

## Coronavirus outbreak fuels surging plant-based meat demand in China

Demand for plant-based protein foods is surging in Asia, suppliers say, as suspicion over possible links between wild animal meat and the new coronavirus drives some consumers, particularly in Hong Kong and mainland China, to rethink diets.

Though still a tiny business compared to Asia's giant meat supply chain, vegetarian alternatives to meat, dairy and seafood are gaining growing custom from people like Hong Kong-based fitness trainer Mike Lee.

"Because of the coronavirus, people have started to pay more attention to their diet and health," said Lee, 40, serving up burritos in his kitchen made using a plant-based pork alternative. "People now are more afraid of getting sick."

Even before the coronavirus pandemic, consultancy Euromonitor [in 2019] predicted China's 'free from meat' market, including plant-based products meant to replace meat, would be worth nearly \$12 billion by 2023, up from just under \$10 billion in 2018.

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Among the most popular purchases is a pork substitute called Omnipork, used in dumplings, noodles and rice, while Beyond burgers, plant-based chicken nuggets and non-dairy milks have also been doing well, he said.

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JUST, a San Francisco-based company that makes egg products from mung beans, says its sales on Chinese ecommerce platforms .... have surged 30% since the coronavirus outbreak.

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