



ANNUAL REPORT 2019

Vegetarian Society of Denmark



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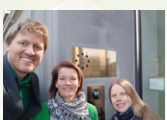
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DEAR READER,

The year 2019 was fantastic in every way, with the plant-based agenda getting even more dominant.

It is clear from the annual survey, which we conduct in collaboration with Coop Analysis, that about 14% of Danes now follow a fully or predominantly vegetarian diet. Among young people this number is 23%. And as many as 58% of Danes - 72% of young Danes - want to eat less meat. These figures show a clear green trend.

The green wind of change is also blowing in the Danish parliament, in the world of business, in the media, and in other organisations, and we in the Vegetarian Society of Denmark are proud of these changes, in which our members, contributors, volunteers, and employees have played a significant role.

It is our hope that you will feel the same way we do when you read this annual report, in which we tell about our biggest projects and most important achievements of the past year.

In 2019, we reached 4,000 members and decided to organise our work into six main programmes:

- **Political influence**
 - developing and implementing political initiatives, as well as networking with other organisations
- **Science and data**
 - dissemination of research, in particular on nutrition and sustainability, as well as studies on consumer preferences
- **Corporate collaboration**
 - advising manufacturers, retailers, wholesalers, and food service providers, as well as hosting networking meetings
- **Education of professionals**
 - inspiration and training of kitchen professionals and nutrition professionals
- **Children and youth**
 - information and guidance on healthy nutrition for children, as well as workshops on sustainability and green cooking in schools
- **Events & activities**
 - organising events and social activities

The programmes show we are working at all necessary levels to ensure everybody in Danish society will become part of the plant-based transition. And this is why we still have plenty to do in 2020 and beyond.

The report shows we can be pleased about all that we achieved in the past 12 months.

We would like to thank our members, donors, volunteers, employees, and partners who are all essential in enabling us to create the change that is needed. We look forward to continuing our work in 2020.

Happy reading and green greetings from the board and secretariat at the Vegetarian Society of Denmark



WORKSHOPS AT SCHOOLS AND A DIGITAL UNIVERSE ABOUT FOOD AND THE ENVIRONMENT

Since autumn 2015, students have conducted workshops for over 12,000 pupils in the country's 6th to 9th grade classes on the links between meat consumption, a green diet, and the environment. The project - which previously received development support from the Danish Environmental Protection Agency, the Danish Agency for Culture and Palaces, and the Ministry of Education - was welcomed by overwhelming interest in all the country's regions and had excellent evaluations from both teachers and pupils.



"It was a great day, inspiring, an eye-opener for me as a teacher"
– Sct. Nicolai School.

We are seeing great demand for these workshops among teachers across the country and we have hired several new presenters. They look forward to visiting even more schools in 2020 - new schools as well as ones which already hosted previous workshops.

Our workshops on food and the environment are based on environmental, economic, personal, and cultural dilemmas. A workshop usually lasts 3-4 hours, or 5-6 hours if the school wants a cooking workshop at the end. We see the cooking workshop as an important complement to the environment

workshop in order to make a link between the practical skills of cooking and the opportunity to sense and taste green food.

With the support of the Ministry of Education and in collaboration with IntuGreen, we developed an associated digital universe, madformiljøet.dk. It is an interactive universe where pupils can explore all the central themes of food and sustainability. The digital universe enables us to reach even more schools than is currently possible with our presenters. In 2020, we aim to spread the knowledge of madformiljøet.dk among school teachers across the country.



VEGGIEWORLD IN COPENHAGEN

In 2019, VeggieWorld came to Scandinavia for the first time and took place on the 2th and 3th of November in Øksnehallen, Copenhagen. The fair was a huge success, with around 4,000 visitors and 50+ exhibitors from Denmark and abroad, as well as a packed and inspiring programme, which included a visit by the world's strongest man, Patrick Baboumian, known from the documentary the Game Changers.

VeggieWorld was organised by the German trade fair organisation Wellfairs in close cooperation with the Vegetarian Society of Denmark. Our role was to plan the programme and to make the event visible to exhibitors, public, and media, while Wellfairs was responsible for the practical side of the fair.

