

# Sustainable Dining Evolution



**February 26, 2024 (Final)**

The EDSP ECO Foundation is a non-profit research and project agency that creates an environment to support organizations worldwide that are responsible for actions to protect the planet, end poverty or increase well-being. We provide support in the form of building and managing websites, conducting extensive research, setting up and offering digital campaigns, connecting stakeholders, giving public speeches and interviews, and developing and rolling out environmental and climate-friendly solutions. This research report was created on a voluntary basis, without any financial or other benefits, and is solely intended to support the objectives of the Climate Coalition.

## Colophon

This report delves into the advantages and obstacles of introducing a plant-based menu at [COMPANY]'s workplace restaurants, aiming to encourage sustainable dietary choices for employees and examining strategies to overcome implementation challenges. This report presents a strategic execution of an important solution of our Climate Plan, making a transition from animal protein to plant-based protein. The Dutch Climate Coalition stands as a dynamic manifestation of our foundation, EDSP ECO, encompassing the collective efforts of over a hundred organizations united under its umbrella, working collaboratively towards the goals set forth in our Climate Plan. The [COMPANY] requested this report, and we willingly provided it without seeking any reimbursement.



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# Summary

This report explores the benefits and potential challenges of veganizing the workplace restaurants at [COMPANY]. By transitioning to a plant-based menu, [COMPANY] can promote sustainable dietary choices among [COMPANY]'s employees, fostering a positive impact on the environment, public health, and animal welfare.

Veganizing the workplace restaurants can have significant environmental, health and ethical benefits as well as financial benefits. By transitioning to a plant-based menu, [COMPANY] can promote sustainable dietary choices among its employees, fostering a positive impact on the environment, public health, and animal welfare, while also raising awareness of the social influence and imitation of plant-based diets, and reducing the supply chain impact of animal agriculture.

Transitioning to vegan workplace restaurants can be challenging due to employee acceptance, nutritional balance, supplier and sourcing challenges, cost considerations, menu development and testing, ingredient sourcing, training and education, marketing and communication, kitchen equipment and infrastructure, supply chain adjustments, specialized staffing, waste management, employee education and engagement, legal and regulatory compliance, diverse preferences, monitoring and feedback, and potential resistance.

Various strategies are available to implement vegan workplace restaurants. These strategies include employee acceptance, menu innovation, collaborations with sustainable brands, promoting health initiatives, chef collaborations and training, labeling and information, incentives and discounts, and cultural and themed events. Big Dutch catering companies, Albron, Hutten and Sodexo, are already actively involved in the transition from animal protein to plant-based protein and will be happy to cooperate.

The transition period can be guided by specialized organizations such as Proveg, Smaackmakers and Vegetariërsbond. The Vegetariërsbond has also shown interest in designing the world's first company label or certification to promote the sustainable transition they are making in the workplace restaurants. [COMPANY] has the potential to become the first non-hospitality company with this new certification or label that has yet to be developed.

There are numerous examples of other companies and organizations making their food choices more sustainable although in the Netherlands there aren't any non-hospitality companies taking big steps towards the transition to plant-based protein and [COMPANY] has the unique opportunity to emerge as a pioneering industry leader with sustainable vegan workplace restaurants, as few other companies are daring to do the same.

There are three potential paths for [COMPANY]: 1. Going completely vegan. 2. Making vegan the norm. 3. Implementing a gradual transition. There is a lot to be said for a gradual transition; it is the easier way to achieve employee acceptance and Hutten, Albron and Smaackmakers all prefer this route as they aim to reduce the percentage of animal products used. The report has been reviewed by the Vegetariërsbond, V-Label and several experts in the field of nutrition. Half of our reviewers recommend to choose the path of gradual transition because, among other reasons, they believe employees would find this easier to accept. However, The Lancet Commission, the UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres and the Dutch Climate Coalition emphasize that the climate crisis is too grave to take gradual steps. The time to take things slow has passed. Furthermore, the productions of all animal products come with an abominable treatment and killing of billions of animals per day. Therefore, we recommend going completely vegan.

# Introduction

In recent years, the world has witnessed an increasing awareness of the urgent need to address the environmental challenges posed by climate change. As a market leading company, [COMPANY] recognizes its responsibility to actively contribute to sustainability and tackle climate issues. Adopting a plant-based or vegan approach in the workplace restaurants presents a promising opportunity to reduce [COMPANY]'s ecological footprint, enhance employee well-being, and align the organization with ethical and environmentally conscious practices.



The objective of this report is to explore the benefits and potential challenges of veganizing the workplace restaurants at [COMPANY]. By transitioning to a plant-based menu, [COMPANY] can promote sustainable dietary choices among [COMPANY]'s employees, fostering a positive impact on the environment, public health, and animal welfare. This report will outline various strategies to implement vegan-friendly workplace restaurants while addressing potential hurdles that may arise during the process.

## Definitions

**Vegan diet:** a diet that excludes all animal products and by-products. In a vegan diet, individuals abstain from consuming meat, poultry, fish, seafood, eggs, dairy products, and any other ingredients or foods derived from animals. This includes avoiding honey, gelatin, and certain additives that may be of animal origin.

**Plant-based diet:** a diet that primarily emphasizes the consumption of foods derived from plants, such as fruits, vegetables, whole grains, legumes, nuts, and seeds. In a plant-based diet, the focus is on avoiding or minimizing the intake of animal products, including meat, dairy, eggs, and other animal-derived ingredients.

We will use the term vegan throughout this report because the most benefits can be achieved by choosing a vegan diet over a plant-based diet. However, most of our arguments and recommendations also apply to plant-based diets. We shall also explore the different reasons to choose a vegan or a plant-based diet. By embarking on this journey to veganize the workplace restaurants, [COMPANY] has the opportunity to inspire change within the organization and beyond.

If you have any questions, comments, or advice, we would appreciate it if you would contact us.



*Vegan Guinness Stew*

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# The benefits of veganizing Workplace Restaurants

## Environmental Impact

The current global food system takes up a large portion of global greenhouse gas emissions. The IPCC calculated it's share to be 21-37%.<sup>1</sup>

