



## Peas Please Submission to National Food Strategy Call for Evidence

### **About Peas Please**

A trail-blazing initiative focused specifically on veg, Peas Please aims to bring together farmers, retailers, fast food and restaurant chains, caterers, processors and government departments with a common goal of making it easier for everyone to eat veg. Peas Please is led by project partners the [Food Foundation](#), [WWF UK](#), [Nourish Scotland](#), [Food NI](#), [Belfast Food Network](#) and [Food Sense Wales](#). For more information about the Peas Please, please visit [www.foodfoundation.org.uk/peasplease](http://www.foodfoundation.org.uk/peasplease). Peas Please works in partnership with Veg Power: [www.vegpower.org.uk](http://www.vegpower.org.uk).

### **Our Policy Pitch: Developing a 20-year Fruit and Vegetable Campaign**

Peas Please started with a simple concept: to make it easier for everyone in the UK to eat enough vegetables through food system change. From there it has grown to an initiative with over 60 businesses and 21 cities pledging to do their part. Retailers, contract caterers, high street chains, schools and others have all come together to serve and encourage more veg, and the success of the initiative provides important insights in how to improve consumption of fruit and vegetables in the UK.

The reason we need Peas Please, of course, is that very few people in the UK are eating enough vegetables. Analysis of the National Diet and Nutrition Survey reveals that 80% of adults, 95% of children and 80% of teens are not meeting their daily vegetable requirements (1). This has a major impact on the quality of their diet, and thus long-term consequences for their health and NHS costs. In the UK, 32,000 preventable deaths could be averted if everyone ate enough fruit and veg (2).

The initiative is guided by our [Commitment's Framework](#), which outlines 10 key actions that businesses and organisations can take to improve veg consumption. These include government action to support the horticulture industry, serving and selling more veg across retail, manufacturing and restaurants, supporting those on a low income through programmes such as Healthy Start, promoting the Veg Power campaign, training up the next generation of veg-focused chefs, and working through towns and cities on place-based initiatives.

Sixteen contract caterers are increasing the amount of veg they serve in their meals. Twelve High street chains and four manufacturers are incorporating more veg into their meals, products and recipes, particularly their kid's meals. Nearly 380 organisations have also been working at the local level in 21 cities as part of the Veg Cities campaign, reaching 110,000 people. Seven major retailers and the Association of Convenience Stores are working to better position and promote veg in store, to incorporate more veg into ready meals, and have supported the national vegetable advertising initiative Veg Power. Operating in parallel to Peas Please, [Veg Power's Eat Them to Defeat Them Campaign](#) was seen by 38 million people through ITV's network and was seen an additional 66 million times through digital poster sites and outdoor advertising. All in all, the campaign had an equivalent value of £10m and reached into the homes of 40 million people. Initial surveys show that 69% of kids liked the campaign, 57% said it made vegetables more fun and 46% of kids who have

seen the advert said they recently tried more vegetables. Sales data confirms a 2.3% positive impact on veg sales and 1.7% increase in veg consumptions by kids.

In just two years Peas Please has delivered more than 80 million additional portions of veg (served or sold)\* and demonstrates the room for improvement in government policy. If contract caterers operating in schools can successfully put two portions of veg in every kid's meal, there's no reason that school regulations shouldn't make this a national standard, and the same for all publicly procured food. As part of Peas Please, retailers are discussing how to make the Healthy Start scheme easier to use and to leverage the programme to make veg more accessible to those on a low income; but the Healthy Start scheme is in need of a major overhaul to make it more effective. Discussions with fruit and vegetable growers of all sizes and types as part of Peas Please have resulted in the Fruit and Vegetable Alliance, a group with the collective knowledge about how policy can better support British growers to provide more produce to the UK market.

Reflecting on Peas Please, we propose the government establish a 20-year fruit and vegetable campaign. Eating fruit and vegetables brings benefits to health and the environment and is the area of the diet where we have the largest inequalities. This fruit and vegetable campaign should have multiple elements including:

1. Establishing a vision for a UK produced seasonal fruit and veg basket which inspires people to try new varieties at different times of the year.
2. Ensuring all publicly procured food and programmes such as the school fruit and veg scheme are oriented around provision of this fruit and veg basket and includes two portions of veg as standard in every main meal.
3. Aligns farming subsidies to support farmers to grow this basket of products – this will include support for new entrants and smaller and younger growers, R&D support on agroecological growing methods, stronger farmer extension support, support for cooperatives etc.
4. Investing in fruit and vegetable advertising to drive aspiration and to normalise consumption. This could build on the work of Veg Power.
5. Investing in a nationwide early years programme for teaching children to develop healthy taste preferences and a lifelong preference for fruit and vegetables. This could build on Finland's experience and the nascent work of Flavour School in the UK.
6. Setting and monitoring mandatory reformulation targets for ready meals and takeaway meals for levels of vegetables (Peas Please pledger Tesco is acting on this and shows it is possible).
7. Developing a scheme with wholesalers aimed at increasing the fruit and veg offer in convenience stores in areas of high deprivation.
8. Investigating in a range of fiscal and other support measures to help those on a low income afford enough fruit and veg. This would include expanding the entitlement to and value of Healthy Start vouchers, and work with retailers to add further value to this scheme. This could also include re-evaluating VAT on foods and fruit and vegetable prescriptions for those on a low incomes.
9. Giving powers to local authorities to discount business rates for businesses which offer the fruit and veg basket.

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\* The final calculation of additional portions of veg served/sold will be captured in the Peas Please progress report, due to be published in late November.

## References

1. Food Foundation. Veg Facts [Internet]. 2016 [cited 2017 Jun 6]. Available from: <http://foodfoundation.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/FF-Veg-Doc-V5.pdf>
2. Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation. Global Health Data Exchange [Internet]. 2017 [cited 2019 Oct 22]. Available from: <http://ghdx.healthdata.org/gbd-results-tool>