



**The facts about  
British  
red meat and milk**





## Introduction

British red meat and dairy has a great story to tell. But that story often gets drowned out because of the tendency to portray all farming all over the world as the same, even though it isn't. This document is designed to dispel some of the major myths and misconceptions about British red meat and dairy production and their impact on the environment, as well as highlighting the importance of red meat and dairy products as part of a balanced diet, and the health and welfare standards British livestock farmers adhere to.

Not all red meat production around the world is the same. In Britain, most livestock is grazed in extensive grass-based systems. According to the Government's Committee on Climate Change, greenhouse gas emissions from UK beef are about half the global average<sup>1</sup>.

**British farmers are very proud of their high standards of production and aim to farm in as climate friendly a way as possible with a view to achieving net zero greenhouse gas emissions.**

British red meat and dairy is produced to some of the highest welfare and environmentally sustainable standards in the world. Our extensively grazed pastures provide habitat for wildlife, while actively managed pastures take carbon dioxide from the atmosphere and store it. A key consideration when buying your meat should be whether it has been produced to the same high welfare and environmental standards as British meat.

Red meat and dairy products play a key role in a balanced diet as rich sources of a range of essential nutrients which can be difficult to get from other sources. Currently, 98% of British households buy milk<sup>2</sup>, while 91% of UK households enjoy red meat<sup>3</sup>. Shoppers are looking to buy local, sustainably produced meat and dairy products and most retailers are now increasingly sourcing British products to meet this demand.

The UK is around 91% self-sufficient in dairy production<sup>4</sup> and 86% self-sufficient in beef production<sup>5</sup>. When it comes to lamb, we are 109% self-sufficient<sup>6</sup>. Although we have seasonal production we export our surplus lamb throughout the year but have also traditionally imported lamb leading up to Easter.

More than 11,000 dairy farmers in the UK and more than 21,800 beef and sheep producers in England are members of Red Tractor. Shoppers can be confident when they buy British red meat and dairy products carrying the Red Tractor logo, they are produced to world-leading environmentally sustainable and animal welfare standards.



# Myth 1:

## British livestock and dairy farming are the biggest source of greenhouse gas emissions

### Emissions<sup>7</sup>:

- In 2019, total greenhouse gas emissions from the UK were 454.8 million tonnes (mt) of CO<sub>2</sub>e (carbon dioxide equivalent).
- Total emissions from UK agriculture amounted to 46.3mt/CO<sub>2</sub>e – around 10% of the UK's total emissions.
- Cattle and sheep accounted for 25.9mt/CO<sub>2</sub>e – 5.7% of the UK's total emissions.
- Carbon sequestered in UK grasslands accounted for a net reduction of 3.8mt/CO<sub>2</sub>e.
- Taking into account grassland sequestration, cattle and sheep account for 4.9% of UK emissions. Excluding grassland sequestration, cattle and sheep account for 5.7%.

British beef and lamb is among the most efficient and sustainable in the world due to our extensive, grass-based system. The Government's Committee on Climate Change has said that greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions from UK beef are about half the global average<sup>8</sup>.

Greenhouse gas emissions from UK milk production have fallen by 24% since 1990 and further methane emission reductions can be achieved through new approaches to cattle breeding and feeding. There are 265 million dairy cows worldwide. If they were all as efficient as UK dairy cows we would only need around 83 million of them to produce the same amount of milk<sup>9</sup>. This shows how efficient our production systems are.

British farming is ambitious and aims to reach net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2040.<sup>10</sup> The drive for further production efficiencies is a key part of this.

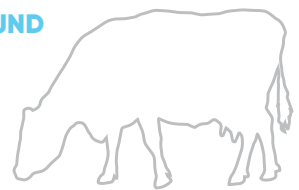
Measures like using natural feed additives, continuous improvements in cattle and sheep health, and breeding programmes will allow animals to become more efficient and will help further reduce methane emissions from livestock.

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of them to produce the same amount of milk.

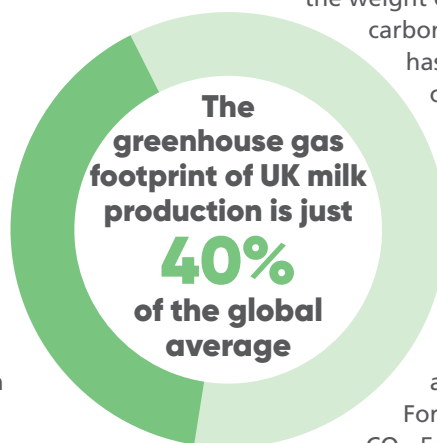


Actively managed pastures are also a good carbon sink, storing carbon which could otherwise be released into the atmosphere, as are hedgerows that separate fields. If this land was put to other uses, there is a risk that much of that carbon would be lost to the atmosphere as carbon dioxide.

