



# PLANT-BASED LABELLING

## HOW COMMON LABELLING LANGUAGE IMPACTS CONSUMER PERCEPTIONS OF PLANT-BASED PRODUCTS



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# 1. INTRODUCTION

The first thing that catches a consumer's eye is the labelling of a product – especially when it comes to plant-based foods. It is ultra important to create labels that consumers can easily understand. Many titles, from 'veggie' to 'meat-free', have become widely established, with food manufacturers describing the product as closely as possible to make it convincing to consumers. . ProVeg conducted a consumer survey in which 1,000 consumers in the UK described and rated their views on the following labels of plant-based foods. We'll have a look at the following terms: 'animal-free', 'meatless', 'meat-free', '100% plant-based', 'plant-based', 'veggie', 'vegan', 'vegetarian'

# 2. ABOUT THE SURVEY

This online survey was conducted in the UK in July 2022. It was completed by 1000 respondents who were recruited via the Attest online platform. The interviewees were asked for their feedback in response to certain labels that are typically used on plant-based meat products (e.g. 'vegan', 'plant-based' etc.). We collected data in relation to several demographic categories, including age, gender, and educational background, setting quotas for age, gender, and dietary habits in order to ensure that the sample was representative of the general population and equally distributed with respect to these variables. The sample consisted of people who follow all kinds of dietary habits (see chart 1).

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Consumers understanding of plant-based labelling



Online survey conducted in July 2022



1000 participants



51% female respondents  
49% male respondents



Omnivores  
Flexitarians  
Pescetarians  
Vegetarians  
Vegans



### 3. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

#### '(100%) plant-based' – the top rated label for plant-based food products

In our survey, participants were given a selection of the most-used labelling terms for plant-based. Consumers said they were most likely to choose a plant-based product with the label '100% plant-based', 'plant-based' or 'veggie.' In contrast, 'meatless' and 'vegan' were the least-preferred labels, while 'vegan' was most understood by consumers.

#### Plant-based labels perceived as good for the animals, safe, and eco-friendly

The results of this survey show that the terms used for plant-based food products are perceived as being good for animals, safe, and eco-friendly. In relation to animal welfare and eco-friendliness, the terms 'animal-free', 'vegan' and 'vegetarian' scored the highest. Consumers said that 'animal-free' and 'veggie' sound like the most enjoyable and tasty options, while '100% plant-based', 'vegetarian' and 'vegan' are seen as healthy, safe, and nutritious. The terms 'veggie' and 'vegetarian' were rated as the most affordable and easy to access.

#### Plant-based labels do not confuse consumers

The results of our survey show that consumers are not confused by plant-based food products which are labelled as 'nuggets.' Only 3.6% of respondents said they had previously chosen a plant-based product referring to 'nuggets' by accident, while 96.4% agreed that they had consciously chosen the product.

#### Well-established understanding of plant-based labels

Those surveyed declared a high understanding of the labelling terms being used for plant-based food products. Over 80% of consumers said that it is obvious that products labelled as 'vegan', 'vegetarian', and 'plant-based' do not contain meat, with 76% stating that the terms help them to understand and identify the nature of the product. About half (48%) of the respondents said there is no necessity to ban terms such as 'burgers' and 'nuggets.'

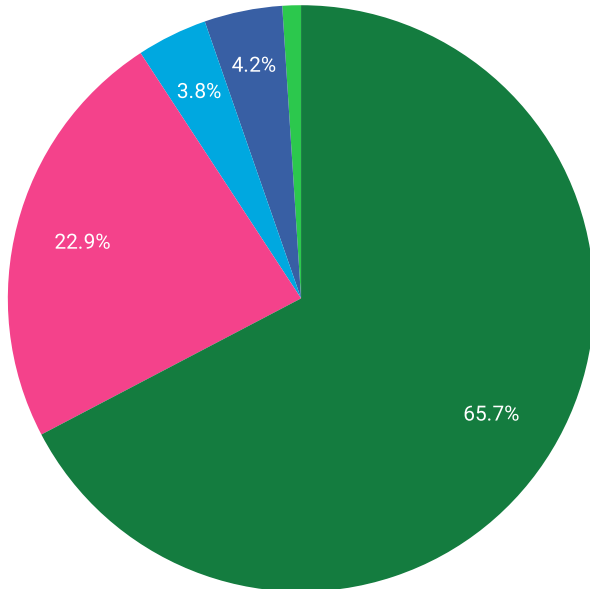
Given the results of this survey, ProVeg concludes that the descriptors for plant-based food products used by food manufacturers are well established and thus clearly understood by the majority of consumers. Respondents associated these labels with positive qualities and statements.



