

# **Sustainable Food Policy**

~ A Meat and Fish Free Menu ~

## **Introduction**

Sustainable food is a fundamental component of our new sustainability strategy. It affects everyone because our staff, volunteers and participants rely on the food we provide to fuel them through our events. We frequently receive feedback relating to our catering provision, which we always consider carefully. We are certain that regular volunteers and participants will have noticed the significant investments and improvements we have made over the years.

## **An important change**

Since our first event in 2012, the food provided by the Ourea Events catering team has always been vegetarian (meat and fish free). However, we have occasionally invited outside caterers and traders to our events who may have provided meat or fish options. This caused some confusion and therefore we have decided to make our position clearer and more consistent.

From 2021 onwards, ALL FOOD provided at our events will be meat and fish free.

This includes:

- ALL FOOD provided by the Ourea Events catering team
- ALL FOOD provided by outside caterers supporting our events
- ALL FOOD provided by traders attending our events

The rest of this article explains the rationale for our exclusively vegetarian – meat and fish free – sustainable food policy.

## **Reducing the carbon footprint of our menu**

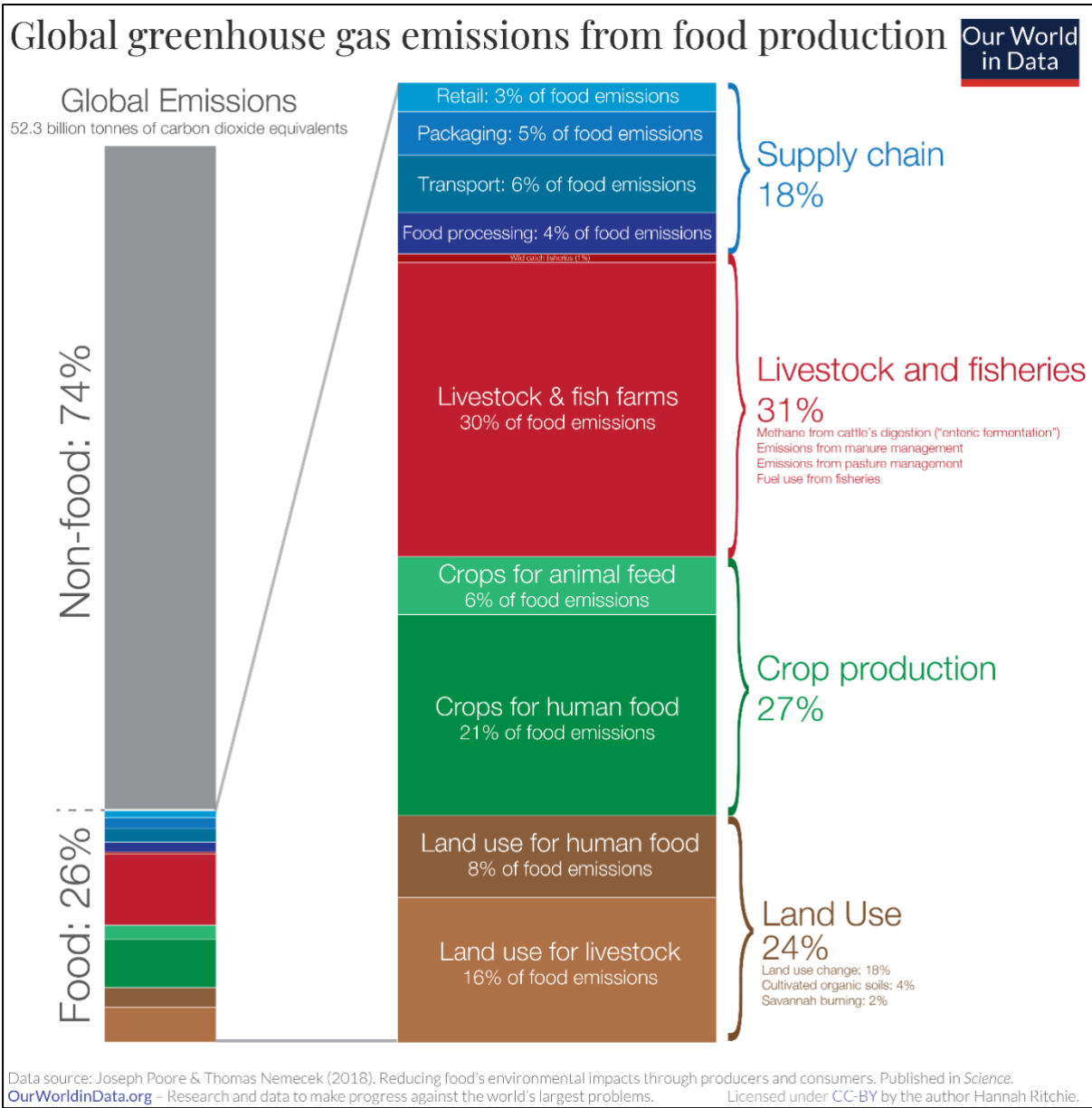
As the consequences of climate change become increasingly urgent, we must all consider the impact of our decisions and behaviours AND take action to reduce our carbon footprint. Food is one way we can all make a difference since we consume it every day.

