

June 2020

Actions and policies related to reduction in the consumption of meat in four countries: UK, France, Germany and Switzerland.

This work document provides a brief overlook of public- and private-led initiatives undertaken in 4 countries (UK, Switzerland, Germany, France) to promote meat reduction and plant-based diets. A state of play of national interventions is also presented, as well as some suggestions for priority interventions.

1/ UNITED KINGDOM

a) State of play of policy interventions

There are few top down public health messages from governmental organisations promoting the uptake of meat reduction and plant-based diets. Although the [Eatwell Guide](#) produced in March 2016 places more emphasis on beans, pulses, fruits and vegetables than ever before, there is **very little evidence of other governmental efforts** promoting the uptake of plant-based nutrition and reduction of meat consumption.

That said, there are plenty of vegan campaigners, charities and Netflix shows around highlighting the benefits of such diets. Although the science seemed somewhat questionable and “cherry picked”, The [Game Changers documentary](#) has been a huge marketing success for promoting plant-based nutrition. The Vegan Society has launched their [Vegan and Thriving campaign](#) which is designed to “reassure people that you can be healthy, happy and can truly thrive on a vegan lifestyle” by offering a host of nutritionally balanced meals and advice. Compassion in World Farming has also launched their [“Eat plants. For a change” campaign](#) which offers how to cook videos for free, simple plant-based meal plans, innovative apps to locate good food near you as well as breaking plant based news. Vegan initiatives are taking off in the corporate workspace with [one group of Vegan Leaders in Corporate Management playing an instrumental role](#).

Research is also booming in this area (see these examples [here](#)). [One particular study](#) which gave participants free meat substitutes for a month was reasonably effective. A month after the study ended participants were still eating 36g per day less meat than before. However their consumption of ruminant meat was unchanged. Attitudes and norms were changed and stayed that way. Participants were twice as likely to move up a rung on the vegan, vegetarian, flexitarian, pescatarian ladder.

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Nonetheless, the most recent research investigating dietary patterns in the UK suggests that **the general population in the UK neither seem to be receiving plant-based health messages nor implementing them into practice**. The [2018 Health Survey for England](#) shows that only 28% of adults were eating the recommended five portions of fruit and vegetables per day – and the average (mean) was 3.7 portions per day. Fewer men than women meet the five-a-day guideline, and young people aged 16 to 24 are also less likely than other adults to get their five-a-day. In 2018, 18% of children aged five to 15 ate five standard portions of fruit and vegetables per day. Furthermore, the intake of canned beans and pulses in the UK is low. [Statista](#) indicates that UK individuals in 2018 on average purchase 100g of canned beans and pulses a week (78g- baked beans in sauce, 22g other canned beans and pulses).

This low intake of plant-based foods may be because there are **many perceived barriers to consuming plant-based diets and meat/dairy alternatives**. Lack of familiarity, lower sensory attractiveness compared to animal alternatives, perceived expensiveness, lack of cooking knowledge, lack of information, lack of availability of products, fear of negative stigmatization and negative health conceptions are the main ones. In terms of legume consumption specifically, flatulence, lack of familiarity and lack of knowledge of preparation are key issues.

Overall, plant-based diets and food groups have numerous health benefits. However, there is research lacking in some areas and its association with certain public health conditions needs to be clarified. There are many public health messages and initiatives promoting the uptake of plant-based specific nutrition. However, surveys currently suggest the UK population's intake of plant-based foods is suboptimal. This could be because effective resources supporting the health messages are lacking. The few studies that have investigated the effectiveness of plant-based interventions such as cooking demonstrations, educational programs and online/telephone demonstrate potential. However, this is an area that requires further research. More longitudinal studies are necessary to assess adherence and self-reported dietary intakes should be paired with other biological markers to increase their accuracy.

b) Opinion about the notion of 'eating less meat'

If people are told to 'eat less meat' you also need to tell them what to eat instead. There's a huge knowledge deficit about nutrition, and removing animal products from a diet does require some planning in order to be nutritionally adequate.

Key public interventions could include a public education campaign around the benefits of pulses and legumes, including how to make tasty nutritious meals with them.

