



**Building the momentum:
driving the agenda**

2021/22
Impact Report

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A message from our Chair

This year, we've made great strides to improve understanding of the food system and track progress, influence the agenda for change, grow the alliance and to showcase positive practices in producing and serving less and better meat and dairy in line with our Better by Half roadmap.

Our survey on retailer tactics around meat sales helped us shed light on a highly influential sector of the food system. The Guardian newspaper reported our findings that retailers are not matching their rhetoric on sustainable eating with action to reduce meat promotions.

As part of our efforts to communicate and inspire innovative practice, we produced short films starring some of the farmers in our movement. We know that the best producers need new routes to market, closer relationships with buyers and better understanding from the public sector. We've also continued to strengthen the movement, and are pleased that members continue to find our resources useful; our latest survey found that 86% have used them to support their work over last two years. The government's long-awaited National Food Strategy failed to deliver. In the absence of actions to change the food environment we advocated for, we are shifting our focus to other opportunities, such as improving public food procurement, the launch of the Food Data Transparency Partnership and a consultation on implementing mandatory food reporting for large companies.

All our work this year has been against a challenging backdrop of global turbulence - the effects of the pandemic, the war in Ukraine and climate disasters - increasing pressure on the food system. The cost of living crisis means we are reflecting with members on how to communicate our 'less and better meat' message sensitively and effectively. We have maintained a focus on working from the ground up; helping put farmers in the limelight and

focusing on the huge impacts that can be achieved through small changes, such as using local and seasonal produce for school meals, and creating price parity between meat and plant-based sandwiches.

In uncertain times, seeing positive changes in public engagement and interest is a source of motivation.

We found from our public survey that that 61% of people are willing to eat less meat, and almost a quarter say they are eating less meat now than they were two years ago. Working at the intersection of health, climate and nature, Eating Better is uniquely placed to drive the agenda for more healthy and sustainable diets. We look forward to working with members and partners in 2022-2023 to build on the momentum we've achieved together.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone who has contributed to the impact of Eating Better over the past year, including alliance members, trustees, staff and our funders, especially the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation, the Oak Foundation, Farming the Future and We Have The POWER.

Jane Landon • Chair, Eating Better



Understanding the food system

Meat promotions

We partnered with the Questionmark Foundation to examine the meat promotions tactics of the UK's four largest supermarkets: Tesco, Sainsbury's, Morrisons and Asda.

[Our findings](#) offer unique and valuable insight about how the Big Four are putting commercial interests ahead of climate commitments – and we want to see them step up. The supermarkets all used promotions to sell more meat, despite pledging to promote sustainable eating.



Number of meat and fish promotions for each of the four supermarkets over five weeks, by animal type.

“This is further evidence that supermarkets are putting profit before population health and that of the planet, by bombarding us with BOGOF burgers, sausages and cheap chicken of unknown origin. With food prices soaring and families struggling, we need to make it easier for everyone to eat healthier and more sustainably with less of all meat and more veg. The research shows that supermarkets are making it even harder for us to eat less meat.”

Simon Billing, executive director, Eating Better

“Supermarkets must take the lead in supporting a healthier and more sustainable food environment, to help customers make better choices. That means stepping up and shifting their strategies and actions in line with their climate commitments. Our survey also highlights a worrying lack of transparency, which makes it even harder for shoppers to identify ‘better’ meat from farms with higher animal welfare and environmental standards. Consumers need to be confident, if they choose to eat meat, that it’s not costing the earth.”

Charlotte Linnebank, director at Questionmark Foundation

Growing our influence

Encouraging local authority action

Local authorities have the opportunity to create change in local communities. We have developed a [new guide](#) and [film](#) to support local authorities to serve and source healthier, more sustainable meals.

'[Serving Better](#)' shows how local authorities and schools can take bold and urgent action to shift to serving more sustainable food, with less meat of all types and more plant proteins and vegetables. With a focus on the role of meat and dairy, the 'Serving Better' guide inspires and encourages local authorities to commit to deliver:

- 25% reduction in the volume of meat and dairy served in council-controlled settings by 2025
- 25% of meat and dairy served meets 'better' animal welfare and environmental standards by 2025

As part of our focus to support local forces for change, we - alongside FOUR PAWS UK, Friends of the Earth, Soil Association and Sustain - published a [campaigner guide](#) for parents, PTA members, school governors, and local campaign groups to call for better public sector food locally, especially school meals.



