



Peas
Please

Making a pledge
for more veg

**PROGRESS
REPORT**
2023



A HUGE THANK YOU TO EVERYONE WHO HAS SUPPORTED PEAS PLEASE OVER THE LAST FOUR YEARS

Acknowledgements

We are extremely grateful to all those who've contributed to this report, our pledgers for reporting their progress in 2023, and to our Veg Advocates for their continued support and input. A huge thanks in particular to our funder, The National Lottery Community Fund (UK Programme), for making all our work possible.



About The National Lottery Community Fund

We are the largest funder of community activity in the UK – we're proud to award money raised by National Lottery players to communities across England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. Since June 2004, we have made over 200,000 grants and awarded over £9 billion to projects that have benefited millions of people. We are passionate about funding great ideas that matter to communities and make a difference to people's lives. At the heart of everything we do is the belief that when people are in the lead, communities thrive. Thanks to the support of National Lottery players, our funding is open to everyone. We're privileged to be able to work with the smallest of local groups right up to UK-wide charities, enabling people and communities to bring their ambitions to life.

WITH THANKS TO OUR STRATEGY AND ADVISORY BOARDS FOR THEIR GUIDANCE AND EXPERTISE

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SUMMARY OF ACHIEVEMENTS

Since Peas Please was launched in 2017 >>



HAVE MADE A PLEDGE FOR MORE VEG

1.1 BILLION



8 retailers added value to the Healthy Start scheme

cumulative additional portions of veg sold or served

Our Small Grants Programme funded **54** local projects aimed at increasing veg consumption, involving **88** of our Veg Advocates and reaching **2,700** people across the UK.



660,843 people have been reached through the **VEG CITIES** campaign

VEGPOWER

36 MILLION people have been reached every year since 2019 by Veg Power



1.5 MILLION

children have taken part in the Veg Power Schools programme



Key messages

- Peas Please pledgers have sold or served **1.1 billion extra portions of veg** over the past five years.
- **23 of our pledgers have obtained a green traffic light score** for their progress in the final year of Peas Please, showing that they have fully met their pledge commitments.
- Despite the progress being made by pledgers, across the

UK the average **proportion of shopping baskets that are veg has fallen from 7.2% to 6.8%** over the past four years.

- The **cost of living crisis** is continuing to impact on the amount of veg households are buying and is hitting low income households the hardest. Household purchases of vegetables **fell in the year to 2022 by 14%**.
- As the current phase of Peas

Please comes to a close, our partnership has shown just what can be achieved by **creating a diverse community of supporters working together to champion vegetables**. With the climate, public health and cost of living crises continuing to affect us all, we need your continued support into the next decade and beyond to make sure that vegetables remain on the agenda.



Did we achieve what we set out to do?

Food system change is tricky at the best of times. What we didn't foresee back in 2019 was that the programme would take place against a backdrop of extreme food system turbulence; with Brexit, the Covid-19 pandemic, and a cost of living crisis all happening over the course of the past four years. As the current programme of work comes to a close, this report will summarise the past four years of work, reflecting on successes and learnings from the project.

In 2019 we obtained funding from the National Lottery for a four-year programme of work, taking Peas Please all the way through to Autumn 2023. We set out with three ambitious goals:

1 To see more veg eaten: We want more veg on offer in convenient and easy-to-eat ways. We want veg to be more appealing and desirable. And we want low income households to have greater purchasing power to buy veg.

2 To catalyse a permanent shift in the food system in favour of higher veg consumption, reflected in both business practice and Government policies.

3 To establish a successful model for enabling people's voices and lived experience to help create food system change.

To meet our goals, Peas Please used a food systems approach that focused specifically on vegetables, aiming to bring together actors from across the UK food system with the common goal of making it easier for everyone to eat veg. So – four years on – did we meet our goals?





GOAL ONE MORE VEG EATEN

3 billion
additional
portions of veg
sold or served



GOAL

1.1 billion
additional
portions of veg



ACHIEVED

100 pledges
to make
veg more
accessible



GOAL

110 pledges
in support of
veg



ACHIEVED

Peas Please focused on increasing the availability and accessibility of veg for everyone in the UK to support more veg being eaten. Our main way of monitoring our impact against this objective was through our annual reporting process. Pledgers are required to report back to us annually on the progress they have made in increasing the amount of veg being sold or served across their business. We then use aggregate, independently sourced metrics from Kantar to triangulate any trends in sales of vegetables.

MONITORING PLEDGER PROGRESS

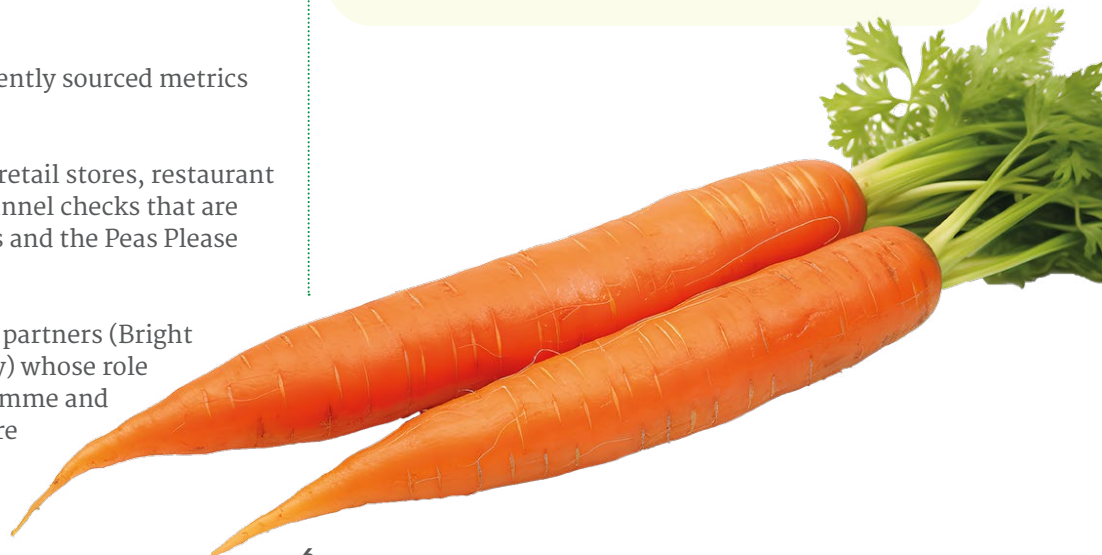
Monitoring is conducted annually to assess each pledger's progress against their commitments through a combination of:

- 1** Pledger self-reporting to the Peas Please team, reporting back against their commitments and targets.
- 2** Use of aggregate, independently sourced metrics (Kantar data).
- 3** Visits, where applicable, to retail stores, restaurant chains and social media channel checks that are conducted by our Veg Advocates and the Peas Please team.
- 4** Working with independent partners (Bright purpose and City University) whose role is to evaluate the overall programme and assess the extent to which we are meeting our original objectives.

Pledgers are asked to self-assess their progress with a numerical rating on a scale of 1–3, and to provide a justification for the rating, which we then used to confirm or adjust their self-rating score. We publish two traffic-light colour codes for pledgers based on this numerical score when they are reporting their second and subsequent years of data (one for overall progress, and one for portion progress where relevant).

