

Marketing alternative proteins through food environment design



Imprint

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1. Introduction

Across Europe, alternative protein (AP) products are becoming more available, yet availability alone does not guarantee uptake. Consumers may encounter AP products in supermarkets, restaurants, canteens, or digital food environments, but still overlook them, misunderstand them, or perceive them as irrelevant to their everyday eating habits. The way these products are positioned, named, promoted, priced, and visually presented plays a decisive role in whether they are considered at the moment of choice¹.

The LIKE-A-PRO findings show that consumers are more likely to try AP products when they are easy to find, clearly explained, appealingly presented, and connected to familiar food routines. By contrast, uptake is hindered when AP products are placed in isolated sections, described mainly through vegan or vegetarian identity labels, presented with unclear information, priced as premium products, or marketed primarily through abstract sustainability claims. In such cases, even consumers who are curious may fail to recognise AP products as relevant, desirable, or easy to integrate into their diets.

This governance mechanism focuses on marketing and choice architecture in food environments. Choice architecture refers to the way options are organised and presented at the point where people make decisions². In supermarkets, this includes shelf placement, product grouping, signage, promotions, packaging cues, tasting opportunities, and price displays. In restaurants and canteens, it includes menu layout, dish naming, menu placement, default options, staff recommendations, and the visual presentation of meals. In digital food environments, it includes searchability, product ranking, images, filters, recommendations, and delivery platform design.

AP products are more likely to reach mainstream consumers when they are presented as appealing food rather than as specialist choices for a narrow identity group.

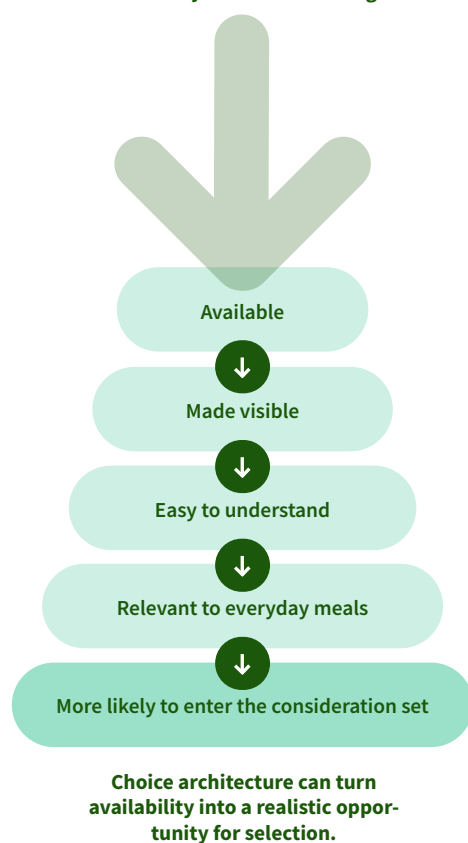
The central challenge addressed by this mechanism is that AP products are often still marketed as alternatives for a specific consumer group, rather than as appealing food options for a broad public. This can unintentionally reinforce their niche status. A product placed only in a vegan section, labelled mainly through what it does not contain, or described primarily as a responsible choice may be missed by consumers who are not actively looking for it. For AP products to become mainstream, marketing needs to move beyond visibility alone and support relevance, familiarity, trust, and trial.

The purpose of this governance mechanism is to provide practical guidelines for marketing AP products in ways that support real-life decision making. The focus is

1 Vecchio, R., & Cavallo, C. (2019). Increasing healthy food choices through nudges: A systematic review. *Food Quality and Preference*, 78, 103714. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.foodqual.2019.05.014>

2 Thaler, R. H., & Sunstein, C. R. (2008). *Nudge: Improving Decisions about Health, Wealth, and Happiness*. Yale University Press.

Availability alone is not enough



not on persuasive communication alone, but on the design of food environments in which AP products are easier to notice, understand, compare, trust, and try. This means treating marketing as part of the full decision context: where products are placed, how they are described, how they are priced, what information is available, and whether consumers feel that AP options are relevant to everyday meals. The aim is to shift AP products from marginal or identity-based positioning towards everyday food appeal, while preserving informed and voluntary choice.

