



LENT CAMPAIGN



March 5 - April 19 2025

FAITH, FOOD, AND THE CALL TO CLIMATE ACTION

In recent decades, the call to care for creation has become increasingly urgent. In his landmark encyclical *Laudato Si'*, Pope Francis urges Christians and all people of goodwill to undergo an “ecological conversion”: **a transformation of heart and habit in response to the environmental crises of our time.** His message challenges us to reflect not only spiritually, but also practically on how our everyday actions, including what we eat, affect the Earth and the most vulnerable among us.

This mandate inspired our Lent campaign. **Our food systems—how we grow, raise, process, and distribute food—are deeply connected to the health of the planet.** While diets are complex and shaped by social, cultural, and economic factors, individual choices still matter. Even small shifts in what we eat can have far-reaching environmental consequences. Food is more than just sustenance; it is a powerful force driving land use, water demand, biodiversity loss, and climate change.

WHY MEAT?

Among all dietary choices, meat consumption, particularly red meat, carries some of the greatest environmental burdens.

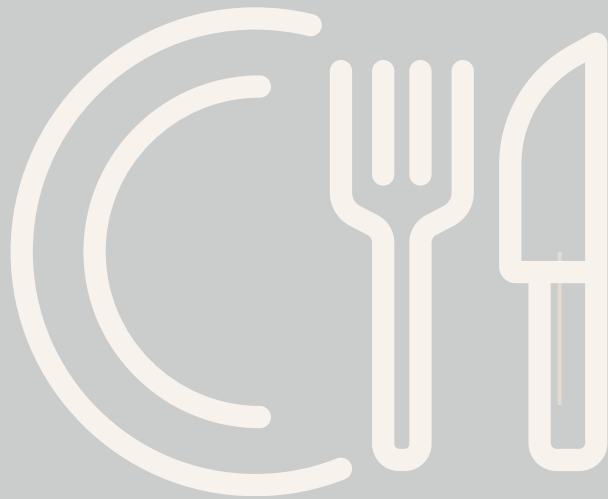
Producing meat is resource intensive. Livestock require vast areas of land for grazing or growing feed. The land needed is often cleared through deforestation or intensive agriculture, both of which release significant carbon emissions. Animal farming also generates methane, a potent greenhouse gas, while contributing to soil degradation and water pollution. These impacts extend far beyond the farm, undermining ecosystems, accelerating climate change, and threatening food security.

Such changes not only lower emissions but also free up land for restoring biodiversity or growing crops more efficiently and equitably.

While not all food choices are freely made, dietary change remains one of the most immediate and effective ways individuals can contribute to shifting the tide.

**This is why diets matter.
Reducing consumption of meat,
relieves pressure on the Earth's
finite resources.**

200 PARTICIPANTS



23 934 MEALS

THE CHALLENGE

With the above outlined information in mind, we launched a Lent campaign rooted in the **tradition of reflection, restraint, and renewal.**

We asked participants to set their own goals, committing to a meaningful reduction in meat consumption or eliminating it entirely for 40 days. By focusing specifically on red and white meat, we communicated a clear, accessible message with high environmental relevance, grounded in both faith and science.

The Methodology

Participants began reflecting on their levels of meat consumption by recording the number of meals per week that included meat, both in the context of weekly lunches and dinners as well as for breakfasts.

Based on this self-assessment, they were asked to set a personal reduction goal for the duration of Lent, aligning their commitment with both their capacity for change and their motivation to contribute to a more sustainable and just food system.

Beyond this, while individuals could take part on their own, **the campaign also encouraged collective engagement by allowing participants to bring others into the challenge,** such as families, thus reporting on the dietary commitments of their circles.



As Lent drew to a close, participants were asked to complete a follow-up survey. This crucial step aimed to evaluate the success of their commitments and gain a deeper understanding of the dynamics of change, including the barriers and enablers that were present.

