

Meetings & Events:

List of Topics

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Eliminating Our Consumption of Bottled Water



“Human beings, while capable of the worst, are also capable of rising above themselves, choosing again what is good...” - Pope Francis. 2015. *Laudato Si’: On Care for Our Common Home* [Encyclical], #205.

Did you know?

Many myths exist about drinking bottled vs. tap water, so you may not know that...

- ❖ Tap water has often been found to be of higher quality than bottled water.
- ❖ Only about 9% of plastic bottles placed in a recycling bin are actually recycled.
- ❖ About 3 times the water provided in a water bottle is consumed during production.
- ❖ Bottled water costs almost 2,000 times more than the same amount of tap water.
- ❖ About 1/3 of bottled water comes from filtered tap water.
- ❖ Reliance on bottled water can result in less pressure on governments to invest in improving or maintaining public drinking water infrastructure.

Act Now!

Eliminating bottled water is easy and will have a big impact.

- Request that the meeting host provide reusable water pitchers for each table and a reusable (or compostable if a composting service is used) glass for each attendee.
- Provide or request plain water and water infused with flavor from fresh fruits such as strawberries and cucumbers.
- Provide all attendees with reusable water bottles. Ensure that there is a bottle refilling station or other means of refilling water bottles available.
- Purchase one or more 5- to 10-gallon water coolers (e.g., Igloo) and paper cups if reusable water bottles are not provided. Brita also makes water containers of up to slightly more than one gallon for those concerned with water quality.

Fair Trade & Compostable Coffee & Tea



“There is a nobility in the duty to care for creation through little daily actions...”

- Pope Francis. 2015. *Laudato Si': On Care for Our Common Home [Encyclical]*, #211.

Did you know?

You have likely heard of Fair Trade coffee and tea, but you may not know that...

- ❖ Deforestation from unsustainable coffee growing practices (i.e., "full-sun" fields) contributes substantially to the loss of tropical forests, especially in Mexico and Central America.
- ❖ Buying Fair Trade supports ethical sourcing practices, sustainable livelihoods for workers and farmers, gender equality, and a lower carbon footprint.
- ❖ Many brands of coffee and tea claim to be Fair Trade, but few are certified (labeled as Fair Trade Certified™).
- ❖ Fair Trade Certified™ brands ensure that companies pay a premium directly to workers to reinvest in their communities.

Act Now!

Try a more sustainable brand of coffee or tea for your next event.

- Provide Fair Trade Certified™ coffee and tea packaged in paper bags. Look for tea bags that are certified compostable and/or recyclable.
- Look for companies certified by the Rainforest Alliance, use regenerative farming, and/or are committed towards water and energy conservation and minimizing waste and emissions.
- Coffee:** *Farmer Brothers, Tony's Coffee, Mother Parkers Tea & Coffee, Equal Exchange*
- Tea:** *DavidsTea, Numi (also Verified Fair Labor™), Tazo, Just Ice Tea™, Equal Exchange*
- Tea (BPI-certified tea wrapper):** *Traditional Medicinals*
- Kuerig compatible (Fair Trade Certified™ & BPI-certified compostable):** *Jō, Joe's Garage*

Sustainable Animal Products



"Because all creatures are connected, each must be cherished with love and respect, for all of us as living creatures are dependent on one another."

- Pope Francis. 2015. *Laudato Si': On Care for Our Common Home [Encyclical]*, #42.

Did you know?

Many false claims are made about the sustainability of animal products. For example...

- ❖ The [USDA requirements](#) for labeling animal products as "free-range" or "pasture-raised" are vague and only require outdoor access; also, the approval process is not standardized.
- ❖ The "[certified humane](#)" label found on some animal products is stricter than the USDA's standards but still has deficiencies (e.g., only requires one square foot of space for birds).
- ❖ Although seafood on average has a lower carbon footprint compared to land animals, fishing can also be unsustainable (e.g., overfishing, fishing during the spawning season, catching juveniles, mortality of other marine animals).

Act Now!

Finding sustainable animal products can be challenging.

- All Meals:** Minimize all red or processed meats, poultry, and fish.
- Lunch/Dinner:** For those requesting meat, provide poultry products that are "certified humane" and "pasture-raised."
- Lunch/Dinner:** As another option for those requesting meat, consider providing a dish containing sustainably grown and caught fish.
- Poultry and Eggs:** Visit the [Certified Humane](#) website to find farms that will ship "certified humane" poultry and eggs and stores that sell "certified humane" products.
- Fish:** Visit the [MSC.org](#) website to find MSC-certified seafood brands that are also pole and line caught (e.g., Sea Tales USA, Pole & Line, and Blue Harbor Fish Co).

