



*Better*  
**FOOD**  
**FOUNDATION**

2020 ANNUAL REPORT

## NOTES FROM THE BOARD CHAIR

This past year has led many people to question long-held assumptions about what is and ought to be normal. Ideas that seemed radical not long ago—that we should be eating far fewer animal products, that we shouldn't keep animals crowded in cages and barns—may seem common-sense to a generation growing up during the COVID-19 pandemic. The snow globe of our food system has been shaken up, and we don't know yet where all the pieces will land.

In this moment of uncertainty there is an opportunity—to shape what the new normal will be in our food cultures, in our food economy, and in our relationships of interdependence and responsibility with the human and nonhuman beings with whom we share this planet.

There are a lot of ways to make our food system a little bit better for humans and animals without changing its underlying architecture—without shifting cultural norms and values, without changing who has voice and power.

Instead, the Better Food Foundation is looking at the big picture. We envision a food system that serves *everyone*, where all stakeholders—workers, farmers, animal advocates, environmentalists, local communities—have a seat at the table. A food system in which delicious and diverse foodways flourish, farmers and workers and entrepreneurs thrive, ecosystems are regenerated, and human and nonhuman bodies are made healthy. And we don't buy into the belief that the only way to help some is by sacrificing or neglecting others. **Food connects us all.** It can connect us for better, or for worse. We're betting on better.



-Jennifer Channin,  
BFF Board Chair



## Core Strategic Areas

BFF's four core strategies shift individuals, institutions, and culture toward plant-based foods.

1. Even during a pandemic year when institutional food service was challenged, our signature **Policy-Based Food Advocacy** campaign **DefaultVeg** grew to 48 institutions, including the Harvard University Office of Sustainability, now offering plant-based foods as their default. We are confident that DefaultVeg has the potential to become the single most effective strategy for shifting institutional dining to plant-forward and plant-based food.

2. Our second strategy, **Growing Diverse Vegan Leadership**, supports the capacity of vegan organizations and leaders, particularly BIPOC- and female-led organizations. In 2020 we are proud to support Liberum's groundbreaking advocacy in Mexico, to sponsor the first National AfroVegan

Virtual Conference, and to assist phenomenal activists and scholars advancing the Black veganism movement.

3. We are **Growing Faith-Based Vegan Outreach** by sharing technology, knowledge, and financial resources with faith leaders at CreatureKind and Shamayim who are sparking a plant-based movement within Christian and Jewish communities.

4. Finally, we are **Transforming Academia** to impact generations of students and educators and elevate animal protection and veganism in new teaching and research.

Through these strategies, we are strengthening the movement for a better food system, incubating new forms of vegan advocacy and cultivating an ecosystem of advocacy groups and activists. Together, we can bring about the shifts in food practices necessary to create a food system that serves everyone.

## Growing Staff Capacity

BFF's new Campaigns Director Laura Lee Cascada brings over a decade of environmental and animal protection campaigning experience to the organization. At BFF, Laura is helping to shift cultural norms around food and sustainability through diverse collaborations, institutional outreach, and innovative public engagement initiatives.

"Throughout the pandemic I've reflected on the ways it has forced us to be resilient in ways we never could have imagined a year ago. But our broken food system hasn't kept up. For years, we've been fed a harmful default: cheap meat from factory farms that pollute our environment, abuse animals, and exploit workers. This past year, with rampant coronavirus outbreaks in slaughterhouses leading to plant shutdowns, the veil over the fragility of industrial animal agriculture was finally lifted. The time is ripe for a more resilient, sustainable, healthful default."

-Laura Cascada,  
Director of Campaigns



## Policy-Based Food Advocacy: DefaultVeg

Harvard University Office of Sustainability was one of 17 new institutions to adopt DefaultVeg in 2020. That brings us to a total of 48 institutions that have made plant-based meals their default in events, dining halls, cafes or other settings where food is served!

In January, after a year-long pilot with more than two dozen participating institutions and conferences, BFF publicly launched DefaultVeg in collaboration with UK-based partners CreatureKind and UK Food Plan. An alternative to campaigns that pressure institutions to “reduce” or “give up” meat, DefaultVeg is based on behavioral science that has already helped universities and other institutions radically lower animal product consumption without generating pushback.

DefaultVeg is a simple but transformative concept: By changing how we present food to consumers, we can influence (“nudge”) people to make food choices that are better for the environment, public health, and animals, leading to dramatic increases in plant-based meals, without taking away anyone’s options. Over time, individual DefaultVeg choices add up to big changes in our food system and our world.

Case studies have shown that using defaults as a behavioral nudge to motivate diners to choose more sustainable plant-based options—without sacrificing anyone’s choice—can increase their selection of veg options by, on average, 60 percent.

