

The Plant Based Treaty | Eat Plants, Plant Trees

The Plant Based Treaty is a landmark international treaty and first of its kind to put food systems at the heart of combating the climate crisis. The Treaty aims to halt the widespread degradation of critical ecosystems caused by animal agriculture.

As a companion to the UNFCCC/Paris Agreement, The Plant Based Treaty initiative is a grassroots campaign designed to put food systems at the forefront of combating the climate crisis. Modelled on the popular Fossil Fuel Treaty, the Plant Based Treaty (PBT) aims to halt the widespread degradation of critical ecosystems caused by animal agriculture and to promote a shift to healthier, sustainable plant-based diets.

It has three main demands: Relinquish, Redirect and Restore.

Exmouth Town Council

Exmouth Town Council declared a Climate Emergency in 2019 and has a [Climate Action Plan](#) in place. We have limited authority to effect many of the pledges in the international PBT and therefore recommend a descoped PBT for Exmouth Town Council to sign.

This council notes:

Animal agriculture is responsible for around half of the UK's methane emissions[1], compared to the global average of 32%[2]. The United Nations 2021 Methane Assessment reveals that methane cuts of 45% by 2030 are required to prevent a 0.3C temperature rise by 2045[3], buying us time for carbon dioxide, a longer-lived gas, to dissipate.

The most comprehensive analysis to date of UK diets showed that plant-based diets resulted in 75% less climate-heating emissions, water pollution and land use than diets in which more than 100g of meat a day was eaten.[4] Vegan diets also cut the destruction of wildlife by 66% and water use by 54%, the study found.[5] The IPCC (2019) Special Report on Land Use, shows that a plant-based food system would save almost 8 Gigatons Equivalent in greenhouse gas emissions by 2050[6].

About 70% of UK land is devoted to agriculture - mainly animal grazing and animal feed and pasture, with further additional land used overseas. The combined land area for rearing cows and sheep for UK consumption is larger than the UK itself.[7] Cattle ranching is the largest driver of deforestation in every Amazon country, accounting for 80% of current deforestation rates[8], and the most extensive food system analysis to date found that globally 83% of agricultural land is used to farm animals, yet supplies just 18% of calories[9].

Two-fifths of UK arable land is used to grow crops for animals, rather than human consumption.[10] Half the UK's wheat harvest goes to feeding animals, mostly chickens and pigs, and would be enough to produce nearly 11 billion loaves of bread.[11] The UK imports large quantities of soy to feed pigs and poultry, relying on 850,000 hectares of land abroad to grow the crops, which contributes to the destruction of habitats such as Brazil's Cerrado, home to jaguars, giant anteaters and armadillos.[12] Shifting towards plant-based diets has the potential to reduce diet-related land use by 76%, allowing us to rewild lands and restore carbon sinks (e.g. forests and peatlands).[13]

A global initiative is underway calling for a Plant Based Treaty that, through its three Rs - Relinquish, Redirect and Restore – aims to halt the accelerating expansion of animal agriculture globally, incentivise and promote a plant-based food system, rewild critical ecosystems in line with the global commitment to limit warming to 1.5C and work to mitigate the climate crisis with fair equitable transition plans.

Action to improve accessibility and promote the consumption of plant-based foods in Exmouth will help to mitigate and adapt Exmouth to the impacts of climate change, improve social justice and economic well being, and support Exmouth in reducing its consumption-based emissions.

Exmouth Town Council, therefore, RESOLVES to:

REDIRECT

Eliminate the driving forces behind the problem.

Promote plant-based foods.

- Include campaigns/activities to encourage a switch to plant-based foods in our Climate Action Plan
- Design public information campaigns to raise awareness about the climate and the environmental advantages and health benefits of plant-based food, nutrition and cooking
- Aim to reduce the public's consumption of animal-based food through education in schools, organisations and local businesses
- Transition to plant-based meal plans when catering for climate-related meetings, events etc.

RESTORE

Actively heal the problem while helping to rebuild resilience and mitigate climate change.

Help to restore key ecosystems and reforest the earth.

- Support reforestation projects and convene a tree forum to provide transparency and encourage collaboration between stakeholders in Exmouth
- Focus shift on nature-based solutions for climate change mitigation and adaptation (in ETC's consultative planning role)
- Cities: support initiatives to increase trees and wildflowers, increase green community projects, wildlife corridors, green rooftops, local growing schemes, work towards biodiversity increases (in our consultative planning role and in our environment policy)
- Enhance food justice by supporting projects that provide access to healthy food for all, especially low-income communities (support projects like Mushroom, a food community network in Exmouth)

References

[1]

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[2]

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[3]

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[4] <https://www.nature.com/articles/s43016-023-00795-w>

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[8] <https://www.plantbaseddata.org/topfacts>

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[10] <https://www.independent.co.uk/climate-change/news/wwf-norfolk-yorkshire-b2113317.html>

[11] <https://www.independent.co.uk/climate-change/news/wwf-norfolk-yorkshire-b2113317.html>

[12] <https://www.independent.co.uk/climate-change/news/wwf-norfolk-yorkshire-b2113317.html>

[13] <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/35458176/>