2. What is in this governance mechanism?

This governance mechanism provides practical guidance for actors who influence how AP products are encountered in food environments. It is intended for retailers, food service providers, restaurants, canteens, AP producers, brands, marketing teams, public food institutions, and other actors involved in designing menus, shelves, displays, promotions, or consumer-facing communication.

The document focuses on how AP products can be positioned, described, promoted, and integrated into everyday food environments. It addresses how marketing can help consumers notice AP products, understand what they are, compare them with familiar options, and feel confident enough to try them. It also considers how poorly designed marketing can create barriers, for example by making AP products seem niche, expensive, confusing, overly processed, morally loaded, or disconnected from local food cultures.

The mechanism covers five main areas. First, it outlines why marketing and choice architecture matter for the uptake of AP products. Second, it explains how the recommendations were developed, drawing on LIKE-A-PRO Living Labs, behavioural intervention pilots, and stakeholder-oriented insights. Third, it proposes concrete guidelines for marketing AP products in food environments, including placement, integration, naming, visibility cues, trial opportunities, price promotions, trust-building, staff engagement, and monitoring. Fourth, it sets out an implementation pathway for food environment actors. Finally, it proposes a distilled set of practical indicators that can be used to assess whether marketing and choice architecture changes are working.

The mechanism does not assume that one approach will work everywhere. Supermarkets, restaurants, canteens, schools, public institutions, and digital food environments differ significantly. Consumer expectations also vary across countries, regions, age groups, income levels, food cultures, and levels of familiarity with AP products. For this reason, the guidelines are designed to be adaptable. Their central message is that AP products should be marketed as attractive, everyday food options, not as marginal substitutes or moral statements.

3. How was this governance mechanism developed?

The recommendations were developed by bringing together evidence from several LIKE-A-PRO activities. The Living Labs, implemented across 11 European countries³, provided insights into how consumers perceive alternative proteins, what motivates or prevents uptake, and how people respond to different types of food environment interventions. These findings were organised through the COM-B model,⁴ which understands behaviour as the result of capability, opportunity, and motivation and through the Consumer Choice Framework⁵, which distinguishes between choice editing, choice expansion, choice environment, and beyond choice interventions.

The Living Labs highlighted several barriers directly relevant to marketing and choice architecture. Consumers reported that AP products can be difficult to recognise, difficult to locate, insufficiently visible, or poorly integrated into food environments. They also expressed concerns around taste, texture, processing, nutritional adequacy, price, allergens, and lack of familiarity. At the same time, they identified several enabling conditions: better availability, attractive placement, clear information, tasting opportunities, appealing packaging, positive social norms, familiar recipes, and marketing that emphasises taste and quality rather than only vegan identity or environmental responsibility.

The behavioural intervention pilots⁶ added practical evidence on how food environment design can influence consumer behaviour. The choice-expansion retail pilot in Norway tested AP product placement, price promotion, in-store visibility, tasting opportunities, and recipe support. It showed that marketing and choice architecture can reduce the effort and uncertainty associated with trying AP products, particularly when products are made more visible, easier to compare, and supported by low-risk trial opportunities. The pilot also underlined that placement alone is not enough; consumers need clarity, trust, appealing product presentation, and confidence that the product will fit into everyday meals.

3 Xhelili, A., Wiegard, J., & Schüürmann, J. (2025). LIKE-A-PRO's Living Labs. Consumer Insights Dataset. LIKE-A-PRO project. Wuppertal, 2025.

