Reaping the Benefits of Plant-Rich Diets: The Ten Point Plan

Plant-rich diets offer a wealth of benefits, solutions and opportunities to the UK. Increased production and consumption of healthy plant-based foods – in particular vegetables, pulses, legumes, fruit, nuts, seeds and wholegrains – would positively impact public health, bolster food security, enhance environmental protection, encourage economic growth and improve animal welfare.

The goals of the Food Strategy as set by Defra, can be met if significant policy interventions are made to foster a transition to plant-rich diets. This would bring the nation's food consumption in line with the latest and best evidence and build a food culture and system that is fit for the future.

The Ten Point Plan proposes integrated measures to increase demand for and supply of domestically produced plant-based foods, with these policies working in combination to improve the nation's health and ensure a just transition to a food system that boosts economic growth while protecting our environment. On the demand side, practical and proven policies will increase the desirability, affordability and accessibility of healthy plant-based foods, especially for people currently facing significant barriers to healthy eating. Simultaneously, policies to support the production, sustainability and profitability of plant-based foods in the UK will boost the farming industry and enhance our domestic food security. In both areas, wherever appropriate, ambitious, achievable targets should be set.

The Ten Point Plan

1 **Leverage public procurement and catering to source and provide more plant-based foods, normalising plant-rich diets and catalysing growth in the market.** Specific measures may include: requirements for meals to conform to emissions-per-portion limits; plant-rich "by default" public sector menus; and removing the obligation to provide meat three times per week from School Food Standards. [1]

2 **Encourage food supply companies to transition towards a higher proportion of sales of plant-based foods.** Specific measures may include mandatory requirements for food companies of more than 250 employees - including processing, retail, manufacture, catering and out-of-home - to report relevant metrics such as protein splits for sold products, sales of fruit and vegetables, and their targets for increasing sales of plant-based proteins.

3 **Bolster national food security and economic growth through support for the horticulture sector to produce more fruit, vegetables, nuts, beans and pulses in the UK.** Specific measures may include providing targeted payments and incentives for farmers sustainably growing crops for human consumption; support for research into plant varieties and production methods; assistance with marketing, both domestic and for export; and rigorous mechanisms to ensure fair prices within the supply chain.

4 **Support British farmers to increase production and provision of plant proteins for human consumption in the UK.** In addition to measures identified above in the context of horticulture, these could include grants, loans and/or subsidies targeted at the financial needs of farmers diversifying protein production; payments for reduction of high environmental impact farmed animals; support for training and retraining of farmers.

5 **Make it easier and more affordable for people to access and eat healthy food.** Specific measures may include: providing fruit and veg through voucher schemes such as Healthy Start, as well as schemes which provide access to healthy plant foods in areas with low access or 'food deserts'; providing practical education for the general public about preparing and cooking plant-based foods, such as in the school curriculum, via community services and via social media; supporting communities to grow healthy food through education and the provision of land for allotments and community gardens.

6 **Raise public understanding of the health and environmental benefits of healthy plant-rich foods and diets.** Specific measures may include: integrated and holistic public health campaigns to promote fruit and vegetable consumption; recipes and meal plans based on healthy and affordable plant proteins such as beans and pulses as part of the Eatwell Guide.

7 **Improve labelling to raise public understanding of health, environmental and animal welfare impacts.** Specific measures may include: mandatory, holistic and standardised environmental and health labelling for all food products,

taking into account GHG emissions, land and water use; indications of fibre content and advice on average daily limits to be included in on-pack nutritional information; mandatory, standardised method of production labelling for animal products.

8 **Improve training for health and food professionals in regard to healthy plant-rich foods.** This training should include modules dedicated to balanced plant-based nutrition for relevant health professionals such as GPs and dietitians, and content on creating nutritious plant-based meals required to be included in training courses and qualifications for chefs and catering professionals.

9 **Update, reform and apply the Eatwell Guide dietary guidelines.** The guide was last updated in 2016 and should reflect the latest evidence on both the health and environmental benefits of plant-rich diets. It should provide guidance on adopting plant-rich diets and toolkits for nutrition professionals to aid implementation and adherence. It must be used to guide policy across all government departments and public bodies, including, for example, public procurement spending and advertising standards.

