



FALL/WINTER 2024-2025

Welcome to the latest issue of SustainALANYC. Through our newsletter we provide information on how each of us individually and as organizations is responsible for economic, social and environmental change and what we can do to make a difference.



7 Themes from Climate Week NYC 2024

Gayatri Joshi, Vorgate Impact

New York City was buzzing with all things sustainability as Climate Week 2024 swept through with over 100,000 attendees, making it one of the largest climate-focused gatherings ever. Missed it? Here are some key themes from the events held from September 22 to 29 in New York.

1. Clean Energy

It's here and now. Forty of the nation's leading green banks announced a partnership to act as a hub for community-focused green banks, which will help communities secure capital for clean energy projects. Countries are being called upon to remove barriers to what some feel is a dragging rollout on renewable energy so they can make their COP28 commitments to triple global renewable energy by 2030. Energy efficiency is often underrated. Every business is being encouraged to set a target to become 5% more efficient by managing the basics, like HVAC. Green power: buying products and services made with clean energy will shift markets.

2. Decarbonization & Reporting is Not Going Away

Some businesses are talking about it, some are staying quiet, but either way, businesses are coming up with detailed climate action plans to move towards net zero emissions. There is an increased call to report to various government authorities on carbon and climate resilience and these will only continue to increase and expand to cover various areas, such as biodiversity, water, resilience, etc. These are meant to increase intentionality and implementation. On the industrial side, transport, shipping, aviation, iron and steel, petrochemicals and chemicals account for 20% of emissions. Much of the discussion was about how renewable energy and innovation would be needed to continue to decarbonize.

3. Nature is our Ally

Nature-based solutions are central to protecting the Earth, its ecosystems and our communities. Restoration of habitats and ecosystems, such as forests, wetlands, and oceans will help stabilize the climate from absorbing carbon, heat and reducing catastrophic weather events, like fire, drought and floods.

4. Indigenous Peoples and Partnership

Working towards a sustainable climate is a shared goal amongst all and must be equitable in not only its approach to understanding the problem and who is impacted, but also in solving the problem. The people of the lands are partners in climate solutions, not only to be seen as victims and beneficiaries, but true partners in forming and executing solutions. The week highlighted environmental justice, indigenous knowledge and skill, as well as the intersection of conflict – how corporate and government interests have pushed people off the land.

5. Invest, Invest, Invest

There is a major focus on finance to invest in climate solutions, from green bonds to loans and tying these directly to carbon reduction. As mentioned earlier, some green banks are now helping to bridge the gap for communities that would generally be unable to access capital for clean energy projects. Investment is being viewed not only through the lens of nature but also through the perspective of communities that consider equitable investment, such as resilience, jobs, food security, and health infrastructure, etc. etc.

6. AI and Technology

AI may benefit businesses by using predictive analytics and optimizing energy systems, but it also is very resource-intensive, with a huge thirst for water, energy and metals which will need to be balanced.

AI can do amazing things for nature, with the ability to track biodiversity and ecosystem restoration, but even a simple ChatGPT AI query can produce 50 to 90 times more energy than a conventional search.

7. All Things Policy

Many climate and environmental initiatives can take a strong hold with the determination of inspired people and climate-oriented NGOs, but policy is necessary. It provides the framework and guidelines needed to create more climate pathway solutions. Governments on the national, state and local levels need to continue to create policies that shift practices. Policymakers can limit or stop extractive processes for metals, water, oil and gas that are either toxic or result in overconsumption. They can prioritize community interests over industrial practices for the health and wellbeing of those communities. They can also prioritize nature through sustainable development of new home or building construction. Policy, even more effectively, can also shift investments towards nature-based solutions.

Climate Week NYC 2024 was about real solutions. Everyone has a role to play in this transition, whether it's businesses adopting climate plans, individuals supporting nature-based solutions, governments creating policies, or banks and governments partnering to enable creative financing for underserved communities. There are opportunities to act at every level. Climate Week NYC brings awareness and encourages us to make meaningful choices today that will have lasting impacts on our climate and communities.



Embracing Sustainability in the Paper Industry: A Green Revolution

John Connolly, LDI Connect

The paper industry, long criticized for its environmental impact, is undergoing a transformative shift towards sustainability. As global awareness of environmental issues grows, those within the paper industry are recognizing the need for responsible and eco-friendly practices, which is not only essential for the health of our planet, but also for the long-term viability of the industry itself.

One motivator of promoting sustainability in the paper industry is the responsibility of sourcing raw materials. Traditionally, the industry has been a contributor to deforestation and habitat destruction. However, many companies are now committing to sourcing their raw materials from sustainably managed forests or from recycled sources. Certification systems like the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) play a crucial role in ensuring that the wood and pulp used in paper production come from forests managed in an environmentally and socially responsible manner.

