

# AVATAR DIRECTOR JAMES CAMERON

## OFFERS A NEW WAY TO FIGHT CLIMATE CHANGE



“We need to get big food and big ag’s **hands off** regulators in Washington, or the government will **continue to support** a broken food system that is all about feeding people **processed foods** instead of healthy organic ones.”

By John Gaudiosi



Walt Disney Imagineering in collaboration with filmmaker James Cameron and Lightstorm Entertainment is bringing to life the mythical world of Pandora, inspired by Cameron’s *Avatar*, at Disney’s Animal Kingdom theme park. The awe-inspiring land of floating mountains, bioluminescent rainforests and soaring Banshees will become real for Disney guests to see, hear and touch. Scheduled to open in 2017, the *Avatar*-inspired land will be part of the largest expansion in Disney’s Animal Kingdom history.

In addition to writing, developing new technology for, and preparing to shoot the three new *Avatar* films, Oscar-winner James Cameron has remained firmly entrenched in environmental issues. The director took the stage on September 15, 2015, at the first-ever U.S.-China Climate Leaders Summit to raise awareness about the impact of animal agriculture on climate change through his talk, “Food for Sustainable Nations.”

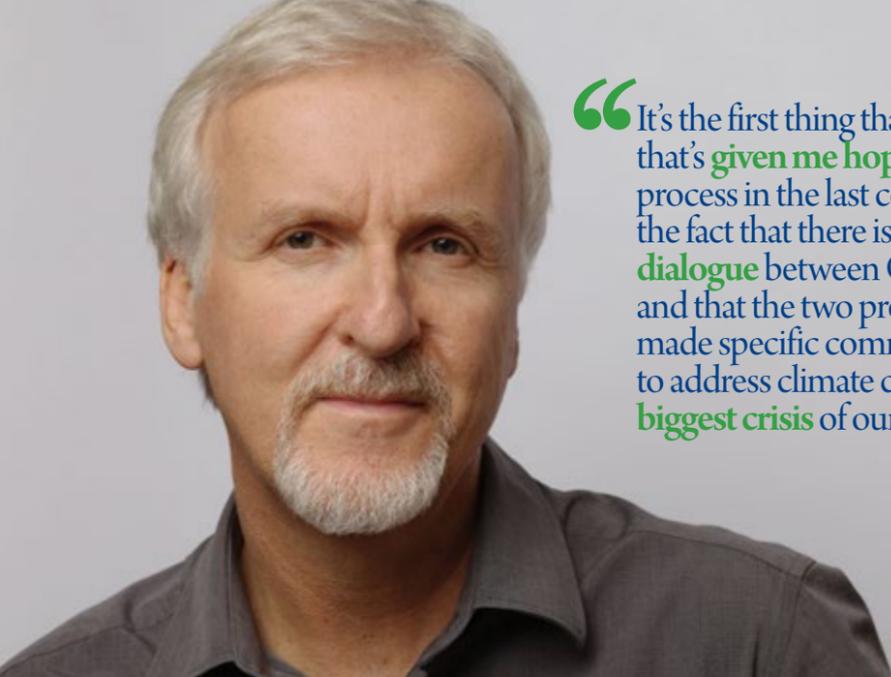
Cameron co-founded the Food Choice Taskforce to investigate how raising 70 billion cows, goats, sheep, pigs, chickens, and other animals humans eat every year are contributing to 14.5% of greenhouse gas emissions worldwide. As Cameron emphasized in his presentation, keeping global warming below dangerous levels isn’t possible if a growing global population mirrors the current American diet and consumes the amount of animal-sourced foods eaten in the U.S.

The 61-year-old director discovered that switching to a plant-based diet not only cuts one’s carbon footprint in half, it’s also healthier – as referenced by the recent blue zone regions around the world that have the largest collection of centenarians (who live a mostly plant-based diet). So, Cameron went plant-based almost four years ago, and now he’s using his stature to get the message out to the public about the connection between animal agriculture and climate change.

