



2026 TASTE TRENDS

European Plant Based Market
Meat Alternatives and plant-based meals



IN THIS REPORT

In this report, created with support from Innova, we take a look at key trends in the savoury food category: ready meals, main dishes, and soup across Western and Eastern Europe.

Covering the last 3 years, we highlight emerging ingredient trends and product claims, giving a clear picture of what's shaping the 2025 market and what consumers are looking for.



2026 TRENDS

As the market moves into a more mature phase, plant-based foods are becoming standalone products rather than alternatives to their meat counterparts. This is being reflected in the flavour innovation seen across the market.

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TOP FLAVOURS

Flavour innovation is going beyond those that replicate meat and fish but still keeping taste at the heart of product development. Bold flavours are coming to the forefront as consumers continue to experiment with umami and spicy flavours.



EXPERT CALL OUT

European consumers are starting to throw out the idea of 'alternatives' and recognise the benefits of natural plant-based foods to boost their fibre and protein intake, making way for beans, vegetables and tofu based products!



16%

of launches tracked in Europe are from Germany

14%

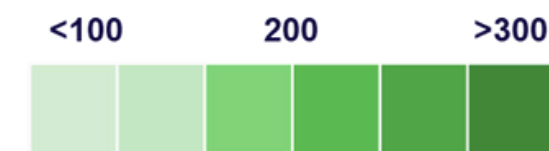
of launches tracked in Europe are from The Netherlands

2 in 3

Plant-based launches feature a protein claim

52%

Of European consumers agree that plant-based foods should be standalone products



NPD Summary



Protein in the spotlight

Plant proteins have seen a CAGR of 2% since 2023 with wheat, pea and soy proteins leading the way. Cultured and microbial proteins (e.g. mycoprotein) have seen an increase of 18% but from a much smaller base.

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Plant-based, naturally

Pulses and beans are driving innovation in the plant-based category with a 41% increase across product launches. This reflects a wider trend of consumers looking for new ways to incorporate plants into their diet.



Fibre gains ground

Average fibre intake across Europe is around 50% lower than the recommended intake according to EFSA. Manufacturers are now answering this challenge with fibre taking the spot of second fastest claim in NPD

Thai green curry
Chilli non carne
Sage
Lemon
Korean BBQ
Seaweed
Kimchi

INTRODUCTION

Fish
Mexican taco
Steak
Teriyaki
Shawarma
Chipotle
Olives
Katsu

GROWTH

Sweet chilli
Coconut
Basil
Tikka Masala
Jalapeño chilli
Chicken
Thyme
Smoky tomato

MATURE

Curry
Smoked
Chilli
BBQ
Pepper
Paprika
Cheese

PROVEN FAVOURITES

Growth in product launches over the last year is high or the flavour is highly mentioned on social media

Appearance in product launches has been growing over the last year

Appearance in product launches has been growing over the last 4 years

Appeared within top 15 NPD over the last 5 years

TRENDING FLAVOURS

Meat, dairy and fish profiles continue to dominate the plant-based alternative space. However, recent shifts in consumer preferences is driving innovation in more diverse and bold flavours with strong influence from global cuisines and growth in sweet and spicy options.

FLAVOUR SPOTLIGHT



CHIPOTLE

Chipotle chilis are jalapeños that have been smoked and dried, resulting in a rich, signature smoky flavour with a medium level of heat. This distinctive ingredient is a staple in Mexican cuisine.

Driven by an increased appetite for bolder flavours across the plant-based category, sweet smoky and spicy profiles are on the rise.

As plant-based foods move into a mature phase, consumers are now seeking exciting flavours that tap into global cuisines and make these products stand out in their own right, not just as an alternative to meat.

NATALIE SHEIL

EUROPEAN SAVOURY CATEGORY MANAGER

KEY STATS

49%

Growth in global product launches with a 'sweet and spicy' flavour

1 in 2

Consumers globally say they are interested in ready meals inspired by street food

ONE TO WATCH



Maple Chipotle

Tapping into the sweet & spicy trend, there has been a huge spike in recipes combining Chipotle and maple on TikTok

LATEST NPD



Pulled plant protein with chipotle and herbs, Switzerland



Mexican spice quinoa chilli, Netherlands



Mexican chipotle bowl, UK

Legumes drive innovation

“Beans are rapidly gaining prominence in the kitchens of European consumers. Packed with fibre and protein, legumes are emerging as a go-to ingredient for health-conscious eaters. The rise in popularity of 'blue zone' diets and a renewed focus on gut health are shifting beans from the side dish to the main course.”

