

Policy Briefing: Calling for plant-based options suitable for vegans on public sector menus every day.

- **For vegans:** veganism is recognised as a protected belief and vegans have the right to access decent, nutritious food.
- **For the environment:** plant-based options can reduce food related CO2 by 50%.
- **For our health:** building familiarity with healthy plant-based meals will encourage greater consumption of foods high in fibre and low in saturated fats.
- **For everyone:** plant-based foods are inclusive and can be enjoyed by everyone.

WHO WE ARE AND WHAT WE DO

VEGANISM IS A WAY OF LIVING WHICH SEEKS TO EXCLUDE, AS FAR AS IS POSSIBLE AND PRACTICABLE, ALL FORMS OF EXPLOITATION OF, AND CRUELTY TO, ANIMALS FOR FOOD, CLOTHING OR ANY OTHER PURPOSE.

Founded in 1944, The Vegan Society is a leading educational, advocacy and campaigning charity. We take an evidence-based approach to encourage policy to move towards a more vegan world.

Go Vegan Scotland is a volunteer vegan advocacy group, promoting veganism as a matter of justice for non-human animals through advocacy, education and information sharing. We talk to people about the morality of using and killing other animals, We also help people with any concerns or queries, offering encouragement and support.

There are over 600,000 vegans in the UK and the number is doubling every 2 years. 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.

CATERING FOR EVERYONE

THE VEGAN SOCIETY HAS BEEN WORKING FOR MANY YEARS TO IMPROVE PROVISION FOR VEGANS IN VARIOUS SITUATIONS.

The availability of vegan options in supermarkets and restaurants has increased recently as consumer demand grows. However, many people struggle to find vegan options in public sector settings, which provide food for some of

our most vulnerable citizens. This means that many people, including children, are missing out on free meals and are being denied access to suitable food when they're dependent on the state to provide for them.

EQUALITY & HUMAN RIGHTS

VEGANISM IS A PROTECTED CONVICTION UNDER HUMAN RIGHTS AND EQUALITY LAW, SO VEGANS HAVE THE SAME RIGHTS AS SOMEONE WHO HOLDS RELIGIOUS BELIEFS.

Go Vegan Scotland carried out a survey on state provision, the results of which confirmed that many Scottish schools, hospitals and other state bodies are failing to provide for vegans. School children often miss out on meals and hospital patients reported having to rely on family to bring them food, and discharging themselves early to go home and eat.

ENVIRONMENT

THE UN HAS ARGUED FOR A GLOBAL MOVE TOWARDS A MEAT AND DAIRY FREE DIET, FOR THE BENEFIT OF OUR PLANET, AND SCOTLAND COULD LEAD THE WAY.

A vegan diet can reduce individual food-related carbon emissions by up to 50%. Animal agriculture is responsible for up to 91% of Amazon destruction (forests are destroyed to grow feed for animals) and for more greenhouse gas emissions than all direct emissions from transport sector.

PUBLIC HEALTH

BOTH THE BRITISH DIETETIC ASSOCIATION AND THE AMERICAN ACADEMY OF NUTRITION AND DIETETICS RECOGNISE THAT A TOTALLY VEGAN DIET CAN SUPPORT HEALTHY LIVING IN PEOPLE OF ALL AGES AND LIFE STAGES.

There are benefits to making vegan meals available to anyone. 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. In addition, some research has linked vegan diets with lower blood pressure and cholesterol, as well as lower rates of heart disease, type 2 diabetes and some types of cancer.

Plant-based food provision is also in line with a number of Government objectives highlighted in relation to the Good Food Nation Bill, including health, sustainability, the environment, affordability, local production and food security.

OUR CAMPAIGN

IN 2016 PORTUGAL INTRODUCED A LAW WHICH COMPELS ALL CANTEENS IN PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS TO PROVIDE A VEGAN OPTION.

Like the Portuguese model, **we are calling for legislative change to guarantee vegan options on every public sector menu, every day**, so that vegans and non-vegans alike have access to healthy, tasty and environmentally-friendly vegan food, wherever they live in Scotland.

Our Petition to the Scottish Parliament, calling for a guaranteed plant-based option on all public sector standard menus in Scotland, closed in November 2018, with a total of 8,778 signatories. We also had public endorsements from a range of politicians including Philippa Whitford MP,

Stuart McDonald MP, Richard Leonard MSP
John Mason MSP & Sandra White MSP.

We presented evidence to the Public Petitions Committee in support of our petition in December 2018. We are currently in dialogue with the committee as they gather further evidence from various sources before making a decision and recommendation on our proposal.

WHAT CAN YOU DO?

- **PUBLICLY ENDORSE OUR CAMPAIGN**
- **RAISE THIS ISSUE IN THE SCOTTISH PARLIAMENT.**

We would love the opportunity to meet with you to discuss these policies in more detail. As evidence-based organisations, we are always happy to provide you with facts, data, and briefings to support our position.

TESTIMONY FROM SCOTTISH VEGANS

"I was in hospital for three days recently. I asked a number of times for vegan food options and was told they could not provide anything vegan. I had to arrange for my wife to bring in food for me. Some people will not be able to rely on family."

"After delivering a baby, the only food available to me was potatoes, salad and toast. This was very difficult as I had anaemia following childbirth, and needed to discharge myself to get a healthy balanced meal at home."

"Our local primary has vegetarian but not vegan options. In order to obtain 'other' dietary requirements you have to prove medical need."

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