

**Environmental Audit Committee Inquiry
Call for Evidence: The Seventh Carbon Budget
The Vegan Society Evidence**

Submission by:

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The Vegan Society: Introduction and Motivation for Submission

The Vegan Society is an educational charity whose mission is to help people to go and stay vegan, for the benefit of human health, the environment and animals. This is achieved by providing information and support, advocating for vegans, promoting plant-based diets and health, and highlighting the benefits of veganism. We consider global climate and environmental sustainability as inextricably linked with our agri-food systems, and with health. In policy settings this includes advocating for a just transition to plant-based food systems and for making vegan and plant based options much more widely available and accessible, to give everyone the option of choosing them.

The Vegan Society is a Registered Charity [Registered in England and Wales (Reg. Charity No: 279228) and in Scotland (SC049495)], a Membership Organisation, and a company limited by guarantee with no share capital (Company Reg. No: 01468880 and 12377572 (England and Wales)). .

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The Vegan Society Evidence: Summary

The Vegan Society supports the Seventh Carbon Budget, particularly the recommended agri-food policy measures.

Government must put in place the support necessary to reduce UK demand for animal products, bringing down average UK meat intake by 35%, and ruminant meat by 40% by 2050.

Likewise, we must reduce our cattle and sheep numbers at least 38% by 2050, and scale up tree growth and carbon sequestration.

We must reduce all forms of food waste by 45% by 2040.

These measures can be supported by a policy plan which The Vegan Society have co-developed, "Reaping the Benefits of Plant Rich Diets: The Ten Point Plan" endorsed by 48 leading health, food, farming, sustainability and other relevant sectors organisations.

This practical, achievable plan has ten key areas to help achieve our greenhouse gas (GHG) obligations and green growth aspirations, in summary:

1. Public Procurement.

Leverage public procurement and catering to source and provide more plant-based foods, normalising plant-rich diets and catalysing growth in the market.

2. Increased plant-based food trade.

Encourage food supply companies to transition towards a higher proportion of sales of plant-based proteins and other foods.

3. Support UK crop growers.

Bolster food security and economic growth through support for the horticulture and agriculture sectors to produce more fruit, vegetables, nuts, beans and pulses in the UK.

4. Focus on plant proteins.

Support British farmers to increase production and provision of plant proteins for human consumption in the UK.

5. Improve healthy food access.

Make it easier and more affordable for people to access and eat healthy plant-based foods.

6. Public education.

Raise public understanding of the health and environmental benefits of healthy plant-rich foods and diets.

7. Food impact labelling.

Improve food labelling to reflect the health, environmental and animal welfare impacts of foods.

8. Professional plant-based training.

Improve training for health and food professionals regarding healthy plant-rich foods and diets.

9. Better Eatwell Guide Practice.

Update, reform and apply the Eatwell Guide dietary guidelines to reflect environmental impacts of foods.

10. Invest in Plant-Based Protein.

Increase investment in and support for healthy, sustainable alternative proteins.

In our evidence, we also highlight relevant policies already underway in other regions and countries.

The Climate Change Committee's recommendations are justified, and deserve consistent government support. The UK must lead the way on the plant-based, just, low GHG agri-food transition. .

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The Vegan Society Evidence – Overarching Issues

The Vegan Society welcomes the Government's aim 'to restore the UK as a global leader on climate action and green growth' (Independent 2025).

Climate-friendly plant-based agri-food system transitions are urgent and vital to achieve this, as part of the fastest, most cost-effective way to slow near-term climate warming (UNEP 2025).

The Climate Change Committee (CCC) Seventh Carbon Budget (CB7) state Net Zero requires major reductions in agricultural and land use methane emissions.

We support these CCC recommendations to reduce the UK's greenhouse gas (GHG) burden through reducing the demand for and production of animal products, and associated food waste, and thus freeing up land for carbon sequestration including tree habitat restoration.

With proper Government support, these policies are very popular: 60-70% of people surveyed support the relevant Government actions that we, and other partners, proposed (Foodrise, Plant-Based Health Professionals et al. 2025a & b).