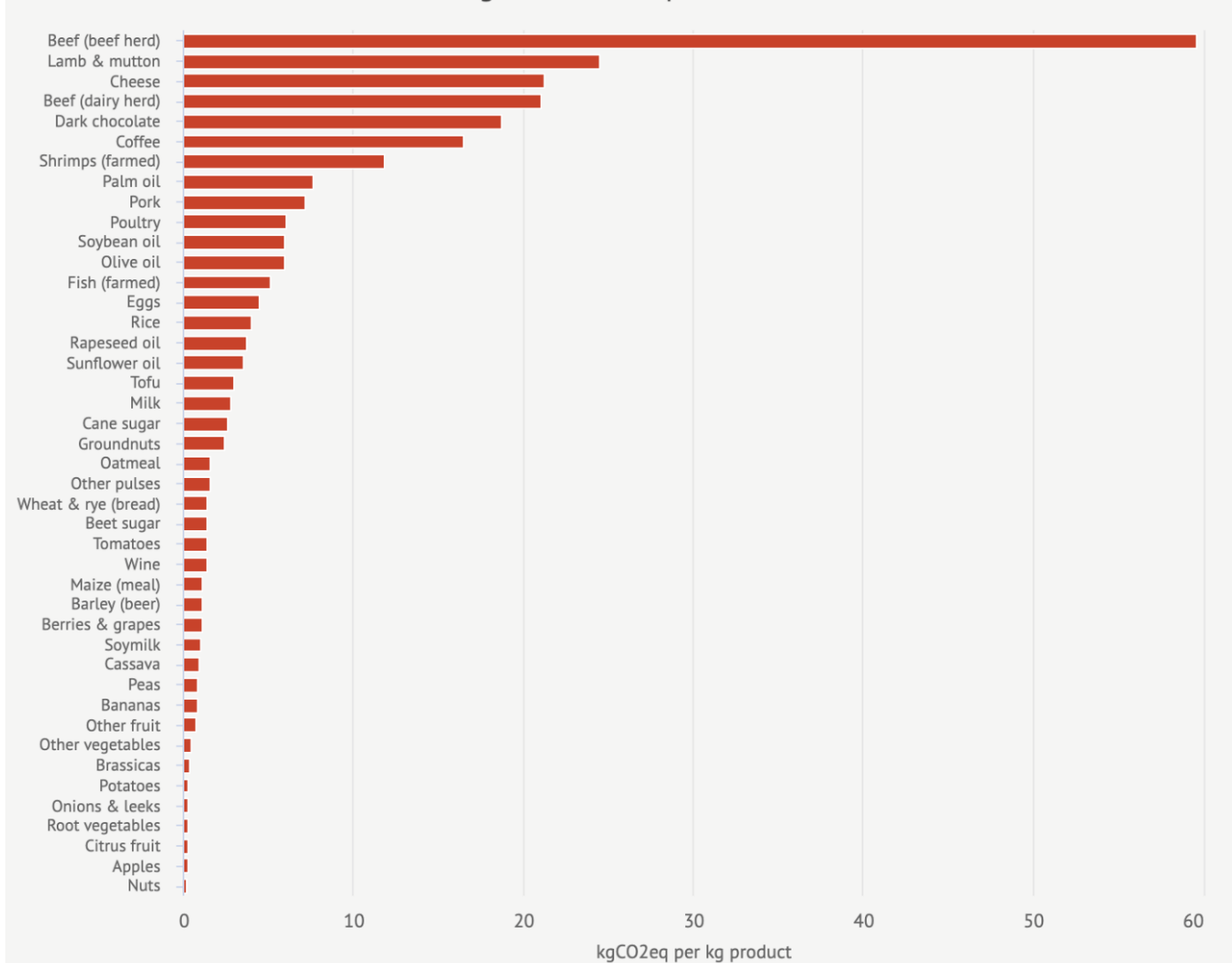
Food system component	Emissions (Gt CO <sub>2</sub> eq yr <sup>-1</sup> )	Share in mean total emissions (%)
Agriculture	6.2 ± 1.4 <sup>a,b</sup>	10–14%
Land use	4.9 ± 2.5 <sup>a</sup>	5–14%
Beyond farm gate	2.6 <sup>c</sup> – 5.2 <sup>d</sup>	5–10% <sup>e</sup>
Food system (total)	10.8 – 19.1	21–37%

*GHG emissions (GtCO<sub>2</sub>-eq yr<sup>-1</sup>) from the food system and their contribution (%) to total anthropogenic emissions. Mean of 2007–2016 period.*<sup>2</sup>

Forests are being cleared for agriculture, with our food production occupying 50% of the habitable surface of our planet and even accounting for 70% of the total demand for freshwater. Additionally, (artificial) fertilizers and chemical pesticides pollute our soil, air, and water. Meat and animal products tend to have a much larger carbon footprint than plant-based products. Global greenhouse gas emissions from animal-based foods are twice those of plant-based foods. The use of cows, pigs and other animals for food, as well as livestock feed, is responsible for 57% of all food production emissions, with 29% coming from the cultivation of plant-based foods. The rest comes from other uses of land, such as for cotton or rubber. Beef alone accounts for a quarter of emissions produced by raising and growing food.<sup>3,4</sup>

Particularly the animal products require a significant amount of land: approximately 80% of all agricultural land is used for the production of meat, dairy, and eggs. According to the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations, meat and dairy products are responsible for about 14.5% of global greenhouse gas emissions. Meat alone accounts for 40% of the average Dutch person's food-related climate impact. Meat has such a large climate impact because producing 1 kilogram of meat requires an average of 5 kilograms of plant-based feed. It is the largest user of freshwater and the leading cause of biodiversity loss.<sup>5</sup>

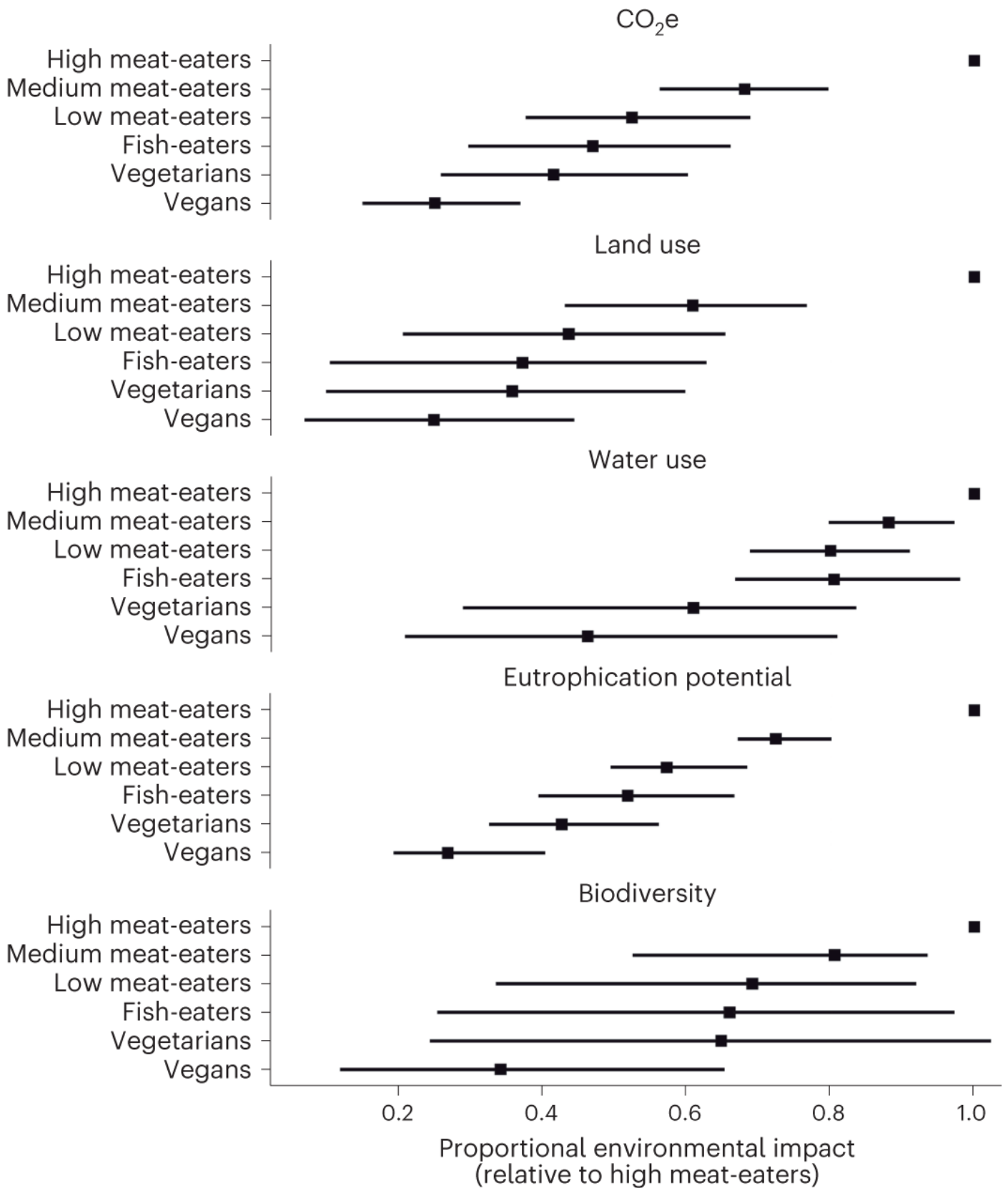
## Animal-based foods tend to have a larger carbon footprint