Cameron talks about these environmental issues, and discusses how sustainability is being integrated into Disney World’s Pandora: The Land of Avatar in this exclusive interview.

**Innovation & Tech Today: How have you been involved in making a change when it comes to Food Systems?**

James Cameron: In late March, the Food Choice Taskforce launched the ‘My Plate, My Planet’ initiative to support the Dietary Guidelines Advisory Committee (DGAC),



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a government-appointed, independent scientific body, in its historic stand on sustainability as a criterion in the important Dietary Guidelines for Americans. The DGAC did something bold and important, citing that "Current evidence shows that the average U.S. diet has a larger environmental impact in terms of increased greenhouse gas emissions, land use, water use, and energy use..." and noting that "a diet higher in plant-based foods, such as vegetables, fruits, whole grains, legumes, nuts, and seeds, and lower in calories and animal-based foods is more health promoting and is associated with less environmental impact than is the current U.S. diet..."

The Dietary Guidelines for Americans affect U.S. nutrition policies and food procurement, including the \$16 billion school lunch program. So, they are a very big deal, with far-reaching impact and implications. In support, we launched a campaign and got more than 100 organizations and individuals to sign on, a lot of them the big environmental groups like the Sierra Club, Conservation International, NRDC, Greenpeace and many others. We published an open letter to USDA Secretary Tom Vilsack and HHS Secretary Sylvia Mathews Burwell in *The New York Times*, *Washington Post*, and elsewhere, urging them to accept the sustainability recommendations of the very scientists they appointed to advise them.

Both Vilsack and Burwell have the opportunity to say forcefully that sustainability matters. What they do will be their legacy, for better or worse. But it's our future. They still have time to make the right choice.

**I&T Today: How important is it to have the U.S. and China on the same stage at the recent L.A. summit talking about environmental issues like this?**

JC: It's critical. It's the first thing that's come along that's given me hope in this whole process in the last couple of years – the fact that there is a significant dialogue between Obama and Xi, and that the two presidents have made specific commitments to address climate change, the biggest crisis of our time. That's huge because you have the two biggest economies, the two biggest emitters, facing the primary issue that affects the globe, and that affects our children and their future. Everybody else in the world can link arms and try to solve the climate problem, but if the U.S. and China are not leading, or not on board with solutions, then it's not going to work. Obviously, we need to get India into that mix, as well, but the U.S. and China are a great place to start. We just need to make sure there's real action. Now.

**I&T Today: What opportunities do you see this opening up for businesses interested in connecting with consumers who want to make a difference?**

JC: Bill Gates is saying if you can come up with great plant protein-based substitutes for people's favorite comfort foods, you're going to do very well. That's pretty obvious. We need a big reboot of the whole agriculture sector. We need to get big food and big ag's hands off regulators in Washington, or the government will continue to support a broken food system that is all about feeding people processed foods instead of healthy organic ones. Those are separate problems from the specific linkage I'm making

about climate and the consumption of meat and dairy. That linkage couldn't be more important. People are generally unaware that what's on their plate has an impact on the planet.

**I&T Today: Do you have any advice for businesses?**

JC: If you really want to surf this wave of change, and the changes are coming, people should look at creating businesses like the Veggie Grill, which serves good, wholesome plant-based food to people who are in a hurry. Chipotle and Veggie Grill have both proven you can provide good food served fast that's well-sourced and that's responsibly grown. Empowering people to make healthier choices is something that business can assist with, in general. And it's good business.

**I&T Today: How will these types of environmental messages be integrated into Disney World's Pandora: The World of Avatar?**

JC: Disney has a commitment to sustainability and animal welfare. One of the reasons they've put Pandora: The World of Avatar in Animal Kingdom is because they wanted to emphasize social and environmental responsibility. It's very positive messaging; there will be an effort to provide good, healthy, organic, sustainably-grown food in what is largely a fast food environment.

Disney has made a commitment to us that it's going to promote sustainability as much as possible. The company already does it at Animal Kingdom broadly, and it's certainly going to promote sustainability within Pandora: The Land of Avatar because that's what the movie stands for.

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