10 **Increase investment in and support for healthy, sustainable alternative proteins.** Specific measures may include: further investment in the National Alternative Proteins Innovation Centre and its work; and ensuring a clear, robust, effective regulatory framework.

The Ten Point Plan: affordable, mission-aligned and achievable

Strategic, cross-government approaches to boosting the consumption and production of plant-based foods have already been implemented in Denmark and, most recently, Switzerland. [2] In the UK context, the Ten Point Plan meets the specific objectives set by Defra for the Food Strategy, without requiring unaffordable financial investment or imposing policies upon the public that would be unpopular or restrict their freedom of choice.

Meeting Defra's stated goals for the food strategy

• **Food security** is enhanced by ensuring a higher proportion of fruit and vegetables are grown within the UK, and by lower dependence on animal feed grown abroad.

Horticultural production in the UK is in an ongoing decline, with vegetable production at its lowest since 2015 and fruit production at its lowest since 2015 (apart from 2021). Only 53% of vegetables and 16% of fruit are home grown. [3] ***The UK spent about £3.3bn on imported animal feed in 2022, demand for which will be reduced by a shift towards more plant-rich diets. Farmed animals are estimated to consume 51% of our domestic wheat, 64% of barley, 36% of oats, 60% of maize, and 92% of field peas.*** [4]

• **Reduced environmental impact** arises through decreased area of land needed for food production (due to reduced demand for feed and pasture), allowing reforestation and/or nature recovery, increasing biodiversity and associated carbon sequestration. In addition, lower numbers of farmed animals reduce methane and nitrate emissions and reduce river pollution from farm effluent.

The Climate Change Committee recommends increasing the amount of plant-based food in the average UK diet to achieve a 20% cut in dairy consumption by 2035 and a 35% cut in meat consumption by 2050. [5] ***A 2023 study published in Nature Food concluded that "plant-based diets produce 75 percent less heat-trapping gas, generate 75 percent less water pollution, and use 75 percent less land than meat-rich diets".*** [6]

• **Economic growth** is fostered directly through increased productivity in horticulture and plant proteins, and indirectly through improvements in public health, which lead to enhanced productivity and economic participation, as well as reduced expenditure on health, social care and ill health-associated benefits.

2025 Green Alliance research concluded that if fruit and vegetable consumption in the UK was increased to meet current dietary guidelines (an increase of 86%), expanding the domestic horticulture production to meet the demand could generate £2.3 billion for the UK economy, create 23,520 jobs and boost farm profits by three per cent across the country. [7] ***A 2023 Green Alliance report concluded that the UK alternative proteins industry could be worth £6.4bn and create 25,000 jobs by 2035.*** [8] ***Research suggests that a 20% reduction in average meat consumption could yield £1.2bn of savings to the NHS per year,*** [9] ***and that for every million people following a plant-based diet, NHS England could save £120m.*** [10]

• **Healthy food** will become more accessible and affordable if measures are taken to promote healthy plant-based foods and reduce animal-sourced food consumption.

There is a strongly evidenced association of plant-based foods and plant-rich diets with lower risks of cardiovascular disease, some forms of cancer and type 2 diabetes, among other conditions. Higher consumption of plant-based foods is already recommended in current UK dietary guidelines [11] ***but just 17% of adults achieve five-a-day and less than one-in-ten children; only 4% of children age 11-18 eat enough fibre.*** [12] ***Research has consistently shown that healthy plant-based diets can be more affordable than typical animal food-based diets, with a 2021 study from Oxford University concluding that vegan diets could reduce food costs in high income countries by up to a third*** [13] ***and the Conservative Animal Welfare Foundation finding that a 20% reduction in meat consumption could save families £130 per year on food bills (published 2024).*** [14]