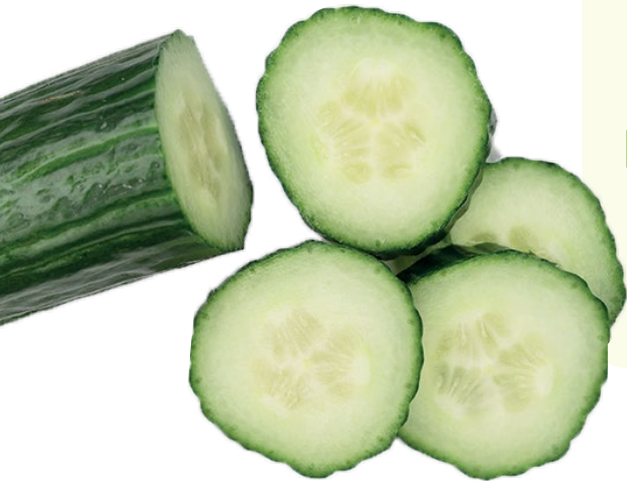
The traffic-light rating is defined as:

- **BLACK:** No report from pledger
- **RED:** Limited progress
- **ORANGE:** A good start
- **YELLOW:** On the road to success
- **GREEN:** Fully implemented all commitments.



THIS YEAR'S PROGRESS

The majority of pledgers who submitted data have made progress on their pledges. 44 out of 49 who reported back to us this year received a yellow or green traffic-light score and are thus on track to fulfill their commitments or have already done so (see [Annex 1](#)).



PLEDGERS RECEIVING A GREEN TRAFFIC-LIGHT RATING THIS YEAR

Association of Convenience Stores (ACS)

Aramark
Robert Gordon University

Ask Italian

Bags of Taste

Brewers Fayre (Whitbread)

Caterlink

Food and Fun

Food Standard Scotland

Greggs

Hampshire County Council
Catering Services (HC3S)

Harvester

Henderson Group and Spar NI

Hungry Horse (Greene King)

JD Wetherspoon

Lantra

Mars

Nestle UK

Ocado

Social Farms and Garden

TastEd

Ulster University Business School

Waitrose

Zizzi

PROGRESS OVER THE PAST FOUR YEARS

Over the course of the project, it has also been encouraging to see increasing numbers of pledgers updating their original pledges so that they are SMART.

Increased transparency around the types of food that businesses sell, with SMART targets for boosting sales of healthy and sustainable foods, will be a critical step in expanding the availability of such foods. Disclosing data on sales of vegetables and – even better – setting sales-weighted targets for vegetables is key for embedding commitments to championing vegetables within commercial operations and accelerating progress. Although a number of Peas Please pledgers have made considerable progress in disclosing data and setting targets for sales of vegetables over the past four years, the overall number of food retail and food service businesses doing so remains low. This means it is not always possible to accurately track progress or hold businesses to account. Just three retailers (Sainsbury's, Lidl and Henderson Group) currently have public targets for increasing sales of vegetables across their business.

Peas Please pledgers from the retail sector have contributed the vast majority of our cumulative portion total over the past four years (79%), highlighting the critical importance of retailers in supporting healthier food environments given their role as the gatekeepers to our diets (Figure 1). Contributions from pledgers

TABLE 1

NUMBER OF PEAS PLEASE PLEDGERS WITH SMART PLEDGES

Sector	Pledgers	% of pledgers with smart targets
Retailers	9	60%
Caterers	15	87%
Casual dining chains	10	90%
Manufacturing	5	60%

in the Out of Home sector were severely impacted by the restrictions the sector faced during the Covid-19 pandemic so it is encouraging to see a small uplift from both caterers and casual dining chains in additional portions of veg served over the last year. Despite this, we continue to see a number of out of home sector pledgers failing to report back to Peas Please on the progress of their pledge, continuing the trend seen last year. While this sector has been under severe pressure during Covid and the cost of living crisis, the Out of Home sector also has a responsibility to support the health of their customers and employees and there is a need for greater transparency of reporting across the sector.

FIGURE 1

THE PERCENTAGE CONTRIBUTION TO OUR TOTAL CUMULATIVE PORTION TOTAL BROKEN DOWN BY SECTOR, 2018 – 2023

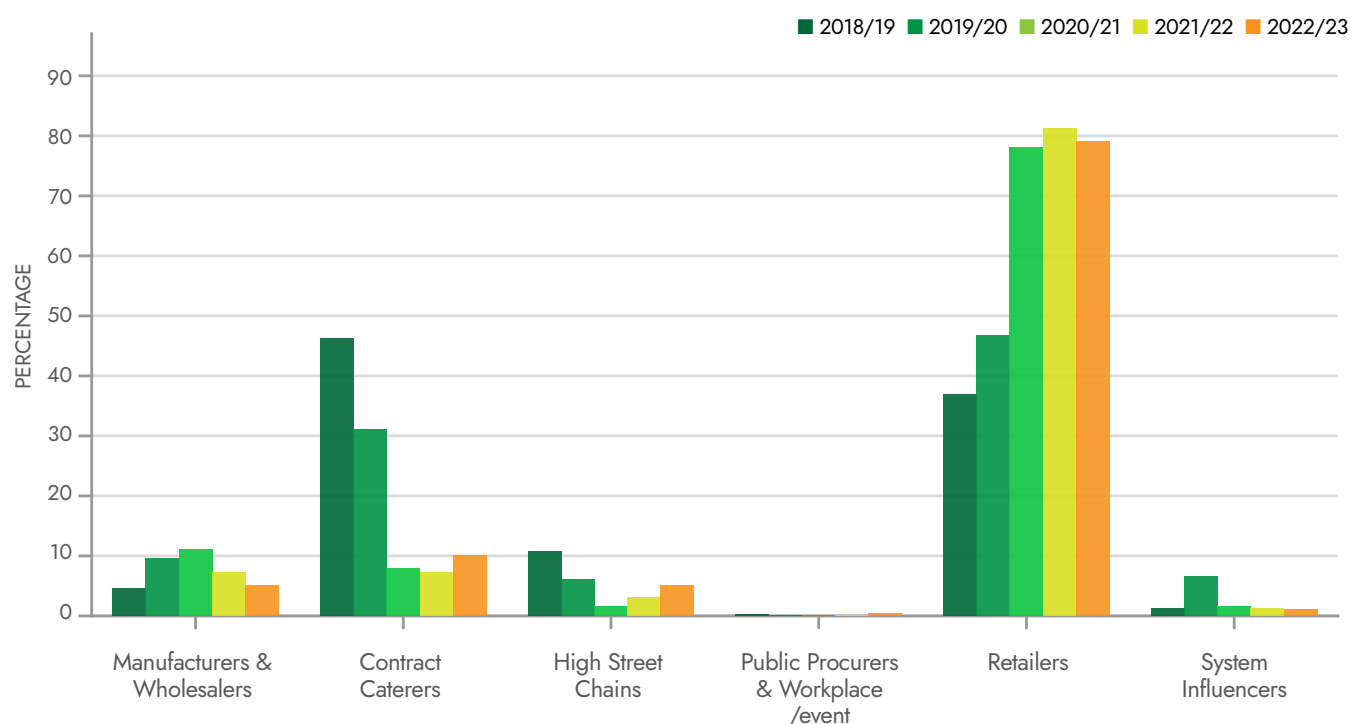


TABLE 2

PEAS PLEASE REPORTING PROGRESS

	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
Number of pledgers due for reporting this year	41	49	70	74	76	62
Number of pledgers providing self-reported data	35	41	38	40*	53	49
Number of pledgers monitored by the PP team – no self-reported data	3	5	3	3	5	5
Number of pledgers who did not provide data	3	3	4 (2 of which have now been removed from the programme)	2 (1 which has been removed from the programme)	15 (5 have been removed from the programme)	13
Number of Veg Cities	**	22	25	25	10	3

* An additional 26 pledgers did not provide data due to capacity issues caused by Covid-19.

