

## How can we use what we learned to influence our local community and our world?

So, you've spent some solid time and energy putting this Resource Guide into action, and you've learned a lot about "Ethical Eating: Food and Environmental Justice." Simply experiencing the Study/Action process has already influenced your local community and your world. But you may be looking for ways to do more.

The Ethical Eating Core Team will be developing resources to support congregational involvement over the years to come. Learn about those resources on the Commission on Social Witness's website for "Ethical Eating: Food and Environmental Justice" at <http://tinyurl.com/etheating>. Meanwhile, in addition to the suggestions for engagement listed throughout this guide, consider the following **group actions** you can take to affect your community and your world:

### Group Actions

**Advocacy.** Once your beliefs about ethical eating are strongly grounded in empirical data, our common faith, and your ethical commitments, consider advocating those beliefs to elected officials through visits, letters, and phone calls. Clearly articulate the religious and moral dimensions of your position. The UUA Advocacy and Witness team produced an excellent handbook for congregational advocacy, called *Inspired Faith, Effective Action*, available as a pdf document at <http://tinyurl.com/faithaction>. See <http://www.uua.org/uawo> for additional tips on influencing your elected officials.

**Public Witness: Media.** Host a press-worthy event that proclaims and embodies your discoveries about ethical eating. Remember that the media is most interested in stories with one or more of the "Four C's": Controversy, Conflict, Contradiction, or Colorful Language/Characters. Be sure to address the religious and moral dimensions of the issue you are addressing, and explain how your event arises from our UUU values.

**Public Witness: Community Life.** Organize congregational participation in a community fair, parade, or demonstration. Use signs declaring your moral position on the issue and the name of your congregation. Invite ministers to participate wearing robes and/or stoles. Make it fun!

**Service.** Organize the congregation to support of community food pantries, Meals on Wheels programs, and similar projects that address the problem of hunger or other issues of ethical eating.

**Donate congregational space** and find other ways to support labor unions, farmers' cooperatives, "fair trade" associations, and other organizations that help the farmers and other workers who produce and distribute food in the global market.

**Organize Sunday programs based on all you have learned.** Combine education, worship, and action for people of all ages. Take it on the road to UUU and other congregations in the area.

**Form an ongoing task force to work on the issue.**

**Establish an ongoing relationship between your congregation and a community organization that promotes ethical eating.** It might be another congregation, a cultural organization, an advocacy or dining group dedicated to a certain issue, or an interfaith organization and/or coalition. Choose a group with whom you can maintain an ongoing and meaningful exchange.

**Organize fair trade coffee, tea and cocoa at the coffee hour.** Work with the relevant parties

at your congregation to switch to Fair Trade. Sell Fair Trade chocolate and other products as an ongoing fundraiser for social justice efforts. For more information check out: <http://www.equalexchange.com/interfaith>, which includes a link to the UUU Service Committee Coffee Project. Also see, <http://www.divinechocolate.com>.

**Launch an eating disorders support group** using the resources of the National Eating Disorders Association (NEDA), in consultation with a professional in your community who works with people suffering from eating disorders. Research shows that eating disorders disproportionately affect young women and racial and ethnic minorities, and affect 5-10 million US Americans from all ethnic groups. <http://www.nationaleatingdisorders.org/>.

**Become a pick-up site for a local Community-Supported Agriculture (CSA) farm(s).** A CSA is a way for the food-buying public to create a relationship with a farm and to receive a weekly basket of produce. Offering your church as a pickup site will increase member participation in the Study/Action process—and expose community members to Unitarian Universalism. Find CSAs in your area by plugging your zip code into <http://www.localharvest.org/csa/>.

**Create a community garden on the congregation's property.** Research

area community gardens and invite an "expert" to inform your group and get you started. Involve the children. (The UU Congregation of Washington County, Oregon established a community garden in cooperation with Latino/Latina and Mayan neighbors. The garden included individual plots and a group plot for corn, and the effort featured potlucks with concomitant ESL classes. The Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Falmouth, Massachusetts, which originated this Study/Action Issue, has been involved with organic community gardening for six years <http://www.uuffm.org/environmentaljustice.htm>). The community garden is managed at the local human services center. Much of the produce is donated to food assistance programs. In April, the community garden hosts the town's Earth Day festival. In October, the Rachel Carson Harvest Dinner is a fundraiser for community food banks on Cape Cod.)

