



madre brava

Meat's affordability crisis - The price gap with plant proteins is widening by the year

A UK Briefing prepared by Madre Brava

Meat's affordability crisis - The price gap with plant proteins is widening by the year

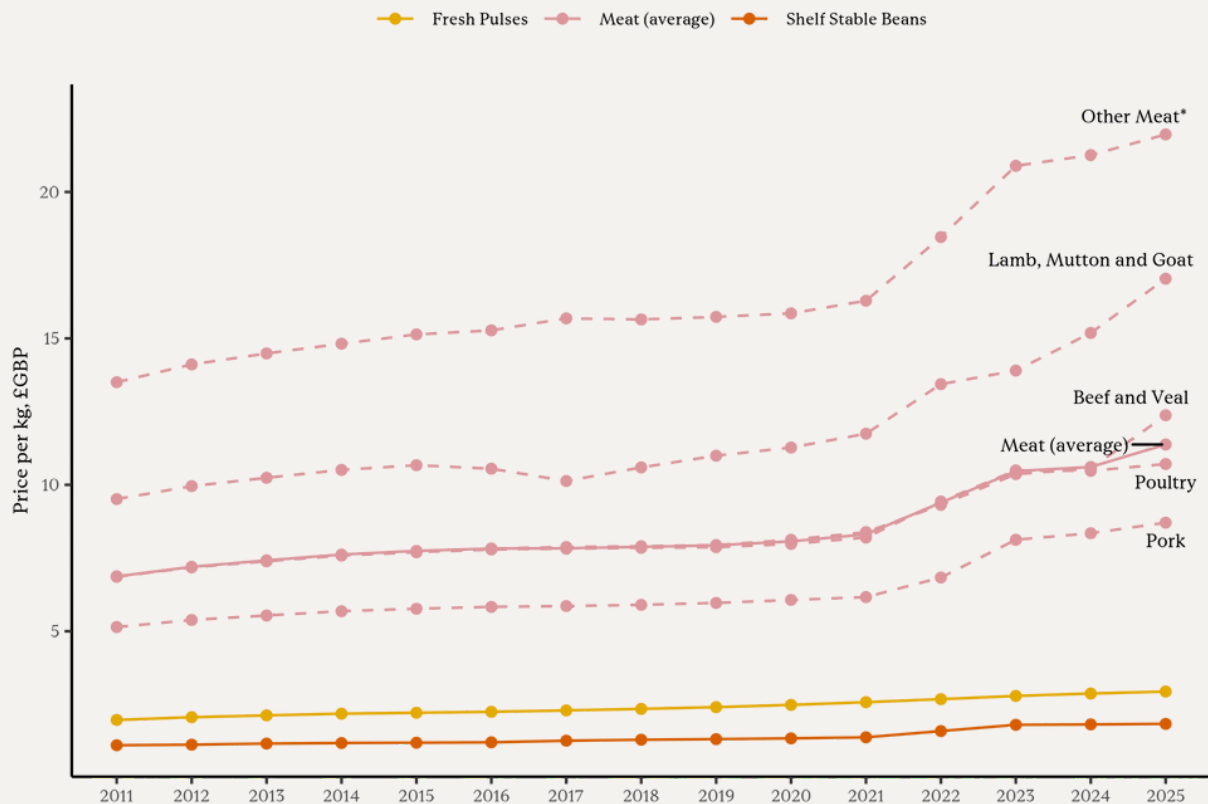
New data obtained from [Euromonitor](#) and analysed by non-profit climate group Madre Brava show that the price of meat in the UK is rising again, while the prices of plant proteins (beans, lentils, peas, tofu and plant-based meat alternatives), which have remained more stable, are now far lower.

Meat, on average, has increased by £3.31 per kg, from £8.07 in 2020 to £11.38 in 2025. The price of red meat has increased the most in the past five years: beef prices have increased by half, up by £4.26 per kilo; same with lamb, which jumped by £5.77; pork rose by £2.64; and processed red meat by £2.98. In contrast, fresh pulses (beans, lentils and peas) increased by only 45 pence per kg, from £2.49 in 2020 to £2.94 in 2025, while shelf stable beans increased by 50 pence to £1.84 in 2025. Most notably, the price gap between shelf stable beans and beef has increased from £6.78 in 2020 to £10.54 in 2025, while the gap between fresh pulses and beef has widened from £5.64 to £9.44 in the same period.

