

Enhancing Meat with Plant Proteins

*A Communication
Guide for Companies*

gfi / Asia Pacific



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This guide was also developed in close collaboration with more than a dozen industry partners, primarily from within Asia Pacific, including startups, food industry consultants, and nonprofit organisations.



“By strategically integrating plant proteins that are optimised for flavour, nutrition, and affordability into the conventional meat supply, we have helped legacy food companies give consumers what they crave, stabilise their supply chains, and reduce price volatility. The value proposition is crystal clear.”

**Tom Hew, Chief Development Officer,
BaseFood**



“At Nurasa, we believe the time has come to redefine meat—enhancing nutrition and sustainability without compromising taste or affordability. By combining the best attributes of conventional meat with the added nutritional benefits of high-quality plant-based proteins, we are pioneering solutions that meet Asia’s rapidly growing appetite while driving innovation and value across the food industry. As the category evolves, Nurasa is proud to lead the way in shaping the future of protein.”

Xiuling Guo, CEO, Nurasa

[Cover image: Q Protein’s beef mince, courtesy of Nurasa]

Value Proposition

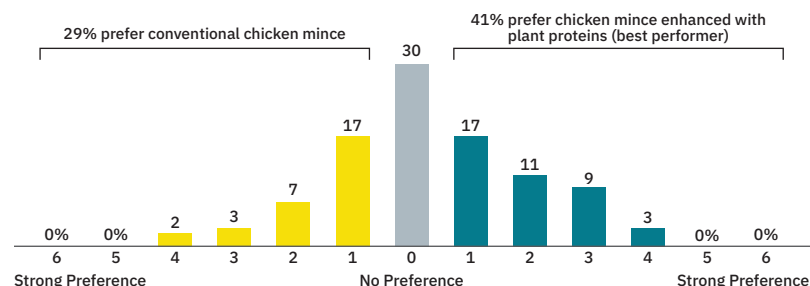
A first-of-its-kind consumer perception [study](#) released in 2024 by the Good Food Institute APAC showed that **consumers are broadly looking for protein diversity rather than meat replacement**. Most local consumers do not intend to reduce their conventional meat consumption—and nearly a quarter want to increase it.

And yet, the data also showed that consumers see clear value in integrating alternative proteins into their diet. Nearly two-thirds of survey respondents described plant-based meat products as “healthy,” followed by “easy to digest,” “tastes good,” and “high in protein.” Affordability was identified as the biggest barrier to their widespread adoption.

Since consumers broadly view plant-based meat as an opportunity to diversify their diet rather than a straight replacement for conventional meat, **interest in products that combine high-quality plant proteins and conventional meat was nearly unanimous**. On average, 93 percent of surveyed consumers in Singapore, Thailand, Indonesia, Vietnam, Malaysia, and the Philippines expressed interest in trying such products, including more than three-quarters of people sceptical of trying fully plant-based meat and 80 percent of those who have eaten plant-based meat but don’t intend to again.

Building on this initial research, in November 2025, GFI APAC collaborated with NECTAR, Palate Insights, and the A*STAR Singapore Institute of Food and Biotechnology Innovation to release [Asia’s first sensory study of meats that combine animal and plant proteins](#), which revealed that **which revealed that such products can actually outperform conventional meat in blind taste tests**.

Chicken mince enhanced with plant proteins vs conventional chicken mince: Difference in Overall Liking (N=116)



Additionally, integrating plant proteins with conventional meat has the potential to enhance product nutrition, boost protein content, lower prices, and increase food-industry profit margins. Such products could also create a virtuous cycle in which plant-protein producers can rapidly scale up their manufacturing capacity, leverage economies of scale, drive down costs, and expand the accessibility of sustainable proteins.

Definitions

There is no universal consensus on nomenclature to describe products that combine high-quality plant-based proteins with conventional animal protein. Various terms—including “enhanced,” “balanced,” “hybrid,” and “blended”—have been used, but in most cases, **companies operating in this category advertise their products, first and foremost, as meat**.

Plant-protein enhancements, including flavour and nutrition upgrades, are often positioned as secondary benefits. “Beef + plant protein,” for example, would be preferable over “plant-rich beef,” which could be misinterpreted by shoppers as a fully plant-based product.

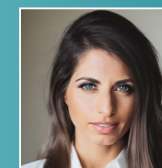
Note: In places within this guide where drawing a distinction between conventional meat and “meat-plus” products is unavoidable, we have intentionally used a variety of descriptors interchangeably (enhanced, balanced, hybrid, and blended), rather than putting our thumb on the scale for any individual term. That said, leading with meat-forward messaging that emphasises familiarity remains the best strategy when engaging consumers.

