



THERE'S ENOUGH SPACE ON THE PLATE:

Putting forward the case for protein diversification in the EU



SUMMARY

For several years now, the EU and its Member States have recognised the strategic importance of protein supply. Europe's current protein system faces growing challenges, including a heavy dependence on imports, price volatility and increasing pressure on the climate and natural environment from livestock-based production.

Protein diversification offers a way forward to address these challenges, while delivering wider benefits for open strategic autonomy, agricultural resilience, public health, and innovation and competitiveness.

This CEPS Explainer sets out why protein diversification matters for the EU and provides an overview of key alternative protein options and their current state of development. It discusses the main barriers preventing these proteins from playing a larger role, notably the need for continued research and innovation, challenges related to scaling and commercialisation, regulatory hurdles and consumer acceptance.

Drawing on international case studies, the Explainer concludes with lessons for the EU and outlines how a more coherent policy approach could support protein diversification.



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What do we mean by protein?

Proteins are one of the three primary macronutrients essential for the body. Beyond providing energy, proteins are broken down into amino acids, which the body uses to build thousands of different proteins that support vital functions such as muscle growth and immune defence.

Humans consume protein from both plant and animal sources. While meat, eggs and dairy offer the highest protein content per gram, plant-based foods like legumes and nuts provide comparable protein amounts per serving.

The typical Western diet generally includes sufficient levels of protein. According to the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA), the average daily protein requirement is 0.66g/kg of body weight, with 0.83g/kg meeting the needs of 97.5 % of the population. For a 75 kg individual, this equates to 50-63g of protein per day. In 2022, the average protein consumption per capita in the EU was 112g daily – well above the recommended intake.

INTRODUCTION

The European Parliament's (EP) recent proposal to ban the use of certain meat-related terms, like 'burger' or 'sausage', for products not derived from the edible parts of animals has sparked a broad reaction, from NGOs to EU and international news outlets. The proposed amendment, titled 'Strengthening of the position of farmers in the food supply chain', aims to ensure that animal-meat-free alternatives are not easily confused with real meat, empowering consumers to buy the food they want and protecting farmers from the impact of plant-based competition to conventional meat. At the same time, some EU Member States like Italy and Hungary are not only banning the use of certain terms, but also novel alternatives to meat entirely.

On 5 March 2026, trilogue negotiations concluded with a compromise that reflects the polarisation over this issue: many terms, like 'schnitzel', 'sausage', or 'burger' are permitted, while 'steak' (and 30 other terms¹) aren't if the product isn't made from animal meat. But the debate goes beyond labels. Focusing on whether animal-meat-free products could be called a 'burger' or a 'chop' risks obscuring more fundamental questions: what role can these alternative protein sources play in Europe's food system?

¹ The full list of banned terms: Beef, veal, pork, poultry, chicken, turkey, duck, goose, lamb, mutton, ovine, goat, drumstick, tenderloin, sirloin, flank, loin, ribs, shoulder, shank, chop, wing, breast, thigh, brisket, ribeye, T-bone, rump, bacon, steak, and liver.

What are their potential benefits and risks? And could Europe use them to bolster its capacity for a competitive and resilient food system?

Meat is an important part of our diet and the main source of protein for many people – according to the European Commission, 64 % of the protein in the average EU diet in 2021 came from animals. However, conventional animal agriculture faces [multiple challenges](#) that are expected to only intensify.

First, agriculture is a major emitter of greenhouse gases (GHG), contributing [over 10 %](#) of the EU's GHG emissions, [with 65 % of that 10 % coming from animal agriculture](#). Almost [5.4 % of global GHG emissions](#) alone are caused by enteric fermentation (a part of the digestive process in ruminant animals) and livestock manure, with the impact of other agricultural activities and the destruction of forests to create farmland increasing this number even further.