# 4. RESULTS

## Eating Habits

Chart 1: Dietary lifestyle



- Omnivore (I frequently eat meat, such as beef, pork, chicken, turkey, fish and/or shellfish)
- Flexitarian (I sometimes eat meat, but I am trying to reduce my meat consumption)
- Pescetarian (I eat fish and/or shellfish, but no other types of meat)
- Vegetarian (I don't eat meat and fish of any kind, but I do eat eggs and/or dairy products)
- Vegan (I don't eat meat, fish, eggs, dairy products, or any other animal-based ingredients)

Question: How would you describe your eating habits?

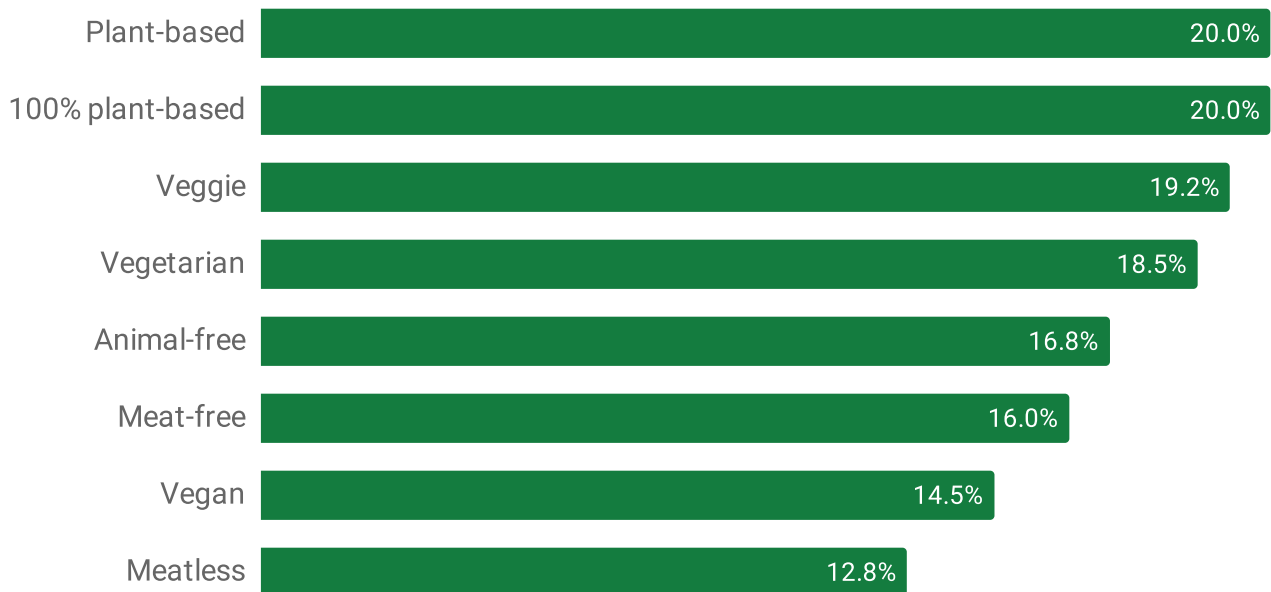
**65.7%** of consumers described themselves as **omnivores** and **22.9%** said they follow a **flexitarian** diet, meaning they intend to reduce their meat consumption. **4.2%** follow a **vegetarian** diet, **3.8%** stated that they follow a **pescetarian** diet, and **1%** said their dietary lifestyle is **vegan**.