Some studies have even found that grasslands could be a more reliable carbon sink than woodland<sup>11</sup>. Unlike forests, grasslands store most of their carbon underground, while forests store it mostly in woody biomass and leaves. If the trees are then burnt or removed, the carbon stored could be lost back to the atmosphere without good management and care.

And it's not just about storing carbon in soils. 40% of the weight of clean wool is pure biogenic carbon<sup>12</sup> – carbon captured by formerly living matter which has absorbed carbon through its life. Sheep consume carbon when they eat grass and transform it into the amino acids of the wool fibre. So, by using wool in clothing or insulation you are choosing a natural carbon-storing product in place of a plastic or synthetic product.

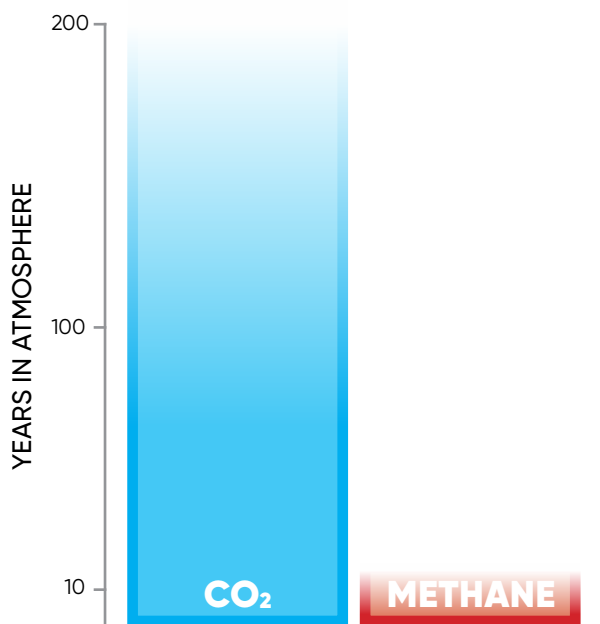
In the UK, 80% of total greenhouse gas emissions are carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>), 12% are methane, and 5% are nitrous oxide. For UK agriculture, 13% of its emissions are CO<sub>2</sub>, 54% are methane and 32% are nitrous oxide<sup>13</sup>. So, methane emissions from UK agriculture account for around 5.6% of the country's total GHG emissions.





The production of GHGs is a significant issue for the livestock sector and livestock farmers in this country are striving to reduce these emissions. Emissions from UK livestock are estimated to be around 5.7% of the country's total GHG emissions<sup>14</sup>, significantly lower than the estimated EU-wide figure for livestock of around 9.1% of all emissions<sup>15</sup>. This is in part due to the UK's efficient production systems.

But science is emerging on the differing behaviour and impact of long-lived GHGs like CO<sub>2</sub> and nitrous oxide, and short-lived GHGs like methane. Methane is classed as a short-lived gas because it lasts in our atmosphere for around ten years until it gets broken down to water and CO<sub>2</sub>. The concentration of this CO<sub>2</sub> 'breakdown' is insignificant in terms of climate warming impact, measuring in parts per billion and happening at a scale that grassland and vegetation can readily re-absorb. In contrast, CO<sub>2</sub> is a long-lived gas which is released directly into the atmosphere by energy suppliers and transport sectors, among others, and stays there for hundreds of years, continuing to contribute to global warming.

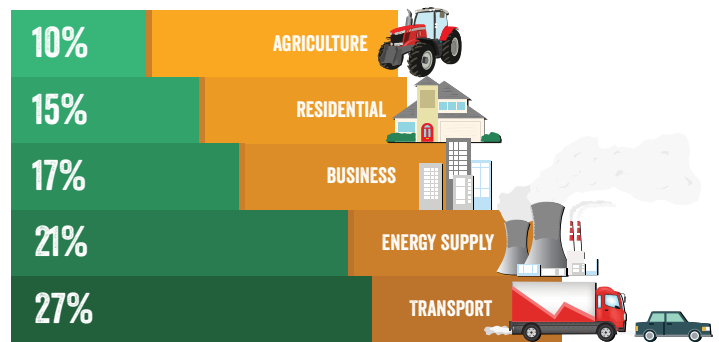


The conventional interpretation of methane emissions suggests that falling methane emissions would continue to lead to global warming. But research results from Oxford University<sup>16</sup> show this is wrong. Falling methane emissions would, in fact, lead to stable or lower global temperatures. This research is important as improvements in the productivity of grazed livestock should significantly decrease the climate heating impact of current levels of red meat and dairy production.

