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We surveyed 500 residents of Orange County, California, on their perspective on a policy that would require local government to purchase more plant-based foods as a way of reducing environmental and public health harms.

Takeaways:

- Residents of Orange County overwhelmingly support (71.73%) legislation to encourage plant-based food purchasing with taxpayer dollars or by city governments and believe that Orange County in particular should be taking such actions (74.5%).
- Only 12.9% of residents said that their representatives were doing enough to encourage food sustainability. 55.9% believe that their representatives were “definitely not” or “probably not” doing enough in this area.
- 67% of residents said they were more likely to vote for candidates who pursue this kind of legislation.

Background

Industrial animal agriculture is the leading cause of biodiversity loss, creates harmful air and water pollution, and emits a significant amount of greenhouse gas emissions. Recent scientific [evidence](#) indicates that even if all other sectors become carbon-neutral, emissions from meat and dairy products alone will push us past 2°C of warming. The EAT-Lancet [Report](#) found that meeting the Paris Agreement goals would require substantial shifts towards plant-based diets. The consensus among scientists is that shifting away from meat and dairy towards a more plant-based diet is essential to meet widely adopted climate commitments, like the 2°C benchmark laid out in the Paris Agreement, and unlock a series of health benefits, such as lowered risk of cardiovascular disease, type 2 diabetes, and overall mortality from a variety of causes.

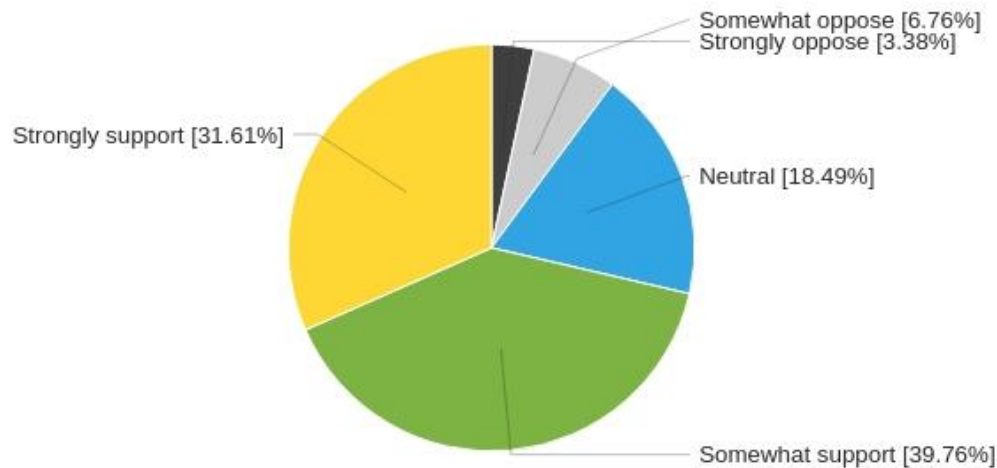
At least 200 cities across California have Climate Action Plans, but Orange County currently does not. Despite this, a 2020 [survey](#) of Orange County residents found that 73% believe that climate change is a serious problem, and 63% supported re-entering the Paris Agreement after President Trump withdrew from the Agreement in 2020. In 2019, the California Legislature proposed [Assembly Bill 479](#), which would have incentivized schools to procure plant-based menu options, but the bill ultimately did not pass.

How do residents of Orange County feel about actions to encourage city government to procure more sustainable, plant-based foods? We surveyed 500 residents and asked them to review hypothetical legislation where their local government:

- Would calculate the city’s food-related greenhouse gas emissions for one year.
- Increase and prioritize the amount of plant-based foods in government facilities, hospitals, higher learning institutions and other food settings.
- Prioritize purchasing those foods from local Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) farmers, where feasible.

When asked how they felt about this policy being implemented in Orange County, 71.4% of respondents said that they supported it (either strongly or somewhat).

How do you feel about this policy overall?



