Recommendations/Guidelines for food served at Chatham House

**Rationale**

Globally, levels of meat consumption have reached unhealthy levels. In the US, for example, the average citizen eats about three times levels deemed healthy by experts. In the EU, the multiple is two. Overconsumption of animal products – and red meat in particular – comes with serious public health implications, including increased incidence of obesity and various non-communicable diseases including type-2 diabetes, heart diseases and various types of cancer.

The production and consumption of meat also comes with serious environmental costs. The livestock sector exerts considerable pressure on already constrained natural resources. It is a highly inefficient use of land and water and a principle driver of deforestation, and habitat and species loss.

Perhaps most importantly, the production and consumption of meat is a major driver of climate change. The livestock sector already accounts for approximately 15 per cent of global greenhouse gas emissions – roughly equivalent to exhaust fumes from all the world’s vehicles. By 2050, global consumption of meat is expected to have risen by up to 76 per cent, and the associated rise in emissions will mean than even with the adoption of the most efficient livestock production practices, keeping global warming to the ‘danger level’ of 2 degrees will be almost impossible. The next five to ten years will be decisive in determining the success of global climate efforts, and action on diet and meat consumption represents a critical yet underused tool to help bridge the gap between current ambition and climate goals.

**Chatham House’s response**

In December 2015, Chatham House published a ground-breaking report[[1]](#footnote-1) laying out pathways for government, industry and civil society action to foster a reduction in global meat consumption, particularly amongst the highest-consuming populations.

The report marked the culmination of an 18-month research project, undertaken with the Glasgow University Media Group and Ipsos MORI, exploring public attitudes, awareness and understanding in relation to the diet-climate relationship. The research encompassed three phases of primary research: a multinational opinion survey carried out in 12 countries; focus group discussions in Brazil, China, the UK and the US; and a series of expert roundtables and interviews with key stakeholders and decision-makers in the same four countries.

The report generated a tremendous amount of interest from the international press, and levels of coverage were amongst the highest seen for a Chatham House output in recent years.

**Guidelines for food served in the staff canteen**

As part of our commitment to the environment and to employee health we want to encourage healthy and sustainable *levels* of meat consumption in the staff canteen.[[2]](#footnote-2) We are also committed to reducing the consumption of less healthy and sustainable *types* of meat - there are, for example, striking differences in the emissions intensity of different animal products, beef being the most emissions intensive (around eight times more emissions intensive than chicken, and around six times more emissions intensive than pork[[3]](#footnote-3)). We will also seek to procure only meat and fish that comes from sustainable sources.

To honour these commitments, we will endeavour to ensure that:

* A hot vegetarian option will be served daily;
* Vegetarian soups\* will be served throughout the week;
* Where possible all meat, fish, fruit and vegetables will be locally and seasonally sourced;
* All fish and seafood served will be MSC certified;
* All coffee served will be triple-certified;
* Little – if any – processed meat will be served;
* No beef will be served.

\* There might be occasions where leftover meat from the previous day will be used in soups.

**Guidelines for food served at external events**

Above we have outlined our general guiding principles for the food that we serve in the staff canteen.

Staff considering menu options for events are encouraged to consider sustainable and healthy options, as have been outlined above. Where staff would like to serve beef at an event, we ask that they provide a justification as to why this would be appropriate in that instance and seek agreement from a member of the Senior Management Team before confirming the menu with the caterers.

Staff liaising with third parties who wish to convene an event at Chatham House are asked to bear our principles in mind when talking through their meal options.

1. Wellesley, L., Happer, C., and Froggatt, A. (2015): *Changing Climate, Changing Diets: Pathways to Lower Meat Consumption*, London: Chatham House [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Experts deem approx. 70g a healthy daily intake of meat. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. On a per kilo of product basis [↑](#footnote-ref-3)