GROWING PLANT BASED
DRIVING TRANSFORMATION TO A HEALTHY, SUSTAINABLE, AND EQUITABLE FOOD SYSTEM

PLANT BASED FOODS ASSOCIATION / PLANT BASED FOODS INSTITUTE
STRATEGIC PLAN 2022-2024
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We have reached a moment in history where the actions that we take now, as a society and global community, will have enormous bearing on the viability of our planet and the life it sustains. The science is clear: We cannot pull our planet back from the brink without food system transformation. And the Plant Based Foods Association—alongside the newfound Plant Based Foods Institute—has a unique and vital role to play in driving this necessary change. This plan, the development of which has been the most important and collaborative process I have led thus far, lays out in clear terms what that role entails as we work towards a food system that is healthier, more sustainable, and more equitable for all.

With the combined forces of PBFA and PBFI, we aim to serve our members’ interests, find and employ solutions to the most urgent issues of our time, and highlight plant-based foods as an essential part of the solution. The strategy outlined on the pages that follow paves the way forward for PBFA and PBFI, details our unique positioning in the quest to reform our food system, and identifies the most impactful areas in which to focus our energy.

We will tackle our ambitious agenda in three ways. First, we will foster a thriving plant-based foods industry that creates, grows, and meets market demand. PBFA’s members are at the core of what we do, and with a strong and expanded membership base, we will multiply the power, diversity, and influence of our collective. Second, we will facilitate a shift to plant-based diets that reduces our society’s destructive reliance on animal agriculture. Finally, we will promote a transition to agriculture production that is diversified, regenerative, resilient, and adaptive. Together, these three pillars represent a holistic, systems-based approach to driving this urgently-needed shift to a food system that respects the dignity and health of all living beings—and one that benefits all who contribute to it and all who are impacted by it.

Our team, our Board of Directors, our membership, and our partners offer an invaluable combination of vantage points, expertise, and skillsets. But we also recognize that we cannot achieve this vision alone, and we embrace collaboration and synergy with those who share our ambitions. Individuals and institutions who operate with purpose can be powerful. A community that is convened around a common purpose and vision can change the world.

The challenges we face are considerable but, through our work, PBFA and PBFI are an essential part of the solution. The future is already here, and the market, the demand, and the number of individuals and communities embracing plant-based foods are growing every day. Through our work with our incredible member community, and by harnessing this innovative industry to drive food system transformation, we will create the change we so urgently need—together. We look forward to joining forces with you.
OUR VISION

A world where values and business interests harmonize to create a plant-based food system that respects the dignity and health of all living beings and the planet.

OUR VALUES

WE ADOPT
A collaborative, systems-based, social justice-centered approach to food system transformation.

WE FOSTER
An inclusive community that values the diverse perspectives and interests of the people, communities, economies, and ecosystems that comprise a thriving plant-based foods industry.

WE THINK
Strategically and holistically.

WE EMBRACE
A mindset of constant learning and evaluation.

WE OPERATE
With transparency, respect, integrity, compassion, and focus.

WE COMMIT
To being adaptive, curious, and bold; and to implement innovative and impactful solutions.
There is an urgent need for transformation to a plant-based food system.

“A sustainable food system is one that delivers food security and nutrition for all in such a way that the economic, social, and environmental bases to generate food security and nutrition for future generations [are] not compromised. This means that it is profitable throughout, ensuring economic sustainability; it has broad-based benefits for society, securing social sustainability; and that it has a positive or neutral impact on the natural resource environment, safeguarding the sustainability of the environment.”

“Plant-based diets in comparison to meat-based diets are more sustainable because they use substantially less natural resources and are less taxing on the environment. The world’s demographic explosion and the increase in the appetite for animal foods render the food system unsustainable.

“Agricultural and nutritional policies that lead to the adoption of plant-based diets at the global level will simultaneously optimize the food supply, health, environmental, and social justice outcomes for the world’s population. Implementing such policies is not free of political challenges but is perhaps the most rational, scientific, and moral path for a sustainable future of the human race and other living creatures of the biosphere that we share.”

The Plant Based Foods Association defines plant-based foods as foods made from plants that do not contain any animal-derived ingredients.

...AND WHY IT IS ESSENTIAL

Environmental Impact

The plant-based transformation of food systems is vital to environmental sustainability. Analysis from the international policy institute Chatham House recently concluded that to sustain human populations, “...global dietary patterns need to converge around diets based more on plants, owing to the disproportionate impact of animal farming on biodiversity, land use, and the environment.”