For every £1 invested in procuring local food, local communities receive £3 in economic benefits

“A lot of people may think their food would be more expensive to have homegrown produce brought into schools. That isn't necessarily the case. We can buy food locally, we can cook from scratch and save money. We can make a pot of soup in half an hour or forty minutes, using fresh vegetables from the fields just a few miles away.”

Kirsten Sullivan Deputy leader, West Lothian Council

“If we are committed to taking steps on climate change, tackling food procurement is the way to go. If you set up an ambition for contract caterers, or whoever is bidding, to do the best for children rather than the cheapest, great things happen. And with that, meal numbers go up, more children are eating great food and the economies of scale means that it is financially viable as well.”

Stephanie Slater, CEO and founder of School Food Matters

Growing our influence

Influencing the public sector

After reviewing the latest evidence on how to nudge people to eat more plants, we spoke to leaders in the field to help inform a step-by-step guide for the public sector, released during Public Sector Catering Magazine's Plant Based Week.

[‘Better menus make better choices’](#) aims to support public sector caterers to redesign their menus to serve less meat, less dairy and more plant proteins and vegetables.

In the same week, we [chaired a panel discussion on plant-based catering in the public sector with representatives](#) from Nottingham Hospitals Trust and alliance member Humane Society International, as well as Andy Jones, the outgoing chair of Public Sector Catering 100.

Andy told the panel that since the voluntary pledge by public sector caterers in 2020 to reduce meat and dairy on menus by 20%, they “have got ‘better’ quality meat into the establishment and reduced meat in meals.”

Then, at the start of 2022, we attended The Oxford Real Farming Conference, where our panel talked about how we can drive demand for better meat and dairy and establish better local connections between producers and the public sector.



Our executive director Simon Billing was then included in the top 20 ‘most influential’ people in public sector catering.

Tip 01

More and better choice of plant-based dishes



How?

- ✓ Ensure that at least 50% of the menu is plant-based.
- ✓ Put plant-based options at the top of the menu.
- ✓ Encourage diners to try plant-based meals.

Why?

The number of plant-based options on menus has been identified as an important behavioural ‘nudge’ to influence meal choice.

Having a higher proportion of plant-based meals in the menu improves take up ¹. A recent study shows that meat-eaters were significantly more likely to choose vegetarian meals when at least 75% of the menu is vegetarian ².

Plant-based options can contain fewer allergens and are inclusive of a wide range of special diets, allowing public caterers to provide offerings for many dietary requirements with less complexity.

What caterers say

“Although we have our plant-based cafe, we put plant-based food at the heart of our campus-wide offer. It is important that we have a variety of food that is appealing for everyone, including those on a plant-based diet. This means the language we use to describe the food is also important and doesn’t just say ‘vegan’. An example would be our popular pumpkin ‘mac n cheese’. It is completely plant-based and students can’t believe it’s not cheese in this familiar dish; it’s those not-so-secret yeast flakes which pump up the flavour! We recognise a flexitarian diet is key to helping everyone tackle climate change and we have been collaborating with Friends of the Earth and TUCO on the Kale Yeah! accreditation. It’s a way of rewarding students and staff for making better choices, a form of green nudging. The idea is when you buy six plant-based dishes, we’ll reward you with a seventh meal, free. That can be meat-based meal or plant-based, but out of seven meals, you’re having six that are plant-based. This is helping to reduce the University’s carbon footprint and is one step closer to saving the planet.”

Dave Morton, Catering Manager, The University of Winchester

Growing our influence

Making food central to the climate change conversation

More than fifty guests joined [us in Glasgow during the first week of COP26](#) to support Eating Better alliance member Nourish Scotland's 'Recipes for Resilience' programme.

We plugged the gap missing in the official conference agenda, where it was widely agreed that food as a solution to the climate crisis was not given the attention it needs.