Many people are opting for locally sourced, less processed and less packaged foods, and finding ways to reduce food waste. These are all great ways to support a more sustainable food system, but the biggest wins are to be found in food production, [which is responsible for one-quarter of the world's greenhouse gas emissions.](#)

Greenhouse Gas (GHG) emissions are expressed as 'carbon dioxide equivalents' but this metric also accounts for other harmful gases such as methane and nitrous oxide. The illustration below shows that over half of the global GHG emissions from food production are attributable to livestock and fisheries, with much smaller percentages attributable to food processing, packaging, transport etc.

Furthermore, livestock production takes up around 80% of the world's agricultural land and is one of the leading causes of deforestation, biodiversity loss and water pollution.

This sums up why we believe that a meat and fish free menu is the only sustainable choice for our business. We are also committed to reducing food waste and unnecessary packaging, and the impact of these changes will be shown in our annual sustainability report from 2021 onwards.



## Ensuring food safety

Food safety is one of our primary considerations as event organisers. It would be incredibly difficult and unpleasant to have to deal with an outbreak of food poisoning during an event and we have worked hard to ensure that our catering provision meets and exceeds UK food safety standards. This has become more important and more challenging as our events have increased in size and complexity.

Most of our events involve relocating every day to a new overnight camp. These are usually in farm fields with a whole host of potential contaminants that need to be managed. We use refrigerated vehicles to store foods that need to be kept frozen or chilled, but it takes some time to hook up the generator and the temperature may fluctuate during these times.

At each overnight camp, our catering team serves food from mid-afternoon into the night. We prepare and cook food in batches to minimise the amount of time that food is standing. We use food

thermometers to ensure that food is served at the correct temperature. However, catering in a rural, outdoor environment is inherently riskier than a controlled, indoor kitchen.

While plant-based foods can become contaminated with pathogens, the risks of foodborne diseases (such as norovirus and campylobacter) are lower compared to meat, fish and dairy\* products.

*\*Please note that we have not eliminated dairy products from our menu because we feel this would be too restrictive for most people. However, most of our menu options are plant-based (meat, fish and dairy free) with the option to add milk, cheese or eggs if you wish to.*

### **Retaining an element of personal choice**

For those who prefer to include some meat and fish in their event diet, we do not wish to remove this choice altogether. Anyone can bring their own food (and drinks) to our events to supplement what we provide. However, we ask that you do not bring any meat or fish items into our catering areas and consume them considerately around others who may not appreciate them.

Furthermore, it is up to the participant to find a way to store any additional food items appropriately. For example, at our multi-day events, some competitors choose to pack well-wrapped meat or fish items (such as canned tuna, sardines or corned beef; wrapped chorizo or sausage rolls) into their support point bag or overnight bag. This is permitted within the rules, but please do not ask us to store or refrigerate any additional food items for you. Some of our events also have routes that pass cafes, pubs and shops and participants are welcome to purchase whatever food they like from these locations.

### **Summary**

These are the actions we are taking to reduce the environmental impact, and improve the sustainability of our food menu from 2021:

- 1. All food provided at our events will be meat and fish free (100% vegetarian) including:**
  - Food provided by the Ourea Events catering team
  - Food provided by outside caterers supporting our events
  - Food provided by traders attending our events
  
- 2. All eggs, milk and cheese products provided at our events will be free range and/or organic.**
  
- 3. We will support local food suppliers including:**
  - Heathen Vegan ([LINK](#)). Our catering partner providing gourmet vegan meals who are also based in Kendal close to Ourea Events HQ.
  - Local catering companies and coffee providers at our events, like Fellside Coffee at our Lake District events ([LINK](#)) and Coffee Rescue at our Scottish events ([LINK](#))
  - *Local suppliers in Wales or Scotland for expedition races (details pending)*
  
- 4. We will reduce food packaging through our food procurement policy:**
  - All the main meals for our expedition events will be prepared in reusable (food grade) containers.
  - Foods wrapped in single-use plastic will be avoided where possible.
  - Food packaging will be recycled – link to waste section

- All non-perishable items will be purchased in bulk (less packaging compared to smaller/individual items)
- We will remove disposable serve-wear (bowls, plates etc.) from all events, and stop using disposable drinking cups at water stations on routes.

## **Conclusion**

We hope that our sustainable food policy will stimulate interesting thoughts and conversations about ethical and sustainable diets. This is such an important topic as we collectively deal with the impacts of the climate crisis and move towards living in less damaging and more restorative ways.

Above all, we hope that you will enjoy the food at our events in 2021 and beyond.

As always, your honest feedback will be welcomed.