** Three initial Veg Cities participated in the monitoring process as pledgers in 2017/18 and are counted above in the number of pledgers due for reporting.

Our impact

TABLE 3

ADDITIONAL PORTIONS OF VEG SOLD OR SERVED BY PEAS PLEASE PLEDGERS

	2016 /17	2017 /18	2018 /19	2019 /20	2020 /21	2021 /22	2022 /23
Additional portions of veg as reported to PP	n/a	4.8 million	85.1 million	73.3 million	403.6 million	147.6 million	344.3 million
% shopping basket that is veg (Kantar)	7.2%	7.3%	7.1%	7.0%	7.0%	7.0%	6.8%

Building on the success of the programme in previous years our pledgers have cumulatively sold or served an additional 1.1 billion additional portions of veg in the six years we have been monitoring Peas Please pledger progress. Over the course of the past 12 months, we added 344.3 million portions to our running total, more than doubling the number of additional portions sold or served by pledgers in the year before (2021–22). As normality continues to resume post pandemic this is encouraging to see.

WHAT'S GOING ON ACROSS THE COUNTRY?

Despite the positive progress being made by many of our pledgers across the UK, the general picture when it comes to veg is a concerning one, with both sales data and citizen surveys pointing to a decline in the amount of veg being both bought and eaten with the cost of living crisis

continuing to impact on household budgets and incomes.

We've been working with Kantar to monitor the proportion of the average shopping basket that is made up of veg since 2019. This figure includes sales of fresh, frozen, chilled, prepared and canned vegetables bought across all the major retailers as well as in independent and bargain stores.

When Peas Please was launched 7.2% of the weight of the average shopping basket was composed of vegetables (Kantar, 2017). **We know, however, that to be in line with the government's Eatwell Guide 20% of the shopping basket should be made up of veg.**

The volume share of veg purchased from retailers has fallen again this year continuing the downward trend seen over the past two years (Figure 2). This year the proportion of the basket that is veg fell to 6.8% from 7% (6.98%) last year. Although these are very small percentage changes, they nonetheless translate into a considerable amount of veg at a population level.

Kantar data captures retail grocery sales only and does not include veg served by caterers and casual dining chains in the OOH sector, nor vegetables sold directly to citizens, for example through veg box schemes. It also excludes vegetables contained within composite products such as ready meals where we know many retailers are making progress. Nevertheless, although not a complete picture of British vegetable purchasing, these figures show that there is an urgent need for retailers to continue to better promote and commit to increasing sales of veg if we are to achieve the recommendations in the Eatwell Guide.

1.1

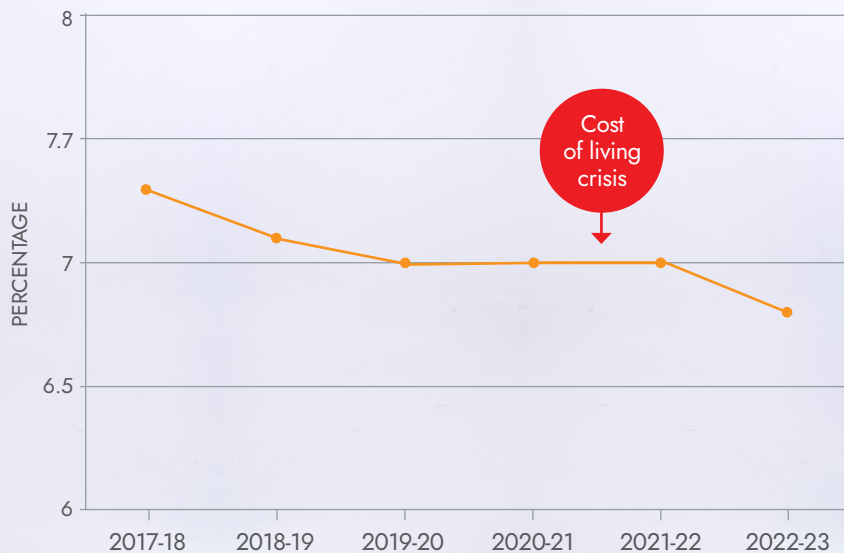
BILLION

additional portions of veg sold or served by pledgers over the course of the programme



FIGURE 2

THE PROPORTION OF SHOPPING BASKETS CONTAINING VEG OVER THE COURSE OF THE PEAS PLEASE PROGRAMME (Kantar)



Mind the gap

Inequalities in vegetable consumption continue to be a serious concern, with veg consumption following a strong income gradient even before the cost of living crisis (Peas Please, 2021). Kantar basket data for the 2022-23 reporting year shows that on average, for those earning less than £10,000 a year, just 5.9% of their shopping basket consisted of veg compared to 8.2% for those earning over £70,000 a year (Kantar WorldPanel, 2023).

Although we do not have up-to-date consumption data at the time of writing, the last National Diet and Nutrition

survey (NDNS) that took place during the Covid pandemic in 2020, found that fruit and vegetable consumption was 0.7 portions per day lower in adults compared to a previous pre-Covid assessment (Public Health England, 2021). Just 13% of households “managing less well financially” met the 5-a-day recommendation, whereas the proportion was more than double this in households “living comfortably” or “doing alright financially” (33% and 28% respectively). The cost of living crisis has exacerbated these dietary inequalities, with a Food Foundation

survey of 10,000 adults in January 2023 finding just under half of households experiencing food insecurity reporting buying fewer vegetables (Figure 3) (The Food Foundation, 2023a). A more recent survey in March/April from our sister organisation Veg Power, looking more broadly at all households and not just those experiencing food insecurity, found that 11% of all households claim to have bought fewer vegetables recently, with the effect

most pronounced in lower income households. Wealthier households state they’ve cut back on veg purchasing to

minimise the risk of waste. For less affluent families, over a third of this group (37%) say their main reason for buying less veg is that they simply haven’t been able to afford to (Veg Power, 2023).

With some 17 million households living with food insecurity (The Food Foundation, 2023a) many are likely to be cutting back on healthier foods such as fruit and vegetables given that these are a more expensive source of calories in comparison to other food groups (The Food Foundation, 2023c).