The report presents the compelling results of this initiative illustrating the environmental significance of dietary changes. By estimating the impact of the achieved meat **reduction through the lens of greenhouse gas emissions (GHG) and land use, we aim to inform the wider public about the substantial environmental footprint associated with meat consumption.**

Ultimately, it demonstrates in tangible terms how individual and collective commitments can translate into measurable ecological benefits.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

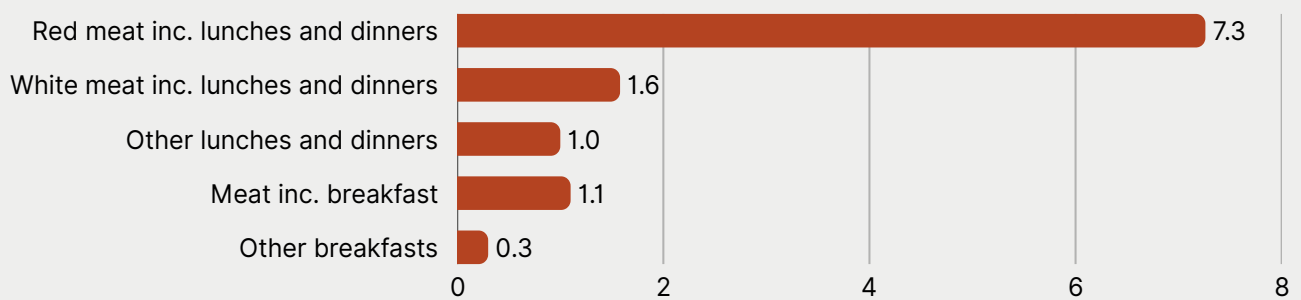
To better understand how different meals affect the environment, we applied the **Life Cycle Assessment (LCA) method**. LCA looks at the entire journey of a food item, from farming and production to consumption and disposal. It also measures the environmental impact across factors like greenhouse gas emissions, land use, and resource consumption.

By assessing various meal types through this lens, we were able to compare how much each one contributes to environmental pressures. As shown by the graphs below, meals that include animal-based ingredients (especially red meat) generally show higher impacts, particularly in terms of emissions and land use, while plant-based meals tended to have a lower environmental footprint.

This is of great significance as about half of the EU's land is used for agriculture, and most natural habitats are already affected by human activity.

Environmental impact of food categories

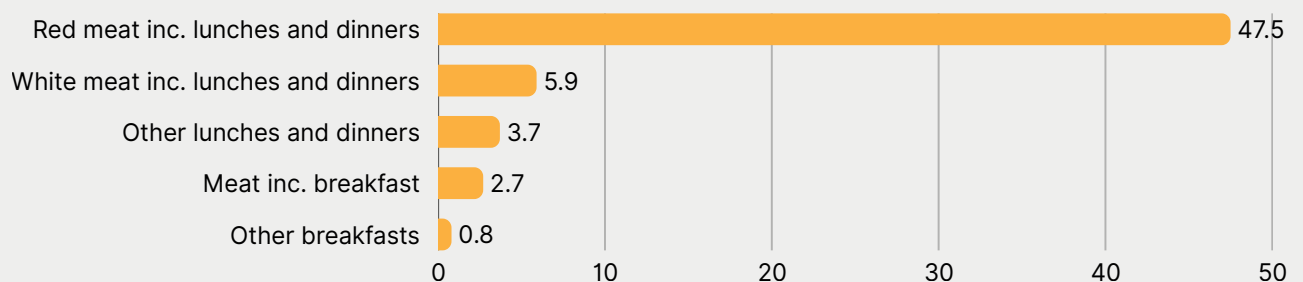
Greenhouse gas emissions



In kgCO₂e per meal

GHG figures from ADEME, Other lunches and dinners = middle of the pack of fish, vegetarian and vegan meals

Land use



In m² per year per meal

LU figures calculated from ADEME's Nos Gestes Climat meal composition averages using Poore & Namecek as base + SHARP Database

THE DIET OF THE PARTICIPANTS

In Europe, around 80% of agricultural land is used to grow feed for livestock, yet meat, fish, and dairy provide only 18% of the calories we eat. This shows a clear mismatch between how much we invest in producing these foods and what we actually get from them. Food environments play an important role in determining our diet, because what is available and affordable hugely influences what ends up on our plates.

