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Friday 27 November, 2015

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Reducing meat consumption is critical to curbing climate change, declared a report by leading think tank Chatham House earlier this week, but its recommendations do not go far enough, says The Vegan Society.

Animal agriculture was identified as one of the major drivers of rising temperatures. Livestock is responsible for more greenhouse gas emissions than all global transport combined, yet public awareness of the link between diet and the environment remains low, the report found. Its main recommendation: a 'meat tax'.

“This is a watershed report, thrusting the catastrophic yet persistently ignored environmental impact of animal agriculture firmly back into the political spotlight ahead of the UN Climate Conference next week. That it came from an independent, politically-influential organisation bodes well for new policy coming out of it,” said Jasmijn de Boo, CEO of The Vegan Society.

“Taxes, however, raise a number of issues and have a history of not working effectively to phase out consumption. Higher prices add to the inequalities we have in society which reinforce oppression, and may also perpetuate the notion that meat itself is more desirable, of greater worth.

“Rather than looking at taxing animal products, let's instead focus on plant-based foods that are better for the planet, everybody's health, the future of our food and, of course, the animals. They are also much more inclusive and affordable.

“What's needed is financial support for farmers wanting to diversify away from livestock and into protein crops. The UK has some of the world's best conditions for growing plant protein like hemp and fava beans, which we set out in detail in our Grow Green report,” de Boo added.

The Vegan Society launched its Grow Green campaign at the Labour Party Conference two months ago. More than seeking a reduction in meat eating, it calls for subsidies for those interested in transitioning from farming animals to growing protein crops and other plant-based agricultural options.

The benefits are not only environmental. Major studies, including the World Health Organisation's report last month, are frequently reporting on the many health benefits of plant-based eating, and its greater sustainability.

Farmers could also face a brighter future. Dairy farmers in particular have struggled very publically this year despite each receiving on average about a third of their income, around £25,000 per year, in EU subsidies. Financial assistance to move out of these failing industry could save their livelihoods.

You can write to your MP here to ask them to support the Grow Green campaign's aims.

For more information, contact The Vegan Society's Media Manager, Jimmy Pierce, on 0121 523 1738 / 07931 819 508

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