It was an inspiring weekend, with a colourful mix of dairy and meat alternatives, superfoods, confectionaries, food, beverages, accessories, cosmetics, and skincare, as well as vegan and green projects, hosted cooking demos, and debates, and showcased entrepreneurship.



The Vegetarian Society of Denmark was, of course, also present with a stand just off the food area, where we informed visitors about our efforts to promote a plant-based diet. Visitors to our stand also had the opportunity to meet a number of authors of exciting books on green food and nutrition.



Visitors at VeggieWorld could also try our concept The Green Paths, which takes them on a journey of adventure into how our dietary choices affect the globe, animals, and our bodies. The Green Paths served as a tool for enlightenment, dialogue, and reflection, and numerous people paid a visit.

Another highlight of VeggieWorld was awarding this year's prizes for best plant-based products and supermarkets. The election of the Plant-based Supermarket of the Year was based on a very thorough study where we examined the selection of over 50 products, tested amid over 110 parameters, in 14 supermarkets, of which 12 physical supermarkets were checked in three different locations.

DIALOGUE AND DEBATE WITH FOOD INDUSTRY AND FARMERS

There is a great demand for our expertise on plant based foods from food producers, retailers, canteens, and representatives of the meat industry. In 2019, we held meetings and presentations for more than 100 businesses.

At the meetings, we showed, among other data, results from our large study on green living, in which approximately 4,300 vegetarians, vegans, and flexitarians participated. The results provide a solid basis for our advice, which businesses are listening to.

Both supermarket chains Netto and Bilka, who won our awards for Best Plant-based Supermarket and Best Plant-based Discount Supermarket, respectively, subsequently used it in their marketing, in stores as well as in promotional newspapers and TV spots. The fact that such big companies mentioned our survey and even spent some of their advertising budget on sharing news of our awards shows that they are paying attention. This creates a solid basis for putting pressure on supermarkets to get more plant-based products on the shelves in future.

Among those we met in 2019 were the CEO of the biggest dairy producer in Denmark Arla and the CEO of the Danish Agriculture & Food Council, as we believe that if we are to change Danish agriculture, it is important that we also meet the people and organisations with whom we disagree. At both meetings, our primary purpose was (1) to make them understand that the development towards fewer animal products and more plants is very serious and not merely transient, and (2) to reiterate key facts about climate and sustainability, such as the facts that production and consumption of animal products must be reduced drastically according to scientific research.



Our Secretary-General, Rune-Christoffer Dragsdahl, participated in two major debates, involving a total of 450 young farmers, at Bygholm Agricultural School and at Grindsted Agricultural School. On both occasions, it was a very positive experience, where we learned that many of the young farmers were used to meeting vegetarians and vegans mainly through stories about intrusions on farms and conflict-headlines in the media. But on this occasion, they heard arguments that made them reflect on the food production of the future, and on what path Denmark and they themselves should choose. We were also contacted by a butcher and a butchery instructor, who wanted us to prepare their profession for offering vegetarian alternatives.

In 2020, our efforts in this area will grow significantly. We have received support from the Green Development and Demonstration Programme under the Ministry of Environment and Food of Denmark for a two-year project called "Network for Future Plant Proteins in Denmark". The purpose is to disseminate knowledge, promote collaboration, and develop ideas, which help the plant-based transition in the Danish food industry.



ORGANIC AND PLANT-BASED FOODS ARE A GOOD MATCH

With the support of the Fund for Organic Agriculture, we started a project about organic foods in 2019. The initiative focuses on promoting organic plant-based crops and products by disseminating knowledge about demand and by facilitating networks between various players from the business world.

As part of the project, we conducted a study on preferences related to organic foods in the vegetarian consumer segment. The results were shared through a booklet aimed at the private sector, which we have included in all our meetings, and which is available on our website.

In September, we also conducted two seminars for the private sector. One was held in Aarhus in collaboration with Organic Denmark and the other in Copenhagen in collaboration with The Danish Chamber of Commerce. Both were sold out, with 50 participants for each seminar.

At the seminars, we gave presentations on developments in plant-based foods and our consumer surveys, after which presenters from the private sector talked about crops, professional kitchens, retail, and new products.