**We did the math:**

**If an average dining hall adopted DefaultVeg for a year, it would save 2.5 million kg CO<sub>2</sub>e, more than 54,000 animals, and more than 354 million liters of water.**



"While pursuing an MS in Environmental Behavior and Communications I looked for ways to address my concerns about the environmental and social consequences of factory farming. DefaultVeg helped me see the importance of data-driven institutional behavior change and the power of defaults to alter society's harmful status quos."

- Trevor McCarty joined BFF as a graduate student intern in 2020, and in 2021 became our Program Associate





Outreach Director Ilana Braverman's 2020 TEDx Talk "Moving Beyond a Hamburger Default World" reached over 26,000 people and was shared by legal scholar Cass Sunstein, Sara Pearl (a producer for the Joe Biden campaign), television host Daisy Fuentes, behavioral scientist Silvia Cottone, environmental engineer Katie Patrick, Vegan Future, and the Tufts Center for Animals and Public Policy.

Establishing plant-based foods as the default makes sense for the environment and for animals. In 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic lifted the veil from our hamburger-default world, revealing to the public what has long been known to experts: that factory farms are hotbeds for disease and perpetuate abuse of workers and animals alike. This growing awareness may be the reason why, even with dining halls and conferences closed due to the pandemic, **more than 2,000 institutional food leaders and food system advocates participated in 59 DefaultVeg webinars in 2020**, seeking out better ways to shift institutional dining towards plant-based foods.



## DefaultVeg Institutions:

To date, 48 institutions have adopted DefaultVeg as a strategy for their dining services or for specific events. Institutions adopting DefaultVeg in 2020 included these and more:

Endangered Habitats League  
Friends of the Earth  
Global Forest Coalition  
Jewish Council on Urban Affairs  
Harvard Office of Sustainability  
Margaret Beaufort Institute of  
Theology, UK  
Public Justice Food Project  
Sierra Club, Virginia Chapter  
Tropical Rainforest  
Conservation & Research  
Centre  
US Climate Action Network  
Washington and Oregon  
Higher Education  
Sustainability Conference  
Western Washington University,  
Huxley College of the  
Environment



The DefaultVeg team also began forging partnerships with city governments from coast to coast to incorporate plant-forward strategies into their climate planning. The City of Ann Arbor, Michigan's sustainability team, A2Zero, has become an official DefaultVeg supporter, and in San Diego we organized a coalition of 20 organizations including San Diego's Sierra Club and Audubon Society to write to the city, encouraging it to embrace a plants-by-default strategy in its updated Climate Action Plan.

"I thought DefaultVeg was a great, easy opportunity to reduce the carbon footprint of my conference as well as share a message around plant-based eating and sustainability to the audience, especially as it coincides with our initiatives at the American Lung Association. The participants loved the food and didn't even question the lack of animal products!"

-Rachel Ram, Senior Project Manager, American Lung Association

"DefaultVeg has been great! Members seem to really enjoy the new veg catering options and remarkably, I haven't heard a single person complain about the shift. On the contrary, members have complimented the quality and variety of our new go-to veggie meals, and one member even told me that she is now trying to implement DefaultVeg in her own home."

-Naomi Spungen, Operations Coordinator, Sketchpad



"The student advocates of the Factory Farming Awareness Coalition resonated with the message of changing defaults, and BFF's willingness to support students empowered them to create change at their schools."

-Katie Cantrell, Factory Farming Awareness Coalition's founder, joined BFF in 2021 as our new Director of Corporate Outreach.



This summer we amplified DefaultVeg's institutional reach by launching the **DefaultVeg Ambassadors program** for high school and college students and professionals who want to transform their dining services and advocate for plant-based defaults in their communities. We recruited 45 ambassadors and empowered them with training, tools, and one-on-one coaching, in partnership with the Factory Farming Awareness Coalition.



We also led trainings for other organizations to use plant-based defaults in their own campaigns and programs. Audiences have included AASHE (Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Ed), CHESC (California Higher Education Sustainability Conference), Mercy for Animals' volunteer network, HSUS campus interns, NetImpact Fellows, and RavenCorps youth activists, among others.

DefaultVeg is also engaging the public through plant-based recipes—DefaultVeg Recipes, the web's largest 100 percent plant-based search engine, has curated recipe collections in partnership with Stone Pier Press, the environmental organization ZeroHour, the Black Vegetarian Society of Maryland, and the JIVINITI coalition.