Additionally, raising livestock is one of the few parts of the food system where Europe's strategic autonomy and resilience are being challenged. Although the EU is a net food exporter, its [imports of soya for animal feed](#), mostly used for poultry and pork, amounted to 96 % in 2024. Likewise, the EU [imports a large part](#) of the vitamins and amino acids

used as animal feed additives. These imports create vulnerabilities for the EU's food security and environmental standards.

In its [2024-2035 EU Agricultural Outlook](#), the Commission concluded that crop yields and feed efficiency optimisation alone are only limited measures to mitigate the effects of external shocks. A single extreme weather event in non-EU countries producing crops for EU animal feed could cause significant disruptions to the EU food system, emphasising that 'tackling the dependencies of the EU livestock sector would require a more comprehensive, food systems' approach'.

With the total human population expected to [grow to 9.7 billion by 2050](#) and the demand for protein-rich food rising, the Commission's call for a comprehensive food systems approach is facing increased pressure. It thus needs to incorporate multiple complementary approaches to provide healthy, protein-rich foods that are acceptable to consumers. At the same time, it creates an opportunity for the EU to take the lead in developing a sustainable, resilient and diverse protein strategy that reduces import dependencies, supports farmers and aligns food systems with the EU's own sustainability goals.

Alas, calls for a protein strategy aren't new – in 2011, the EP adopted a [motion](#) that addressed the EU's proteins imports and called for action to tackle the 'protein deficit'. In 2018, a [resolution](#) was adopted on a European strategy for promoting protein crops and

reducing price volatility, zoonosis risks and environmental impacts, amongst others. This led to a Commission [report](#) which outlined potential actions to increase EU plant protein production but it didn't propose a formal strategy and nor did it explore the broader spectrum of alternative proteins (APs) that could contribute to a more resilient and sustainable protein system.

THE BENEFITS OF PROTEIN DIVERSIFICATION

A strategy to improve the EU's protein diversification could have many benefits for its economy, its natural environment and its people, while at the same time helping to mitigate some of the challenges that the EU currently faces. What's more, it can also create an opportunity for farmers' improved resilience and new types of agri-food business.

OPEN STRATEGIC AUTONOMY/SELF-SUFFICIENCY

As mentioned above, improving the EU's protein strategy has been on the agenda, or hovering close to it, for quite some time, primarily due to the EU's dependency on imported protein crops. This reliance makes the EU vulnerable to global commodity price fluctuations. Most of the import dependencies concern soya, which is [mainly used in the livestock sector](#) as feed protein. These imports mostly come from Latin America and the US, and with the [EU-Mercosur agreement](#) in [January 2026](#), these dependencies are only likely to grow.

Recent disruptions, such as following Russia's invasion of Ukraine, have highlighted how such dependencies can impact food prices and supply stability. That's why protein diversification can strengthen trade resilience by reducing the EU's exposure to a few dominant crops and suppliers, as well as encouraging regional production systems and shorter value chains. By doing this, protein diversification supports the EU's broader goals on [strategic autonomy](#) and the need for resilient, sustainable food systems.

Reduced pressure on nature and climate

Agriculture accounts for more than 10% of the EU's total GHG emissions, being responsible for over half of methane and nearly three-quarters of nitrogen emissions, largely due to livestock production. The sector is also a key driver of land use change and biodiversity loss [within](#) and [outside](#) the EU.

Promoting protein diversification can [reduce land](#) and water use by improving resource efficiency. Through lowering environmental pressures and freeing up land for nature

restoration or carbon sequestration, it directly supports the [EU Biodiversity Strategy](#), [Farm to Fork](#), and [climate-neutrality targets](#).

MORE RESILIENT AGRICULTURE

Protein diversification offers farmers new economic and environmental opportunities, helping to secure the agricultural sector's long-term competitiveness. Integrating APs, such as legumes and pulses, into the crop rotation [improve soil health and enhance climate resilience](#). Extreme weather events, including droughts, are likely to occur much more often, [reducing crop yields](#). New protein crops and sustainably produced animal products can yield premium prices and contribute to the development of sustainable food systems, a pillar of the [Farm to Fork Strategy](#).