Paper manufacturing is an energy-intensive process, which over time has led to significant carbon emissions. The industry is addressing this challenge by adopting energy-efficient technologies and transitioning to renewable energy sources. Many paper mills are investing in modern equipment and systems that not only reduce energy consumption, but also minimize greenhouse gas emissions. The integration of cleaner technology, such as biomass and solar power, is becoming increasingly common.

Promoting a circular economy is a cornerstone of sustainability in the paper industry. Recycling paper reduces the demand for virgin pulp and minimizes the environmental impact associated with logging and transportation. Many paper manufacturers are actively encouraging recycling initiatives and investing in the development of innovative processes to recycle paper efficiently. Furthermore, consumers are becoming more environmentally conscious, contributing to the demand for recycled and eco-friendly paper products. Water is a vital resource in paper production, and its responsible use is integral to sustainability efforts. Paper mills are implementing water conservation measures, such as closed-loop systems and efficient water treatment processes, to minimize their impact on local water sources. Additionally, efforts are being made to reduce the discharge of pollutants into water bodies, safeguarding aquatic ecosystems and local communities.

In conclusion, the paper industry's journey towards sustainability reflects the power of responsible business practices. As consumers increasingly prioritize environmentally friendly products, the industry's commitment to sustainability is not only an ethical choice, but also a strategic one. By reducing emissions, promoting recycling, and conserving resources, the paper industry is setting a positive example for other sectors to follow. In this era of environmental consciousness, the paper industry's green revolution is a crucial step towards a more sustainable and resilient future.



Let's Eat!

Sustainable Recipe Corner Easy to Make Plant-Based Butternut Squash Soup

Oria Aponte, Hodgson Russ LLP

Now that the weather is a bit cooler, I think we can all agree, a hearty soup is just the right dish to bring us comfort. Here is a simple butternut squash soup that can be made on a weeknight or as a side dish to any holiday meal. Most of the ingredients needed are staple items we all have in our pantry or fridge. It's super easy, affordable and most of all – super delicious!

I hope you enjoy making this nutritious and beautiful soup.

Ingredients:

- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 1 large onion, chopped
- 3 cloves garlic, chopped
- 2 pounds cubed (1-inch) butternut squash (about 7 ½ cups)
- 1 cup no-salt-added chickpeas, drained and rinsed
- ¾ teaspoon salt
- ½ teaspoon ground cumin
- ¼ teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
- ⅛ teaspoons ground turmeric
- Pinch cayenne pepper
- 5 cups low-sodium chicken or vegetable broth*
- 1 tablespoon honey
- 2 tablespoons tahini
- ½ cup packaged crispy chickpea snacks (plain or lightly salted)
- 2 tablespoons chopped fresh parsley

Instructions:

- Heat the oil in a large pot over medium heat. Add the onion and cook until softened, about 4 minutes. Add the garlic and cook 30 seconds more.
- Stir in the squash, chickpeas, salt, cumin, black pepper, turmeric, and cayenne pepper.
- Add the broth and bring to a boil, then reduce the heat to medium-low and simmer, covered, until the squash is very tender, about 20 minutes. Use a hand blender to puree until smooth. Stir in the honey.
- Place the tahini in a bowl and stir in 2 tablespoons of cold water. Add more water by the teaspoon until the tahini is loose enough to be drizzled.
- Serve the soup drizzled with the tahini, garnished with the crispy chickpeas and parsley.

Embracing Seasonality and Local Produce: A Sustainable Approach to Eating

Camille Gallardo, Ellis Law Group

In an era where sustainability has become a pressing concern, our food choices play a crucial role in shaping the health of our planet. Two interconnected practices - eating seasonally and buying local produce - stand out as powerful ways to reduce our environmental footprint while supporting local economies and enjoying fresher, more flavorful food.

The Power of Seasonal Eating

Eating seasonally means consuming fruits and vegetables at the time of year when they naturally ripen in your local area. This practice offers several sustainability benefits:

1

Reduced Carbon Footprint

Seasonal produce doesn't require energy-intensive greenhouse cultivation or long-distance transportation.

2

Decreased Water Usage

Crops grown in their natural season typically require less irrigation, conserving water resources.

3

Lower Pesticide Use

Seasonal crops are better adapted to local conditions, often needing fewer pesticides to thrive.

4

Enhanced Biodiversity

Rotating crops with the seasons promotes soil health and supports a diverse ecosystem.

The Benefits of Buying Local

Purchasing produce from local farmers complements seasonal eating and further enhances sustainability:

1

Minimized Transportation

Learn about which produce is in season in your area throughout the year.