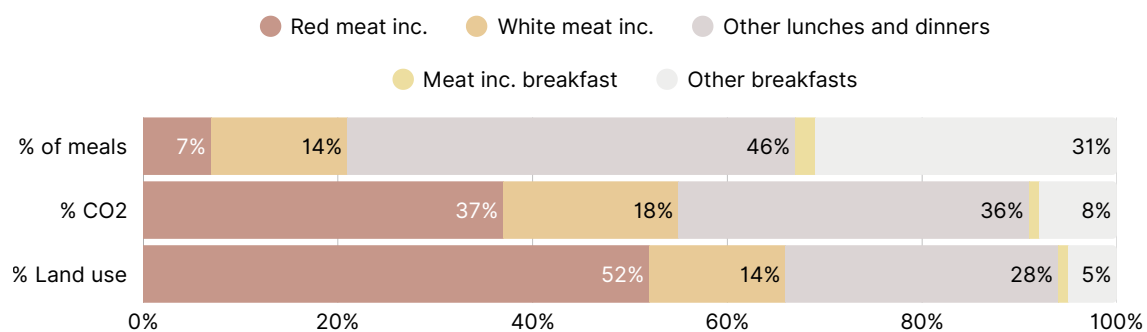
The following section will explain the data received from the survey by comparing the original diet (self-reported departing diet) of each participant to the resulting diet (self-reported outcome diet) of each participant. It will also look at the commitment diet, i.e. the theoretical reduction based on the goal participants set for themselves and strived to reach. Furthermore, we juxtapose the CO₂ and land use metrics with the change in meat consumption.

The survey options differentiated between lunches and dinners including red meat, white meat or no meat. Breakfasts were taken into account as separate entities, since they have their own nature and should not be mixed under the formula of "3 meals / day".

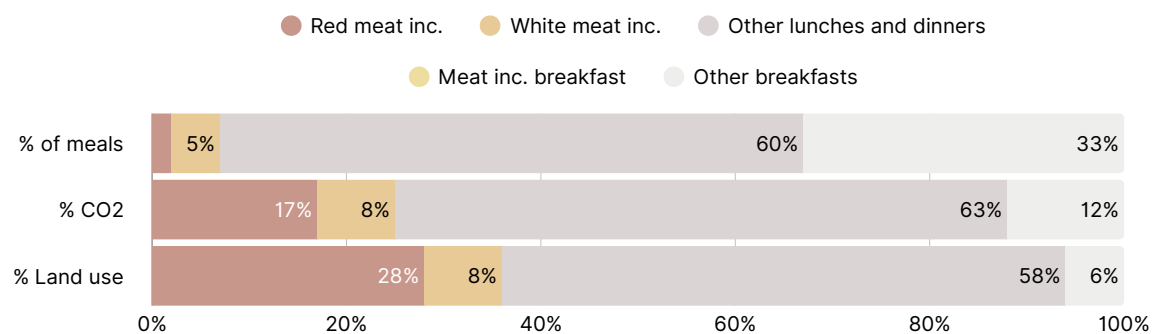
It is necessary to note, that the pool of participants in our survey were more inclined toward diets lower in meat than the European average. Notably, their meat consumption was about 47% lower than the average European diet already at the point of departure.

In the following page you find the 3 graphs (original diet, commitment at the beginning and result diet) next to each other for better visual comparison. Continuously we look at each graph separately and offer an explanation.

