

## **Motion for SRC to support the Student Association’s development of plant-based catering**

**Owner:** Naomi Smith, Environment Officer

**In effect from:** Immediately

**Review date:** September 2025

### **This SRC notes:**

1. The Students’ Association operates three primary catering outlets: Rector’s Cafe, Old Union Coffee Shop, and Main Bar.
2. The PBU motion proposes an increase in plant-based catering as demonstrated in the accompanying practical plan.
  - a. “Plant-based” refers to foods containing no animal-derived ingredients.
3. Studies have demonstrated that centering plant-based meals decreases food’s greenhouse gas emissions by an average 40% and water footprint by 24%.<sup>1</sup> As per the Union Strategy under the Sustainability Pillar, an adoption of plant-based food systems would result in a reduction of overall greenhouse gas emissions.<sup>2</sup>
4. Plant-Based Universities is a global, student-led movement with over 80 active campaigns, and has achieved landmark votes at 13 UK universities, including at Cambridge and UCL, to maximise sustainable food options.
5. Over 600 St Andrews students have signed our petition, endorsing this motion.
6. Plant-based food can be financially beneficial for universities presenting an opportunity for cost savings. Plant-based meals cost on average 30% less than meat-based meals, and 21% less than vegetarian meals.<sup>3</sup>

### **This SRC believes:**

1. That it is paramount to make plant-based food more accessible to and for those whose intolerances, allergies, and disabilities are overlooked by existing, predominantly animal-based foodways. There are access barriers to students, faculty, and staff with sensitivities and allergies to many of the products around town.
2. That the various needs of current and future students across the University campuses will be advantaged by gradually transitioning to spotlight more foods, textures, and flavours, all with a significantly smaller ecological footprint.

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<sup>1</sup> Meier, Johanna and Andor, Mark A, and Doebbe, Friederike and Haddaway, Neal and Reisch, Lucia A. “Can Green Defaults Reduce Meat Consumption?” (August 11, 2021). *Food Policy*, 110, 102298, Available at SSRN: <https://ssrn.com/abstract=3903160> or <http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3903160>

<sup>2</sup> [www.yourunion.net/pageassets/about/policies/Strategic-Plan-23-27.pdf](http://www.yourunion.net/pageassets/about/policies/Strategic-Plan-23-27.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> [bryantresearch.co.uk/insight-items/climate-cost-university-catering/](http://bryantresearch.co.uk/insight-items/climate-cost-university-catering/)

**This SRC resolves:**

1. To pass this motion on a philosophical basis so that it may be taken at a future date to the Board of Directors who will map out and implement the logistics.
2. To consider the recommendation modelled in the document accompanying this motion.
3. To publicly endorse the PBU St Andrews campaign, and support students campaigning for the broader University to become more ambitious with their catering strategy.
4. To open up discussions with the DSN and other important stakeholders on how we can work together to create the most equitable and sustainable catering model possible within the University.

**Proposed By:** The Plant-Based University Campaign Student Team

**Seconded by:**

Catriona Martin, Director of Student Development and Activities

Nathaniel Rice, Widening Access and Participation Officer

Jack Kennedy, LGBTQ+ Officer

## **Appendix A - Implications to the Broader UK and Globally**

### **National**

1. In 2019, Fife Council declared a Climate Emergency, committing to the target of net-zero by 2045.<sup>4</sup>
2. The UK has imported over 3.8 million metric tons of animal feed from deforestation-linked countries like Brazil & Argentina in 5 years<sup>5</sup>.
3. Scotland has more arable land than the Netherlands, yet the Dutch feed the whole of Europe with their veggies. In the last 150 years, we've lost 30% of arable land & increased grazeland by over 200%.<sup>6</sup>
4. In the UK this transition could relieve 51% of current agricultural land for rewilding and carbon drawdown, which, if reforested, could make the UK carbon negative with no changes to fossil fuel consumption.<sup>7</sup>
5. Scotland ranks in the lowest 15% of countries regarding biodiversity intactness and NatureScot cites human activities such as fisheries, deforestation and agriculture as some of the drivers causing this loss of biodiversity (see Appendix A)<sup>8</sup>

### **Global**

1. The animal industry demonstrates significant resource inefficiency, producing only 18% of global calories, yet uses 83% of global farmland.<sup>9</sup>
2. Scientific evidence indicates that eliminating fossil fuel usage alone would not be enough to meet the Paris Agreement's target of limiting global temperature rise to 1.5 Celsius above pre-industrial levels, and thus prevent catastrophic global warming.<sup>10</sup>
3. Animal agriculture is responsible for at least 14.5% of greenhouse gas emissions.<sup>11</sup>
4. Transitioning to a plant-based food system would unburden an area of land equivalent to the size of Europe, the United States, Australia, and China *combined*.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> [www.fife.gov.uk/\\_\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0020/560072/Climate-strategy-2024-final.pdf](http://www.fife.gov.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0020/560072/Climate-strategy-2024-final.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> [plantbasedfife.org/resources/climate/](http://plantbasedfife.org/resources/climate/)

<sup>6</sup> [data.worldbank.org/indicator/AG.LND.ARBL.HA?locations=NL-GB](http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/AG.LND.ARBL.HA?locations=NL-GB)

<sup>7</sup> (Harwatt and Hayak, 2019)

<sup>8</sup> [www.nature.scot/doc/understanding-indirect-drivers-biodiversity-loss-scotland-summary](http://www.nature.scot/doc/understanding-indirect-drivers-biodiversity-loss-scotland-summary)

<sup>9</sup> (Poore and Nemecek, 2018)

<sup>10</sup> (Clark et al., 2020)

<sup>11</sup> (FAO, 2017)

<sup>12</sup> (Poore and Nemecek, 2018)