

Plant-based meat substitutes not popular among mainstream flexitarians, finds study

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A new study conducted by WUR researchers Muriel Verain and Hans

Dagevos reveals that plant-based meat substitutes are popular among dedicated flexitarians who consume very little meat. On the other hand, those who eat meat regularly or in considerable amounts are less enthusiastic about meat substitutes. The paper is [published](#) in the *Handbook of Plant-Based Meat Analogs*.

Dagevos and Verain surveyed 1941 Dutch adults on the question of whether they intended to cut back on their [meat intake](#) in the coming years. The results showed that 30% intended to lower their [meat consumption](#), 20% remained neutral, and 50% had no such intention.

The consumers were also asked how they intended to go about reducing their meat consumption: smaller servings, buying meat analogs, substituting meat with other protein sources, or simply leaving out meat and [dairy products](#).

This revealed that consumers were willing to replace red meat with white meat and reduce serving sizes. Substituting meat with analogs was the least popular strategy.

However, a more detailed investigation showed significant differences. Meat analogs were popular among flexitarians who eat meat with their dinner once or twice a week, whereas flexitarians who eat meat on three to five occasions per week were not enthusiastic about meat analogs.

Hardcore meat-eaters who eat meat on a daily basis did not want the substitutes at all. Thus, say Dagevos and Verain, plant-based [meat substitutes](#) are not popular among mainstream flexitarians who eat meat on half of their weekdays.

This outcome was confirmed when consumers were asked what their favorite meat alternatives were. The mainstream flexitarians favored legumes, nuts, seeds and mushrooms over plant-based meat analogs.

The scientists say that the study yields two counterintuitive outcomes. On the one hand, the common assumption that plant-based meat analogs are popular among flexitarians as a low-threshold meat alternative is not supported.

On the other hand, meat analogs are popular among the 6% of consumers who eat no meat at all and the 9% who eat meat no more than twice a week. This disproves the hypothesis that (semi) vegetarians do not like meat analogs.

More information: Hans Dagevos et al, Flexitarian foods: do plant-based meat analogs facilitate flexitarian diets? *Handbook of Plant-Based Meat Analogs* (2024). [DOI: 10.1016/B978-0-443-21846-0.00004-6](https://doi.org/10.1016/B978-0-443-21846-0.00004-6)

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