

4 May 2018

Health and Harmony Consultation Response

I am responding on behalf of the Eating Better alliance to DEFRA's consultation on future farm policy '*Health and Harmony: the future for food, farming and the environment in a Green Brexit*'. [The Eating Better alliance](#) brings together 53 national civil society organisations working towards a fair, green and healthy future for the UK food system.

We have welcomed recent messaging from DEFRA towards a healthier and more sustainable food system though are disappointed that the Health and Harmony consultation is narrowly focused on farming rather than on a broader food strategy, as its title might imply.

We understand the need to develop new policies towards farming post CAP and the opportunities this provides to do more to ensure public money supports public goods. However, we regret that within this consultation, little consideration is given to the broader context in which new farming policy will need to operate and its relationship to broader food policy and social goals. Eating Better is calling for an integrated food and farming strategy that is wider than a set of policies concerned with agriculture, rural economies and land management and which better integrates and drives progress towards climate change goals, supports public health, the restoration of biodiversity, while also supporting farming practices that contribute to these goals.

Specifically for Eating Better, the strategy falls short on the urgent need to shift our food culture towards healthy and sustainable eating with 'less and better' meat and dairy for our health and the health of the planet. We have already set out and shared with DEFRA Eating Better's [10 recommendations](#) for livestock's role in a sustainable food and farming system that would support this goal:

- ***An integrated food and farming strategy*** to replace CAP which drives progress towards climate change goals for agriculture and supports public health and restoring biodiversity.
- ***A transition to healthy sustainable eating patterns*** with less and better meat and dairy with more plant-based eating.
- ***High standards and enforcement*** for environmental protection, food safety, antibiotic use in livestock farming and farm animal welfare.
- ***Public money for the provision of public goods*** such as wildlife, farm animal welfare, environmental and landscape benefits, including building healthy soils, enhanced biodiversity, flood alleviation and climate change mitigation.
- ***Sustainable levels of livestock production*** in line with the carrying capacity of land, climate change goals and environmental limits, the principles of sustainable diets and public expectations for high quality, high welfare, sustainably produced UK livestock products.
- ***Protection for high quality permanent grassland and carbon-rich soils*** that avoids overgrazing.
- ***Sustainably sourced animal feed*** to reduce the UK's impact on climate change and biodiversity in other countries. Alternative feeds with lower impact should be developed, including consideration of heat-treated, safe, food waste for pigs and chickens.

- **Clear and honest labelling** including a mandatory method of production labelling for all livestock products.
- **Economic support for sustainable livestock production systems** including more extensive pasture-based, agro-ecological, organic, and mixed farming systems.
- **Sufficient transition funding for innovation, research and training** to support the practical and cultural shift needed.

On all these points, the current consultation document is lacking or weak on detail.

Our recommendations also include the important role of public sector food procurement, in hospitals, prisons and schools, as well as government departments, to support the shift to healthy and sustainable eating (as recommended by the Government's revised 2016 [Eatwell Guide](#)). Thus, we are disappointed that the consultation fails to include reference to the role of public sector food procurement in supporting dietary shifts as well as providing a market for quality British produce and recommend that this omission is rectified.

Specific comments on the section 5 on using Public Money for Public Goods.

Eating Better welcomes the proposal that future agricultural support payments should be linked to delivering public goods, including improving environmental protection and animal welfare, including improving soil health, reducing greenhouse gas emissions and increasing biodiversity. Water and air quality, higher standards of animal welfare and vibrant rural communities and economies are essential too. We do not consider these can be traded off against each other eg by asking which are more important as the consultation does, as all are important and we would like to see the Government adopt measurable targets for delivering on these objectives.

The consultation also asks whether there are other public goods the government should support. This list must include 'public health' and support for activities that:

- contribute to healthy sustainable diets by reducing the health and economic cost of diet-related disease and making healthy sustainably produced, fresh food available, affordable and accessible to all, specifically with more and diverse plant-based foods available and with production based on sustainable methods;
- help farmers transition from high levels of production for products we should be reducing in our diets, such as high levels of meat and dairy consumption;
- reduce or eliminate risk of food related diseases (such as E.coli, salmonella, campylobacter);
- encourage growth in acreage of beneficial farm systems that can deliver some – or all – of these outcomes such as organic, agro-ecological and agro-forestry.

Our recent report: [Principles for Eating Meat and Dairy More Sustainably: the 'less and better' approach](#) provides practical guidance and a set of eight principles for better livestock production and consumption:

1. **Choosing better for the climate** means shifting the balance of our diets towards more plant-based foods; while eating less meat. Choosing meat from 'pasture-fed' animals can help lock carbon into the soil, but only makes sense if consuming considerably less overall.
2. **Choosing better for animals** means choosing meat and dairy from well managed production systems that enable natural behaviour, support good health and provide a natural diet.
3. **Choosing better for nature** means choosing livestock products that have a diet based around local food sources and home-grown feedstuffs, using for example European native legumes, which can help reduce our reliance on unsustainable soy.
4. **Choosing better for feeding the world fairly** means shifting diets away from meat and dairy overconsumption. This would ensure resources are used more efficiently and fairly.

5. **Choosing better for health** means shifting towards more plant-based diets which would have health benefits for the majority of the population.

6. **Choosing better for responsible antibiotic** use means choosing products that require minimal antibiotic use in their production. In practice, this means avoiding products produced intensively.

7. **Choosing better for cutting waste** means valuing meat as a precious resource, making the most of each carcass and reducing the amount of wasted edible food.

8. **Choosing better for livelihoods** means choosing meat and dairy from smaller scale, higher standard producers. Choosing meat and dairy with a known provenance can reconnect producers and their customers such as through farm shops, box schemes, farmers markets and independent butchers.

Eating Better proposes that such outcomes be included within a framework for determining definitions of 'public goods' within new support arrangements.

Thank you for inviting us to comment and I look forward to hearing from you that Eating Better's concerns have been taken into account.

Yours sincerely



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