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## '(100%) plant-based' – the top rated label for plant-based food products

Chart 2: Consumers' preferred label for plant-based nuggets at the supermarket



Question: Imagine that you are at the supermarket and you want to purchase some nuggets. Please indicate which of the following options you would choose

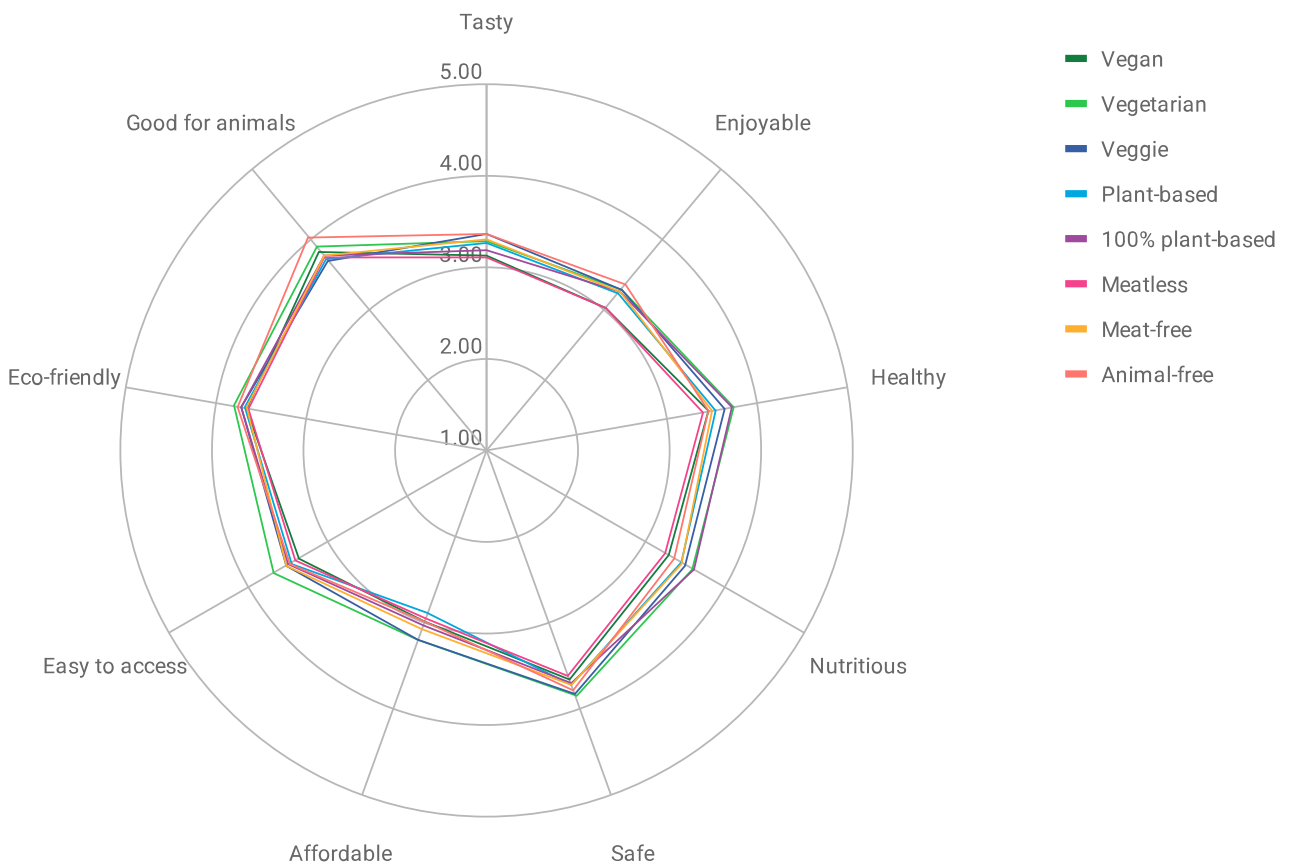
When participants were asked to imagine themselves wanting to purchase nuggets at the supermarket, there was no significant difference in the proportion of people choosing plant-based nuggets based on the various terms used to label the product. The labels 'vegan', 'meatless', and 'meat-free' were perceived as being slightly worse, while the labels **'plant-based'** and **'100% plant-based'** were perceived as being slightly better, but the differences were small, and not statistically significant. **20%** of people said they would choose the labels **'plant-based'** and **'100% plant-based'**, when choosing plant-based nuggets. Besides that, consumers prefer the labels **'veggie'** (19.2%) and **'vegetarian'** (18.5%) and 'animal-free' compared to 'vegan' (14.5%) or 'meatless' (12.8%), which were the least-preferred terms.





