



ECO ACTION NEWS

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Solar, Schools, and Sustainable Meals: ESRAG's October Impact Update

This month, we're digging into one of the most powerful, and often overlooked, tools we have for solving the climate crisis: food systems. From what's on our plates to what ends up in the trash, the way we produce, consume, and waste food has a huge impact on the environment, public health, and community resilience. That's why ESRAG is focusing on practical, scalable solutions, from school refrigerators to solar panel logging, and from plant-rich meals to debunking persistent myths. We're also proud to share how you can nominate game-changing environmental innovations through the Earthshot Prize. Whether you're looking to take action locally or globally, this issue is packed with tools and inspiration to help you lead the way toward a more sustainable future.

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Why Food Systems Are at the Heart of ESRAG's Environmental Mission



When you think about solving climate change, food may not be the first thing that comes to mind. But it should be. From what we eat to how it's grown, distributed, and wasted, our global food system is one of the most powerful levers we have to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, restore biodiversity, and build a more equitable world.

That's why ESRAG is committed to transforming food systems as a core part of our environmental work.

According to [Project Drawdown](#), reforming the food system is one of the most impactful climate solutions available today. In fact, food-related solutions make up a major portion of Drawdown's top-ranked strategies to stop global warming. These include:

- Reducing food waste
- Shifting to plant-rich diets
- Regenerative agriculture
- Supporting smallholder farmers
- Protecting ecosystems through sustainable land use

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ESRAG: An Official Nominator for the Earthshot Prize

Seeking Game-Changing Solutions for People and Planet

The Earth needs bold solutions, and ESRAG is helping find them. We are honored to be an official nominator for the 2026 Earthshot Prize, one of the world's most prestigious environmental awards. Through this global initiative, we have the opportunity to spotlight and support outstanding innovations that protect and restore our planet.

Founded by Prince William and the Royal Foundation, the Earthshot Prize awards £1 million to each of five winners annually, across five key categories:

- Protect and Restore Nature
- Clean Our Air
- Revive Our Oceans
- Build a Waste-Free World
- Fix Our Climate

Each Earthshot represents a bold, ambitious goal for 2030 to repair the Earth and secure a sustainable future. The prize recognizes visionary thinkers, scientists, entrepreneurs, activists, innovators, who are turning ideas into scalable, transformative action.

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Debunking Food Myths for Your Health and the Planet

By Joan Gagnon

In today's information overload, misconceptions about food and the environment spread quickly, and they can derail meaningful change. Whether it's doubts about nutrition or beliefs that "local meat is sustainable," myths can hold people back from adopting healthier, planet-friendly habits. That's why knowing how to gently correct misinformation with friendly, well-sourced responses empowers us to drive awareness and action, a goal central to ESRAG's mission. And, oh, check out the recipe at the end.

1. Myth: "You won't get enough protein on a plant-based diet."

Reality: Whole plant foods like beans, lentils, tofu, quinoa, nuts, and whole grains contain ample protein. Most people actually exceed their daily needs effortlessly.

Friendly Fact: Lentils deliver more protein per calorie than steak!

Source: [National Library of Medicine](#) notes beans, lentils, and tofu as sustainable, adequate protein.

Action Step: Add beans or lentils to one meal a day this week – you'll easily hit your protein needs. Because of the beneficial fiber in beans and lentils, we recommend you add a small amount each day to acclimate your body to this healthy, source of protein and fiber.

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Let the Race Begin: Rotary Clubs, Log Your Solar Panels!



By Elizabeth Henke

The Million Solar Panels Challenge, A Global Rotary Competition

The Million Solar Panels Challenge (MSPC) is uniting Rotary clubs around the world in a powerful campaign to show what clean energy leadership looks like. Our goal? Log 1 million solar panels installed by Rotarians, and weâ€™re well on our way.

So far, over 114,000 panels have been logged across 65 countries and 240 Rotary districts, representing nearly 1 million tonnes of CO2 avoided over 30 years, the equivalent of planting more than 1.2 million trees!

Who Can Log Panels?

