

EPFL Plant-Based Universities Campaign - Involvement Guide

(Updated Octobre 2023)

Thank you for expressing an interest in the PBU campaign!

This is an initial guide intended for **all interest levels** to get to know the campaign and different ways to contribute to the cause.

Whether you are interested in knowing more or a full-on commitment, any level of help is much appreciated and please do not hesitate to [contact the core team](#) for more information or ways to be more involved!



What is PBU?

Plant-Based Universities is a international student-led campaign asking **for all university catering facilities to end the sale of animal products and make 100% of their menus plant-based**, in order to limit the university's contribution to the climate and ecological emergency and shift public opinion in favour of a plant-based food system.

This campaign is a decentralised movement supported by [Animal Rising](#) (Previously Animal Rebellion, a sister movement to Extinction Rebellion), actively run by students all across the UK, and more recently in countries worldwide.

Our main motivation is the well known major environmental impacts of the meat, dairy, and fishing industries¹. **The world cannot halt climate change without shifting towards a plant-based food system even if we stopped fossil fuels²** and drastic changes to the current food system have to happen immediately. Please refer to later sections for sources of more detailed background information.



Here is an introductory video to the PBU campaign: [Plant-Based Universities](#)

Since the central launch of the PBU campaign in 2021, **seven university student unions have already signed to transition to 100% plant-based catering** at their outlets, with many more universities achieving incremental wins, such as default plant milk, on their way to reach the 100% goal.

The key to this campaign is that we are asking for **institutional change**, not personal change; we are not forcing anyone to eat a certain way, only for universities to take responsibility and divest away from the meat and dairy industry in order to align with their sustainability targets.

¹ Jia, G, Shevliakova, E et al, "Chapter 2: Land-Climate Interactions" in UN Special Report: Climate Change and Land (2019.) <https://www.ipcc.ch/srccl/>

² Clark et al 2019, "Global food system emissions could preclude achieving the 1.5° and 2° C climate change targets" University of Oxford (2020) <https://www.science.org/doi/10.1126/science.aba7357>

PBU here in EPFL

In July 2019, the Swiss government set a series of targets aimed at reducing greenhouse gas emissions in order to underscore its status as a role model. They established two main objectives for federal entities, including EPFL:

- Reduce energy-related greenhouse gas emissions by 50% (from 2006 levels) by 2030
- Achieve carbon neutrality by offsetting energy-related emissions (starting in 2020)

EPFL has publicly stated working towards the Swiss government's climate targets and helping meet the objectives of the Paris Agreement.

In 2023, EPFL published the Climate & Sustainability Strategy that aims to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by an average of 40% (from respectively 2006 and 2019 levels) by 2030. Food is responsible for 13% of carbon emissions on campus. Half of these emissions comes from meat products, even though these products make up less than 15% of our food purchases. EPFL is willing to cut food-related carbon emissions by at least 40% (from 2019 levels) by 2030[1].

EPFL has written down explicit goals to serve seasonal, local, organic meals. However, although commonly considered central to the environmental impact, the geographical origin of food turns out to be almost negligible, the type of food consumed being the main factor in the ecological impact [2]. Moreover, GHG emissions are only one factor of the broader ecological crisis. Today, the production of meat, eggs, dairy products and aquaculture uses 83% of agricultural land and accounts for 57% of food-related emissions [3]. Transitioning to a plant-based diet would positively impact biodiversity and limit deforestation [4]. EPFL puts plant-based catering as an action item without considering it as a clear goal in its strategy. A proper plant-based diet shouldn't be a concern, it has been proven that, when properly planned, a plant-based diet is healthy without negative compromise[5][6].

Several European universities have already adopted a stance on plant-based catering. Therefore, EPFL without a lack of a clear commitment for plant-based catering. Currently in the university of Berlin, Students will be able to order meals from menus that are 68% vegan, 28% vegetarian and just 4% meat[8]. UK universities at Birmingham, Stirling, London have passed motion to go 100% plant-based before 2030.

Without taking the food issue more seriously, EPFL is clearly behind university peers and not **on track in reducing its carbon emission and realising its sustainability pledge.**

[1] EPFL 2030 Climate & Sustainability Strategy

[2] Weber, C. L., & Matthews, H. S. (2008). Food-miles and the relative climate impacts of food choices in the United States.

[3] Poore, J., & Nemecek, T. (2018). Reducing food's environmental impacts through producers and consumers. *Science*.

[4] FAO, 2006, « Livestock's long shadow »

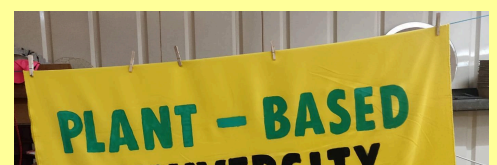
[5] The impact of livestock on biodiversity – FAO-2019

[6] Craig WJ, Mangels AR; American Dietetic Association. Position of the American Dietetic Association: vegetarian diets. *J Am Diet Assoc*. 2009 Jul;109(7):1266-82. doi: 10.1016/j.jada.2009.05.027. PMID: 19562864.

[7] Caroline A Koch, Emilie W Kjeldsen, Ruth Frikke-Schmidt, Vegetarian or vegan diets and blood lipids: a meta-analysis of randomized trials, *European Heart Journal*, Volume 44, Issue 28, 21 July 2023, Pages 2609–2622,

[8] Berlin's university canteens go almost meat-free as students prioritise climate,

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/aug/31/berlins-university-canteens-go-almost-meat-free-as-students-prioritise-climate>



How can you get involved?