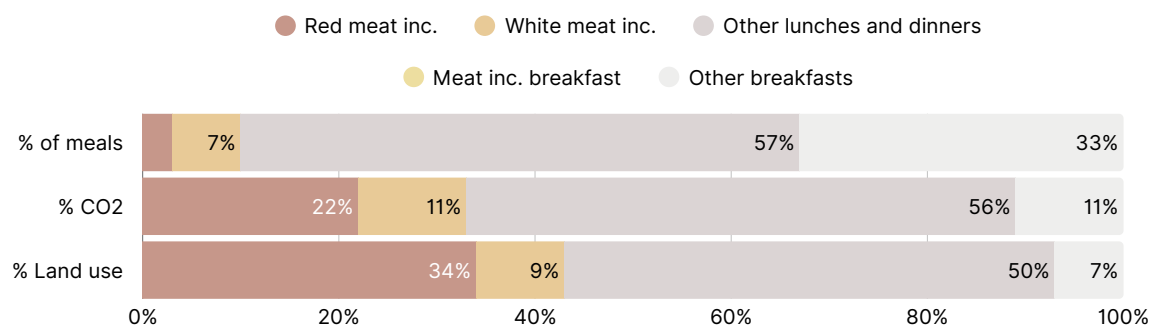
Original diet



Commitment at the beginning



Resulting diet



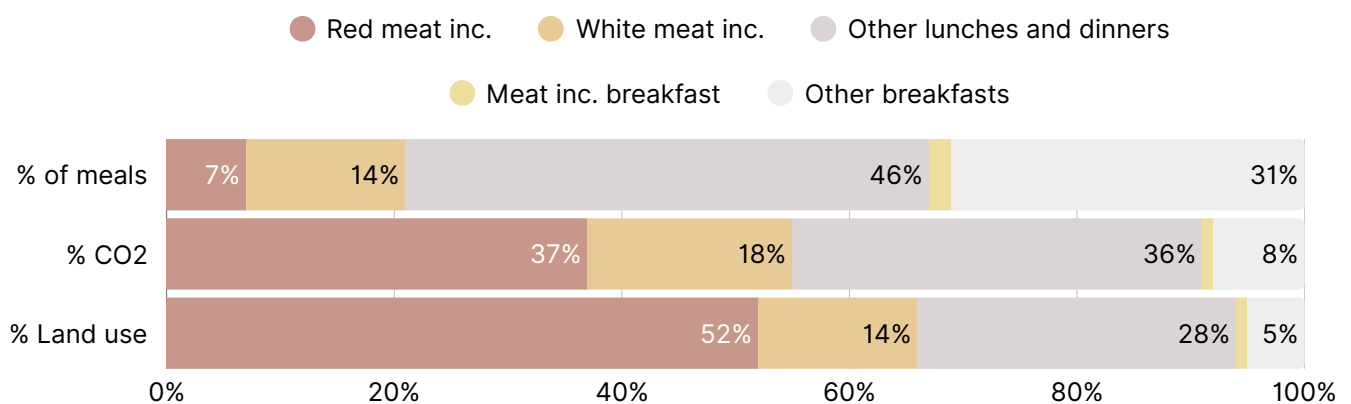
THE ORIGINAL DIET

The chart illustrates that in the original diet of the participants 7% of the dinners and lunches included red meat and 14% white meat. The rest we can consider as meals without meat (the meat including breakfast category amounts up to cca 2%). When it comes to the environmental impact, this 7% of red meat including lunches and dinners amount up to 37% of CO₂ emissions and 52% of the total land use of a person's diet. This is of considerable significance when we talk about resources use.

When we look at the annualized data per person, we can see that the greenhouse gas emissions amount to 1.4 tons of CO₂ and land use to 6495 m² at the point of departure, which will gain importance when later on compared to the resulting diet.

Annual emissions from solid diet per person (tCO₂e): **1.4**

Annual land use from solid diet per person (m²): **6495**



THE RESULTING DIET

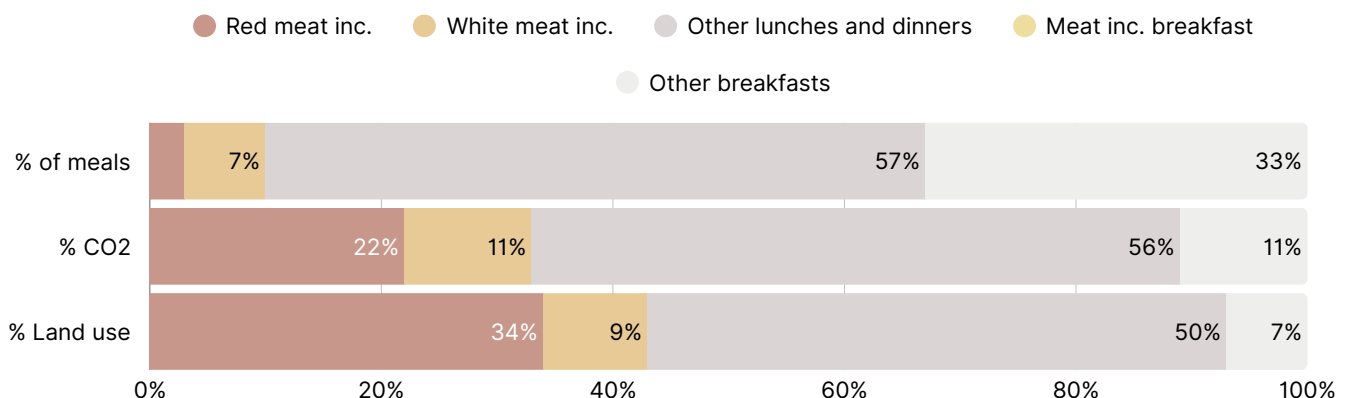
As forecasted in the introduction, diets including less meat noticeably lower resource use, thus the consequent impact on the environment. A 4% drop in the consumption of red meat including meals resulted in a 15% drop of CO₂ emissions and an 18% drop in land use. In case of white meat including meals the drop is less significant, but still positive. A 7% drop in the consumption of white meat including meals resulted in a 7% drop of CO₂ and 5% drop of land use compared to the original diet. When we compare the annual emissions per person, the reduction amounts to -0.3 tonnes CO₂ and -1870 m² of land use.

