

# Public sector caterers' progress towards serving less and better meat



# Introduction

In December 2019 Public Sector Catering magazine supported a meeting of the most influential people in public sector catering at which they agreed, as PSC100, to launch a campaign to build awareness of the need to reduce meat consumption and buy better quality meat from local producers. The campaign reflected a shift in customer demand as well as a need to cut their carbon footprints and to offer healthy and nutritious meals.

The campaign built awareness in the industry and beyond, gaining the support of leading industry associations, companies and organisations. Many were already working towards the called-for 20% reduction in meat, but the campaign broadened the support and increased the volume of plant-based food served.

Now, in 2021, public sector catering is moving away from an awareness campaign to building resources and activity. The aim is to support the caterers and work collectively to present to Government the buying standards that will be required to ensure caterers buy less, but better quality, locally-sourced meat.

This research gives a snapshot of the progress towards and beyond the 20% reduction, but also looks at how caterers are achieving it and gives an insight into what customers think about, and demand from, a more plant-based menu.

We polled nearly 90 public sector caterers in March 2021 representing around 5,000 sites across the UK, including schools, healthcare and universities.

**“ Improving the nation’s health and our sustainability has never been more important. The food we serve in our hospitals, schools and other public institutions should contribute to health and sustainability – and be a pleasure too. ”**



**Prue Leith CBE**  
*Restaurateur, celebrity chef,  
television presenter and  
Vice President of the SRA*

**“ I'm delighted that public sector caterers are so focussed on promoting plant based meals. The nation's health and the planet will both benefit in the long term. ”**



**Dr Rupy Aujla**  
*TV personality, chef and author of  
“The Doctor’s Kitchen”*



# Survey summary

80%

of respondents have committed to reducing meat across menus.



