

March 12, 2019

The Honorable Bill de Blasio
Mayor, New York City
City Hall
New York, NY 10007

Dear Mr. Mayor:

Yesterday's announcement that New York City plans to adopt starting this fall across its public school system a "Meatless Monday" policy is disappointing and misguided because it denies New York's children access to nutritious food they need for development and because it appears to be based on a collection of half-truths.

The Meatless Monday policy ignores a simple fact – meat and poultry products are excellent and affordable sources of complete protein, vitamins, and minerals that students enjoy in school cafeterias across the country. The science is indisputable: meat is exceptionally nutrient-dense, with essential vitamins and minerals, and it is a source of complete proteins that cannot be matched by plant-based diets. Meat's nutrients are highly bioavailable, meaning they are more easily absorbed by the body than nutrients from plant sources. Extensive research has shown the benefits of meat for both body and brain, especially for children, and it can contribute to critical dietary factors like satiety and weight management.

During the press conference announcing the Meatless Monday policy, several speakers justified the policy based on perceived health and nutrition benefits, citing the availability of pizza and grilled cheese. Before referencing them as examples of superior foods that will save the planet and promote health, their nutrition profile should be considered. One slice of a regular 14-inch cheese pizza provides 12.58 grams of protein, 2.75 mg of iron, and has 3.29 g of sugar. A roast beef sandwich with cheese on 9-grain bread, on the other hand, offers students a food with 42.01 g of protein, 5.4 mg of iron and only 2 g of sugar.¹ Although pizza and grilled

¹ Nutrient Data Laboratory (U.S.), & Consumer and Food Economics Institute (U.S.). (1999). USDA nutrient database for standard reference. Riverdale, Md: USDA, Nutrient Data Laboratory, Agricultural Research Service.

Pizza Information Accessible at:

<https://ndb.nal.usda.gov/ndb/foods/show/21293?fgcd=&manu=&format=Abridged&count=&max=25&offset=&sort=default&order=asc&qlookup=pizza&ds=&qt=&qp=&qa=&qn=&q=&ing=>

Roast Beef Sandwich Information Accessible at:

<https://ndb.nal.usda.gov/ndb/foods/show/45262007?man=&lfacet=&count=&max=25&qlookup=ROAST+BEEF+SANDWICH%2C+UPC%3A+7827>

cheese are wonderful foods that can be a part of a healthy balanced diet, meat products offer unmatched nutrient density essential to brain development, memory, muscle building, and immune health.

Justifying the Meatless Monday policy by citing environmental concerns is also misplaced. According to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, all of agriculture contributes nine percent of America's greenhouse gasses (GHGs), while livestock production accounts for 4.2 percent of GHGs. Ironically, the announcement comes out the same day the United States Department of Agriculture's Agricultural Research Service (ARS) published a new report attributing only 3.3 percent of GHGs to cattle production. In contrast, that ARS report attributes 56 percent of GHGs to transportation and energy production, prompting the conclusion the city's education system should focus on improving its utilization in those sectors.

Finally, Meatless Monday is troubling because, besides lacking a scientific foundation, it is about denying choice. The U.S. dietary guidelines provide that eating meat and poultry is a beneficial part of a healthy and balanced diet. The North American Meat Institute appreciates that some parents and their children may choose not to include meat and poultry in their diets. But those who choose to consume meat and poultry because it is a known and trusted source of affordable, wholesome, and delicious nutrition should not be denied that option based on bureaucratic fiat.

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Meatless Monday is a policy that lacks a scientific foundation and denies New York's schoolchildren options without a sound basis. I urge you to reconsider the Meatless Monday policy.

Respectfully submitted,



Julie Anna Potts
President and CEO
North American Meat Institute