Almost 1000 people took the LessMeat Monday survey, which is amazing. Overall, the results were really positive, but I wanted to take some time lay out a few of the main criticisms and respond to them.

**The real goal should be local and organic food, and the meat vs. non-meat debate is missing the point.** Though local and organic foods are important parts of sustainable food systems, after meeting with the head of dining, Matthew Biette, we were informed that they were unaffordable for the Middlebury dining halls. While we could have done something along the lines of a special, local Atwater dinner, we feared this would only cater to students who were already passionate about the issue and that it would not raise any new awareness. A related complaint was that vegetarian diets actually supported corn and soy industries which are worse than the meat industry. I agree that big soy and corn agriculture are not ideal, but disagree that our vegetarian options supported them more than meat would have. While it is true that we had one tofu option made from soy, our other protein options were pasta, cheese, chick peas, and humus. Also, livestock consumes 1/3 of the world’s grain, so meat production is intrinsically tied with the corn industry. There are many other food issues that we did not fully address that are very important, but that does not invalidate the meat vs. vegetarian debate, which we chose to tackle because it is feasible for the dining hall on a weekly basis.

**Vegetarian food was cheaper than meat so we should pay less/it was more expensive so it was unfair to the dining hall.** Our group did a cost benefit analysis of meat products vs. nonmeat products for the dining hall, and the prices turned out to be approximately the same. We originally hoped that less meat would save the dining hall money, but Matthew Biette is great at buying quality meat at great prices.

**We should focus on other environmental problems before tackling meat.** If we want to help the environment, addressing meat production is a necessity. The 2006 FAO paper “Livestock’s Long Shadow” reported that livestock production causes 18% of greenhouse gas emissions (more than the entire transportation sector), it is most likely the leading cause of biodiversity loss and water pollution worldwide, and it uses up 70% of agricultural land, half of which is used solely for animal feed which is extremely energy inefficient. Meat production is a serious environmental problem that can be partially mitigated by something as simple as choosing to not eat meat one meal per week.

**We disrespected and prohibited choice.** Our project was in no way meant to force anyone to do anything. We considered doing a completely Meatless Monday and decided against it because we wanted people to have a choice. While we did take away one meat option, we added another dish that could be eaten by both vegetarians and meat eaters on campus. We tried very hard not to disrespect anyone, and tried to make that clear in the email when we wrote that *we respect whatever you chose*. Our intention was to inform people of some of the environmental consequences of those choices. Many people suggested that if we hadn’t had any information, no one would have noticed the difference. We discussed simply trying to sneak in less meat, but decided against it because education and increased awareness is what will actually make a difference in the long run. We truly wanted the wanted the focus to be on education, and it was. We stood passively outside of the dining halls with information and made ourselves available to answer any questions that students had.

**We were imposing our minority vegetarian views on everyone.** We were promoting less meat, not a vegetarian diet (in fact 3 out of our 4 group members are not vegetarian). Meat reduction is not such a radical idea; what is new and radical is our increased demand for meat, which has grown 37% since 1980 and is predicted to double by 2050. The worst case scenario is that LessMeat Monday only benefitted the minority, but the Organic Garden Survey last year found that 15% of students did not eat meat on campus, and LessMeat Monday represents less than 5% of meals on campus.

**There was not enough information.** Many people made a beeline to the food (understandably) and missed the big posters and the info sheet outside the dining hall, so I will put those along with our citations and paper online at the end of the semester when we finish our project. I also would love to talk about this if anyone wants more information or is confused.