These demonstrate the strong connection between meat consumption and resource demand, while also illustrating that different types of meat-based diets vary in their resource intensity.

This shows a clear mismatch between how much we invest in producing these foods and what we actually get from them. It also highlights a major opportunity: **by shifting toward less resource-intensive foods, we can make a big difference in reducing the environmental impact of our food system.**

Annual emissions from solid diet per person (tCO₂e): **1.1**

Annual land use from solid diet per person (m²): **4621**

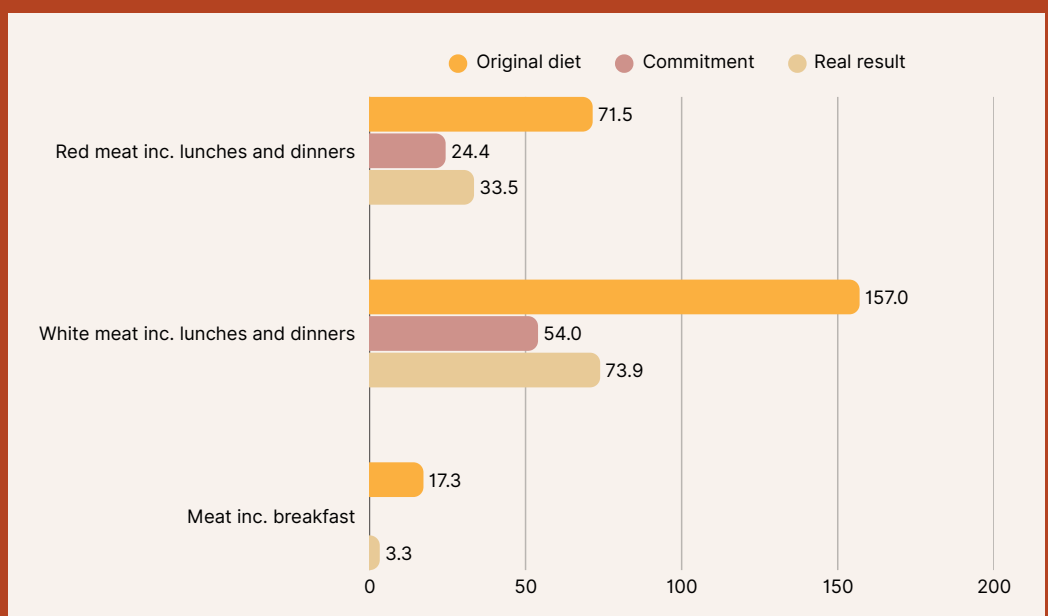


81% OF COMMITMENTS FULFILLED

Even though participants didn't fully meet all of their commitments, the reductions achieved were still significant. We believe that cultural and religious traditions, like Lent, can support change by reinforcing personal values and motivations. **In total, 81% of the commitments were fulfilled, which is a promising result.**

On average, participants aimed to cut their meat consumption by more than half. For red meat including lunches and dinners, the goal was a 66% reduction, and the actual drop was just over 53%. The results for white meat were similar, with a 65% reduction goal and a 52% actual decrease. Meat eaten at breakfast saw the biggest change, with an 81% reduction compared to the original diet, which indicates that addressing meat consumption reduction through breakfasts can be an impactful approach.

