



EMMA O'ROURKE

Matched with
Tailored Food



Emma's Story

I came to the School of Moral Ambition because I believe the world's biggest challenges aren't impossible to solve, they are just overlooked by the types of people who can best solve them.

My career started in international development, where I supported USAID-funded programs - government aid targeting areas of immense need. After USAID was dismantled, I shifted into public affairs in Washington, DC, and worked at a startup firm working with large corporations to influence public policy. The move from one industry to the other was striking. I came to see firsthand how targeted corporate interests shape the discourse and world around us. Was it possible that social change is not just a matter of means but a matter of messaging?

For years I have been following Rutger Bregman and have been deeply inspired by the idea that a small group of people can have an outsized impact. When the School of Moral Ambition launched its food system reform fellowship, it felt like the perfect opportunity to apply this premise and the skills I have built in research, strategy, and stakeholder engagement.

Factory farming is one of the defining moral challenges of our lifetime. Reforming our food system has the potential to create meaningful progress across three critical and connected issues: animal welfare, environmental sustainability, and human health. Factory farming affects billions of animals, contributes to environmental pressures, and shapes the systems that determine what food is produced, how it is produced, and what people can access and afford.

This fellowship represents an opportunity to prove that ambitious, talented people can apply their skills to some of the world's most important moral challenges — and that with the right people, strategies, and resources, we can accelerate progress on issues that once seemed too difficult to change.

The Proposed Project

I will be working with Tailored Foods, a nonprofit building more nutritious, affordable, and

culturally relevant food systems in countries including Liberia, Haiti, the United States, and the Congo. Tailored Foods partners with grassroots entrepreneurs to develop and scale low-cost, locally sourced food products, while also working with larger food system organizations to make healthy food more accessible to communities facing malnutrition. Instead of just shipping food to areas in need, Tailored Foods is establishing local ecosystems of food production and consumption.

During my fellowship, I will serve as project manager for the Affordable Nutrition Coalition, a pilot initiative focused on translating research about affordable, plant-rich diets into practical advocacy tools and coordinated action.

The food system is complex, and progress requires more than good ideas. It requires alignment between researchers, advocates, policymakers, businesses, and communities. The Coalition's goal is to bridge that gap by turning evidence into clear narratives, shared resources, and strategic engagement.

My role will focus on building the infrastructure needed for collaboration. I will manage evidence curation, coordinate the development of communications materials across partner organizations, and help transform research into tools that can influence decision makers.

I will also support conference and policy engagement by identifying high-value opportunities, coordinating preparation and follow-up, and creating systems to capture lessons learned. This includes understanding which arguments resonate, where barriers remain, and how the Coalition can become more effective over time.

The Potential Impact

By the end of the fellowship, I aim to help build the Affordable Nutrition Coalition into a stronger, more coordinated force for food system reform.

Today, important research, organizations, and advocacy efforts exist in parallel. The Coalition's opportunity is to bring these pieces together: pooling expertise, resources, and influence to create a more unified approach to making affordable, plant-rich food systems a reality.

A successful fellowship would mean that partner organizations leave with clearer messaging, stronger relationships, and better tools to engage high-leverage decision makers across the food system.

The long-term impact is a stronger reform ecosystem: one where evidence translates into action, where organizations can work together more effectively, and where changing the food system feels not only necessary, but achievable.