

Animal-free cheese and other high tech foods taking page out of electric car industry's financial strategies to grow in a highly-competitive market

"We need to meet people where they are today," said Magi Richani, founder and CEO of San Francisco-based Nobell Foods. "If we want to jump from niche early adopters to mass market we can't just sell the sustainability story."

Richani's company is developing an animal-free cheese that mimics the texture of regular cheese. She knows that the carbon footprint of cheese can be dramatically reduced by making it without animals — but most customers will only buy Nobell's cheese if it can compete on price and taste with cheese made with dairy.

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That means getting prices way down — in her case, by developing a genetically modified version of soybeans that make casein, the protein that gives cheese its stretchy, melty quality.

That's a challenge each company on the stage is hoping technology will help chip away at — and it's especially hard given the massive economies of scale and subsidies of traditional agriculture.

Tesla received a half-billion-dollar loan from the Department of Energy to build a manufacturing facility in California, and some panelists hope the government will make similar moves to support green agriculture.

[**This is an excerpt. Read the original post here**](#)