Our productivity ambitions, along with the British herd and flock size remaining steady, mean the impact of methane from livestock will decrease gradually, provided the number of animals does not increase.

To stop further global warming, the priority must be reducing the levels of long-lived gases like CO<sub>2</sub>, while progressively reducing methane levels will cool the climate.

## Greenhouse gas emissions in the UK



\*Other: 9%. Other includes, Waste Management, Public, Industrial Processes and the Land Use, Land Use Change and Forestry (LULUCF) sectors (note that LULUCF acts as a net sink of emissions).



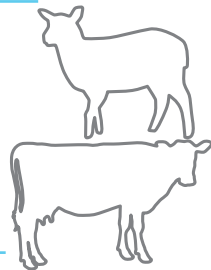
## Myth 2:

### British livestock and dairy farming are bad for the environment

Livestock can and does play a key role in the maintenance and enhancement of wildlife habitats. There are several examples where livestock is critical to the lifecycle of wildlife – for instance, the Large Blue Butterfly. The Large Blue breeds in warm and well-drained unimproved grassland and livestock plays a key role in producing suitable habitat conditions through grazing<sup>17</sup>.

Appropriate grazing is key to conserving many priority habitats such as limestone grassland and upland heath. 53% of Sites of Special Scientific Interest land is found in the upland grassland areas, with 96% of upland SSSIs being in favourable or recovering condition<sup>18</sup>.

It is estimated that the contribution of beef cattle and sheep to biodiversity value is **£121 MILLION** in England alone.<sup>19</sup>



Livestock plays an important role in maintaining and enhancing the soil used to grow crops too. The introduction of grass and clover leys and livestock into arable crop rotations is beneficial to soil health and fertility<sup>20</sup>, with manure from grazing livestock helping to boost soil organic matter<sup>21</sup>. Leicestershire arable farmer Phil Jarvis has introduced four-year grass and clover leys and shorter two-year herbal leys which are grazed by both his neighbour's sheep and his own Leicester Longwools. This regenerative approach helps build soil fertility, health and combats grass weeds while using some of the current agri-environment options in Countryside Stewardship.

With good management, animal manure acts as a highly effective natural fertiliser of crops, with many beneficial constituents for soil health by providing supplemental nutrients for crop growth. Organic matter also improves water filtration rate, water holding capacity and the hydraulic conductivity of the soil. Using natural manure as fertiliser also reduces the use of chemical fertiliser, and therefore nitrous oxide.

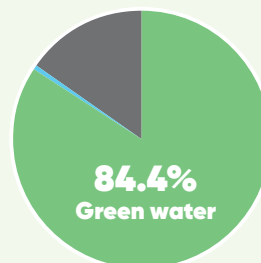
There are strict rules and regulations in place to prevent water pollution from manure and air pollution from ammonia. In 2021, 74% of the farmed area of England covered by Defra's Farm Practices Survey was covered by a nutrient management plan<sup>22</sup>. These plans help reduce incidence of diffuse water pollution, as well as minimising greenhouse gas emissions.

Many farmers are taking steps to reduce ammonia concentration in cattle manure, including altering feeding regimens and using slurry storage facilities that reduce emissions by up to 90%. This can also offer reductions in feed or fertiliser costs for farmers, thus further incentivising their work, beyond the environmental benefits<sup>23</sup>.

Water usage is another claim that is levelled at livestock and dairy farming. But water usage is a complex issue to measure.

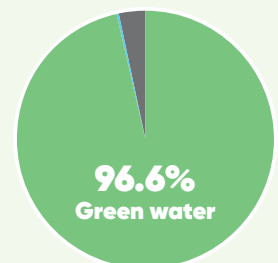
When calculating water footprints, water is split into three different groups:

- **GREEN** – rainfall used by crops (including grass) at the place where it falls. This water is essentially unavailable for other uses;
- **BLUE** – water taken out of the available water supply from the tap;
- **GREY** – freshwater used to dilute pollution.



### Beef

It is estimated that 17,000 litres of water are required to produce one kilo of English beef. Of this, only **0.4% is blue water**, while 84.4% of the total is green water (rain) to grow the grass. The remainder is grey water.

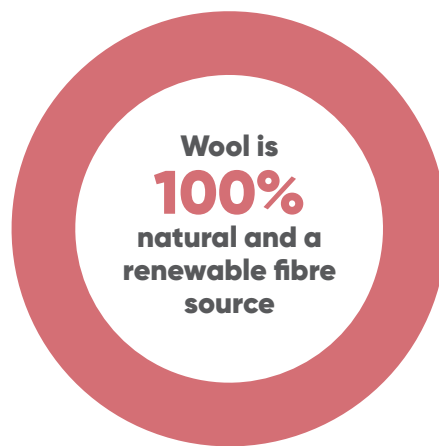


### Lamb

It is estimated that 57,759 litres of water are required to produce one kilo of English lamb. Of this, only **0.1% is blue water** while 96.6% is green water (rain) to grow the grass. The remainder is grey water.

