

Motion Name: Transition to a 100% just and sustainable plant-based student union

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Background:

1. In 2019, our university was the first in the UK to declare a climate emergency³. 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 emissions⁴ 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 forests².
2. Should we transition to plant-based farming, the UK could free up 51% of its land for rewilding and carbon drawdown². As such, 7 UK Universities have recently passed a motion to transition to plant-based catering in response to the climate crisis¹.
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*'⁶.

Purpose :

1. Undeniably, the subsidy schemes in the UK favour animal products, as does the private/fast food sector. This has made plant-based foods less accessible in the past.
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 Oxford¹ and Harvard². 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 and just world for all.

Actions:

1. For the Students' Union to officially endorse the Plant Based Universities Campaign, and for SU Officers to lobby internally for university-wide affordable, fully plant-based food at UoB.
2. For the Students' Union to aim for 100% plant-based catering, inclusive of all students and staff on campus. Plant-based health professionals can provide advice and oversee any menu changes. This will first manifest through the improvement and expansion of plant-based options at union-run and union-catered events, with the target of 70% plant-based by the 2025-26 academic year and 100% plant based by the 2026-27 academic year.
3. For the Students' Union to explore creating a sustainability accreditation and grant by 2025 for student groups that commit to offering 100% plant-based food at their events.
4. For the Students' Union to lobby for the on-campus vending machines to go 70% plant-based by 2025 and 100% plant-based by 2027.

¹ [New estimates of the environmental cost of food | University of Oxford](#)

² [Eating-Away-at-Climate-Change-with-Negative-Emissions--Harwatt-Hayek.pdf \(harvard.edu\)](#)

³ [Bristol becomes first UK university to declare climate emergency - Bristol Live \(bristolpost.co.uk\)](#)

⁴ <https://www.fao.org/3/a0701e/a0701e.pdf>

⁵ <https://www.plantbaseduniversities.org/about-4> and [University of Stirling To Go 100% Plant-Based In UK First \(plantbasednews.org\)](#)

⁶ <https://plantbasedtreaty.org>