

Time to regulate plant-based meat labels? Fewer than half of consumers know vegan 'beef' is animal free, survey shows

Fewer than half of consumers understand that “plant-based beef” is entirely vegan, according to a study from the National Cattlemen’s Beef Association. The survey of more than 1,800 consumers ... found 45% believed plant-based beef is vegan. Just over three in 10 thought it could contain animal byproducts, while 17% thought it could have small amounts of meat, and 7% said these items contain meat and there are no restrictions on the amount.

Survey participants said plant-based meat causes less environmental harm (52%), is healthier (51%) and lower in sodium (44%) than conventional meat.

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Participants were shown several packages and marketing campaigns for leading plant-based meat brands. Beyond Meat’s packaging for burgers and meat confused many respondents, an average of 59% of whom thought the product contained meat — especially given the cow on the company’s logo and wording like “beef” and “even meatier.”

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In the war over the term “meat,” the plant-based sector has recently had a streak of wins — but this study could slow the sector’s success. Meat industry defenders have long said that plant-based products cause consumer confusion. And this study released by the NCBA gives them something to back up that claim.

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