The overwhelming dominance of green water in the total figures for both beef and lamb production means that, compared to livestock systems that rely on feed produced by irrigation in some other countries, the actual hydrological impact of English beef and sheep meat production is very small<sup>24</sup>.

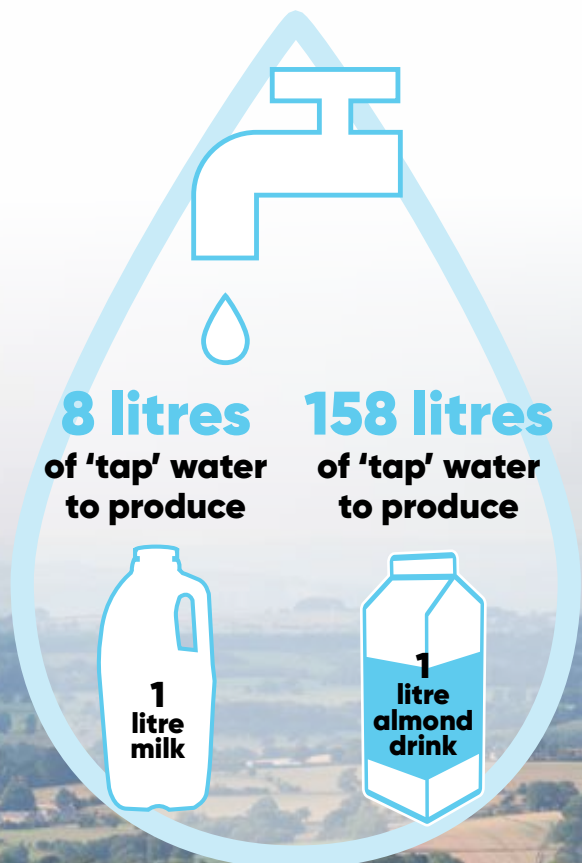
- While it may look like dairy milk production uses a huge amount of water, it should be noted that most of that water is 'green' water (rainfall) to grow the grass. The important thing to compare is 'blue' water use – water taken out of the available water supply. To produce one litre of milk it takes 8 litres of 'blue' water<sup>25</sup>.
- In comparison, it takes 5,290 litres of 'blue' water to produce one kilogram of raw California almond kernels<sup>26</sup>.
- Almond drink is typically 3% almonds, so based on these figures, the average litre of almond drink would require 158 litres of 'blue' water – nearly 20 times as much as dairy milk.



The wool produced by sheep is worth more than £100 million to the British economy<sup>27</sup>. Wool offers a range of solutions to problems we currently face. It is a 100% natural, renewable and biodegradable fibre as sheep produce a new fleece every year. Wool can be used in clothing without any concerns over microplastics and microfibres, and is a natural insulator which can help reduce domestic carbon emissions when used in the home. But we only have this fantastic natural resource if we have a profitable livestock industry.

Many livestock and dairy farmers are also helping deliver clean, **renewable energy** through solar panels, wind turbines and the use of anaerobic digestion technology. This contributes to powering millions of homes<sup>28</sup>.

The **landscape** created by farming is part of what brings over three billion visits to the British countryside every year. This in turn supports local jobs and businesses. Such attractions include the treasured landscapes of the National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). England's upland National Parks and AONBs receive nearly 70 million day visits every year, with visitors spending £1.78 billion<sup>29</sup>.



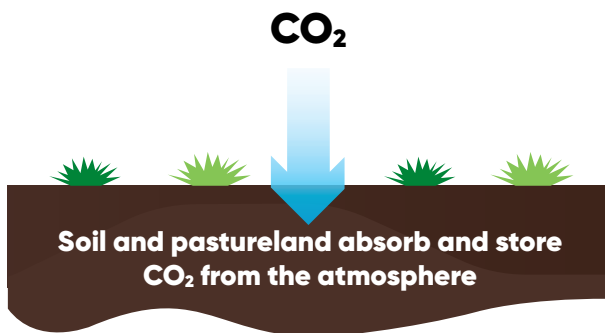


## Myth 3:

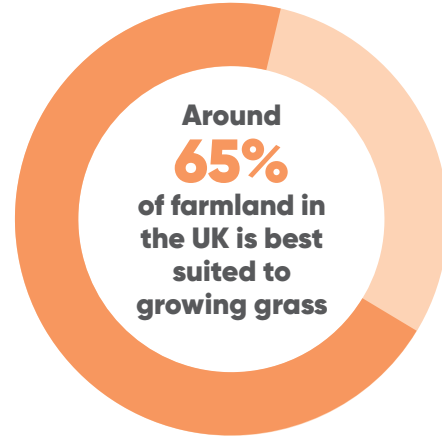
### The land British livestock graze could be used to grow crops instead

The UK climate is ideal for growing grass for animals to eat. Around 65% of farmland in the UK is best suited to growing grass rather than other crops<sup>30</sup>. If we did not graze livestock on it, we could not use it to produce food. Grazing livestock on this land allows us to turn inedible grass into high quality, nutrient-rich beef, lamb, and dairy.