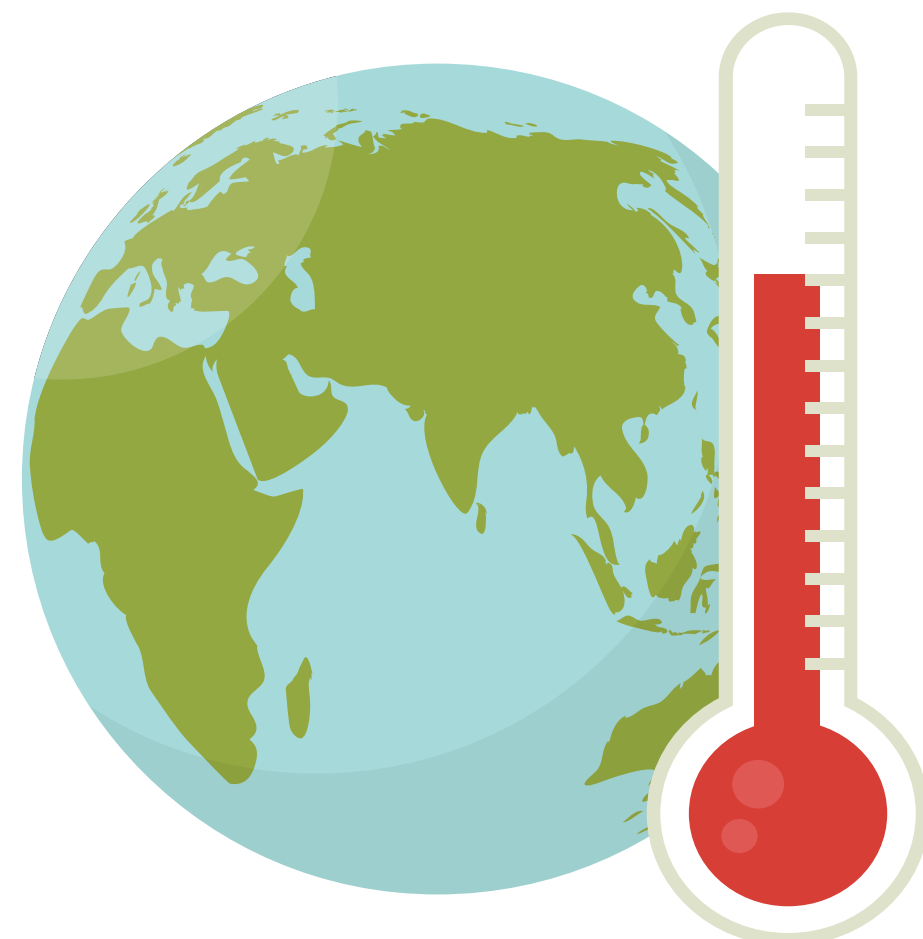
83%

have increased plant proteins (beans and pulses) in dishes by up to 20%.





The main drivers of change are customer demand and concerns about the **climate, nature loss and individual health.**



**87%**  
ranked climate  
change of the  
greatest concern in  
influencing moves  
to less meat

 **86%**

of those surveyed said  
health was a factor in  
reducing meat

 **84%**

of those who took part in  
the poll cited the impact  
on nature and wildlife

 **79%**

believed animal  
welfare were  
“important” concerns





# Contents



## What progress are public sector caterers making?

The survey shows that nearly 80% of those who took part in the poll have pledged to reduce meat across menus and more than half of those surveyed would source better meat.



## What's driving change?

The poll indicates that changing customer demand and concerns about climate change, nature loss, health and animal welfare are the main drivers for change and that caterers recognise the co-benefits of making the shift to sustainable menus.



## How are caterers making change happen?

Smaller portions of meat in dishes (in line with strict nutritional standards for school and healthcare), fewer meat dishes on menus, making vegetable dishes more prominent and meat-free days are all helping to reduce meat consumption.



# What progress are public sector caterers making?

**Nearly 80%** of those polled have decided to reduce meat content across menus.

**Over half (51%)** said consumer demand for red meat had dropped by up to a fifth and **60%** said there had been reductions in both pork and processed meat.

**83%** have increased plant proteins (beans and pulses) in dishes by **up to 20%**, while **60%** have been using more meat replacement products.

**Chicken** retains its popularity with **more than a fifth** of caterers saying they are using more chicken in dishes.

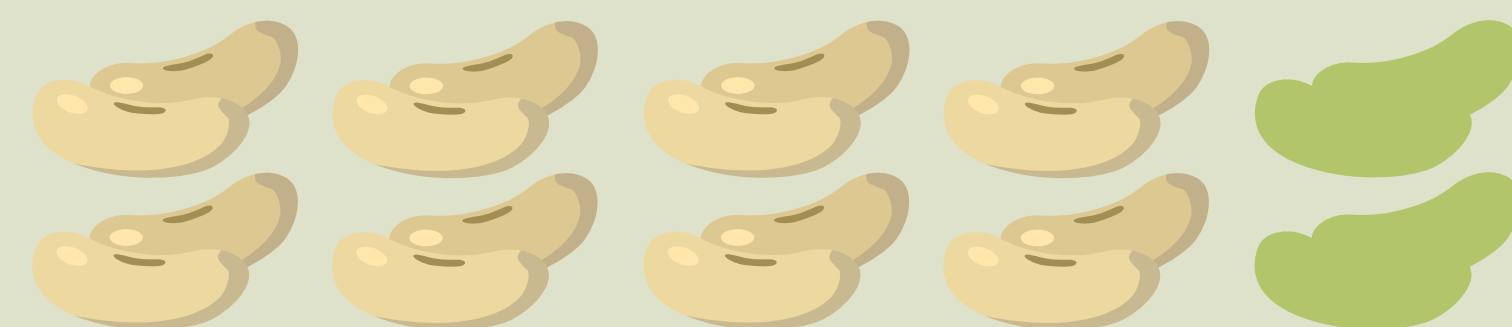
**More than half** of those polled would source better<sup>1</sup> meat and dairy and **60%** would like to buy better.