c) Existing 'good practices' in the UK

- ◆ **[Meat Free Mondays](#)** - Launched by Paul, Mary and Stella McCartney in 2009, Meat Free Monday is a not-for-profit campaign which aims to raise awareness of the detrimental environmental impact of animal agriculture and industrial fishing. The campaign encourages people to help slow climate change, conserve precious natural resources and improve their health by having at least one plant-based day each week.
- ◆ **[Veg Power](#)** - Veg Power is on a ten-year mission to turn around vegetable consumption in the UK. The mission: to get every kid in the UK eating one more portion of veg each day. The original Veg Power poster campaign was followed by a successful crowdfund, a book full of expert tips and recipes, and in 2019 we joined forces with ITV and creative agency adam&eveDDB to launch Eat Them to Defeat Them, a veg-focused advert that challenged the norms and played into kids' narrative around veg.
- ◆ **[Five a day campaign](#)** - public NHS campaign to promote fruit & veg consumption.
- ◆ **[Veganuary](#)** - Veganuary is a non-profit organisation that encourages people worldwide to try plant-based diets for January and beyond. During the 2020 campaign, more than 400,000 people took a pledge to try a plant-based diet, while more than 600 brands, restaurants and supermarkets promoted the campaign, and launched more than 1200 new plant-based products and menus in the UK market alone. Throughout the year, Veganuary encourages and supports people and businesses alike to move to a plant-based diet as a way of protecting the environment, preventing animal suffering and improving the health of millions of people

Sector specific interventions (not public intervention):

- ◆ **Sustainable Restaurant Association [One Planet Plate](#)** - One Planet Plate is a global campaign that enables diners to vote with their fork for a better food future by dining at participating restaurants and choosing these 'sustainable specials'. Since its launch in 2018, more than 200 chefs, have taken the opportunity to contribute their recipe for a One Planet Plate, a dish that encapsulates their ethos and crucially is climate-kind.
- ◆ **WRI's [Playbook](#)** - To help food service companies support diners in choosing more plant-rich meals, this playbook from WRI's Better Buying Lab outlines the top 23 'behavior change' strategies drawing on cutting edge academic research into how people choose food, as well as insights from experts in the food service industry about what works and what doesn't. The playbook is designed to be used by anyone working in the food service sector wishing to make changes within their operations to encourage diners to choose more sustainable, plant-rich options.

2/ GERMANY

a) Meat Consumption in Germany

The German portal [Statista](#) indicates that the per capita meat consumption in Germany was 59.5 kg in 2019, a value that has been stagnated over the last 30 years. Among the preferences, pork remains the favourite variety, at 36kg, followed by poultry (13kg) and beef (10kg). Consumption of sheep, goat and other meats amounts to less than 2kg.

Key indicators at the [German's Nutrition Report of 2019](#) suggest that meat consumption is now declining. Data for 2018 reveals a decrease in consumption of 2kg per capita in just one year, and surveys of German households indicate a further decline in 2019. The report shows a decline in German consumers eating meat daily from 34% to 28% in the last years, while younger generations are increasingly becoming vegetarian.

The rates of meat consumption in Germany are among the [highest in the EU](#); nevertheless, German consumers are progressively becoming aware of the environmental, climate and animal welfare issues related to animal farming. As per to the aforementioned report, three in four people believe that meat consumption should be reduced. More than 80% claim their consideration for information on the food product about the animal welfare and environmental conditions under which it was produced, while 40% mention the attention to organic and animal-friendly labels.

b) The call for political action

German politicians have been speaking out in favour of a [“meat tax”](#), which intends to raise the current tax on meat to improve animal welfare and reduce CO2 emissions. At the moment, the tax on meat products is 7%, but two political parties at the *Bundestag* are arguing that it should increase to the standard 19%, with additional revenue spent on improving animal welfare. This proposal has been discussed for almost a year and it is still waiting for approval.

In June 2020, more than [1000 workers at a German slaughterhouse](#) were infected with the coronavirus. In response, the Federal Minister of Labour, Hubertus Heil, decided that, [starting next year](#), the slaughter and processing of meat in the factories should only be done by the company's own staff, and that employment contracts are prohibited. In fact, [the meat industry has long been criticized](#) for its working conditions. Critics blame the widespread collective accommodation of workers in the meat industry and low standards of hygiene in slaughterhouses for the rapid spread of the virus in the industry. The Federal Minister of Agriculture, Julia Klöckner, has also started to campaign for the improvement of the conditions of workers in the meat industry, in what she refers to as a [“livestock realignment”](#).

Additionally, the recently launched [Climate Action Programme for 2030](#), a strategy to ensure that Germany achieves its climate protection goals for 2030, mentions that “the variety and attractiveness

of plant-based (vegetarian / vegan) and CO₂-reduced dishes is to be increased, as is the proportion of products from organic farming, expressly retaining the option of choosing dishes with meat content every working day". Even if this states the need to reduce meat consumption, the whole document only contains one recommendation regarding public catering, which reveals that there is still the need for several shifts regarding the high levels of meat consumption in Germany.