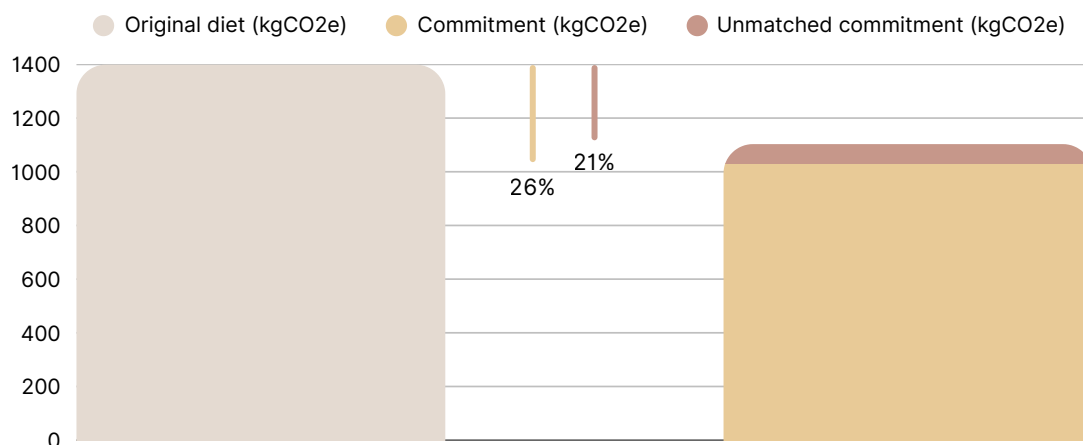
Annualized meat consumption per person (total meals)



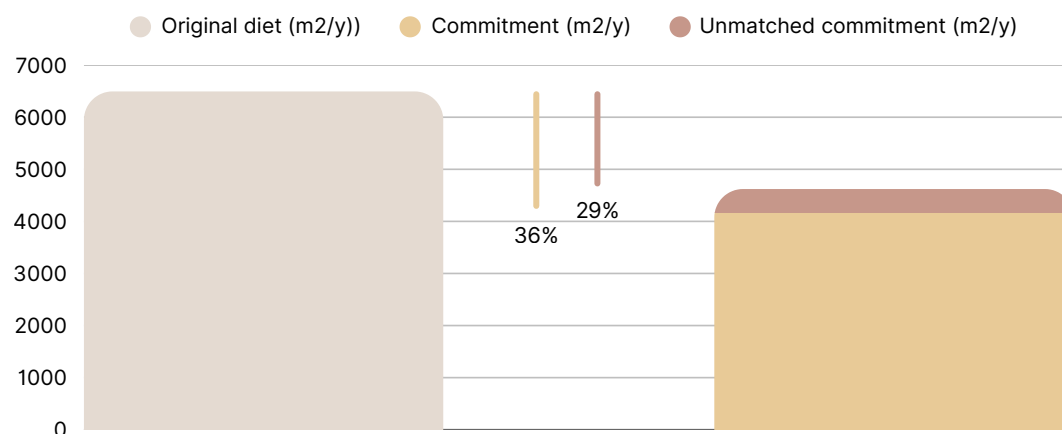
IMPACT OF THE CAMPAIGN

Participants on average managed to reduce annual emissions from solid diet per person by 21% and land use intensity by 29%, which suggests that shifts on scale can move the needle to the right direction. In the previous graphs we could see that that a reduction in meat consumption by approximately half, can have a 1/4 reduction in GHG emissions and almost a third in land use.

Annual emissions from solid diet per person (kgCO₂e)



Annual land use from solid diet per person (m²)

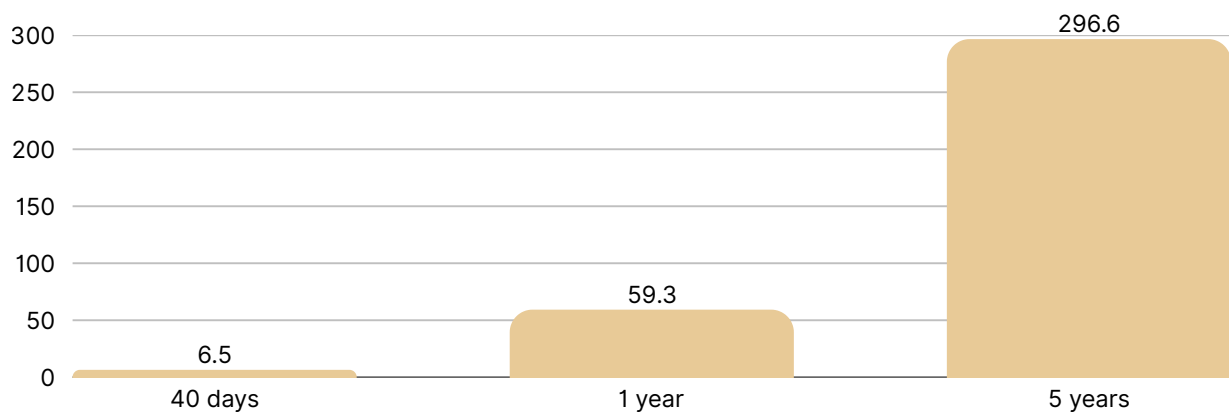


Looking at the total impact of the 200 participants over the 40-day period we conclude that the changes in diet helped avoid around 6.5 tonnes of CO₂ emissions and saved approximately 41,000 square meters or 4.1 hectares of land.