Actively managed pastures that are grazed by livestock are also a good carbon sink, capturing carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) in the grassland and storing carbon in the soil which could otherwise be released into the atmosphere, as are hedgerows that separate fields. If this land was put to other uses, and the soil was disturbed, there is a risk that much of that carbon would be lost to the atmosphere as CO<sub>2</sub>.



Well managed grazing produces food and fibre while keeping the soil covered with vegetation. This improves water storage and quality, prevents erosion and nutrient migration, and provides wildlife habitats. Carbon sequestration can be enhanced in grasslands through grazing management<sup>31</sup>.



“Land abandonment poses one of the greatest threats to biodiversity as it removes the brakes on succession. Most open landscapes in the UK will revert from grassland to scrub and, ultimately, to woodland as large plants reach for the light and outcompete many smaller species. Grazing and disturbance by livestock – particularly by native breeds that can outwinter – ‘re-sets’ this ecological clock, allowing a high diversity of these valuable early-succession flowers to thrive in open sunlight.

“Early succession habitats like hay meadows and permanent pastures, grazed by the right amount of livestock at the right time, can support an astonishing 770 species of wild flower and are crucibles of biodiversity. Nearly 1,400 species of pollinators and other insects rely on species-rich grassland for their survival and they, in turn, support a myriad of bird and animal life. Re-creation of these open habitats must be seen as a priority as urgent as planting trees.”

*Dr Trevor Dines, Botanical Specialist, Plantlife, on the publication of Plantlife research showing meadows face mounting risks from poor legal protection, and from land abandonment and undergrazing, July 2019*

# Myth 4:

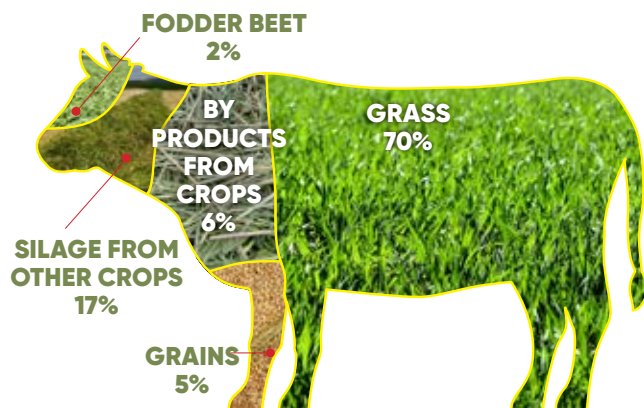
## British cows and sheep eat crops that humans could eat



Around **70%** of a typical British beef cattle herd's diet is grass, with the remainder made up of by-products, silage and grains from crops which would never have been used in the human food supply chain<sup>32</sup>.

**87%** of UK beef is produced using predominantly forage-based diets<sup>33</sup>. This means UK beef production is not a driver of deforestation in other parts of the world.

### The miracle of british cows - turning grass into tasty food



Feeding cattle and sheep a small amount of cereals, or protein crops, to supplement a forage-based diet enables them to produce an increased amount of protein for people to eat. For example, beef and dairy cows have been shown to create more protein than they take in from crops that could be eaten by people.

For every kilo of plant protein that could be eaten by people that dairy cows eat, they produce 1.41 kilos of edible protein output for people. Beef cattle produce 1.09 kilos of edible protein output per kilo of input they receive from potentially human-edible plant protein<sup>34</sup>.

Livestock farmers also use co-products like brewers' grains and by-products like bread crusts to feed their animals. This helps reduce the food chain's greenhouse gas footprint<sup>35</sup> and prevents these products from ending up in landfill<sup>36</sup>.

By enhancing the use of by-products and crop residues as feed and utilising the unique ability to consume a diverse range of feed resources, most of which humans cannot digest, there is an opportunity to increase the resilience of food production in a changing climate.