4 Michie, S., van Stralen, M. M., & West, R. (2011). The behaviour change wheel: A new method for characterizing and designing behaviour change interventions. *Implementation Science*, 6(1), 42. <https://doi.org/10.1186/1748-5908-6-42>

5 Xhelili, A., & Nicolau, M. (2021). From intention to action: Multi-stakeholder recommendations for making sustainable food consumption a reality. Wuppertal. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.5337036>

6 Xhelili, A., Schüürmann, J., Strube, R., Ziavras, S., Perrea, T., Chrysochou, P., Nystrand, B., Bye, I., Nystad, R., Vázquez-Araújo, L., Romeo-Arroyo, E., Vertriest, L., Willems, M., van der Waard, S. (2026). Driving Change with LIKE-A-PRO: Results and Lessons from Behavioural Intervention Pilots. LIKE-A-PRO project. Wuppertal, 2026.

The restaurant-based choice environment pilot is also relevant. It explored how menu integration, dish naming, and the presentation of AP options can shape consumer attention and selection. Its underlying logic is that the design of the immediate food environment can influence choices without removing options. Similarly, the beyond-choice digital communication pilot showed that framing, message design, and consumer narratives matter, but that communication is more effective when connected to concrete opportunities to act.

The LIKE-A-PRO stakeholder briefs⁷ provide further guidance. The industry-oriented brief emphasises investment in taste, texture, nutritional quality, clean and sustainable production methods, communication, trust-building, strategic placement, and consumer capacity building. The policy-maker brief highlights the importance of accessibility, labelling, education, and monitoring. Together, these findings indicate that marketing AP products should not rely on one isolated lever, such as a sustainability claim, a discount, or a separate vegan shelf. It should combine product appeal, visibility, affordability, trust, and decision-context design.

The specific contribution of this governance mechanism is to translate these insights into practical marketing guidelines for food environments. It positions marketing not only as a tool for raising awareness, but as a way of shaping how AP products are encountered, understood, compared, and tried in everyday food decisions.

This governance mechanism is primarily based on LIKE-A-PRO project evidence, including consumer insights generated through the Living Labs, behavioural intervention pilot findings, and stakeholder-oriented briefs developed within the project. References to these internal project outputs are provided as footnotes throughout the document.

⁷ Xhelili et al. (2024) Acceptance of Alternative Proteins Among European Consumers. Policymaker, Industry, CSOs and Academia Briefs.

4. Guidelines for marketing AP products in food environments



Marketing APs where choices happen



4.1 Position AP products where routine food decisions happen



AP products should be placed where consumers already make relevant food decisions. In many food environments, AP products are still isolated in separate “vegan” or “vegetarian” sections. While this may help committed vegan or vegetarian consumers find them quickly, it can also unintentionally signal that AP products are not relevant to mainstream shoppers. For flexitarians, omnivores, and consumers who are simply curious, segregated placement reduces visibility and makes AP products less likely to enter the consideration set.

Retailers should therefore consider integrated placement strategies. This means placing AP products alongside comparable conventional products where consumers can easily compare options⁸. For example, plant-based burgers can be placed near other burger products, alternative mince near conventional mince, protein-rich ready meals near comparable ready meals, and dairy alternatives near relevant dairy categories. Integration should be done carefully, with clear signposting and labelling, so consumers do not feel misled or confused.

In restaurants and canteens, AP dishes should be integrated into the main menu rather than placed only in a separate vegetarian or vegan section. A dish that appears alongside other main meals is more likely to be seen as a normal option. This does not mean that dietary labels should disappear; consumers who need or want vegan or vegetarian information should still be able to find it. However, the first marketing message should not necessarily be identity-based. The dish should first be presented as tasty, satisfying, and relevant.

The objective is to make AP products visible at the point where consumers are already thinking about what to buy or eat. Placement should reduce effort, not add another search task.

4.2 Integrate, but do not confuse



Integrated placement can help normalise AP products, but integration should not come at the cost of clarity. If AP products are placed next to conventional products without clear signposting, consumers may feel confused, misled, or frustrated. This can undermine trust and reinforce negative perceptions.

Food environment actors should therefore apply a “clear integration” approach. AP products can be placed within relevant mainstream categories, but consumers should still be able to quickly

8 van der Meer, M., de Ruyter de Wildt, M., & Dagevos, H. (2025). “Planting” meat substitutes in the meat shelf: An online and field study. *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, 82, 104104. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jretconser.2025.104104>

understand what the product is, what it is made from, and whether it meets their dietary needs. The aim is to support comparison without creating ambiguity.

