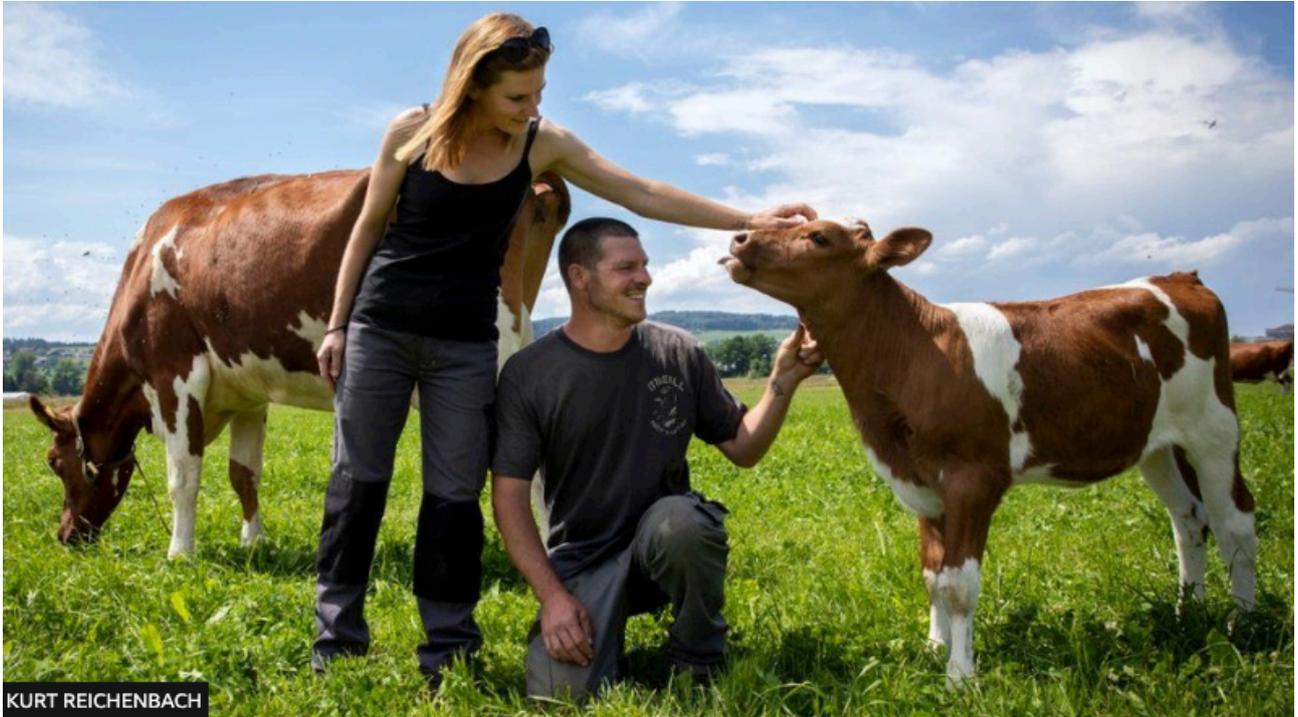


The meat and dairy farmers who are going vegan

Celebrity beauty lines are fast becoming vegan as standard

By Suzanne Bearne, 26th May 2022



It was after Laurence Candy lost most of his dairy herd to bovine tuberculosis that he decided he would no longer send animals to the slaughterhouse.

"It made me wonder if we can justify the industrial slaughter of sentient beings," says the 50-year-old looking back on the event in 2017. "As a society, we have to question this."

Since last year, Mr Candy has been working with a Scottish-based organisation called Farmers For Stock-Free Farming (FFSFF), which has been set up to support meat and dairy farmers who want to transition to animal-free agriculture.

He is now in the process of selling his remaining animals - 35 beef cattle - and concentrating instead on growing cereals such as oat, wheat, barley and broad beans.

Mr Candy is also switching to "veganic production", which prohibits the use of manure, or any other animal product, to improve the soil. For this, he is working with a body called International Biocyclic Vegan Network, which promotes and certifies plant-based, organic farms around the world.

"It allows for two years to transition out of a livestock enterprise and establish suitable alternatives," he says. "This approach enables the farmer to have a suitable timescale to develop their business plans, without a financial impact."

Mr Candy adds: "I'm trying to add value. There's currently very few farmers growing veganically, but obviously veganism is a growing trend in his country."

The statistics bear out his comments. The number of vegans in Britain quadrupled between 2014 and 2019, according to a survey for the Vegan Society.

Meanwhile, almost half (49%) of Britons are now limiting their meat consumption, or not eating it at all, found research this year from market research group Mintel. This was up from 41% in 2020.

It comes at the same time as the National Food Strategy, an independent review, said last year that the UK's current appetite for meat was "unsustainable". It concluded that intake needed to fall by 30% to help improve the environment.

This call to reduce meat consumption, and a parallel increased interest in veganism, is replicated around the world.

In Canada, Mike Lanigan decided to give up his farm in Ontario, in 2016, when a calf was born three months premature, and he spent all day trying to keep it alive. "I had an epiphany," says the 65-year-old.

"We know we need to reduce livestock to meet climate change goals... we're seeing farmers here in Scotland reach out to us; one sheep farmer contacted us worried about methane emissions from sheep [asking] what options are there for me, another for ethical reasons."

UK organisation, Refarm'd, specialises in helping dairy farmers switch to making and selling plant-based milk, cheese and yoghurt substitutes, such as oatmeal water.

"The whole reason I set up the business was to stop animal exploitation," says founder Geraldine Stark. "[And] we heard a lot of stories of how farmers were struggling, and thought how can we work together."

Refarm'd says it has, so far, worked with several farms in the UK and Switzerland to provide them with equipment and recipes.

However the transition isn't always plain sailing. Claudia Troxler, 37, and her husband Beat, run a farm in Switzerland. In 2020 they shifted from dairy farming to producing oatmeal water, which they tried to sell nationwide.

Yet, by the end of last year Ms Troxler says they decided to scale back production as it was taking "an enormous amount of time" to deliver to organic shops across Switzerland. They now instead, sell only from their farm shop.

Dr Nicola Cannon, associate professor of agriculture at the Royal Agricultural University, says it's not surprising dairy and cattle farmers may be considering going animal-free.

"The farming sector, especially the dairy industry, is struggling to meet the labour requirements at the moment, and what with the meat sector's ageing agricultural population, the crop sector is generally less intensive," she says.

"They're [also] being driven to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. It's difficult for the livestock sector as they're burping and farting methane... it might make people think of moving to a simpler system and a plant-based system, where they've got more control of emissions." (...)

Source : [BBC News](#)