Diversification can also help farmers generate additional income by processing protein crops on-site or supplying feedstock for novel protein production systems. By broadening revenue sources and improving resilience to price and climate shocks, protein diversification supports a more dynamic and sustainable agricultural sector.

HEALTH BENEFITS

Shifting towards more plant-based diets supports public health by lowering the intake of saturated fats and encouraging the uptake of more diverse diets. Current consumption patterns, marked by high red meat intake and a growing reliance on ultra-processed foods contribute to rising rates of non-communicable disease such as cardiovascular diseases and cancer.

Encouraging a balanced mix of plant-based, alternative and high-quality animal proteins can provide nutritionally complete diets while [improving overall health and reducing antibiotic resistance](#). This also aligns with the Farm to Fork goal of promoting sustainable, healthy and accessible diets for all.

INNOVATION AND COMPETITIVENESS

Protein diversification isn't only a sustainability and strategic autonomy priority but also a major industrial and innovation opportunity. The emerging protein sector could strengthen Europe's bioeconomy, stimulate rural development and create high-skilled jobs. By supporting crop diversification, local processing and novel food technologies, the EU can revitalise its agri-food value chains.

Assessments suggest that protein diversification could create new revenue opportunities for farmers. By expanding the demand for legumes and other crop-based inputs for [plant-based, fermentation-based and cultivated foods](#), protein diversification can diversify farm income streams, strengthen resilience to market volatility and support value creation. A

[recent report](#) estimates that APs could boost the EU economy by EUR 111 billion every year for the the next 15 years, 20 % of that sum being within the broader value chain beyond food retail.

With leading research institutions such as [Wageningen University](#) and [Ghent University](#) working to advance food innovation, the EU is well placed to build an integrated food-tech ecosystem that connects academia, farmers, industry and policymakers. Strategic investment in this area would make the EU a true global leader in sustainable food innovation, especially as other big economies are also investing in this field.

Developing EU-wide standards and sustainability certifications for APs could help set an international benchmark (i.e. wielding the so-called Brussels Effect), just as the EU has done for renewable energy and data protection, thus further enhancing Europe's competitiveness and global regulatory influence.

THE DIFFERENT FLAVOURS OF ALTERNATIVE PROTEINS

APs are a promising yet debated aspect of protein diversification. The term encompasses different protein-rich foods and ingredients that can substitute or complement conventional meat. This explainer focuses on a contentious category of these meat alternatives – APs designed to replicate the sensory and nutritional properties of animal meat, often categorised into plant-based, fermentation-derived and cultivated APs.

Understanding the differences between these categories is essential for identifying the regulatory, market and technological challenges and opportunities.

PLANT-BASED APs

Plant-based meat substitutes like tofu and wheat protein have been around for centuries and a French patent from 1911 for [soya cold cuts](#) and a US patent from 1918 for [vegetable meat replacements from wheat gluten](#) marked the beginning of modern plant-based APs. The rising demand for accessible proteins and the high price of meat spurred innovation for developing food products that could [directly imitate](#) meat in taste, chewiness and nutritional profile.

The production process is still broadly consistent: proteins are extracted from crops like wheat, soya, or peas, mechanically processed into protein fibres resembling muscle tissue, and combined with fats, water, minerals and vitamins to create products such as burgers, sausages or nuggets. Plant-based APs, spanning plant-based meat, seafood and dairy-like products, are the most commercially mature category, with a global market

estimated at [USD 28.6 billion in 2024](#), but consisting of less than 3 % of the global meat market's total volume.

While still not as accepted as animal-based products and unable to benefit from the same economics of scale, plant-based APs are now starting to become much more established. A recent [study](#) determined that for the first time ever, in Germany, a basket of plant-based protein products was cheaper than one with the equivalent products of animal origin. At the same time, [consumers rated](#) 16 % of plant-based APs as personally enjoyable as their meat counterparts, an improvement to the study's [2024 edition](#) – but still indicative of a continuing gap in sensory acceptance.