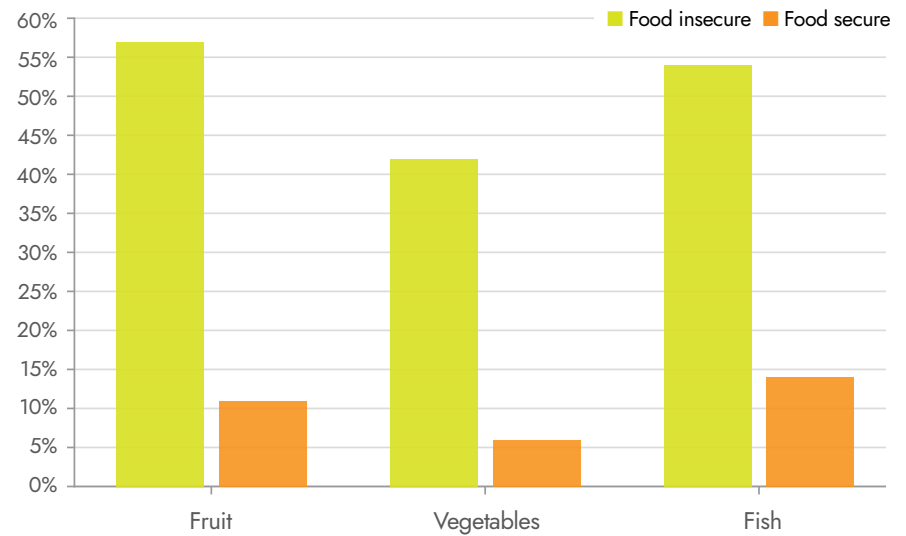
“THE COST OF LIVING CRISIS MEANS MANY ARE CUTTING BACK ON HEALTHIER FOODS SUCH AS FRUIT AND VEGETABLES”

PURCHASES OF VEGETABLES

Purchases of vegetables (which can act as proxy for estimating consumption trends) support what is being reported in citizen surveys, and show a sharp decline in the amount of veg being bought over the past year. Defra’s Family Food Survey captures purchases of food by UK households from both retail and the Out of Home sector, and includes vegetables in composite foods as well as those bought whole. Although vegetable purchases have been fairly stagnant for the past thirty years, purchases saw an uplift in 2020/21. This was likely a result of Covid-19, with many reporting having more time

FIGURE 3

THE PERCENTAGE OF HOUSEHOLDS REPORTING BUYING LESS OF HEALTHY FOODS (The Food Foundation, 2023)

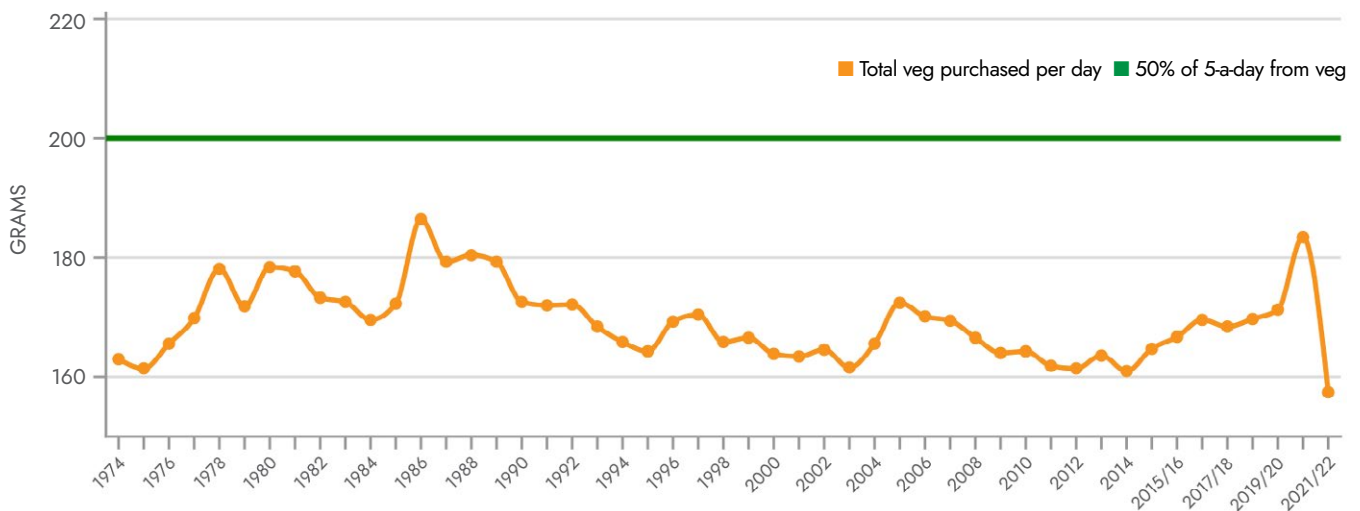


to prepare and cook healthier food, although this was by no means a universal experience (Mazidii et al., 2021). Concerningly, purchases of vegetables dropped to their lowest

level in fifty years in 2021–2022, suggesting that the cost of living crisis is having a profound impact on household purchasing habits and dietary health.

FIGURE 4

TRENDS IN VEGETABLE PURCHASES (HOUSEHOLD AND EATEN OUT) G/PER PERSON/PER DAY, 1974–2022



Sources: Adjusted National Food Survey data 1974–2000, Expenditure and Food Survey 2001–2002 to 2007 and Living Costs and Food Survey 2008 onwards, Family Food Survey 2022



Examples of vegtastic innovation over the course of the programme

A key part of our theory of change was the hypothesis that businesses offering more convenient and easy-to-eat veg would support people to eat more veg. Over the past four years of the programme we've seen businesses set about trying to do exactly this in a number of innovative and creative ways. Here are some of our highlights from past four years:



PLEASURE:

Making vegetables delicious whenever we eat them

- Hampshire County Council Catering Services (HC3S) has supported 246 schools to implement successful social media marketing campaigns to engage and encourage parents to support school meals and eat more veg at home. School catering teams set up fun tasting tables to encourage children to try new vegetables which were often presented in different ways, or pupils were offered different vegetables from the new menu.
- To encourage young customers to eat more greens Lidl's fun size range of veg aimed to capture their imagination with products such as 'Avodillos' or 'Broccoli Trees'.
- Caterlink reformulated their recipes to include more plant-based dishes on their menus and introduced salad and vegetable toppings. This has resulted in an increased consumption of vegetables.



PRODUCER:

Growing vegetables sustainably at all scales of production

- Castell Howell, Cardiff Council, Blas Gwent, Food Cardiff, and Cardiff & Vale University Health Board piloted a scheme focused on courgettes, with the aim of increasing the use of locally grown produce in school meals through increased engagement with children and the local supply chain. Building on the findings of the 'Courgette pilot', which reached 1,500 children and demonstrated the feasibility of supplying schools with agroecologically grown veg, Food Sense Wales is now leading on a pilot to develop new local agroecological supply chains into schools. The Welsh Veg in Schools pilot is supported by Welsh Government Foundational Economy funding and several key partners including Local Authorities and Health Boards along with Peas Please wholesaler pledger, Castell Howell and a number of enthusiastic growers as well as Farming Connect Horticulture.
- Veg Cities Tower Hamlets. In collaboration with Tower Hamlets Food Growers (a network of community gardens and growers set up by

WEN-Women's Environment Network), the Keep Growing campaign was established to provide support for people to grow their own food, share produce, and celebrate local growing and local resilience. During the pandemic, the campaign tailored their approach with approximately 700 families involved and receiving starter kits to support them to start growing veg at home.



- Ulster Farmers' Union have been working with farmers and horticultural groups across Northern Ireland to support the launch and delivery of a new vegetable initiative – Parful Produce – which aims to champion Northern Ireland vegetables and drive consumption. The Ministers for Health, Education and Agriculture were invited to the launch of the new vegetable initiative along with retailers where stakeholders were able to meet the growers and be introduced to the new collaborative vegetable initiative. The members of the collaborative veg growers group 'VEG NI', represent over 80% of the commercial vegetable growing in NI.

