



PLANTING VALUE IN THE FOOD SYSTEM



Policy Briefing

Food is important to us all. How each one of us gets the right food is the shared concern of many people, including farmers, cooks, food company staff, retail workers, politicians and home-makers.

In *Planting Value in our Food System*, we draw on dozens of hours of interviews with people working in many aspects of UK food to present an evidence-based, realistic plan for fair, sustainable food. We have found extensive common ground around human health, food sustainability and affordability, social justice issues and our relationship with non-human animals. We all need food systems which will improve our health and working conditions, as well as our society and natural environment, for the long term. We need a Great Food Transformation.



Some of our key principles for this work

Food policy needs social values embedded within it, and coherent linkages with economics, health and environment policy across all government and policy-making bodies.

- Food policy needs to **improve the experiences of farmers** and food producers. These are people who respect the complexity of nature and food, and understand the nuances needed for fair, sustainable policies.
- **Animals are everywhere in our food systems** – under, around and above, in the natural environment, soils, air and waters, as well as in our fields and sheds. We need to fully perceive and honour these facts and these animals.
- There are many public goods, and there is great public value, in making our Great Food Transformation to be **towards a fully plant-based food system**.

Where, when and how?

We propose:

- A **National Food Sustainability Council** to be urgently formed, to oversee the principles, joined-up policies and binding targets needed to transform our food system, reporting directly to a Joint Food Sustainability Committee for England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. This Council could be the 'new independent body' described in Henry Dimbleby's *National Food Strategy: Part 1*.
- A UK **Food Sustainability Bill** as early as three to six years from now, embedding our global commitments, such as the Paris Agreement and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, alongside our health, economic, ecosystem and social goals. This will include a timeline to animal and climate justice, with binding steps in reducing our consumption of animals.



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- A **Well-being of Future Generations Bill** in the following Parliament, to align England, Scotland and Northern Ireland with Wales. This will enable all the governments to act in concert on sustainable development, environment, food, land use, climate and health, in terms of future needs.
 - Beyond 2030, we foresee social shifts that will enable a UK **End of Slaughter Bill** to phase out property rights over animals. This will grant 'domesticated' animals full, supported and stewarded lifespans, free from pre-determined deaths.

Some further policy recommendations include:

- A UK **Future Food System Risk Assessment** process to ensure that we are properly tracking hazards and mitigating dangers threatening the equity, health and sustainability of our food.
- **Consistent leadership in fair and sustainable food.** Every food policy and practice in the UK modelling fair, sustainable practices that will benefit the global food community.
- **Plant-based by default:** Plant-based meals and dishes to be the default option on all menus in public and private organisations, from Parliamentary restaurants and hospital catering to company canteens.
- **A Plant-Based Transition Commissioner** to oversee the necessary interlinked social, cultural and economic shifts towards a fair, sustainable arable- and horticulture-led, plant-based food system.

We support farmers

The Vegan Society are explicitly pro-farmer. We support the people who produce the food that we all eat. Also, the evidence is clear that –

for reasons such as climate change, diet, food poverty and the needs of animals – we need to phase out the farming of animals. So, we want to help land managers transition to a fairer, better, plant-based system, with proper society-wide investment to empower and enable those moves.

We call upon political leaders to act with urgency

Without co-ordinated improvements at every level and in every aspect of our food systems, we will struggle to meet our social, health and climate change goals. The changes needed will help the UK to take proper responsibility for meeting our own needs within our fair share of global resources, while still trading equitably for what we cannot produce ourselves. Our Members of Parliament already have duties to protect the long-term health and well-being of all their constituents. The Food Sustainability Bill will simply make the law more explicit around how fair, healthy and sustainable food systems are integral to our health and well-being.

We seek a better way of living:

Food is vital. More than cost, or provenance – and alongside tradition, community, taste and joy – food is fundamental to life itself. Our proposals envision a food system which enhances the well-being of everyone, building a fairer, healthier society. It is in our power to make fresh, tasty, nutritious, sustainable food accessible to every person at a fair price, while protecting farmers and the land.

What we are proposing is not compromise: it is a better way of life for all.

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