Affordable and cost-effective

Implementation costs would be modest, and may in many cases be met through the redirection of existing budgets. Simultaneously, adoption would save significant expenditure, as a result of improvements in public health and mitigation of negative environmental impacts, in addition to providing an opportunity for economic growth. For instance, an Oxford University study found that reducing average meat consumption in the UK to two to three servings per person per week could prevent 45,000 premature deaths and reduce NHS costs by £1.2 billion per year. [15] A peer-reviewed study estimated that the EAT-Lancet planetary health diet would be 17% cheaper than the UK's current average diet in 2017 – when also factoring in savings to health and climate change costs, and assuming food waste is halved, it would be 35% cheaper. [16]

Implementation costs could be met in a number of ways, including:

- Redirection of existing farming payments towards horticulture and crops for human consumption
- Redirection of existing UKRI budgets to support innovation and R&D in the plant-proteins sector
- Selective levies on harmful products or practices, ring-fenced for supporting positive alternatives
- Selective redirection of existing public health campaign budgets towards effective, evidence-based activities promoting dietary change
- Facilitation of direct or indirect private sector support

Supported by public opinion

Evidence from multiple sources suggests the public recognises the value in increasing consumption of plant-based foods and is generally supportive of measures to achieve that. [17] A May 2025 poll conducted by the sponsors of the plan found:

- 69% of people said they would like to eat more fruit, vegetables and other plant-based food than they currently do.
- 69% said that the government should do more to help people eat fruit, vegetables and other plant-based foods.
- 70% said the government should support animal farmers to transition to more sustainable practices, such as rewilding or plant-based crop production.
- 65% said that the government should take steps to make healthy plant-based foods more affordable for everyone.
- 62% said public sector bodies such as schools and hospitals should provide more food based on healthy plant sources.
- 73% said health campaigns should provide more information about how to access, prepare and cook healthy foods easily and cheaply. [18]

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The Ten Point Plan is endorsed by:

Health: British Society for Haematology | Business for Health | The Centre for Sustainable Healthcare | Doctors Association UK | Green at Barts Health | Greener Practice | Greener Healthcare and Sustainability Project (GHASP) | Health for Extinction Rebellion | My Nutriweb Nutrition Education Hub | Pharmacy Declares | Plant-Based Health Professionals UK | Professor Anthony Costello, University College London | Professor Hugh Montgomery OBE FMedSci, UCL Professor of Intensive Care Medicine, and co-lead Lancet Countdown on Health and Climate Change | Professor Rosie Green, London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine | Professor Sir Andy Haines, London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine | Psych Declares | UK Health Alliance on Climate Change | UK Kidney Association

Food, Farming and Sustainability: Adfree Cities | Alternative Proteins Association | Better Food Traders | BOSH! | British Growers Association | Bryant Research | The Centre for Food Policy, City St George's, University of London | Changing Markets Foundation | Climate Emergency UK | Communities Against Factory Farming | The Community-Supported Agriculture Network | Farm Adaptation Network | The Food Foundation | Foodfacts.org | Foodrise (formerly known as Feedback) | Freedom Food Alliance | Growing Communities | Hodmedods | Hubbub | Made in Hackney | Madre Brava | Moving Mountains | Oatly | Organic North | Plantheads (Crackd) | Professor Paul Behrens, University of Oxford | ProVeg UK | Quorn Foods | Real Zero | Regather | Root and Reason | Small World Consulting | SOS-UK | Stockfree Farming | Suma Wholefoods | THIS | UK for Good | UK Fruit and Vegetable Coalition | Vegan Food & Living | The Vegan Society | Veganuary | Vegeco (Benevo) | The Vegetarian Society | V for Life

Animal Protection: Animal Justice Project | Compassion in World Farming | Humane World for Animals UK | World Animal Protection | Viva!

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[14] Conservative Animal Welfare Foundation, as above

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[17] Eating Better 2024 https://www.eating-better.org/site/assets/files/10374/public_attitudes_survey_2024_final.pdf : 61% of people willing to cut their meat consumption; The Food Foundation, Good Food Institute and Green Alliance 2025 https://foodfoundation.org.uk/sites/default/files/2025-04/LHF%20Technical%20report%20final_0.pdf ; 38% intending to cut meat consumption, rising to more than half among under-35s

[18] Survation survey of 1,091 UK adults, conducted 29-30 May 2025. Data were weighted to the profile of all adults in the UK aged 18+. Results available on request.