In 2020, our work with DefaultVeg was picked up by media including

Happy Eco News

More About Advertising

*Ms. Magazine*

One Green Planet

*Pittsburgh Post Gazette*

Pizza Vegan

*The Royal Examiner*

Tenderly



THIS HOLIDAY SEASON, **CHOOSE RESILIENCE**  
BY DEFAULT

A circular photograph of rapper Grey, a man with dreadlocks and a beard, wearing a denim jacket, smiling and gesturing with his hands. The photo is set against a background of overlapping green, teal, and blue circles.

Grey for  
**DEFAULTVEG**

Find thousands of delicious plant-forward recipes at [DefaultVeg.org](https://DefaultVeg.org)

THIS HOLIDAY SEASON, **CHOOSE COMPASSION**  
BY DEFAULT

A circular photograph of actress Jillian Rose Reed smiling and holding a microphone, wearing a red apron with a smiley face. The photo is set against a background of overlapping green, teal, and blue circles.

Jillian Rose Reed for  
**DEFAULTVEG**

Find thousands of delicious plant-forward recipes at [DefaultVeg.org](https://DefaultVeg.org)


THIS HOLIDAY SEASON, **CHOOSE SUSTAINABILITY**  
BY DEFAULT

A circular photograph of singer Stéphanie Gérard, a woman with curly hair, wearing a blue blazer and jeans, posing against a pink background. The photo is set against a background of overlapping green, teal, and blue circles.

Stéphanie Gérard for  
**DEFAULTVEG**

Find thousands of delicious plant-forward recipes at [DefaultVeg.org](https://DefaultVeg.org)

THIS HOLIDAY SEASON, **CHOOSE INCLUSIVITY**  
BY DEFAULT

A circular photograph of NFL player Weslye Saunders eating a meal with a fork. The photo is set against a background of overlapping green, teal, and blue circles.

Weslye Saunders for  
**DEFAULTVEG**

Find thousands of delicious plant-forward recipes at [DefaultVeg.org](https://DefaultVeg.org)

Vegan actor/singer Stéphanie Gérard, rapper Grey, racecar driver Leilani Munter, actor Jillian Rose Reed, and NFL player Weslye Saunders, whose combined social media followers number more than 1.25 million people, have all encouraged their fans around the world to choose compassion, resilience, sustainability, and inclusivity by default with DefaultVeg.

## Growing Diverse Leadership

As BFF scales up its own ability to reach people directly with powerful vegan advocacy messages, we continue to be inspired by the work of groups who are transforming culture in a more vegan direction in their own communities.

### **Liberum**

Liberum launched in 2019 with BFF support. Remarkably for such a young organization, in 2020 alone Liberum's social media channels had over 50.3 million social media impressions and its videos had 10.1 million views.

Liberum works in Mexico with a team of Mexican professionals to generate cultural change, create market alternatives, and promote laws and public policies ensuring that animals are respected and not exploited. In 2020 Liberum's "Leche? No Gracias!" campaign continued to grow its reach and political influence in Mexico, with a new campaign video called "Todas las madres importan" (All mothers matter), featuring Mexican actress, Aislyn Derbéz. Since Liberum's anti-dairy campaign's launch in 2019, its videos have been viewed more than 30 million times.

The campaign started a new podcast and blog called "Todos Somos Bestias" (We are All Beasts) and launched several new activist tools, built by BFF's web team, including a letter-writing site called "Cambiemos las Leyes" (Let's Change the Laws) that allows users to send virtual letters to their senators, and a tool for generating "tweetstorms." Liberum's first action using the new tools, in March, resulted in 13,925 emails to senators!



Liberum has made creative use of public spaces to expand their dairy campaign, including a series of billboards on buildings in Mexico City this fall as well as ads on city buses. They've also supported vegan restaurants by featuring their chefs in web-based vegan cooking programs.



## AfroVegan Society

We were proud to sponsor the first National AfroVegan Virtual Conference which took place in July. The AfroVegan Conference featured speakers, wellness coaches, plant-based chefs, and medical professionals who promote plant-based eating and vegan living as a solution to many of the global challenges we currently face. Because of the cancellations of in-person events, this online gathering filled a crucial need for Black vegans to come together to learn, build community, and support one another's advocacy work. More than 3,900 attended the virtual event.