<sup>1</sup>By better we mean food that is produced to higher environmental and welfare standards as outlined in the Eating Better 'Sourcing Better' guide for food service.



# 60%

of respondents said there had been reductions in both pork and processed meat

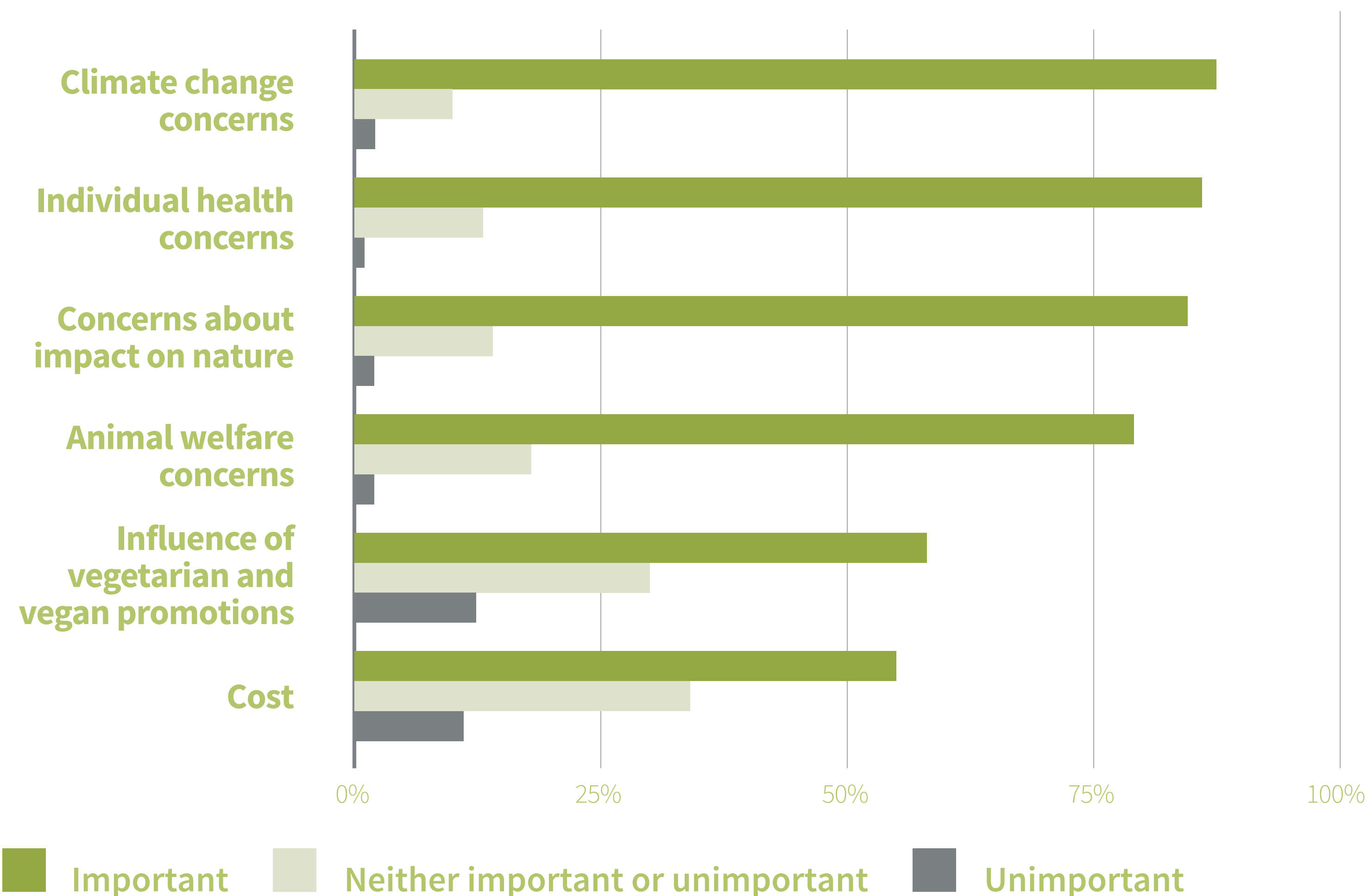


# 83%

have increased plant proteins (beans and pulses) in dishes by up to a fifth.