Currently, global food systems are responsible for over a third of all man-made greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. Animals raised for meat, dairy, and eggs, as well as crops grown for animal feed, account for a combined 57 percent of GHGs emitted from our food system. Scientific evidence links the overconsumption of dairy and meat products, especially in Western diets, to high use of natural resources: two-thirds of global agricultural land is used to raise livestock – a major emitter of GHGs – while one-third of fresh water is used to produce animal products. Industrial animal agriculture also produces hundreds of billions of pounds of manure that contribute to air and water pollution. Toxic runoff causes water bodies to have high levels of nitrogen and phosphorus, a process called eutrophication, that can lead to contamination of drinking water. This process, also leads to the proliferation of algae on the water’s surface and suffocates the marine life beneath, resulting in dead zones. Increases in land use for animal agriculture or growing animal feed, paired with the climate impacts of increased GHGs, remain the top two contributors to biodiversity loss, reducing the resiliency of ecosystems, as well as that of our food system.

In an effort to meet the Paris Agreement reduction target of 1.5 degrees Celsius by 2050, we must reconsider our current dependence on industrial animal agriculture. To reduce GHGs, eutrophication, and biodiversity loss, a shift to a plant-based food system is essential.

Human Health

Eating primarily plant-based foods, rich in fiber and essential nutrients, is central to healthy and nutritious diets and is linked to lower rates of chronic diseases such as heart disease, cancer, and type 2 diabetes. More than 60 percent of adults in the U.S. have at least one chronic condition, and 40 percent have two or more. Chronic diseases are the leading causes of death and disability, which together drive the nation’s $3.8 trillion annual health care costs. A fiber-rich, plant-based diet can be cost-effective in preventing and managing, and sometimes even reversing, chronic diseases. BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, (and) People of Color) communities are disproportionately impacted by chronic diseases and higher rates of being lactose normal, or not digesting lactose, which impacts over 36 percent of the US population and is most prevalent in African Americans and those of East Asian descent.9

Research shows that plant-based diets may be a low-risk intervention that can lower body mass index, blood pressure, HbA1C, and cholesterol levels.10 They may also reduce the number of medications needed to treat chronic diseases and lower ischemic heart disease mortality rates.

Because of their lower environmental footprint, predominantly plant-based diets would also help reduce the health impacts of climate change, air pollution, water contamination, and other environmental events, which are associated with a higher risk of developing illnesses, such as inflammatory diseases and allergies. Increased consumption of plant-based foods - and a consequent reduction of animal-based products - is also crucial to prevent future zoonotic disease outbreaks, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, and to protect the efficacy of medically-important antibiotics for future generations.11,12

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9 Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, “Chronic Diseases in America.” Available at https://www.cdc.gov/chronicdisease/resources/infographics/chronic-diseases.htm
Social Justice

A transition to a plant-based food system has the potential to benefit people, the planet, and animals.

Opportunities to advocate for policies, systems, and environmental shifts to a plant-based food system must consider social justice and access to plant-based foods. For example, national food programs, such as those in schools, hospitals, and correctional facilities, traditionally consist of meals with high amounts of animal products and lack plant-based entrée and milk options. Increasing access to climate-friendly, plant-based milk and meals in schools and other institutional settings is key to promoting health and environmental sustainability.

While all communities would benefit from increased access to healthy plant-based foods, BIPOC communities are disproportionately impacted by our current animal product-dominated food system, due to higher rates of being lactose normal, or not digesting lactose, and higher existing rates of chronic disease.

Shifting to a plant-based food system could contribute to cleaner air and water for communities across the U.S. Research shows that 80 percent of the 15,900 annual deaths resulting from food-related air pollution is attributable to industrial animal agriculture and that shifting to plant-based diets could reduce deaths from agricultural air quality by 83 percent. Air pollution from industrial animal agriculture affects surrounding populations, but particularly impacts BIPOC communities, which are disproportionately located within a three-mile radius of concentrated animal feeding operations (CAFOs).

Additionally, the necessary shift to plant-based diets will impact over 80 billion land animals that are raised each year globally for their meat, milk, or eggs. Two-thirds of these animals are raised in intensive systems that result in animal welfare concerns and suffering on a mass scale. U.S. land animal production accounts for nearly 10 billion of this total.

A transition to a plant-based food system has the potential to ensure equity and justice across the food system.

Foster a thriving plant-based foods industry that creates, grows, and meets the market demand.