In retail, this can be done through shelf tags, category markers, product descriptors, and simple icons that identify the protein source or product type. In restaurants and canteens, menu design can integrate AP dishes into the main offer while still providing clear information on ingredients, allergens, and dietary suitability. In digital environments, filters and tags can help consumers find AP products without isolating them from broader product categories.

Clear integration is particularly important for consumers with allergies, dietary restrictions, religious requirements, or strong food preferences. It also matters for consumers who are sceptical of AP products and may interpret unclear placement as a marketing trick. A successful choice architecture strategy should make APs more visible and normal, while also maintaining transparency.

4.3 Use visibility cues that support discovery without cognitive overload



Visibility matters, but more signage is not always better. Consumers often make food decisions quickly, especially in supermarkets, canteens, restaurants, and lunch settings. If AP products are hard to identify, they may be overlooked. If they are surrounded by too many symbols, claims, or competing labels, consumers may become confused or sceptical.

Food environment actors should use simple, consistent, and easy-to-recognise cues to help consumers identify AP options.

These can include shelf tags, menu icons, product category markers, display headers, or small point-of-sale prompts. The cues should help consumers answer basic questions quickly: what is this product, what is it made from, how do I use it, and why might I choose it?

The design of cues should be accessible. Colour coding should not be the only way information is communicated, as this may exclude consumers with colour vision differences. Icons should be intuitive and tested with consumers before wider use. Text should be short and concrete. For example, “made with peas,” “protein-rich,” “quick to cook,” or “new plant-forward option” may be more useful than abstract claims.

Visibility cues should also avoid moralising. Messages that imply guilt, sacrifice, or superiority may attract some consumers but alienate others. Effective cues are likely to be those that combine clarity with appetite appeal.

4.4

Lead with taste, quality, and everyday usefulness



Taste is one of the strongest determinants of AP acceptance. Consumers may care about sustainability, health, or animal welfare, but they are unlikely to repeatedly choose products they do not enjoy. Marketing should therefore lead with taste, texture, culinary quality, and everyday usefulness.

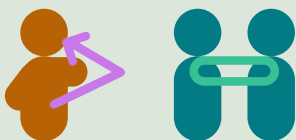
This means that AP products should be described as food first, not as substitutes first. Product descriptions and menu language should highlight flavour, preparation style, ingredients, texture, and meal occasion. Words such as crispy, hearty, creamy, smoky, fresh, spicy, Mediterranean-style, high-protein, filling, or quick to prepare can make products feel more concrete and appealing. By contrast, descriptions that focus only on “meat-free,” “vegan,” “sustainable,” or “better for the planet” may not be sufficient to motivate trial among broader consumer groups.

In restaurant and canteen settings, dish names should sound appetising and familiar. A lentil stew, mushroom burger, pea-protein wrap, or roasted vegetable and bean bowl should be presented in a way that makes the meal desirable, not defensive. In retail settings, packaging and shelf communication should show how the product can be used in everyday meals, especially where consumers may lack cooking confidence.

Health and sustainability claims can still play an important role, but they should support the core food appeal rather than replace it. Consumers should not feel they are being asked to trade enjoyment for responsibility. The most effective marketing is likely to show that AP products can be tasty, convenient, nutritious, and sustainable at the same time.

4.5

Avoid identity-limiting language



One of the recurring barriers in AP marketing is the overreliance on vegan or vegetarian language. These labels are important for consumers who actively seek them, but when used as the main marketing frame, they may narrow the perceived audience. Many consumers who could be open to AP products do not identify as vegan or vegetarian. They may be flexitarian, health-conscious, curious, price-sensitive, environmentally aware, or simply interested in variety.