**SATURDAY, JULY 25, 2020**  
COOKING DEMOS | PANELS | YOGA | KEYNOTES

PANEL  
**Health Benefits of Plant-Based Eating**



Dr. Milton Mills  
Critical Care Physician



Dr. Celeste Palmer  
Vegan Pediatrician



Dr. Baxter Montgomery  
Vegan Cardiologist

KEYNOTE PRESENTERS



Tracye McQuirter



Najjha  
Wright-Brown



Brenda Sanders

PANEL  
**Vegan Parenting 101**



JaVanna  
Johnson-Cooke

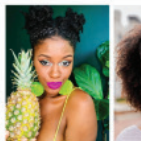


Greg Brown



Rhashida Bess

COOKING DEMOS



Jasmine Duke



Halle Thomas



Ayindé Howell



Jessica Carter

WELLNESS SESSIONS



Tianna Christine



Jamila Anahata

more speakers coming soon...  
**Register for FREE Today!**  
[afrovegansociety.org/events](https://afrovegansociety.org/events)

## Growing Faith-Based Vegan Outreach

**CreatureKind** engages Christian communities and institutions to bring concern about farmed animals into the center of Christian ethics and practices. In the first year of its operation as a stand-alone nonprofit entity, CreatureKind's influence within Christian denominations in the US and UK continues to soar.

CreatureKind's direct engagement with Christians grew in 2020 through its launch of a pilot Fellowship program for graduate students and professionals. The Fellowship program not only helps to develop the pipeline of people working at the intersection of Christian faith and animals, but also results in community-embedded projects to raise awareness and change food policy.

CreatureKind is also engaging religious policymakers in the UK and the US to promote ethical eating, farmed animal welfare, and plant-based defaults in policies and practices of Christian denominations, schools, and nonprofits. The Christian Ethics of Farmed Animal Welfare (CEFAW) UK launched its major report (the result of a three-year collaboration with 13 UK Christian institutional partners) in 2020,



“The Christian Ethics of Farmed Animal Welfare: A Policy Framework for Churches and Christian Organizations.”

Founder David Clough's work on animal ethics is included in a new book commissioned by the head of the Church of England, the Archbishop of Canterbury, for book group discussions for all Church members.

CreatureKind co-director Aline Silva was named one of “Seven Spiritual Leaders to Watch” by *Spirituality and Health* magazine.



**Shamayim** is a vegan voice for dietary change within the Jewish community. Shamayim's new programs in 2020 included a Rabbi Reflection Circle for 25 rabbis, a 22-day Vegan Challenge, an Animal Welfare sermon contest (with sermons heard by more than 1,500 people), a series of vegan guides and online events for Jewish holidays, and a webinar speaker series. Shamayim held its seventh annual vegan retreat for Jewish vegan leaders in February, and seven synagogues joined Shamayim's Synagogue Vegan Challenge.

Beyond providing anchor funding, BFF staff work to assist and advise these organizations in diverse ways that aid their success. The resulting collaboration between organizations on strategy, campaigning, fundraising and technology has made all of us more resilient and adaptable during a year when many nonprofits have struggled. We are so glad, for example, that we could help our partners invest in web and social media-based technologies in 2019 and 2020, which have proven especially valuable in pandemic times.

# J E W I S H V E G A N



# V E G A N

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## Transforming Academia

Finally, related to our fourth program area, Transforming Academia, BFF Board Member Dr. Aaron Gross, Faith in Food Fellow, Dr. Christopher Carter, and a colleague launched a new Food Studies Initiative this fall at the University of San Diego. The initiative brings together concern for farmed animal ethics, racial justice, and environmental ethics, and is aimed at the creation of an interdisciplinary food studies minor and a university-wide commitment to ethics in food, reflected in academic content, student community engagement, and dining services.

Dr. Christopher Carter gave presentations on religion, animals, food, and race, including a talk at the Society of Christian Ethics entitled “Food Ethics in Practice: How to work with your institution to create sustainable food,” and spoke about Black veganism and his forthcoming book, *The Spirit of Soul Food*, on NPR’s food podcast, The Top Four, along with co-panelists Talia Pollock and Waz Wu. He was also interviewed for Pollock’s own podcast, Party in my Plants, for the episode “Creating a Dinner Plate in Solidarity with BIPOC, Animals, and the Environment.”

The University of San Diego is home to a new Food Studies Initiative.

In 2020 BFF’s messages reached more than 2.5 million individuals, a year-over-year increase of 690 percent.