**PRICE:**

Making vegetables affordable at a price that works for both producers and consumers

- Lidl, Sainsbury's, Tesco, Waitrose and the Co-operative Group all added value to the Government's Healthy Start Scheme between 2021 and 2023, providing targeted support for low income households with children to buy fruit and veg.
- Sainsbury's has introduced 'The Great Big Fruit and Veg Challenge,' successfully gamifying fruit and vegetable purchases by encouraging their customers with Nectar cards to explore and try a variety of veg. Customers are rewarded with bonus nectar points for purchases of fruit and veg.

**PLACEMENT:**

Giving vegetables more prominence in shops and on menus, and increasing the number of places to buy vegetables in town and cities;

- Autograph Education incorporated a carrot symbol on their primary school menu leaflets to signify where extra 1/2 portions of veg had been added to meals. The symbol effectively conveys their recipe development and commitment to high nutritional standards to parents, students, and schools.
- Aldi have boosted sales of fresh produce by redesigning and refreshing store formats. One key change has been to



promote fresh produce to their customers at the very start of their shopping journey, on the first aisle, as well as giving special prominence to their 'Super 6' price promotion for fruit and veg. Those stores where these changes have been implemented have seen an increase in sales for fresh products compared to older store formats.

**PRODUCTS:**

Developing new ways of getting vegetables into what we buy and eat every day

- Greggs launched two brand new salad options within their Balanced Choice range which contain at least one portion of veg. Following a successful trial in the North-East, the new salads were rolled out nationwide for Greggs customers across the UK to enjoy.
- Compass Group UK & Ireland have launched various concepts across their business to increase

plant-based content into their recipes. Their Business and Industry sector launched 'plantilicious' which ensured that every meal contains 2 portions of veg.

MARKETING AND COMMUNICATION

- In 2021, Aldi turned the ordinary carrot into a viral Christmas advertising sensation. Kevin the Carrot became the most searched Christmas character on Google in the last five years, surpassing even M&S's Paddington Bear advert. Aldi collaborated with Marcus Rashford MBE for 'The Christmas Carrot,' introducing his vegetable alter ego, 'Marcus Radishford,' and shining a light on his campaign for free school meals. Their innovative rendition of the traditional Christmas Carol story featured fruit and vegetable characters like Tiny Tom and Peas and Goodwill.
- Birds Eye launched the Eat In Full Colour Campaign in 2018 to highlight the health, quality, taste, value and sustainability credentials of frozen veg; encouraging consumers towards eating a full rainbow of vegetables.



GOAL TWO

A SHIFT IN THE FOOD SYSTEM



GOAL

Agriculture policy includes strong support for fruit and veg production and consumption



GOAL

School food standards in all four nations include two portions of veg



GOAL

Uptake to the Healthy Start and Best Start programmes increases



GOAL

Innovative pilots stimulated



ACHIEVED

Horticulture strategy initially committed to in the Government's food strategy for England although later reversed, a 2023 House of Lord's Horticulture Sector Committee report strongly recommended a horticulture strategy.



ACHIEVED

School Food Standards in Northern Ireland and Scotland recommend two portions of veg



ACHIEVED

Best Start Foods has an 88% uptake rate of those eligible for the scheme. In September Healthy Start uptake across England, Wales, and Northern Ireland was 66% - the same level as in January 2019.



ACHIEVED

A small scale growers horticulture project in Wales resulted in increased funding for the Welsh horticulture sector. The UK government's 2021 Levelling Up White paper included a commitment to pilot fruit and vegetable prescriptions in low income communities.

INFLUENCING FOOD POLICY

We focused on three areas of food policy as a part of the programme:

1 THE HEALTHY START AND BEST START SCHEMES

These schemes enable low income families with very young children to have greater veg purchasing power, by providing them with funds to spend on fruit and vegetables, pulses, milk, formula and (in Scotland) eggs. Our aim was to see uptake to the scheme increase and eligibility expanded so that more low income families are able to use the schemes.

2 SCHOOL FOOD

Our aim was to see two portions of veg recommended in all four nations' school food standards.



3 FRUIT AND VEGETABLE PRODUCTION

Our aim was to see increased support for UK fruit and vegetable growers in horticulture strategies for each of the four nations.

With much health and agricultural policy devolved in the UK, it has been interesting to see the difference in progress made across all four nations on each of these issues, a summary of which can be found below:

	Healthy Start & Best Start	Vegetable provision in School Food Standards	Support for fruit and vegetable production
England	<p>No movement on expanding eligibility criteria.</p> <p>In September 2023 uptake was at 68.4% of eligible families.</p> <p>Value of funds increased to £4.25 in April 2021.</p>	<p>Standards recommend schools should offer one or more portions to pupils at lunch every day.</p>	<p>The Government committed to implementing a horticulture strategy in June 2022. However, this decision was reversed in May 2023, although at the Sunak Summit in May the government committed to replacing the retained EU Fruit and Vegetable Producer Organisation Scheme with an expanded offer of support in 2026, tailored to the needs of domestic growers (Gov UK, 2023).</p>
Northern Ireland	<p>No movement on expanding eligibility criteria.</p> <p>In September 2023 uptake was at 56.5% of eligible families – the lowest uptake of all four nations.</p> <p>Value of funds increased to £4.25 in April 2021.</p>	<p>Standards recommend that at least two portions of vegetables or salad must be available per child throughout the lunch service. Pies, casseroles, stews and other composite main course dishes must contain 40g of vegetables per serving, in addition to two separate portions of vegetables or salad.</p>	<p>The independent strategic review of the Northern Ireland Agri-food sector in 2021 encouraged DAERA to work with the Horticultural Forum for NI and the NI Soft Fruit Growers Association to co-design an investment scheme built around the unique needs of the sector, acknowledging the economic and health benefits of increased vegetable production and consumption. This has not progressed due to the collapse of the NI Executive.</p>
Scotland	<p>Income thresholds for Best Start Foods will be removed in 2023-4, supporting an additional 20,000 people.</p> <p>Between 2021-22 uptake was at 88% of eligible families.</p> <p>Value of funds increased to £4.50 in August 2021, followed by an increase to £4.95 in April 2023.</p>	<p>According to school food standards at least two portions of veg 40g (primary)/80g (secondary) should be provided as part of a school meal. Portions of vegetables must be made available when other food is served.</p>	<p>In Scotland, the area used for vegetable production is slowly increasing. The CAP replacement process is likely to include enhanced provision for small scale veg producers and there is renewed interest in controlled environment glasshouses as well as vertical farms.</p>
Wales	<p>No movement on expanding eligibility criteria as tied up with England scheme.</p> <p>In September 2023 uptake was at 72.4% of eligible families.</p> <p>Value of funds increased to £4.25 in April 2021.</p>	<p>School food standards recommend that at least one portion of vegetables or salad must be provided each day (primary schools). At least two portions of vegetables or salad must be provided each day (secondary schools).</p>	<p>Peas Please has supported the development of a Wales Horticulture Alliance, bringing together key stakeholders from across the sector and horticulture industry in Wales to strengthen co-working and to develop a vision for the future of the sector.</p>

1. HEALTHY START AND BEST START

Despite the digitisation of the Healthy Start scheme and its inclusion in Marcus Rashford's End Child Food Poverty campaign, uptake rates in England, Wales and Northern Ireland remain concerningly low, and fall far short of the government's own uptake target of 75% for the scheme (The Food Foundation, 2023b). This is particularly worrying given that Best Start Foods, the equivalent scheme for households with young children in Scotland, has far higher uptake of the scheme (88%) as well as providing families with a greater amount (£4.95) that has been raised in line with rising inflation. In 2023-24, all income thresholds for Best Start Foods will be removed, supporting an additional 20,000 people. This risks exacerbating inequalities in children's health across the UK.

