

Project overview

In the UK, greenhouse gas emissions from the food system account for 19% of our GHGs and must be reduced if we are to be able to hit the UK's Net Zero goal, yet the vast majority of people are unaware that what they eat can help reduce climate change.

Our vision is a bold and unique UK-wide campaign to profile bean, lentil and pulse (beans) consumption as an achievable, affordable action to tackle climate change, with a focus on enabling children, young people and families from low-income households to adopt this behaviour change. Beans offer a positive route into reducing diet-related GHGs given that messaging can focus on adding them into diets, rather than taking anything away. They are a win-win-win for climate, health and equity outcomes. We want to see a UK where beans are aspirational and where everyone – regardless of income – is empowered to cook and eat them; where more beans are available in retail and on menus (particularly in schools and universities), making them easier to access.

To achieve this, at a national level we'll:

1. **Develop creative and impactful messaging for a digital campaign to drive demand.** We'll focus on chefs and other digital influencers given their role in shaping food trends and menus and create digital assets to share on social media and with community, membership and youth organisations to create a wider movement to boost appeal. We'll work closely with Veg Power and Beans is How to deliver this.
2. Engage and build **a community of action among national food businesses** by providing them with evidence-based actions they can take to boost sales/servings of beans to support them to **reduce their scope 3 emissions and improve the health of their customers' shopping baskets**.
3. **School Children:** We'll focus on children in 750 primary schools in the lower half of the deprivation scale in England, Scotland and NI, working to engage caterers, teachers and parents to drive increased uptake. This will be led by our partners, Veg Power.
4. **Share insights and learnings with policymakers** across the devolved nations to embed a shift in providing climate-friendly food options in educational and other public settings.

We'll also activate the campaign in two place-based settings with reach into low-income communities:

1. **University Students:** We'll activate the campaign at University of Kent where half of students experience food insecurity, trialing on-campus interventions and working with the student body to increase engagement and uptake, capturing learnings that can be shared with other higher educational institutions.
2. **Birmingham.** Birmingham is England's 7th most deprived authority. We'll work with the City Council Food Strategy team and create a community of action among local businesses to shape our engagement with businesses at a national level and work together to implement incentives for local businesses to get more beans on menus.

We want to embed a permanent shift in the food system in favour of higher bean consumption. To do this we will work to obtain long-term commitments from schools, businesses and policymakers on changing the food on offer, working with them to embed more climate-friendly options into their menus, product ranges, and in the government's standards for food served in public settings.

By working to boost the appeal of beans, and through repeated exposure to our campaign and schools' work over the course of the 3-year programme, we will also be equipping our target audience (18-35 year olds) with the skills and confidence to change their eating and cooking habits to support healthier and more climate-friendly behaviours in the long-term. All assets and communication materials created to support the campaign will remain open access via Veg Power's website and available to download after the project ends.

This will be a 3 year programme of work commencing Summer 2025.