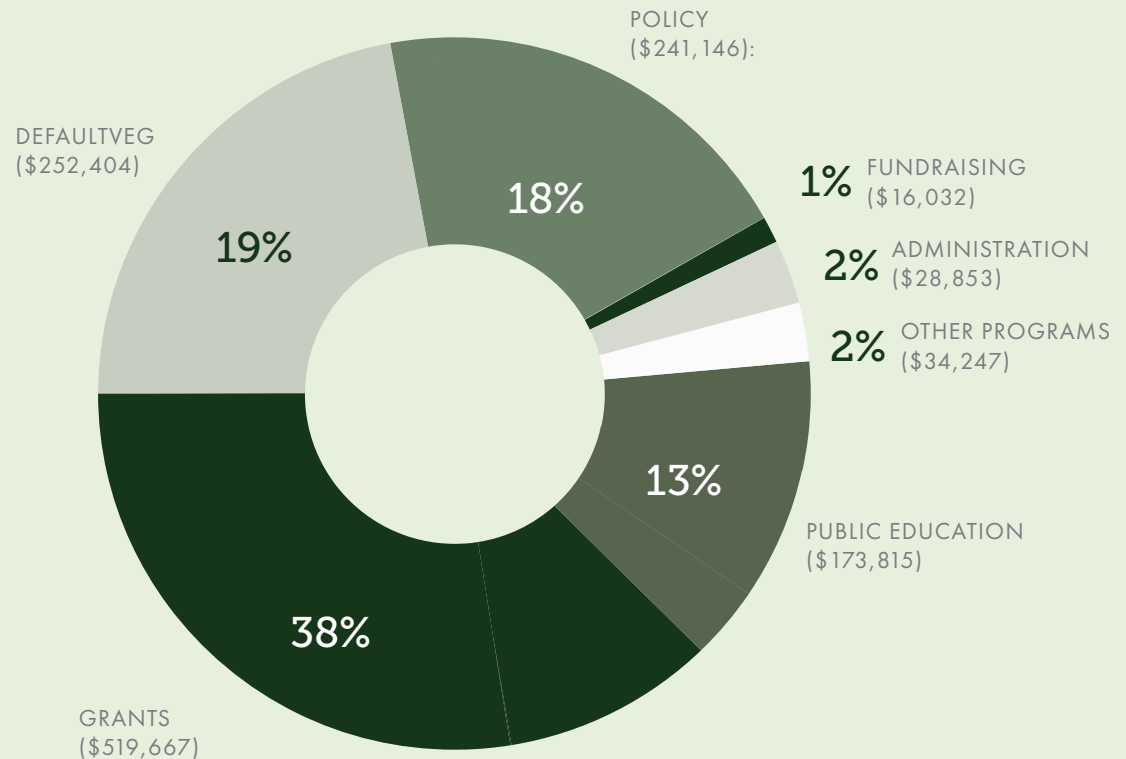


## Financial Data

BFF's close collaboration and resource-sharing with other organizations means that our own administrative costs are very low. In 2020, 97 percent of our expenditures supported programs and grants.

Thanks to generous donations and a government PPP loan, BFF was able to maintain stable funding in 2020 for our core staff and operations, as well as our capacity grants to partner organizations CreatureKind, Liberum and Shamayim. This financial stability has meant that we and our partners could continue to expand our programs, maintain our staff capacity, and grow our advocacy for plant-based, compassionate and sustainable food systems, despite the economic disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

**TOTAL PROGRAM \$1,312,896: 97%**  
**TOTAL: \$1,357,781**



## A Note from the Board

Eating has always been about relationships. Eating brings together families, shapes cultures, directs economies, transforms environments and defines the relationships between species. We never really eat alone.

And just as we don't eat alone, we can't do this work alone. At the present time Better Food Foundation is fortunate to have our core staff fully funded by a sustaining grant, but this is not nearly enough to take advantage of all the high-value opportunities before us at present. Programs like DefaultVeg, our grants supporting a more diverse vegan leadership and faith-based vegan outreach, and our efforts to engage higher education in the task of reimagining our food system could benefit from additional funds. **This means that 100% of new funds we receive are spent to grow the impact of programs.**

We're especially seeking partners to expand our signature program, DefaultVeg. One of the most effective ways we can expand DefaultVeg to more institutional partners is by supporting strategic collaborations where a new implementation of DefaultVeg is combined with data collection. These high-value collaborations result in immediate short-term impact, and even more valuable research that shows in precise terms just how effective

changing defaults can be. Since DefaultVeg is such a new concept, the results of these strategic collaborations are exactly what we need to persuade larger and larger institutions to change the dining status quo, but funding is the missing ingredient. This is but one example!

To learn more about our work, our amazing partners, and how you can help, contact Jennifer Channin at [jennifer@betterfoodfoundation.org](mailto:jennifer@betterfoodfoundation.org).

For a better future,

Jennifer Channin  
*Board Chair*

Aaron Gross, PhD  
*Board Member*

Ben Goldsmith  
*Board Member*

Dee Dee McKee  
*Board Member*



BUILDING A HEALTHY, EQUITABLE,  
HUMANE, ENVIRONMENTALLY  
SUSTAINABLE FOOD SYSTEM.

**CONTACT US AT**

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