Nevertheless, Peas Please and a number of Peas Please pledgers have made a number of positive contributions to the scheme over the past four years, including facilitating:

- **6 roundtables between retailers, the government, and NHS BSA** to discuss digitisation of the scheme as well as ways in which retailers could support the process
- **1 ministerial roundtable** chaired by Jo Churchill, then Minister for Public Health, bringing together retailers to discuss support for the Healthy Start scheme during the Covid-19 pandemic
- **8 retailers**, of which 6 are pledgers, **added value** to the scheme by providing extra funds for recipients to spend on fruit and veg or discounting their purchases during 2020/1
- In April 2021 the value of the scheme in England, Wales and Northern Ireland increased from **£3.10 to £4.25**.
- Research from the University of Leeds evaluating Sainsbury's value-add offer during 2020-21, found that providing coupons to redeem on fruit and veg **materially impacted the amount spent by low income households on fruit and veg** (Thomas et al., 2023). An evaluation by Birmingham University of Lidl's offer also found positive impacts.

2. SCHOOL FOOD

Since the start of Peas Please, **two nations have updated their school food standards to include a recommendation for two portions of veg to be served to school children**, representing positive progress. However, adherence to school food standards can be patchy, and there is still much more that could be done to improve how much veg is accessible to children during the course of the school day.

In 2021 the Peas Please partnership produced a **report** taking a candid look at the UK's school food system, picking out examples of good practice from across the four nations, identifying opportunities for positive change, and making recommendations for policy and decision makers. The report was produced with input from our Veg Advocates and found that provision of vegetables through school food standards and other school schemes varies markedly across the four nations. For example, in England, children aged 5 to 7 attending state-funded primary schools receive one portion of fruit or vegetable each school day through the School Fruit and Vegetable scheme. No similar schemes exist in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

3. FRUIT AND VEGETABLE PRODUCTION

Peas Please helped to establish the **Fruit and Vegetable Alliance**, a consortium of both large and small British fruit and vegetable growers, which fed into Defra through the Edible Horticulture Roundtable. Over the past four years the Alliance has produced several consensus reports

outlining how the government can best support the edible horticulture sector to succeed. At the request of Defra, the Fruit and Vegetable Alliance produced a paper in early 2023 agreeing the Alliance's joint priorities in preparation for the Horticulture Strategy which Defra had committed to in the

2022 England Government's Food Strategy. This paper, *Cultivating Success: Priorities for increasing sustainable production to meet growing demand* (The Fruit and Vegetable Alliance, 2023), fed into the development of the government's horticulture strategy before the government disappointingly u-turned on their commitment in May 2023.



Stimulating local activity

Veg Cities - a place-based approach



The Veg Cities initiative is coordinated by our partner Sustainable Food Places. Organisations participating in the Veg Cities campaign encompass a range of different areas, including schools and community groups, restaurants, caterers, councils, and food

growing enterprises. After the most recent round of funding in 2022, 3 places were awarded Veg cities funding. In total, 36 cities and places have run Veg Cities campaigns over the past four years.

A large number of people have been reached directly as part of initiatives run by Veg Cities:

660,843

people have been directly reached through veg promotion activities.

18,070

people have taken part in growing and cooking classes.

605

gardens have been set up or supported as part of creating a network of growing spaces.

392

initiatives to monitor and reduce food waste have been established.

32

fruit and vegetable markets and stands have been set up.

As a result of this effort, 9.78 MILLION PORTIONS of veg have been served over the past four years by Veg Cities

MAKING VEG MORE APPEALING

One of the original aims of Peas Please was to make veg more appealing, increasing the amount of advertising and positive PR that veg receives. To this end our brilliant sister organisation Veg Power was set up – spun out of the 2018 Peas Please Veg Summit. Over the past few years they've run a series of far-reaching and creative TV advertising campaigns in partnership with ITV (Eat Them To Defeat Them), engaged millions of children and teachers with vegetables as part of an ambitious schools programme, and continue to offer accessible and tasty recipes for families trying to feed their kids affordable and healthy meals that they'll actually eat. More detailed results and analysis of Veg Power's impact are analysed separately. Visit their [website](#) for further details on their activities.





ENCOURAGING INNOVATIVE PILOTS

Over the course of the programme we aimed to test new business models for improving affordability and access to veg.

A **report was published** by Peas Please Partners Food Sense Wales in 2022 evaluating a pilot study undertaken as part of Peas Please work in Wales. The report showed that small-scale investment can have a significant and positive impact on edible horticulture businesses, with sales of veg increasing on average by 75%.

As part of Castell Howell's 2021 pledge to develop local supply chains, Food Sense Wales worked with the wholesaler to develop an action research pilot. Working with the Food Cardiff partnership – Castell Howell and grower, Blas Gwent, together with key partners, Cardiff Council, Cardiff and Vale University

Health Board and Tyfu Cymru – decided to explore what it would take in practice to get Welsh veg from agroecological producers onto Welsh school children's plates. The group decided to focus on courgettes and committed to a pilot looking at the challenges of getting veg through the food system and consumed in schools. This culminated in the publication of a

Government Foundational Economy funding is now building on the findings of the initial 'Courgette Pilot' again looking at increasing the amount of local veg going into schools.

Peas Please also helped secure a commitment in the Government's 2021 Levelling Up White Paper to pilot fruit and veg prescriptions in low income communities (the Community Eatwell programme), although to date this commitment has not been implemented. This is something The Food Foundation

"SCHOOL MEALS REPRESENT AN OPPORTUNITY FOR A SECURE MARKET FOR AGROECOLOGICAL VEG PRODUCERS"

report which noted how school meals represent an opportunity for a secure market for agroecological veg producers and how they could be used as a key mechanism for investment in vegetable supply chains in Wales. A second phase pilot, supported by Welsh

have been calling for since 2017 (The Food Foundation, 2017), with almost 200 people attending a webinar we hosted in 2021 exploring the potential to implement the National Food Strategy's recommendation for fruit and veg prescription pilots.



GOAL THREE

A MODEL FOR ENABLING PEOPLE'S VOICES



GOAL

Recruit **100 Veg advocates** and build a model to capture lived experience



ACHIEVED

180 Veg Advocates initially recruited, learnings on building a model for lived experience documented by our Veg Advocates and shared through a number of different channels

Initially engaging 180 volunteers from across the UK we aimed to understand what citizens believed it would take to make it easier for people to eat more veg. Specifically, the programme set out to:

- Create opportunities for Veg Advocates to share their voices and lived experiences with businesses and policy makers, and to create food system change that is relevant and impactful.
- Stimulate new and innovative action on veg in their communities.
- Create a new generation of food system agents of change, through forming networks and cultivating advocacy.



KEY SUCCESSES OF THE VEG ADVOCATE PROGRAMME

BRINGING COMMUNITIES TOGETHER THROUGH VEG:

Our Small Grants Programme funded

54

local projects aimed at increasing veg consumption

88

Veg Advocates were involved in delivering these projects



Their activities reached approximately

2,700

people across the UK

At least

17

communities have plans in place to continue beyond the programme ending

ENGAGING BUSINESSES AND CITIZENS IN CONVERSATIONS ABOUT VEG:

36 VEG ADVOCATES

visited 50 supermarkets in 2021 to assess how well they were meeting their Peas Please pledge.