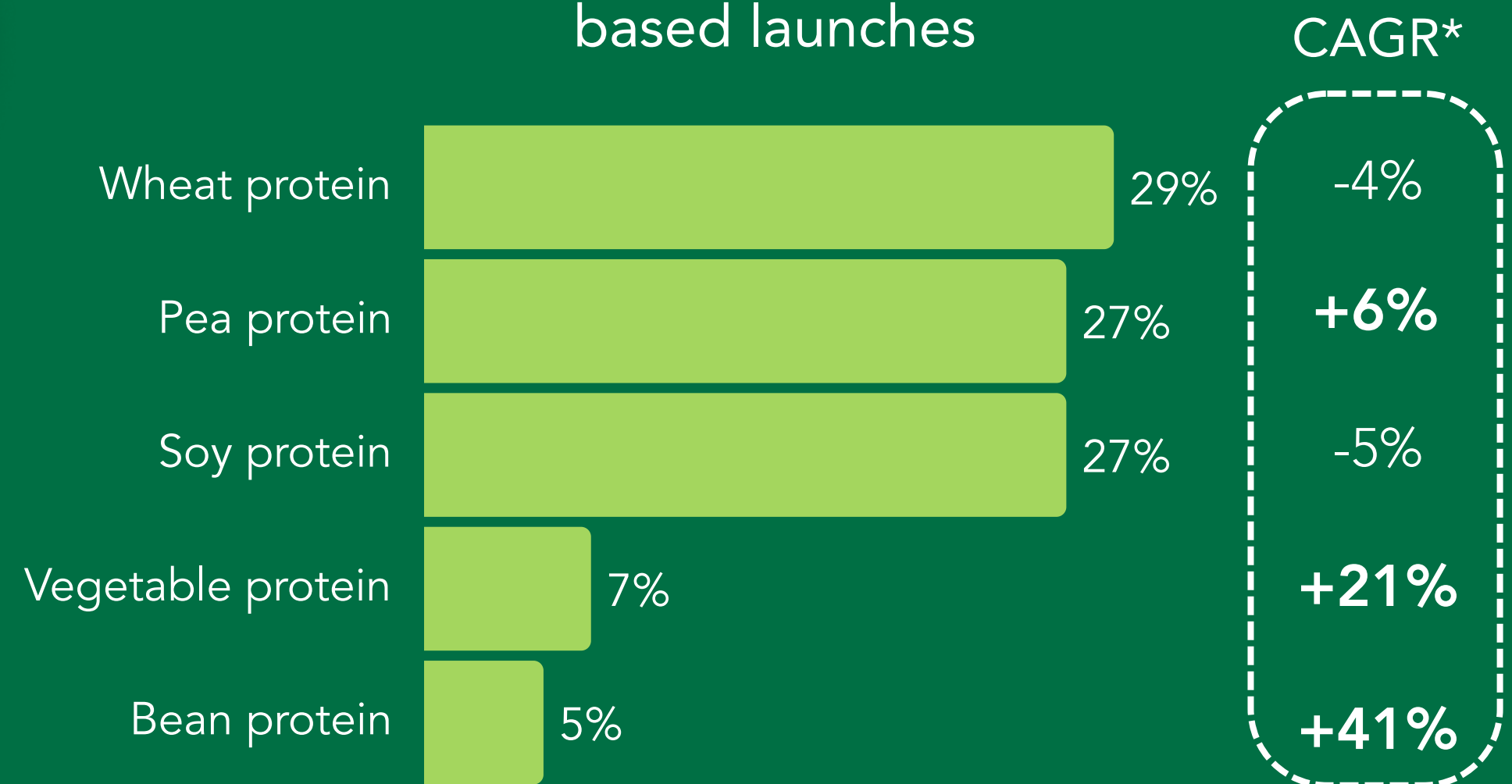
Natalie Sheil
European Savoury Category Manager



A buzz about beans

Hot on socials right now are @minaelleskitchen's chickpea and kale wraps amassing 1.4 million views. "Creamy harissa butter beans" is another viral hit, racking up 10 million views.

Top protein types as a percentage of plant-based launches



*CAGR of last three years

Top flavours in products using beans as an ingredient

#1
Chilli

#2
Curry

#3
Tomato

SOCIAL MEDIA SAVOURY TRENDS



The trends in numbers

Pickled red onion has **29 million views** on TikTok

@sepps_eats TikTok video showing lionsmane as steak gained **14.1 million** views

@bosh.tv miso and ramen TikTok garnered **3.1 million** views



Bright and pickled salads

Fresh salads are trending, particularly those featuring pickled vegetables, "Pickled red onion salads" alone boast over 29 million views on TikTok.

One standout viral sensation is the cucumber salad, blending soy sauce and white wine vinegar, for a refreshing yet savoury bite. This salad's popularity was even blamed as a contributing factor to a cucumber shortage in Iceland



Ramped up ramen

Ramen has been, gaining traction thanks to it's ease of customization, allowing it to cater to diverse palettes and the current trending flavour.

Trending dishes recently have been adding peanuts, combining spicy elements, or blending rich umami flavours. A recent video by **@bosh.tv** showed miso and ramen garnered 3.1 million views and was saved over 90,000 times!



Mushrooms replacing meat

Mushrooms have gained significant popularity on social media as a sustainable alternative to traditional meat, thanks to their umami, and earthy undertones, making them an ideal base.

@sepps_eats showcasing Lionsmane as steak was viewed 14.1 million times! Their ability to easily absorb seasoning has also sparked widespread interest as consumers become more adventurous in flavours



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