors. Next door in Austria, where everyone is an organ donor by default—and people have to opt out—more than 90% of citizens are organ donors. **Clearly, most people take the path of least resistance and go along with whatever the default is... so let's harness that!**

WHY DEFAULT VEG?

Next to transportation emissions, food choices are our largest environmental impact. Changing how and what we eat is a powerful way to decrease our carbon footprint.

Switching 1,000 meals to DefaultVeg saves an amount of pollution equivalent to driving a passenger vehicle 4,140.9 miles. That means that in one year, **a company with 1,000 employees that serves lunch every weekday can save nearly a million miles of vehicular emissions and about 9 million gallons of water.** That's a larger impact than installing low-flow toilets or solar panels—without any of the upfront investment.

Defaulting to plant-based foods increases their uptake by

60%

decreasing food's carbon footprint by

40%

and water footprint by

24%

Other reasons to default to plant-based meals include:

HEALTH:
Several of the most common health conditions are diet-related, including diabetes and heart disease. **Plant-forward meals can cut healthcare costs and improve employee wellbeing.**

INCLUSIVITY:
Plant-based meals can be eaten by everyone regardless of allergies, intolerances, religious restrictions, or cultural traditions. Approximately 30-50 million US adults experience some degree of lactose intolerance, most of whom are people of color.

FUTURE:
There is a rising population of vegan and vegetarian consumers. Over half of Americans under 30 identify as "flexitarian," and Gen Z drinks 5x more plant-based milk than prior generations.

HOW CAN I IMPLEMENT DEFAULTVEG?

At this pivotal moment, leading institutions are going plant-forward, helping kickstart a new normal. You can too! DefaultVeg can be implemented on your set, on your studio lot, in your office lunches, at meetings, conferences, workshops, or any special event. **Online resources** can walk you through the logistics of menu design, but in the meantime, here are a few key tenets that can help you kickstart the process:

- **Make it Easy:** Make plant-based entrees the default for catered meals. Offer meat and dairy as an "add-on" instead of being built into each offering.

- **Make it Visible:** Place plant-based entrees at the front of buffets and menus. Incorporate plant-based items throughout your menu rather than segregating them.

- **Make it Sound Good:** Use tasty descriptors focused on flavors, textures, and ingredients, rather than focusing on how healthy or vegan it is.

- **Make it Plentiful:** If a full DefaultVeg menu isn't possible, offer 2-3 plant-based dishes for every meat dish served.

Better FOOD FOUNDATION

DefaultVeg is a program of the Better Food Foundation.
Go to betterfoodfoundation.org for more information or contact info@betterfoodfoundation.org