



The Scottish Parliament  
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

**PUBLIC PETITION NO.**

**PE01708**

### **Name of petitioner**

Mark Banahan on behalf of The Vegan Society & Go Vegan Scotland

### **Petition title**

Catering for vegans on all public sector menus

### **Petition summary**

Calling on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to bring forward legislation to guarantee plant-based options on every public sector menu every day, to protect the rights of vegans and for our health, the environment and animals.

### **Action taken to resolve issues of concern before submitting the petition**

Go Vegan Scotland conducted a survey on vegan food provision in state entities in Scotland.

The findings of that survey were published and presented to the Scottish Government.

### **Petition background information**

Veganism is a way of living which seeks to exclude, as far as is possible and practicable, all forms of exploitation of, and cruelty to, animals for food, clothing or any other purpose.

More people of all ages are making the decision to live vegan, with the number in the UK doubling twice in the last 4 years. More people are also choosing plant-based food for health, environmental and ethical reasons.

Plant-based food can be enjoyed by everyone. The British Dietetic Association recognises that well-planned totally plant-based diets are suitable for every age and life stage.



stage.

The UN has urged a global move towards a meat and dairy free diet for the benefit of our planet, and Scotland has the opportunity to lead the way.

### **Equality**

Veganism is still widely misunderstood. Many still think of vegans as people who choose to follow a restrictive diet. In fact, veganism is not about food at all. Vegans are people who live in recognition of the fact that animals are sentient beings, just like us, and so consider it wrong to use them as commodities, unnecessarily bringing them into existence in order that we can take things from them and then kill them. Vegans are morally opposed to the commodification of other animals and so live their lives, in so far as they possibly can, avoiding any involvement in the use and killing of animals.

This vegan moral conviction has been found to come within the scope of international human rights provisions and vegans in the UK are protected under human rights and equality law. This means that service providers have an obligation to provide for vegans and a responsibility under the Equality Act 2010 to avoid any discrimination on the grounds of veganism.

All state entities must act in accordance with these rights and the Government must pass such laws as are necessary to secure our rights. State entities also have a positive duty to advance equality and remove or minimise disadvantages faced by vegans on account of their protected convictions.

### **Inclusive**

Providing vegan options does not just protect the rights of vegans. Plant-based food can be enjoyed by vegans and non-vegans alike and so guaranteeing these options improves inclusivity. A good vegan option provides for everyone, including vegetarians, those with religious dietary needs and those with allergies. Plant-based options are also often preferred by non-vegans due to health and environmental considerations.

### **Sustainable**

Increasing vegan food provision could support environmental initiatives. A vegan diet can reduce food related carbon emissions by 50% and the new land used every year for each person would near-halve. (Peer-reviewed study from the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine & WWF Livewell Plate both 2017).

Animal agriculture is responsible for more greenhouse gas emissions than all transport combined. (Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, Tackling Climate Change Through Livestock 2013).

An average cow produces around 700 litres of methane per day, equivalent to the emissions produced by a 4 x 4 travelling 35 miles a day. (Dr David Davies. Aberystwyth University - Documentary: Meat The Truth 2007)

Animal agriculture is responsible for up to 91% of Amazon destruction - forests are destroyed to grow feed for animals (far more soy is used to feed poultry, pork, cattle and even farmed fish, not for vegan products). As well as destroying wildlife habitats, deforestation contributes to climate change, removing valuable CO2 absorption and storage that trees provide. (World Bank - Causes of Deforestation of the Brazilian Amazon 2004)

Consuming animals and things taken from animals is a very inefficient food source and form of nutrition - we're in a bizarre situation where for every 100 calories we feed to animals we only receive 12 calories back by consuming their flesh and milk. (Cassidy, E. S., West, P.C., Gerber, J.S. & Foley, J.A Redefining agricultural yields 2013)

In June 2018, researchers from Oxford University conducted a landmark study and suggested that eating a vegan diet could be the "single biggest way" to reduce your environmental impact on earth. (Poore, J., Nemecek, T. University of Oxford - Reducing food's environmental impacts through producers and consumers 2018)

### **Healthy**

Both the British Dietetic Association and the American Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics recognise that totally plant-based diets are suitable for every age and life



stage.

To get the most out of a vegan diet, it should include plenty of whole grains, fruit, nuts, seeds and vegetables, which are packed full of beneficial fibre, vitamins and minerals.

It's easy to produce tasty options that include these foods, which are rich in fibre and low in saturated fat, and there are lots of online resources and recipes which can help organisations ensure they are offering healthy, balanced and tasty vegan food.

In addition, a considerable body of research has linked vegan diets with lower blood pressure and cholesterol, as well as lower rates of heart disease, type 2 diabetes and some types of cancer.

(Sarah Alexander, Robert J Ostfeld, Kathleen Allen, Kim A Williams. A Plant Based Diet & Hypertension 2017)

(Yoko Yokoyama, Ph.D., M.P.H., Susan Levin, M.S., R.D., C.S.S.D., and Neal Barnard, M.D., F.A.C.C Meta-analysis of dietary cholesterol 2017).

(Michelle McMacken & Sapana Shah. A Plant Based Diet For The Prevention and treatment of type 2 diabetes 2017)

The UK is woefully short of meeting the five portions of fruit and veg a day recommendation (estimates are around three and a half portions a day according to the National Diet and Nutrition Survey). Building familiarity of plant-based foods in public sector settings could help address this.

### **Making it Happen**

Changing our food system will inevitably result in longer term implications for our farming system. The Vegan Society are working with researchers and farmers to propose sustainable alternatives to animal farming. Their Grow Green campaign outlines how climate change can be tackled through plant-protein agriculture, and the policies required to encourage such transition. They also point to other forms of diversification to support farmers out of animal farming.

### **Improvements in Plant-based Provision Elsewhere**

The Vegan Society's 'Catering For Everyone' campaign has been encouraging public sector institutions (schools, hospitals, councils and prisons), to increase their vegan options.

The campaign has been well received with many public sector institutions recognising that improvements can be made and agreeing to increase their provision for vegans.

An English county council, universities in Manchester and London, and a Welsh health board are among the many public sector institutions making positive changes to their menus due to this campaign.

In 2016 Portugal introduced legislation compelling all public sector canteens to provide a vegan option on their daily menus. This followed a successful campaign and shows that legislative changes, just like we are calling for, can be successfully implemented.

Steps are being taken in other countries to increase the availability of plant-based options. For example, in Brazil a number of districts are working towards making their school meals fully plant-based in recognition of the environmental, health and financial benefits of doing so.

### **Unique web address**

<https://www.parliament.scot/GettingInvolved/Petitions/cateringforeveryone>

### **Related information for petition**

**Do you wish your petition to be hosted on the Parliament's website to collect signatures online?**

**signatures online ?**

YES

**How many signatures have you collected so far?**

0

**Closing date for collecting signatures online**

06 / 11 / 2018

**Comments to stimulate online discussion**

- Do you agree with the action called for in the petition?
- If so, please explain why.