Facilitate a shift to plant-based diets and the displacement of animal agriculture.

Promote a transition in agricultural production that is diversified, regenerative, resilient, adaptive, and based on plants for direct human consumption.
We take a systems-based approach to food system transformation.

For PBFA and PBFI, taking a systems-based approach means working across sectors, disciplines, and in partnership and collaboration with a diverse group of food system participants. We recognize that a food system transformation will require different interventions and a holistic approach that recognizes the complexity of challenges both stemming from and facing the food system.

“The food system includes the related resources, the inputs, production, transport, processing, and manufacturing industries, retailing, and consumption of food as well as its impacts on environment, health, and society. There is an accelerating momentum worldwide to adopt the food systems approach to bring consumption and production patterns together.”

“Building on a definition by FAO (2018), food systems encompass the entire range of actors and their interlinked value-adding activities involved in the production, aggregation, processing, distribution, consumption, and disposal of food products that originate from agriculture, forestry, or fisheries, and food industries, and the broader economic, societal, and natural environments in which they are embedded.”

This approach frames our strategy and represents the lens through which we prioritize and build out our work.

By serving our members’ interests through the Plant Based Foods Association, and by identifying and disseminating impactful solutions through the Plant Based Foods Institute, we empower the plant-based foods industry to drive food system transformation.

The two organizations convene and collaborate with our membership, partners, and stakeholder groups to increase the availability and accessibility of plant-based foods, and promote a transition in agricultural practices.
PLANT BASED FOODS ASSOCIATION
MISSION

To champion, strengthen, and elevate our members and the plant-based foods industry.

Our Foundation

Driven by the need for the plant-based foods industry to establish a collective voice and attain critical representation in government, the Plant Based Foods Association was formed in 2016 by founding executive director Michele Simon and our founding board members, Jaime Athos, Martin Kruger, Nicole Sopko, Miyoko Schinner, and Michael Lynch.

Together with 23 founding brands, the founding executive director and board laid the groundwork to achieve their vision of exponential industry growth, and paved the way for the Association’s future accomplishments. In its first five years, the Plant Based Foods Association built robust programs to affect change from the halls of government to supermarket shelves. Powered by the collective support and enthusiasm of our members, the Association defeated numerous legislative bills that aimed to restrict the labeling of plant-based food products, developed relationships with retail and other marketplace partners that have since provided a variety of meaningful growth opportunities for our membership, and published cutting-edge research for the benefit of the plant-based foods industry and those that contribute to its success.
OVERARCHING FOCI

Provide opportunities to our members to further grow and strengthen their businesses and meet their goals, thus contributing to the overall strength and positioning of the plant-based foods industry.

Protect and increase clarity and transparency around the use of plant-based terminology.
PLANT BASED FOODS ASSOCIATION

OBJECTIVES

1. Grow, strengthen, and diversify our membership, community, and benefits.

WHY
With an expanded, 1,000-company membership base and strong communication and engagement, we will better serve our membership and the broader industry by increasing the power and diversity of the collective.

HOW
We will implement a two-way communications plan; introduce tailored, enhanced, and new member benefits; and employ capacity-building initiatives to serve and foster a strong, diverse community.

2. Create and shape opportunities for members to expand their foods with prioritized retailers, distributors, foodservice, and e-commerce operators.

WHY
The Plant Based Foods Association is in a unique position to create tailored, broad-scale opportunities to expand plant-based foods.

HOW
We will identify members' expansion interests and inventories, support buyers in achieving their supplier diversity goals, and expand our e-commerce work.

1 5
OBJECTIVES

3 Expand assortment and accessibility of plant-based foods via partnerships with at least 15 retail, distributor, foodservice, and e-commerce operators to grow market share.

WHY
Retailers and foodservice operators are seeking insights to inform the expansion of their plant-based food offerings and leverage the dollar opportunity that plant-based foods provide.

HOW
We will publish annual US plant-based foods marketplace data and engage partners on expanding their plant-based strategy through assortment, merchandising, marketing, and long-term planning.

4 Ensure that plant-based products can be clearly and accurately labeled and identified, and that plant-based food companies do not face burdensome and unnecessary labeling restrictions.

WHY
Labeling restrictions are costly for food companies and present potential obstacles to consumer acceptance. Misuse of the term “plant-based” can create consumer confusion.

HOW
We will execute legislative strategies, defend against and challenge restrictive labeling laws and regulations, and defend the term "plant-based."
OBJECTIVES

5 Build members’ capacity to advocate for food policies that support a transition to plant-based food systems at local, state, and federal levels.