The increasing 'meat to beans' gap is making plant-based or hybrid meals an appealing choice for supermarket shoppers - and we are seeing this in the data, with a reduction in the volume of retail sales of fresh and processed meat in 2025 - in favour of beans.

madre brava

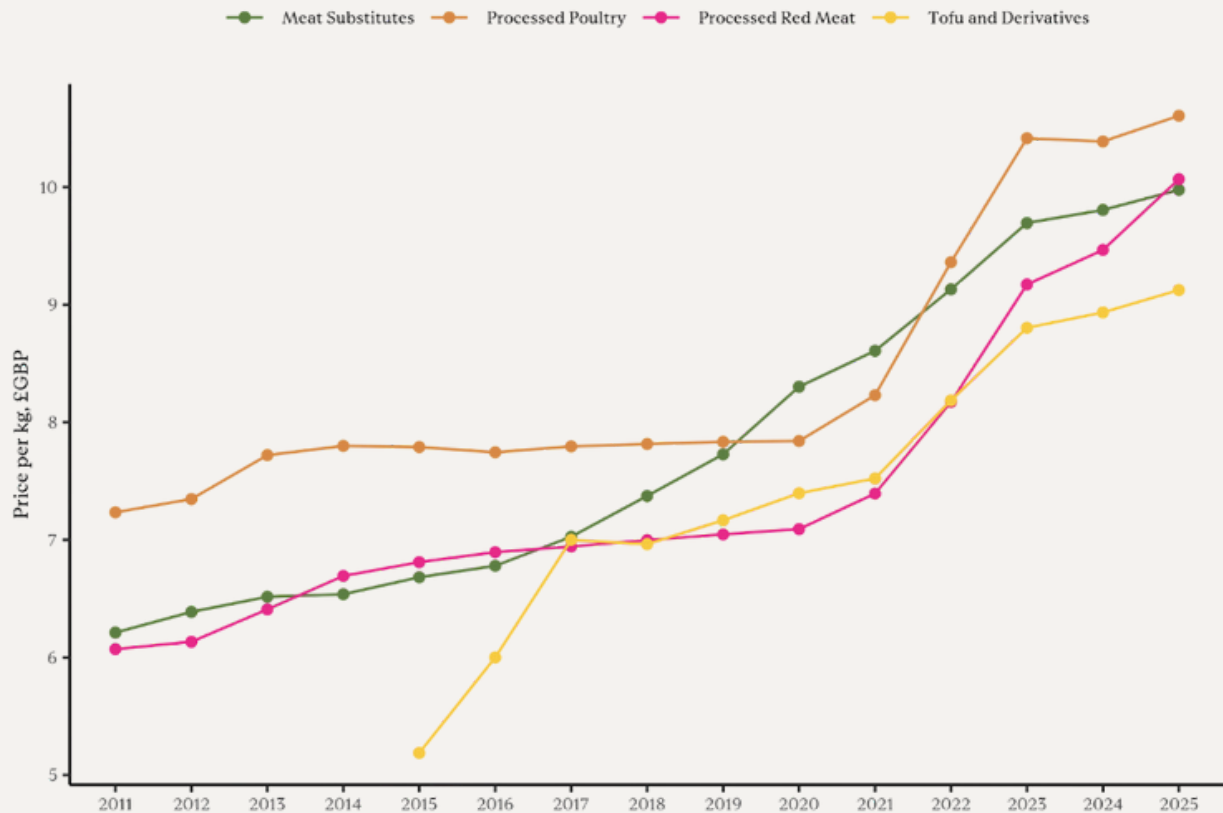
Whole protein foods - average retail prices



Other key findings from this retail price analysis include:

- All types of fresh and processed meats have seen long term, structural price increases.
- In 2025, retail volumes of fresh meat had decreased to levels below pre-pandemic era, while processed meat continues to decline in volume, signalling that price increases may be starting to have an impact on consumer choices.
- Due to their low cost, the price of whole food plant proteins, beans and pulses are relatively stable.
- The price of tofu has fallen relative to meat and is also now cheaper, on average, than most kinds of fresh and processed meat.
- Plant-based meat alternatives have seen lower price increases than meat, and are now cheaper, on average, than processed meat. For example, plant-based versions of chicken Kyivs (when sold in packs of two) were found to be cheaper than the chicken versions in many supermarkets, including Tesco and Aldi. (1)

Processed meat and substitutes - average retail prices



Source: Euromonitor International, Staple Foods, Industry Edition 2025 (2) *Other meat includes game such as venison, rabbit and game birds like pheasant and partridge, as well as other domesticated animals including rabbit.