We organised a panel, chaired by Simon Billing, who discussed ways of growing demand for organic farming, and how we can use the public sector's purchasing power to source from small, local producers.

The event brought producers and chefs together to make connections, build and diversify better routes to market for farmers, and, ultimately, the movement itself.

We also brought farmers' voices into the discourse by screening our new films, secured press coverage for pastoralist farmers, and took part in the international Glasgow Food and Climate Declaration, which recognises that sustainable food and farming can help to ensure equal access to food.



Signatories to the Glasgow Food and Climate Declaration. Eating Better's executive director, Simon Billing, back row, fourth from left

“Although food systems weren't given enough attention by the COP26 presidency, we were pleased to see so many food and climate organisations come together over the two weeks to create a dynamic set of events that illustrated the important role food has on impacting our climate.”

Anna Taylor, CEO of the Food Foundation

Growing our influence

Strengthening the alliance

A big part of growing the alliance involves reaching out to new and influential voices, including health, conservation and farming sectors, and youth voices.

This year we welcomed four new members to the alliance; BiteBack 2030, Made in Hackney, eat:festivals and Kids Kitchen.

Bringing young voices into the movement, is crucial to expanding our influence and making sustainable changes for the future, and young people are well placed to help drive the messages underpinning the Eating Better movement.



“It’s crucial that our young people play a part in securing a sustainable food environment that’s fit for the future. Our [Better by Half](#) roadmap calls for better school food standards and for food education to be embedded in the curriculum, which are key campaigning areas for Bite Back, too. As they focus more on the health and environmental impacts of our food systems, we look forward to working with them to help shape their campaigning.”

Simon Billing, Eating Better’s executive director

“We have a lot to achieve to transition to a sustainable, equitable and compassionate food system. We won't do this by working in silos - but by working together and bringing our respective food skills, cultures and expertise to the table. Our work inspires people to grow, cook and eat more plants and it's that experience of joyful and inclusive plant-centred cooking that we bring to Eating Better.”

Sarah Bentley, founder of Made in Hackney

Growing our influence

Making news

As part of our commitment to share knowledge and grow the alliance's influence, we refreshed our website to make our resources on healthy and sustainable food systems more accessible.

We also produced our first films, and spoke at more national and international events.

We have also significantly grown our digital engagement over the last year, and we now have more social media followers, website traffic and media coverage across both national and trade news.

We featured extensively in BBC Radio Four's new book, '39 Ways to Save the Planet', which was written by Countryfile's Tom Heap and included a foreword by Arnold Schwarzenegger.

In the chapter on meat, Simon Billing outlines the vital role public procurement plays in normalising sustainable eating with more plants on menus and much less meat and dairy.

+190
media mentions

+887%
increases in LinkedIn views

+244%
increase in new website visitors

+90%
increase in website traffic

168.7
hours watched on Youtube

Showcasing best practice

Producing our first films

This year, we completed our trilogy of films that bring our [Better By Half](#) roadmap to life and showcase the organisations prioritising sustainability.

The films have been well received by members, who are using the films themselves. We have shown the films to many audiences at different events across the year to stimulate discussions, including at COP26.



[‘Producing Better’](#) is the first in our trilogy of Eating Better films, which aim to bring our [‘Better by Half’](#) roadmap to life, showcasing the businesses and organisations already helping us all to eat ‘less and better’.

Our journey to build this narrative begins at Eversfield Organic, an award-winning, family-run farm, certified by Eating Better members the Soil Association and Pasture for Life. It’s an example of a food business at the very heart of a movement for change.



[‘Serving Better’](#), the second in our trilogy, goes alongside our step-by-step guide for local authorities and schools.

It was filmed at Mandeville Primary School in Hackney, which prioritises two meat-free days each week and uses local growers and suppliers.



Our film series concludes with [‘Buying Better’](#) which explores retail’s crucial role in helping us to eat ‘less and better’.

The film features Cathryn Higgs, head of food policy at Co-op, which moved its own-brand fresh pork to 100% British, outdoor-bred from RSPCA-assured farms in 2018. It also recently launched its plant-based range of products and prioritised making the price accessible for customers.