Based on the results and on the cooperation established with the private sector in 2019, we received a grant to continue the project in 2020. Our focus will be to develop our collaboration with wholesalers and food service providers. This is because we saw a particularly strong interest from the food service sector, and we see great potential in promoting organic plant-based products in this area.



IMPROVING DIETARY GUIDELINES WITH OUR MILK CAMPAIGN

In March 2019, we had a large campaign with full-page ads in Danish newspapers and with videos on social media, which focused on the fact that official dietary guideline is unclear in relation to milk. The guideline does not explicitly say that you should drink milk, but many Danes still have that understanding.

The campaign challenged the authorities, but we contacted The Danish Veterinary and Food Administration in advance to inform them that our intention was constructive - to promote alternative sources of calcium, such as the wide variety of nutritious green leafy vegetables, and nuts and whole grains, which are also packed with calcium.

We have no doubt that our approach was vital to The Danish Veterinary and Food Administration's positive response to the campaign. During prime time on the second largest Danish TV channel, TV2, they confirmed that there are plant-based sources of calcium that can be consumed instead of dairy. They also changed the wording on their website to reflect this.

"It is possible to follow a healthy diet with a calcium content that meets the recommendations, without dairy products."

The Danish Veterinary and Food Administration, 2019

The Danish Veterinary and Food Administration admits:
We have to be more clear in our communication about calcium



In September, the Danish Veterinary and Food Administration released a video on milk, which emphasised that you do not need to consume dairy products if you are conscious of other sources of the nutrients that many people get from milk.

However, we still believe that an update of the dietary guideline is needed if it is to become common knowledge among Danes that consuming dairy products is a choice and not a necessity. The same applies to the dietary guidelines on a more general level. Today, it is based on a mix of scientific evidence and "culture". We believe that it should rely solely on science

TOWARDS A MORE GREEN DIET: CALCULATION ON SOCIO-ECONOMIC BENEFITS IS ON ITS WAY

In the autumn of 2019, we received the good news that the Ministry of Environment and Food of Denmark had asked the University of Copenhagen to calculate the socio-economic benefits if Danes were to follow a greener diet.

This is an endeavour we had been campaigning about for 18 months! Similar calculations exist for Norway, Belgium, and the United Kingdom, but we have not had such data for Denmark - until now.

The figure is of tremendous importance, because it will enable us to refer to the fact that the Danish government's own calculations show an X economic benefit per year for Denmark if Danes were to follow a greener diet. We will also be able to use this figure going forward in our work, including it as an appendix to future legislative proposals, campaigns, etc.

Our campaign on getting such a calculation carried out included several op-eds published in nationwide newspapers. We also enquired about it in a survey sent to all candidates prior to the general elections in 2019, and we also prompted a couple of politicians from the Parliament to ask the Minister of Food about it.



In 2018, the former Minister of Food, Jacob Ellemann-Jensen, declined to provide such a calculation when asked by the Red-Green Alliance (Enhedslisten). But in 2019, the request was repeated by the spokesmen on food from both the Red-Green Alliance and the Socialist People's Party, and this time with a positive outcome: The ministry ordered the data and the result is expected to be announced by the end of 2019.

When the calculation is published, we will, of course, scrutinise it carefully and assess whether it includes all relevant factors and scenarios (e.g. the "planetary health diet" from the EAT-Lancet report, as well as vegetarian and vegan diets).

We also plan to enter into a public debate about the calculation to ensure that as many people as possible hear about the socio-economic potential of a plant-based diet and to ensure that it can form a basis for political initiatives that promote greener food.



MORE PLANT-BASED FOOD IN PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS

The City of Aarhus and the City of Copenhagen both decided, in 2019, to introduce significantly greener food in municipal kitchens. Both municipalities have set targets of 25% lower carbon emissions from municipal food in 2024 and 2025, respectively. In practice, this means that both municipalities must cut animal products by about 40%.

People's diets are already greener in these cities compared to the rest of the country, which means that they are going to be significantly greener by any measure, and that both municipalities will be a source of inspiration for the rest of the country in this area.