Government must reduce the GHG burden of food wasted by farming of animals. Grain feed alone almost doubles UK food waste, and associated GHG emissions (Gerber et al. 2013, CIWF 2025). Imported soya for non-ruminants is also a major UK GHG source (CIWF 2025).

There are major opportunity costs to large scale grazing, reducing net carbon sequestration, net dietary fibre and protein co-production, and net UK food security. Extensive ruminant grazing can only offset up to c. 60% of associated GHG emissions, and intensification is no better (Garnett et al. 2017). Plant-based agri-food systems transformations (EAT-Lancet 2025), including edible legume and grain production for plant protein foods, are vital.

Our farming of animals causes about half of UK production methane (CATF 2025), with 20% more from our net imports of animal products (WRAP 2021). CO₂ balance from tree growth and peatland restoration require land freed up from industrial scale farming of animals.

The evidence-based guide to governments, "Reaping the Benefits of Plant Rich Diets: The Ten Point Plan (Foodrise, Plant-Based Health Professionals et al. 2025a & b) will accelerate this process. A clear majority (over two thirds) of people in the UK already seek to make healthy low GHG plant-based food choices. Our Plan has practical, achievable measures to build affordable, resilient agri-food systems, boost economic growth, and protect our climate and wider environment, through a focus on plant-based agri-food.

Relevant region and country level plans already underway elsewhere include:

Denmark: Action Plan for Plant-based Foods (Govt Denmark 2023a & b)

Portugal: National Energy and Climate Plan 2021-2030 (Govt Portugal 2024),
Public catering Law n°11/2017 (Govt Portugal 2017)

Switzerland: Swiss Nutrition Strategy 2025–2032 (Swiss Confederation 2025)

Taiwan: Climate Change Response Act (as amended 2023): Articles 8 & 42 (Govt Taiwan 2023)

EAT-Lancet (2025) emphasise the links between health, sustainability, and justice, “The food we eat is more than a personal choice. It is a public issue with global consequences. What we eat affects agricultural land use, greenhouse gas emissions, water availability and quality, labor systems, and public health. .. Fewer than 1% of the world’s population is currently in the ‘safe and just space’, where people’s rights and food needs are met within planetary boundaries.”

We must reduce numbers of animals in farming globally by 20-25%, and the financial turnover by c. 40%. Appropriate local expertise will enable plant-based farming and diets to meet the needs of local people (EAT-Lancet 2025).

The CCC CB7 recommendations are justified, and deserve consistent government support to us all, including primary producers, to build a climate-friendly agri-food system. The UK must take responsibility for our huge all-time consumption GHG emissions (Hickel 2020), and lead the way on the plant-based agri-food transition.

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The Vegan Society Evidence – Theme 1. CCC's assumptions behind the budget

The Vegan Society broadly supports the Climate Change Committee's (CCC) underlying assumptions. The UK must:

- (1) fulfil our Net Zero greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions by 2050;
- (2) not rely on international carbon credits (but rather, reduce our production and imported consumption footprint);
- (3) significantly reduce agri-food GHG (a major Scope 3 issue) as more than 10% of Carbon Budget 7 (CB7) reductions;
- (4) fully support nature-based biosphere management, moving away from farming of animals to offset all agri-food GHG emissions by 2050; and
- (5) act to reduce demand for high-GHG goods such as animal products.

The CCC rightly address the major contribution of industrial-scale farming of animals to the UK's GHG accounts. There are critical dependencies between our agriculture, food imports and food supply. Agri-food systems are the largest part of breaking the GHG planetary boundary, yet a global net financial loss, and especially vulnerable to climate change (EAT-Lancet 2025). Import modelling is vital, so we take full responsibility for our real consumption GHG footprint, as well as opportunity costs.

Thus, EAT-Lancet adds weight to the CCC CB7 assumptions which lead to the 'Balanced Pathway' requirement of 27% fewer UK cattle and sheep from 2023 to 2040. A one third reduction of industrial scale farming of ruminant animals will need to be balanced by a nearly two-third increase in crop growing - particularly fruit, vegetable, and nuts – from 2020 to 2050 (EAT-Lancet 2025).

