

Americans understand what plant-based meat is, what it's made from, and how it's labeled

Morning Consult and the Good Food Institute (GFI) surveyed a demographically representative, randomly recruited sample of more than 3,000 American adults in December 2024 and found that a majority understand the difference between plant-based and animal-based meat products.

Americans understand “plant-based” means made from plants

- 86% of Americans on average correctly identified that packages of widely available plant-based meat products were “made with plant-based ingredients (e.g., vegetables, legumes).”
- This is almost as many as identified a package of black bean burgers as being made with plant-based ingredients (91%).

Americans understand plant-based meat is not animal meat

- 84% of Americans correctly identified that packages of commonly sold plant-based meat products did not “contain meat from an animal.”
- This is almost as many as identified a package of tofu as not “containing meat from an animal” (91%).

Americans understand what plant-based meat is made from

- 78% of Americans correctly identified one or more of the plant protein ingredients in the plant-based meat products they reviewed: soy protein, pea protein, or wheat gluten.

Americans’ understanding does not rely on prior knowledge

- 92% of Americans have heard of the term “plant-based meat” before and 65% say they have heard either “a lot” or “a little” about it.
- 83% had heard of at least one plant-based meat brand of the six packages tested, with the best-known brand being heard of by 63% of Americans. But because packages were assigned randomly, only 38% were familiar with the brand they answered questions about.
- Even most Americans who had not heard of “plant-based meat,” who had not heard of any plant-based meat brands, and who had not heard of the brand of the product they saw, still understood that these products were plant-based and did not contain animal meat:
 - Among those who had not heard of the brand that made the plant-based meat product they saw (62% of Americans), 83% correctly identified that the product they saw was “made from plant-based ingredients,” and 81% that it did not “contain meat from an animal.”

- Among those who had not heard of “plant-based meat” (just 8% of Americans), 80% correctly identified that the product they saw was “made from plant-based ingredients,” and 73% that it did not “contain meat from an animal.”¹

“Plant-based” is familiar to Americans

- “Plant-based meat” is the term Americans are most familiar with: 92% have heard of this term and 65% claim to know “a little” or “a lot” about it.
- When asked what name they thought best described the plant-based products they saw, Americans were most likely to choose “plant-based” beef/chicken/bacon/deli slices/fish filets (42%), followed by the phrase “-made from plants” (25%). Cumulatively, this means 67% of Americans thought that a naming option including both “plant” and the meat type or product format best described these products. Fewer than 1/3 thought the other three names tested “-alternative,” “meat-less” or “substitute” were best.²

Most Americans believe companies should be able to use these terms on labels, and only a minority support restrictions

- To understand Americans’ attitudes toward regulation of plant-based meat labeling, we asked half of participants whether “companies should be allowed to use terms like ‘plant-based beef’ or ‘plant-based chicken’ to describe plant-based products meant to mimic beef, chicken, etc.,” and half whether companies “should *not*” be allowed to do so.
- When asked about support for free expression in labeling (i.e., “should be allowed”), 56% of Americans agree that “companies should be allowed to use terms like ‘plant-based beef’ or ‘plant-based chicken’ to describe plant-based products meant to mimic beef, chicken, etc.,” while only 20% disagree (remainder undecided).
- When asked about support for regulation (i.e., “should not be allowed,” only 31% of Americans agreed, and 34% disagreed (remainder undecided).

¹ Margin of error = +/-6% due to small incidence

² Each participant saw the word ‘meat’ replaced with a description of the product type they viewed: “beef,” “chicken,” “bacon,” “deli slices,” or “fish filets”

Who and how we asked

- GFI partnered with Morning Consult to survey a group of 3,010 American adults, selected to represent the demographic makeup of the United States.
- GFI asked each to view a series of packages from conventional animal meat products, plant-based meat products (using meat terms like “beef,” “chicken,” or “f’sh” or product formats like “patties,” “nuggets,” etc.), and either a black bean burger or a package of tofu as widely known plant-based protein products, and answer a series of questions about them, including: whether they were plant-based and/or animal-based, whether they contained certain protein ingredients, and whether they felt the packaging gave them enough information about each product.
- Each participant saw one of two conventional meat products (a package of USDA Organic grass-fed ground beef or a package of chicken nuggets), followed by one of six plant-based meat analog products (selected from among six of the top-selling products in U.S. grocery stores and representing a variety of product formats), and one of two traditional meat alternatives (a black bean burger or a package of tofu).
- Participants were also asked about whether they had heard of the brands tested in the study, and whether they had heard of any of four common terms used to describe these products: “plant-based meat,” “meat alternative,” “alternative protein,” and “fake meat.”
- Participants were able to view high-resolution scanned images of the front and back (or whichever side the nutrition label was on if not the back) of each product when answering questions about it.

