

Viewpoint: Is cell-based meat oversold as a sustainability solution?

A [new report](#) by the [International Panel of Experts on Sustainable Food Systems](#) critiques the growing trend of alternative proteins. By promising a more sustainable and humane food system, this “alt-protein” sector, including mass marketed plant-based foods, [cell-cultured meats](#) and [precision fermentation products](#), has been flooded with investment dollars and media hype. And while such well-capitalized merchandizing guarantees serious consumer attention on store shelves, researchers continue to question their merits.

[The Politics of Protein](#) argues that the evidence for the positive impacts of alternative proteins is limited and even speculative, primarily funded by the companies themselves. The report also [comprehensively addresses](#) major claims from the alt-protein sector, who these promises benefit and who is left out of the discussions.

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In terms of the sustainability credentials, alternative proteins deserve a closer look. Many use energy/resource-intensive ultra-processing, as well as sub-ingredients or feedstocks that are produced through environmentally destructive and chemical-dependent monocultures that are already found in [75% or more of processed foods](#). This includes [GMO corn](#) and [soy](#) engineered to withstand high doses of glyphosate or grown with Bt pesticides in their genes, or palm oil that is the cause of deforestation, rural displacement and critical habitat destruction.

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