# Investigation reveals PR campaign to discredit Eat-Lancet report linked to meat industry



A recent investigation has uncovered evidence suggesting that a public relations campaign aimed at discrediting the prominent Eat-Lancet Commission study may have been orchestrated by vested interests within the meat and dairy industries. The leaked information, revealed by the climate website DeSmog, indicates that the backlash against the 2019 report was partly facilitated by Red Flag, a PR firm associated with the Animal Agriculture Alliance, which represents key players in the meat sector, including major corporations like Cargill and Smithfield Foods.

The Eat-Lancet Commission report sought to address the pressing question of how to feed the growing global population without exacerbating climate change. It proposed a "planetary health diet" that recommended a 50% reduction in global red meat consumption while increasing the intake of plant-based foods such as nuts and pulses. This shift, argued the report, could mitigate the harms associated with animal agriculture, which accounts for over 14% of global greenhouse gas emissions.

Despite its intention to promote sustainable dietary changes, the report was met with fierce opposition. Following its release, researchers involved faced personal attacks, resulting in threats and insults that escalated online. A significant volume of negative content emerged, with thousands of critical posts circulating on Twitter (now known as X) and more than 500 articles published questioning the study’s validity.

According to the documents seen by DeSmog, Red Flag claimed that their campaign successfully highlighted the report's perceived radical nature and alleged hypocrisy of its founders. The document notes that nearly half of the 1,315 articles concerning the Eat-Lancet report included messaging from Red Flag, including claims that the diet promoted by the report was “dangerous” and patronising towards disadvantaged populations.

Researcher Dr. Marco Springmann, associated with the University of Oxford and co-author of the study, described experiencing severe stress following the media storm generated by the backlash. He stated, "Usually I lead on two to three studies a year, but in the year following Eat-Lancet, I wasn’t able to even lead on one," highlighting the adverse impact of the campaign on researchers' professional lives.

Dr. Line Gordon, another co-author, reflected on the intensity of the negative feedback, recalling feeling “overwhelmed” by the vitriolic responses that followed the study’s publication. The discourse surrounding the report was described as indicative of a broader cultural war regarding dietary practices, a phenomenon that has become increasingly recognised in recent years.

Furthermore, the leaked document detailed how Red Flag's campaign portrayed the Eat-Lancet study as out of touch and elitist, enlisting the support of affiliates like the Institute of Economic Affairs, a UK libertarian thinktank. This collaboration enabled them to shape the narrative around the study, thereby framing it as a polarising issue rather than one that could be approached through rational discussion.

Despite the campaign’s influence, the Eat-Lancet report has since been acknowledged as one of the most significant studies of its kind, cited extensively in policy debates and government documents. With a second report anticipated in the near future, Springmann expressed hopes that this new research might facilitate a more constructive dialogue about sustainable diets.

The ongoing impacts of such PR campaigns raise questions about the nature of scientific discourse in the face of ideological battles over health and climate change, as experts like Jennifer Jacquet of the University of Miami emphasised the need for discussions rooted in truth rather than division.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

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