Vegetarian vs. Animal Food Products



These efforts “call forth a goodness which, albeit unseen, inevitably tends to spread.”

- Pope Francis. 2015. *Laudato Si': On Care for Our Common Home [Encyclical]*, #212.

Did you know?

How does the sustainability of vegetarian vs. animal food products compare?

- ❖ The lifecycle of beef can produce between 25 and 150 times the amount of greenhouse gases as vegetarian proteins (per 100 grams of protein) ([Ritchie 2020](#)) and nearly 60 times more CO₂ than wheat, corn, or peas (per pound) ([Poore and Nemecek \(2018\)](#)).
- ❖ Compared to vegetarian food products, animal-based food production requires more land (and often forest clearing) for raising animals and the crops that feed the animals.
- ❖ Purchasing local fruits, vegetables, and grains does not necessarily ensure minimal carbon emissions. Crops that are non-native or grown out of season may require accommodations that lead to higher emissions (e.g., summer crops grown in a greenhouse during the winter).

Act Now!

Focus on including vegetarian proteins, fruits, and vegetables into meals and snacks.

- All Meals:** Offer vegetarian protein options (e.g., beans, tofu, lentils) as much as possible.
- All Meals:** Always offer fruits and vegetables (preferably local and seasonal) as options.
- Breakfast:** Provide plant-based food items (e.g., oat cups, steel-cut oatmeal w/ fruits or nuts, tofu scramble, avocado whole grain toast)
- Lunch/Dinner:** Consider a main dish consisting of plant-based proteins (e.g., tofu, beans, lentils).
- Lunch/Dinner:** Offer at least 2 vegetarian/vegan items for every 1 animal-based food item in buffets; provide at least 1 vegetarian and 1 vegan option near the beginning.
- Snacks/Desserts:** Provide many plant-based items (e.g., fresh fruit, unsalted or lightly salted nuts, hummus with raw vegetables, chocolate-covered fruit, small vegan baked items).

Sustainable and Compostable Cups, Cutlery & Plates



"Let ours be a time remembered for the awakening of a new reverence for life, the firm resolve to achieve sustainability," - Pope Francis. 2015. *Laudato Si': On Care for Our Common Home* [Encyclical], #207.

Did you know?

Some facts you may not know about plastic and paper products include the following:

- ❖ Many products are made from plastic that is very difficult to recycle.
- ❖ Many paper products include a plastic lining that prevents food or liquid from soaking in.
- ❖ Biodegradable does not mean compostable, and many products labeled as compostable do not fully compost. Certification by the Biodegradable Products Institute (i.e., **BPI-certified**) is required.
- ❖ Many paper and wood products involve deforestation or the destruction of wildlife feeding grounds. Certification by the Forest Stewardship Council (i.e., **FSC-certified**) is required.

Act Now!

There are many sustainable options available.

- All Meals:** Offer as many food items as possible that do not require utensils.
- All Meals:** Request or provide reusable plates, cups, cutlery, bowls, and catering pans.
- All Meals:** If reusable options are not available, provide the event organizer or caterer with a list of paper/bamboo products that are **FSC-certified**.
- All Meals:** If plastics are preferred, request plastic alternatives (e.g., made from sugarcane or other plant-based materials) that are **BPI-certified**.
- Sustainable Options.** Visit [Green Paper Products](#) to find additional options.
 - Cups: Maytree, Greeviro
 - Cutlery: Biocean, Sakuchi, Ecovita, 2 Zebraz, Gezond, Treetery, Woodable, Great Value
 - Plates: EcoSmart, ECO SOUL, Sakuchi, Gezond, Green Wave

Single-Use Packaging for Condiments & Snacks



"Nature cannot be regarded as something separate from ourselves or as a mere setting in which we live. We are part of nature, included in it and thus in constant interaction with it." - Pope Francis. 2015. *Laudato Si': On Care for Our Common Home [Encyclical]*, #139.

Did you know?

Wondering if condiment/snack packaging is recyclable? If so, you may want to know that...