*Greenhouse gas emissions per kilogram for different food groups. Adapted from Dr Hannah Ritchie/Our World in Data (2020)  
Data source: Poore & Nemecek (2018) <sup>6</sup>*

High meat eaters (100 g or more total meat consumed per day), medium meat-eaters (50 and 100 grams of meat per day) and low meat-eaters (less than 50 grams of meat per day) have a significantly higher impact on the environment. They cause more greenhouse gas emissions, use up more land and more water. Meat eaters cause more eutrophication. Harmful algal blooms, dead zones, and fish kills are the results of a process called eutrophication — which occurs when the environment becomes enriched with nutrients, increasing the amount of plant and algae growth to estuaries and coastal waters. As a result, the animal-based diet poses a serious threat on biodiversity.<sup>7</sup>





*Relative environmental footprint from GWP100, land use, water use, eutrophication potential and biodiversity impact of diet groups in comparison to high meat-eaters (>100 g d<sup>-1</sup>)<sup>8</sup>*

## Health Benefits

Eating meat, dairy, and eggs does not only harm animals and the environment, but it can also have a negative impact on our health. Eating processed meat and red meat (meat from mammals) increases our chances of developing cancer.<sup>9</sup> Many vegan foods are rich in plant-based protein, so with conscious choices animal-derived protein can be replaced. Given how healthy plant-based foods can be, it is no wonder that more and more world-class athletes and other famous names are opting to eat vegan. Check out some of the health benefits below:

### Vegan foods are rich in the nutrients your body needs

You can get many healthy nutrients from a healthy balanced vegan diet that is rich in wholefoods including fruits, vegetables, pulses, grains, nuts, and seeds.<sup>10</sup> People who eat vegan tend to make healthier food choices because they become aware of the nutrients they need to replace animal protein and choose foods like nuts, seeds, wholegrains, beans, fruits, vegetables and vegetable oils and generally they eat less heavily processed foods. People who eat vegetarian and vegan also tend to make healthier life choices. They smoke less, weigh less and exercise more.<sup>11</sup>

### Vegan diets help reduce our risk of suffering from cancer and other diseases

Vegetarian diets are associated with beneficial effects on the blood lipid profile and a reduced risk of negative health outcomes, including obesity, diabetes, heart disease, and cancer.<sup>12,13,14</sup> A healthy vegan diet, termed a whole food plant-based diet, is a great way to eat. This type of diet is able to address the root cause of chronic disease as it is high in antioxidants and phytonutrients that act to counteract inflammation, the main driver of chronic disease. The fiber in plants feed our healthy gut bacteria, which are crucial for promoting health, and the low-fat content maintains favorable blood lipid levels, preventing fat from depositing in organs where it leads to malfunction.<sup>15</sup> The International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC), part of the World Health Organization, has classified processed meats as Carcinogenic group 1 (causes cancer). Other products in group 1 are tobacco smoke, asbestos, and alcoholic beverages. Red meats, which are all meats from mammals, are placed in group 2 (probably causes cancer).<sup>16</sup>

### Plant-based diets can reverse chronic disease

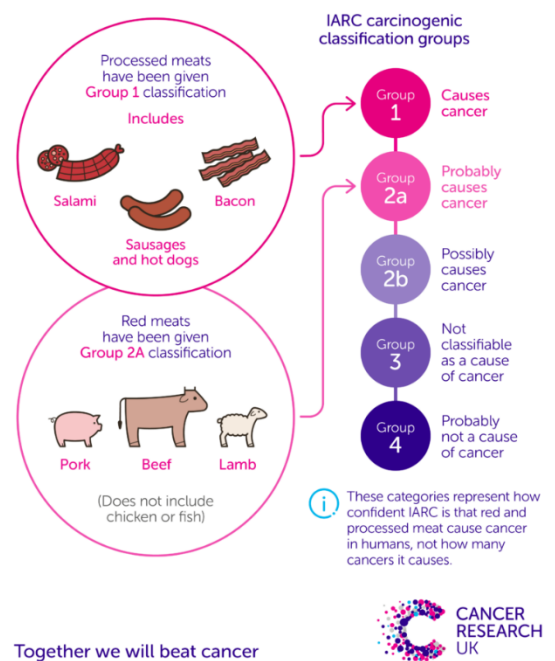
A low-fat whole food plant-based diet is the only diet that has been shown to arrest and reverse atherosclerotic plaques in the heart arteries, responsible for causing heart attacks.<sup>17,18,19</sup> This way of eating can also reverse diabetes<sup>20</sup>, fatty liver disease<sup>21</sup> and early stages of prostate cancer<sup>22</sup>. The more plant-based the diet after a diagnosis of breast<sup>23</sup> and colon cancer<sup>24</sup>, the better the chance of remission and survival.

### Plant-based diets recommended by leading health organizations

Dietetic associations around the world have confirmed that a plant-based diet (vegan/vegetarian) is nutritionally optimal for all stages of human life. International health organizations also recommend plant-based diets for disease prevention, including the American College of Cardiology<sup>25</sup> and the World Cancer Research Fund<sup>26</sup>.

The Caring Doctors are calling on all institutional kitchens such as hospitals and other healthcare facilities, universities, school communities and municipalities to switch to a plant-based menu as the standard as soon as possible.

## Meat and cancer: How strong is the evidence?



They base their call on reports from the IPCC<sup>27</sup> and the renowned EAT Lancet Report: The Lancet Commission concludes that dietary changes from current diets toward healthy diets are likely to result in major health benefits. This includes pre-venting approximately 11 million deaths per year, which represent between 19% to 24% of total deaths among adults. According to the Lancet Commission, the extensive data highlighting the prevention of deaths and the profound impact of the environment underscores the urgency for immediate action.<sup>28</sup>



### Vegan food can boost your mood

It is a given that following a compassionate lifestyle that avoids harming animals will give you a clearer conscience, and a survey of 11,537 people shows that vegans may be happier than meat-eaters<sup>29</sup>.