# Myth 5:

## Swapping red meat and dairy products for alternatives will substantially lower my carbon footprint

**“Balanced diets featuring plant-based foods, such as coarse grains, legumes, fruits and vegetables, and animal-sourced food produced sustainably in low greenhouse gas emission systems, present major opportunities for adaptation to and limiting climate change”**

*Debra Roberts, Co-Chair of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change Working Group II, following publication of the IPCC's Special Report on Climate Change and Land, August 2019*

- The carbon footprint of a litre of British milk is around 1.25kg CO<sub>2</sub>e<sup>37</sup> compared to a global average of 2.9kg CO<sub>2</sub>e per litre<sup>38</sup>.
- The carbon footprint of a kilo of British beef has been estimated at around 17.12kg CO<sub>2</sub>e<sup>39</sup> compared to a global average of 46kg CO<sub>2</sub>e per kilo<sup>40</sup>.
- The carbon footprint of a kilo of lamb produced in England or Wales is around 14.6kg CO<sub>2</sub>e<sup>41</sup> compared to a global average of 24kg CO<sub>2</sub>e per kilo<sup>42</sup>.

Not all red meat production is the same. The key consideration must be where the livestock was farmed and the environmental and welfare standards of where it was produced. And this is where British beef has a great story to tell. According to the 2020 report from the Government's Committee on Climate Change, greenhouse gas emissions from UK beef are about half the global average<sup>43</sup>.

Every type of food production has an environmental impact and livestock production is no different. However, it is misleading to say that by cutting out red meat and/or dairy from your diet you will drastically reduce your carbon footprint. There are a number of activities which make more of an impact than stopping eating red meat and dairy – for example, one less flight, driving a more efficient car and switching to green energy<sup>44</sup>.

Plant-based products do not always necessarily have a lower impact on the environment. It all depends on where and how the ingredients have been produced, the environmental pressures involved in its production, the environmental management associated with that country's agricultural system and the environmental resources available, as well as how far the product has travelled.

### Carbon footprint and nutrient density

Considerations of the environmental impact of foods need to be linked to concerns about nutrient density and health, particularly as the population continues to grow. In livestock production, productivity improvements through animal breeding or grassland management can help in this area. While meat and dairy were found to have higher greenhouse gas emission values per gram, they were found to be far more nutrient-dense with much lower greenhouse gas emission values per calorie than grains<sup>45</sup>.

Concentration of essential nutrients should also be considered in the context of nutrient recommendations as part of a balanced diet and climatic impact. Milk both has the highest nutrient density for drinks, and was shown to have the highest nutrient density in relation to greenhouse gas emissions of a variety of drinks (soft drink, orange juice, beer, wine, bottled carbonated water, soy drink, and oat drink) in one study<sup>46</sup>.



# Myth 6:

## Red meat and dairy products are bad for your health

Red meat and dairy are recognised as an important part of a balanced diet. Currently 98% of British households buy milk<sup>47</sup>, while 91% of UK households enjoy red meat<sup>48</sup>.

Red meat is one of the richest sources of essential nutrients such as iron, zinc and B vitamins in the diet, as well as a significant source of protein. Red meat has much lower fat contents than it did 20 years ago, with fully trimmed lean beef containing just 5% fat on average and fully trimmed lamb containing 8% fat<sup>49</sup>.

Dairy products are highly nutritious with milk, cheese and yoghurt all containing a range of high-quality protein, nutrients and vitamins. Dairy products are a great source of protein, potassium, magnesium, zinc and phosphorus. For most people they are the main source of iodine, which is difficult to get from other food sources. From a nutritional standpoint, the majority of plant-based alternatives do not have the nutrient richness of dairy products<sup>50</sup>.



Milk consumption is recommended by medical experts for both adults and children as part of a balanced diet. Eating these foods improves bone health, especially in children and teenagers, and provides a balanced package of essential nutrients. There is a general misconception that dairy foods are high in fat. In fact, whole milk is only 3.6% fat. Semi-skimmed milk is 1.7% fat, while skimmed milk is 0.3% fat<sup>51</sup>.

Milk and dairy foods are good sources of important nutrients, so health experts advise that you should not cut them out of your or your child's diet without first speaking to a GP or dietitian<sup>53</sup> as many alternative products do not contain comparable levels of nutrients.



**A 200ml glass of semi-skimmed milk contains<sup>52</sup>:**

**41%** of your recommended daily intake of iodine – contributes to the production of thyroid hormones which are important for bone and brain development during pregnancy and infancy. There are concerns about low iodine intakes in the UK, especially in young women.

**31%** of your recommended daily intake of calcium – needed for maintenance of normal bones and teeth, and to support muscle and nerve function and normal blood clotting.

**14%** of your recommended daily intake of protein – contributes to the maintenance of bones and muscle, and growth in muscle mass.

**74%** of your recommended daily intake of vitamin B12 – supports the immune system and the release of energy from food, and helps reduce tiredness and fatigue.

**35%** of your recommended daily intake of vitamin B2 (riboflavin) – supports the maintenance of normal vision, skin and red blood cells.

