

Lobbying and actions of the synthetic imitation food industry

Strategies developed by some key players

In addition to the start-ups and their financial investor partners, part of the influence structure is formed by third-party organizations in the form of NGOs, think tanks, philanthropies, foundations, etc., which also receive funding from the same investors who support the development of synthetic imitation of meat.

This influence structure aims to reach the level of international organizations by targeting UN agencies such as UNEP, FAO, CODEX, WHO and the EU.

Synthetic imitation of meat is part of the larger "conglomerate" of industry interests in products that offer an alternative to traditional animal food (such as vegan food producers, plant-based meat substitutes and beverages, etc.).

EAT Foundation - The organization is a lobby group that reasons around the sustainability of food and food systems and has proposed its "planetary health diet" as guidelines for sustainable food (supporting, in concrete terms, a vision of industrialized, processed food that focuses on nutrients rather than food). EAT is supported, among others, by multinational food companies, the pharmaceutical industry and institutional actors in research and education. The EIT (an EU-funded innovation promotion center) also contributes to EAT's work. The foundation was established by the Wellcome Trust in partnership with the Stockholm Resilience Centre in 2016. EAT's founder and executive chairman, Dr. Stordalen, has close ties to the World Economic Forum, for which she is one of the young global leaders.

The EAT Foundation is pushing for a change in local diets, advocating for a global model ("Planetary health diet") that includes a reduction in meat consumption and an increase in plant-based alternatives. In particular, this vision supports the food products offered by multinational corporations and global supply chains. The global diet is characterized by an abundance of ultra-processed food products. The EAT Foundation has a strong presence at UN events and its global diet is a persistent reference cited in the international organization's documents on the future of diet and food.

Multinationals

Food giant Unilever is one of many examples of those who support an vision for the future of food in an industrialized world. By refocusing on the nutritional composition of food, it offers a wide range of ultra-processed foods, while the impacts of ultra-processed food on both health and the planet are well documented in the scientific literature.

The Swiss company Nestlé, which has been leading the alternative (plant-based) protein movement for years, has only recently begun to take an interest in synthetic imitation of proteins, strengthening its cooperation with start-ups in this field, such as the Spanish company Future Meat Technologies.

Google co-founder Sergey Brin invested a quarter of a million dollars ten years ago in a project that would result in the first hamburger patty recreated in a laboratory. While the boss of Amazon is investing heavily in alternative (plant-based) protein companies.

Traditional animal-based food producers such as Tyson Foods, JBS, Cargill, Bell Food group, ADM have also invested in start-ups developing synthetic imitation of meat such as Upside

Food (Tyson Foods, Cargill), Future Meats Technology (Tyson Foods, ADM), BioTech Foods (JBS), Aleph Farms (Cargill) Wildtype (Cargill), Mosa meat (Bell), Amai proteins (BayWa), or by indirectly supporting the industry, such as the French group Bel, which has invested in Big Idea Venture, a venture capital fund focused on alternative protein projects.

Lobbying certain international organizations

UNEP & FAO - The United Nations Environmental Programme (UNEP) publicly considers meat consumption to be the "world's most urgent problem," as stated in the title of an [article](#) published by the institution. In 2018, [Impossible foods and Beyond Meat](#) -two companies offering plant-based alternatives to meat- were awarded the title of UNEP Earth Champion. In 2015, it was the turn of [Unilever](#), the food giant that is expanding into the alternative meat industry (the brand of plant-based meat alternatives 'The Vegan Butcher' was acquired by Unilever to become part of its portfolio). UNEP supports the guidelines for a "Big Food Transformation"¹ proposed by the EAT Foundation and supported in its "Planetary Health Diet" (see above).

The Food System Summit hosted by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) last year saw a strong partnership with representatives of the alternative meat lobby such as the EAT Foundation, the Good Food Institute, ProVeg, Unilever, Aleph Farms, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, as speakers and sponsors of the summit.

World Economic Forum - The World Economic Forum (WEF) is an organization that promotes cooperation between the public and private sectors, and is the organizer of the annual meeting in Davos, Switzerland, of heads of state and government. In its series of [white papers](#) on the future of meat, it argues that "alternatives to traditional animal-based foods" can meet "the nutritional needs and dietary demands of a projected mid-century population of 10 billion in a healthy and sustainable manner," making the case for increased financial support for the industry. They call for "joint public-private investments and new platforms for accelerated innovation and market development, in the same way that the renewable energy industry has been 'primed' by some key governments." In its annual "Technology Pioneers" series, the WEF has recognized companies such as Avant Meats (lab-grown imitation of seafood) and Air Protein (precision fermentation). In addition, some of the WEF members are major supporters and investors in synthetic imitation of meat start-ups, such as Breakthrough Energy, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, Cargill, Tyson Foods, Nestlé.

EIT food - EIT Food (see above) is strongly linked to actors who support synthetic imitation of food and a vision of the future of food that follows the recommendations of globalized diets and meat alternatives. At the event organized by EIT Food under the title "The future of food conference" (June 16, 2022), Cellular Agriculture Europe - the lobby group of EU synthetic imitation of meat producers - was one of the main sponsors of the event, along with representatives of alternative proteins such as EABA (European Algae Biomass Association), EATIP (European Aquaculture technology and innovation Platform).

¹<https://www.unep.org/news-and-stories/story/towards-great-food-transformation>;
[https://www.thelancet.com/pdfs/journals/lancet/PIIS0140-6736\(18\)33179-9.pdf?utm_campaign=tfeat19&utm_source=HubPage](https://www.thelancet.com/pdfs/journals/lancet/PIIS0140-6736(18)33179-9.pdf?utm_campaign=tfeat19&utm_source=HubPage)