- ❖ It is projected that approximately 1.3 trillion sachets (i.e., small plastic packaging) containing single-use condiments (e.g., ketchup, mustard, hot sauce) will be consumed globally in 2027.
- ❖ Sachets are typically not recycled because they are made from a combination of plastic, aluminum foil, and other materials that are difficult to separate. (Source: [Green Peace 2019](#))
- ❖ Plastic bags and wrappers used to package snacks (e.g., chips, cookies, candy) consist of a mix of plastic, tin, aluminum, and other materials and therefore cannot be recycled with other plastic bags.

Act Now!

Identify unpackaged alternatives for snacks, desserts, condiments, and drinks.

- When ordering or serving condiments with food as part of a meeting or event, request that they be provided in glass bottles/containers instead of in single-serve sachets.
- Order or provide drinks that come in large pitchers (e.g., plain or fruit-infused water) instead of single-use boxes or pouches.
- Minimize purchasing snacks and desserts that come in plastic wrappers or bags. Unpackaged options include fruit, nuts, hummus and vegetables, chocolate-covered fruit, and small vegan baked items.
- Alternatively, select snacks packaged in wrappers that are certified compostable by the Biodegradable Products Institute (BPI) (e.g., BAR-U-EAT) and/or paper (e.g., Equal Exchange mini chocolate bars).

Sustainable and Safe Food Storage



Every effort to protect and improve our world entails profound changes in "lifestyles, models of production and consumption,..." - Pope Francis. 2015. Laudato Si': On Care for Our Common Home [Encyclical], #5.

Did you know?

Plastic is effective for storing and insulating food, but you may not know that...

- ❖ Plastic food storage containers and bags are made from three major categories of plastics (#3, 4, 5), all of which are not easily recycled.
- ❖ Styrofoam take-out containers, or clamshells, are made from foamed or expanded polystyrene (plastic #6), which is a hazardous material considered to be a human carcinogen by the World Health Organization.
- ❖ Storing or reheating hot foods and liquids in Styrofoam containers can cause styrene to leach into them prior to being consumed.
- ❖ Plastic wraps (aka. Saran Wrap and cling film) are made from Plastic #3. Because they are thin, clingy, and flimsy, they can easily clog standard recycling machines.

Act Now!

There are many options for plastic-free and certified compostable food storage available.

- Plastic-free food storage bags made from vegetables and/or corn starch are available. Examples that are certified compostable (labeled BPI-certified) include those made by Unni, Eargardin, Harps&Seb, Jencenbio, moonygreen.
- Compostable food storage containers are available. BPI-certified examples with or without compartments include Ethereal Earth, Green Earth, Eco Products, and Eco Soul.
- Reusable food wrap made from beeswax and GOTS-certified organic cotton are available. Examples include Bee's Wrap and BYTTME. (GOTS = Global Organic Textile Standard)
- Food wrap (BPI-certified): EcoSafe NatureFresh
- Consider advocating for a ban on Styrofoam food containers in your community or state.

Using Polyester-free Tablecloths & Linens



"Only by cultivating sound virtues will people be able to make a selfless ecological commitment." - Pope Francis. 2015. *Laudato Si': On Care for Our Common Home* [Encyclical], #211.

Did you know?

Many myths exist about using polyester in fabric, so you may not know that...

- ❖ One of the primary uses of recycled Category 1 plastics (including recycled water bottles) is in the production of polyester. Therefore, many of those water bottles that are recycled still end up as microplastics in our water when laundered.
- ❖ Between about 640,000 and 1.5 million microfibers are released into the water per kilogram of materials washed when doing the laundry.
- ❖ Even fabric and linens made from 100% natural materials, such as cotton, may contain pesticides and dyes that pollute the environment and can cause irritation.

Act Now!

Sustainable alternatives to polyester are available.

- Request that the meeting venue use tablecloths and other linens (e.g., washable napkins) made from 100% organic natural fibers.
- Alternatively, request that meeting organizers and event planners supply meeting areas with tablecloths and other linens (e.g., washable napkins) made from 100% ORGANIC natural fibers (e.g., cotton, hemp, linen, silk, and wool).
- Consider the following companies that sell products made from 100% ORGANIC natural fibers: Rawganique, The Ultimate Green Store, Pottery Barn, Everlastly Home, and Smallable.

Sustainable Options for Disposable Napkins, Paper Towels, & Tissues

We need to “acknowledge the ways in which we have harmed God’s creation through our actions...” - Pope Francis. 2015. *Laudato Si’: On Care for Our Common Home [Encyclical]*, #218.

Did you know?

Many paper products are not as sustainable as you think, so you may not know that...