# What's driving change?



“ The public sector is the guardian of the nation's health and this report shows it is listening to customer and staff concerns about climate, health and creating a more sustainable food chain.

The pandemic and Brexit have changed people's perceptions and they want us to procure the best of British, first. We are working closely with the industry to develop new recipes and menus which show our commitment to increasing plant-based meals while also offering choice for people, using less but better quality meat.

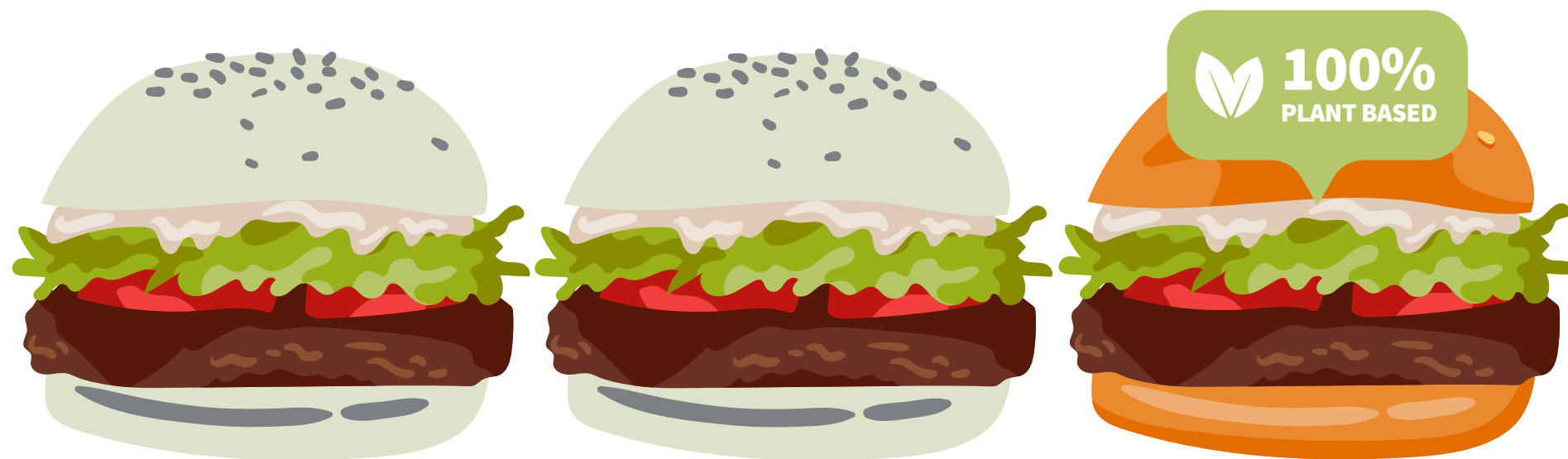
We have to accept that customers have changed their eating habits for the good and better. ”



**Andy Jones**  
Chair of PSC100 group



# How are caterers making change happen?



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A third of respondents are offering meat substitutes