Depending on your availability and therefore level of commitment, you could help us out as one of the following:

1. Supporter

- For deeper understanding of the cause, please read: [PBU Campaign Overview](#) (note: *Animal Rebellion is now Animal Rising*)
- Here are some [quick answers](#) to the most common questions
- If you endorse this campaign after reading, you could:
 - Follow us (@plantbasedlausanne) and the central campaign (@plantbasedunis) on instagram
 - Share, like and comment on our instagram posts
 - Share the campaign with your friends and start a discussion with them about going plant-based
 - Participate in our outreach events
 - Start considering personal changes for sustainability
 - Vote for this campaign when a vote is active
 - If you wish to know more about anything plant-based, here's [more content!](#)

2. Volunteer

- Do all of the above and also...
- You could join the volunteer's Whatsapp group (drop us an email or dm on insta for the link) where will ask for help with leafleting, poster, graphic designing, writing, photography, networking etc.
- If you are interested in **leafleting**, which involves convincing people to support the campaign, you should take some time to **inform yourself about the science behind** our claim
- For further understanding of the **campaigning process**, please read: [The PBU Guide](#) (note: *Animal Rebellion is now Animal Rising*)
 - This is a good start about the science: [Information pack](#)
 - Ed Winters on Socratic questioning: [This is my advice to vegans.](#)

3. Core team member

- If you are interested in being more actively involved in the campaign, such as organising and leading outreach, being involved with communications with the university, running social media, writing media articles etc. then a core team role may be for you!
- You need to be willing to offer your time for regular commitment
- We would really love to see some lower years sign up to be in the core team so the campaign can run smoothly into each new academic year
- To see the outline of our current plan for 2023/24, you could take a look at: [PBU Campaign at EPFL: Plan for 2023/24](#)
- Please **drop us an email, dm on insta or send us a whatsapp message** if you would like to discuss being part of the core team

- If you haven't already, you will probably want to consider **going fully plant-based** (or even vegan!) yourself in order to be a leading example for this cause that you advocate for- [here's more](#) about going plant-based

Quick common Q&A

For details, please refer to [Cheat Sheet for Responses to common criticisms](#)

1. **Inclusivity** - what about students who need meat for medical reasons?
Students are still free to eat non plant-based food, it just won't be provided by the university. In fact, universities don't currently cater for every student's dietary requirements. Going PB will actually include a **bigger majority** of students.
2. **Price** - does turning plant-based mean a more expensive menu?
No - it will remain the same if not cheaper. Also, **subsidies** for meat should be given to PB foods instead, which can only happen if demand for meat decreases.
3. **Catered colleges** - students at those colleges will be forced to be plant-based?
No - different from other outlets, **fully catering** canteens will be transitioned into a **PB default** instead, such that students can still ask for animal-based meals.
4. **Personal choice** - are you taking away students' freedom of choice?
Our focus is to make **institutional changes** such that they align with their sustainability ambitions, as opposed to forcing individual changes.

Get in touch and social media

EPFL Linktree: <https://linktr.ee/plantbasedepfl>

EPFL PBU email: pbulausanne@gmail.com

Central PBU Instagram: [PLANT-BASED UNIVERSITIES \(@plantbasedunis\)](#)

PBU website: www.plantbaseduniversities.org/

Animal Rising website: <https://www.animalrising.org/>

More content about going plant-based!

WHY: Environmental and health aspect

YouTube channels

- Plant based news - [Why COP27 Refused To Discuss Food...](#)
- Mic the vegan - [Protein is Not Protein? What I've Learned Debunked](#)
- Earthling Ed - [Veganism could save the planet. Here's why.](#)
- Simon Clark - [How much does local meat help the environment?](#)
- Vegan Linked - [EVIDENCE BASED: Everyone Should Eat Vegan: Dietary Guidelines Dr Michael Greger](#)
- Animal Rebellion - [Bel Jacobs: Meat & Dairy = Climate Crisis](#)
- TED talks - [Think Veganism | Kerry McCarthy | TEDxUniversityofStirling](#)

Film

- [Cowspiracy: The Sustainability Secret Seaspiracy | Official Trailer | Netflix](#)

HOW: Practical aspect - Cooking recipes, hacks etc

YouTube channels

- SweetPotatoSoul - [5 vegan recipes EVERYONE needs to know!!!](#)

- Gaz Oakley - [MEATY MUSHROOM VEGAN BURRITOS](#)

Instagram accounts

- [Vegan Recipes \(@veganrecipideas\)](#)
- [Maya // vegan recipes \(@fitgreenmind\)](#)
- [Max La Manna \(@maxlamanna\)](#)
- [Devorah | The Yummy Vegan \(@theyummyvegan\)](#)

Get free help when you go plant-based!

- Veganuary - <https://veganuary.com/try-vegan/?d=register>
- Challenge 22 - <https://challenge22.com/?group=351>

REALLY, WHY? Moral aspect - if interested

Plant-based is not equivalent to vegan.

The difference is that plant-based is a **diet** that is generally beneficial, whereas veganism is a **philosophy of living** which seeks to exclude exploitation and cruelty to animals as much as possible and practicable.

If you are curious, check these out:

YouTube channels

- Earthling Ed - [8 reasons why going vegan could be the wrong choice](#) ; [Meat Eater Decides to Challenge Vegan Activist](#)
- Joey Carbstrong - [A tragedy has occurred...this affects all of us](#)
- Mic the vegan - [Dairy Disclosed | Mini Documentary](#)
- Practical ethics channel - [Is it okay to eat meat? Peter Singer tackles the best objections against vegetarianism](#)

Films and documentaries

- [Dominion \(2018\) - full documentary \[Official\]](#)
- [Earthlings Documentary Land of Hope and Glory \(UK 'Earthlings' Documentary\)](#)