

24 July 2025

PUBLIC STATEMENT: DEFENDING FAIR LABELLING FOR PLANT-BASED ALTERNATIVES

As producers of plant-based alternatives and protein ingredients we are committed to transparency, innovation, and consumer choice. We strongly oppose ongoing efforts to restrict the use of familiar denominations such as "burger", "sausage" and other generic shapes and terms for plant-based products.



Our coalition of industry stakeholders, from small businesses to large companies, asks policymakers to uphold the status quo on the use of meat names for plant-based products in line with the goals below.

1. Respecting Consumer Choice

- Consumers have the **right to choose products** that align with their dietary needs, values, and preferences. Consumers are not misled; they make a **conscious choice to buy plant-based products**. Using familiar everyday terms empowers them to make informed decisions.
- To respond to consumer demand, plant-based products are **clearly labelled** to indicate their non-animal origin, using qualifiers such as "plant-based," "vegan" or "meat-free" alongside familiar terms like "bacon" or "sausage". These familiar terms refer to shapes, sizes and textures and are typically used for other animal products too, such as "fish burger". Last October, the Court of Justice of the European Union ruled¹ that **current EU rules on meat denominations already provide sufficient consumer protection**. Moreover, it argued against establishing legal definitions for meat-related terms due to cultural and linguistic differences across the EU. Current proposals to ban the use of everyday food terms will only introduce legal uncertainty and unnecessary complexity to a system that has proven to be clear and effective.
- Surveys and market research **consistently show**² that consumers are **not confused** by these terms and understand the plant-based nature of these products. According to a study conducted by the European Consumer Organisation (BEUC), around 4 out of 5 consumers³ do not see a problem with using familiar meat terms to describe plant-based alternatives. In contrast, in markets where plant-based foods are already mainstream, such as Germany or the Netherlands, banning familiar names to impose new ones would confuse consumers who are used to them.

2. Supporting Innovation

- Restricting the use of familiar terms **stifles innovation** by limiting the ability of companies to explain how their products fit into common meals and recipes. In fact, those terms help consumers understand⁴ how to cook and use plant-based alternatives. Without these familiar names, producers will have to invent new terminology, which raises the barrier for consumers to try new products, **slowing market growth** and **reducing incentives for companies to invest and innovate**.
- Banning familiar denominations **does not protect innovation**. Instead, it risks undermining the success of European companies that are making **more available food options for people to choose from**, alongside meat and dairy products.

¹ Court of Justice of the European Union judgment in Case C-438/23 | Protéines France and Others. October 2024. [Link](#).

² BEUC 2025, Unwrapping veggie burgers [Link](#).

Observatorio de consumo de la alimentación plant-based en España 2025. [Link](#).

Proveg 2024, Are consumers confused by 'meaty' terms on plant-based food? [Link](#).

³ BEUC 2020, One bite at a time: Consumers and the transition to sustainable food. [Link](#).

⁴ Gleckel, Jareb A., 2020. Are Consumers Really Confused by Plant-Based Food Labels? An Empirical Study. Journal of Animal and Environmental Law. [Link](#).

3. Ensuring a Level-Playing Field

- Imposing restrictive labelling rules would **unfairly disadvantage plant-based producers** without bringing material benefits to farmers. In fact, growing crops for direct human consumption offers greater economic value and resilience to farmers than producing for animal feed. Proponents of bans on meat terms claim that such bans will help defend conventional farming, omitting the fact that plant-based foods producers also source their ingredients from conventional farming. For example, members of Plant-Based Foods Europe have **close partnerships with local farmers** and a majority source their ingredients exclusively from European farmers.
- The plant-based sector is small compared to meat (estimated at 1% of the market⁵) and dairy (estimated at 5-6% of the market⁶), but **key to Europe's agri-food innovation and resilience goals**. Forced rebranding and relabelling, following extensive market research to invent new names that make sense to consumers in different languages will be **costly, especially for SMEs**. If such bans are adopted, companies will have to spend time and money navigating complex, changing regulations, diverting resources from R&D and product improvement **going against all attempts at simplifying regulation and fostering competitiveness**.

We urge policymakers to:

- **Reject proposals** that would ban or restrict the use of familiar denominations for plant-based products.
- **Support transparent labelling** that informs, rather than confuses or restricts, consumers.
- **Promote innovation** in the food sector by allowing fair competition and clear communication.

Plant-based alternatives, including both meat and dairy, are a **vital part of Europe's agri-food systems**. We stand ready to work with all stakeholders to ensure a competitive, fair, and transparent food system that supports innovation, sustainability, and consumer choice.

⁵ Mordor Intelligence, 2025, Europe Dairy Alternatives Market Size & Share Analysis - Growth Trends & Forecasts up to 2030. [Link](#).

⁶ Statista, 2025, Meat substitutes in Europe. [Link](#).

List of signatories:

- Plant-Based Foods Europe
- European Alliance for Plant-Based Foods (EAPF)
- European Vegetable Protein Association (EUVEPRO)
- Plantebranchen (Danish Plant-Based Business Association)
- Växtbaserat Sverige (Plant-Based Sweden)
- Next Food Chain
- Vegetales
- Unione Italiana Food
- Slovak Associations for Branded Products (SZZV)
- Pro Vege
- Czech Association for Branded Products (ČSZV)
- InterVeg
- Quorn