Well-planned fully plant-based diets can support healthy living at every age and life-stage (BDA 2021). The UK's current food supply and consumption has too much animal fat and protein for optimal health, and severely lacks plant-based foods for plant-based protein, dietary fibre, vitamin C and other key nutrients (DEFRA 2024, NDNS 2025). Moreover, vitamin B12 mostly comes from synthesis of supplements and fortification (AIC-BAFSAM 2023). We lower GHG emissions by taking these directly, not feeding them to farmed animals.

We import c. 25% of the foods we could produce (DEFRA 2024). We must produce much more of the food we need and want (EAT-Lancet 2025). As CCC say, government must improve trade data, and animal product import emissions.

Agri-food system GHG emissions need to be below c. 0.5 t CO₂e/yr per person: c. 40 Mt CO₂e/yr for the 2050 UK population (EAT-Lancet 2025). We are over 200% above this, a c. 150 MtCO₂e excess (CCC 2025). We must reduce our agri-food

emissions by c. 4 – 7 Mt CO₂e/yr (WRAP 2024. Neither industrial scale farming of animals, nor 'bioenergy with carbon capture and storage' (BECCS) can do this. We need the land returned for crops, habitat restoration and carbon sequestration (Harwatt & Hayek 2019, WWF RSPB 2023).

Methane (CH₄) and nitrous oxide (N₂O) emissions from farming of animals require a transition to plant-based farming techniques (proven technology), and plant-rich diets (proven technology). We cannot risk waiting for hypothetical, unproven "emission-reduction" technologies.

Despite common belief, animals do not produce fertilizing soil nutrients: these nutrients come from their food. Plants, in contrast, can synthesize fertilizing soil nutrients. Industrial-scale farming of animals demands vast GHG intensive feed crop flows. Grains and legumes grown as food will produce the plant protein and dietary fibre we need, and reduce GHG intensive agrochemical and animal fertilizer use. UK groups such as Farmers for Stockfree Farming (e.g. Stockfree Farming 2022, 2025a&b), and the Stockfree Organic Standard are perfecting these techniques.

Thus, we believe the CCC CB7 should also model the end of industrial scale farming of animals.

The Vegan Society supports the assumptions which support the CCC recommendations to reduce both the farming and consumption of animals in the UK. The evidence confirms this will help us fulfill our climate change obligations, and transition to a healthy plant-based agri-food system with many cobenefits for the environment and public health.

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The Vegan Society Evidence – Theme 2. Technology choices

The Vegan Society advises that proven, existing technologies must be the primary means for delivering our climate change duties. We have clear evidence of the co-benefits and likely success of proven agro-ecological technologies in plant-based farming for improving soil health, sequestration and public health (EAT-Lancet 2025, Stockfree Farming 2022, 2025a&b).

The Vegan Society have co-developed a plan with 48 other organisations from the health, food, farming, sustainability and other relevant sectors: "Reaping the Benefits of Plant Rich Diets: The Ten Point Plan (Foodrise, Plant-Based Health Professionals et al. 2025a & b). The Ten Point Plan gives practical, achievable policy levers to drive demand for, and accelerate the transition to, plant-based foods such vegetables, fruit, pulses, grains, legumes, and nuts, boosting economic growth within the GHG planetary boundary.

We need support for expansion of proven technologies such as plant protein (e.g. edible legumes, grains etc.) and other crop farming, and protein fermentation from plants, as well as other plant-based food manufacturing. With nutrition (e.g. Eatwell Guide) and catering, these proven technologies need to be supported by robust market building policies. Plant-based public procurement, plant protein retail targets, healthy food access policies, public education, food impact labelling, and professional plant-based health and catering training (e.g. the Vegan Eatwell Guide, The Vegan Society 2020) must be fully supported to back up plant-based agri-food technologies and foods.

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The Vegan Society Evidence – Theme 3. Costs, policy choices and economic implications

The Vegan Society finds that the financial costs of current industrial scale farming of animals are not tenable. Transitioning away from industrial scale farming of animals is part of the fastest, most cost-effective way to slow near-term climate warming (UNEP 2025). The climate and other harms of animal-based agri-food swallow any financial benefit (EAT-Lancet 2025). A huge cost of inaction in agri-food is worsening Non-Communicable Disease (NCD) levels (EAT-Lancet 2025).