Additionally, for the purposes of this guide, “meat” is inclusive of fish/seafood, and “plant proteins” can be understood to include not only traditional plant proteins, but also mycoprotein, other fungi/fermentation-derived ingredients, and algae. This guide does not, however, focus on products that combine conventional meat with cultivated animal proteins, though there are a handful of companies [exploring](#) this space as well.

Communication Principles

Since enhanced meats are specifically designed to appeal to consumers who would otherwise purchase conventional meat, it is important for companies operating in this category to articulate why their product offers everything that consumers already love about meat—and more! Messaging that primarily emphasises reduction (e.g., “50% less X, low in Y”) risks being viewed as sacrificial and is less likely to be successful in appealing to shoppers walking up and down the meat aisle.

- ✓ Be positive, emphasising addition (more protein! more fibre!) rather than subtraction
- ✓ Be accurate
- ✓ Avoid technical language or industry jargon
- ✓ Avoid loaded terms that disparage conventional meat, which can turn off mainstream consumers



“We champion messaging that centres what consumers crave and showcases how our products deliver a richer, more elevated experience—unrivalled in nutrition, with a bold depth of flavour.”

**Parendi Birdie, CEO,
Carnéa Meat Co.**

Questions + Answers

Based on input from more than a dozen industry stakeholders, we have compiled sample answers to frequently asked questions from customers and companies, with hyperlinked sources for reference.

Don't see your question below? [Contact GFI APAC's Corporate Engagement experts](#) for additional guidance.

*Q Protein's minced chicken was created through a collaboration between CREMER Sustainable Foods, Nurasa, and meat importer Quality Meat
[Credit: Nurasa]*





Carnéa Meat Co.'s meatballs feature both nutrient-dense plant proteins and recognisable veggies, but lead with meaty, flavour-forward consumer messaging.



Harvest B's "slow cooked diced beef" uses plant proteins to create a product with 25 percent more protein per 100g serving, compared to 100 percent sous-vide cooked beef. [Credit: Harvest B]

Does adding plant proteins affect the taste of conventional meat?

Plant proteins can upgrade meat's flavour profile or blend seamlessly into an existing formulation. Taste is the single most important factor for driving consumer sales, and blind tests have shown that meats enhanced with plant proteins can outperform the conventional meat consumers already know and love.

What nutritional and functional benefits do plant proteins add to meat?

Plant protein concentrates—which remove starch and other non-protein components—have more protein than most of the meats they are replacing, so blending such ingredients with meat can increase protein content. Across the board, plant ingredients also have no cholesterol and lower saturated fat, and many contain fibre, so incorporating them into meat products can support a more well-rounded nutritional profile and opens the door to customisation based on desired attributes. For example, select plant-based ingredients can be added to meat to support gut health, muscle growth, weight loss, or integration of healthy proteins into kids' meals.

Does adding plant-based ingredients affect the protein content of meat?

Inclusion levels and ingredient choices ultimately determine how much protein a final product has, but some plant-based ingredients can match (e.g., mycoprotein) or exceed (e.g., soy protein concentrates) the protein content of animal meat, meaning that the more they're added to meat, the higher the total protein content will be.

Additionally, nutrient-dense ingredients like soy protein concentrates are a highly digestible and bioavailable protein source. Similarly, mycoprotein—a rich protein source derived from fungi—offers higher essential amino acid content than chicken or beef.

Food companies have been adding plant-based ingredients to meat for decades as “extenders.” How is this any different?

Unlike refined starches and low-quality meat “extenders,” which are generally used in small amounts and intentionally not advertised, meats that incorporate high-quality plant proteins do so specifically because of the taste and nutrition advantages they offer. In these “best of both world” products, plant proteins deliver a clear upgrade and create an opportunity to spotlight advantages on product packaging.

Are blended meats “ultraprocessed”?

Plant-based meat has a very different nutritional profile from most other “ultraprocessed” (UPF) foods, like cakes, pastries, sugary drinks, and processed animal meat. Indeed, a systematic review and [meta-analysis](#) of real-world studies on UPF and heart risk found that sugary drinks and processed animal meat, two UPF subgroups, drove most of the increased risk linked with the category as a whole. By comparison, [research](#) suggests that plant-based meat could offer meaningful health benefits when used to replace processed conventional meat.

Are balanced proteins more expensive?

Many grocery stores have already started selling meats enhanced with plant proteins that [cost the same](#) or [less than](#) their conventional counterparts, meaning the healthier and tastier choice could be more affordable too—a potent trifecta. As plant-based protein production ramps up, costs are expected to fall further through economies of scale (including for [newer ingredients](#), like mycoprotein), thus helping food companies mitigate the effects of [rising global meat costs](#).

How do meats that incorporate plant proteins stack up against conventional animal proteins from a climate, food security, or public health standpoint?