**Plan congregational potlucks and holiday meals around the theme of sustainable food,** or on one of the many other themes of this guide. Measure your waste after the meal with the goal of reducing it next time.

**Donate the best; compost the rest.** Most local soup kitchens and food pantries are happy to accept food that the churches and fellowships don't use, so develop a regular donation plan. Many Unitarian Universalist congregations produce enough coffee grounds to develop pretty respectable compost piles. If composting waste is a goal, there are many resources available to help create a healthy and productive compost pile. Have participants bring their own storage containers to church functions so they can share leftovers. Teach congregants how to compost at home.



**Write an article or an ongoing “Food Feature” for your congregation’s newsletter** telling people about the discoveries you made throughout the study process.

**Auction off a sustainable compassionate meal in your congregation’s fund-raising effort, or volunteer to bring delicious, sustainably raised food to bake sales and church meals.** These are both gentle introductions to new opportunities and ways of living that may help people try new things.

**Ask the grocery store where you shop to display the origin of its produce.** Urge them to indicate pesticides, sprays, waxes, etc.

**Compile a collection of recipes using compassionate and sustainable foods.** Make copies easily available to the congregation. Distribute them during the winter holidays and before summer picnics. Have seasonal editions. Base a church potluck or other event around them.

**Teach a children’s religious education class that emphasizes how food gets to the table.**

Include the children in menu development and meal preparation. Help them understand the basics of just, sustainable, compassionate food. Children like to learn about the production and use of food in different cultures and in different religious traditions. Consider adapting the curriculum *Sacred Food: Sunday School and Group Activities for Youth*, available at <http://www.nccecojustice.org/resources.html#foodandfarmingresources>.

**Encourage the grocery you visit to sell organic and/or locally produced foods.** If they are already doing so, thank them.

**Encourage local restaurants to offer sustainable and/or animal friendly choices.** Thank them. If you are concerned about animal welfare, call ahead to the chef regarding menu options. Have available at your congregation a list of restaurants that offer sustainable/animal friendly choices. Visit restaurants of different cultural and ethnic traditions.

**Join a buying club or food cooperative if possible in your area.** These organizations offer whole foods, food in bulk, and minimally packaged food grown organically or sustainably. Congregations as well as individuals can join to purchase earth-friendly food, cleaning products and other supplies.

**Choose whole foods.** With little or no processing, whole foods are as close as possible to their natural state. Most if not all of their original nutrients and fiber are retained. The marketing of whole foods uses less energy, water and packing than more highly processed foods.

**Learn about food labeling.** With the current interest in sustainable, just and compassionate food, an array of product labels have appeared in the market place. Some of these creatively worded labels are misleading and require a closer look (see page 56).

**Display bumper stickers that reflect your values.**

**Buy in bulk.** Cut down on cost and packaging. Even some supermarkets offer bulk products, although this might require asking a staff person or manager.

**Speak with the nutrition services director at the local school and encourage a meat-free meal day.** Perhaps to celebrate Earth Day or World Vegetarian Day (October 1) – or both!

**Encourage organic community gardening.** There is nothing more local than your own neighborhood, unless it’s your own backyard.

**Eat low on the food chain.** The environmental cost to produce a plant-based diet is dramatically lower than that of a meat-based diet. Many cookbooks offer easy-to-make, inexpensive and tasty recipes to help us reduce our intake of animal-based foods and make the transition to a plant-based diet.

**Use reusable bags.** Save resources. Many stores will give a discount to customers who bring their own canvas or other reusable bags to carry groceries.

**Choose organic food in season, from Fair Trade or local sources.** Organic food includes crops grown without the use of conventional pesticides, artificial fertilizers or sewage sludge, and animals reared without the routine use of antibiotics or growth hormones.

**Support sustainable agriculture and farmers’ markets.** Every time we buy a product, we vote with our dollars for what kind of future we will create.

Please share your projects and ideas as they take form, and help your congregation and Association live out the 2008-2012 UUA Study/Action Issue, “Ethical Eating: Food and Environmental Justice.”



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