

## Is plant-based meat all it's cracked up to be?

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Plant-based meats are booming in supermarkets, with an Australian-first study showing the category has grown five-fold in number (+429%) since 2015, with a staggering 137 products ranging from 'bleeding' burgers to nut roasts.

Published in October in the international journal [Nutrients](#)\* and presented today at the Nutrition Society of Australia conference in Newcastle, the study was based on a rolling audit of foods in the four major Australian supermarkets and compared plant-based meats to their animal-based equivalents.

Carried out by the Grains & Legumes Nutrition Council (GLNC), researchers found plant-based meats were lower in kilojoules, fats, and protein, yet higher in carbohydrates, and dietary fibre in comparison to their traditional animal-based meats.

One third of products included protein-rich legumes such as beans and lentils, while 20% of plant-based burgers were made with whole grains like brown rice and quinoa. GLNC Nutrition Manager Felicity Curtain points to these findings as opportunities to bridge gaps in the Australian diet.

"We know convenience is a major barrier to eating both whole grains and legumes, so if you're looking at plant-based meats, choosing one made with these ingredients may be an easy step to getting more of these short-fall foods into your diet."

However there is room for improvement in the category, with plant-based mince six times higher in sodium than its traditional counterpart, and less than a quarter of products fortified with nutrients like Vitamin B12, Iron, and Zinc, which are naturally contained in many animal-based meats.

Based on these findings, GLNC are calling for more guidance in the development of plant-based meats, alongside input from nutrition professionals to ensure consumers can make healthy choices at the supermarket shelf.

The plant-protein trend is predicted to continue well into 2020 and beyond; the impacts of which may be a 'win-win' for our health and the environment.

"Plant-based foods like beans, legumes, tofu, nuts and seeds, and whole grains are packed with nutrition, and have a smaller environmental impact compared to animal products," said Ms Curtain.

Although some of the plant-based meat substitutes contain valuable nutrients from the whole grain and legume ingredients and offer a convenient option, it can be beneficial to choose protein-rich whole foods on occasion too. Enjoying half a cup, or 100g, of beans, peas or lentils provides a valuable protein boost. Alternatively, making your own plant-based burgers with a variety of whole grains and legumes is also an excellent choice. Take a look at just how easy it is by trying our delicious [Black Bean Burgers](#) for dinner tonight!

## Ends

### Reference

\*Curtain, F.; Grafenauer, S. Plant-Based Meat Substitutes in the Flexitarian Age: An Audit of Products on Supermarket Shelves. *Nutrients* 2019, 11, 2603. <https://doi.org/10.3390/nu11112603>

To arrange an interview with a GLNC dietitian or to request images, please contact:

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### Background:

GLNC runs a rolling audit of a range of grain and legume foods on shelf in the four major Australian supermarkets (Coles, Woolworths, IGA, ALDI), revisiting major categories biennially. Product audits help identify nutrition trends and track changes in the market, with all on-pack information collected and analysed; including nutrients, ingredients, whole grain and legume content, and all nutrition and health claims. GLNC and our Contributors use this information as an evidence base, to inform future projects and communications such as campaigns, media releases, research, and to grow the Code of Practice for Whole Grain Ingredient Content Claims (The Code). For personalised nutrition advice, GLNC suggests seeking the professional advice of an Accredited Practising Dietitian (APD).

Take a look at our [social media channels](#) for easy tips, recipes and more!

Visit the [GLNC Website](#) for more recipes, factsheets and information on the nutrition and health benefits of whole grains.