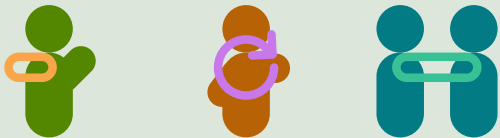
Marketing should therefore avoid presenting AP products only as food for vegans or vegetarians. Instead, it should use inclusive language that speaks to a wider range of motivations. Terms such as plant-forward, protein-rich, made with lentils, made with peas, mushroom-based, quick lunch option, family-friendly, or chef-inspired can make AP products feel more relevant to everyday consumers.

Lead with taste, ingredients, and everyday relevance. Use vegan or vegetarian information to support clarity, not to define the product's entire identity.

This does not mean hiding vegan or vegetarian information. Transparency remains essential, especially for dietary preference, ethical, religious, or allergen-related reasons. The issue is hierarchy. The first message should invite broad interest; dietary labels can then provide additional clarity.

Avoiding identity-limiting language is particularly important for consumers who may resist AP products because of social norms, masculinity associations with meat, or perceptions that APs are part of a lifestyle they do not identify with. Marketing that focuses on taste, protein, performance, convenience, or familiar meal formats may reduce this resistance.

4.6 Make trial low-risk and easy



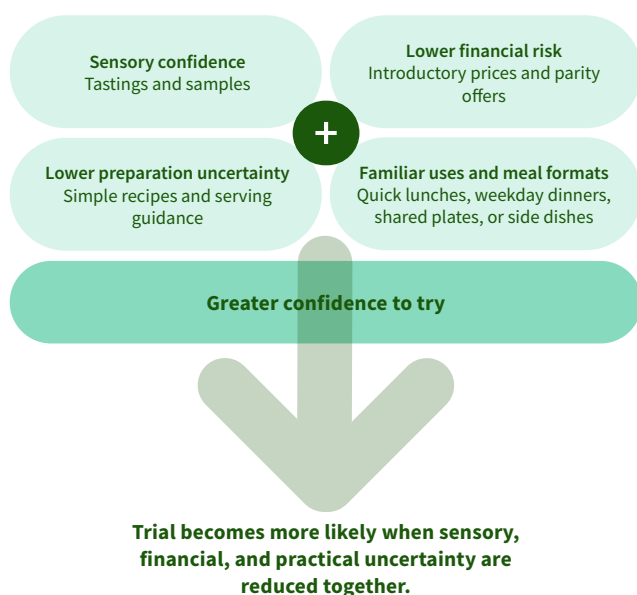
Many consumers are hesitant to buy AP products because they are unsure whether they will like the taste, know how to cook them, or feel the product is worth the price. Trial is therefore a critical step. Once consumers have a positive first experience, unfamiliarity decreases and repeat uptake becomes more likely.

Food environment actors should lower the risk of trial through tastings, small portions, introductory offers, meal bundles, sample menus, and limited-time dishes. In supermarkets, tasting stands can allow consumers to experience the product before purchase. In canteens, smaller tasting portions can be offered alongside familiar dishes. In restaurants, AP options can be introduced as part of mixed menus, shared plates, or side dishes before being promoted as full main meals.

Recipe support is also important. Many consumers lack confidence in preparing AP products, especially if the product is unfamiliar or the source ingredient is not part of their usual cooking habits. Simple cooking instructions, short recipes, QR codes, serving suggestions, and meal pairing ideas can reduce this barrier. However, essential preparation information should not be available only through a QR code. Consumers should be able to understand the basic use of the product quickly, directly at the point of sale.

Trial should be framed positively. Messages such as “try our new protein-rich lunch,” “taste before you choose,” or “quick dinner idea” are more inviting than messages that emphasise obligation or dietary change. The goal is to create a first positive experience that makes AP products feel less risky and more familiar.

What makes trial easier?



4.7**Use price promotions strategically, not as a substitute for value**

Price is a major barrier to AP uptake. Marketing strategies that ignore price are unlikely to reach broader consumer groups. However, discounts alone are not enough. If consumers try a discounted product but find it disappointing, confusing, or difficult to prepare, the promotion may not lead to repeat purchase.

