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### Food for thought: Would you like real or fake meat with that?

Four in ten people say they would eat a plant-based substitute for meat

**Toronto, ON, August 12, 2019** — Subway became one of the latest fast-food chains to jump on the plant-based protein bandwagon — announcing in the past week that it will test a Beyond Meat meatball sub at its North American restaurants starting next month.

From some of the world's biggest grocers and restaurants ramping up their meatless burger offering to German politicians proposing a "meat tax", it's probably never been a more popular time to try a meat substitute or fake meat.

There's even reports of big suppliers such as California-based Impossible Foods Inc. facing a shortage of the plant-based products, while the stock price of competitor Beyond Meat Inc. at US\$164 a share has skyrocketed by more than 557% since its initial public offering.

With all the hype around this emerging vegetarian option, how likely are you to try a meat substitute?

More than four in ten people (42%) across 29 countries surveyed between August and September last year said they would eat a plant-based substitute for meat.

#### Most still prefer meat

Respondents in Asian giants — China (73%) and India (63%) — were most willing to try such products, followed by those in Latin American countries of Mexico (58%), Columbia (56%) and Peru (55%).

On the other end of the spectrum, people in Eastern Europe's Romania (26%), Serbia (27%), Hungary (30%) were the least willing to try the food, followed by Japan and France (31%).

Mallory Newall, Director, Ipsos Public Affairs U.S. and an author of the report, said it isn't surprising that more than 40% of those surveyed are open to trying a meatless product, but the real threshold is whether they'd actually change their diet.

"Openness to trying, in theory, is one thing; actually, making a dietary change, in practice, is another," said Newall. "I think that's why we see fewer than one in four globally saying they prefer a meatless diet."

The majority of people (75%) said they prefer to eat meat, poultry, or fish.

India was the only country surveyed where most people (56%) said they prefer a vegetarian diet. The country is also considered home to the world's largest vegetarian population.



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### The vegetarian experience

But even among the vegetarian crowd, there's a debate brewing over whether one really wants to eat something that is advertised as made with beet juice to make it "bleed" like meat.

Toronto-area doctor Ami Mody, who's been vegetarian since birth, said her first experience with a meat substitute burger at a Canadian fast-food chain months ago was "quite disappointing."

"I have eaten many vegetarian burgers with rich, tasty veggie patties that have the right balance of vegetables — beans, potatoes, peas — and flavouring," said the 45-year-old Rheumatologist.

"I expected the burger to taste like the plants — peas. Instead, it tasted like a pale imitation of meat with fake meat flavouring."

Interior designer Shivi Bansal, 37, had a similar experience, saying the plant-based protein products may be a good transition for a meat lover, but it didn't satisfy her as a life-long vegetarian.

"I prefer other protein burgers like black bean, chickpea, lentil, or red bean burgers," she said.

Nonetheless, Beyond Meat products are sold at more than 50,000 retailers around the world, and the company's net revenue jumped four-fold to US\$67.3 million in the second quarter.

Newall added that the current popularity of these meat substitute products could have to do with the perception that "plant-based" implies a more healthy and sustainable food source.

More people around the world (29%) think environmental sustainability of the food they eat will get worse in the future than those that think it will get better (27%).

Meanwhile, Dr. Mody said she may try another plant-based protein food that many seem to be enjoying if they "stop adding the fake meat taste to it."

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