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# INDUSTRY WEEKLY DIGEST

School of Hospitality & Tourism Management

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## THE PROTEIN PROBLEM

Evidence suggests that our current meat consumption habits are not sustainable and are having negative impacts on the environment. So, what are the alternatives?

Meat production is an inefficient method of producing protein. It requires large amounts of land and water and also contributes significantly to greenhouse gas emissions. In this digest, **Anita Eves** explores the identified potential alternatives in development, but questions if the consumer will accept them?

Have a great weekend!



# EVIDENCE SUGGESTS THAT OUR CURRENT MEAT CONSUMPTION HABITS ARE NOT SUSTAINABLE AND ARE HAVING NEGATIVE IMPACTS ON THE ENVIRONMENT. SO, WHAT ARE THE ALTERNATIVES?

## ANITA EVES

The easiest approach is, perhaps, to reduce meat use. Although the fine dining sector has been slow to respond, **'Eleven'**, in Maddison Park, has reopened following the COVID pandemic as an entirely meat free enterprise and Kirk Howarth has opened a high-end Plant-based restaurant and cookery school in East London (**Plates London**). Will these be the first of many?

An alternative is to use other sources of protein – with insects and lab-grown meat possibilities. **BCG and Blue Horizon (2021)** talk about adoption of alternatives as requiring parity – in price, taste and texture. Although as yet far from parity, the authors predict that by 2035 up to 22% of animal protein could be replaced by alternative sources – but is parity, as defined here, the only obstacle?

Although widely consumed in other parts of the world, insects are not seen as 'food' in the West and can evoke feelings of disgust. That said, **Archipelago** in Fitzrovia has offered insects for some time, and has a Michelin Plate suggesting this is more than a gimmick. Offerings include Love Bug Salad, Bushman's cav-iar – caramel meal worms, and Pan-fried chermoula crickets. We now have farms growing insects (e.g. **Horizon Edible Insects London** and **Entocycle**), and the first full-time edible insect café **Grub Kitchen**.

Sometimes insects are presented in all their glory (see image below!), but a more acceptable approach may be the use of protein extracted from insects. With Sainsbury's is now selling **'Small Giants'** – a snack made with cricket flour, perhaps parity is getting closer?



### FURTHER READING:

**BCG and Blue Horizon Consulting (2021)**  
**Food for thought – the protein revolution**

Lab-grown meat derives from the cultivation of animal cells into 'flesh' (tissue culture). Interestingly we tend to be more averse to tampering with animals than plants (or indeed fungi as in the case of Quorn), so will consumers accept this one (**Cultivated Meat, But Will Consumers Eat It?**)? A study in the Netherlands found that Gen Z were particularly averse to the idea, viewing it with disgust. Despite this, it is suggested that by 2040 40% of meat could be lab-grown (**Lab Grown Meat**). Although, currently very much at the experimental stage, the world's first lab-grown meat restaurant has opened, including knitted steak on the menu **bistro-invitro**, and Just Eat have approval to sell cultured chicken in Japan. The meat produced equates to mince, but, for instance, minced beef accounts for 40% of all beef used in meals. But what about a steak? Well, with 3-D printing, perhaps we will be able to produce the fibrous nature of meat, integrating other ingredients to provide succulence and flavour? The possibilities seem endless, but the proof will be in the eating!