The targets in the City of Aarhus and the City of Copenhagen arose, partly directly and partly indirectly, from our campaign for a plant-based option in all public kitchens, a campaign which we started in 2017.

In both cities, our proposal for a plant-based option in public kitchens was put forward in city councils, and before the vote, we sent information to city council members about the popular support for both a plant-based option and for greener food in general.

In Copenhagen, there was no support in the city council for introducing a plant-based option in municipal kitchens, but there was support for greener food in general.

In Aarhus, the proposal was initially sidelined because a key politician was opposed to it and due to misleading stories in the media. Consequently, we sent a detailed document to the city council containing facts and scientific references. In June, the mayor's office then made a new proposal on greener food, which referred to our document, and we appeared before the finance committee, where a number of constructive questions were asked. The proposal was later accepted by the city council.

In December, we were informed that the City of Copenhagen had removed its ban on vegan food in day-care centres. This was a result of our meeting with the administration, as well as the fact that a city council member for The Alternative Party, on behalf of us, had inquired formally about the ban. It is not a guarantee of vegan food in day-care centres, but it does, among other things, give the institutions the freedom to allow parents to give their child a vegan packed lunch, which is a significant step forward compared to the previous practice.

We continue to work for political support to make a plant-based option available in all public kitchens in Denmark. We are also working, along with other major stakeholders, to find funding for kitchen staff across the country so that they can learn the extra skills they need to master plant-based cooking.



SPREADING AWARENESS TRANSFORMS SOCIETY

Press outreach is an important part of our work to put the spotlight on the plant-based agenda and to disseminate the relevant research and knowledge to the general public. We were mentioned in the media about 350 times during the year 2019, according to the professional media-watching database InfoMedia. This includes everything from appearing on TV and radio, to being quoted in newspaper articles, writing debate posts, and even general mentions, e.g. of our statistical material on developments in Danish society.

We continue to watch out for faulty claims in the media with what we call our 'Vege-Tektor' posts on Facebook, and we directly challenge media when they play fast and loose with the truth. Among other cases, we were supported by the Director-General of DR (the Danish Broadcasting Corporation, Denmark's oldest and largest media enterprise) in a complaint about a video on milk. We sometimes have to publicly point out mistakes, but our preferred approach is for media to fix their errors after we inform them of a false claim. This creates credibility for both the media and us.

In 2019, we held two major lecture tours in Denmark. First with the world-famous Dr. Caldwell Esselstyn in May and later with our Secretary-General in November. We also held a series of lectures with clinical dietitian Maria Felding and plant-based nurse Stig Ladefoged. Every time we hosted or gave a lecture, it was a pleasure to meet so many interested and curious Danes, and we look forward to hosting another world name in 2020, Dr. Michael Greger. Also the plant-based world record holder in ultra-rowing, Niclas Tonnesen, is going to give a series of lectures in the year to come.

We also participated in Denmark's Democratic Festival on Bornholm, where we hosted the Plant-Based Tent in collaboration with Knowledge Centre for Food Innovation Denmark, Naturli' Foods, and Simple Feast with presentations, debates, and discussions, where famous comedian Casper Christensen, meteorologist Jesper Theilgaard, politicians Bertel Haarder and Uffe Elbæk, as well as a number of other MPs, came by.





TOWARDS NEW GREEN HEIGHTS IN 2020

As can be seen from the previous pages, we have plenty to do in 2020.

We will continue to work within our six programmes. In particular, we want to focus on the areas where we see great potential at the moment, and where we have experience in creating results that move Danish society in a greener direction:

Our political work, our industry outreach, and our collaboration with other organisations.

Together with all of you - members, donors, volunteers, employees, and collaborators - we create green results that make a change both on a large and on a small scale.

***Thank you for your support in 2019.
We wish you all a green and enriching year in 2020***

YOU CAN SUPPORT OUR WORK IN THE FOLLOWING WAYS:

- Via the website vegetarisk.dk/bidrag
- By bank transfer:
IBAN DK2584010001053216
SWIFT/BIC: MEKUDK21



Vegetarian Society
of Denmark

Sortedam Dossering 55
2100 Copenhagen, Denmark
kontakt@vegetarisk.dk
+4551918978
www.vegetarisk.dk