- ❖ Raw materials used to produce paper and wood products often require the clearing of forests and/or are grown in areas essential to the survival of indigenous populations and wildlife (e.g., bamboo coming from areas where pandas feed).
- ❖ Many of the sustainable options available today are almost as comfortable to use and visually attractive as their less sustainable counterparts, even without the addition of chemicals and dyes.
- ❖ Napkins, paper towels, and tissues, often produce plastic waste through their packaging.



Act Now!



Make sure that the paper products you request are FSC-certified and plastic-free.

- If it is appropriate to do so, request or provide washable cloth napkins.
- Request that the meeting/event be supplied with napkins, paper towels, and toilet paper certified by the Forest Stewardship Council (labeled as **FSC-certified**) as coming from materials that were sustainability grown and harvested.
- Look for products that are shipped in plastic-free packaging.
- The following companies sell products that are plastic-free and FSC-certified: Bamboo Story, Betterway, Caboo, Cloud Paper, Eco-Soul, EZ-Pull, Fehhto, Georgia-Pacific, Grove Co., Mother Earth (*plastic-free packaging*), Reel (*100% recycled paper*), Repurpose, The Cheeky Panda, Tork, Weemium (*plastic-free packaging*), White Cloud

Reducing Food Waste



...approximately a third of all food produced is discarded, and “whenever food is thrown out it is as if it were stolen from the table of the poor” - Pope Francis. 2015. *Laudato Si’: On Care for Our Common Home [Encyclical]*, #218; *Catechesis (5 June 2013): Insegnamenti 1/1 (2013)*, 280.

Did you know?

When ordering food for an event or meeting, it is important to be aware that...

- ❖ About one third of the food produced globally for human consumption is lost or wasted (Source: Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations).
- ❖ About 8 to 10 % of global greenhouse gas emissions come from unconsumed food ([World Resources Institute 2020](#)).
- ❖ Around 58% of methane emitted by solid waste landfills is from landfilled food waste ([EPA](#)).

Act Now!

Try the following to reduce the amount of food wasted at a future event.

- Select a hotel or caterer committed to reducing food waste. Some companies may be willing and able to measure food waste during the meeting or event.
- Select a hotel or caterer that is willing to pre-arrange food donations of unconsumed food.
- When not using a caterer, purchase food from a company committed to reducing food waste. Refer to the USDA/EPA list of “[U.S. Food Loss & Waste 2030 Champions](#).”
- Collect RSVPs beforehand to more accurately estimate how much food to order.
- All Meals:** Provide or request fruit in the form of sliced fruit or a fruit salad.
- Breakfast:** If bagels, muffins, or pastries are offered, request that everything be cut in half.
- Lunch:** If possible, avoid pre-packed (i.e., boxed or bagged) lunches.
- Snacks/Desserts:** Request that any desserts be served in small, bite-size portions.
- Snacks/Desserts:** Request that only small reusable plates/bowls be used during breaks.
- Snacks/Desserts:** Consider only offering unsweetened beverages (e.g., coffee, tea, water).

Reducing Waste through Composting & Recycling



We have not yet managed to adopt a circular model of production capable of preserving resources for present and future generations..." - Pope Francis. 2015. *Laudato Si': On Care for Our Common Home* [Encyclical], #22.

Did you know?

When collecting compostable and/or recyclable items, it is important to be aware that...

- ❖ Some food items may not be allowed for compost pickup (e.g., meat, dairy products, oil). Many industrial facilities do not allow paper, cardboard, or BPI-certified "plastic" items.
- ❖ There are often limits on not only whether paper, glass, or plastic items can be recycled, but also what types of each can or cannot be recycled.
- ❖ Terracycle's Zero Waste Box™ can be used to collect plastic candy and snack wrappers and bags from almost all manufacturers.

Act Now!

Minimize trash as much as possible by collecting compostable and recyclable items.

- Confirm what can or cannot be composted or recycled with your county, city, or local industrial composting facility/recycling company; call or check their websites.
- Request that the meeting room be provided a "waste station" with separate and clearly labeled receptacles for "compost," "recycling," and "trash."
- Post signage containing photos of food and other meeting items above the appropriate receptacles; images should be consistent with local composting/recycling policies.
- Ensure that there is an industrial composting facility nearby.
- Cover or remove all standard trash cans to encourage use of the compost/recycling stations.
- Snacks/Desserts:** If candy, chips, or other snacks and desserts packaged in disposable wrappers are provided, consider purchasing a [Zero Waste Box™](#) from Terracycle.

