

What we are asking is that the council ensure all catering for internal meetings and events is plant-based, which is an important and necessary step in addressing the climate crisis. It's a simple ask, and a small task, but to understand why it's important, we need to zoom out and look at the bigger picture.

This year we have seen a record-breaking cyclone in south-eastern Africa, wildfires in Chile and Canada, unbearable heatwaves across Asia, and powerful ice storms in the southern United States. Environmental experts predict that at our current rate of collective inaction, the world could be facing a 1.5 degrees Celsius temperature rise within the next 10 years. Current scientific consensus points to meat and dairy production as a leading cause of climate breakdown, with the **livestock sector accounting for 14% of global greenhouse gas emissions, and animal farming and fishing being the leading cause of deforestation and biodiversity loss globally** (Chatham House, 2021). In London, 27% of food emissions come from meat, while it provides only 5% of the volume of food consumed (ReLondon, 2021). Per calorie and gram of protein produced, meat and dairy produce many times more emissions than plant foods.

In the UK, approximately 85% of agricultural land is used for farming animals and growing their feed; 40% of the UK's arable land is used just to grow animal feed. Of all the cereals eaten in the UK, 40% are eaten by people and almost 60% are fed to animals. Animal grazing and land clearing has devastated our natural landscape and continues to be the source of harmful emissions and pollution.

It only makes sense that to reduce emissions and reverse the devastation of our landscape, we must move towards plant-based foods. Recent studies have confirmed this, showing that the least sustainable plant-based diet was more environmentally friendly than the most sustainable meat-eaters diets in terms of emissions, water and land use (Scarborough et al., 2023), whether they are imported or grown locally, or produced using conventional or organic methods ([Pieper et al. 2020](#), [Fresán and Joan Sabaté. 2019](#)). A shift to plant-based eating in high-income nations could cut those nations' agricultural emissions by 61% and free up land that can be returned to nature and therefore sequester carbon ([Garner et al. 2019](#)) This change in land use would also benefit wildlife, allowing for our precious ecosystems and biodiversity to bounce back.

This is reflected in the report titled *Camden Carbon Scenarios to 2030: Achieving a Zero Carbon Camden* says that solutions to achieving net zero 'could be achieved by adopting more land efficient diets that would then free up land for rewilding with trees. Camden residents could therefore play a role in this by dietary adjustments to reduce the amount of lamb and beef which are particularly land inefficient and replace them with plant proteins.'

The Government commissioned National Food Strategy (July, 2021) recommended meat consumption should be reduced by 30% to help food security for future generations, and the Government's independent Climate Change Committee recommended that public bodies should lead the way by promoting plant-based food. Other countries have taken major steps recently - South Korea and Denmark have announced action plans to radically transform the food system

through plant-based foods. Many councils across the UK have switched to fully plant-based catering.

The solutions are clear - a move away from meat and dairy is necessary for the council and the country to achieve their net zero targets, prevent further deforestation and halt biodiversity loss. What we need now is modelling and leadership from local authorities - from Camden Borough council, by committing to serve 100% plant-based fare at internal meetings and events. When residents hear about this, they'll be able to recognise the serious position we are in and the importance of taking up plant-based eating habits themselves. We will be normalising plant-based eating, and will encourage residents to take action to prevent climate breakdown and protect nature as much as possible.

Inclusion: Plant-based catering takes away any guess work in feeding those who might have any number of motivations for avoiding particular foods, such as religion, culture, animal, environmental or health related concerns. Providing an array of foods that everyone could eat is *the* most inclusive approach to catering. Providing plant-based alternatives of the foods we all know and love will allow attendees to feel more comfortable with the changes to the menu.

Nutrition: It is evident that both plant-based and non-plant-based diets can be sufficiently healthy or extremely unhealthy, depending on which foods are chosen. However, as the NHS, the British Association for Nutrition and Dietetics and an overwhelming number of non-industry-funded scientists have repeatedly said, a wholefoods plant-based diet is perfectly healthy for all stages of life, including infancy, pregnancy and old age.

Cost: Though issues of cost have been raised in the past, this is often entirely based on the meat substitutes that people see in restaurants, of course comparing a chicken burger to a 'plant-based chicken' burger will cause some discrepancies in cost as a result of supply and demand. Yet for our purposes in Camden Council, supplying sustainable, affordable catering to our meetings and events, it's relatively obvious to note that the cheapest supermarket staples (pasta, rice, potatoes, lentils, vegetables, beans) are all plant-based, whereas the more expensive aisles contain meat and fish.

In Cambridge City, where the council made a commitment to plant-based catering in 2022, the council officers performed research and found that "there was usually no difference in cost between plant-based foods and non-plant based foods" ([Stewart, 2022](#)).

Appeal

Plant-based catering is a necessary next step in addressing food related emissions and protecting and restoring nature in the UK. Those who come to Camden Council will begin to see your actions as paving the way for a better, brighter future for us all. Attendees at your meetings and events will be encouraged to recognise and celebrate the benefits of engaging with the plant-based catering that you provide. Though it might seem a small change in isolation, addressing the catering we provide at Camden Council is vital in showcasing how we can be an enormous part of the change that is so essential to our collective survival.

