



To:

Rt Hon Steve Reed MP, Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs

Rt Hon Wes Streeting MP, Secretary of State for Health and Social Care

Rt Hon Ed Miliband MP, Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero

Dear Secretaries of State,

Our organisations are writing to you today to urge the Government to end the ongoing consumer campaign to increase the consumption of meat and dairy run by the Agriculture and Horticulture Development Board (AHDB). The Let's Eat Balanced campaign flies in the face of the government's own public health and sustainability goals, and demonstrates that the AHDB is not currently fit for purpose. Instead of promoting meat, the Government should use similar publicity campaigns to drive up the consumption of fruit, vegetables and whole foods and communicate the health and sustainability benefits of plant-based whole foods to the public.

Evidence is abundant that high quantities of red and processed meat increase the risk of coronary heart disease, some forms of cancer and type 2 diabetes [1], and the Lancet Countdown has calculated that 38,500 deaths were associated with high consumption of red and processed meat and dairy products in 2021 [2]. The government's own dietary guidelines, the Eatwell Guide, recommend limiting intake of red and processed meat to 70g per day [3]. Research shows that a quarter of women and four in ten men (43%) were exceeding the recommended level of red and processed meat consumption in 2018/19 [4]. Research conducted in December 2024 found that only 29% of people could correctly identify the 70g limit. [5]

The AHDB campaign stands in stark contrast to expert opinion and advice on environmental protection and to the mission of the Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra), to “restore and enhance the environment for the next generation, leaving it in a better state than we found it”. Defra’s stated priorities include “to reduce greenhouse gas emissions” in the agricultural sector “to help deliver net zero” [6].

The 2021 independent National Food Strategy, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change and the UK’s Climate Change Committee all stress the urgent need for a reduction in meat and dairy consumption to achieve climate change targets [7], with the CCC recommending a cut of 20% by 2030 and 35% by 2050 [8]. As the Government’s own climate advisor, it has identified the AHDB’s meat and dairy campaign as in contradiction to those goals [9].

Despite “horticulture” remaining in its name, the horticulture and potato sectors withdrew from AHDB in 2021 [10], leaving only the livestock industry and cereal growers – many of whom supply the livestock industry – as its sole levy payers. Rather than representing the interests of the wider agricultural sector, AHDB is now effectively a body solely promoting the interests of the animal farming sector.

Instead of sponsoring this group, the Government must shift the focus of support and marketing campaigns to the horticulture sector and its products; vegetables, fruits, legumes and wholegrains - these are the foods the UK is eating too little of. The Government must make people aware of the recommendations to limit meat and dairy consumption and enable a just transition to profitable and sustainable agriculture in the UK. Such strategies have already been implemented by other governments, including the Danish government in 2023, and the UK must follow suit [11].

Thank you for your consideration of these important issues. We would welcome the opportunity to meet you or officials from your departments to discuss these matters further.

Yours sincerely,

AdFree Cities	Compassion in World Farming	Freedom for Animals
Animal Aid	Dale Vince OBE	Friends of the Earth UK
Animal Defenders International	Doctors Association UK	Green Britain Foundation
Animal Interfaith Alliance	Dr Amir Khan	Greener Healthcare and Sustainability Project
British Society for Haematology	Dr Chris van Tulleken	Greener Practice
Caroline Lucas, former Green Party Leader	Dr Simon Brooman, Retired lecturer in Animal Law	Greenpeace UK
Changing Markets Foundation	Ecomedics	Hubbub
Chris Packham CBE	Feedback Global	Humane Being
	FOUR PAWS UK	Humane Society International
	Freedom Food Alliance	Irish Doctors for the Environment

My Nutriweb	Professor Hugh Montgomery OBE	The Humane League
PETA UK	ProVeg UK	The Shellfish Network
Plant Based Treaty	Pysch Declares	The Vegan Society
Plant Based Universities	Real Zero	UK Health Alliance on Climate Change
Plant-Based Health Professionals UK	Stock Free Farming	Vegan Organic Network
	The Food Foundation	World Animal Protection

References

- [1] Kennedy et al, 2024. Estimated effects of reductions in processed meat consumption and unprocessed red meat consumption on occurrences of type 2 diabetes, cardiovascular disease, colorectal cancer, and mortality in the USA: a microsimulation study. *Lancet Planet Health*. 2024 Jul;8(7):e441-e451. doi: 10.1016/S2542-5196(24)00118-9. PMID: 38969472. <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/38969472/> ; World Health Organisation, 2015. [Carcinogenicity of the consumption of red meat and processed meat](#).
- [2] Lancet Countdown on Health and Climate Change, 2024. https://s41874.pcdn.co/wp-content/uploads/Lancet-Countdown-2024_United-Kingdom.pdf
- [3] NHS, [Eatwell Guide](#) and [Eat Well advice on meat consumption](#).
- [4] Stewart et al, 2021, [Trends in UK meat consumption: analysis of data from years 1–11 \(2008–09 to 2018–19\) of the National Diet and Nutrition Survey rolling programme](#) *The Lancet Planetary Health*, Volume 5, Issue 10, e699 - e708.
- [5] The Vegan Society. Survey conducted on Attest on 18 December 2024. Sample of 1000 using nationally representative targeting.
- [6] Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, [About us](#).
- [7] [National Food Strategy](#), 2021; Climate Change Committee, 2020, [The sixth carbon budget: agriculture and land use, land use and forestry](#); Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, 2019, [Climate change and land use](#).
- [8] Climate Change Committee, 2022, [Government's Food Strategy 'a missed opportunity' for the climate - Climate Change Committee](#).
- [9] Climate Change Committee, 2024, [Progress in reducing emissions 2024 Report to Parliament](#); [Progress in reducing UK emissions - 2023 Report to Parliament \(theccc.org.uk\)](#).
- [10] [AHDB Horticulture and potatoes archive website](#).
- [11] Government of Denmark, 2023, [Danish action plan for plant-based foods](#)