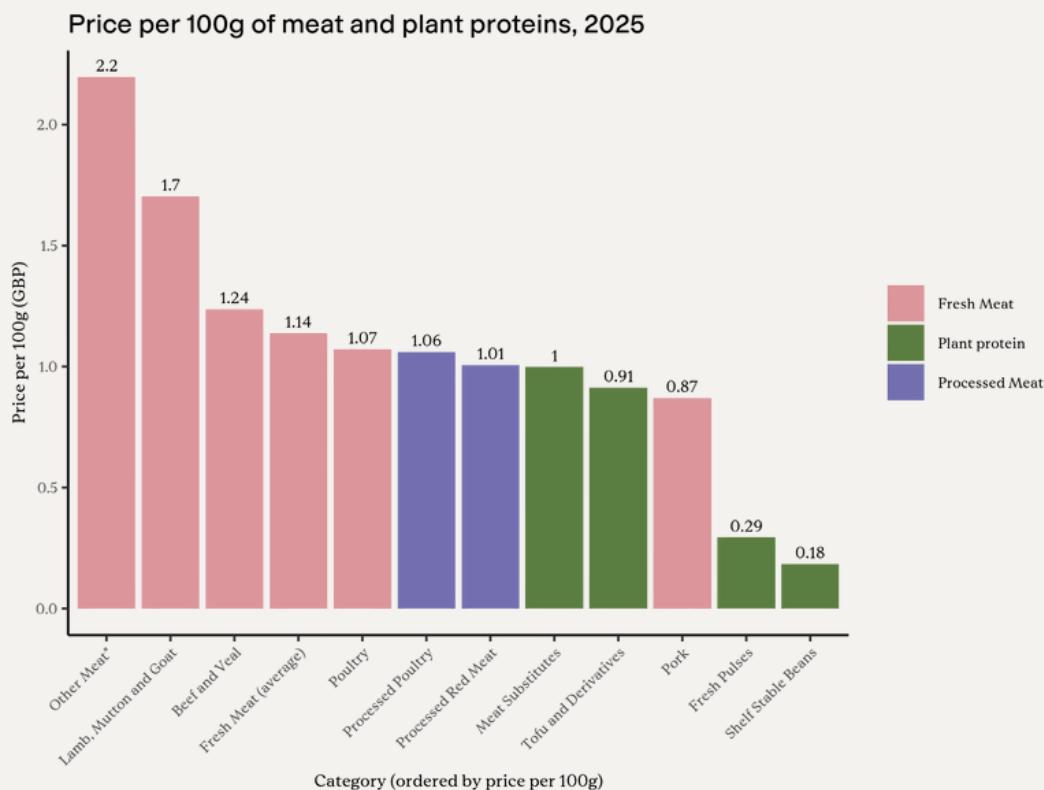
1 We looked at the price of chicken nuggets and Kyivs in the top 8 supermarkets, representing over 90% of the UK market share on the 13th of November 2025. We used online prices for all but Lidl where we visited in person. We found the cheapest plant-based products, and the cheapest animal-based equivalent based on price per kg. Promotions, and package sizes \pm 40% were excluded. This methodology was used by ProVeg, Germany in their recent price study: <https://proveg.org/de/proveg-preisstudie-2025>

2 All source material is the exclusive property of Euromonitor International Ltd and its licensors. Source material is provided without any warranties or representations about accuracy or completeness. Euromonitor International Ltd cannot be held liable for analysis or findings within this report and cannot be held liable for any reliance on such materials in any capacity and any reliance is done at the users risk.

The benefits of eating more beans and less meat

Cost of living crisis

With the UK still facing a cost-of-living crisis and food price inflation hitting lower income families the hardest, plant-based whole foods like beans and pulses, and meat alternatives, are a cost effective protein alternative, while being healthier, higher in fibre and lower in fat than red and processed meat. Currently the poorest families in the UK would need to spend 70% of their disposable income on food to meet the government standards for a healthy diet. Eating more beans and other plant-based proteins instead of meat, can help reduce the costs of following a healthy diet, particularly as beans count as one of the '5 a day' recommended portions of vegetables and fruit.