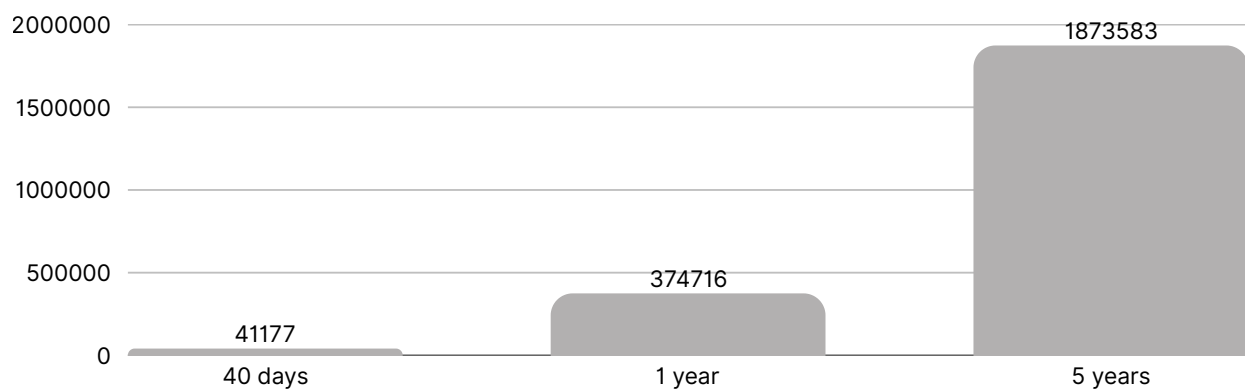


200 individuals different timeframes assuming impact from day 0

Emissions from solid diet avoided (tCO₂e)



Land use from solid diet avoided (m² / year)



3 BARRIERS

01

UNSUPPORTIVE ENVIRONMENTS

Participants noted challenges such as social gatherings, limited food options while traveling, and resistance from family members to dietary changes.

02

SOCIAL CONSTRAINTS

Daily life pressures—including frequent invitations, colleagues offering sweets, and reliance on fast food due to tight schedules—made sustained commitment more difficult.

03

FEAR AND FINANCES

Some expressed concerns about nutritional deficiencies, while others pointed to financial limitations as a barrier to maintaining dietary changes.

3 ENABLERS

01

AWARENESS

Many participants found that increased awareness of the health and environmental benefits, ethical concerns around animal treatment, and positive framing from ODB encouraged their commitment.

02

COMMUNITY SUPPORT

Support from peers, colleagues, partners, and even religious communities played a strong role in helping participants stay motivated.

03

TASTY RECIPES AND VEGETARIAN OPTIONS

Access to appealing vegetarian dishes in restaurants, along with incorporating new, enjoyable recipes into daily meals, helped sustain the dietary shift.

CONCLUSION

Our Lent campaign proved that faith-inspired commitment can be a driver in environmental action. By targeting meat reduction during Christianity's most meaningful period of sacrifice, we tackled the urgent need to **reduce food system pressures on our planet**. Using robust GHG emissions and land use data from ADEME, Poore & Namecek, and SHARP Database, participants tracked consumption across red meat, white meat, and breakfast categories, providing insight into dietary behaviour change.

The results challenged expectations. Despite participants already consuming 47% less meat than typical Europeans (66kg annually), **they still achieved considerable reductions**. When participants committed to halving their meat intake on short term, they delivered on 81% of their promises, an extraordinary success rate that defies conventional assumptions about dietary change.

The environmental impact was also measurable: 21% reduction in GHG emissions (from 1.4 to 1.1 tonnes CO₂ per person annually) and 29% less land use (6,495 to 4,621 m² per person annually). Most striking was the 81% reduction in breakfast meat consumption, suggesting strategic meal targeting could revolutionise dietary transitions.