24 VEG ADVOCATES

also participated in dialogues with representatives from food manufacturers and supermarkets, suggesting ways that they could better promote and offer veg

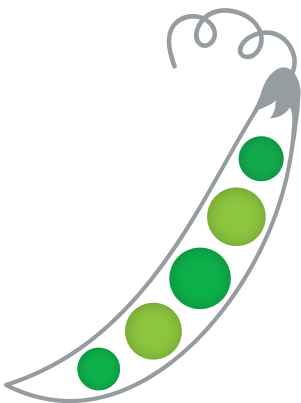
CREATING A NETWORK

Veg Advocates report that one of the greatest benefits of the programme has been the opportunity to connect to other like-minded individuals. A number of Veg Advocates are now engaged in other work or volunteering roles that seek to improve the food system, including with Sustainable Food Places, Veg Cities and My Food Community.

FUNDING COMMUNITY ACTIVITIES THAT CHAMPIONED VEG

In March 2022 we launched the Small Grants programme, with the aim of supporting Veg Advocates to pilot new and innovative action on veg in their communities, or to scale-up existing activities. We invited applications for events or activities which promoted, encouraged or made it easier for people to eat veg. The grant was deliberately not prescriptive – we wanted to hear from Veg Advocates about what they thought would work best in their local community. Between May 2022 and March 2023, 88 Veg Advocates were involved in delivering 54 activities across the UK.

Many activities used multiple tools simultaneously for increasing the appeal and accessibility of veg, motivating individuals to eat more veg, or sharing knowledge about growing and cooking vegetables:



- 17** activities involved **eating veg together**, through communal meals that give people the chance to taste veg, increasing its appeal and kick-starting conversations about veg in welcoming environments.
- 29** activities aimed to promote veg through **food education or knowledge sharing**, including workshops and demonstrations on cooking skills, the health benefits of veg, or where and how to buy and cook veg on a budget. Nine of these activities **produced resources** including work booklets, a seasonal food leaflet and recipe cards.
- 14** included activities that aimed to connect people to veg through **access to growing schemes**.
- 3** activities sought to **research and learn about the barriers** to veg faced by community members, or methods that had successfully promoted veg in other areas. Many more mentioned how valuable bringing the community together had been for wellbeing, for starting conversations about food, and for creating peer-to-peer support that encourages healthy choices.
- 9** of the activities aimed to **connect people to local producers of veg** or to support local supply chains



Each grant was £200 but in many areas Veg Advocates applied as a group, pooling their grant money to deliver an activity together.

Although the grants were small – £200 per Veg Advocate – in focus groups England and Scotland’s Veg Advocates told us that they valued the flexible approach of the Small Grants programme which allowed Veg Advocates to be creative.

WHAT DID WE LEARN?

One of the aims of the Veg Advocate programme was to explore the barriers to veg consumption by listening to lived experiences and communicating these effectively to policy makers and pledgers. Veg Advocates reported that they would have liked more opportunity to be involved in policy advocacy efforts at a national level, as their activities were focused predominantly in their own communities. Some Veg Advocates reported feeling removed from the broader aims of the Peas Please programme and could have contributed more here, for example, as ‘critical friends’ providing feedback on the project’s broader activities. Where Veg Advocates did engage with pledgers, through ‘investigations’ and dialogues with business pledgers, it was a challenge to feedback to Veg Advocates on the impact of their involvement and more could have been done by Peas Please partners to continue the dialogue.

One of the most successful outcomes of the Veg Advocate programme was creating a network of like-minded individuals, which the Veg Advocates felt they benefited from both professionally and personally. However, the network did lack in male representation, young people and ethnic diversity. It would have



Wales and England Veg Advocates at a Manchester away day in 2022

“ONE OF THE MOST SUCCESSFUL OUTCOMES OF THE VEG ADVOCATE PROGRAMME WAS CREATING A NETWORK OF LIKE-MINDED INDIVIDUALS”

been beneficial to have had more involvement from individuals with experience of food insecurity. This lack of diversity was partly due to the challenges of recruiting online during the Covid lockdown. Similar projects aiming to involve citizens in food system change and any future Veg Advocate work could be improved by recruiting through

in-person outreach, for example visiting community groups and education settings, as well as online recruitment channels.

Given the length of the programme and the impact of the Covid-19 lockdowns a good number of Veg Advocates continued to be engaged in the programme’s final year. However, a more structured range of activities, and a series of recruitment stages, would have allowed for varying levels of engagement i.e. more could have been done to involve Veg Advocates in low-level engagement such as through social media messaging.

A more detailed overview of our work with citizens can be found in our report, **Involving Citizens with Food Activism**.

EVALUATING PEAS PLEASE’S IMPACT

An independent evaluation of the Peas Please programme was undertaken by **Bright purpose**, an independent consultancy. To assess the impact Peas Please has had since 2019 they conducted 160 interviews with a range of stakeholders over the course of three years. The evaluation concluded that the main successes achieved were linked to the value the Peas Please partnership was able to add through coordinating, corraling, and organising others to take action on veg. The main successes were summarised as follows. We:



- Kept veg on the agenda – when it could easily have fallen away during very challenging times for food businesses
- Acted as a catalyst and a point of focus – for example giving Food Partnerships something to focus on through the Veg Cities initiative
- Created a network for sharing learning - for Veg Advocates and Partners that has added value to their experience
- Worked collaboratively with other key stakeholders to influence decision makers at national level
- Created a movement – a feeling for Pledgers of being part of something bigger, and doing the right thing

Things we could have improved on included; focusing more on the quality and potential to deliver impact of the business pledges obtained, providing more training and support for Veg Advocates, and making it easier for pledgers of all sizes and Veg City coordinators in particular to measure and report back on their progress.

WHAT NEXT?

The Peas Please partnership is currently actively applying for funding to build on what we have achieved so far. In the meantime, it's more important than ever for those of you who've supported Peas Please to keep up the good work.

Regardless of what exactly the future holds for the Peas Please programme we all have a responsibility to champion increased production and consumption of veg.

The proportion of people eating little to no veg has actually increased over the past decade for both adults and young children, with almost a third (29%) of primary school aged children eating less than one portion of veg a day. There are also deep concerns concerning dietary inequalities when it comes to vegetables with the poorest 20% eating an average of one portion of veg less a day than the richest 20% (Peas Please, 2021). This is despite the fact that vegetables (and pulses) are universally agreed to be beneficial for health, with 18,000 premature deaths attributed to diets low in vegetables and legumes in the UK every year. **Veg are the golden thread connecting diets that are both more healthful and more sustainable** and are significantly lower in greenhouse gas emissions relative to most other types of food.

If the UK is to have any chance of meeting its Net Zero target, as well reducing the huge burden of diet-related ill-health currently being shouldered by the NHS, we will need continued support and championing of veg into the next decade and beyond.



AND FINALLY...THE 2023 ENGLAND PEAS PLEASE PRIZES



RECOGNISING AND REWARDING PROGRESS OVER THE PAST FOUR YEARS

A large amount of what Peas Please has achieved over the past four years has been down to the support of those in our network. We have been hugely grateful for the support of our pledgers, Veg Advocates, and partner organisations who've been exceptionally generous with their time and advice.

