

Best of both worlds? Meat innovators consider taking the hybrid leap



Henk Hoogenkamp, a protein application specialist in the field of hybrid foods. According to Henk Hoogenkamp, a protein application specialist in the field of hybrid foods, there is no ideal ratio for hybrid products. "For developing countries, the bottom line is cost, although I have always tried to formulate the products with the same nutritional protein content as the original," he says.

For Hoogenkamp, in terms of functionality, pea protein is a good equivalent to soy protein and offers strong clean and clear labeling appeal.

Rice bran protein is also growing, but not in terms of functionality, instead rather for its hypoallergenicity status, he notes. "Chickpea and mung bean are also ones to watch and are good names for a natural label, while also delivering functionality," he adds.

"These foods contribute to reducing greenhouse gases and allow for much-improved availability of the meat sources. For example, if a formulated meat product such as a burger contains 50 percent plant-based components, twice as many burgers can be made available," Hoogenkamp explains.

What's next for hybrid concepts?

Much of the DuPont's recent focus has been on developing soy-based technology that can mimic the whole-muscle fibrosity attributes of beef, poultry and pork. "Our structured vegetable products, sold under the SUPRO MAX brand, are designed to mimic whole-muscle meat texture when hydrated." This technology then enables the development of a wider variety of hybrid or meat-free products, resembling whole muscle products. "SUPRO MAX Structured Vegetable Products are hydrated, flavored, and sized into strips, chunks and shreds to resemble a wider variety of formats than previously available from traditional soy protein technology," he explains, highlighting that we can expect to see more from the company in this space.

For Bark, convenience products will benefit the most from this emerging trend. "Currently most of them have a poor nutritional composition, and the use of healthier raw materials can reduce their overall calorie content," he notes.

It will be exciting to see how this new hybrid arena develops in the months ahead, as the industry looks to answer the health, sustainability and animal welfare concerns of a consumer who doesn't want to cut meat out of their diet altogether.