



Rt. Hon. Alok Sharma MP,
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By email: psaloksharma@cabinetoffice.gov.uk

Brussels, 23 September 2021

Subject: Making the default food choice the most sustainable one at COP26

Dear Rt. Hon. Alok Sharma MP,

Honourable organisers of the 26th UN Climate Change Conference of the Parties (COP26) in Glasgow,

Ahead of the crucial 26th COP in Glasgow, we would like to draw your attention to the concept 'Plant-based by default'. This innovative, and easy to apply, catering concept has the potential to reduce the climate footprint of the COP26 event, while setting an inspiring example for society at the same time.

According to the FAO, total emissions from global livestock are 7.1 Gigatonnes of Co2-equivalence per year, representing 14.5 percent of all anthropogenic greenhouse gas emissions.

Scientific research by the University of Oxford points out that a global switch to diets that rely less on meat and more on fruit and vegetables could save up to 8 million lives by 2050, reduce greenhouse gas emissions by two thirds, and lead to significant healthcare-related savings and avoided climate damages. Many studies have confirmed such positive effects of a global transition to a more plant-based food pattern.

The concept 'Plant-based by default', developed by prof Henriette Prast, builds on this knowledge and has the potential to stimulate the uptake of more plant-based diets, without restricting people's freedom of food choice. The concept reverses the current standard that is often unconsciously imposed by society.

At many events, dinners and company cafeterias, it is currently common practice to serve meals with meat as a standard. People who are on a vegetarian or plant-based diet, often have to indicate separately, in advance, that they would prefer a meal without meat. The concept, 'Plant-based by default' reverses this standard, by serving meatless meals by default, while keeping the opportunity for people to indicate that a meal with meat is preferred.

The concept has already been successfully applied by the Dutch Ministry of Education, Culture and Science and several local Dutch governments since 2018. It demonstrably contributes to a reduced meat consumption and associated positive climate impacts.

As Members of the European Parliament, we invite the COP26 organization to consider introducing the 'Plant-based by default' concept, by making the default food choice the most sustainable one.

We look forward to receiving your climate positive response,

Kind regards,

Anja Hazekamp
Sylwia Spurek
Alice Kuhnke
Eleonora Evi

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