

Policy Briefing 2018



Who we are and what we do

Founded in 1944, The Vegan Society is a leading educational, advocacy and campaigning charity working towards a vegan world for the benefit of animals, people and the planet.

This briefing summarises some of the issues that The Vegan Society cares and campaigns about, and outlines policy recommendations for the UK Government, Devolved Administrations and the EU.

At the Vegan Society, we represent vegans across the UK and the world. There are over half a million vegans in the UK and the number is increasing. However, the issues that vegans care about are issues that affect all citizens like the use and abuse of animals, climate change, and the promotion and provision of vegan diets for public health. **By understanding and representing us, you can make the country a better place for animals, for the environment, and for public health.**

With your help, we want to see:

Veganism to continue to be a protected belief

The Equality and Human Rights Commission says that human rights legislation 'protects a wide range of non-political beliefs, including veganism'.

This is based upon Article 9 of the European Convention on Human Rights. In 1993, the European Court of Human Rights confirmed (W v UK 18187/91) that vegans enjoy rights to freedom of thought and conscience and the right to manifest beliefs in teaching and practice. They also have the right to avoid indirect as well as direct discrimination. This includes schools, hospitals, the justice system, employment and elsewhere. Veganism has been deemed a protected belief under a broad interpretation of EU law. **We would like to see veganism enshrined in domestic law after Brexit.**

Vegan diets promoted for public health

Typically higher in fruits and vegetables, vegan diets tend to contain more fibre and less saturated fat than omnivorous diets, aligning themselves closely with NHS nutrient recommendations.

Research suggests that people are consuming too much saturated fat, and not enough fruit, vegetables and fibre (Public Health England 2014). When compared to other lifestyle factors affecting long-term health, poor diet is thought to have the greatest impact on the National Health Service's budget (Scarborough et al. 2011). Well-planned vegan diets provide multiple health benefits. **We would like to see vegan diets promoted for the good of public health.**

Support for animal farmers converting to growing crops

Moving away from animal farming, to plant crops for food can significantly cut UK greenhouse gas emissions and mean that our fruit and vegetables are grown much closer to home.

The UK is a world leader in proven environmentally, economically and socially sustainable horticulture, arable farming, agro-forestry and other crop farming. Yet we only produce 11% of our fruit, and 55% of our vegetables.

Many farmers are concerned about their livelihoods, so we can support them by encouraging a move away from animal farming, and towards growing plant crops for food; fuel; fibre and other direct human uses. **We would like to see support given to animal farmers who want to convert to growing crops.**

The supply of free fortified plant milk in schools.

Currently vegan school children are discriminated against, along with children who do not consume dairy for religious, cultural, or ethical concerns.

The School Food Plan in England recognises healthy fortified plant-milk drinks in schools, and around 17% of UK residents regularly buy plant milks. Yet, the EU free school milk scheme explicitly excludes plant milks, despite the UK topping up EU money with 25p to the pound. **We would like to see the inclusion of fortified plant milks in any future domestic school milk scheme.**

Greater provision of animal-free medicines.

Around 75% of the most commonly prescribed medicines contain animal derived ingredients.

This is not only a problem for the UK's 1.7 million vegans and vegetarians but also for the millions of others who do not consume or use animal-derived products for medical reasons (e.g. allergies) or due to religious, cultural or ethical concerns. **We would like to see any already-existing animal-free alternatives to prescription products to be brought in across the board, and for better labelling of medicines containing ingredients of animal origin.**

Greater provision of vegan meals in public institutions.

In 2016 Portugal introduced a law which compels all canteens in public institutions to provide a vegan option

With over half a million vegans in the UK and a growing popularity with veganism, vegan meals should be provided in every public institution. Catering in care settings is often found lacking for vegans, especially important at a time when adequate nutrition plays a key part in recovery. This provided the impetus for The Vegan Society to launch its *Catering for Everyone* campaign, aimed at improving the provision of meals in public institutions for vegan service users. **Like the Portuguese model, we would like to see a law put in place that ensures all canteens in the public sector provide at least one vegan option.**

Next steps

We would love the opportunity to meet with you to discuss these policies in more detail. You can get in touch with us to arrange a meeting using the contact details below. As an evidence-based organisation, we are always happy to provide you with facts, data, and briefings to support our position.

Contact details

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