Our Peas Please prizes give us an opportunity to recognise a small number of our supporters, so a huge congratulations to all our 2023 winners. This year's winners were announced at our England Veg Summit in November 2023. The winners and runners-up were selected based on their progress and input over the duration of the project, with a particular focus on the 2022/3 reporting cycle.



THE PEAS PLEASE PLEDGER CHAMPION

This award recognises organisations who have effectively implemented Peas Please pledges as a core part of their business proposition, including Peas Please in their company reporting, or linking their pledges to company and staff performance appraisal.

WINNER: SAINSBURY'S

Sainsbury's were the first pledger to set a sales-based target; a publicly reported commitment to increase the proportion of total vegetable sales by 1% of tonnage. They have been encouraging customers to increase veg consumption by utilising a varied range of tactics and incentives:

The Great Fruit and Veg challenge encourages customers to make healthier choices by offering them the chance to earn more nectar points when they purchase more fruit and veg. 2023 is the fourth year Sainsbury's have run this challenge, with 88 million more portions of fruit and veg purchased during last year's challenge.

Sainsbury's provided £2 top up coupons that families receiving the Government's Healthy Start Scheme can spend on fruit and veg between 2021 and 2023. They have worked with Leeds Institute for Data Analytics and IGD to analyse the impacts on shopping habits, finding a significant impact on low income shopping baskets.

Their Imperfectly perfect and Greengrocer ranges – as well as their Taste Me Don't Waste Me pilot – offer fruit and veg at price points that are accessible to all customers.

THE PEAS PLEASE INDIVIDUAL CHAMPION

Recognising an outstanding individual contribution by a staff member within one of our participating pledger organisations which has given inspired leadership to their organisation's Peas Please pledge.

WINNER:
NICKY MARTIN,
COMPASS GROUP

Nicky has really championed Peas Please internally at Compass Group, leading on a whole new approach to data and analysis internally, designed to improve how accurately Compass Group are able to monitor and track the amount of veg in their meals.

Compass Group have also led the out of home sector in setting ambitious targets for increasing the amount of veg procured.

RUNNER-UP:
Amanda Whatley, HC3S

Amanda's support of Peas Please and Veg Power have proved invaluable over the past few years. Amanda has tirelessly championed the importance of veg for healthier school meals, showcasing just how much of a positive impact catering can have on children's nutrition and their enjoyment of food.

THE PEAS PLEASE INNOVATION PRIZE

Recognising inspirational and innovative schemes to support organisational Peas Please pledges and our overall mission of boosting veg consumption.

WINNER:
TESCO

Tesco not only successfully committed to reformulating their range of ready meals to boost their veg content – contributing to a large number of additional portions of veg being eaten by households – but also launched a new Meat & Veg mince range containing 30% veg to support families to increase their veg consumption. The range was developed in response to increasing customer demand for healthier, sustainable and convenient products.

RUNNER-UP:
Greggs

Greggs have provided customers with an affordably priced range of healthier options containing one portion of veg. Following a successful trial in the North-East, the new range was rolled out nationwide. 32% of the products on Greggs shelves in 2022 were defined as a healthier choice, with more veg filled new products coming later this year.

THE VEG-O-METER PRIZE

Rewarding the biggest percentage increase in vegetable portions sold or served by our pledgers between the 2019/20 and 2022/23 reporting cycles.

WINNER:
**BLACKPOOL
CATERING SERVICES**

With a veg-tastic 300% increase in portions of veg served across schools in the Blackpool area compared to baseline.

RUNNER-UP:
Tesco

Tesco's pledge to ensure two thirds of own-brand ready meals contain at least one portion of veg has contributed to a 200% increase in portions of veg sold compared to baseline.

Annex

We've grouped our pledgers by sector, in line with our [commitments framework](#), where the actions organisations sign up to as part of their pledges vary depending on an organisation's business model and sector. A detailed breakdown of pledges can be found on the [Peas Please microsite](#).

TRAFFIC LIGHT RATING KEY:

- **BLACK:** No report from pledger
- **ORANGE:** A good start
- **GREEN:** Fully implemented all commitments.
- **RED:** Limited progress
- **YELLOW:** On the road to success

SYSTEM INFLUENCERS

1% (the proportion of our cumulative portion total contributed by our system influencer pledgers)

PLEDGER	TRAFFIC LIGHT	
	OVERALL PROGRESS	PORTION PROGRESS
Association of Convenience Stores (ACS)	●	Does not report
Bags of Taste	●	Does not report
Community Supported Agriculture	●	Does not report
Food and Fun	●	●
Food Standards Scotland (FSS)	●	Does not report
Lantra	●	Does not report
Millbank Farm	●	Does not report
Social Farms and Garden	●	Does not report
Soil Association	●	Does not report
Sustainable Food Places (SFP)	●	●
Sustainable Restaurant Association (SRA)	●	Does not report
TastEd	●	●
TUCO	●	Does not report
WRAP	●	Does not report

RETAILERS

79% (the proportion of our cumulative portion total contributed by our retailer pledgers)

PLEDGER	TRAFFIC LIGHT	
	OVERALL PROGRESS	PORTION PROGRESS
Aldi		
Asda	No longer pledgers	
Co-op		Does not report
Henderson Group/SPAR NI		
Lidl		
Morrisons		Does not report
Ocado		Does not report
Sainsbury's		
Tesco		
Waitrose		





















OUT OF HOME – CONTRACT CATERERS

10% (the proportion of our cumulative portion total contributed by our contract caterer pledgers)

PLEDGER	TRAFFIC LIGHT	
	OVERALL PROGRESS	PORTION PROGRESS
Albacore	No longer pledgers	
Bartlett Mitchell		
Blackpool Catering Services		
Caterlink		
CEC catering		
Compass Group		
Hampshire County Council Catering Services (HC3S)		
Havering Catering Services (HES)		
ISS		
Olive Catering		
Sodexo	No longer pledgers	
Vertas	No longer pledgers	













OUT OF HOME – HIGH STREET RESTAURANT CHAINS

5% (the proportion of our cumulative portion total contributed by our high street restaurant chain pledgers)

PLEDGER	TRAFFIC LIGHT	
	OVERALL PROGRESS	PORTION PROGRESS
Ask Italian		
Brewers Fayre (Whitbread)		
Giraffe		
Greggs PLC		
Harvester (Mitchells & Butlers)		
Hungry Horse (Greene King)		
JD Wetherspoon		
Prezzo		
Subway		
Zizzi		











EVENT SPACES, WORKPLACES AND PUBLIC PROCURERS

0.4% (the proportion of our cumulative portion total contributed by our event spaces, workplace and public procurer pledgers)

PLEDGER	TRAFFIC LIGHT	
	OVERALL PROGRESS	PORTION PROGRESS
Aramark Robert Gordon University		
Aramark University of Westminster		
Cardiff and Vale University Health Board		
University of Edinburgh		
University of South Wales (USW)		
University of West London (UWL)		

MANUFACTURERS & WHOLESALERS

5% (the proportion of our cumulative portion total contributed by our manufacturer and wholesaler pledgers)

PLEDGER	TRAFFIC LIGHT	
	OVERALL PROGRESS	PORTION PROGRESS
Bidfood	No longer pledgers	
Birds Eye		
Castell Howell		
Mars		
Mash Direct		
Nestle UK		Does not report
Puffin Produce		Does not report

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