WHY
To educate and empower our members to represent the plant-based foods industry and become agents for food systems change.

HOW
We will provide advocacy training and tools for company members to engage in state and federal lobbying and policy change.
PLANT BASED FOODS
INSTITUTE
To drive transformation to a plant-based food system that benefits people, the planet, and animals. We will do this by identifying and creating impactful solutions for businesses and food system participants, and advocating for systems change.
OVERARCHING FOCI

1. Identify gaps in research to prioritize partnerships and strategies needed to drive change towards a plant-based food system.

2. Develop and execute strategies directed at key food system stakeholders to highlight the human and planetary health benefits of plant-based foods, and the social justice imperative of shifting to plant-based diets.

3. Create opportunities for plant-based food companies and U.S. farmers to increase supply network resiliency and foster a transition to sustainable agriculture.
OBJECTIVES

1. Influences the development of updated Dietary Guidelines for Americans in 2025 that promote plant-based diets and call for reduced consumption of animal-based foods.

**WHY**
We need clear guidance from the government regarding the nutrition, sustainability, and social justice benefits of plant-based foods. The Dietary Guidelines for Americans influence government procurement, nutrition education in schools, government nutrition programs, and the advice nutritionists and doctors give to their patients.

**HOW**
We will develop a nutrition research agenda and advocacy strategies for the promotion of plant-based foods and diets.

2. Influence U.S. policy to support a transition to a sustainable plant-based food system.

**WHY**
Agricultural policy shapes our food system, determines which crops are grown and which foods are affordable and widely available, and currently supports the animal agriculture system.

**HOW**
We will develop advocacy strategies and partnerships to enact policies that incentivize sustainable and climate-friendly agriculture, reduce animal-based food production and consumption, and promote plant-based diets.
Position offsetting procurement of animal-based foods with plant-based foods as a key strategy for growth, relevance, and meeting Environmental, Social, and Governance goals, by partnering with key businesses and stakeholders to inform and set targets.

**WHY**
Increased adoption of plant-based foods across retail and foodservice will achieve benefits for the environment and human health, and will help companies meet their Environmental, Social, and Governance and growth goals.

**HOW**
We will develop a methodology to illustrate the environmental impact of plant-based foods versus their animal-based counterparts, engage on the role of plant-based foods in Environmental, Social, and Governance strategies, and demonstrate the shift in consumer purchasing from animal-based to plant-based foods.
Increase the availability of plant-based foods in institutional and commercial foodservice settings (i.e., schools, hospitals, and other institutions) while creating a pipeline of plant-based foods in distribution.

WHY
Greater availability of plant-based foods will allow for increased purchases and consumption.

HOW
We will create resources to help plant-based food companies identify the opportunities and navigate the challenges of having their products served in schools and other institutions, and develop strategies to increase the availability of plant-based meals served in government and other institutions.
PLANT BASED FOODS INSTITUTE

OBJECTIVES

5 Encourage plant-based food companies to source sustainable, domestically-grown ingredients.

WHY
The plant-based food industry’s sourcing of domestic ingredients can drive an agricultural production shift towards sustainable practices, create resilient supply networks, and incentivize farmers to transition from growing animal feed or raising animals to growing healthy food for people.

HOW
We will connect plant-based food companies to farmers, processors, shippers, and manufacturers; provide support and guidance to companies seeking to source domestically-grown ingredients; and evaluate domestic ingredient sourcing pilot programs. We will conduct nutrition and agricultural research to determine which plant-based crops are ideal for human and planetary health. We will also develop a policy agenda and strategy to address the obstacles to domestic sourcing of regenerative, plant-based ingredients, and to support the transition to a plant-based food system.
We move forward with focus, fueled with optimism for what can be achieved through the work led by PBFA and PBFI, and in our collaboration with our partners and allies. The challenges we face in realizing our vision are considerable, but the opportunities that lie before us have never been greater—and they must be seized.

By serving our members’ interests through the Plant Based Foods Association, and by identifying and disseminating impactful solutions through the Plant Based Foods Institute, we are uniquely positioned to empower the plant-based foods industry to drive food system change. And by working collaboratively together and with the many stakeholders that shape our food system, we will jointly have the capacity, skill, and influence necessary to contribute to transformation of the food system.

We look forward to joining forces with you to bring our vision to life: A world where values and business interests harmonize to create a plant-based food system that respects the dignity and health of all living beings and the planet.

- The teams at PBFA and PBFI