Finding Sustainable

Giveaway & Garbage Bags

Mother Earth "now cries out to us because of the harm we have inflicted on her by our irresponsible use and abuse of the goods with which God has endowed her." - Pope Francis. 2015. *Laudato Si': On Care for Our Common Home [Encyclical]*, #2.

Did you know?

There are many myths about the most sustainable bag type, so you may not know that...

- ❖ Americans use about 365 plastics bags per person per year (National Geographic, 2018).
- ❖ Most of the negative environmental impact in the form of greenhouse gas emissions occurs during the production and shipping of plastic bags.
- ❖ Reusable cloth bags must be re-used over 100 times to have a smaller carbon footprint than single-use plastic bags. Paper bags need to be re-used only a handful of times.
- ❖ Many paper products (including bags) are not sustainable (e.g., harvested from virgin trees instead of tree farms; require the clearing of forests; grown in areas where wildlife feed).
- ❖ Food waste and other wet items can cause compostable garbage bags to tear more easily than traditional bags.



Act Now!



There are many options for sustainable and compostable bags available.

- Select paper when given the choice between plastic, paper or reusable/cloth bags.
- Use small paper bags certified sustainable by the Forest Stewardship Council (i.e., labeled FSC-certified) and compostable by the Biodegradable Products Institute (i.e., labeled BPI-certified) for distributing any giveaway items. One example is those made by Duro.
- Request that BPI-certified compostable garbage bags be put in garbage bins. Examples include those made by EcoSafe, Unni, Biotrashbag, BioBags, Primode, & SecondNatureBags.
- Request that smaller trash containers be used to prevent compostable bags from tearing due to weight. Ensure that all wet food waste is disposed of in separate compost bins.

Reducing Unsustainable Paper Meeting Materials



"An awareness of the gravity of today's cultural and ecological crisis must be translated into new habits." - Pope Francis. 2015. *Laudato Si': On Care for Our Common Home [Encyclical]*, #209.

Did you know?

Paper is often considered a renewable/sustainable material, so you may not know that...

- ❖ Paper and other wood-based products are often manufactured using wood or paper pulp that is grown and/or harvested in an unsustainable manner (e.g., harvested from virgin trees instead of tree farms; require the clearing of forests; grown in areas where critical wildlife feed; etc.).
- ❖ Certification by the Forest Stewardship Council (labeled as FSC-certified) provides the best guarantee that trees and other plants used to produce the product were grown and harvested in a sustainable manner.

Act Now!

Try to minimize paper usage and only use sustainable paper when needed.

- Distribute as much meeting materials (e.g., program, list of attendees, location guide, etc.) electronically as possible to save paper.
- If printed items are desired, print meeting materials on printer/copier paper that is FSC-certified and/or made from recycled post-consumer waste. Look for paper that is shipped in plastic-free materials.
- FSC-certified 100% recycled paper:** Aspen 100 made by Boise Polaris, New Leaf Paper, and Hammermill.
- FSC-certified mix of sustainable materials:** Aspen 50 made by Boise Polaris, Elementree, HP 30% recycled paper, Southworth, and Neenah by Wausau Papers.

Reusable and Sustainably-Sourced Decorations & Giveaways

“For all our limitations, gestures of generosity, solidarity and care cannot but well up within us, since we were made for love.” - Pope Francis. 2015. *Laudato Si’: On Care for Our Common Home* [Encyclical], #58.

Did you know?

The sustainability of decorations is often overlooked, so you may not know that...

- ❖ There are companies that claim their balloons are biodegradable, but none have been certified by the Biodegradable Products Institute (BPI).
- ❖ Though paper comes from a renewable resource, if a paper product is not certified by the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC), the trees and other plants used to manufacture it may have been grown and harvested in a way harmful to the environment and nearby wildlife.



Act Now!



Try to reuse decorations as much as possible, and only use paper when needed.

- Request that event planners purchase giveaway items that use a minimal amount of packaging for storing and shipping. Try to avoid anything that is individually wrapped in plastic (e.g., candy).
- Minimize using decorations made from polystyrene (e.g., balloons). Alternatively, reusable and/or compostable options to consider would be potted plants (preferably in ceramic or clay pots), banners and garland made from cloth, light strings, etc.
- Ensure that any paper decorations are sourced from trees and other plants that have been certified by the FSC as having been sustainably grown and harvested.
- If table centerpieces are desired, request that sustainable options, such as tiered food stands or potted plants, be used.