2 September 2026

Joint Statement:
FAIR NAMING IN SUPPORT OF EU'S PROTEIN AUTONOMY

Restrictions on the naming of plant-based foods undermine the goals of the EU Protein Action Plan

As producers of plant-based alternatives and protein ingredients and as organisations representing actors across the plant-based food value chain, we are committed to transparency, innovation and consumer choice. We support the ambition of the EU Protein Action Plan: a more resilient, autonomous and competitive European protein system that includes plant-based protein. We are concerned that restrictions on the naming of plant-based foods, introduced through the recent changes to the Common Market Organisation (CMO) regulation and at risk of being extended further in the full revision, directly undermine that ambition. Our position is clear: We oppose any further tightening of the rules on the denomination of plant-based foods.

An ambition worth protecting: the EU Protein Action Plan

In July 2026, the European Commission set out its EU Protein Action Plan, a strategy to build a more self-sufficient, resilient and sustainable EU protein system. Its goals are clear: to strengthen Europe's open strategic autonomy by expanding domestic protein supply; to improve the competitiveness and resilience of the wider protein system and to foster new market opportunities for farmers and rural communities by growing demand for European-grown plant protein. Reducing the EU's heavy dependence on imported plant protein and turning that dependence into a competitive, home-grown value chain is a central ambition we fully support.

Plant-based foods are integral to this vision since they:

- create higher-value markets for EU-grown pulses, cereals and other protein crops
- anchor processing and ingredient manufacturing within Europe and
- give farmers diversifying into protein crops a growing outlet for their harvest.

Rising demand for plant-based foods is, in practice, rising demand for European plant protein. Suppressing that demand works against the very transition the Action Plan seeks to accelerate.

Naming restrictions undermine those goals

Competitiveness. Restricting familiar names forces producers into costly rebranding and renaming, additional extensive market research and legal advice to devise new terms that work across languages. Restricting familiar names also stifles consumer demand, inflicting losses and costs on the whole value chain, from farmers to equipment providers and retailers. These costs divert resources from research, development and product improvement and fall hardest on SMEs. **This runs counter to the EU's own competitiveness and simplification agenda and slows a sector that Europe should be helping to scale.**

Strategic autonomy and farmer opportunity. Demand is the pull factor that draws EU-grown protein crops into higher-value food markets. By discouraging demand for plant-based foods, naming restrictions weaken that pull, undermining the Action Plan's market-attractiveness and demand-side goals and narrowing the new opportunities it promises to farmers who diversify into protein crops. **Weaker demand for plant-based foods means weaker markets for European protein and continued reliance on imports.**

Consumer choice and evidence. Consumers understand the use of familiar terms; they make an informed choice, aided by clear qualifiers such as "plant-based", "vegan"/"vegetarian" or "meat-free". In fact, those terms help consumers understand[1] how to cook and use plant-based alternatives. Four out of five consumers see no problem with using familiar terms for plant-based alternatives[2] and in 2024, the Court of Justice of the European Union confirmed that existing EU rules already provide sufficient consumer protection.[3] **Further restrictions would address a problem that does not exist, while raising real barriers to choice and innovation and affecting the long-term development of the plant protein sector in the EU.**

Affordability. In the middle of a cost-of-living crisis, this is a measure that makes food more expensive. Costs of rebranding, renaming and cross-border compliance land on producers and end up on the shelves, while weaker competition keeps prices from falling. **Restricting how everyday foods can be named raises costs for the very consumers policymakers should be protecting.**

Policy coherence. It is contradictory for the EU to launch an Action Plan to expand the production and consumption of plant protein while, at the same time, hampering its demand. A credible approach requires policy that pulls in one direction. **Denomination rules should reinforce the Protein Action Plan's objectives, not work against them.**

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[1] Gleckel, Jareb A., 2020. Are Consumers Really Confused by Plant-Based Food Labels? An Empirical Study. Journal of Animal and Environmental Law. Link.
[2] BEUC 2020, One bite at a time. Link. Proveg 2024, Are consumers confused by 'meaty' terms on plant-based food? Link.
[3] Court of Justice of the European Union judgment in Case C-438/23 | Protéines France and Others. October 2024. Link.

We urge policymakers to:

- ➢ **Reject any further restrictions** on familiar names for plant-based foods, in the full revision of the CMO regulation and in any future file.
- ➢ **Ensure coherence** between food denomination rules and the EU Protein Action Plan, so that naming supports, rather than suppresses demand for European plant protein. At the very least, make sure proposals are accompanied by an impact assessment.
- ➢ **Deliver the demand-side goals** of the Protein Action Plan through enabling measures such as fair naming, VAT parity between plant- and animal-based products and sustainable public procurement.
- ➢ **Protect the Single Market** with consistent, workable rules across all Member States and official languages.
- ➢ **Create the framework for fair competition** and thereby **promote innovation**, enabling plant-based producers to compete on a level playing field.

Plant-based foods are a vital part of Europe's agri-food system and a practical lever for the autonomy, competitiveness, resilience and opportunities for farmers that lie in protein diversification, that the EU Protein Action Plan seeks to secure. **We, the undersigned, stand ready to work with policymakers to make the EU Protein Action Plan a success and we urge them not to undercut it by restricting the naming of the very products that drive demand for European plant protein.**

List of signatories:

1. EAPF - European Alliance for Plant-based Foods
2. PBFE - Plant-Based Foods Europe
3. Plantebranchen - Danish Plant-based Business Association
4. Vegetarian Butcher Collective
5. BALPro - Bundesverband für Alternative Proteinquellen
6. NÉGYOSZ - Hungarian Association of Plant-Based Food Producers and Distributors
7. SZZV - Slovak Association For Branded Products
8. VPO - Association for Protein Diversification in Austria
9. EUVEPRO - European Vegetable Protein Association
10. APA - Alternative Proteins Association
11. ProVege - Plant Based Food Finland
12. Assitol - Associazione Italiana dell'Industria Olearia
13. Next Food Chain - Plant-based Business Network Flanders
14. Maison Boucand
15. PZPZR - Polish Plant-Based Food Producers Association
16. VegetalEs - Spanish Association of Plant-based Food and Drink Producers
17. Quorn Foods
18. Redefine Meat
19. SPA - Swiss Protein Association
20. EIT Food - Protein Diversification Think Tank
21. One Planet Pizza
22. Linda McCartney Foods
23. Moving Mountain Foods
24. Crackd - Plant Heads
25. Better Nature
26. Beyond Meat
27. Meatless Farm
28. Interveg

29. Nature‘s Richness Group
30. Rügenwalder Mühle