

Growing appetite for meat alternatives in Brussels

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Increasing numbers of people in Belgium are turning away from meat in favor of plant-based alternatives, according to new research from psychologists at the University of Bath, in collaboration with Belgian animal welfare organization GAIA.

New analysis finds that in 2020, over half of Belgians (51%) were 'satisfied' with [meat alternatives](#)—a figure that has increased from 44% since 2019.

The results of the research which gauged responses from a representative sample of 1,000 people in Belgium over two years (in 2019 and 2020) highlights concerns around animal agriculture and the environment that are impacting individuals' dietary choices.

Additional findings from the study published in the journal *Appetite*, suggest there has been no significant change in attitudes towards cultured [meat](#) (e.g. meat produced by in-vitro cell culture of animal cells, instead of from slaughtered [animals](#)) over the two years. Roughly 40% of Belgians said

they would buy cultured meat in both waves of the survey.

Deeper analysis revealed that plant-based alternatives were more appealing to women, whilst cultured meat was more appealing to men. Both cultured meat and plant-based meat were also more appealing to younger consumers and those in the northern, predominantly Dutch-speaking region of Flanders.

Lead researcher Dr. Chris Bryant from the University of Bath explains: "In many ways, this survey data confirms what many of us can see in the supermarkets: plant-based alternatives to meat and animal products are on the rise.

"In just one year, we saw a significant increase in the number of Belgian consumers satisfied with plant-based alternatives with the key figure moving to just over half in 2020."

The research comes as a report from Boston Consulting Group predicted that Europe and the US would hit 'peak meat' in 2025, with consumers increasingly favoring plant-based and other more sustainable alternatives.

"We know that [meat production](#) is a key driver of a whole range of ethical, environmental and public health problems," said study co-author Hermes Sanctorem, consultant for GAIA. "It is good news that we are seeing [consumers](#) turn towards alternatives. What we have already—plant-based alternatives—are increasingly popular. What is to come—cultured meat—has a stable potential. And both options seem to be complementary as a solution, according to our study, since they are appealing to different consumer categories."

Scrutiny around meat consumption has been growing. The Dasgupta Review, published earlier this year by the Treasury, is the latest high-profile report to call for a reduction in meat consumption

for the sake of the planet. Meanwhile, animal product alternatives are attracting record investments— over \$3 billion in 2020, according to The Good Food Institute.

More information: Christopher Bryant et al, Alternative proteins, evolving attitudes: Comparing consumer attitudes to plant-based and cultured meat in Belgium in two consecutive years, *Appetite* (2021). [DOI: 10.1016/j.appet.2021.105161](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.appet.2021.105161)

Provided by University of Bath

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