## Plant-based labels perceived as good for the animals, safe, and eco-friendly

Chart 3: Consumers' agreement with attributes assigned by labels

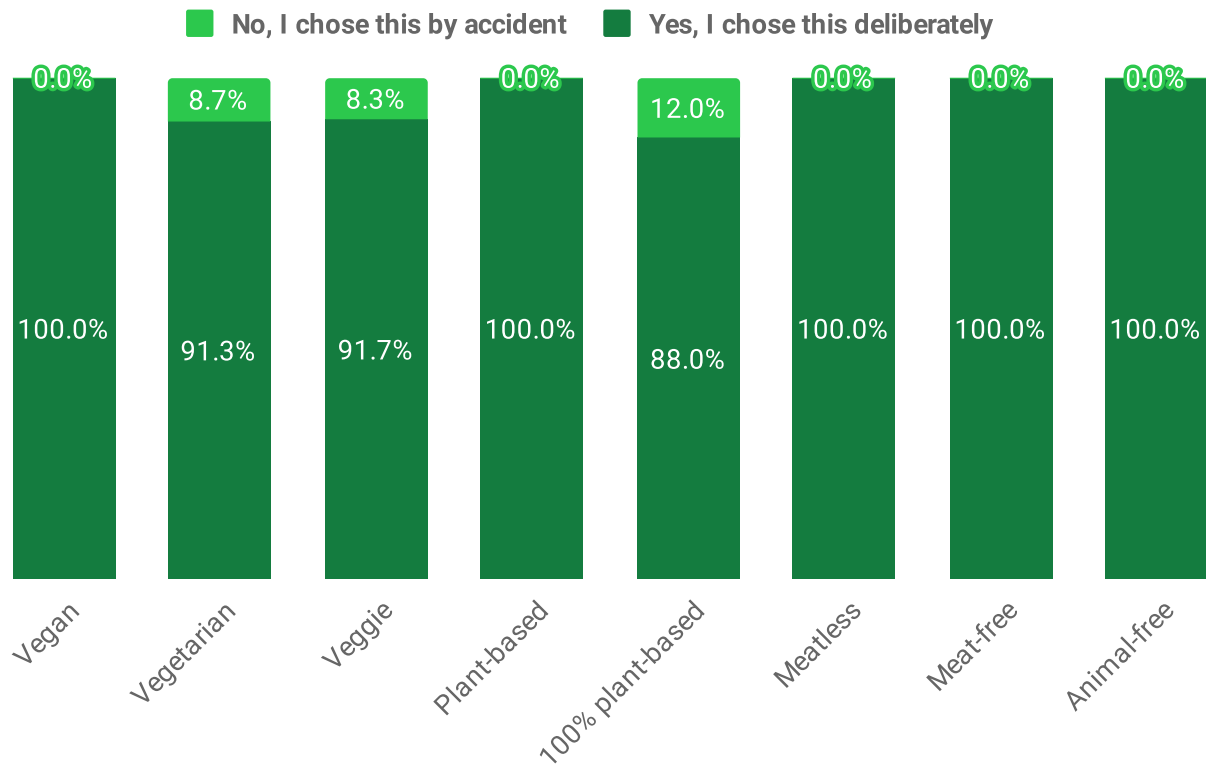


Question: To what extent do you agree or disagree that ..... nuggets are...

