❓ Additional questions from the session

Below are some of the questions that were raised in the session but we weren't able to answer fully live.

How can your great organisations campaigning for a more sustainable food systems all come together to form a unified, louder campaign?

Ruth, *Sustain*: Many organisations are coming together to call for more climate-friendly food policies as part of the National Food Strategy Part 2, due to be released in 2021, and we must continue to do so. As we have seen in these talks, food still isn't being taken seriously enough in policy about climate change, and that needs to change if we are to have any hope of keeping warming below 1.5 degrees

How can food banks contribute to net zero?

Krysia, *Feedback:* To get to net zero we need to enforce a food waste hierarchy. Food is valuable and no edible food should be making its way down the hierarchy, which it currently does due to structural issues in our food system. Instead food waste must be prevented via system change and mandatory business reporting, in order to relieve the resources used to grow it, like land, fossil fuels and soil. Where food waste cannot be prevented it should be redistributed to other people and then to animals.

Redistributing food is preferable to sending it down the hierarchy to anaerobic digesters or to landfill or incineration, however this must not deflect from the structural causes of poverty. Redistribution may have a role in social eating, or on a small scale adhoc basis, but it does not alleviate food poverty. This is a separate issue of rights, where governments have a duty to ensure that people have the economic means to access adequate nutritious food.

Where food waste is inevitable how can we make it easier to recover it?

By using apps like OLIO to share and rescue food.

Do these measures focus enough on structural issues that create barriers to a more sustainable system? Such as land prices / concentrated land ownership creating barriers to sustainable farming? Or the continued reduction of real wages limiting people's ability to be able to make a 'sustainable' choice, despite increased pressure on individuals to 'do the right thing'?

The UK government has recently launched the Agricultural Act 2020, which aims to incentives farmers to reduce their environmental impact. This will replace the previous scheme which was skewed to larger land owners. The policy is newly formed and not yet implemented so the impact remains unclear. More information on the new Act can be found here.

Krysia, *Feedback*: This is a really key question that strikes at the heart of our broken food system. Regarding land access, Sustain does some really great work on access to land in and around UK cities. As

for real wages and inequality that leave sustainable choices out of reach for many people (vegetables cost more per calorie than processed foods), policies that join the dots between climate change and food need to address barriers to veg by increasing local availability and normalising delicious plant rich food. We could start by making food production subsidies more aligned with sustainability and health by making horticulture subsidies more substantial and available for smaller farms. Substantial support for different supply chain models would help the transition from supermarket dominance to more resilient, regional, community based and less wasteful systems, funded for example by supermarkets handing back the covid tax-relief.

How do you ensure people make the correct change without being prescriptive or viewed as authoritarian? (While people here would mostly agree there are those who, because of lack of education or community upbringing/values, don't have the same views? Within this community also there are people with different priorities: No meat/ low meat, No packaging/ only local, Organic/ regenerative farming etc.)

Krysia, *Feedback*: Pragmatism and positivity are central to achieving a shift in diets. There are several things that could easily cut overall meat consumption without telling people what to eat, for instance by reducing some of the invisible prescriptive policies that currently steer us towards meat. Firstly we could rebalance agricultural production subsidies towards healthy sustainable food, particularly edible horticulture. We could also remove support for advertising of foods that aren't compatible with climate mitigation, like red or processed meat. Public universities and pension funds should also divest from intensive livestock production. These measures aren't about taking away people's choices, they are about removing the barriers that prevent people from making sustainable healthy choices. Other barriers include seeing plant-based food as not normal, and for a niche group of people. Plant-rich public procurement can go some way to normalising sustainable diets, as can education about plant rich cooking in communities and schools as well as supermarkets working to make plant rich options appealing, normal and easy through promotion, positioning and labelling (supermarkets could be incentivised to normalise plant based diets via a mandatory target to halve their sales of meat and dairy by 2030 compared to a 2020 baseline). One high impact way to reduce meat consumption would be through a carbon levy on producers of high impact foods aimed at reformulating processed red meat. This would work in the same way as the sugary drinks levy but to avoid paying the levy producers might reformulate burgers to include a percentage of healthier ingredients like mushrooms. This way people could continue to buy meat burgers without having to pay more or change their cooking habits.

As for the different priorities amongst stakeholders and even amongst civil society, there are several dividing questions such as whether some meat production can be compatible with climate change mitigation and at what scale (what is less? what is better?). Having these debates in public while we stand solidly behind a simple message: 'globally we have to eat less meat' can help raise public awareness according to Chatham House.

Is banning beef the answer?

London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine launched its own labelling scheme to indicate meal choices that complied with the EAT Lancet Planetary Health diet - i.e. focusing on positive choice rather than cutting out. More info [here](#).

Additionally, Student Eats joined this event and added that:

"We believe the discussions around banning beef in universities only address the climate crisis and don't address the biodiversity crisis - we've written an article and statement on why we believe banning beef isn't the answer" See [here](#).

Ruth, *Sustain*: We certainly need to significantly reduce meat and dairy in our diets, but it's more complicated than just banning beef. Farming cows through agro-ecological methods *can* be beneficial for soils and biodiversity, whilst switching from beef to other meat may have a big impact on the environment as well. It is more beneficial to choose less of all types of meat and dairy, and for the small amount eaten, choose organic, higher welfare, certified sustainable or pasture-raised. At the same time, choose more fruit and vegetables, grains and pulses, as much from your locale as possible, and eat less of the very heavily processed foods that are high in very planet-damaging sugar and palm oil, like sugary drinks.

