

Iris Gerosa statement

I'm here to talk about some of the most urgent environmental issues we're facing—water pollution, deforestation leading to the loss of biodiversity, and excessive water waste. These problems are all connected.

I am happy to know that the Bath & North East Somerset Ecological Emergency Action Plan is in place, but I believe it's missing a key point—the adoption of a plant-based diet.

Here's why. Firstly, water pollution, this is a major issue, and animal farming is a significant contributor. Releasing large amounts of animal waste and antibiotics, which contaminate rivers, lakes, and oceans, threatening both ecosystems and clean water access, for billions of people.

Furthermore the livestock industry also consumes an enormous amount of water—around 15,400 liters of water are needed to produce just one kilogram of beef. This is a stark contrast to plant-based foods like lentils, which require only about 250 litres per kilogram. With over 1.7 billion people living in areas of severe water scarcity, it's essential to rethink our consumption habits.

Deforestation is another major issue, much of it driven by the need for more land to raise livestock. Every year, an area about the size of Portugal is destroyed. This not only wipes out habitats and displaces wildlife, but it also speeds up climate change since forests absorb up to 30% of the world's carbon emissions.

The good news is that shifting to a plant-based diet can address these issues. It is stated in your action plan to “encourage environmentally-friendly diets,” so promoting plant-based eating is the logical next step. This helps preserve biodiversity, protect ecosystems like the Amazon in my home country of Brazil, and reduces the strain on local resources in Bath & North East Somerset.

As residents of Bath, we have a role to play in addressing this ecological emergency. By choosing plant-based options, we can reduce the demand for products that contribute to deforestation, water pollution, and biodiversity loss. As a council, you have the opportunity to lead by example, promoting policies that support sustainable food choices, protecting our local environment while also contributing to global conservation efforts.

I'd therefore like you to consider this ask from the Plant Based Councils campaign: please implement a Plant-Based Action Plan to promote and prioritise plant-based eating wherever the council has influence.

Thank you.