Residents were also asked what was most appealing about the proposed legislation. Some representative comments included:

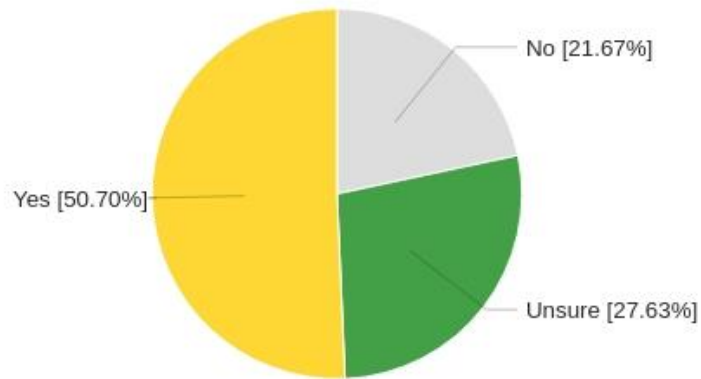
- “The government leading the way and making the change in its own agencies.”
- “I think agencies making larger purchases have a responsibility to lead the way with climate initiatives.”
- “I love the focus on supporting plant-based protein sources as they do more than just lower our carbon footprint, they are generally better for our health.”



A word cloud of written responses about what residents liked most about the legislation.

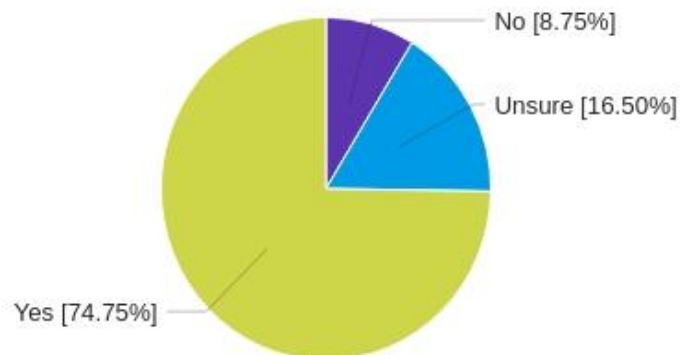
When asked if the government has a responsibility to buy climate-friendly food with taxpayer money, 50.7% answered “Yes.”

Do you believe that the government has a responsibility to use taxpayer money to purchase food that doesn't contribute to climate change?



Respondents were then asked more specifically whether Orange County should reduce food-related emissions in their jurisdiction. 74.5% responded yes.

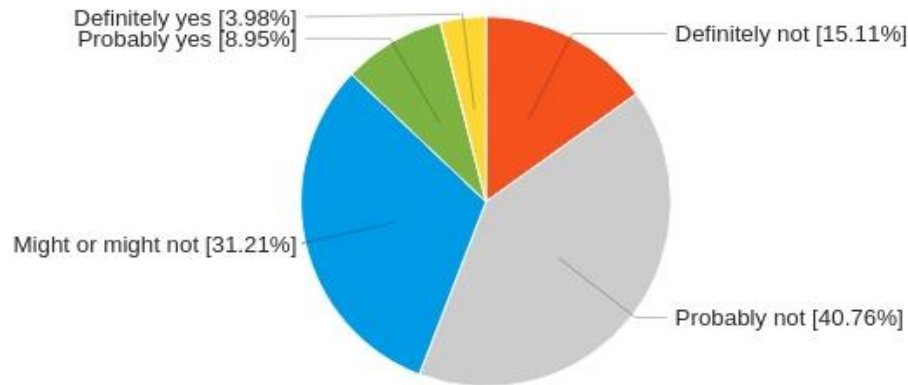
Should your local government take action to reduce food-related greenhouse gas emissions?



Residents of Orange County were also asked if they felt that their representatives were doing enough on food-related emissions. Only 12.9% responded with either “definitely” or “probably” yes.

55.9% responded that their representatives were “definitely not” or “probably not” doing enough in this area.

Do you believe that your representatives are currently doing enough on this issue?



Finally, Orange County residents were asked if they would be more likely to vote for representatives who pursue this kind of climate-friendly food plan.

67% answered “definitely” or “probably yes” and only 9.7% answered that they would not vote for representatives who pursue this plan.

Are you more likely to vote for someone who pursues this kind of climate-friendly food plan?