### Eating vegan can help you achieve a healthy body weight

Vegan foods tend to be lower in calories than animal-derived ones, making it easier to achieve a healthy body weight without actively focusing on cutting calories. Many vegan foods contain significantly less saturated fat than animal “products” do, and many studies have shown that vegans tend to have lower body mass indexes than non-vegans.<sup>30</sup>

### Good for your skin

When it comes to skin issues, one of the worst culprits is dairy – multiple studies have shown that dairy consumption exacerbates acne in both men and women.<sup>31</sup> Aside from ditching dairy, vegans typically eat more nuts, seeds, fruit and vegetables, which are good for healthy skin.<sup>32</sup>

### Eating vegan can reduce the pain of arthritis

Studies have shown that a diet high in healthy vegan foods can help reduce the symptoms of arthritis, since consuming animal-derived foods is linked to pain-causing inflammation.<sup>33</sup> Eating probiotic plant-based foods such as fermented vegetables and non-dairy yogurts with live cultures can boost the good bacteria in the large intestine, also helping to boost nutrient absorption and reduce inflammation.<sup>34</sup>

### Well-being and productivity

Supporting employees with creating a healthy life style can improve personal well-being and productivity in the work place. Healthy employees are less likely to call in sick or come to work sick. The healthy life style of an employee can influence their family positively. When the family adopts a healthy life style the employee will also be absent less to take care of sick family members.<sup>35</sup>

## Social benefits

Vegan work-place restaurants play a crucial role in promoting diversity and inclusion at [COMPANY]. Diversity, defined as the unique perspectives, experiences, and characteristics that each employee brings, is a fundamental aspect of their culture. Inclusion is about creating an environment where everyone feels safe to be themselves, is treated fairly and respectfully, and has equal access to opportunities.

Vegan menus support these values by offering an inclusive approach to dining, contributing to a more inclusive and respectful environment for all employees. By embracing plant-based options, [COMPANY] can demonstrate its commitment to creating an inclusive workplace where employees can thrive and reach their full potential. These groups can consist of vegans and vegetarians, health-conscious employees, environmental advocates and ethical consumers. Also people with religious dietary restrictions or guidelines, such as Hindus, Buddhists, Jains, and some sects of Judaism, often adhere to vegetarian or plant-based diets.

Offering plant-based options can help them adhere to their beliefs. [COMPANY]'s diverse and international workforce may come from regions where plant-based diets are more common or culturally significant. Providing plant-based choices reflects an understanding of their diverse backgrounds.

## Ethical Considerations

### Animal abuse

The food industry is one of the biggest exploiters of animals and is responsible for mass suffering and death. Every year, tens of billions of animals are killed for food, and most endure lives of constant fear and torment. Nearly all the animals raised for food are separated from their families and crammed by the thousands into filthy warehouses, where they spend their entire lives in abysmally filthy conditions. They are mutilated without the use of painkillers and deprived of everything that is natural and important to them. On the killing floor, many animals are conscious and struggling to escape while their throats are cut—and some are still conscious while their bodies are hacked apart or when they are dunked into tanks of scalding-hot water.<sup>36</sup>

### Value of all beings

It is an indisputable fact that animals have sentience and complex nervous systems. Animals are intelligent and complex—much more so than many people even realize—and scientists are finding increased evidence of this all the time. But emotional complexities and intellectual capabilities aside, animals can feel pain just like humans can—and just like us, they value their lives and do not want to suffer.<sup>37</sup>

### There is no “humane meat”

That said, there is no such thing as “humane meat.” Giving animals a few more inches of living space is simply not enough—and even if their quality of life is high, we still do not have the right to take that life for something as trivial as a particular meal. Animals on organic and “free-range” farms often endure the same cruel mutilations—such as debeaking, dehorning, and castration without painkillers—as animals on conventional factory farms do. And at the end of their miserable lives, they are typically shipped on trucks through all weather extremes (usually without food, water, or rest) to the same slaughterhouses used by factory farms.<sup>38</sup>

### Environmental destruction and pollution

In addition to animal suffering, animal agriculture also contributes to environmental destruction. Raising animals for food requires massive amounts of land, food, energy, and water and results in polluted land, water, and air. The United Nations (U.N.) has acknowledged that raising animals for food is “one of the top two or three most significant contributors to the most serious environmental problems, at every scale from local to global.”<sup>39</sup> And the resources going toward feeding the billions of animals used for food could be used more wisely to combat world hunger.<sup>40</sup>

### Our responsibility to reduce suffering

People may ask, “But animals eat meat, so why shouldn’t we?” Some animals do kill other animals for food, but unlike most humans, those animals could not survive if they didn’t. It is unfortunate that some suffering is a part of nature. But humans are capable of making choices based on ethics—such as how to feed, clothe, and entertain ourselves—so we have the responsibility of making the most ethical choices possible and of doing our best to reduce suffering of any kind. Of course, there are also similarities between humans and other animals. Like us, other animals experience fear, pain, and distress. But we are uniquely capable of choosing between cruelty and kindness, so we should never willfully inflict pain on any being—human or nonhuman.<sup>41</sup>



## Financial benefits

Transitioning to offering only vegan food in the workplace can also have potential cost-saving benefit, but it is important to note that the extent of these savings would depend on various factors such as the company's existing food services, location, and employee preferences. Here are some ways in which offering vegan food could potentially save the company money:

### Reduced Ingredient Costs

Plant-based ingredients, such as fruits, vegetables, legumes, grains, and nuts, can be more affordable than animal-based products like meat, dairy, and eggs. Vegan options can be sourced locally and seasonally, potentially reducing transportation and supply chain costs.<sup>42</sup>

### Energy and Resource Efficiency

Producing plant-based foods generally requires fewer resources, such as water, land, and energy, compared to animal agriculture. By reducing the consumption of animal products, the company may contribute to a more sustainable use of resources.<sup>43</sup>

### Healthcare Cost Savings

A diet rich in whole plant-based foods has been associated with improved health outcomes, including reduced risk of chronic diseases.<sup>44,45,46,47,48</sup> By providing healthier meal options, the company could potentially experience lower healthcare costs due to improved employee well-being and fewer diet-related health issues.

### Environmental Savings

Animal agriculture is a significant contributor to greenhouse gas emissions and other environmental challenges.<sup>49</sup> By promoting a vegan diet, the company can align its values with sustainability efforts and potentially reduce its environmental footprint, which may lead to positive public relations and cost savings.

### Menu Simplification

Vegan menus may require fewer complex cooking techniques and equipment compared to animal-based options. This could lead to streamlined kitchen operations, reduced equipment maintenance costs, and potentially lower labor costs.

### Reduced Food Waste

Plant-based foods tend to have longer shelf lives and can be utilized in various dishes, reducing the likelihood of food waste. This could lead to cost savings by minimizing food spoilage.

### Employee Satisfaction and Retention

Offering diverse and inclusive food options, including vegan choices, can enhance employee satisfaction and attract talent who value ethical, health, and environmental considerations. Higher employee satisfaction and retention can result in long-term cost savings associated with recruiting and training new employees.

### Cultural Sensitivity

Vegan options can cater to diverse dietary preferences and religious considerations, potentially reducing the need for separate food arrangements for diverse groups of employees.

### Innovation and Trends

Embracing plant-based food trends aligns with evolving consumer preferences and market demands. This could position the company as forward-thinking and appealing to a broader customer base.

It is essential to conduct a thorough cost analysis to determine the specific financial implications of transitioning to a vegan food policy, considering both the potential cost savings and the initial investments required. Collaborating with experts in food service, sustainability, and nutrition can help the company make informed decisions that align with its goals and values.

