

One in five UK adults have confused plant-based products with real animal products, according to new report

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- One in five UK adults have confused plant-based products with real animal products due to branding or labelling, with this rising to half (50%) of vegans and 36% of vegetarians.
- Nearly a third of UK adults say they are less likely to buy plant-based products if they resemble animal-based food. Half of those who follow a vegan diet (49%) would prefer plant-based foods to differentiate from animal-based products.
- Nearly two fifths of adults in the UK (38%) believe plant-based producers should not be allowed to name plant-based food products after their animals or animal product counterparts.

New findings from a report conducted by Opinium, on behalf of UK & Ireland law firm Browne Jacobson add support to the position that plant-based products should be described using terminology unconnected with other animal products, with one in five UK adults having confused plant-based products with animal products due to branding or labelling.

Moreover, nearly two fifths of adults in the UK (38%) believe plant-based producers should be prohibited from naming plant-based food products after their animals or animal product counterparts.

This comes after much controversy in the EU and UK about the banning of animal product terms to describe plant-based food.

It is already a requirement for food producers and other food business operators responsible for food labelling to ensure that the labelling and marketing of their products is not misleading, otherwise these companies risk incurring hefty fines and legal proceedings with damaging reputational consequences.

The findings also demonstrate that the way food producers present, label and market plant-based products has an impact on consumers' purchasing behaviour, with three in ten UK adults (31%) saying they are less likely to buy plant-based products if they resemble animal-based food and half of those who follow a vegan diet (49%) would prefer plant-based foods to differentiate from animal-based products.

Paul Kirkpatrick, Partner and Head of the Manufacturing and Industrials Sector comments: *'This is a call to action for the UK Government.*

This research stresses the need for tighter regulation on the branding, labelling and marketing of plant-based products to protect consumers from confusion. We are aware of restrictions or the banning of certain animal product derived terminology in other countries and this research suggests further measures may need to be implemented in the UK.

Conor Wileman, Associate at Browne Jacobson comments:

'Misleading food labelling and marketing practices can lead to severe consequences for food and drink producers, including regulatory enforcement, forcing producers to undertake a costly re-branding exercise. In light of this research, it will be important for businesses producing plant-based food to stay abreast of UK and EU food law developments to ensure their products are compliant with any new regulations and statutory guidance.

The survey was conducted over three days (from 24 – 28 of November 2023) to a nationally representative sample of 2,000 UK adults, weighted to Office of National Statistics (ONS) criteria. The built-in demographics were by gender, age, region and city.

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