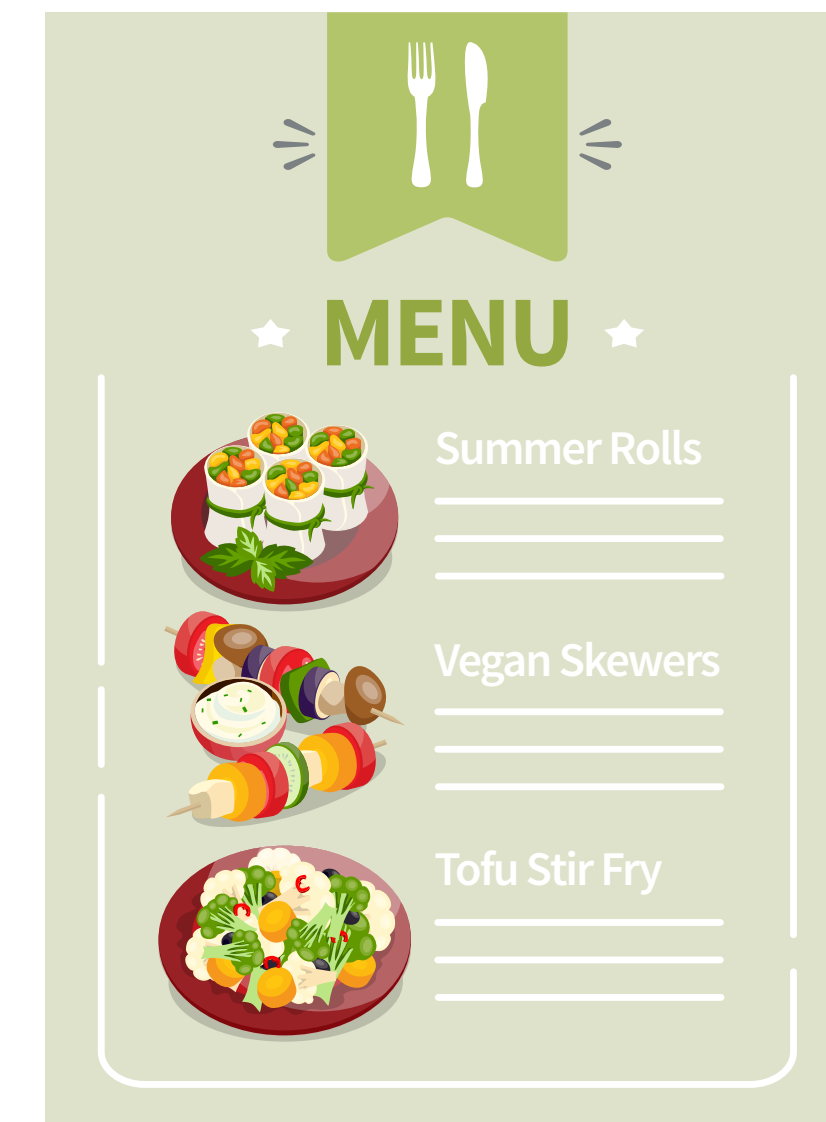
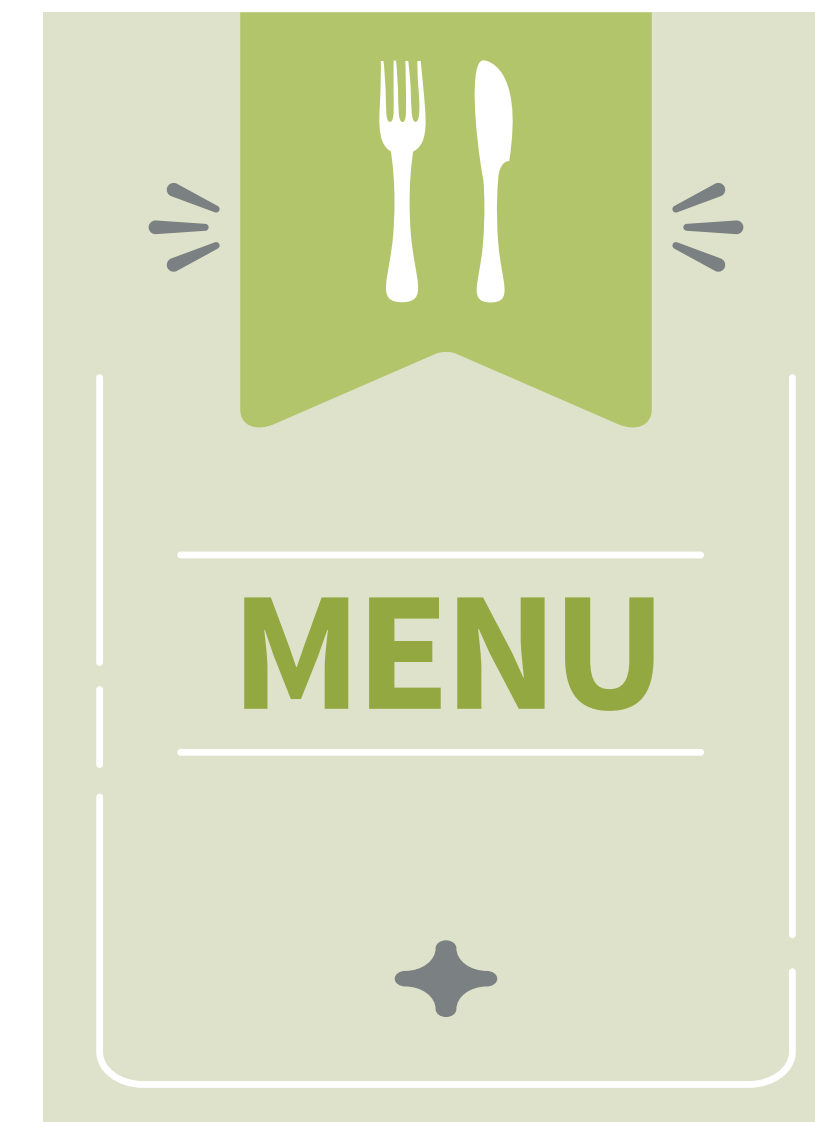
48%

