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## **NEW REPORT EXPLORES: IS PLANT-BASED MEAT A HEALTHIER CHOICE?**

Plant-based meats are nutritionally superior or comparable – on average across most categories – to similar conventional meat products; do not present the same individual and public health risks of conventional animal meat; and offer some of the health benefits associated with plant-based eating.

These are the key findings of a first-of-its-kind report released today that analyses the health and nutrition of plant-based meat products available in Australia and New Zealand.

[\*Plant-Based Meat: A Healthier Choice?\*](#) is a collaboration between Food Frontier, Australia and New Zealand's not-for-profit think tank on alternative proteins, and Teri Lichtenstein, a leading Australian Accredited Practising Dietitian.

It compares the nutritional averages of plant-based meat categories to similarly processed, conventional meats, from sausages and burgers to chicken-style pieces and more. It further explores other health impacts of plant-based meats, from processing to ingredients, as well as the individual and public health risks associated with high production and intake of conventional meat.

Key findings reveal that:

- **Plant-based meats are nutritionally superior or comparable to conventional meat equivalents:** Plant-based meats across most categories have, on average, lower or comparable kilojoules and sodium, higher or comparable protein and lower fat and saturated fat per 100g, along with the presence of health-promoting fibre, in comparison to their conventional meat equivalents. These comparisons are most significant for saturated fat; for example, conventional meats had anywhere from double to five times the amount of saturated fat than plant-based meat equivalents on average.
- **Plant-based meats do not have the individual and public health risks as conventional meat equivalents:** Plant-based meats do not present the same foodborne illness risks; links to the rise of zoonotic disease and antimicrobial resistance; and factors believed to contribute to colorectal cancer, cardiovascular disease and type 2 diabetes - diseases that are among the leading causes of death in Australia.
- **Plant-based meats, while processed foods like their conventional meat equivalents, offer some of the benefits associated with plant-based eating:** Most plant-based meats provide certain benefits associated with eating more whole plant foods, such as dietary fibre and considerably lower saturated fat on average than their conventional meat equivalents. They can also serve as a transition food towards a more plant-centric diet given their design as a centre-of-plate protein alternative.

This report follows a year in which Australians consumed more than double the amount of red meat<sup>1</sup> advised by current government dietary guidelines.<sup>2</sup>

“Consumers who want to reduce their meat consumption and are seeking a protein-packed alternative should know that plant-based meats can serve as a healthier option than similar conventional meats,” said report co-author and Accredited Practising Dietitian, Teri Lichtenstein.

“This report shows plant-based meats on average are nutritionally superior or comparable and offer some of the benefits of plant-based eating, even though they are processed foods just like their conventional meat equivalents. They also do not present the potential health risks that some conventional meats pose, from foodborne illness to links to non-communicable disease,” she said.

<sup>1</sup> Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) (FR) Meat consumption (Indicator) [Internet]. 2019 [cited 2020 Jun 23]. Available from: <https://data.oecd.org/agroutput/meat-consumption.htm> doi: 10.1787/fa290fd0-en. *OECD meat consumption data was utilised in line with Australian Government use of OECD data for determining meat consumption*

<sup>2</sup> Lean meat and poultry, fish, eggs, tofu, nuts and seeds and legumes/beans [Internet]. Canberra: National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC), Department of Health (AU); 2017 Jun 13 [cited 2020 Jul 7]. Available from: <https://www.eatforhealth.gov.au/food-essentials/five-food-groups/lean-meat-and-poultry-fish-eggs-tofu-nuts-and-seeds-and>

Food Frontier CEO Thomas King said that given Australians would need to reduce red meat consumption by 24kg per year to meet current dietary guidelines – and with more consumers looking to convenient alternatives as a solution – dietitians, public health practitioners and consumers need to understand whether plant-based meats are a ‘healthy’ swap for similar conventional meats.

“Considering health is the top motivator for Aussies seeking to eat less meat, and with the local plant-based meat category reaching critical mass, more consumers are naturally asking whether these alternatives make for a healthier swap,” he said.

“This report provides an evidence-based, data-driven analysis to answer questions on nutrition, processing, ingredients and more, and brings context to the conversation by unpacking how plant-based meats compare to conventional meats in equivalent formats.

“Our aim is to offer insights and guidance to the millions of meat-reducing Aussies and Kiwis, enabling them to make better choices about the proteins on their plate,” he said.

Amongst those best choices, the report highlights products that offer superior nutrition and ‘clean labels,’ which are increasingly sought after by consumers for containing fewer and more familiar ingredients.

For example, Sunfed Meats Chicken Free Chicken® is made of a yellow pea protein base and minimal ingredients derived from recognisable sources. It is high in iron (9.1mg compared to conventional chicken’s 0.4mg per 100g).

Another top performer is Fable Food Co’s Plant-Based Braised Beef, which is made primarily of shitake mushrooms, with no additives. It contains 14 grams of dietary fibre and more than double the Recommended Dietary Intake of Vitamin D per 100g.

The report concludes with recommendations to plant-based meat manufacturers to address consumer demands around nutrition, ingredients and more, and guidance to consumers for determining the role of plant-based meats within their diet.

Consumers can learn more about the health and nutrition of plant-based meats and find five easy plant-based meat recipe swaps in a free digital download available [here](#).

The full report, *Plant-Based Meat: A Healthier Choice?*, is available for download at [FoodFrontier.org/reports](https://www.foodfrontier.org/reports).

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### **About Food Frontier**

Food Frontier is the independent think tank on alternative proteins in Australia and New Zealand. Plant-based meat and cultivated meat can help sustainably diversify protein supply and overcome major environmental and public health threats in the Asia Pacific. As an independent advisor funded entirely by philanthropy, it helps leaders across Australia and New Zealand navigate and pursue the opportunities these industries present. Its work is future-proofing food systems by diversifying protein supply with safe and sustainable alternatives.

Food Frontier’s [previous reports](#) include economic modelling of the Australian plant-based meat sector to 2030 in partnership with Deloitte Access Economics, as well as research on consumer behaviours and plant-based eating trends in partnership with Colmar Brunton.

[www.foodfrontier.org](https://www.foodfrontier.org)



### **About Teri Lichtenstein, Accredited Practising Dietitian**

Teri Lichtenstein is an Accredited Practising Dietitian (APD), sports dietitian and accredited nutritionist with over 20 years’ experience in nutrition across the food and healthcare sectors. Teri is a Board Member of Nutrition Australia and is a member of the Social Media Advisory Committee for the Dietitians Association of Australia. She is the founder and director of FoodBytes, a nutrition marketing consultancy working to bring nutrition messages to a broad audience. [www.foodbytes.com.au](https://www.foodbytes.com.au)

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