

Adoption of Green Party Statement of Policy on Meat and Dairy Reduction

Developed by the Food & Agriculture Policy Working Group, between Jan & July 2022

Climate change modelling acknowledges that we urgently need to reduce meat and dairy consumption to prevent catastrophic climate breakdown. A shift in consumer habits is [already underway](#) but needs to accelerate. This will be hard. Food is complicated and emotive and changing people's diets is not like changing their boiler. The cost of living crisis means many are experiencing food poverty so we need to ensure people in need aren't penalised.

The long-awaited [Government Food Strategy](#) of June 2022 was widely criticised as it failed to address the role of diet in addressing climate change, against the recommendations of the Government's own [independent review](#).

As well as climate benefits, urgent action would achieve the following co-benefits:

- Greater food security and stronger rural economies.
- Addressing biodiversity loss and soil quality loss - farming produces not just our food but our landscapes and our ecosystems.
- Benefits for water quality, as agricultural pesticide & fertilisers are the biggest contributors to river pollution.
- Savings to the NHS from healthier diets. [Sustain](#) estimates that meat over-consumption costs the NHS directly £1.2 billion, and 45,000 deaths annually. The [National Food Strategy](#) states that obesity alone accounts for 8% of annual health spend in the UK, or £18bn.

Conference adopts this statement of policy which expands on our existing Green Party Food & Agriculture Policy, and calls on the Government to take the following steps over the next three years.

Step 1: Immediately begin a programme of mass public engagement :

- A mass marketing & cooking skills campaign with positive messaging including health & economic benefits of alternatives such as pulses.
- A ban on advertising high-carbon foods.
- A 'whole school food' education programme which includes school meals and school curriculum.
- An urgent reform of the Government's failing [healthy start scheme](#) which would
 - Expand the scheme to provide a voucher for all children aged 5 and under (not just those on the lowest incomes) to subsidise fruit, veg and milk - including plant milk alternatives.
 - Increase the current voucher value to a realistic level such as £10 per child per week¹
 - Pilot ways this subsidy can support local and sustainable fruit and veg production, based on localising models such as [beetroot bonds](#)

Step 2: restore farming subsidies to former EU levels and beyond, and radically reframe them to support the shift to 'less and better' meat and dairy plus a 'just transition' for farmers, including:

- Reduce and ultimately end subsidies for high-carbon practices such as beef farming and farming on peatlands.

¹ Cost = approx. £3.7 million p.a. for all children aged 5 & under assuming 620k births year in England and Wales, approximated from <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/birthsdeathsandmarriages/livebirths> - no costs included for admin however there may be some saving on admin costs for a universal scheme tied to child benefit)

- Repurpose that investment to support nature, climate and health-friendly methods including smaller mixed farms, regenerative farming, wild meat (e.g. venison) and woodland pasture. Also invest in non-animal protein e.g. nut trees, legumes, and horticulture (fruit & veg) - that capture carbon, enhance nature AND produce good food.
- Develop mass green skills training programmes for people working in farming and the wider food economy (including processing, retail & hospitality) including use of meat/dairy alternatives.

Step 3: Make visible the real cost of meat and dairy:

This means meat will become more luxury (as it was in the pre -cheap-meat era) so MUST be alongside green party policies such as universal basic income and proper welfare benefits, which empower and enable people to make their own food choices.

- Ensure labels and advertising for meat and dairy clearly show all carbon emissions, animal welfare levels and production methods
- Introduce VAT for meat and Dairy (they are currently exempt i.e. zero rated.)
- Phase in a carbon tax covering farm emissions including enteric fermentation - i.e. methane from livestock burps (mainly cow and sheep) as well as inputs such as fuel and fertiliser. The revenues from this part of the Carbon Tax will be recycled back into farming and will be spent on measures to help farmers transition to more sustainable farming methods. Imported meat and dairy would be covered by a carbon tax on imports.