

Real cheese, no animals: More than 70% of consumers want breakthrough cheese

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Precision-fermentation company Formo and the University of Bath have

co-published the first large-scale study of consumer acceptance for animal-free dairy products.

Researchers surveyed 5,054 individuals from Brazil, Germany, India, the UK, and the US to understand what [consumers](#) think of animal-free dairy products.

Precision fermentation is a process that allows specific proteins to be produced via microorganisms. By inserting a copied stretch of cow DNA, microorganisms produce milk proteins. The process is more efficient than using animals to make proteins, and avoids the negative side effects of industrial animal agriculture, which is responsible for 18% of all greenhouse gas emissions.

The findings of the study, published in the journal *Frontiers in Sustainable Food Systems*, show that consumers around the world are ready for [cheese](#) made from real milk proteins produced by microorganisms.

Across countries and [age groups](#), 79% of consumers are willing to try precision-fermentation-derived dairy cheese, with 71% willing to pay for such products. Across dietary preferences, flexitarians showed the highest levels of enthusiasm for these products.

"Just as we have seen plant-based milk taking an increasing share of the milk market in recent years, we now see that consumers are ready for a new kind of animal-free dairy cheese product." Christopher Bryant, Ph.D., of the University of Bath, said.

"Seeing the growing consumer groups of flexitarians and [young people](#) driving adoption of animal-free cheese is a big indicator that these products will appeal to consumers far beyond the niche markets of current vegan cheese."

Findings highlighted that consumers understood the big taste improvements over current vegan cheese products, while also showing that consumers across countries recognized the environmental and ethical advantages of animal-free dairy, which causes 85-97% less greenhouse gas emissions than conventional dairy.

"Most cheese lovers think current vegan cheeses are nowhere near the flavor or functionality level that meets their cheese needs." said Oscar Zollman Thomas, Formo's lead researcher on the project.

"Precision fermentation is allowing us to fundamentally change that and make real cheese without animals involved."

This was reflected in another major finding of the research: That those who currently eat the most cheese were the most likely to want to buy animal-free [dairy](#) cheese.

"That finding was explosive because that's always how we've understood the mission: Initiating change not through consumer sacrifice, but rather through delicious, satisfying products," said Oscar Zollman Thomas.

More information: Oscar Zollman Thomas et al, Don't Have a Cow, Man: Consumer Acceptance of Animal-Free Dairy Products in Five Countries, *Frontiers in Sustainable Food Systems* (2021). [DOI: 10.3389/fsufs.2021.678491](#)

Provided by University of Bath

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