Tracking progress

Sandwiches unwrapped

Our [survey](#) of 430 sandwiches across food service and retail in February this year highlighted a disappointing lack of progress, and illuminates the scale of ambition still required to make meaningful change.

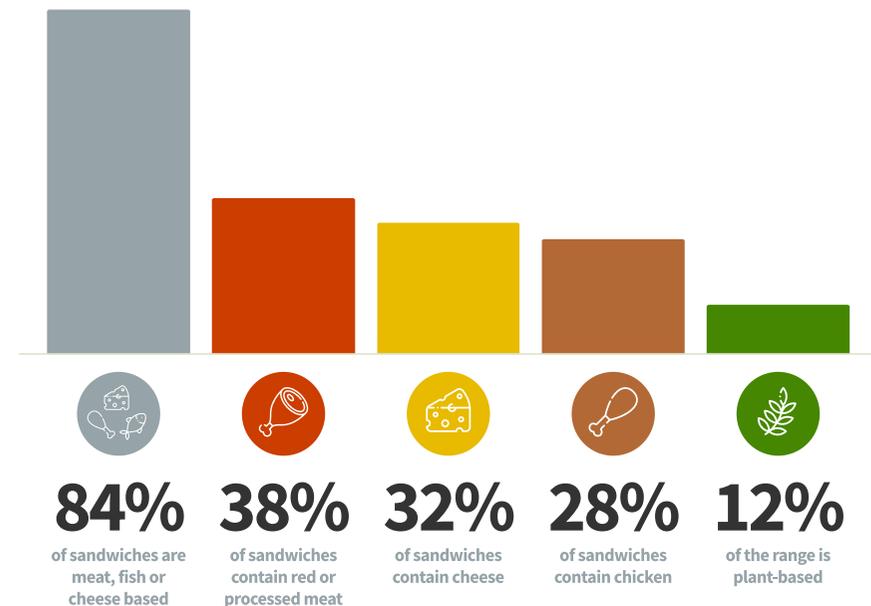
We found that the sandwich market is still too meat-based, and plant-based sandwiches are too expensive. The rise in alternative proteins as sandwich fillings comes at the expense of vegetarian, rather than meat-based, sandwiches.

At the time of our research:

- 84% of sandwiches on the UK high street contained meat, fish or cheese, which was only one percent less than in 2019
- Tesco cut its plant-based offer by more than a quarter, while Asda and Morrisons dropped their offer entirely

More than 160 articles covered ‘Sandwiches Unwrapped’, including [the Independent](#), [Daily Mail](#), [London Evening Standard](#), and page 3 of The Telegraph. Trade publications included [The Grocery Gazette](#) and [Food Service Footprint](#).

What's in the sandwich aisle?



“Eating Better’s sandwich survey highlights the need for reformulation of convenience foods to contain less meat and more veg to improve outcomes for our health and the environment. The lack of affordability of plant-based options is a serious barrier to people transitioning to healthier and more sustainable diets. If people are going to reduce their meat consumption, alternative options need to be the most convenient and affordable for everyone.”

Anna Taylor, executive director at Food Foundation

Looking ahead

We have an action-packed year ahead for Eating Better.

First, we have plans to improve our diversity, equity and inclusiveness. We are recruiting a community mobiliser to increase our engagement with under-represented voices, and are looking to engage more health and farming organisations.

We also plan to explore the intersection of meat's effects on health and climate. Our new project, will help us to develop a strategy to challenge the growth of processed meat in the food environment.

We have also set out a framework for better sourcing with retailers, and, for the first time, we have assessed retailers against this framework based on publicly available information. We will publish our findings this coming year.

We plan to develop our core narrative amid the changing political and economic environment, and to test our framing and messaging with centre-right audiences.

“I think what Eating Better is doing is tremendous - a really important voice in the space. Bringing different people together around the table, as messy, uncomfortable and challenging though it is, is so important - even if nobody agrees on anything...even if we all walk away thinking “they’re wrong” - what the others said is still in our minds.... I find tremendous value in the organisation.”

**Kristin Bash, Chair, Food Special Interest Group,
Faculty of Public Health**



Acknowledgements

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Vicki Hird
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Clare Oxborrow
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Our staff

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www.eating-better.org