BIOMASS AND PRECISION FERMENTATION-BASED APs

A second approach to create protein-rich food is through fermentation, applied in two different ways:

In biomass fermentation, microorganisms like yeasts, fungi, bacteria or algae are grown in fermenters like ones used in breweries, harvested and used as protein-rich food ingredients. An established example is mycoprotein derived from *Fusarium* fungi, first identified as a protein- and vitamin-B-rich food source in a [1945 patent](#) and commercialised in the UK in 1985. A key advantage of this process is resource efficiency. The Finnish company Solar Foods, for example, produces protein from naturally occurring bacteria requiring mainly carbon [dioxide, electricity and minerals](#).

Precision fermentation uses microorganisms not as the end product but as molecular factories. Comparable to yeasts converting sugars into alcohol in traditional beer brewing, specific bacterial and yeast strains can produce functional ingredients. Vitamin B2, predominantly used as an animal feed additive, is now largely produced through fermentation by genetically modified bacteria. Today, over [90 % of the rennet](#) used in cheese-making is produced using precision fermentation.

Increasingly, precision fermentation is employed to produce targeted functional [ingredients for APs](#), enhancing their nutritional value and/or creating more meat-like flavours. This approach has a lot of potential but often relies on genetically modified microorganisms, meaning that product safety and consumer acceptance needs to be robustly validated.

Different microorganisms' ability to grow on diverse feedstocks, from biomass to a mix of air and electricity, reveals another strategic benefit of this approach. In a circular bioeconomy, precision fermentation can be used to [transform agricultural side streams](#) into an essential component of European food security.

CULTIVATED APs

Instead of growing muscle fibres, fat cells and connective tissue in animals, these can be cultivated in bioreactors, not unlike microorganisms in biomass fermentation. The idea of using tissue-engineering techniques to grow meat for food was [popularised](#) in the early 2000s but had already been envisioned more than 70 years earlier by politicians and scientists alike.

In bioreactors, real animal cells are nourished by a culture medium that replicates the animal's internal environment, allowing them to multiply. To give the look and structure of animal meat, producers use edible scaffolds or organise the cells using 3D bioprinting.

Regardless, while the fundamental technology exists, with the first cultured hamburger being [presented in 2013](#) and the first lab-grown chicken meat [commercially available in Singapore in 2024](#), Winston Churchill's vision of cultivated chicken is still very much in its infancy, even today.

We shall escape the absurdity of growing a whole chicken in order to eat the breast or wing, by growing these parts separately under a suitable medium. Synthetic food will, of course, also be used in the future. Nor need the pleasures of the table be banished. That gloomy Utopia of tabloid meals need never be invaded. The new foods will from the outset be practically indistinguishable from the natural products, and any changes will be so gradual as to escape observation.

Winston Churchill, Fifty Years Hence, 1931

HYBRID APPROACHES

Each AP category has distinct advantages and disadvantages, and in practice many products combine ingredients produced through several of these techniques. Impossible Foods pioneered this approach, combining plant-based burgers with precision fermentation-derived heme, an iron-containing molecule that creates the metallic, bloody flavour of meat. Other companies, such as US-based Mission Barns (which recently got [FDA approval](#) for cultivated pork fat) or the Dutch [MosaMeat](#) aim to combine cultivated animal fat with plant-based APs.

Naturally, APs can also blend animal- and non-animal-sourced proteins. By replacing up to 50 % of animal meat with plant-based proteins, these hybrids can substantially lower their negative health and environmental impacts while remaining [closer in taste and consumer acceptance](#) to pure meat than plant-based APs. In some places, these hybrids

are already being adopted – all [29 000 burgers](#) sold at the 2025 Dutch Grand Prix were hybrid burgers, combining 50 % meat with seaweed and other vegetables, almost halving their environmental impact – without being advertised as such.