In the following section, we asked the participants to indicate to what extent they find that the labels denote certain attributes. The different labels scored relatively equally in the evaluation. In general, consumers found that **all labels denoted products that are good for the animals, eco-friendly, safe, and healthy**. The 'animal-free', 'vegetarian', and 'vegan' labels in particular were described as denoting a product that is good for the animals. Consumers also found that 'vegetarian' and 'animal-free' sounded the most eco-friendly. In terms of **taste and pleasure**, consumers said they preferred '**veggie**', '**animal-free**', and '**vegetarian**'. In terms of **health, safety and nutritional value** on the other hand, the '**100% plant-based**', '**vegetarian**' and '**vegan**' labels scored the highest. Last but not least, participants associated the terms '**vegetarian**' and '**veggie**' with **affordability and easy access**.

## Consumers choose plant-based options deliberately

Chart 4: Consumers' intention to purchase a plant-based option



Question: Did you deliberately choose the meat-free option (i.e., the product which does not contain animal meat)?

Overall, just 3.6% who chose the plant-based nuggets claimed to have done so by mistake, which strongly suggests that **labelling products like 'nuggets' does not confuse consumers. 96.4% said that they had chosen the plant-based option deliberately.** Those consumers who said they had accidentally chosen plant-based nuggets did so in response to the following labels: '100% plant-based' (12%), 'vegetarian' (8.7%), and 'veggie' (8.3%).



