



## Plant Based Universities

*As a result of a student petition receiving 157 signatures, and debate at Union Assembly, LUSU support for the aims of the petition and campaign was approved by Union Assembly on 14<sup>th</sup> May 2024. This is the contents of the petition:*

### Who are we?

Plant-Based Universities (PBU) is a student-led campaign calling on universities to transition in a just and sustainable way to 100% plant-based catering. Worldwide, there are over 80 active campaigns. Students at eight UK universities – including the University of Cambridge and University College London – have voted for fully plant-based catering in landmark student union votes and referendums, recognising that we cannot reach climate targets without institutional shifts like these.

Lancaster University can become the first northern university to demonstrate tangible change, helping to ensure that its students have a future to graduate into.

We are proposing a gradual transition to a fully plant-based catering system by 2027, recognizing that such a change will need time and effort to implement. Some departments have already made the switch to plant-based or vegetarian catering on campus.

Although student-led, this campaign has been endorsed by notable LU academics who have signed the PBU open letter:

- Professor Crispin Halsall (Faculty Director of Natural Sciences, Lancaster Environment Centre)
- Professor Rebecca Willis (Professor in Energy and Climate Governance, Lancaster Environment Centre)
- Distinguished Professor Peter Atkinson (Executive Dean of the Faculty of Science and Technology)
- Dr Mike Roberts (Senior lecturer in Conservation and Ecology, Lancaster Environment Centre)
- Professor Kirk Semple (Professor of Environmental Microbiology, Lancaster Environment Centre)

This campaign is not proposing a ban on animal-derived foods on campus. No independent outlets will be affected, and students will still be able to bring their own food.

### Why is this important?

✗ Animal agriculture is responsible for 14.5% of greenhouse gas emissions [1]. Even if fossil fuel usage is eliminated, it would not be enough to prevent catastrophic global warming (as published in Nature [2]).

But we can make a huge difference by shifting to plant-centric catering...

✓ A plant-based food system would free up land area the size of Europe, the United States, Australia, and China all put together [1].

✓ Reforestation of this land can sequester between 9-16 years worth of fossil fuel emissions, whilst still providing enough protein to feed the planet [3]!

Animal agriculture is the leading cause of habitat destruction and biodiversity loss worldwide [4]. With a transition to more plant-based farming, we could restore our planet to its natural state and give us more much more time to deal with the climate crisis [3]. More local to the UK, this reforestation can pull back our climate targets by 9 years, and allow us to be self-sufficient with the food we produce, meaning no more food imports [5].

### **How will it benefit you?**

Let's be honest, it is difficult making individual change and worrying about climate change and our future can feel like a huge responsibility. Institutional change can mitigate the burden on individuals by offering high-quality plant-based food at university.

We will ensure that catering on offer is:

- ✓ Healthy
- ✓ Delicious
- ✓ Sustainable
- ✓ Affordable
- ✓ Inclusive (e.g. plant-based food is almost always Halal and Kosher, and 65% of the population are lactose-intolerant [6]!)

### **Why Lancaster?**

Lancaster University stands out as a beacon of progressive values and environmental responsibility. Our proposal finds resonance with Lancaster's commitment to sustainability. With Lancaster's EcoHub, Green Lancaster and other food-sustainable initiatives, this is a logical next step.

By aligning with Lancaster's ethos, we leverage the university's rich tradition of forward-thinking initiatives. As a university that embraces innovation, diversity, and sustainability, Lancaster is unusually well positioned to further push this much-needed change. Together, we can showcase Lancaster's dedication to creating a more sustainable future.

### **What we're asking for**

We are proposing a gradual shift. This phased approach will begin with a transition to 50% plant-based catering by 2025, with an increase to 100% by 2027. This approach is being implemented at the University of Stirling, the first university to pass a motion committing students' union catering outlets to 100% plant-based catering.

As this campaign is student-led, we want the transition to align with what students want. We will appoint a dedicated student representative who will work collaboratively with the university and catering team, ensuring that students are offered tasty and affordable plant-based food options. The PBU campaign is further supported by the Plant-Based Health Professionals, founded and directed by Dr Shireen Kassam, a Consultant Haematologist and Honorary Senior Lecturer at King's College Hospital.

In the words of LU's Professor Willis (Energy and Climate Governance),

*“Reducing our consumption of meat and dairy products is an essential part of the journey to net zero. Showcasing plant-based food at universities is a brilliant way of introducing people to healthy, planet-friendly dietary options.”*

#### References

[1] <https://www.science.org/doi/10.1126/science.aaq0216>

[2] <https://www.science.org/doi/10.1126/science.aba7357>

[3] <https://www.nature.com/articles/s41893-020-00603-4>

[4] <https://www.worldwildlife.org/magazine/issues/summer-2018/articles/what-are-the-biggest-drivers-of-tropical-deforestation>

[5] <https://animal.law.harvard.edu/wp-content/uploads/Eating-Away-at-Climate-Change-with-Negative-Emissions%E2%80%93Harwatt-Hayek.pdf>

[6] <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK532285/>