



Engaging with your political representative

Grow Green

Background

Animal farming is one of the leading contributors to climate change and environmental degradation. At least 14.5% of all greenhouse gas emissions are caused by animal farming. What's more, the agricultural sector is the number one culprit for water pollution, and is projected to make the smallest contribution towards meeting the UK's 2050 carbon emission target.

The Vegan Society launched the Grow Green campaign as a solution to these wide-ranging, and serious problems which will affect, not only the billions of animals sent to slaughter every year, but also our planet, and the animals and people who inhabit it.

Our first report outlined the reasons why we desperately need to move away from animal farming, and our latest Grow Green report, written by the New Economics Foundation, provides the solutions for encouraging a shift away from animal farming and towards growing crops for human consumption. You can find both of these reports on our Grow Green webpage here: www.vegansociety.com/growgreen.

Getting our Grow Green report, and its ground-breaking policy recommendations, in front of key decision makers and parliamentarians is more important than ever before, and we have a once in a lifetime opportunity to shape future food and farming policy for the better. This is where you come in.

As a member of The Vegan Society's Campaigner Network, we need your help in spreading the word about our campaign and importantly, meeting with your local political representative to discuss this important issue with them, asking them to support our proposals. This handy document will take you through the necessary steps to set-up a successful meeting with your political representative.

1. Identify your political representative

Your political representative plays an important role in representing the interests and concerns of both the UK public as a whole, and also their constituents. They split their time between working in Parliament, and working in their constituency.

The first step is to find out who your political representative is. This may be different to who you thought represented you, so it's worth checking who it is via the links below:

Members of UK Parliament (MPs)

- ▶ www.parliament.uk/mps-lords-and-offices/mps
- ▶ www.theyworkforyou.com

Welsh Assembly Members (AMs)

- ▶ www.senedd.assembly.wales/mgFindMember.aspx

Members of Scottish Parliament (MSPs)

- ▶ www.parliament.scot/msps.aspx
- ▶ www.theyworkforyou.com/scotland

Members of the Legislative Assembly in Northern Ireland (MLAs)

- ▶ <http://aims.niassembly.gov.uk/mlas/search.aspx>
- ▶ www.theyworkforyou.com/ni

Members of European Parliament (MEPs)

- ▶ www.europarl.europa.eu/unitedkingdom/en/your-meps.html

2. Do your research

Once you have identified your political representative, the next thing to do is to research more about them. Do they have an important role within Parliament or the Assembly? What are their political interests? Have they spoken on similar issues before? Their official political profiles will give you some basic information, but you may need to dig deeper to see which angle will most likely lead to them supporting our proposals.

To find a record of what your MP has said in Parliament, try searching for their contributions on Hansard: <https://hansard.parliament.uk>. If they are particularly active and have made a large number of

contributions, then a useful time-saving tip is to search by keyword e.g. 'farming', 'climate change', or 'animals'. Looking at their public social media profile can also be a useful way of seeing what issues they care about and whether there is any overlap with the campaign's aims. You can search for their public profiles on platforms like Facebook and Twitter. A useful resource for finding your MP on Twitter is: www.mpsontwitter.co.uk.

3. Make contact

The next, and arguably most important step, is to make contact with your political representative. Now that you have done the groundwork on the issues they care about, you can now set about crafting the perfect email, tailoring the message to suit their interests. For instance, if their political interests are food security, then you can mention the inefficiencies of feeding human-edible grain to animals. Or if they are interested in climate change and the environment, then you can make sure you mention that animal farming contributes at least 14.5% of all greenhouse gas emissions globally, greater than the share attributable to the entire transport sector.

In need of inspiration? You can find a template email at the end of this document, providing you with key points you may like to raise. We are also happy to help you tailor your email to your recipient. Please feel free to get in touch via campaigns@vegansociety.com, or give us a call, and we'll do our best to help create the perfect email and therefore maximise your chances of receiving a positive response.