Price promotions should therefore be used strategically. Introductory discounts, meal deals, loyalty points, bundle offers, or price parity promotions can encourage first purchase, but they should be paired with taste-focused messages and preparation support. For example, a discounted AP product can be promoted alongside a simple recipe, a visible taste cue, or a meal occasion such as “easy weekday dinner.”

Food retailers and caterers should avoid positioning AP products as premium niche goods unless the product is clearly designed for that segment. For mainstream uptake, AP products need to feel financially accessible. Where possible, AP meals in canteens and public food services should be priced at the same level as comparable conventional meals.

Price promotions should also be evaluated. The key question is not only whether sales increase during the promotion, but whether consumers return to the product afterwards. Tracking repeat purchase, satisfaction, and product feedback can help determine whether price was the main barrier or whether other issues, such as taste, placement, or preparation, need attention.

4.8**Build trust through transparent and practical information**

Consumers often have questions about AP products: What are they made from? Are they healthy? Are they highly processed? Do they contain allergens? Are they sustainable? Are they suitable for children, athletes, older people, or people with dietary restrictions? Marketing that avoids these questions can undermine trust.

Food environment actors should provide clear, practical, and credible information. In retail settings, packaging and shelf communication should make the main protein source visible. In restaurants and canteens, menus and staff should be able to explain key ingredients, allergens, and preparation methods. Claims about health or sustainability should be specific and evidence-based, not vague or exaggerated.

Transparency should be balanced with simplicity. Consumers do not need to receive all information at once, especially in time-pressured food environments. A layered approach can work well: simple front-facing information at the point of choice, with more detailed information available through packaging, menus, websites, QR codes, or staff.

Trust also depends on who communicates. Chefs, nutritionists, public institutions, trusted retailers, local producers, or credible third parties may be more persuasive than brand-only claims. Staff can play an important role, especially in restaurants, canteens, and tasting contexts. For this reason, staff should be equipped with simple, non-judgemental answers to common consumer questions.

4.9

Train staff as choice facilitators



Staff can reduce uncertainty and build confidence when recommendations are informed, natural, and free from judgement or pressure.

Food environment staff are often overlooked in marketing strategies, but they can strongly influence consumer confidence. Retail staff, canteen workers, servers, chefs, and tasting-stand staff may be asked about taste, ingredients, allergens, preparation, and value. If they are unable to answer, consumers may hesitate.

Staff should therefore be trained as choice facilitators. This does not mean pressuring consumers to choose AP products. It means helping consumers navigate options confidently and without judgement. Staff should understand what the products are, how they taste, how they are prepared, what allergens they contain, and how they compare to familiar alternatives.

Training should include tasting. Staff who have tried the products themselves can speak more credibly and naturally. Training should also include language guidance. Staff should avoid moralising statements or assumptions about consumer identity. A helpful recommendation might be, “This one is popular because it is crispy and filling,” rather than, “This is the sustainable choice you should make.”

In restaurants and canteens, staff can also provide feedback to managers about consumer reactions. They may hear questions, complaints, confusion, or praise before these appear in formal monitoring systems. Their insights should be used to improve placement, naming, preparation, and communication.

4.10

Monitor behaviour, not only visibility

Marketing and choice architecture should be evaluated through behavioural and acceptability indicators. It is not enough to know that a product was displayed, promoted, or seen. Food environment actors should assess whether consumers noticed it, understood it, tried it, liked it, bought it again, and felt they had a meaningful choice.

In retail settings, relevant indicators include sales, repeat purchase, promotion uptake, product returns, consumer questions, time on shelf, and comparison between integrated and segregated placement. In restaurants and canteens, indicators can include dish selection, plate waste, satisfaction, menu feedback, staff observations, and displacement behaviour. In digital environments, indicators can include click-through rates, search visibility, basket additions, repeat orders, and review sentiment.

Monitoring should also include unintended effects. Consumers may feel misled if AP products are placed too closely to conventional products without clear labeling. They may ignore products if signage is too complex. They may resist if messaging feels moralising. They may try once but not return if the product does not meet taste expectations. These outcomes are valuable learning signals.