c) Useful references

<https://de.statista.com/statistik/daten/studie/36573/umfrage/pro-kopf-verbrauch-von-fleisch-in-deutschland-seit-2000/#statisticContainer>

https://www.bmel.de/SharedDocs/Downloads/DE/Broschueren/Ernaehrungsreport2019.pdf;jsessionid=EBE5309DBF30C8DC886F4563ECDAF823.internet2851?_blob=publicationFile&v=4~

https://www.bmu.de/fileadmin/Daten_BMU/Download_PDF/Klimaschutz/klimaschutzprogramm_2030_umsetzung_klimaschutzplan.pdf

<https://www.dw.com/en/coronavirus-german-slaughterhouse-outbreak-crosses-1000/a-53883372>

<https://www.euronews.com/2019/02/10/which-european-countries-eat-the-most-meat>

<https://www.tagesschau.de/inland/kabinett-fleischindustrie-arbeitsbedingungen-105.html>

<https://www.zeit.de/wirtschaft/2020-06/julia-kloeckner-bundeslandwirtschaftsministerin-fleischindustrie-spitzentreffen>

3/ SWITZERLAND

In Switzerland, per capita meat consumption is around 50 kg per year, which is significantly lower than in Germany and France. Even though Switzerland is a “farmer country”, meat consumption is declining slightly, especially thanks to vegan associations’ commitment.

a) Political situation

The political situation is difficult, because meat producers are granted more fundings compared to vegetable or fruit producers. Indeed, the Swiss government pays subsidies directly to certain products and, in this regard, the meat sector is protected. There have been a few political initiatives in the last years in Switzerland:

- **Clean water initiative**, which addressed indirectly the meat sector. The initiative aims at reaching more sustainable farmers and thus also less meat production in Swiss farms.
- **Initiative against industrial meat.**

Nevertheless, these initiatives did not have a big success. Citizens gathered signatures for these initiatives, but they were not implemented by the government because of high pressures from farming lobbies.

Swiss-Veg created a survey (**Sondage Vegé**) and it points out that the German part of Switzerland is keener to meatless diets than the French cantons; women are more often adopting vegan diets than men; and the majority of vegan people in Switzerland is between 15 and 34 years old.

b) Existing ‘good-practices’

Vegi-Day campaign by SwissVeg: It has been implemented by local governments in a few cities in Switzerland. The project started in 2011 and was very active until 2014, but in the last few years, it seemed to have fell asleep. However, the association will start to push again on this project from August 2020 on, hiring new staff members.

They also do a campaign, putting huge posters all around Switzerland with images of cute animals that will be killed for meat consumption. Last year, SwissVeg gained a lot of visibility by being published in the most important Swiss journal and they had a huge impact on the public, although it has been very difficult to quantify its real audience.

c) Other relevant initiatives

- The **national initiative "No factory farming in Switzerland** (factory farming initiative)", which was launched on June 12, 2018, wants to put an end to animal breeding. The goals is to protect the environment, animal welfare, and food safety. Numerous organizations and individuals

from a wide variety of areas have already joined the initiators' demands. Together they managed to collect the necessary **100,000 signatures**.

- **Sustainable nutrition:** The **Basel, Bern, Zurich, Lucern cantons** created a guiding principle to promote increased plant nutrition. It shows the effects of animal product consumption on climate, resource and land consumption, health, and animal welfare. The mission statement makes recommendations for reducing the consumption of animal products and increasing the proportion of vegetarian and vegan menus.
 - 1) The canton takes appropriate measures to promote the sale of vegetarian and vegan menus in the catering facilities of public institutions and other administrative bodies.
 - 2) The canton creates suitable incentives for cooks to receive further training in the preparation of vegetarian and vegan dishes and, within the scope of its possibilities, ensures that schoolchildren and home economics teachers are familiar with the preparation of vegetarian and vegan dishes.
 - 3) The canton is expanding the vegetarian and vegan diet in the catering facilities of public institutions and other administrative bodies and is also introducing a daily vegan menu in catering facilities that have more than one menu to choose from.

Range of action: 105 media reports, 3000 signatures.

- **Fundamental rights for primates in Basel:** Animal welfare is hardly taken into account by Swiss legislation: the initiative focuses on researches using primates under painful conditions, sometimes even negating their basic needs - often for studies with highly questionable benefits -. Despite the supervision by ethics committees, the prescribed balancing of interests often turns into a mere formality. The initiative therefore calls for fundamental rights to life and physical and mental integrity for non-human primates to be laid down in the cantonal constitution.

Range of action: 30 media reports.

4/ FRANCE

According to a study by the CREDOC (Research Centre for the Study and Observation of Living Conditions) carried out in 2018, the consumption of meat products has decreased by 12% in 10 years. Despite this fall, "meat remains a culturally important marker of the French diet" moderates Pierre Sans, associate researcher at INRA-Aliss (food and social sciences) in Ivry-sur-Seine.

a) Good practices in France

This decrease can be explained by the access to nutritional information via the Internet and social networks, as well as access to the voice of scientific specialists, which has made it possible to encourage the reduction or even elimination of meat consumption. Numerous French associations such as L214, Vegan France or Vegan Impact, to name only a few, are therefore active in promoting vegetarianism and veganism in order to raise awareness about farming conditions, health and disease impacts, environmental impacts, but also to promote alternative and ecological practices.

