# **A Plant Based Students’ Union**

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## Background:

1. In 2019, our university was the first in the UK to declare a climate emergency[[1]](#footnote-1). In 2020, we cut all investments in fossil fuels. Divesting from animal agriculture is the next logical step. It’s responsible for at least 18% of global emissions[[2]](#footnote-2) and limiting global warming to 1.5°C will require drastic carbon dioxide removal (CDR) from the atmosphere. The most effective route for this in the UK is the restoration of our native forests[[3]](#footnote-3).
2. Should we transition to plant-based farming, the UK could free up 51% of its land for rewilding and carbon drawdown[[4]](#footnote-4). As such, the University of Stirling has recently passed an SU motion to go 100% plant-based by 2025 in response to the climate crisis[[5]](#footnote-5).
3. A similar transition at Bristol is something our student union could be really proud of. Demonstrating this is our multiple endorsements from both vegan and non-vegan groups conscious of the climate emergency and enthusiastic to act. Plant Based Treaty, a national grassroots campaign working with councils to become more sustainable, have stated their support for our motion: ‘*Plant Based Treaty is fully supportive of the student climate leaders who understand the alignment of climate science and ethics in their bold demands for a fully plant-based university.’*

## Purpose:

1. Undeniably, the subsidy schemes in the UK favour animal products, as does the private/fast food sector. This is why meat and dairy-based partnerships are much more convenient and popular.
2. However, universities educate the leaders of our future and are the sites where much of our research and understanding of the climate crisis emerges. Some of the most compelling research on agriculture and climate comes from universities, including Oxford[[6]](#footnote-6) and Harvard[[7]](#footnote-7). The literature is showing that, regardless of production method, plant-based agriculture is inherently less resource-intensive than animal agriculture. This highlights the importance of institutional divestment in mitigating climate disaster.
3. Plant-based catering is a necessary step in the development of a more sustainable food system. It can be achieved without detriment to any particular persons and can be nutritionally sound and inclusive of all faiths and religions.
4. The Student’s Union is responsible for setting an example. Its principles and actions can inspire students to think critically and act more in alignment with their values on environmental justice. This motion is an opportunity to show students that, in an era of climate anxiety, young people *can* actively help to create a more sustainable future for themselves and their community.

## Actions:

1. For the SU to have 100% of their partnerships plant-based by 2025:
   1. All union events (e.g., formals, fairs, and events) and giveaways to be 50% plant-based by next academic year and 100% plant-based by 2025.
2. For the SU to endorse the Plant Based Universities Campaign to support student campaigning, and lobby internally, for university-wide, 100% plant-based, and affordable food at UoB:  
   1. The SU to create sustainability accreditations/grants for societies that commit to permanently offering 100% plant-based food at their events.
   2. Have incentives and discounts for plant based companies to partner with the union and the university.
   3. The SU to lobby for the on-campus vending machines to go plant based.

1. [Bristol becomes first UK university to declare climate emergency - Bristol Live (bristolpost.co.uk)](https://www.bristolpost.co.uk/news/bristol-news/bristol-becomes-first-uk-university-2769842) [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. https://www.fao.org/3/a0701e/a0701e.pdf [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. [https://animal.law.harvard.edu/wp-content/uploads/Eating-Away-at-Climate-Change-with-Negative-Emissions––Harwatt-Hayek.pdf](https://animal.law.harvard.edu/wp-content/uploads/Eating-Away-at-Climate-Change-with-Negative-Emissions%E2%80%93%E2%80%93Harwatt-Hayek.pdf) [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. [Eating-Away-at-Climate-Change-with-Negative-Emissions––Harwatt-Hayek.pdf (harvard.edu)](https://animal.law.harvard.edu/wp-content/uploads/Eating-Away-at-Climate-Change-with-Negative-Emissions%E2%80%93%E2%80%93Harwatt-Hayek.pdf?fbclid=IwAR0qbRS0IuKp4JG0AzXXb5P73osdgnYJ3VBJir88YBpMlajmJg0riNVJFMg) [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. [University of Stirling To Go 100% Plant-Based In UK First (plantbasednews.org)](https://plantbasednews.org/news/environment/university-stirling-vegan-scotland-uk-first/) [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. [New estimates of the environmental cost of food | University of Oxford](https://www.ox.ac.uk/news/2018-06-01-new-estimates-environmental-cost-food) [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. [Eating-Away-at-Climate-Change-with-Negative-Emissions––Harwatt-Hayek.pdf (harvard.edu)](https://animal.law.harvard.edu/wp-content/uploads/Eating-Away-at-Climate-Change-with-Negative-Emissions%E2%80%93%E2%80%93Harwatt-Hayek.pdf?fbclid=IwAR0qbRS0IuKp4JG0AzXXb5P73osdgnYJ3VBJir88YBpMlajmJg0riNVJFMg) [↑](#footnote-ref-7)