Marketing should therefore be treated as an iterative process. Food environment actors should test different names, placements, prompts, price points, and visual cues, then adapt based on evidence.

5. Suggested implementation pathway



Implementation should begin with the consumer journey rather than with the product alone. Food environment actors need to understand how consumers encounter AP products in practice: whether they notice them, whether they understand what they are, whether they see them as relevant, whether they feel confident trying them, and whether the experience supports repeat choice. This makes the pathway less about launching a single marketing campaign and more about improving the conditions under which AP products are discovered, evaluated, and adopted.

A useful first step is to map current touchpoints. Retailers, restaurants, canteens, brands, and food service providers should review where AP products appear across shelves, menus, displays, digital platforms, promotions, packaging, and staff interactions. This mapping should identify whether AP products are visible in mainstream decision points or hidden in separate sections, whether product descriptions are clear and appetising, whether price differences are noticeable, and whether staff or digital tools can answer basic consumer questions.

The next step is to identify friction. Consumers may overlook AP products because they are poorly placed, reject them because they are described in unfamiliar or identity-based language, hesitate because they seem expensive, or avoid them because preparation guidance is missing. In restaurants and canteens, AP dishes may be technically available but placed at the bottom of menus, framed as special dietary options, or described less appealingly than conventional dishes. Understanding these points of friction helps actors decide which changes are most likely to matter.

Once friction points are clear, actors can redesign the choice context. This may involve integrating AP products into mainstream categories, improving dish names, using clearer visibility cues, pairing promotions with recipes, offering tastings, improving product images, training staff, or ensuring that essential information is available at the point of choice. Redesign should not make

AP products feel forced or artificially privileged. It should make them easier to notice, understand, compare, and try.

Changes should then be tested in real food environments. Rather than assuming that one placement, name, or message will work everywhere, actors should compare options. A retailer could test integrated versus segregated placement across similar stores. A canteen could compare different names for the same AP dish. A restaurant could test whether placing an AP dish among main dishes increases selection compared with placing it in a separate vegetarian section. Digital platforms can test product images, filters, rankings, or search terms.

Operational alignment is essential. Marketing changes will not work if products are unavailable, poorly prepared, priced inconsistently, or if staff cannot answer basic questions. Stock reliability, kitchen preparation, allergen information, staff training, and pricing should therefore be aligned with the marketing strategy. Staff should be treated as part of the choice environment because they often translate marketing into real consumer interaction.

Successful approaches can then be scaled, but not copied blindly. Lessons from testing can inform category management, menu design standards, brand guidelines, procurement specifications, responsible marketing principles, or public food service requirements. However, scaling should allow local adaptation. A strategy that works in one country, store format, age group, or canteen may need adjustment elsewhere.

Within this pathway, the main responsibility sits with the actors who design and manage food environments. Retailers, restaurants, canteens, brands, and food service providers control placement, naming, pricing, visibility, staff interaction, and product presentation. Public authorities can play a supplementary role by setting expectations in public procurement, supporting responsible marketing guidance, and funding pilot testing. Researchers can support experimentation and evaluation, while civil society organisations and consumer groups can help assess trust, transparency, and consumer understanding.

6. Distilled summary and practice-oriented indicators

This governance mechanism proposes a practical route for marketing AP products through food environment design rather than relying only on information campaigns. Its central idea is that AP products should be made easy to find, easy to understand, easy to compare, and easy to try. Marketing should not position APs as niche products for a narrow audience, but as appealing food options that fit everyday routines.

In practical terms, this mechanism points to a sequence of marketing design questions. Are AP products visible where food decisions already happen? Are they integrated in ways that support comparison without creating confusion? Are they described through taste, quality, convenience, and familiar uses rather than only

through vegan or vegetarian identity? Is trial made low-risk through tastings, promotions, smaller portions, or recipe support? Is enough information available to build trust without overwhelming consumers? Finally, are actors measuring whether consumers notice, understand, try, enjoy, and return to AP products?

