

MEAT REPLACER? NO THANKS! PULSES? WHY NOT...



Decreasing the consumption of animal proteins and increasing the consumption of plant proteins is one of the keys to a future diet which is healthier (better for our health) and more sustainable (better for our environment). However, this dietary transition implies a significant change in consumers' eating habits.

Researchers from the CSGA joined forces with a Norwegian team (NOFIMA) to explore the attitudes of consumers (25-60 years old) towards animal (meat, fish, egg), plant (lentils, plant milks, tofu) and meat replacer (plant-based meat) protein sources. The researchers used an original methodology. During a two-hour session, small groups of 10 people were asked to describe their daily meals using a photo-collage technique, to sort images of food, to imagine the diet of celebrities or to invent a future with no meat.

The results showed a significant discrepancy between what consumers want (eating less meat) and what they actually eat. Meat remains an important and central part of their daily meals. Consumers were curious about plant-based sources of protein (lentils, chickpeas, etc.) but the main obstacle to the consumption of these products remains the lack of nutritional knowledge: "I think there is less protein in pulses than in meat but I'm not sure, I could be wrong" and acceptability in France: "If it's not good, I won't give it another chance" or practicality in Norway: "I feel like I have a lot of lentils in my cupboard, because I know they're good but I don't really know how to prepare them". Most consumers also indicated that changes take time ("for our generation it's hard, to tell yourself that next week you'll switch to plant-based food, that's not possible. People have to get used to it, over 10, 20 or 30 years").

Finally, participants perceived meat replacers as highly processed industrial products, which are not compatible with health and sustainability. These results suggest that meat replacers may not be the most direct way of encouraging consumers to adopt a diet which is richer in plant proteins.

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To know more

Varela P, Arvisenet G, Gonera A, Myhrer KS, Fifi V and Valentin D (2022). Meat replacer? No thanks! The clash between naturalness and processing: An explorative study of the perception of plant-based foods. *Appetite*, 1:105793.

Keywords

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