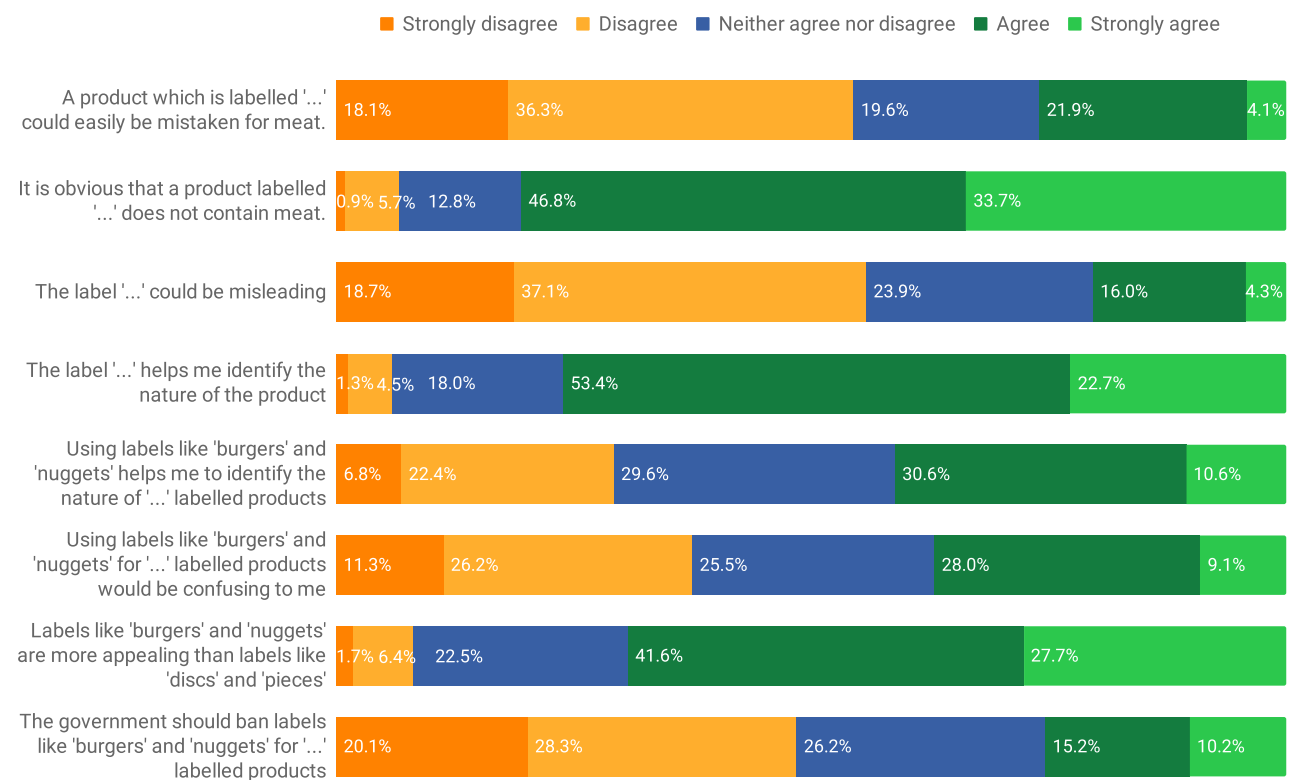
Unsplash - Pablo Merchán Montes





## Well established understanding of plant-based labels

**Chart 5: Consumers' agreement with statements regarding plant-based labels**



*Question: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?*

Overall, all labels being used for plant-based food products were rated very positively by consumers. **80.5% of participants (strongly) agreed that these labels suggest that the product does not contain meat and 76.1% said it helps them identify the nature of the product.** 69.3% of consumers said they believed that labels like 'burgers' and 'nuggets' are more appealing than labels like 'discs' and 'pieces.' **When asked, if these labels could be misleading, a staggering 55.8% (strongly) disagreed, confirming that these labels are being understood correctly by consumers. In detail, 54.4% of the participants disagreed with the statement that products labelled with terms like 'plant-based,' 'veggie' etc. could easily be mistaken for meat.** Furthermore, almost half (48.4%) of consumers said that they did not think that the government should ban labels like these for 'burgers' and 'nuggets', which displays existing understanding of plant-based labels on food products. Regarding the statement "Labels like 'burgers' and 'nuggets' for plant-based labelled products would be confusing to me", the opinions of the respondents are split. 37.1% (strongly) agreed with this, while 37.5% (strongly) disagreed with the statement.

## 5. RECOMMENDATIONS



When labelling plant-based meat products, food producers should **use the labels 'plant-based', '100% plant-based', or 'veggie', since consumers identify with these labels the most.** In comparison, consumers did not respond as well to the labels 'meatless' or 'vegan'.

Proveg recommends, when targeting consumers that care most about the **environment and animal welfare**, food producers should **use labels like 'animal-free', 'vegan' or 'vegetarian'.** If you want to emphasise the **taste and enjoyment** of your plant-based food product you should **use labels like 'veggie' or 'animal-free'.** **'Veggie' and 'vegetarian',** on the other hand, communicate **easy accessibility and low cost.**



Proveg suggests that most consumers **understand the labels correctly** and **rate them positively.** There are some consumers that are confused by certain terms, which implies that food manufacturers should **strive to make the labelling of their products as precise and easy to understand** as possible.



## 6. ABOUT PROVEG

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### OUR VISION

A world where everyone chooses **delicious and healthy food** that is good for **all humans, animals, and our planet.**

### OUR MISSION

Reducing the global consumption of animals by 50% by 2040.

