

BARGAINING OBJECTIVE **6**

Food and land use

BACKGROUND

Food

The global food system accounts for 20-30% of greenhouse gas emissions with beef, lamb and dairy being significant contributors (<https://foodsource.org.uk/book/export/html/4>). Creating a 'food environment' where people can eat less and better meat and dairy is important to address this. But how meat and dairy, or any food for that matter, is produced is the critical information upon which to base dietary and food procurement choices.

Intensive farming has significant negative impacts on the climate, biodiversity, animal welfare, some local communities and our health <https://www.thersa.org/globalassets/pdfs/rsa-field-guide-to-future.pdf>

In the UK most of the beef and lamb isn't intensively farmed or grain fed. Our chickens on the other hand, which are often seen as a more environmentally friendly and healthier choice, are predominantly factory farmed and consume vast amounts of grain contributing to mass deforestation with serious impacts on both the climate and biodiversity as well as any indigenous communities living on the land https://www.eating-better.org/uploads/Documents/2020/EB_WeNeedToTalkAboutChicken_Feb20_A4_Final.pdf https://www.greenpeace.org.uk/wpcontent/uploads/2020/01/Greenpeace_WingingIt.pdf

Food waste is responsible for approximately 8% of global emissions, this is a particular issue in high-income countries where over a third of the food that is produced is wasted. If 50-75 percent of food waste is reduced by 2050, avoided emissions could be equal to 10.3-18.8 gigatons of carbon dioxide. Reducing waste also avoids the deforestation for additional farmland, preventing 74.9-76.3 gigatons of additional emissions (<https://www.drawdown.org/solutions/reduced-food-waste>).

Adopting simplistic policies, such as banning beef, without understanding and making changes to the whole food procurement and food waste system in an institution can cause unintended negative consequences. It is critical that universities and colleges adopt holistic food and land use policies that move away from industrial animal farming, unsustainable fishing, plants grown in intensive monocultures and overly processed food towards a more sustainable food system that is not only good for the climate but also good for the soil, for farmers and communities, for animals and for our health.

Land use

Following serious food shortages created by World War 2 rural land in the UK (as in many other countries) was farmed with the sole purpose of increasing yield i.e. the amount of food





that could be produced per hectare. The European's Common Agricultural Policy was introduced in 1962 and reinforced this approach by awarding the highest subsidies to big farms that produced the highest yields. Over 70% of land across the UK is farmed, much of it intensively, and we now face the following challenges as a result of this intensification over the past 50 years:

- **Environment** The UK is one of the most nature depleted countries in the world. More than one in seven native species face extinction (including 30% of UK birds) and more than half are in decline. Soil is being destroyed 10 times faster than it's being created and the UK has lost 84% of its fertile topsoil affecting the health of our rivers, aquatic life and costing £1.2 billion a year. Agriculture is responsible for 88% of the UK's ammonia gas emissions causing harmful air pollution.
- **Diets** Intensive agriculture has depleted micronutrients in our soils and food, high antibiotic use in intensive livestock farming has contributed to anti-microbial resistance and as people eat more convenient processed foods made from mass produced cheap ingredients high in sugar, salt and fat diet-related illness and deaths in the UK are increasing.
- **Economics** The impact of unhealthy diets is estimated at £27bn. The average age of UK farmers is 58 years and few young people want to enter the profession as it is often low paid, skilled and physically hard work. It has been estimated that more than one farmer a week in the UK dies by suicide.

Universities own more than 52,000 hectares of land in the UK, much of which is rented to tenant farmers who are contributing to the challenges in our food system as detailed above.

FOOD CULTURE

A third of Britons now have meat-free or meat-reduced diets because of an increased awareness of the climate and nature crisis but the reliance on convenience food means many people have lost their connection with food & farming as well as cooking skills.

We urgently need to move to low carbon food production which boosts biodiversity, enhances human health and protects animal welfare.

DEMANDS

- **Meat, dairy and fish** Serve 50% less by 2025 (or earlier) compared to current levels and ensure the remainder is 'better' ie meat and dairy is UK sourced and 100% pasture fed, fish is MSC certified.
- **Fruit, veg, wholegrains and pulses** Serve more and ensure the produce has been produced using agroecological farming methods.
- **Food waste** Redistribute food surplus to students and/or local community and compost all unavoidable food waste and compostable packaging within an agreed timeframe.
- **Food packaging** Eliminate all non-compostable and non-reusable food packaging by an agreed timeframe.
- **Establish a land use policy** for the land owned by the institution with the primary aim of improving soil health which will result in soil carbon sequestration.





NEGOTIATOR'S RESOURCES

- Garnett, T., Smith, P., Nicholson, W., & Finch, J. (2016). Food systems and greenhouse gas emissions (Foodsource: chapters). Food Climate Research Network, University of Oxford.
<https://foodsource.org.uk/book/export/html/4>
- Field Guide For The Future – report by RSA Food, Farming and Countryside Commission, 2019.
<https://www.thersa.org/globalassets/pdfs/rsa-field-guide-to-future.pdf>
- The cow in the room: a call for policy for sustainable diet. <https://feedbackglobal.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/Feedback-PolicyBrief-Cow-InRoom-Final-15August2019.pdf>
- IDDRI report: Ten Years for Agroecology in Europe-
<https://www.soilassociation.org/media/18074/iddri-study-tyfa.pdf>
(4 page summary -
https://www.iddri.org/sites/default/files/PDF/Publications/Catalogue%20Iddri/D%C3%A9cryptage/201809-IB1018-TYFAEN_0.pdf)
- Winging It: How the UK's Chicken Habit is Fuelling the Climate and Nature Emergency – report by Greenpeace, 2020.
https://www.greenpeace.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/Greenpeace_WingingIt.pdf
- Sustain, the alliance for better food and farming. Sustain advocates food and agriculture policies and practices that enhance the health and welfare of people and animals, improve the working and living environment, promote equity and enrich society and culture <https://www.sustainweb.org>
- SOS-UK, Farming for Carbon and Nature - food and farming carbon offset scheme for UK tertiary education: <https://tinyurl.com/y4algfw2>

THIS GND QUICK GUIDE provides an overview and entry point to engaging with one of six UCU Green New Deal demands for universities and colleges. To access the full GND bargaining and negotiation framework, click here: https://www.ucu.org.uk/media/11326/Green-new-deal-bargaining-guide--model-claim/pdf/green-new-deal_bargaining-guide_jan21.pdf

To discuss this further, seek advice on progressing this demand or other aspects of the GND, and to use the model claim and letter, contact environment@ucu.org.uk

