

# Policy recommendations for promoting healthy sustainable diets in the UK

This briefing outlines the policy recommendations of the Eating Better alliance for UK, Devolved Administrations and EU. It has been produced in consultation with our supporting organisations & partner networks (see overleaf).

Eating Better is calling for action by governments, the food industry and all those who can make a difference to help people move towards eating less meat and more plant-based food that's better for us and the planet, as part of the vital task of creating healthy sustainable and fair food and farming systems.

## Why it matters?

The benefits of a 'less and better' approach to meat eating include:



**FAIRER:** Supporting a fairer system where farm animal welfare is enhanced; food security is improved by using more crops to feed people rather than livestock and more farmers have a fair chance of earning a sustainable living. Halving world consumption of grain-fed meat, for example, could feed 2 billion more people.<sup>1</sup>



**GREENER:** Reducing the huge environmental footprint of unsustainable meat production and consumption including reducing greenhouse gas emissions, water use, pollution, land use change and biodiversity loss. Meat is typically the most greenhouse gas (GHG) intensive part of our diet accounting for at least 14.5 per cent of global GHG emissions.<sup>2</sup>



**HEALTHIER:** Improving public health by promoting more plant-based diets and reducing adverse health impacts of high levels of meat consumption - particularly of red and processed meat. Eating less meat can also save money. Eating meat no more than three times a week would prevent 45,000 early deaths a year in the UK and save the NHS £1.2bn a year.<sup>2</sup> Stopping overuse of antibiotics in farming is essential to save their vital role for human health.

## Policy Approach

Eating Better is calling on policymakers in UK Government, Devolved Administrations and EU to:

- ✓ Ensure policy to address food security focuses as much on food consumption as production and better integrates health, environment and farming policies and research.
- ✓ Consider using all the levers, incentives and nudges to help people, farmers and food companies throughout the food chain create the cultural and economic shifts necessary to make our food system fairer, greener & healthier.
- ✓ Recognise that governments at all levels have an important role to work with stakeholders to create the vision, provide the policy coherence and the political will to use the levers that only governments have (including regulatory and fiscal). Governments are also well placed to convene experts, fund research, report and monitor progress.

**Eating Better** is a new alliance to demonstrate that eating 'less and better' meat can be fairer, greener and healthier for people and planet.

We are calling for action by governments, the food industry and all those who can make a difference to help people eat a greater variety of plant-based foods and less meat; and to support farming that produces meat in ways that benefit the environment, health, global food security and animal welfare.

Launched in July 2013 with the endorsement of celebrity chef and campaigner, Hugh Fearnley-Whittingstall, Eating Better is already supported by 39 national organisations and partner networks, from a wide range of sectors.

<sup>1</sup> Emily S Cassidy et al 2013 Environ. Res. Lett. 8 034015 doi:10.1088/1748-9326/8/3/034015

<sup>2</sup> UNFAO, Tackling climate change through livestock: A global assessment of emissions and mitigation opportunities, 2013

<sup>3</sup> Scarborough et al, Modelling the impacts of the Fair Less Meat diet. British Heart Foundation Health Promotion Research Group, Oxford University, 2010

## What's needed?

The positive responses we've received to the launch of Eating Better show that the time is right for governments to take action to help people move towards eating less and better meat as part of a shift towards eating that is better for our health as well as the planet. As our YouGov survey results show (see box) the public are increasingly aware and interested in eating less and better meat and there are business opportunities for food companies and farmers.

We recommend governments to develop policies and practices to support a transition to less and better meat consumption and production including to:

 **Publish and promote new official guidelines on healthy eating and environmental behaviour to include the benefits of eating less and better meat.** This would require updating of the Eatwell Plate to provide businesses, health professionals, educators and the public with integrated advice on healthy, sustainable diets - with clear guidance for different nutritional requirements and budgets. Cross-departmental working is vital as the objectives cannot be met by one department alone.

 **Introduce clear and mandatory procurement standards for caterers** to ensure that meals paid for by taxpayers in schools, hospitals, prisons, care homes and all government departments reflect environmental (eg carbon reduction commitments) and health factors, to include less and better, including higher welfare meat. The current review of Government Buying Standards provides an opportunity to ensure public food procurement supports healthy sustainable food consumption and production.

 **Support and encourage farming that produces meat in ways that benefit the environment, health and animal welfare and provides a fair return for farmers.** This includes helping people reconnect with where their food comes from and reform of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) to support humane and sustainable farming.

We urge UK Governments, agencies and devolved administrations to engage effectively with EU policy processes, including to:

 **Work with EU institutions and Member States** to develop EU-wide integrated strategies to promote increased consumption of plant-based foods and less and better meat consumption including within the European Commission's Communication on the Sustainability of the European Food System and its delivery.

 **Work to ensure next Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) reform** delivers a European Healthy Sustainable Food and Farming Policy which ensures a transition to more sustainable levels of supply and demand at a European level.

### Public support for less & better meat eating

A YouGov survey of the British public published by Eating Better in November 2013 found one-in-three people (34%) say they are willing to consider eating less meat, with a quarter (25%) saying they had already cut back on the amount of meat they eat over the last year. Eating Better says the horsemeat scandal, rising prices, concerns about health and increased awareness of environmental impacts of meat production are likely to be behind the trend.

Despite rising food prices, around half those surveyed said they would be willing to pay more for 'better' meat if it tastes better, is healthier, produced to higher animal welfare standards or provides better financial returns to farmers. Willingness to pay was not restricted to higher (ABC1) social grade groups.

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### Supporting organisations

Alliance of Religions and Conservation (ARC)  
 Behaviour Change  
 British Dietetic Association  
 Compassion in World Farming  
 Consensus Action on Salt and Health (CASH)  
 Fairfood International  
 Farms Not Factories  
 Feeding the 5000  
 First Steps Nutrition Trust

Food Ethics Council  
 Food for Life Partnership  
 Forum for the Future  
 Friends of the Earth  
 Greenpeace  
 LEAF (Linking Environment and Farming)  
 Love Food Hate Waste  
 Oxfam  
 Part-time Carnivore  
 People & Planet  
 Progressio

RSPB  
 Send a Cow  
 Slow Food UK  
 Soil Association  
 Sustainable Food Trust  
 Sustainable Restaurant Association  
 The Pig Idea  
 UK Health Forum  
 Vegetarian for Life  
 Vegetarian Society  
 Waste Watch (part of Keep Britain Tidy)

World Society for the Protection of Animals  
 WWF-UK

### Partner Networks

European Public Health Alliance  
 Food Climate Research Network  
 Love Food Hate Waste  
 Network of Wellbeing  
 Sustain: the alliance for better food and farming  
 Sustainable Food Cities Network  
 UK Food Group