# Impact on the world by going vegan

[COMPANY] aims to act with respect, integrity, and care for a safe environment. Eating animals or the products of animals is highly unethical and contradictory with these values. When an industry leader goes vegan, it can have significant impacts on various aspects of the world, ranging from the environment and public health to social and economic factors.

## Environmental Impact

The shift to a vegan diet in a large company can lead to reduced demand for animal-based products, which in turn can help decrease the overall environmental footprint associated with livestock agriculture. This reduction in demand for meat and dairy can contribute to lower greenhouse gas emissions, reduced deforestation, and less pressure on water resources.

## Promotion of Plant-Based Alternatives

The company's adoption of a vegan diet can create more opportunities for plant-based food companies and startups. This could lead to increased innovation and investment in plant-based food technologies, driving the growth of the plant-based food industry worldwide.

## Employee Health and Well-Being

By providing plant-based food options in the workplace, the company can contribute to the well-being of its employees. Plant-based diets have been associated with reduced risk of chronic diseases, which could result in healthier and more productive employees.

## Social Influence and Imitation

High-profile actions taken by large companies can set trends and influence public opinion. Other companies might be inspired to follow suit and adopt plant-based initiatives, further amplifying the positive impacts. Their adoption of a vegan diet can inspire similar initiatives in various countries and regions, fostering a more widespread adoption of plant-based diets worldwide.

## Animal Welfare Awareness

The company's commitment to a vegan diet can draw attention to animal welfare issues, potentially sparking discussions and actions on a larger scale to improve the treatment of animals in the food industry.

## Supply Chain Impact

As a significant buyer of food products, the company's shift to a vegan diet may affect supply chains and encourage suppliers to diversify their offerings to meet the demand for plant-based alternatives.

## Investment and Market Shifts

The company's transition to veganism may influence investment decisions and consumer preferences. Investors and consumers might increasingly favor companies that align with ethical and sustainable practices, potentially driving market shifts.

## Challenges and Criticisms

While the move toward a vegan diet can have positive impacts, it may also face challenges and criticisms from stakeholders who are resistant to change or have concerns about potential economic impacts on traditional livestock industries.

It is important to note that the magnitude of these impacts would depend on the extent of the company's vegan initiatives, the scale of its operations, and the level of influence it holds within the industry and society. Nevertheless, any significant shift by a large company toward a vegan diet can have ripple effects and contribute to the growing global movement toward more sustainable and ethical food choices.

# Possible Challenges

## Employee Acceptance

To increase employee acceptance of changing the restaurants' menus it is important to address concerns and misconceptions that employees may have about plant-based diets, and to propose strategies to encourage participation. Strategies will be discussed in the next chapter.

## Nutritional Balance

To meet the dietary needs of all employees the vegan menu needs to provide adequate nutrients and variety.

## Supplier and Sourcing Challenges

It is important to identify reliable plant-based food suppliers and incorporate sustainable sourcing practices. Well known Dutch caterers, Albron, Hutten and Sodexo, are all already involved in the plant-based food transition which making the transition easier. A critical examination of what they have to offer, to what extent they are currently able to reduce animal protein and how climate and environmentally friendly their sources are, is essential.

## Menu Development and Testing

Creating a diverse and appealing vegan menu may require research, development, and testing of new recipes. This could involve hiring chefs or culinary experts, conducting tests, and investing in new ingredients and equipment.

## Ingredient Sourcing

Locating high-quality, sustainable, and ethically sourced plant-based ingredients might involve higher upfront costs, especially if the company is shifting away from existing supplier relationships.

## Training and Education

Employees involved in food preparation and service may require training on vegan cooking techniques, allergen handling, and menu presentation to ensure consistency and quality.

## Marketing and Communication

Introducing a vegan food policy may require internal and external communication efforts to inform employees, stakeholders, and customers about the changes. This could involve designing marketing materials, updating websites, and potentially hiring public relations consultants.

## Kitchen Equipment and Infrastructure

Shifting to a vegan menu might necessitate modifications or upgrades to kitchen equipment and facilities to accommodate the new cooking methods and ingredients.

## Supply Chain Adjustments

Transitioning to vegan food may require adjustments in the supply chain, including new supplier relationships, transportation arrangements, and potential changes to inventory management systems.

## Specialized Staffing

Hiring or training specialized staff, such as vegan-trained chefs or nutrition experts, to ensure the quality and nutritional value of the vegan menu items.



## **Initial Costs of Ingredients**

While plant-based ingredients can be cost-effective in the long run, there may be initial costs associated with stocking up on new ingredients and building up an inventory.

## **Waste Management**

Implementing a vegan food policy might lead to shifts in waste management practices, potentially requiring adjustments in disposal methods and recycling programs.

## **Transition Period Expenses**

During the transition period, the company may need to maintain both vegan and non-vegan options, leading to increased costs as operations adjust to the new menus.

## **Employee Education and Engagement**

Providing education and resources for employees about the benefits of a vegan diet, as well as addressing any concerns or questions, may require organizing workshops, seminars, or informational materials.

## **Legal and Regulatory Compliance**

The company may need to navigate legal and regulatory requirements related to food labeling, nutritional information, allergen management, and other aspects of vegan food service.

## **Diverse Preferences**

Ensuring a diverse and inclusive menu that caters to various dietary preferences, allergies, and cultural considerations might involve additional menu items and development costs.

## **Monitoring and Feedback**

Regularly collecting feedback from employees and customers and making necessary adjustments to the menu based on preferences and trends could require ongoing investments.

## **Potential Resistance**

There might be resistance from employees or customers who prefer non-vegan options, potentially leading to the need for additional efforts to manage expectations and address concerns.





# Strategies for Veganizing the Workplace

## Restaurants

### Employee acceptance

To increase employee acceptance of changing the restaurants' menus it is important to address concerns and misconceptions that employees may have about plant-based diets. Before implementing the vegan diet assess employee preferences and demand, conduct surveys, or gather feedback from employees to gauge their interest in adopting a vegan or plant-based diet. Understanding their preferences and concerns will help tailor the approach accordingly. It is important to decide whether you want to make a conservative transition that more employees will be comfortable with or if you want to make a drastic change in order to have a significant impact on the environment, the reduction of animal abuse and employees' overall health.

Conduct workshops, seminars, or presentations to educate employees about the benefits of a vegan or plant-based diet for health, the environment, and animal welfare. Provide informative materials and resources to address common misconceptions. Organize taste-testing sessions and promotional campaigns to raise awareness and encourage participation. Give people a straightforward way to introduce vegan eating at home, for example by recommending existing appropriate cookbooks or by publishing an easy vegan [COMPANY] cookbook. Give employees the opportunity to be involved in the making of the cookbook by having them taste the recipes that make it into the book or let them introduce their own favorite vegan recipe. [COMPANY] could start a friendly workplace competition where employees send in their favorite vegan recipes. The 20 (or more) best recipes can be included in the [COMPANY] cookbook and introduced and even be sold in the workplace restaurants as regular menu items. This not only promotes vegan eating but also inclusivity.

People worry that they do not get enough nutrients from vegan food. It is important to inform employees about the nutrients in the vegan meals, as well as the nutrients in the non-vegan meals. It is often mentioned in the media that plant-based meats are full of salt, sugar and fat. However, in comparison to the same animal product they often are healthier. A solution could be to list the nutrients of for example a vegan burger and provide the nutrients of a beef burger.