of those who were polled had introduced a 'meat-free' day



52%

said they had re-designed menus to give meat-free dishes more prominence



56%

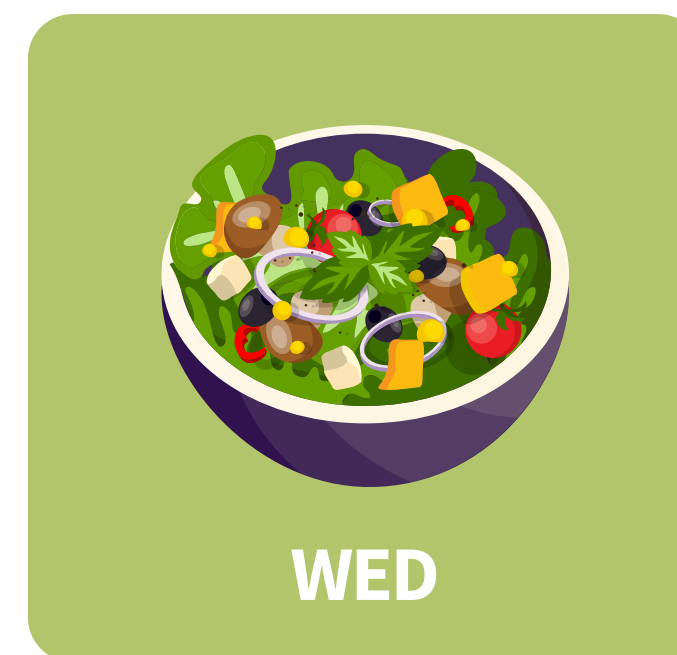
of respondents said they were reducing or removing meat-based dishes from the menu cycle