One of the flagship initiatives put in place by the French government is the law on agriculture and food (Egalim) since 1 November 2019, which imposes the obligation to offer one vegetarian meal per week. Although this law is very recent and imposes the preparation and training of canteen staff to offer alternative meals, it is a real opportunity whose impact will be visible in the years to come. The Vegetarian Association of France offers training courses to support those involved in collective catering in the context of the introduction of plant-based food in canteens.

b) What has been successful?

As mentioned above, changing lifestyles, health concerns, environmental awareness, animal welfare issues and rising selling prices are all factors that may explain the decline in consumption of meat products in France. These choices might also be guided by health issues, after the many food scandals, such as mad cow disease, horse lasagne or after the WHO's warning in October 2015 on the carcinogenic effects of excessive meat consumption.

34% of French people say they are flexitarian, meaning that they reduce their consumption of meat products, giving priority to quality rather than quantity, without giving it up completely, while only 3% to 5% are said vegetarians. *"Although the practice of totally eliminating meat products is still not widespread in the population, the vegetarian trend is influencing beyond its hard core and has implications on the meat consumption of the average individual or on animal husbandry in general,"* explains Grazyna Marcinkowska, research officer at FranceAgriMer.

3) Political opportunities

One of the main political opportunities to reduce meat consumption in France is to enforce laws to ensure that animal rights are respected and that they are controlled. Indeed, many slaughterhouses do not respect sanitary conditions and recently, the association L214 denounced the very poor

conditions of lamb breeding [in the Roquefort industry](#). The fact that associations are working with members of parliament to implement laws and denounce these practices helps to raise awareness among citizens to consume less meat. Nevertheless, it is difficult for some parties to speak out publicly for fear of losing part of their electorate.

But this can contribute to real political opportunities for the future. One of the future initiatives is to establish an ISO standard to provide definitions and criteria specific for vegetarian, vegan and vegan foods. Finally, as laws often lag behind the market and the minds of citizens, this does not stop many individual initiatives to reduce meat consumption in France.

5/ OTHER INTERESTING LEADS

a) Belgium – Priority interventions & interesting meat reduction practices

- **Priority interventions in national policy:** the tax on live-stock farming, school and education (in particular encouraging students via education to change food habits and also supplying school dinners with less meat products), health and environment (for policymakers to recognise both environmental and health impacts of eating and producing meat products), and for the CAP to align with the values of reducing live-stock production and reducing the consumption of meat.
- **Practices carried out by [Vegetik](#):** Vegetik created a vision and mission, that entails 4 topics: environmental impact, health and nutrition, animal suffering, and philosophy and geopolitics. This is a holistic view of why people should cut down meat and people can find a reason depending on which resonates with them most. Eg. The philosophy and geopolitics topic tries to link together feminism and veganism. Using a renowned philosophy like feminism, this establishes veganism as philosophy. Also using social media and their website to channel these campaigns and practices.
 - **The best means to carry out the practices:** TV interviews and conferences
 - **How to know whether the practices are successful:** engagement with political figures, engagement on social media in terms of messages, followers social and political change, special interest from university figures

b) Finland – Interesting meat reduction practices

- **Finnish meat reduction practice “Meatless October”** in 2013 in Finland. The campaign’s purpose was to encourage meat-eating consumers to follow a vegetarian diet for one month to tackle the sustainability issues of high meat consumption and production.
 - **How?** It was promoted on social medias such as Facebook and Twitter. A blog was created where people could share vegan and vegetarian recipes. The disadvantages of this: it can be “slactivism” a term that refers to engaging in social media not truly reflecting real life activism.
 - **How successful?** The outcome could have been swayed by a desire to try out the diet as oppose to the acts being evoked by the campaign that told of the environmental and public health frame, there is questions as to whether a one-month long campaign has lasting effects on sustainability. But it did spark a motivation amongst consumers by introducing vegetarian diets in small doses. Food consumption appears to be strongly embedded into

socio-cultural and material practices, and so to constantly take an individualistic approach to campaigning for reducing meat consumption makes the view of the practice one sided. They conclude that the shift calls for new discussion and practical campaigning that promotes structural changes.

c) Other campaigns

Less Is More (reducing meat campaign by Greenpeace International): the premise is “Eat less meat, more plants, tell your friends” – encouraging an individualistic approach to spreading awareness about the benefits of reducing meat consumption,