BARRIERS TO PROGRESS

To deliver on APs' potential for contributing to the EU's protein diversification, multiple barriers need to be addressed. These range from R&I to improved feedstocks and better production processes, to challenges related to regulatory approval, scaling and the commercialisation of innovative foods.

Consumer acceptance, shaped by trust, affordability and access to clear information also plays a decisive role, alongside ensuring farmers' inclusion and other stakeholders across the value chain. Many of these barriers are partially shaped (and thus can be addressed) by the policy and regulatory environment.

RESEARCH AND INNOVATION

While APs are slowly maturing, research and development is still needed in multiple areas. Currently, soya is one of the major protein ingredients in plant-based APs. While soya is well-understood as a food ingredient, excessively relying on soya can be problematic for two reasons. First, it's one of the ['big 9' allergens](#), creating a potentially serious hazard for a small (but not insignificant) part of the population.

As the EU imports much of its soya, the second aspect is increased dependency on non-EU markets. This dependency is significantly higher in animal agriculture, with up to [96 % of the soya](#) mainly used for feed being imported, underscoring the need for research into alternative crops for protein production. The EU has recognised this, allocating some of the funds for the upcoming FP10 to [projects related to better protein crops](#).

For precision fermentation to create more varied ingredients for APs, better host strains need to be identified and feedstock, media and processes optimised. Efforts here can yield cross-cutting advances with other biotechnologies in the emerging [bioeconomy](#), for example when processes intended for APs can be applied to producing biochemicals or bioplastics.

While cultivated APs rely on mature tissue-engineering technologies, finetuning these to food requires progress on multiple levels. To grow a variety of meat from mammals and fish, the appropriate cell lines need to be identified and developed, animal-serum-free and cost-effective growth media need to be optimised to specific lines and food-safe scaffolding materials and techniques must be developed.

A clear commitment to R&I will allow the EU to remain a world leader in novel AP technologies, creating opportunities for SMEs and giving farmers more clarity on how to integrate novel foods and new crops into their production systems.

SCALING AND COMMERCIALISATION

While Europe is at the forefront of R&I for APs, it's failing to deliver when it comes to bringing new technologies to market. There are three major factors that hinder the scaling and commercialisation of APs – the lack of appropriate scale-up financing, scale-up infrastructure and regulatory barriers.

Until recently, most EU and national bioeconomy-related funding programmes have [prioritised early-stage R&I](#), while the investment for scaling up and commercialising bio-based innovations, such as precision-fermented or plant-based APs, has lagged. To meet the projected demand for plant-based APs, production capacity would [need to increase sixfold](#), requiring a EUR 23.9 billion investment. For cultured APs to supply 1 % of the meat market, cultivation capacity would even [need to increase by twentyfold](#). Likewise, the Commission's [Strategy for a Competitive and Sustainable EU Bioeconomy](#) identifies financing gaps for scaling up biomanufacturing as a big hurdle for reaching the bioeconomy's full potential.

Most fermentation-based and all cultivated APs are considered novel foods in Europe. The same holds for some plant-based APs, if they include a plant as a protein source that hasn't been traditionally consumed in Europe, such as [duckweed](#). Thus, besides capacity and financing for scaling, regulatory approval for novel foods remains a major barrier for innovative AP producers.

Preparing a dossier for regulatory approval is also very resource intensive. For example, the European Food Safety Authority's (EFSA) [dossier for MosaMeat's cultivated fat cells](#) was prepared by 10 full-time employees collaborating with six accredited laboratories over two years and comprised almost 1 000 pages. That's why it's crucial for applicants to clearly understand the requirements early in the preparatory process. Yet EFSA [doesn't provide specific scientific pre-submission advice](#) to individual applicants. Originally intended to ensure its independence, this rule results in a lack of guidance and clarity for applicants.