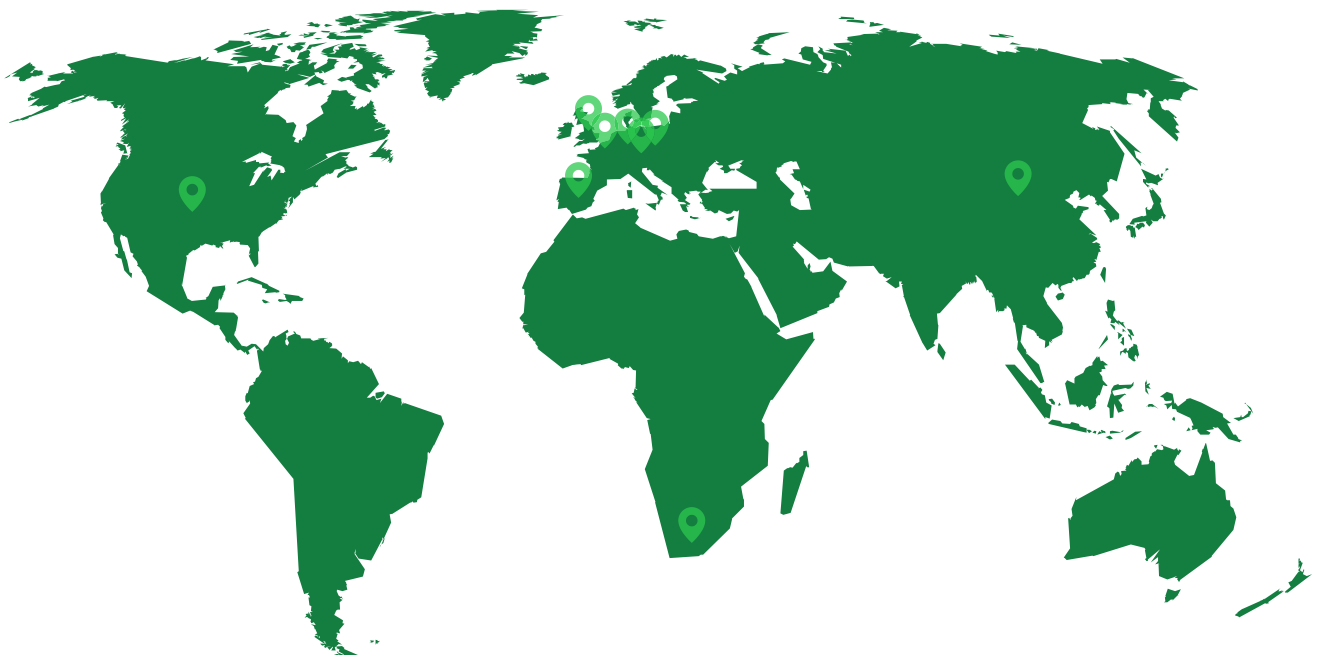
In order to achieve this, we work with mission-aligned companies and offer them support in three key areas:

REPUTATION | REVENUE | IMPACT

### WHO ARE WE?

ProVeg is an international food awareness organisation working to transform the global food system by replacing conventional animal-based products with plant-based and cultured alternatives.

ProVeg works with international decision-making bodies, governments, food producers, retailers, investors, the media, and the general public to help the world transition to a society and economy that are less reliant on animal agriculture and more sustainable for humans, animals, and our planet.



## WHO DO WE WORK WITH?

As a leading NGO in the alternative-protein space, we have no commercial agenda. This allows us to provide objective expert advice and help support you successfully and effectively by harnessing the power and profitability of the shift to plant-based eating, in the most appropriate way for your business.

We work with companies along the entire value chain, which gives us unique insights into the key challenges, hurdles, and opportunities at every stage of the journey as you take your product to market.



## OUR NETWORK

### Our B2B community

**12,058+**  
subscribers across  
our international  
newsletters

**400+**  
delegates at  
the New Food  
Conference 2021

**45+**  
startups  
supported by the  
ProVeg Incubator

**14,258+**  
LinkedIn followers

### Our B2C community

**23,000+**  
consumers in our  
Test Community

**88,000+**  
followers across  
our international  
Instagram  
accounts

**410,000+**  
subscribers  
across  
our international  
newsletters

**350,000+**  
people signed  
up for the Veggie  
Challenge so far



Adobe Stock - Prostock-studio

## OUR TEAM

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**Stephanie Jacznikowska-McGirr**

*International Head of Food Industry & Retail*

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## GET IN TOUCH

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