**28%** of your recommended daily intake of phosphorus – supports the maintenance of bones and teeth.



Lean red meats can play an important part in a healthy balanced diet as they have a high nutrient density. This means that they contain a wide variety of nutrients in a relatively small amount of food.<sup>55</sup>

Bioavailability – the proportion of a substance which enters the circulation when eaten and so is able to have an active effect – is also an important issue to consider.

The iron and zinc found in red meats is more bioavailable than in many alternative food sources, and red meat can enhance the absorption of these important minerals<sup>56</sup>. Cow's milk has good bioavailability of calcium (about 30 to 35%). Milk and dairy products make a considerable contribution to the UK calcium intake.

#### Other health benefits:

Studies have also suggested an association between dairy and:

- a protection against weight gain and obesity, significantly reducing the risk of type 2 diabetes and associated cardiovascular disease<sup>57</sup>;
- a possible reduction in the risk of some cancers, including colorectal cancer<sup>58</sup>.

“In the UK, meat and meat products contribute to intakes of a variety of essential nutrients, including protein, iron, zinc, vitamin B12 and vitamin D.

“Those who choose to avoid or cut down on meat need to make sure they acquire adequate amounts of these nutrients via other foods – and this needs some basic nutrition knowledge, food literacy and planning.

“A varied meat-free diet can be nutritionally adequate, although supplements of B12 in particular (or foods fortified with the vitamin) are advised for vegans. But it shouldn't be assumed that alternatives to meat will provide the essential nutrients present in meat in equal measure.”

*Professor Judy Buttriss, British Nutrition Foundation*



Red meat is also a great source of a range of nutrients and vitamins<sup>54</sup>, as well as **protein** which helps make you feel full for longer. Protein-rich foods are a good way to help to control weight. Red meat is also a great source of:

- **Iron:** a vital mineral for red blood cell formation. A deficiency of iron in the diet is the most common dietary cause of anaemia. The type of iron found in red meat (haem iron) is more easily absorbed and used by the body than the iron in plant foods such as pulses, nuts, seeds and leafy green vegetables (non-haem iron).
- Readily absorbable **zinc:** important for the healthy functioning of the immune system, growth, wound healing and fertility. We get about 30% of our dietary intake of zinc from red meat and meat products.
- **Potassium** and **selenium**, an important antioxidant which has been linked to reducing the risk of heart disease and certain cancers.
- **B vitamins**, including **B12**, which is important for healthy red blood cells, growth and the production of energy.
- Red meat is naturally low in **salt**.



We get about  
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# Myth 7:

## Red meat and dairy alternatives are better for you

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Alternatives to meat and dairy products have grown in popularity in recent years but people need to make sure they are getting all the nutritional elements they need as part of a healthy balanced diet and which red meat and dairy can help provide.

Plant foods contain many vitamins and minerals that are important for a balanced diet and can be a source of calcium. However, plant foods contain inhibitory substances, such as oxalates and phytates, which reduce calcium absorption<sup>59</sup>.

Meat alternatives are often higher in sodium than red meat. Even though they're made with beans, tofu, and other plant foods, meat substitutes can be high in saturated fat. Manufacturers of meat alternatives often use coconut and palm oils, both of which are high in saturated fat, to give products a mouth-feel similar to ground beef. So it's important to read labels on meat substitutes to determine fat content. Some of the meat substitutes on the market are highly processed and many contain additives and flavourings<sup>60</sup>.

Many dairy alternatives are artificially fortified with extra vitamins and minerals because they do not possess the same nutrients that can be found naturally in cow's milk. Cow's milk has good bioavailability of calcium, which means our bodies can absorb it easily.

Diets high in red meat are often claimed to be a significant cause of death. But a recent Lancet report into the health effects of dietary risks in 195 countries showed high red meat consumption caused the fewest diet-related deaths globally. A diet high in sodium was the main cause of diet-related deaths.<sup>61</sup>

**“Meat has massive social benefits. It's an important source of dietary protein, energy, highly bioavailable micronutrients, even small amounts of animal-sourced food have a really important effect on the development of children, in the developing world on their cognitive and physical development and they are really important.”<sup>62</sup>**

*Professor Geoff Simm, Director of the Global Academy of Agriculture and Food Security, University of Edinburgh*