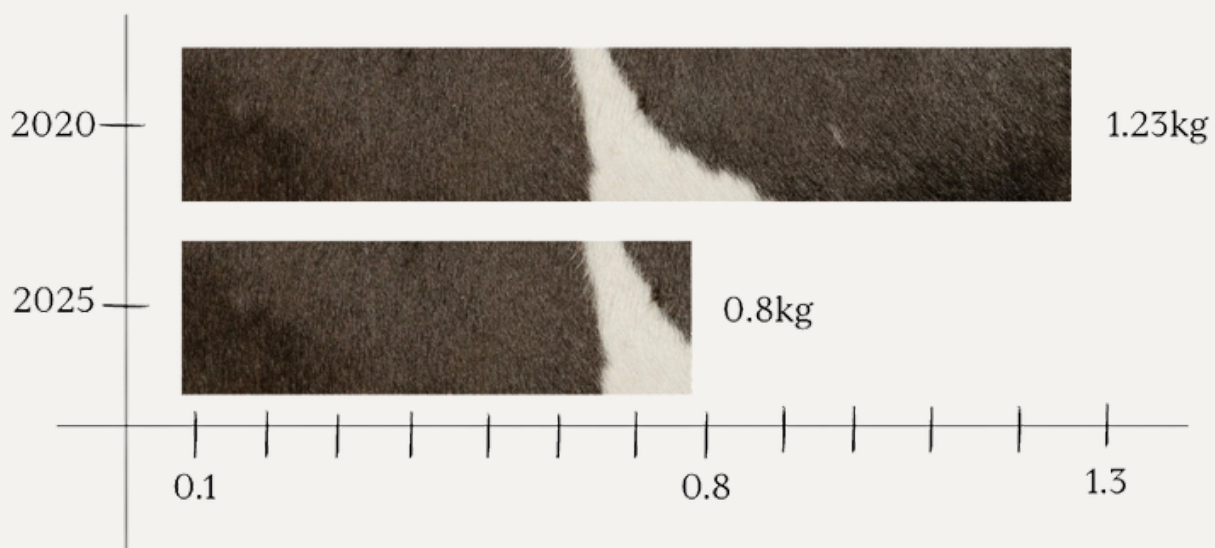
*Other meat includes game such as venison, rabbit and game birds like pheasant and partridge, as well as other domesticated animals including rabbit.

madre brava

The benefits of eating more beans and less meat

How Much Beef Can £10 Buy* You in the UK?

**on average*



Health

Most British people lack enough dietary fibre - around 95% of us - and fibre-rich diets have multiple health benefits including a 24% reduction in the risk of coronary heart disease as well as reductions in the risks of type 2 diabetes and some forms of cancer. Overall, research shows that increasing our consumption of beans, pulses and legumes can extend our life expectancy by over two years.

madre brava

Why meat prices are rising long-term

The data shows that this is not a recent trend but a long-term and structural phenomenon over the last few years. This is not only in the UK, but common across Europe. There are multiple reasons for the price increases, which include the 3 Cs (climate change, conflict, and the longer-term impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic) as well as Brexit in the UK:

- Climate change and extreme weather events such as droughts and floods, which have impacted the prices of feed for livestock. Dry weather has affected grass, meaning cattle must be fed feedstock earlier in the season, affecting prices, while European dairy cattle herds were affected by the 'Blue-tongue' virus - which scientists say is made more likely because of climate change - affecting milk supplies. Livestock can also be lost during extreme weather events - in floods, typhoons and through heat-stress.
- Climate impacted foods are responsible for 40% of food inflation, with beef, milk and butter falling into the top five most price impacted foods. The others are chocolate and coffee
- Conflict, COVID and socio-economic shocks: The ongoing war in Ukraine has disrupted supply chains and continues to affect the prices of grain, fertiliser and energy. Combined with the shock to supply chains caused by COVID, and climate impacts, this led to rises in prices of all agricultural commodities, peaking in 2022.

