Annual Review 2019/20
Thank you!

Thank you so much for being a member of the Vegetarian Society, you really have made great things happen over the last year! In this annual review you can read about all the things your involvement and financial contributions have achieved.

When the lockdown started, you gave money to send vegetarian food boxes to food banks that needed help. Your feedback on proposals to rename veggie burgers helped to persuade the House of Lords and the agriculture minister to reject the changes, shaping the future for vegetarians. Funded cookery classes for community groups took place throughout the year.

Thanks to you, the Vegetarian Society has had a positive impact on the causes most important to vegetarians. Eating more vegetarian food is one of the biggest ways we can help the environment. That’s why the Vegetarian Society works with everyone, no matter what they eat. Your donations mean even more people can eat to beat climate change.

Thank you.

Lynne Elliot
Chief Executive of the Vegetarian Society
Vegetarian Society Approved trademarks continue to grow

Last year, the number of products licensed to use our Vegetarian Society Approved trademarks continued to grow. New additions include: Nestlé’s ‘Yes!’ snack bars; Kerry Foods’ Richmond Meat-free Sausages; Fray Bentos Cheese & Onion pies, which are part of the Baxters Food Group; Pernod Ricard Winemakers’ Brancott Estate Wines and Calbee UK’s Yushoi Snacks and Seabrook Crisps.

Our trademarks mean you can see at a glance which items are suitable for vegetarians and vegans. We check the products, from the sourcing of the ingredients to the manufacturing processes, so you don’t have to. This makes your trips to the supermarket that bit speedier and your life that bit easier!

You put dinner on the table for hundreds of people

Many people have faced difficulties because of the coronavirus pandemic and, when the lockdown was implemented in the UK, food banks saw a big increase in demand. On 27 March we asked you to support our Emergency Food Bank Appeal to help get food boxes to the people who really needed them.

Your response was incredible! Thanks to your generosity, and the support of some of our amazing Vegetarian Society Approved clients, over £30,000 was pledged in just one week. The donations were used to put together nutritious and hearty food boxes containing all the ingredients needed to make two vegetarian recipes: a delicious Tomato and Green Lentil Ragu and a warming Bean Chilli.

We worked with the Trussell Trust, a national network of food banks, to get the boxes distributed to the people with the greatest need. Manchester Central Food Bank, who had seen a dramatic 47% increase in people needing emergency food parcels, received our first boxes. Patsy, who works there, said “We cannot say thank you enough! Fewer people will now go hungry thanks to the generosity of those involved in the project!”

We’re still getting food boxes to people who need them. Thanks to your donations people using food banks will continue to have nutritious veggie meals in these difficult times.
Influencing the House of Lords

Thousands of Vegetarian Society members wanted to take part in giving feedback to the House of Lords. In June 2019, the House of Lords approached us about a new proposal, which would ban terms associated with meat being used for vegetarian food. They felt we were the main organisation representing the views of vegetarians and thought it was important to know our members’ opinions on the new legislation.

We asked you, our members and supporters, and the businesses licensed to use the Vegetarian Society Approved trademarks for views on the proposal. If the legislation progressed it would mean companies could not call their products veggie sausages or burgers.

Many of you saw this as a chance to influence policy making and over a thousand of you responded. 70% of the responses had negative or very negative views of the proposal, making it more important than ever that your opinions were heard.

Laura Sears, the Vegetarian Society’s Individual Giving Officer, represented your views at a publicly broadcasted House of Lords committee. The committee were so convinced by the arguments you raised about the proposed EU bill that it was unanimously agreed the current naming system should not be changed. Thanks to your feedback, the House of Lords wrote to Agriculture Minister Robert Goodwill, to recommend the proposal should be rejected.

Every comment we received was sent to the House of Lords for them to consider. Your words influenced the decision taken to reject the proposal, significantly shaping the future for vegetarians.
Cookery classes for community groups

The Vegetarian Society offers free cookery classes for community groups across the UK, all year round. This gives people the chance to learn how to make delicious veggie food and gain life skills. Here are just two examples of the classes made possible with your financial contributions.

For Giving Tuesday in December, we asked you to help fund a class for people who had experienced domestic abuse. Your response was amazing! You donated an incredible £1,223, which was more than double the original target. Thanks to your generosity we were able to run two classes and reach even more people.

In February, we visited the Sahara project, run by Women’s Aid. Everyone enjoyed the day and had a great time cooking lots of veggie and vegan dishes, including a fragrant Persian Herb, Chickpea and Kale Stew. The women in the group said they learnt valuable new skills, such as the importance of fresh ingredients and kitchen skills, that will help them cook great food with simple ingredients. The Sahara group really enjoyed learning how to make new dishes and cooking wholesome and delicious food with people in a similar situation as themselves. Your donations made this possible.

In January, we asked for your help again. On Young Carers Day we wanted to fund a community cookery class for a group of young carers. In just one week you donated £847 which meant we could give them a chance to have fun with cooking while learning new skills.

Thank you for making this happen!
National Vegetarian Week reaches over 5 million people

National Vegetarian Week ran from 13 to 19 May and encouraged millions of people to eat more veggie food. We showed meat-eaters that tucking into vegetarian food is a delicious way to reduce their carbon footprint and suggested 50 family-friendly veggie things to do throughout May. These ranged from asking a school or workplace canteen to go veggie for the day, to choosing the tofu dish when ordering from the local Chinese takeaway.

Vegetarian food gained huge exposure thanks to the wide range of promotional activities we put in place. In fact, we even ran out of the “50 veggie things” wall charts and saw an unprecedented number of digital downloads! For the first time ever we launched a TV advert which was broadcast on popular digital channels including Sky News, BT Sport and Food Network. It was seen by over 5 million people across the UK, allowing us to tell a whole new range of people just how easy and tasty eating veggie food can be.

Businesses across the UK got involved with National Vegetarian Week and ran their own promotions and competitions relating to 50 veggie things. McDonald’s offered a free Spicy Veggie Wrap for the week and told us it was one of their most popular promotions ever, with 112,000 people taking advantage of the offer.

As part of our National Vegetarian Week Grants Programme, over 100 community groups, schools and organisations were awarded funding to run their own events. This meant 21,000 people across the UK attended an event, sampling delicious veggie food.
A massive thank you to generous supporters who have left us gifts in their wills and made big donations. These meant we could invest more in last year’s work, which you can see reflected in the expenditure which is greater than the income we received in the year. This is why your future donations and leaving a gift in your will is so vital to future work.
Future plans

Next year could be even better than this year – by being a member you will make this happen! We have lots of exciting plans to work on the things that are important to vegetarians.

- As the world moves into its new normal, three veggie options wherever you go by 2025 is even more of a priority.

- The Food Box Project will continue, as food banks are needed more than ever and many of you have told us you want to help where you can.

- The Vegetarian Society Cookery School will continue to teach and inspire people to make great vegetarian food. Classes may take alternative formats with more digital options in the works, and we will be face to face when we can be.

- As we all focus on what the world could or should be like, the Vegetarian Society will be here to help people consider their health and the environment with a new project to support people to go and stay veggie.

- We will create lots of new information and guidance for people, with enewsletters, information on our website and through our enquiries and dietitian services. We will produce a pregnancy guide, information on toddler nutrition and are working on a book too.

- National Vegetarian Week 2020 will be bigger and bolder than ever, even though it might be at home! We will be working with prominent celebrities, Stephen Fry and Chris Packham and celebrity chefs and bloggers to tempt people to eat veggie food and try new recipes.

We know this year has been a difficult one for all of us. We feel privileged to be here for you and to work with you to make the world a kinder place.

Thank you for everything you have done.