Climate: Plant proteins require up to [96 percent less land](#) and [99 percent less water](#) to produce than conventional meat, and contribute up to 98 percent fewer greenhouse gas emissions. Their impact is so significant that if Burger King and McDonald’s—which together account for only 2-3 percent of global beef purchases—changed their hamburger patties to 50/50 blends, it would free up 8.5 million hectares of agricultural land (more than 115 times the size of Singapore), reduce emissions by up to 51 million tonnes (more than the total emissions of Switzerland), and single-handedly achieve [80 percent](#) of both brands’ net-zero targets.

Food security: By 2050, global meat production is projected to increase by at least [70 percent](#) compared with 2012 levels, driven by a growing human population that is becoming more prosperous. Yet according to the World Resources Institute, conventional meat production requires

feeding up to [100 calories](#) to an animal to create just one calorie of beef. Even producing chicken, the most efficient animal protein, requires feeding [nine calories](#) of feed to a bird to get one calorie back as meat.

This inefficiency accelerates deforestation and water depletion and threatens smallholder livelihoods. By incorporating plant proteins into meat production, companies can significantly mitigate these risks, stabilise their supply chains, and make more meat with fewer resources.

Public health: Incorporating high-quality plant proteins into conventional meat [reduces consumers’ risk](#) of developing heart disease, stroke, and diabetes. And unlike intensive animal farming, producing plant-based ingredients poses zero risk of spreading zoonotic diseases, such as African swine fever or avian flu, which lowers the threat of [unexpected supply disruptions](#).



Note: Studies have [consistently shown](#) that consumers make food decisions based on taste and price, not climate, food security, or public health benefits. That said, these are useful attributes that can meaningfully contribute to achieving corporate targets on public health and decarbonisation.



Recommendations for Companies

*Beef and shiitake smash burger,
courtesy of Fable Foods*

Aim high—but keep taste as priority number one

There is no universal threshold that dictates the percentages of plant vs. animal proteins in enhanced meat, or optimal protein content levels, but many companies have developed delicious products with a 50/50 plant-to-meat balance and protein levels that match or exceed conventional meat. Sufficient R&D testing is essential to ensure that reaching a desired inclusion rate and protein level does not come at the expense of flavour—a non-negotiable factor for market success—but all things being equal, a product that delivers everything consumers expect from meat *plus more* will be viewed as having clear value.

Explore effective positioning strategies

As a nascent food category, it is not yet clear what strategies are most effective at conveying the benefits of hybrid meats to curious shoppers. While there will no doubt be significant geographic variation, GFI encourages companies to lead with deliciousness and emphasise familiarity (e.g., “same great meat taste, now with 20% more protein!”) rather than novelty. Consumers are generally more willing to try products that branch off from those they have traditionally bought than to ditch their favourites for something entirely new. Subtractive language that emphasises ingredient/content reductions (“50% less X, low in Y”) should also be avoided.

Additionally, in most markets, families have five to seven dishes that they return to over and over again, and these will vary regionally (e.g., bún chả in Vietnam vs. green curry in Thailand). To set up for success, it’s important to understand these historical applications and tailor products to fit cleanly into existing recipes by incorporating ingredients that complement time-tested dishes rather than clashing with them.

Prioritise partnerships with meat companies

For many startups, the most scalable pathway to market will be partnering with established meat companies rather than pursuing direct-to-consumer strategies. Meat companies control the processing lines, distribution networks, and retailer relationships that can accelerate blended meats towards affordability and mainstream adoption. Developing solutions as an ingredient partner can allow startups to scale quickly, while reducing the risks and costs of building consumer-facing brands.

Create with commercialisation in mind

Adding plant proteins to meat can boost a product’s perceived value, but most mainstream consumers will not pay more than they are used to spending in the meat aisle. To reach those shoppers, companies should prioritise ingredients with a clear pathway to price parity—such as soy protein, which is widely available—and stay laser-focused on reducing costs. Base proteins can then be further complemented by flavour-forward ingredients that give products a distinctive flourish.

Additionally, since most existing blended meats are burgers, sausages, and other minced products, significantly less R&D muscle has been dedicated to the whole-cut meats that make up a sizeable portion of Asia’s market demand. There are significant untapped opportunities for companies exploring these frontier spaces. If such products find market success, they can be a meaningful first step towards achieving what existing plant proteins have so far been unable to do: satisfy rising meat demand via more sustainable proteins, bolster regional food security and supply chain resilience, and give consumers an alternative greater than the sum of its parts.

*Read Asia's first sensory study of meats that combine
animal and plant proteins.*



For further guidance on incorporating plant proteins into conventional meat products, or to share comments and questions, please [contact GFI APAC Corporate Engagement experts Jennifer Morton and Divya Gandhi.](#)