2

Fresher, More Nutritious Food

These are excellent sources of local, seasonal produce.

3

Support for Local Economies

Community Supported Agriculture programs provide regular deliveries of local, seasonal produce.

4

Increased Food Security

Learn canning, freezing, and other preservation techniques to enjoy local produce year-round.

Challenges and Solutions

While adopting these practices can be challenging, here are some strategies to help:

1

Educate Yourself

Learn about which produce is in season in your area throughout the year.

2

Visit Farmers' Markets

These are excellent sources of local, seasonal produce.

3

Join a CSA

Community Supported Agriculture programs provide regular deliveries of local, seasonal produce.

4

Preserve Excess

Learn canning, freezing, and other preservation techniques to enjoy local produce year-round.

Conclusion

Embracing seasonality and local produce is more than just a dietary choice - it's a commitment to sustainability. By aligning our eating habits with nature's rhythms and supporting local agriculture, we can significantly reduce our environmental impact while enjoying fresher, more flavorful food. As consumers, we have the power to drive positive change through our food choices. Let's seize this opportunity to create a more sustainable food system for ourselves and future generations.



Holidays Are Upon Us!

Sustainability Awareness Dates

November 1 Celebrate World Vegan Month this November | The Vegan Society

November 6 International Day for Preventing the Exploitation of the Environment in War and Armed Conflict

November 15 America Recycles Day

November 17 Take a Hike Day

November 21 World Fisheries Day

November 30 - December 12 COP28

December 5 World Soil Day

December 11 International Mountain Day

December 20 International Human Solidarity Day



Sustainable Holiday Tips

Rose Hirsch, Emmet Marvin & Martin LLP

We are all getting ready for the holiday season. With Thanksgiving, Hanukkah, Christmas, and Kwanzaa approaching this may be the most wonderful time of the year but also the most wasteful. During this holiday season, Americans create about 25% more waste, which amounts to a million extra tons of garbage each week. So how can we make this holiday season a little more sustainable?

Here are some general tips:

- Shop Locally and carpool if you can or use public transportation. This will cut down transportation emissions.
- Try and buy eco-friendly gifts. You can make a gift, give an app, gift an experience or donate to a charity.

Hanukkah

- If you eat turkey, buy your turkey locally – this will reduce your carbon footprint.
- Scale back on your menu to cut back on waste.
- Don't use plastic or paper. You can set your table with silverware, real glass plates and cloth napkins.
- Use leaves to create an autumn leaf bouquet or create a fall wreath with vines, ribbons, leaves and gourds. Reuse pumpkins from Halloween, fill with cut flowers to create a centerpiece.



Thanksgiving

- Reuse your menorah each year or make your own menorah using recycled materials.
- If you use real candles – choose organic – beeswax, soy or vegetable wax.
- Stay away from plastic dreidels. You can make dreidels out of clay or wood.
- Make vegan latkes and other plant-based Hanukkah recipes.
- Give gifts that are experiences instead of eight gifts of presents.
- Re-use gift wrap.



Sustainable Products Corner: Ettitude

Elba Cortes, Fox Rothschild LLP

This issue's featured product is Ettitude. Their fabrics are 100% free of toxins. Ettitude makes loungewear, bedding and bath towels using CleanBamboo Fabric (lyocell) made from organic bamboo. They have been featured in Forbes in the article *This Entrepreneur Fights Climate Change With Silky Soft Bamboo Sheets*.



Christmas

- Use natural decorations – a sustainable tree, pinecones, evergreen branches, sticks. These can be put in the compost bin after the holiday season.
- Use LED or solar lights. They use less energy to function.
- Use candles – choose organic – beeswax, soy or vegetable wax.
- Prepare a plant-based meal and reduce food waste.
- Buy local products or make your own eco-friendly gifts.
- Make edible ornaments – popcorn garland, pinecones, ornaments made from clay or wood.
- Make your own centerpiece by reusing glass jars, paper, ribbons, acorns, pinecones, etc.



Kwanzaa

There are seven symbols of Kwanzaa:

- Mkeka – This is a mat that is usually made of straw. Try and reuse it each year.
- Mazao – These are the crops, fruits and vegetables that represent the harvest. Once these are used. Try and use them as part of your meal.
- Kinara – This is the candle holder. Choose one that is locally made or make one yourself out of wood, empty jars, etc.
- Mishumaa – The seven candles that represent the seven principles. Use sustainable candles that are made with soy, beeswax or coconut wax.
- Muhindi – Corn – Reuse it each year if possible or buy fresh and use as part of a meal.
- Kikombe che Umoja – the Unity cup – Reuse it each year.
- Zawandi – Gift an experience that keeps the seven principles in mind.



Meet the Sustainability Team

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