Especially for SMEs, this can create significant uncertainties² and result in a mismatch between the dossiers submitted and the data EFSA expects for a specific case. Consequently, the average novel foods application in the EU takes [2.6 years](#), with some

² In a [public consultation for EFSA's 2017-24 performance](#), 46 % of industry participants disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement that 'EFSA provides clear and robust pre-submission advice'.

applications taking up to a staggering six years. For example, the still-pending applications for The Protein Brewery's and Solar Foods' biomass fermented proteins were filed in [June 2020](#) and [February 2022](#).

For innovative food-tech start-ups without established long-term revenue sources, such potentially long timelines could hinder or even put them off entirely from launching in the EU.

CONSUMER ACCEPTANCE

Being able to precisely process protein-rich plants, microorganisms and real animal cells to achieve APs with the specific taste, mouthfeel and nutrition of conventional meat is not only one of AP technology's strengths, but also a weakness – APs are often perceived as artificial and unhealthy due to their high degree of processing and the use of genetically engineered microorganisms to produce some precision fermented APs.

While unprocessed cuts of meats and fresh legumes are generally recognised as [healthier than processed foods](#), processed APs [tend to be healthier](#) than the meat-based foods they aim to directly replace. Yet the nutritional value of both processed meats and APs varies significantly between products, giving credibility to consumers' worries.

The current draft of the EU's upcoming [Heart Health Plan](#) includes studies on 'highly processed foods' and a 'new comprehensive food-processing assessment system for Europe with complete nutritional profiles'. If this new comprehensive system allows for a more nuanced classification than the current NOVA system by better considering the nutritional value of foods, it can guide consumers towards APs that are healthier and entice AP manufacturers to make their products as healthy as possible. Without clear, harmonised EU labelling that translates these assessments into easily understandable information for consumers, such a system's potential to build trust and support the uptake of healthier APs would likely remain limited.

Additionally, current APs still fail to fully replicate the taste and sensory experience of the meat-based foods consumers are familiar with. Some plant-based APs, however, are catching up. For example, in a [recent study](#) on the taste of plant-based APs, almost 50 % of consumers liked plant-based burgers and plant-based alternatives to chicken fillets as much or more than their animal-based counterparts.

Due to their less mature production infrastructure compared to animal-based meat, APs are often sold at a higher price point. With the market now maturing and due to the impact of high inflation on the meat and dairy industry, prices have begun to equalise and plant-based APs are even starting to [become cheaper](#) than their animal-based counterparts.

CASE STUDIES & LESSONS TO LEARN FROM OTHERS

The EU isn't the first to prioritise a protein strategy. Across the world, governments have combined food security goals, regulatory work on novel foods and targeted R&D support, to build a more supportive ecosystem for protein diversification. Differences in regulatory structure, land availability and the role of farmers (among others) means that policies can't be simply copied-and-pasted directly by the EU. But this doesn't mean that lessons can't be drawn from other countries, as their progress (or lack thereof) can highlight key policy levers that could accelerate the market's development in the EU.

In 2022, the UK's national innovation body published a [report](#) on the challenges and opportunities for plant-based proteins, fermented proteins and novel systems, gathered through stakeholder workshops (industry, farmers, government, knowledge partners and consumers). Following the report, the UK launched a regulatory sandbox programme for cultivated meat in 2024. The sandbox brings together cultivated meat producers (including [EU-based ones](#)), researchers, regulatory experts and the Food Standards Agency to improve the authorisation process and to guarantee safe innovation. This also came with [GBP 75 million of government investment](#) in sustainable new foods.

Singapore has positioned itself as a global food tech and [AP hub](#). This is partially due to the country's high dependency on imported food, which they want to change with their '30 by 30' strategy, namely producing 30 % of nutritional needs locally and sustainably. Having set up direct partnerships with novel food companies and being the first country to allow cultivated meat on its market, Singapore has marketed itself as an ecosystem of regulatory openness, attracting several innovative foods producers.