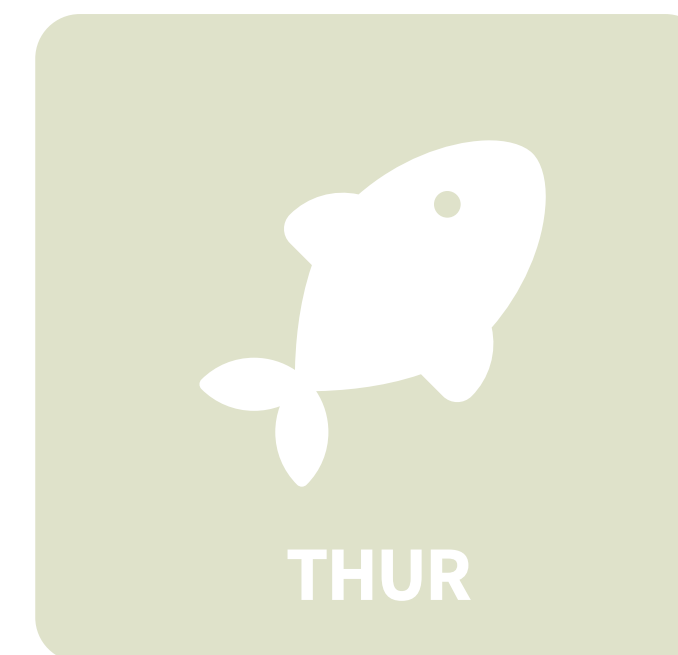
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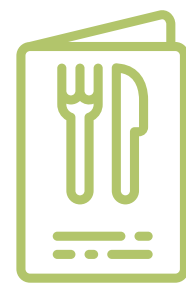
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# Recommendations



Have at least one day in the week where only plant-based food is served



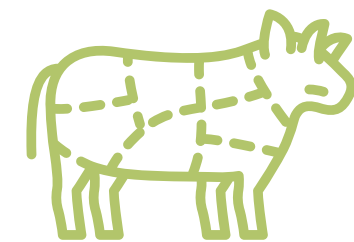
Reduce or remove meat-based dishes from the menu cycle



Give meat-free dishes more prominence on menus to help customers make more sustainable choices and enhance marketing at point of purchase.



Limit the meat content of dishes and replace with beans, pulses, nuts and more vegetables



Aim to know provenance of produce, and source meat and dairy that have been produced to higher environmental and animal welfare standards along with local fruit and vegetables



# Making progress

The results from our latest survey with Public Sector Catering, released ahead of PSC Plant Based Week 2021, show the sector's continued progress towards serving less meat, in line with a number of reports highlighting that we all need to eat less meat and more beans, pulses and vegetables to address the climate and nature crises.

The pandemic has been particularly challenging for the public sector over the last year, but the sector has responded to demand for more plant based meals and is taking the necessary steps to reduce meat, particularly red and processed meat across menus and dishes, although the high consumption of chicken remains a concern.

In addition, by acknowledging that we can't achieve "less" without the "better," it's encouraging that many public sector caterers are committing to sourcing higher animal welfare produce and are harnessing the sector's huge purchasing power to create the right environment for everyone to eat better for themselves and the planet.



**Simon Billing**  
*Executive Director, Eating Better*





# Who we are



Eating Better is an alliance of 60+ civil society organisations, working to accelerate a 50% reduction in meat and dairy consumption by 2030 and to creating an environment where healthy and sustainable diets are accessible and affordable to all. Eating Better inspires, informs, collaborates and showcases solutions. We work with producers, the food service industry, retailers and public sector catering to chart progress to eating less meat and dairy in favour of more plant-based meals for climate, nature, health, animal welfare and social justice. Together we can all eat better for people and planet.

[www.eating-better.org](http://www.eating-better.org)

**Registered Charity No. 1175669**



Public Sector Catering is the only dedicated resource for the UK's foodservice community. It's online presence and monthly magazine is essential reading for caterers, chefs and managers within the public sector, health and education. With a deserved reputation for excellence that has been built up over many years, Public Sector Catering gains added insight into the industry thanks to relationships built up with key organisations such as the Local Authority Caterers Association (LACA), the Hospital Caterers Association (HCA), the National Association of Care Catering (NACC), Prison Caterers, the University Caterers Organisation (TUCO) and the Defence Catering Group.

[www.publicsectorcatering.co.uk](http://www.publicsectorcatering.co.uk)