We must reduce animal consumption to hit new climate change targets, says The Vegan Society

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If the UK is to have any chance of meeting its new climate change targets, it must encourage a significant shift away from animal products, says The Vegan Society.

The UK yesterday announced its commitment to cutting carbon emissions by 57% by 2032, from 1990 levels. Yet according to the government's official climate change advisors, the current policies which focus narrowly on the energy, transport and waste sectors fall well short of those required for the new target.

Meanwhile, animal agriculture continues to be ignored at a policy level. This is despite it being one of the leading causes of climate change, responsible for more greenhouse gas emissions (at least 14.5%) than all global transport – cars, trains, planes, ships – combined.

"What we desperately need is a public education campaign on the disastrous environmental impact of animal agriculture. Most people in this country still have little idea that the production of meat, fish and dairy products is destroying the planet," said Jimmy Pierson, spokesperson for The Vegan Society.

"Policies and initiatives are also needed if we are to have any meaningful impact. If we want a blueprint then look to China, who recently announced its plan to reduce meat consumption by 50% to tackle climate change. China is really leading the way on this, and we should follow."

Animal agriculture emits high levels of CO2 – around 3.2 million tonnes every year – through activities such as land change, feed production and manure management. Cattle also produce large amounts of methane, a highly potent greenhouse gas: your average cow produces around 700 litres of methane per day, the equivalent of a large 4×4 vehicle travelling 35 miles in a day.

Research by leading international think tank Chatham House last year identified animal agriculture as a primary driver of climate change, warning that 'dietary change is essential' if global warming is to not exceed the 2C limit imposed at the UN Climate Change Conference in Paris.

There have also been repeated calls by the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the UN for a global shift towards a vegan diet. In its landmark report in 2006 animal agriculture was described as 'one of the most significant contributors to the most serious environmental problems, at every scale from local to global.'

"Animal agriculture doesn't just contribute to climate change. It is also widely regarded as one of the leading causes of deforestation, habitat loss, species extinction, water consumption and ocean dead zones. Going vegan is the single best thing any individual can do to help secure the future of our planet," added Pierson.

You can go vegan with The Vegan Society's 30 Day Vegan Pledge (www.vegansociety.com/pledge). Sign up for free to receive daily emails providing advice, info and delicious recipes.

For more information, please contact Jimmy Pierson, Media Manager, The Vegan Society / media@vegansociety.com / 0121 523 1738 (office) / 07931 819 508 (out of hours).

The Vegan Society is a registered educational charity (no. 279228) that campaigns for change and provides information and guidance on all aspects of veganism.

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