Practice-oriented indicators for monitoring the implementation and effectiveness of marketing and choice architecture intervention

MARKETING OBJECTIVE	PRACTICAL INDICATOR	WHY IT MATTERS
Increase visibility	Share of AP products placed in mainstream product categories or main menus	Tracks whether APs are positioned where routine decisions happen
Improve findability	Consumer-reported ease of finding AP products in-store, on menus, or online	Shows whether choice architecture reduces search effort
Improve digital discoverability	Search ranking, filter availability, image quality, and click-through rates for AP products in online shops or delivery platforms	Reflects the role of digital food environments in how consumers find and evaluate AP options
Avoid niche positioning	Share of AP products marketed through taste, ingredients, convenience, or quality rather than only vegan/vegetarian labels	Measures whether marketing reaches beyond already committed consumers
Support comparison	Presence of AP products next to comparable conventional products with clear signposting	Helps consumers evaluate APs as normal alternatives
Reduce confusion	Number of mistaken purchases, complaints, or consumer reports of unclear placement	Helps identify unclear placement, labelling, or category design
Increase trial	Number of tastings, samples, introductory offers, or small-portion opportunities provided	Tracks whether consumers can try APs with lower risk
Support preparation confidence	Share of AP products or dishes accompanied by simple preparation guidance, recipes, or serving suggestions	Helps consumers understand how to integrate AP products into everyday meals
Address affordability	Price difference between promoted AP products and comparable conventional products	Monitors whether marketing is undermined by price barriers
Strengthen taste appeal	Consumer ratings of taste, texture, and meal satisfaction	Ensures that marketing claims match consumer experience
Build trust	Share of AP products or dishes with clear information on protein source, allergens, and preparation	Reduces uncertainty and perceived risk
Improve staff confidence	Number of staff trained to answer basic AP product questions	Measures whether human touchpoints support consumer choice
Monitor uptake	Sales, dish selection, basket addition, or order rates for AP products	Shows whether marketing changes influence behaviour
Monitor repeat behaviour	Repeat purchase or repeat selection rates	Indicates whether first trial becomes sustained uptake
Monitor acceptability	Consumer feedback on whether AP marketing feels informative, appealing, or pushy	Helps avoid reactance or perceived manipulation
Support learning	Number of placement, naming, or promotion tests conducted and evaluated	Shows whether marketing is evidence-based and adaptive



7. Conclusion and way forward

Marketing and choice architecture can play a decisive role in moving alternative protein products from niche to mainstream. The LIKE-A-PRO evidence shows that many consumers are open to APs, but that openness depends on the conditions under which products are encountered. If AP products are hidden, expensive, confusing, poorly described, or framed as relevant only to narrow identity groups, they are unlikely to reach their full potential.

The way forward is to treat marketing as food environment design. This means placing AP products where routine decisions happen, describing them in appetising and inclusive language, reducing the risk of trial, providing clear and trustworthy information, and ensuring that staff can support consumer questions. Marketing should not rely only on sustainability claims or moral appeals. It should show that AP products can be tasty, convenient, affordable, familiar, and relevant to everyday meals.

Marketing and food-environment design can activate attention and trial, but sustained uptake depends on product quality, affordability, trust, and fit with everyday routines.

This mechanism's specific contribution is to position choice architecture as a practical marketing tool. Food environment actors do not need to wait for consumers to become fully convinced before improving how AP products are presented. They can reduce friction, improve visibility, support comparison, and make trial easier now. At the same time, they should avoid overpromising. Marketing alone

will not overcome poor taste, high prices, weak supply, or low trust. It must be connected to product quality, affordability, transparency, and real consumer experience.

A realistic way forward is to begin with small, testable changes: integrate AP products into mainstream categories, improve dish names, offer tastings, adjust price promotions, train staff, and monitor consumer response. Successful approaches can then be scaled into category strategies, menu design standards, brand guidelines, public procurement expectations, and responsible marketing principles. In this way, AP products can become not only available, but visible, understandable, attractive, and normal within everyday food environments.

