

Title of assignment: “Mapping trends and tensions in the marketing of plant-based meats”

The summer project offered will review current trends and tensions in the plant-based meat market, and map key actors and products with particular attention to how products are being marketed towards consumers in the Norwegian context.

BACKGROUND

As consumers are increasingly open to reduce meat consumption for environmental, health, and ethical reasons, a new market for increasingly advanced plant-based meat alternatives is emerging¹. Mimicking different properties of meat, such products are supposed to make meat reduction simpler and more convenient for regular consumers. According to one prediction, 8% of the global protein market will consist of plant-based substitute products by 2030². Although consumers are still quite sceptical³, this market is also predicted to grow in Norway⁴. A wide range of actors are involved in the production, provisioning, and marketing of plant-based meat.

Plant-based meat products are often positioned as the sustainable and healthy alternative to conventional meat. But while these products typically have a lower environmental footprint according to life-cycle assessments, there are still uncertainties about their sustainability⁵ and healthiness⁶ vis-à-vis meat. There is great variation between products as they are produced using different methods and ingredients⁷. Concerns further relate to the industrially produced and heavily processed nature of many substitutes⁸. Simply put, there are many tensions present in the plant-based meat sphere. This project will help develop an overview of such tensions internationally, as well as how these are grappled with and reconciled in the marketing of products to consumers in the Norwegian context.

AIMS

This summer project is divided into two main tasks, outlined below:

- 1) *Literature review focused on plant-based meat in a global context.* Review academic and grey literatures to locate the most important trends and tensions in current debates around plant-based meat (including both supportive and critical viewpoints), and relate these to key actors in the plant-based meat industry.
- 2) *Actor and product ‘mapping’ focused on the plant-based meat landscape in a Norwegian context.* Drawing on existing sources and independent investigation, map the market for plant-based meat substitutes in Norway (according to analytical categories to be established in advance with supervisors). The mapping should include (i) key products and related production networks, and (ii) information about how the products are being marketed to consumers.

The result will be relevant to research activities within the FME Include as well as other ongoing projects within the research group on sustainable consumption and energy equity at Centre for Development and the Environment (SUM). The results can also be useful for researchers elsewhere working with topics on food production and consumption, and it is expected that the

assignment will provide a learning experience to the student (corresponding to Master level criteria for performance) guided by supervision from researchers.

SCOPE OF WORK

The student will work principally under supervision of Arve Hansen and Johannes Volden, both at SUM. The student will be offered a desk (shared student office) at SUM and can benefit from contact with other researchers at SUM. The findings will be presented in a report.

The work is to take place principally in the summer 2023 and the report is to be submitted by 1st September to Hansen/Volden. The scope corresponds to six weeks' full time work, but the work can also be spread over a longer period according to the applicant's suited timeframe.

Number of available projects: 1

OUTCOME

The outcome is to be a report, with annexed background information and sources, as well as a structured review of the literature in a spreadsheet (guided by supervisors). We also encourage the candidate to publish a popular article (e.g. newspaper article) based on the work. This latter is seen as important both for the student's own development, and to bring the role of consumption out to public awareness. Such dissemination from research to a broader public is an important objective in Include and at SUM.

APPLICATION

Preferred applicants are students enrolled in Master Programme's at departments at the University of Oslo. The assignment is open to all candidates with at least one year of studies at the Masters level. Interested candidates must submit a statement of purpose/motivation and an overview of academic records and background.

¹ Tziva, M., S. O. et al. 2020. "Understanding the Protein Transition: The Rise of Plant-Based Meat Substitutes." *Environmental Innovation and Societal Transitions* 35 (June): 217–31.

² Bloomberg Intelligence (2021) Plant-Based Foods Poised for Explosive Growth. Available at: https://assets.bbhub.io/professional/sites/10/1102795_PlantBasedFoods.pdf

³ Varela, P. et al. 2021. "Meat Replacer? No Thanks! The Clash between Naturalness and Processing: An Explorative Study of the Perception of Plant-Based Foods." *Appetite*, November, 105793.

⁴ Ueland, Ø. et al. 2022. "Meat Consumption and Consumer Attitudes – A Norwegian Perspective." *Meat Science* 192 (October): 108920.

⁵ Smetana, S. et al. 2023. "Meat Substitutes: Resource Demands and Environmental Footprints." *Resources, Conservation and Recycling* 190 (March).

⁶ Tonheim, L. E. et al. 2022. "Plant-Based Meat and Dairy Substitutes on the Norwegian Market: Comparing Macronutrient Content in Substitutes with Equivalent Meat and Dairy Products." *Journal of Nutritional Science* 11: e9.

⁷ Mayer Labba, I. et al. 2022. "Nutritional Composition and Estimated Iron and Zinc Bioavailability of Meat Substitutes Available on the Swedish Market." *Nutrients* 14 (19): 3903.

⁸ IPES-Food 2022. "The Politics of Protein: Examining Claims about Livestock, Fish, 'alternative Proteins' and Sustainability." https://www.ipes-food.org/_img/upload/files/PoliticsOfProtein.pdf.