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Meat Eaters are Gobbling Up the Concept of Clean Meat

New research indicates that two-thirds of Americans are willing to try meat grown from cells without slaughtering animals. The survey of nearly 1,200 consumers, which was led by the nonprofit research organization Faunalytics with support from The Good Food Institute, also found that more than half believed clean meat would be healthy, safe, and environmentally friendlier than conventional meat, while looking and tasting the same. A majority of respondents were also interested in replacing conventional meat with clean meat, with 40% willing to pay a premium for clean meat.

Only a quarter of consumers were initially familiar with clean meat. During the survey, each respondent was given one of four messages with different content: The first group received a message outlining how clean meat is natural; the second group read about how conventionally-produced meat is unnatural; the third group received a message that naturalness isn't important; and the fourth group was shown a message similar to what companies are currently using – the benefits that clean meat offers for people, animals, and the environment.

Compared to past studies that did not provide consumers with information about the positive aspects of clean meat, each of these four messages increased consumers' interest in eating it. A previous study surveying potential consumers found that 32% of Americans would be willing to replace conventional meat with clean meat and that 33% would be willing to eat it regularly (Wilks & Phillips, 2017). With the messaging in Faunalytics' study and the use of "clean meat" instead of "in vitro meat," these numbers were substantially higher: 53% said they would eat it as a replacement for conventional meat, while 46% would eat it regularly.

Many consumers reported being willing to pay more for clean meat than for conventional meat. For beef, 14% percent of respondents were willing to pay a premium of 25% or more. Twenty-five percent were willing to pay a premium up to 24.9%. For chicken, 22% of respondents were willing to pay premiums of 25% or more—and a similar number for fish. Nineteen percent were willing to pay a premium up to 24.9% for each.

This willingness to pay more for clean meat was particularly true of people who learned about the unnatural aspects of conventional meat, such as the use of antibiotics and hormones, unsanitary farming conditions, and the unnatural rate of growth of farmed animals. Almost half of people who read that message were willing to pay more for clean meat than conventional meat (47%) versus only 38% of those who read a more general message.

"We are happy to see research into how consumers feel about our field. Transparency and consumer education are part of our core principles. We believe that as consumers learn more about our products,

they will become more excited to bring these products to the dinner table,” explains Steve Myrick, VP of Operations at Memphis Meats.

“Any concern about clean meat consumer acceptance is really unnecessary,” notes Bruce Friedrich, executive director and co-founder of The Good Food Institute, which promotes clean meat and works with clean meat companies on regulatory and scientific cooperation. “Even in this very short survey, accurately describing clean meat and talking about its benefits convinced consumers that it’s a product they want to consume – in a real world scenario, these numbers should be even better.”

The complete research report, additional analysis and infographics are available at no charge at faunalytics.org/clean-meat. These materials include detail on consumer attitudes and reported willingness to pay as well as the full text of all messages used.

Full report: <https://faunalytics.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/Clean-Meat-Acceptance-Primary-Findings.pdf>
Downloadable infographics: <https://faunalytics.org/clean-meat-an-infographic/>

Faunalytics is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization collecting and conducting essential research on animal-related issues. Faunalytics manages the world’s biggest collection of opinion and behavior research on this topic. The free library includes the organization’s independent studies as well as research it collects and summarizes from others. Animal Charity Evaluators has rated Faunalytics a standout charity since 2015.

The Good Food Institute is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization dedicated to creating a healthy, humane, and sustainable food supply. GFI has a team of scientists, entrepreneurs, lawyers, and lobbyists, all of whom are focused on using markets and food innovation to transform our food system away from industrial animal agriculture and toward clean meat and plant-based alternatives.

The Animal Advocacy Research Fund provided support for the project.

(FN) Wilks, M., & Phillips, C. J. (2017). Attitudes to in vitro meat: A survey of potential consumers in the United States.