Your political representative will receive hundreds of emails and letters every day, and generally have a few members of staff to handle them. It may take them a little while to reply to your email, however, as a constituent of theirs, they are obliged to reply. If you haven't heard from them after a week or so, you may wish to send a follow-up email, asking whether they have had a chance to look over your previous email and that you are looking forward to hearing from them soon. Sometimes a gentle nudge is all it takes to send your issue towards the top of the pile. After all, they want to keep their constituents happy, and sending a follow-up email demonstrates that you care about the issue and would like them to get involved.

4. Arrange a meeting

The response you receive from your political representative or their team may be inadequate, and not address everything raised in your initial correspondence. Don't despair, the most important thing at this stage is to try and get them to agree to a meeting with them. The meeting will be the best setting to press them on the other issues. You want to avoid getting into a long back-and-forth with them, and instead suggest the opportunity to meet in person to discuss the food and farming policy recommendations further.

Most political representatives will hold weekly constituency surgeries, typically on a Thursday or Friday when they are back in their constituencies. Or they may invite you to their Parliamentary of Assembly office to discuss the issue further.

5. Meet your political representative

Meeting with your political representative can be a daunting prospect, but it's important to remember that they are there to represent you, and will do their best to make you feel comfortable and listen to the points you raise.

After going through the main points with them (outlined at the end of this document and within our reports), try and get them to agree to actions, ask for when that is likely to happen, and make a note of it. Possible actions resulting from the meeting could include:

- ▶ Raising the issue in parliament. This could be as an oral or written question, arranging a debate in Parliament, or setting up of an Early Day Motion (EDM) or similar – essentially a petition for parliamentarians.
- ▶ Taking the issue up with the relevant minister and team – in the case of Grow Green, it would be the environment, or farming minister. Your political representative will know who best to contact, so don't be afraid to ask them who it is.
- ▶ Taking a photo of you and the political representative. This means that you have something to share with them on social media. They will appreciate the positive, thankful post from a constituent, and it's a nice memento for you, a win-win.

6. Stay in touch

Be sure to follow-up with a thank you email to your political representative, and make a note of the things you discussed and any agreed actions that they will take. It is also a good idea to thank them through social media. If you had a photo taken with them, this would also be a good thing to share on social media if you feel comfortable doing so.

7. Keep us in the loop

The Vegan Society are here to help you every step of the way, so do keep us up-to-date on any developments, and we can always advise you on the next steps to take. If you would feel more comfortable, a member of The Vegan Society's campaigns team can accompany you to the meeting.

Simply email the team at campaigns@vegansociety.com to arrange a call or Skype and we will guide you through the process and answer any questions you might have. We can also arrange to send you resources, like physical copies of our reports, to take along to the meeting.

Representing The Vegan Society

As a Campaigner Network member we trust you to do what you can to uphold The Vegan Society's reputation and not take it for granted. In particular, we'd like you to:

- ▶ Be open and honest about your relationship with The Vegan Society and whether you are communicating your own views or The Vegan Society's.
- ▶ Respect any requests to keep sensitive information to yourself.
- ▶ Act and communicate in a way that best represents The Vegan Society, especially at events and meetings or in communication with third parties. Never do anything that could bring the name of The Vegan Society into disrepute.
- ▶ Try to reflect The Vegan Society's values in the way you represent us. Show consideration and respect for other people and their points of view, both within and outside the organisation.

Key messages for Grow Green

When talking to your political representative, here are some points you should look to include:

- ▶ The global contribution of animal farming to greenhouse gas emissions is agreed to be at least 14.5%, more than emissions from all transport combined.
- ▶ Farming cattle produces around 65% of animal farming methane emissions. Animal farming causes around 44% percent of total human-made methane emissions.
- ▶ Methane warms the atmosphere much more strongly than CO₂.
- ▶ A move away from animal farming, in particular ruminants like cows and sheep, would significantly reduce methane emissions.
- ▶ Chatham House have said that it is unlikely that global temperature rises can be kept below two degrees Celsius in the absence of a radical shift in meat and dairy consumption.
- ▶ The UK provides good conditions for growing plant proteins for direct human consumption, such as fava beans, peas, hemp seed, or sweet lupin. However, the UK currently assigns only 16% of its agricultural land to growing protein crops, much of which are used to feed farmed animals.
- ▶ Encouraging farmers to grow plant protein crops for human consumption would offer them an alternative, more environmentally sustainable, livelihood while also contributing to a strong public health message.
- ▶ Encouraging a transition away from animal farming and towards growing crops for human consumption would:
 - Contribute to the UK GHG reduction targets
 - Reduce the threat to global food security by decreasing the UK usage of natural resources in other countries – currently used to grow crops for feeding animals
 - Reduce many of the current health issues related to the under-consumption of plant foods, fibre and folate, as well as the overconsumption of protein, and certain specific meat and dairy products
 - Encourage farmers to grow plant protein crops for direct human consumption, thus offering them an alternative, positive livelihood, with lower and more stable input costs
 - Make the UK an example of best practice for tackling emissions from the livestock sector.

◀ We can encourage this shift with the following policies:

- **The creation of a Protein Aid Scheme.** Farmers should be rewarded for growing sustainable, environmentally-beneficial crops like pulses. Growers should be given a payment per area of land they use to grow protein crops.
- **Making protein crops a focus of a new farm entry scheme.** We all need farmers to put food on our plates. An entry scheme to get more people into farming, and growing protein crops, is essential if we are to feed our growing population sustainably. We should offer access to land, training and give support for start-up costs.
- **Designate funding into research and development for protein crops.** Research can help unlock the true potential of plant proteins. Canada is now the world's largest producer and exporter of pulses because of their investment into research and development. Similar investment should be made into the research and development of UK protein crops.
- **Implement a farmed animal tax.** The health and environmental costs associated with animal farming should be included in the final product. A meat tax, or a farmed animal tax, aimed at making farming animals less desirable, should be implemented. At the very least, let's reduce the subsidies given to animal farmers to reflect the damage they cause.
- **Encourage the serving of plant proteins in public sector canteens.** An emphasis on vegan dishes containing British pulses within public sector canteens would help stimulate the market. We should introduce a scheme that ensures all public sector canteens are providing at least one vegan dish and any containing pulses should be UK grown.

Template Email/Letter

Dear Mr/Ms [Enter your political representative's surname here],

As a constituent, and a member of The Vegan Society's Campaigner Network, I would like to talk to you about their latest piece of work around protein crops and how this could fit into a new food and farming policy post-Brexit.

I don't want to see farmed animals killed for our consumption, however I'm aware that despite the recent growth in veganism, many people don't yet share my views, so I want to highlight another important reason why we need to rethink animal agriculture.

Animal agriculture is massive contributor to climate change and environmental degradation. We know that animal farming contributes 14.5% of all GHG emissions globally - greater than the share attributable to the transport sector – and that we will struggle to keep temperature rises to below two degrees Celsius without a radical shift in meat and dairy consumption.

I believe that the threat of climate change and the importance of lowering greenhouse gas emissions over the next few decades means that reducing our reliance on animal farming is a matter of urgency.

Encouraging farmers to move away from animal farming and towards growing plant proteins, crops like beans and peas, can be part of a solution for a genuinely sustainable farming future.

The Vegan Society has worked with the New Economics Foundation to produce their latest report (see: www.vegansociety.com/growgreen), Solutions for the Farm of the Future, which looks at the opportunities plant protein crops can offer for our environment and public health.

The report highlights the need for UK diets to be sustainable, healthy, affordable and ethical – and how protein crops can help across all these areas.

The Grow Green report makes the following policy recommendations to government:

- Creation of a Protein Aid Scheme (subsidies for the farming of pulses)
- Making protein crops a focus of a new farm entry scheme
- Designating funding for the research and development of protein crops
- A farmed animal tax
- Increasing the serving of plant proteins in public canteens

I want to see the UK lead the way for sustainable and healthy food systems, and I believe that these policy recommendations would help us achieve that aim.

I look forward to hearing your thoughts on how we can build a more sustainable food and farming system in the UK, and I would love the opportunity to meet with you to discuss this further.

Please let me know when would be best to come and discuss this important issue with you in person.

Yours sincerely