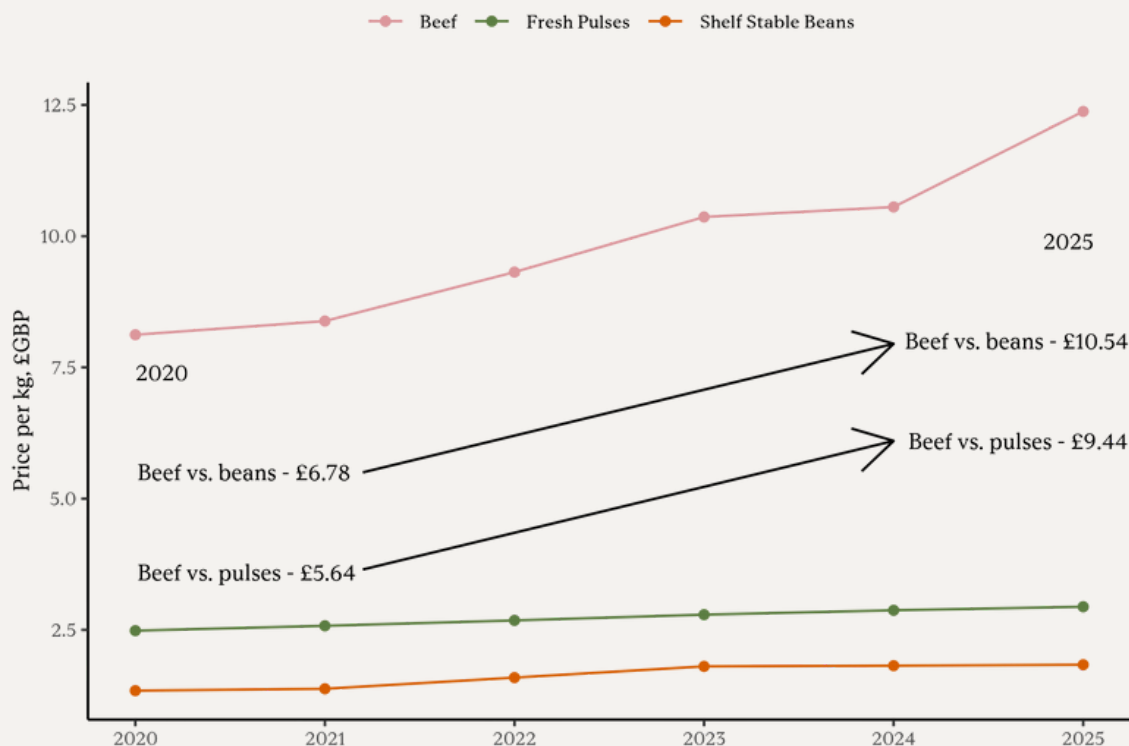
Why meat prices are rising long-term

- Animal diseases are prevalent and hard to control in factory farming: 'Zoonotic diseases' which can infect humans, as well as animals create a risk of new pandemics; while production diseases impact animals and result in food loss. An example is avian flu outbreaks which have affected the prices of chicken and eggs. In the 2024-25 season avian flu resulted in culling of 1.8 million chickens in the UK, in just a three month period. In the current flu season - which we are at the start of - there are 35 confirmed cases, which include several large commercial flocks, with culling ongoing.
- Chris Jaccarini, Food and Farming Analyst at ECIU said:
"Shoppers will have noticed that the price of the weekly shop has shot up in recent years. At 73p, a pint of milk now costs 23p more than it did at the start of the gas crisis. Milk, butter and beef are among the products most hit by extreme weather and have all become much more expensive. Both butter and beef prices have been driven up by poor grass growth after a historically hot, dry summer, forcing farmers to rely more heavily on bought-in feed. At the same time, a virus outbreak in European dairy herds, which scientists warn is more likely due to climate change, has kept demand for British dairy high."

madre brava

Brits should be eating more beans - they are cheaper and healthier

Beans and pulses have generally remained stable in price - in contrast to the sharp rises in meat prices. There are several reasons for this: beans require less fertilizer, water and other inputs to produce than meat and dairy, and so are less susceptible to price increases or shortages of these. They can also be dried or canned and stored for longer, making them less subject to short term market fluctuations.