What role would personal carbon trading might play as a regulatory lever with respect to food consumption and climate? (in light of Krysia's point about (meat) levies / taxes being regressive but it)

Krysia, *Feedback*: I don't know enough about what personal carbon trading might look like. However a carbon levy could perhaps Incentivise reformulation of sausages and burgers to be healthier and more sustainable without being a regressive policy. Governments could place a carbon levy on suppliers of processed meat products, aimed at reformulating these foods to reduce emissions per portion. By levying the tax on industry, producers could add mushrooms to burgers (known as blended burgers where they have been developed in the US) to avoid paying the tax, and the amount of meat in each portion would decrease without citizens paying more or changing their behaviour. Targeting the tax at reformulation avoids issues of regressive taxes that penalise low income households and does not rely on the willpower of individuals to choose lower meat options in the supermarket. Tax thresholds should align with health standards to ensure products are healthier and do not contain excessive processed food additives like salt.

How do councils decide which/what food makes the cut and what is deemed exemplary food? (Local dairy/meat produced on regenerative farms vs foreign vegetables etc.)

Ruth, *Sustain*: Standards for sustainable food in the public sector must be set in law, like standards for nutrition are. There should be a maximum amount of meat that can be served, and minimum standards for the sustainability of some foods, for example all meat should be higher-welfare, organic or free-range. There is simply no place for factory-farmed meat in our public sector institutions, it is a waste of public money, and it is risking future pandemics and runaway climate change.

Councils should be provided with the resources they need to source from smaller, more local enterprises. If these standards incur an extra cost, studies have shown time and time again that the

investment is worth it in money to the local economy, as well as climate and nature and the government needs to recognise it as such

Could food waste at institutions be combated by providing less options? And should there be a metric to what meant with "low in meat"?

The easiest solution is to say the maximum amount of meat and dairy that can be served per person per week. Then leave it up to the caterer to deliver that in a way they think best, so that could be via meat free days, or very low-meat meals, or incentives like meal deals on meat-free meals to encourage these to be chosen

Krysia, *Feedback*: The Hospitality and Food Service sector is responsible for 8% of food waste and surplus (not redistributed). We know that voluntary business initiatives don't tend to work well so in agreement with the answer above about meat, a good option is mandatory food waste reduction targets (with a baseline and a date) and then leave it up to the caterer to decide how to meet those targets depending on where their food waste arises.

How do the panel think we can avoid just shifting from meat to meatless/replacements products which benefits the large food businesses again rather than to more a planet friendly based diet consisting of seasonal fruit and vegetables and legumes?

Ruth, *Sustain*: Public procurement! 25% people eat a public meal each day. Make these meals reflect the kind of foods we want. This would do 2 things

1) bolster the supply chains for good food, support small-scale suppliers with our money and

2) make it normal for people to eat this kind of food, to help develop tastes accordingly

One idea is to increase the value of Healthy Start Vouchers, given to new parents and pregnant people to buy fruit and vegetables and infant formula milk. Digitalising the vouchers and making sure they are taken up by all low-income parents is also really important.

Krysia, *Feedback*: Rebalance agricultural production subsidies to support the production of regionally grown and distributed horticulture to ensure available supply of the healthy reference diet by removing meat production subsidies, raising horticultural subsidies from 1% of total agricultural subsidies to the majority, supporting edible horticulture via funds for regional marketing and large scale support for regional food economies.

Also, as advocated by the Behavioural Insights Team, a Government media campaign of a plant based 'power dish'. As was done by Agricultural and Horticultural Development Board's Pork Division on pulled pork, which saw a ~22,000% increase in consumption after coordinated marketing

Finally, education of plant rich cooking in communities and schools, university freshers, new parents, home movers, in order to overcome barriers, raise awareness to boost public support for policy and preserve knowledge about food preparation in an age of processed food.

Ho do we get food to poorer families that may not have access to technological solutions (like apps)

Refer individuals to food banks. Working with charitable partners to ensure food is never wasted so we channel food to charities when possible.

Krysia, *Feedback*: As the Trussel Trust says, "Our vision is for a UK without the need for food banks." As previously discussed, redistribution may have a role in social eating, or as an intermediary measure at times of crisis, but it does not alleviate poverty, which is an issue of rights, where governments have a duty to ensure that people have the economic means to access adequate nutritious food*.*

Will the new british agricultural policy impact environmental footprint of how food is produced in Britain?

Ruth, *Sustain*: Overall, the new Agriculture Bill has some positive parts - basic payments to farmers will be replaced by a new Environmental Land Management Scheme - which will instead pay farmers for public goods. This could be a great move but we are yet to define 'public goods' and the devil will be in the detail.

There's also a great risk that any efforts we make at good standards here will be undermined by trade deals with other countries, which could see food produced in a much more damaging way imported into the UK. There's a risk that UK consumers could drive demand for environmental degradation and deforestation abroad (perhaps unknowingly), and that our farmers would need to lower standards to compete.