

Letter to the European Commission regarding EU promotion of meat and dairy.

[Plant Based Health Professionals UK](#), an organisation of over 800 health professionals, are welcoming the Commission's aim to review the agricultural promotion policy "with a view to enhancing its contribution to sustainable production and consumption, and in line with the shift to a more plant-based diet, with less red and processed meat and more fruit and vegetables."¹ **We are therefore urging the Commission to ensure a positive outcome of this review improving the public health of European citizens by ending the promotion of meat and dairy, and investing in the promotion of healthy sustainable plant-based diets.**

Promoting animal-based diets poses tremendous risks to public health

Unhealthy diets are now responsible for 1 in 5 deaths globally every year, around 11 millions deaths in total, making this a leading risk factor for chronic disease, disability and death.² Poor diets are major risk factors contributing to the rise in obesity, cardiovascular disease, cancer, type 2 diabetes and dementia. In the EU, the average consumption of red meat exceeds recommendations, while the intake of plant-based foods such as legumes or vegetables is insufficient, as laid out in the Commission's Farm to Fork strategy.³

Promote healthy diets EU wide and beyond

Eating a plant-based diet refers to eating a diet that consists of fruits, vegetables, legumes, whole grains, nuts and seeds, with few or no animal products. Plant-based diets are abundant in nutrients such as fibre, vitamins, minerals, antioxidants and anti-inflammatory compounds that are often lacking in the standard Western diet. They are low in saturated fat, predominately found in animal-derived foods. Replacing saturated fat with unsaturated fat improves health outcomes and reduces mortality.

¹ European Commission. EU farm and food products – review of policy on promotion inside and outside the EU. 2021. <https://ec.europa.eu/info/law/better-regulation/have-your-say/initiatives/12782-EU-farm-and-food-products-review-of-policy-on-promotion-inside-and-outside-the-EU>

² EAT-Lancet. EAT-Lancet Commission Summary Report. <https://eatforum.org/eat-lancet-commission/eat-lancet-commission-summary-report/>

³ European Commission. A Farm to Fork Strategy for a fair, healthy and environmentally-friendly food system . 2020. https://eur-lex.europa.eu/resource.html?uri=cellar:ea0f9f73-9ab2-11ea-9d2d-01aa75ed71a1.0001.02/DOC_1&format=PDF

Eating a plant-based diet has been shown to significantly reduce the risk of our commonest chronic diseases, whilst helping you live a longer and healthier life. For example, a healthy plant-based diet reduces the risk of coronary heart disease by 25%⁴, cancer by 15%⁵, type 2 diabetes by at least 50%⁶ and helps you maintain a healthy weight throughout your life⁷. Plant-based diets are not only optimal for disease prevention but can also be used to treat established illness in conjunction with conventional medical treatments. A 100% whole food plant-based diet has been shown to be extremely useful for weight loss⁸, heart disease⁹, type 2 diabetes¹⁰ and much more.

The impact of a plant-based diet is such that national and international guidelines now recommend plant-based diets for prevention of cardiovascular disease¹¹, cancer¹² and the treatment of type 2 diabetes¹³. Major dietetic organisations around the world, including the British Dietetic Association in the UK have confirmed that a well-planned vegan diet can meet nutritional requirements for all stages of life from birth through to old age¹⁴.

Considering the proven negative impacts of diets containing meat and dairy, it is vital the Commission stops the promotion of such products. Instead, the Commission should take their aim to promote the shift towards plant-based diets seriously.

⁴ Satija A, Bhupathiraju SN, Spiegelman D, et al. Healthful and Unhealthful Plant-Based Diets and the Risk of Coronary Heart Disease in U.S. Adults. *J Am Coll Cardiol*. 2017;70(4):411-422. doi:10.1016/j.jacc.2017.05.047

⁵ Dinu M, Abbate R, Gensini GF, Casini A, Sofi F. Vegetarian, vegan diets and multiple health outcomes: A systematic review with meta-analysis of observational studies. *Crit Rev Food Sci Nutr*. 2017;57(17):3640-3649. doi:10.1080/10408398.2016.1138447

⁶ Tonstad S, Butler T, Yan R, Fraser GE. Type of vegetarian diet, body weight, and prevalence of type 2 diabetes. *Diabetes Care*. 2009;32(5):791-796. doi:10.2337/dc08-1886

⁷ Satija A, Malik V, Rimm EB, Sacks F, Willett W, Hu FB. Changes in intake of plant-based diets and weight change: results from 3 prospective cohort studies. *Am J Clin Nutr*. 2019;110(3):574-582. doi:10.1093/ajcn/nqz049

⁸ Wright, N., Wilson, L., Smith, M. et al. The BROAD study: A randomised controlled trial using a whole food plant-based diet in the community for obesity, ischaemic heart disease or diabetes. *Nutr & Diabetes* 7, e256 (2017). <https://doi.org/10.1038/nutd.2017.3>

⁹ Ornish D, Scherwitz LW, Billings JH, et al. Intensive Lifestyle Changes for Reversal of Coronary Heart Disease. *JAMA*. 1998;280(23):2001–2007. doi:10.1001/jama.280.23.2001

¹⁰ Barnard ND, Cohen J, Jenkins DJ, et al. A low-fat vegan diet and a conventional diabetes diet in the treatment of type 2 diabetes: a randomized, controlled, 74-wk clinical trial. *Am J Clin Nutr*. 2009;89(5):1588S-1596S. doi:10.3945/ajcn.2009.26736H

¹¹ Arnett K, Blumenthal R et al. 2019 ACC/AHA Guideline on the Primary Prevention of Cardiovascular Disease: A Report of the American College of Cardiology/American Heart Association Task Force on Clinical Practice Guidelines. 2019;140:e596–e646. doi:10.1161/CIR.0000000000000678

¹² Thomson Rock C, Thomson C et al. American Cancer Society guideline for diet and physical activity for cancer prevention. *CA*. 2020;70(4): 245-271. doi:10.3322/caac.21591

¹³ Kelly J, Karlsen M et al. Type 2 Diabetes Remission and Lifestyle Medicine: A Position Statement From the American College of Lifestyle Medicine. 2020;14(4):406-419. doi:10.1177/1559827620930962

¹⁴ BDA. British Dietetic Association confirms well-planned vegan diets can support healthy living in people of all ages. 2017. <https://www.bda.uk.com/resource/british-dietetic-association-confirms-well-planned-vegan-diets-can-support-healthy-living-in-people-of-all-ages.htm>