In the UK, for example, the failure to transition away from processed meat consumption has led to 50,000 avoidable bowel cancer cases since 2015, costing the NHS £3 billion (CAN 2025). In England alone, the transition to plant-based diets would have a total net benefit to the NHS in reduced NCD of up to £18.8 billion (Henderson and Sampson 2023).

Scope 3 greenhouse gas emissions of our food are up to 40+ times higher than the Scope 1 and 2 emissions. Thus, many organisations significantly under-report their climate change and the associated financial liabilities of the full life-cycle of their activities (at a projected price of over £50 per tonne of CO₂e). Major opportunities, including for fairer cost distribution, will arise from acting upon true Scope 3 emissions. If companies don't take action to decarbonize their upstream and downstream emissions, globally there could be over £400 billion in annual liabilities by 2030. (Ecovadis-BCG 2025a&b, EAT-Lancet 2025).

A plant-based agri-food system can make sustainable, healthy, culturally appropriate food affordable and accessible for all (EAT-Lancet 2025). The Good Food Institute (GFI) Europe finds that cost is a major barrier to climate-friendly food currently (GFI 2025). Increased Government promotion of and investment in UK grown and manufactured plant-based protein products is crucial to stimulate private investment, bring down retail food costs, increase economic growth and job creation in the sector and contributing to our GHG targets (Green Alliance 2025). Huge benefits can be reaped through this kind of support for the sector. For example, sales of plant-based protein foods rose over 30% in Lidl in Germany in the first six months after they set price parity with animal-based alternatives (Schwartz Group 2025). Lidl Germany are on track to align with the Planetary Health Diet by 2050 (EAT-Lancet 2025).

The Vegan Society have co-developed, "Reaping the Benefits of Plant Rich Diets: The Ten Point Plan (Foodrise, Plant-Based Health Professionals et al. 2025a & b) that will help make this demand-side transition affordable.

Endorsed by 48 leading health, food, farming, sustainability and other relevant organisations, and drawing on the latest and best evidence, the Ten Point Plan proposes practical, achievable measures to governments.

The Ten Point Plan suggests specific measures to make it easier and more affordable for people to access and eat healthy food, such as:

Incentivising the food industry, including supply companies, to transition towards a higher proportion of plant-based sales

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 on how to plan and cook plant-based meals, 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 more land to meet demand for allotments and community gardens.

The Ten Point Plan measures can boost economic growth whilst coming within the GHG planetary boundary, through a focus on plant-based food.

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The Vegan Society Evidence – Theme 4. Behavioural change

The Vegan Society agrees, comprehensively supported collective behaviour changes will be key to fulfilling our climate change obligations. There is extensive evidence that a sizeable majority of people in the UK want active, substantive, consistent government action to support them to make climate-friendly food and other choices (see below).

Climate-friendly choices must be the most accessible, affordable and attractive option. In 2023, a government, healthcare, catering and NGO partnership successfully set up popular lower GHG menus in all eleven New York City public hospitals. Culturally diverse plant-based meals are prominently offered as chef's specials to all patients, with a meat-based alternative choice. Satisfaction rates are 90% with the chef's plant-based special. GHG emissions from hospital catering are c. 36% lower, with total cost savings of around £530,000 per year (c. £0.44 per meal; NYC Health + Hospitals, 2024). UK healthcare institutions urgently need such proven low GHG food practices (PBHP UK 2024). This example demonstrates that behaviour change nudges, such as plant-based defaults in public sector settings, can effectively change behaviour without compromising personal choice.

The Vegan Society has co-developing, "Reaping the Benefits of Plant Rich Diets: The Ten Point Plan (Foodrise, Plant-Based Health Professionals et al. 2025a & b). endorsed by 48 leading health, food, farming, sustainability and other relevant organisation. These practical, achievable government policies will support the necessary behaviour changes across the agri-food system for our GHG duties (Stockfree Farming 2022, 2025a&b).