Develop an online rating system for menu choices and meals to measure the success of the vegan transformation efforts. Gather feedback from employees to continually improve the vegan offerings and address concerns.

### Albron

Albron uses CO2 emissions as a metric to assess their impact on the climate. Their aim is to reduce CO2 emissions by decreasing food waste and replacing animal proteins with plant-based proteins. Their goal is to offer at make at least 80% of the used protein plant-based. They achieve this, for example, by offering hybrid meatballs, which consist of half meat and half mushrooms. Recently, all Albron locations can also view their own CO2 footprint, benchmarked against other locations where Albron operates.<sup>50</sup>

### Hutten

Hutten is invested in making the transition to vegan workplaces. Hutten's goal is to be a climate neutral caterer by 2024 and climate positive in 2030. They are slowly reducing the use of animal products. Their focus is on becoming climate neutral and make their food system completely circular. In 2024 60% of the used proteins will be plant-based.<sup>51</sup> At the beginning of 2023 Hutten hosted an inspiration session for their business partners about the transition from animal-based to plant-based company restaurants.

### Sodexo

Caterer Sodexo has set goals to make all their processes more sustainable and in 2019 they published a position paper on animal welfare. In this position paper Sodexo commits to improving all animal welfare in their supply chain. They do this by setting up a Sodexo animal welfare supplier charter. The goal is to have all their relevant suppliers world wide

sign this charter. Also they have set goals to implement a broiler chicken commitment and use only cage free eggs from 2025. Sodexo has assigned representatives to implement their animal welfare goals.<sup>52</sup>

Sodexo has committed to the ESG goals and publishes a yearly magazine where they show their progress on all the relevant ESG goals.<sup>53</sup> Sodexo has set the goal to reduce carbon emissions by 34% in 2025 and to achieve net-zero in 2040. They have partnered with the WWF to achieve this goal.<sup>54</sup> Sodexo has implemented methods and procedures to reduce food waste and to implement a plant-based diet for all of their consumers. We couldn't find specific goals for plant-based protein but overall their commitment to sustainability is impressively documented and thorough. We recommend their webpage: <https://nl.sodexo.com/corporate-responsibility.html>

Albron, Hutten and Sodexo can show [COMPANY] what their current possibilities are and what their advice is for a smooth vegan transition. Albron, Hutten and Sodexo do not explicitly mention the unethical part of eating animal (products). However, [COMPANY] should consider the ethical aspect in this transition.

## **Menu Innovation**

Hand out menu samplings to introduce employees to new plant-based dishes. Offering samples can be an effective way to showcase delicious alternatives and win over skeptics. Explore creative plant-based recipes and collaborate with expert chefs to enhance the culinary experience.

## **Collaborations with Sustainable Brands**

A collaboration with existing local vegan restaurants or vegan brands such as the Vegetarische Slager or Viverra can have several positive effects. Employees can get familiar with the taste of plant-based meats, which can motivate them to replace their animal-meat at home with a plant-based version. Rising sales for the vegan brand can make it easier for them to lower their prices in supermarkets, making plant-based meats available for more people. Other collaborations could be with local restaurants or writer of a cookbook.

## **Well-being**

Collaborate with health experts or nutritionists to highlight the health benefits of plant-based diets. Consider running health challenges or campaigns to encourage employees to try plant-based meals for a specific period. This can also be part of [COMPANY]'s Well-being framework. [COMPANY] has a dedicated health & well-being center that provides several health & well-being employee services including an in-house physiotherapist, psychologist, career center, indoor gym, yoga room and a running track. A dietitian could be of added value to the team of well-being ambassadors. A dietitian could help employees to make the transition to a vegan diet. Diet advice could be combined with advice for physical activities in [COMPANY]'s gym, yoga room and running track, to help people with weight loss goals, building stamina or other healthy physical habits. This would reflect the holistic perspective [COMPANY] has on well-being.

Workplace health programs can increase productivity. In general, healthier employees are more productive. Healthier employees are less likely to call in sick or use vacation time due to illness. Because employee health frequently carries over into better health behavior that impact both the employee and their family (such as nutritious meals cooked at home or increased physical activity with the family), employees may miss less work caring for ill family members as well. Similarly, workplace health programs can reduce presenteeism — the measurable extent to which health symptoms, conditions, and diseases adversely affect the work productivity of individuals who choose to remain at work. The cost savings of providing a workplace health program can be measured against absenteeism among employees, reduced overtime to cover absent employees, and costs to train replacement employees.<sup>55</sup>

## **Chef Collaborations and Training**

Work with experienced chefs to develop tasty and creative plant-based recipes. Offer training sessions to your restaurant staff to ensure they can prepare and present these dishes well. Discuss with the company's caterer what they are doing to veganize their menus and how experienced their staff is.

## Incentives and Discounts

Consider offering incentives or discounts for employees who opt for plant-based meals. This can encourage more people to give it a try. List the vegan choice first on the menus, give discounts on vegan dishes or raise the prices of animal-based dishes. Set up a loyalty program where employees get a free meal after buying ten vegan meals. Another option is to stop reimbursing meals that contain meat.

## Cultural and Themed Events

Organize themed events around vegan or plant-based cuisine, such as Meatless Mondays, Vegan Fridays or international plant-based food days.

## Labeling and Information

Clearly label vegan options on the menu to make it easier for employees to identify and choose these dishes. The next chapter about V-label offers more information on this subject.

# Organizations that provide guidance for transitioning to a plant-based workplace

## Vegetariërsbond

The Vegetariërsbond<sup>56</sup> is a non-profit organization that was founded in 1894. Their mission is quite straightforward: to achieve a 50% reduction in meat consumption by 2040 compared to 2007. The Vegetariërsbond aims to assist both consumers and businesses in making delicious, healthy, and mindful choices in vegetarian and vegan dining. Through events that offer tastings of vegetarian and vegan cuisine, they provide insights to consumers and professionals on crafting flavorful vegetarian and vegan dishes and products. Additionally, they offer guidance on adopting a healthful and conscious vegetarian and vegan diet, for example through the inspirational platform LekkerVega<sup>57</sup>.

The Vegetariërsbond prefers to see a hundred meat reducers rather than just one vegetarian, understanding the broader impact. They champion a positive message, respecting everyone's pace in their transition to a vegetarian or vegan lifestyle, while striving to aid individuals in embracing more plant-based nourishment.

The Vegetariërsbond undertakes an extensive array of activities to fulfill their mission<sup>58</sup>. A pivotal aspect of their endeavors is their collaboration with the V-Label<sup>59</sup>, established in Switzerland in 1996. Globally, over 50,000 products from more than 4,300 companies bear the V-Label certification, making it the world's largest quality mark for vegan and vegetarian products and services. This internationally recognized label assists consumers worldwide in swiftly identifying vegan or vegetarian options. In each country, the V-Label is associated with a non-profit organization. A significant portion of the proceeds earned by the V-Label is issued to the non-profit organizations' efforts of reducing meat consumption.

## V-label

Currently, there is no certification or label for non-hospitality businesses to signify their status as a vegan or vegetarian company. The Vegetariërsbond expresses their desire to initiate efforts towards establishing a completely new concept for a label or certification that companies can use to communicate their sustainability efforts, particularly in relation to company restaurants and cafeterias. This new label or certification will enable [COMPANY] to promote its commitment to veganism and sustainability in a credible and transparent way, and to set an example for other companies to follow.