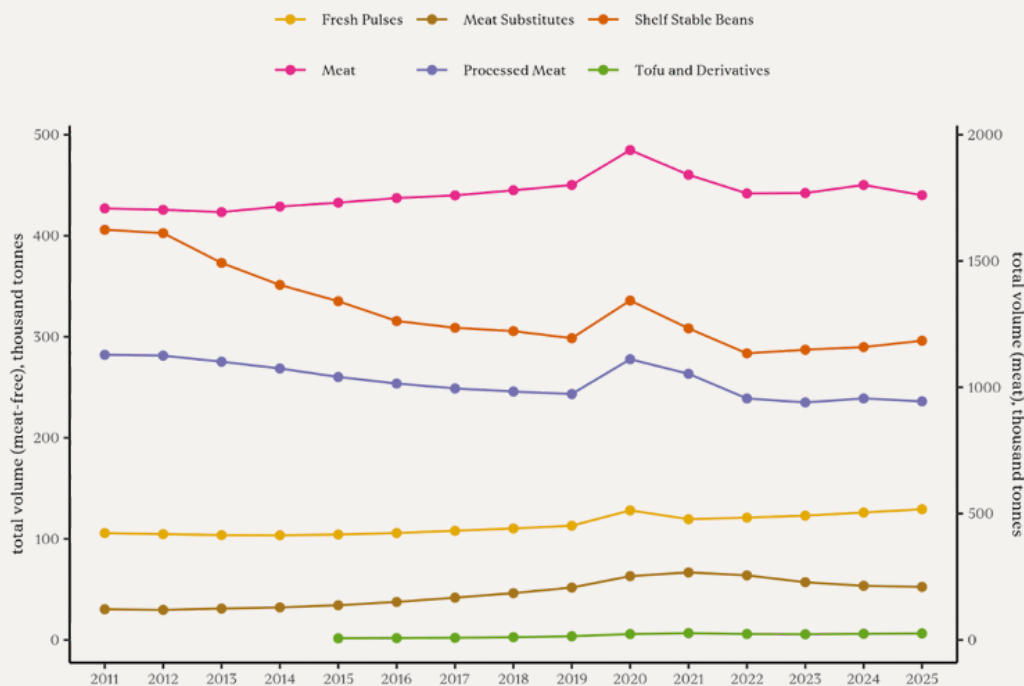


The Food Foundation's recent 'Bean Facts' report also notes that consumption of beans peaked in 1979 when bean consumption was four times what it is today. The report, which uses Defra's family foods survey data, shows a reduction in the most popular categories - baked beans, peas - as well as fresh and frozen beans, and a slight increase (from very low levels) of other canned beans and pulses as well as dried pulses.

madre brava

Brits should be eating more beans - they are cheaper and healthier

Protein Food Retail Volumes 2011-2025



Euromonitor International, Staple Foods, Industry Edition 2025. Greater volumes in 2020 and 2021 are attributed to COVID-19 lockdowns, when the vast majority of food was purchased from retail outlets and consumed in the home

According to data from Euromonitor, our consumption of beans and pulses is slowly rising again. Following a decline, shelf stable beans and fresh pulses have seen a slight up-tick in the last few years. Premium beans have entered the market offering jarred pulses and beans, making them more appealing. At the same time, meat had also seen an up-tick in volume, in line with recent trends for higher protein diets. However, in 2025, retail volumes of fresh meat had decreased by over 40 tonnes below pre-pandemic levels, and processed meat continues to decline in volume, signalling that price increases may be starting to have an impact on consumer choices.

How retailers can help

Retailers should support consumers in making healthy and cost-effective choices. Most people in the UK say they want to eat more healthily and sustainably, and support higher animal welfare standards. However, in comparison to many European retailers, UK supermarkets have lagged behind in taking steps to normalise plant-rich diets in their advertising, promotions, meal deals and recipe suggestions.

Many retailers in Germany and the Netherlands have committed to targets to reduce sales of meat and dairy and to increase the sales of plant protein, to encourage a shift to healthier and more sustainable diets - with budget supermarkets Lidl and Aldi among the leaders in this shift.

As more people adopt plant-based meat and dairy, we would expect that economies of scale lead to further price reduction over time (as has been seen in Germany).

There is some movement among UK retailers, with Lidl the first to set such a target and calling for government action; and with a number of supermarkets committing to increase sales of beans as part of the Food Foundation's 'Bang in some beans' campaign.

Conclusion

The structural issues that have led to long term rises in the prices of meat are highly likely to continue, particularly in the face of increasing climate impacts on agriculture. The stable price of plant-based proteins will make them increasingly attractive to consumers who wish to maintain protein intake and increase their consumption of affordable, healthy and sustainable food.

As the largest sellers of food to British people, supermarkets should take responsibility and support consumers in eating healthily and affordably.

Madre Brava urges UK retailers to at least set 2030 targets to rebalance protein sales in line with the Eatwell Guide, the UK's national dietary guidelines.