Several of the Ten Point Plan proposals - to increase plant based foods in public procurement and catering, and commercial food supply including retail - will give millions of people the chance to enjoy good plant-based meals. This familiarity will directly support behaviour change, through encouraging people to reproduce these plant-based meals at home. In some cases, such as default options in the public sector, these measures would encourage greater acceptance without removing freedom of choice.

Governments Supporting Behaviour Change is Popular

A May 2025 poll by the Ten Point Plan co-sponsors found over two thirds of of people would like to eat more fruit, vegetables and other plant-based food, grown in the UK with Government support; 62% want public sector caterers to provide more healthy plant -based foods; and 73% want more information about how to access, prepare and cook healthy foods easily and cheaply.

Thus, the government should help people adopt plant-strong and lower GHG diets, and create the markets the primary producers and food manufacturers

need.

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The Vegan Society Evidence – Theme 5. Public engagement

The Vegan Society agrees that effective public engagement will be key to meeting our climate duties.

The Vegan Society has co-developed a new plan based on proven public engagement strategies. This is, “Reaping the Benefits of Plant Rich Diets: The Ten Point Plan (Foodrise, Plant-Based Health Professionals et al. 2025a & b), based upon the latest reliable evidence, concordant with EAT-Lancet Commission 2 (2025).

Governments’ public engagement must supply the resources people need to effect change. Key limiting factors in most cases are financial and social support (Food Foundation 2023).

- Over two thirds of people would like to eat more fruit, vegetables and other plant-based food, and want government to do more to help, including with affordability;
- 70% want the government to support animal farmers to make sustainable transitions, e.g. to rewilding, and plant-based crop production;
- 73% want health campaigns to provide more information about how to access, prepare and cook healthy foods easily and cheaply.

The Ten Point plan has specific public engagement policy measures which will also address people as farmers, food producers and retailers, health professionals and service providers.

Public procurement is a powerful form of public engagement. Over 2 billion meals are served by the UK public sector each year, to an estimated 15 million people (DEFRA 2022). Leveraging public procurement spending to source and provide more plant-based foods will normalise plant-rich diets and catalyse growth in the market.

Food supply, and better GHG impact labelling, is another vital public engagement tool. More support to food supply companies to supply more and better, GHG-labelled, plant-based foods, will help more people understand, access and afford low-GHG choices.

Food-based public health campaigns and dietary messaging is a third powerful public engagement lever. Governments need to support better training for health and food professionals on low-GHG plant-based foods, with more use of an updated plant-strong Eatwell Guide (The Vegan Society 2020), with low-GHG plant-based diets in all linked public health campaigns.

The Ten Point Plan measures can help make sustainable and healthy choices accessible, affordable, and engaging for everyone. The experts in sustainable, healthy diet change are Registered Dietitians, who contributed to our Ten Point Plan, alongside other health, food, farming and sustainability experts.

Governments need to show consistent leadership, model the necessary behaviour changes, fund change in public organisations, and clearly communicate why these changes are important and will benefit us.

Governments which are already taking action include:

Denmark: Action Plan for Plant-based Foods (Govt Denmark 2023a & b).

Portugal: National Energy and Climate Plan 2021-2030 (Govt Portugal 2024); Public catering Law nº11/2017 (Govt Portugal 2017).

Switzerland: Swiss Nutrition Strategy 2025–2032 (Swiss Confederation 2025).

Taiwan: Climate Change Response Act (as amended 2023): Articles 8 & 42 (Govt Taiwan 2023).

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The Vegan Society Evidence – Theme 6. Parliamentary scrutiny

The Vegan Society reminds Parliament must pay due regard to the scientific evidence, including to EAT-Lancet Commission 2 (2025), and highlight undue influence from those with links to industrial scale farming of animals upon policymaking. For example, the Agriculture and Horticulture Development Board statutory levy board has consistently run advertising large scale meat and dairy advertising campaigns whose aims are contradictory to expert dietetic and climate change recommendations on low-carbon and plant-based diets (Foodrise et al. 2025).

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