What made the difference?

This study supports the argument that people are able and willing to change, given the food environments are also supportive and allow the right decisions to be made. In order to scale up the already existing positive examples **we need policies that restructure the context we live in**. Peer support networks and accessible information are similarly among the most powerful motivators. Christian moral values also helped to deepen the motivation needed for lasting transformation.

With Pope Leo XIV's compelling UN FAO address on food system transformation and his continued advocacy for Laudato Si', religious communities now have unprecedented papal backing for pursuing climate action through dietary change.



ABOUT OUR DAILY BREAD

NETWORK

Our Daily Bread is a network of faith-based organisations passionate about sustainable food systems. Coming together from across the 27 member states of the European Union, we strive to use our collective voice to advocate for a fairer and more sustainable food system in Europe and beyond.

Christians have an important role in shaping the policies that affect our food systems because of their ongoing advocacy, connection to practitioners on the ground and faith that calls to care for our common home. This ecumenical group, Our Daily Bread, seeks to unify the diverse number of FBOs working on food systems in a way which has never been done before.

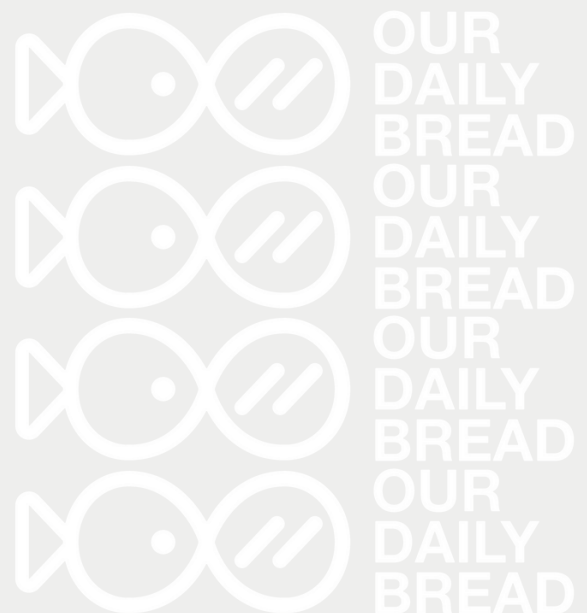
ADVOCACY

Our advocacy seeks to address questions of sustainability through the lens of both producers and consumers.

We want the European Union to improve its regulations on food systems so that producers can enhance biodiversity, embrace agroecological practices, and protect rural communities.

We equally believe that consumers have the power to build a more sustainable food system by changing the way we eat. By promoting organic, healthy and delicious diets with lower meat consumption, consumers can make a real difference.

Our mission is to use the powerful Christian teachings to build a sustainable food system for generations to come.



ourdailybreadnetwork.eu

REFERENCES

ADEME. (2024, November). *AGRIBALYSE® database* (Version 3.2) [Data set]. Agence de la transition écologique. Available in OpenLCA, SimaPro, CSV, and Excel formats. <https://doc.agribalyse.fr>

ADEME & Datagir. (2025). *Impact CO₂* [Data platform]. [https://impactCO₂.fr](https://impactCO2.fr)

Datagir / ADEME. (2025). *Base Empreinte Carbone – NosGestesClimat* [Data set]. <https://nosgestesclimat.fr>

European Environment Agency. (n.d.). *Towards sustainable management of land* [Infographics]. <https://www.eea.europa.eu/en/analysis/maps-and-charts/towards-sustainable-management-of-land>

European Parliament. (2023, May 10). *Report on ensuring food security and long-term resilience of the EU agriculture (A9-0185/2023)*. https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/A-9-2023-0185_EN.html

Poore, J., & Nemecek, T. (2018). *Reducing food's environmental impacts through producers and consumers*. *Science*, 360(6392), 987–992. <https://doi.org/10.1126/science.aag0216>

Van Wijk, M., & Gaitán-Cremaschi, D. (2022). *SHARP Indicators Database* (v2.0) [Data set]. Wageningen University & Research.

Blue Horizon. (2025). *Meat, dairy, egg and fish farming use 83% of the world's farmland, yet provide only 18% of the world calories* [Online article]. <https://www.bluehorizon.com/insight/meat-dairy-egg-and-fish-farming-use-83-of-the-worlds-farmland-yet-provide-only-18-of-the-world-calories/>