# Myth 8:

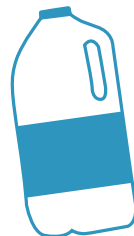
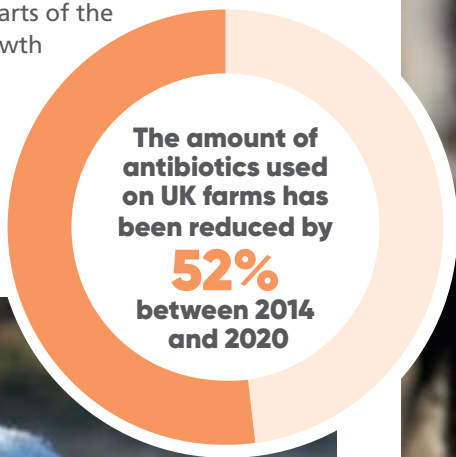
## Red meat and dairy products are full of antibiotics and hormones

The UK is the **fifth lowest** user of on-farm antibiotics across 31 European countries, beaten only by the Nordic countries (Norway, Iceland, Sweden, Finland) where the dry, cold climate is a key factor in stopping bacteria breeding and therefore reducing demand. The amount of antibiotics used on UK farms has been reduced by **52%** between 2014 and 2020<sup>63</sup>. Careful and appropriately managed use of antibiotics is necessary to protect animal welfare and farmers only use them when necessary.

Strict withdrawal periods are stipulated for each licensed veterinary medicine, including antibiotics. This means that animal products can only enter the food chain when they are safe for human consumption<sup>64</sup>.

The use of hormones for growth promotion in farm animals is banned in the UK. Hormone use is common in some other parts of the world.<sup>65</sup>

The use of all growth promoters, including low dose antibiotics, in farm animals was banned in the EU in 2006<sup>66</sup> and remains in law, which means farmers in the UK do not – and cannot – use these products, which are commonly used in other parts of the world to ensure faster growth and minimise production costs. Low dose antibiotics are still used in many countries globally to increase growth rates in animals.



**BRITISH MILK IS PRODUCED TO WORLD LEADING STANDARDS**



**95%**  
of British milk is Red Tractor Assured

Regulation as well as Red Tractor<sup>67</sup> standards guarantee traceability, food safety and responsibly sourced food, with animal health and welfare at the forefront. There are 11,193 Red Tractor dairy members in the UK and 21,832 Red Tractor beef and lamb members in England.



# Myth 9:

## British livestock farmers don't care about their animals' health and welfare

Farmers care deeply for the health and wellbeing of their animals as they are the core of their business. The UK has always been at the forefront of animal welfare legislation and offers some of the best farm animal welfare standards in the world<sup>68</sup>, with a robust and comprehensive legal framework protecting animal health and welfare. The UK has extremely mature and well-developed industry bodies that recognise the importance of animal health and welfare, and a significant number of credible quality assurance and health and welfare schemes and/or initiatives. In general, the principal producing and exporting countries located in South America, North America, Oceania and Asia have a much less developed legal framework compared to the UK.

The Animal Protection Index<sup>69</sup>, which ranks countries around the world for their commitments to improving animal welfare, identified the UK as one of the top three best performing nations.



**BRITISH LIVESTOCK IS PRODUCED TO SOME OF THE HIGHEST ANIMAL WELFARE STANDARDS IN THE WORLD**

British farmers are proud to produce the food we love.

There are a number of steps that are taken on-farm which are done so in the best interests of the animals and in line with expert advice and veterinary guidance.

Cattle are housed indoors for a range of health and welfare reasons. Limited grass growth over the winter and poor weather leading to flooding means that, in some areas of the UK, it is not possible to graze cattle outdoors and ensure that their nutritional needs are met.



Housing cattle protects them from bad weather and helps ensure a balanced diet is fed to each cow. In some instances, cows may live indoors all year round so the herd can be managed appropriately for their needs. This allows the farmer to closely monitor the herd, which helps with the detection of early stages of giving birth, lameness or disease<sup>70</sup>.

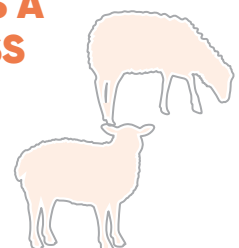


Cattle houses are well ventilated, bright spaces with individual resting areas for each cow to lie down. These are all requirements of Red Tractor Assurance and have been derived from expert guidelines to ensure natural cow behaviour as well as strong animal health and welfare regulations. Equipment like cattle brushes also help with health and welfare by keeping cattle clean.

Sheep shearing is a pain-free process and is vital for the health and hygiene of the animals. As most sheep cannot shed their coat, there is a risk of overheating. Shearing also stops the fleece from dragging along the ground and becoming dirty, which can attract flies and lead to infections. This is why sheep are shorn before summer – to ensure their comfort and health. Government guidance states that farmers should remove the fleece from all mature sheep at least once a year<sup>71</sup>.



**SHEEP SHEARING IS A PAIN-FREE PROCESS AND IS VITAL FOR THE HEALTH AND HYGIENE OF THE ANIMALS.**





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