



Catering Giant Pushes Toward 42% Plant-Based Meals on U.S. College Campuses

By Megan Edwards
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Sodexo, one of the largest food service providers in the United States, is making 42% of their meals on college campuses plant-based over the next three years. For nearly two decades [Sodexo](#) has been working with the [Humane Society of the United States](#) to tackle climate change by reducing carbon emissions, increasing responsible food sourcing, and incorporating more vegan menu options.

The new initiative is part of Sodexo's larger goal of reducing its carbon footprint by 34% by 2025. The catering giant noted that in the fiscal year 2020 at least 70% of its U.S. carbon emissions were related to animal-based food purchases, making plant-based meals central in their effort to go green. Currently, the HSUS has trained kitchen staff at 147 Sodexo sites across the country to implement a larger selection of plant-based recipes.

“Companies like Sodexo and their competitors are serving millions of meals a year and have a high level of influence when it comes to purchasing power and menu choices,” says Karla Dumas, director of food service innovation for the HSUS. “There is an undeniable level of social accountability to do right by their clients. Any sustainability plan...that’s meant to create real change will center on shifting from a meat-heavy menu to one that’s focused on plant-based entrées, and the HSUS is here to support companies ready to create this real change.”

The plant-based push also keeps the company in tune with what students want to eat. A Sodexo [press release](#) cites a recent [Innova Health and Nutrition Survey](#) that reports 23% of 18–25 year-olds follow either a vegetarian or vegan diet, and nearly a third increased their consumption of plant-based proteins in 2021.

“With students it’s all about making options accessible and recognizable to those who may not already be familiar with plant-based meals,” says Certified Executive Chef Rob Morasco, vice president of university culinary innovation for Sodexo. “We do demos for students to familiarize them and that makes plant-based dining more enjoyable. We have trackers set up at universities, so we’ll know if, for example, we’re at 20% plant-based options in the fall semester. We’ll also know what’s popular so we can keep those items on the menus.”

Apart from offering more plant-based meals, in 2018 Sodexo implemented the Knorr Professional and World Wildlife Fund's [Future Foods 50](#) initiative to include more ingredients that are high in nutritional value and low in environmental impact. The Future Foods 50 program focuses on whole grains, beans, leafy greens, root vegetables, nuts, and other whole-food, plant-based ingredients that promote health, help reduce climate change, and bring more food diversity to consumers.