

13,9M€ PROJECT TO MAINSTREAM ALTERNATIVE PROTEINS FOR EVERYBODY AND EVERYWHERE HAS OFFICIALLY STARTED

The LIKE-A-PRO project (No. 101083961), funded by the European Union under the topic “HORIZON-CL6-2022-FARM2FORK-01-07” has officially started on November 1st, 2022. The project brings together key representatives along the entire alternative protein value chain (protein producers, ingredient & product developers, culinary centres, food clusters), scientists and market & communication experts in a trans-disciplinary consortium (42 entities in 17 countries) coordinated by the technological center CTIC CITA.

European consumers are showing an increasing interest in alternative protein food products as viable substitution of conventional animal-based food. Consumer growing pull for these products is the perfect ground for the European diets to become more sustainable and healthier.

However, to date, animal-based products are totally key in our diets, contributing with about 67% of the protein intake (Pasiakos SM et al, *Nutrients*. 2015 Aug 21;7(8):7058-69).

Although the consumer willingness to reduce animal protein consumption is clear more effort is needed to facilitate and accelerate the protein shift, offering a wide range of alternatives to attract even the most reluctant consumer.

Still, alternative protein mainstreaming is hindered by the challenges at the product development stage, resulting in a low availability and accessibility of acceptable products. In fact, Europeans seeking alternative protein food products are faced with limited options in terms of product types, protein sources, flavors and textures.

Currently, the alternative protein market is clearly dominated by soy-based protein products however, soy is not suitable for everyone, ranking among the 14 main allergens.

Added to this is the fact that many alternative protein products are simply not attractive to consumers due to unbalanced nutritional profile, off-flavors and unpleasant textures in the final product.

This limit consumers interest expecting the taste and texture to match those of animal protein products. In addition, the limitations in protein functionality are a challenge for food producers, as many alternative proteins do not work well when added in the food formulation e.g., do not perform well in gelation, emulsifying, foaming, fat binding. It is precisely these limitations that explain why most alternative protein products currently available on the shelves contain a long list of ingredients, mostly additives which discourages consumers.

To make a protein dietary shift possible, the food industry focus must focus on diversifying the alternative protein sources and developing new appealing products, this way meeting consumer demands in terms of wider choice and product quality. This is precisely the main goal of LIKE-A-PRO project, which aims to facilitate sustainable and healthy diets by mainstreaming alternative proteins and products, making them more available, accessible, and acceptable to all population groups (from children to elderly,

vulnerable groups) and everywhere (across Europe, in urban, peri-urban, and rural areas). This will be done via development of 16 new alternative protein products with ingredients from 7 novel and optimized protein sources.

Innovative, sustainable, local, affordable and industrially viable are the parameters that will mark the development of these 16 products, ensuring the success on the market.



**Funded by
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