When [COMPANY] wants to take the steps to implement a certification, the Vegetariërsbond anticipates a time frame of approximately 6 months to develop



this concept, with potential implementation commencing after 12 months. The process of obtaining the certification would involve a consultation phase, during which the Vegetariërsbond can guide and advise [COMPANY] in formulating a plan and outlining the prerequisites necessary for Certification. The Vegetariërsbond possesses a multitude of resources to facilitate informed decision-making and garner support from both [COMPANY]'s leadership and employees. They also have dietitians who can support the transition to a healthy and more sustainable diet. The Vegetariërsbond outlines the following principles:

- The existing menus in [COMPANY]'s company restaurants serve as the foundation, as they clearly indicate the extent of progress required.
- A gradual transition is deemed more realistic to increase employee acceptance. This coincides with their mission to reduce meat consumption.
- People require guidance to learn how to incorporate vegan or vegetarian eating and cooking in their life. The Vegetariërsbond can provide this support and collaborate with [COMPANY] to devise a plan for employee assistance. This may encompass a webpage featuring tips and ideas, a beginner's vegan [COMPANY] cookbook, as well as tastings, challenges, workshops and presentations. NB: Opting for a vegan cookbook, over a vegetarian cookbook, is recommended, as the journey towards vegetarianism is envisioned as a steppingstone towards embracing a vegan lifestyle. Also replacing dairy can be a challenging part of becoming vegan so this is an essential part of a cookbook that is meant to guide people away from animal products.
- External independent inspection agencies are engaged to monitor [COMPANY]'s adherence to the newly developed label or certification's criteria. Regular inspections are conducted.

## **ProVeg**

ProVeg is an international organization that works to transform the global food system by replacing animal-based products with plant-based and cultured alternatives. ProVeg has permanent-observer status with the UNFCCC, is accredited for UNEA, and has received the United Nations' Momentum for Change Award. ProVeg Netherlands is a part of this organization and works towards a plant-based future. They collaborate with companies, governments and other organizations to promote and encourage plant-based eating. They also offer recipes and vegan news stories on their website.<sup>60</sup>

## **Smaackmakers**

Smaackmakers is recommended by Hutten and guides companies in the transition to more sustainable menus at the workplace. They also organize workshops, lectures, and training sessions. They are a member of the advisory board of the UN program Sustainable Food Systems, a member of the Dutch division of the World Footprint Network, a partner in the International CSR covenant for plant-based proteins, in close contact with various Ministries, and regularly invited to think tanks and debates.<sup>61</sup>

# What other companies are doing

WeWork announced in 2018 that all six thousand employees were going vegetarian, and it will also not reimburse employees who order meat during a lunch meeting. The company, which is valued at \$20 billion and provides shared workspace for freelancers, entrepreneurs and businesses across the US, Europe, Asia and Latin America, estimated the ban would save 63.2 billion liters of water, 202 million kg of carbon dioxide emissions and more than 15 million animals by 2023<sup>62</sup>.

There are a growing number of businesses that are making vegan options the standard choice to meet their climate goals. Normalizing vegan options helps consumers make kinder and more sustainable choices, which in turn helps animals and the planet. Here are some companies that are championing vegan milk options as the norm:

- University College London has made oat milk the default option in all four cafés in the Student Union.
- The University of Birmingham ran a trial of using oat milk by default in March 2023.
- London School of Economics and Political Science serves plant-based milks as standard in the Shaw Café.
- The University of Aberdeen made oat milk the standard choice for drinks across all four of its cafés to celebrate Earth Day 2023 and has committed to expanding plant-based food options across campus.
- Stumptown Coffee Roasters in the US switched to oat milk as the default. Plant milk coffee machines are popping up all over the UK and have recently been spotted at Costa Express locations, at BaxterStorey catered offices, and in M&S Vegan Food.

Promoting plant-based milk as the default choice offers a straightforward approach to curbing dairy consumption and acquainting employees with the ease of incorporating minor vegan substitutions. The logical progression would naturally involve transitioning to vegan cuisine:

- Sodexo made oat milk the norm at LinkedIn's offices in San Francisco, where 65% of the food on the menu is vegan.
- Google is reducing meat in their menus by offering more and more vegan or vegetarian options or by lowering the percentage of meat in a dish. Their salads contain 20% animal product instead of 40% and their burger patties now have a higher percentage of vegetables than beef. Choices that have less meat are higher on the menu than choice that contain more meat.
- Burger King Austria's "Normal or with meat?" campaign in 2022 made the plant-based versions of its popular products the normal choice on menus. Customers ordering the chain's signature Whopper were offered the plant-based Whopper unless they requested otherwise. Burger King UK will make 50% of its menu vegan by 2030, and fully vegan Burger King restaurants have opened for one month in countries including the UK, Denmark, Germany, Spain, and Sweden.
- Hospitals in New York have made vegan food the default option for patients to improve health outcomes, cut carbon emissions, and decrease food costs.
- The University of Oxford's Uehiro Centre for Practical Ethics has served vegan food as the norm since 2021 and reported that almost everyone opts for the default plant-based options.
- Otto's Burger in Germany has meat-free burgers as the norm, and beef burgers are only served when customers request them. The business ran an initiative for World Vegan Month in which beef burgers were €1 more expensive to help people make climate-friendly choices.
- Salesforce has launched a program called "Wellness Wednesdays," which encourages employees to eat plant-based meals at least once a week.
- Deloitte has added vegan options to its menus and is developing more plant-based options.
- Examples of Dutch companies doing more than just offering vegan choices are hard to find. ABN AMRO, KLM Royal Dutch Airlines, Dutch Railways (NS) have added vegan options to its menus and say they are working on developing more plant-based options.

# Potential Path for Veganizing the Workplace Restaurants

When considering the best approach for veganizing the workplace restaurants at [COMPANY], it is crucial to weigh the potential benefits and challenges associated with each path. Three main strategies stand out as potential options:

## Going Completely Vegan

The preferred and a bold and decisive choice, transitioning all [COMPANY] workplace restaurants to a fully vegan menu would showcase the company's commitment to sustainability and ethical practices. This approach would have a significant impact on reducing [COMPANY]'s ecological footprint, contributing to lower greenhouse gas emissions, pollution and fostering animal welfare. By leading the way with a completely vegan menu, [COMPANY] can inspire positive change not only within the company but also across the industry. It would send a powerful message about [COMPANY]'s dedication to create a greener and more compassionate world.

## Making Vegan the Norm

By making vegan options the norm and offering some vegetarian and omnivorous choices, [COMPANY] can take a balanced approach that accommodates various dietary preferences. This strategy acknowledges the growing interest in plant-based diets while ensuring inclusivity for employees who may not be ready to fully embrace veganism. Promoting plant-based options and reducing the availability of omnivorous dishes can still have a considerable environmental impact and contribute to ethical practices. This approach respects employee diversity while encouraging a shift towards a more sustainable and compassionate food culture.

