

VOICE

2022's Food Impact Trends Are All About Climate Change

It takes almost 100 times as much land to produce a gram of protein from beef or lamb versus peas



Consumer trends point to peas, fungi and seaweed as 2022 growth crops. Getty Images

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By **Nathan Rice**

5 DAYS AGO

Our **food systems** are continuing to change at a dizzying pace as consumers become more invested in the stories and sources **behind the food** they eat.

The biggest question they have: How can my food choices have a positive impact on **climate change**?

Global warming has undoubtedly transformed what we eat, both because of increased consumer interest in the environment and its growing impact on our wallets. In fact, climate change—and its impact on agriculture—will likely be the single biggest factor impacting consumer food choices in 2022 and beyond. Consumers must grapple with the fact that, either directly or indirectly, it takes almost **100 times as much land** to produce a gram of protein from beef or lamb versus a gram of peas.



appealing to budget-conscious consumers.

These factors—coupled with greater consumer awareness of sustainability and climate impact—will deepen acceptance of sustainable food alternatives and increase consumer desire for better, more environmentally friendly protein and dairy options. These phenomena will increase consumers' desire for better, more sustainable protein and dairy options.

But what are those options? This is where marketers must harness rising consumer consciousness to educate, persuade and acquire new customers and brand enthusiasts.



THE VITAL ROLE OF MARKETING IN SUPPORTING OUR FOOD SYSTEM

Peas, mushrooms and aquatic plants

Consumer trends point to peas, fungi and seaweed as 2022 growth crops. After working with clients in the natural products industry for more than 20 years, the timing was right for these three sustainable options to break through as alternatives to animal products.

It wasn't a surprise to see Epicurious make a decision early in 2021 to move away from beef in its publications and include a [primer on seaweed](#) and hundreds of recipes with mushrooms. Additionally, the search for "Is pea protein a complete protein?" is up 200% in current Google search trends.

Consumer preferences are driving entirely new perspectives on the food chain, looking for more ways to make sustainable meal choices. These trends coupled with food innovation and technology are raising the bar for established CPG and food brands, many of which are being challenged by smaller and more nimble competitors.

Clearly, the industry needs new thinking and fresh, innovative strategies to keep pace with consumers' demand for a reimagined food system. Marketers can bring these ideas to life by comparing plant-based food systems to meat-based alternatives for health, sustainability and environmental stewardship.

Meat alternatives: not impossible

In addition to mushrooms, seaweed and beans, there are a few more cutting-edge protein alternatives being developed to fill an emerging need for sustainably produced meat-free products. This field is still in its beginning stages with plenty of room for new ideas.

The agriculture industry is also transforming to meet this demand through better breeding and testing for seeds, with a focus on non-GMO crops, increased yields and more sustainable planting and harvesting practices.

Marketers can highlight the global impact of alternatives to meat-based food systems and focus on the positive human outcomes—such as land sustainability and self-sufficiency for farmers, growers and ranchers—that will result from innovations in food technology.

Insects? Yes, please

Even though consumer preferences and palates are changing, one sustainable source of protein may take some time to impact the market: [edible insects](#). This food source has kept civilizations alive for millennia, but in modern society it's tough to get past the "yuck" factor.

However, food manufacturers are now considering how insects may play a role in protein alternatives without requiring consumers to eat bugs for dinner. Crickets, for example, have been successfully raised for both human and animal consumption in Canada and transformed into high-protein powdered supplements.

While the day of edible insects will come sooner than we think, the U.S. consumer palate hasn't evolved quite enough for it to be one of the most impactful food trends in 2022. But don't wait for the trend to crest before hopping on board.





Nathan Rice is a partner at Haberman, a Minneapolis-based firm dedicated to helping mission-driven companies in food and agriculture grow.

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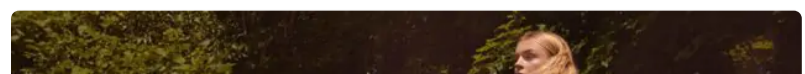
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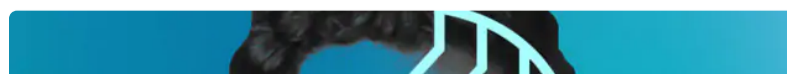
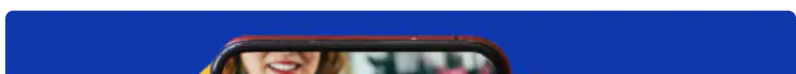
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