China's approach to protein diversification is closely embedded in its broader food security and industrial policy agenda. Recent [five-year plans](#) have placed a strong emphasis on securing the domestic food supply while explicitly supporting the development of APs as a strategic complement to conventional agriculture. Lawmakers have called for the accelerated development of the AP ecosystem, which has been reinforced by significant public investment, including a dedicated cultivated meat and microbial protein research centre in Beijing and targeted funding under the Ministry of Science and Technology's 'Green Biological Manufacturing' programme. Overall, China treats APs as a strategic emerging industry, applying a similar approach to sectors like solar energy and electric vehicles.

In several EU Member States, policy already supports APs in some form. In [France](#), the government invested EUR 11.7 million in local plant protein production, awarding 10 projects as part of the National Strategy for Plant Proteins, which aims to reduce the country's protein import dependency.

Meanwhile, [Denmark](#) published an Action Plan for Plant-based Foods and committed DKK 675 million of grants to help Denmark lead the way in producing plant-based foods, as well as to reduce Danish meat consumption. [The Netherlands](#) set up a National Protein Strategy in 2020 to improve self-sufficiency in new and plant-based proteins. According to their National Energy and Climate Plan, [Portugal](#) is working on a national strategy that promotes plant-based foods to lower emissions and improve Portuguese diets.

CONCLUSIONS – LESSONS FOR THE EU

Protein diversification is crucial for building a sustainable EU food ecosystem. Old and new types of proteins are emerging and embracing these APs requires a policy framework that considers food, health, environmental and industrial objectives together. Advancing protein diversification isn't only a question of dietary change but a strategic choice that can strengthen Europe's strategic autonomy by reducing its dependencies on imports.

At the same time, a more diversified protein mix can help lower pressure on land, biodiversity and the climate, while supporting a more resilient agricultural sector through crop diversification and reduced exposure to global market volatility. The increased availability of healthier protein options can also contribute to more balanced diets. Providing clear policy guidance and direction can help unlock innovation and reinforce the EU's competitiveness in the rapidly growing market for APs, positioning Europe as a leader in sustainable food systems.

A priority is to ensure that existing and planned EU policies are accessible for novel foods, including the Bioeconomy Strategy and the European Biotech Act, as well as relevant innovation and financing policies linked to the Common Agricultural Policy, FP10 and European Competitiveness Fund. This could come with a revision of the [Regulation on novel foods](#), to adapt it to current policy objectives and the significantly altered technological and market landscape, while maintaining high food safety standards and improving regulatory predictability.

Regulatory and consumer-facing measures should assess APs primarily on their nutritional value and health outcomes, rather than processing alone. Clear and harmonised EU labelling can help address consumer concerns by increasing transparency around nutritional quality and environmental performance.

Regulatory approval processes could be streamlined through improved EFSA pre-submission support and guidance throughout the procedure. Regulatory sandboxes, like the UK, could also help improve policy coordination, and if properly designed, can help further advance the EU's food-tech industry. The [European Biotech Act](#) is an opportunity

to do this but it currently explicitly excludes novel foods. The Biotech Act should thus be revised to include novel foods.

A coherent EU protein strategy would ensure that protein diversification is addressed in a coordinated way, avoiding fragmented and inconsistent policy signals. It would provide long-term regulatory clarity for farmers, investors and other food system actors, while supporting the responsible development and scale-up of emerging protein sectors. This would also allow stakeholders across the agricultural value chain to plan ahead and adjust their investment over time, reducing the risk of [stranded assets and abrupt financial losses](#). At the same time, an EU protein strategy should recognise the complementary role of diversified protein sources to existing livestock systems. To support this transition, the EU could set indicative targets for the balance between animal and plant-based protein.

In short, protein diversification represents a strategic opportunity for the EU to strengthen its food resilience while supporting a competitive new industry that complements existing livestock production. To realise this potential, the EU should prioritise scalable, healthy and nutritious APs, ensuring they can benefit from existing innovation and investment support, and provide regulatory clarity.

Acting sooner rather than later would allow the EU to shape global markets and position itself as a true global leader in sustainable and resilient food systems.

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