Any Rotary member who has helped install solar panels, whether on their own home or business, or as part of a project for others, can log their panels.

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Coolers that Care: Tackling Hunger and Food Waste with School Refrigerators

Imagine a solution that feeds hungry students, reduces landfill waste, and teaches environmental responsibility, all with one simple tool: a refrigerator. Thatâ€™s the goal of ESRAGâ€™s Food Waste Refrigerators in Schools action guide, a practical resource for Rotary Clubs and community groups eager to fight food insecurity and protect the planet.

Globally, an estimated 1.3 billion tons of food is wasted every year, while millions of children go to school hungry. This paradox is a solvable one. ESRAGâ€™s action guide lays out how to rescue edible food from being thrown away and redirect it to students who need it, by providing schools with dedicated refrigerators for food donation and sharing.

What Is the Project?

The initiative is straightforward:

- Install a refrigerator in a school cafeteria or common area.
- Encourage students and staff to place uneaten, sealed, or leftover food into the fridge (as permitted by food safety laws).
- Make this food available to any student who is hungry or in need, no questions asked.

Itâ€™s an elegant solution that normalizes sharing, reduces waste, and ensures more children have access to nutritious meals.

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Join the Plant-Rich Diet Challenge: Eat for the Planet, Live for the Future



What if a simple shift in what we eat could help protect the climate, promote health, and support communities? The Plant-Rich Diet Challenge, an initiative of ESRA's Plant-Rich Diet Task Force, invites individuals and Rotary Clubs to do just that—one delicious meal at a time.

Why Take the Challenge?

The global food system is a major contributor to climate change, accounting for over 30% of greenhouse gas emissions. Animal agriculture in particular consumes vast resources—land, water, and energy—while driving deforestation and pollution. Transitioning toward a more plant-rich diet is one of the most effective climate solutions available today, according to leading research like Project Drawdown.

The Plant-Rich Challenge empowers you to reduce your environmental footprint while discovering nutritious, accessible, and tasty meals that benefit your health and the planet.

Sign up today: esrag.org/plant-rich-challenge

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Can Tofu Taste like Candy?



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Tofu Cubes

by Joan Marie Gagnon Tofu is a great way to get protein and spice up your meal. When I first tried tofu years ago, it was in my "œyuk" category. But, that was before I learned how to cook it. By adding spices and marinates, it is marvelous. It takes on the flavor of the spices, marinate, sauces, etc.

These flavorful tofu bites are packed with a umami flavor and absolutely irresistible! Make a big batch, you'll be tempted to snack on them all. If you can resist, they're a great way to add protein to your veggie dishes throughout the week.

Ingredients:

- 1 block of extra firm organic tofu
- 1/4 cup tamari
- 2 tablespoons maple syrup (optional)

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Weekly Seminars

October 8: Advancing Plant-Forward Food Policies Across Cities, Universities, and Government with Eleanor Carrara

Discover how cities, universities, and public institutions are adopting plant-based food policies to cut environmental impacts and boost public health—featuring six Canadian municipal wins and a national university initiative. [Register.](#)

October 15: Vegan Chef Challenge with Jackie Va and Roberta Celebrano

The Vegan Chef Challenge, by Vegan Outreach, is a month-long event where restaurants debut new vegan dishes. Diners taste, vote, and shape menus—boosting plant-based options, mainstreaming veganism, and driving business for participating restaurants. [Register.](#)

October 22: Planet B: A Systems Engineering Approach for World Peace and Planetary Health with Dr. Sailesh Rao

What if we can't achieve world peace and planetary health without starting over? How would we apply systems engineering principles to accomplish that? And what would that "Planet B" solution be and how would we go about implementing it? [Register.](#)

October 29: Health aspects of plant-rich eating with Brenda Davis

Brenda Davis, RD, is a plant-based pioneer, acclaimed speaker in 28 countries, and author/coauthor of 13 books (with a 14th on plant-based diets for older adults in progress). Inducted into the Vegetarian Hall of Fame and Luminary Award honoree, she's a global leader in nutrition. [Register.](#)

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