## Implementing a Gradual Transition

A methodical and gradual transition allows [COMPANY] to test the waters and progressively introduce plant-based options. Starting with a limited selection of vegan dishes and gradually phasing out meat and animal products, [COMPANY] can gauge employee receptivity and adapt accordingly. This approach fosters engagement and facilitates a smoother transition, making it an effective strategy for encouraging long-term sustainable dietary changes. Over time, [COMPANY] can build a stronger foundation for a plant-based menu while providing employees with the opportunity to explore new and healthier food choices. An often-used way for the gradual transition is using hybrid foods and beverages where a growing percentage of an animal product is replaced by a plant-based product. For example, a tuna salad made with part tuna and part tofu and nori, or a yoghurt made with part cow milk and part soy milk, starting with 20% plant-based, then 50%, 80% and finally 100% plant-based.

In choosing the right path, [COMPANY] must consider employee preferences, potential challenges, cost implications, the company's values and sustainability goals. Open communication and employee feedback are essential to ensure a successful and well-received transition. Whether through a bold vegan commitment, a balanced norm with plant-based emphasis, or a gradual shift, [COMPANY] can play a leading role in driving positive change, contributing to a healthier planet and a more compassionate future for all.

# Recommendations

The Vegetariërsbond and V-Label have reviewed this report. They have given their approval and express that they recommend choosing the gradual transition. They believe this is the most successful route. They offer their expertise and experts to guide the process and to develop and then award a brand new label or certification for vegan workplace restaurants. This certification does not exist at the moment and would be newly developed by the Vegetariërsbond.

We have asked several experts in the field of nutrition for advice, and these were their comments: It is important to offer meat and dairy substitutes that have the right nutrients added in the right amounts and to involve dietitians to make sure the new menus offer healthy well balanced nutritious meals. Also, [COMPANY] should randomly check whether the vitamins and minerals claimed on labels of vegan products are actually present, as there is tampering going on.

Half of our reviewers recommend [COMPANY] to choose the path of gradual transition. The impact of vegan food in [COMPANY] workplace restaurants on climate change is limited compared to what [COMPANY] consumes in fossil raw materials and fuels, electricity, transport, etc. The value of the step towards vegetarianism is mainly that it can convince millions of outsiders. You lose that effect if hasty implementation fails. Worse still, people may hold onto their biases that vegan food is not enjoyable. That is why they would advocate gradual implementation, with frequent consultation with employees and timely adjustments. The goal does not have to be achieved in a month or a year, as long as it is achieved.

However, the other reviewers could not stress enough the severity of the climate crisis and the impact the food system has on not only the climate but also general health.

The Caring Doctors are calling on all institutional kitchens such as hospitals and other healthcare facilities, universities, school communities and municipalities to switch to a plant-based menu as the standard as soon as possible. They base their call on reports from the IPCC<sup>63</sup> and the renowned EAT Lancet Report<sup>64</sup>. The Lancet Commission concludes that dietary changes from current diets toward healthy diets are likely to result in major health benefits. This includes preventing approximately 11 million deaths per year, which represent between 19% to 24% of total deaths among adults. According to the Lancet Commission, the extensive data highlighting the prevention of deaths and the profound impact of the environment underscores the urgency for immediate action.

The IPCC calculated that the current food system is responsible for 21-37% of all greenhouse gas emissions and Xiaoming Xu et al<sup>65</sup>, climate scientists at the University of Illinois, conclude from their research that Global greenhouse gas emissions from animal-based foods are twice those of plant-based foods.

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said on June 15 2023 that climate policies currently adopted will lead to average temperatures 2.8 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial times by the end of the century, nearly twice the UN goal of a 1.5 degree rise, Guterres said. "That spells catastrophe. Yet the collective response remains pitiful. We are hurtling towards disaster, eyes wide open -- with far too many willing to bet it all on wishful thinking, unproven technologies and silver bullet solutions. It's time to wake up and step up," Countries are far off-track in meeting climate promises and commitments. I see a lack of ambition. A lack of trust, a lack of support, a lack of cooperation and an abundance of problems around clarity and credibility. The 1.5 degree goal is "still possible," if the fight against climate change is accelerated. All of this action must be global. It must be immediate."<sup>66</sup>

We respect our reviewers' recommendation for a gradual transition, and we recognize and acknowledge their arguments for this path. We also believe that the most important outcome is to eventually achieve the transition from animal protein to plant-based protein, even if it may take a little longer. However, as the Dutch Climate Coalition, our primary objective is to address the urgent environmental challenges posed by climate change and promote sustainable practices that lead to a greener future. We support the statement made by the leader of the United Nations. The fight against climate change must be accelerated and all of this action must be global and immediate. No one and no company can escape it: we all must do everything in our power to combat climate change.

After conducting a thorough analysis of potential strategies for veganizing your workplace restaurants, we strongly recommend pursuing the "completely vegan" route as the most impactful and aligned with our collective mission. The "completely vegan" approach represents a bold and decisive stance in the fight against climate change, reducing greenhouse gas emissions and alleviating the immense environmental burden associated with the production of all animal-based products. By adopting a fully vegan menu, [COMPANY] would demonstrate its unwavering commitment to sustainability and ethical practices, setting an inspiring example for other organizations and industries to follow.

While we understand that the most extreme route may initially seem challenging, we believe that taking decisive action in the face of the climate crisis is of paramount importance. We recognize that [COMPANY] may prefer to choose to implement a more moderate version of this transition, and we appreciate the complexities involved in organizational change. However, we urge you to consider the significant positive impact that a complete shift to vegan restaurants could have on the environment and animal welfare.

Although a significant CO<sub>2</sub>-reduction can be achieved from adopting a gradual transition of reducing animal products and offering vegetarian meals, animal suffering caused by meat and dairy production is frequently overlooked in discussions about transitioning to a plant-based diet. However, it is important to emphasize that the treatment of animals within the bio-industry amounts to nothing short of ecocide, representing an ethical and moral disgrace. Reflecting on how animals are treated worldwide it becomes evident that we should feel a profound sense of shame. Future generations may indeed look back upon our actions with a heavy heart, wondering how we allowed such mistreatment to persist.

By embracing this path, [COMPANY] would not only reduce its ecological footprint but also inspire a broader culture of sustainability within the company and beyond. Our purpose is to advocate for the most effective strategies to combat climate change and environmental degradation. While we respect the decision-making process and the need to balance various considerations, we feel compelled to stress the unparalleled potential of the "completely vegan" route.

Our suggested course of action for the next steps is as follows:

- Make a cost analysis for investment and cost benefits.
- Set up a strategy for employee acceptance and participation before, during and after implementation of the vegan menus.
- Report how the vegan menus can ensure adequate nutritional value and variety.
- Meet up with de Vegetariërsbond to discuss the possibilities to develop a special label or certification for vegan workplace restaurants for [COMPANY].
- Prospect what de Vegetariërsbond, Proveg and Smaackmakers can offer in guidance of the transition to vegan workplace restaurants.
- Research the possibilities offered by the company's caterer to make a vegan transition.
- Research the availability of sustainable sources in the company's caterer supply chain.
- Analyze what else is needed from the company's caterer to make the vegan transition.

We stand ready to support and guide [COMPANY] throughout this transformation, providing resources, expert advice, and best practices to ensure a seamless and successful vegan transition. Together, we can take bold steps towards a more sustainable future, leaving a legacy of positive change.

Thank you for considering our recommendation, and we look forward to collaborating closely with [COMPANY] in this transformative journey.

With kind regards,

Marloes Spaander

EDSP ECO Foundation Co-Founder

Climate Coalition Representative



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