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Verbindend:
Projektleiter Drs. Jochem Wolthuis treibt mit dem staatlich geförderten Programm „Die neuen Protein Partner für Deutschland – Gemeinsam die Proteinwende in Deutschland gestalten“ die niederländisch-deutsche Zusammenarbeit voran.

Plant-based 3.0 Needs Innovative Solutions

The “New Protein Partnership” between Germany and the Netherlands – More plant-based and protein-rich foods for the German market

With a variety of integrated solutions, Dutch companies want to bring more sustainability and health awareness into the German nutrition system.

Where do you currently see the biggest opportunities for cooperation between the Netherlands and Germany in the protein sector?

We are currently focusing on meat-like products with fewer additives and less energy use, as well as plant-based innovations that offer long-term added value to consumers. This also includes new, innovative technologies, for which Germany has great scientific expertise. This is where we can collaborate well.

Keyword: new technologies and raw materials: What’s next?

The first generation of plant-based alternatives – let's call it Plant-based 1.0 – was dominated by soy and wheat proteins. The next step involved improvements in texture and taste, often using peas and fava beans. We're now entering Plant-based 3.0: hybrid solutions and fermentation-based innovations. Clean Label is also important. That means: fewer ingredients, fewer additives. The trend is toward products that appeal to more than just vegetarians. If you look at taste tests, it's amazing that many people can no longer tell the difference between plant-based and animal products. Even traditional meat companies are jumping on this trend.

The Vegetarian Butcher also started as a startup and has now been taken over by Unilever and JBS subsidiary Vivera. What does this mean for the industry?

The New Protein 3.0 is becoming mainstream. Companies and investors are looking for scalable products and solutions that consumers really want. If you milk a cow but don't feed it, it will eventually die. The same goes for innovation: without support, it fades. That's why new ideas and business models need both customers and investors.

What role does the Netherlands play in the protein transition?

According to Prof. Heijn Verduin, we are currently the most successful country in Europe with more than 250 plant-based products and around 100 companies active in this sector in Germany.

What do German companies need to keep up in terms of sustainability?

The pressure is increasing. Retail chains want to reduce their meat shelves and promote plant-based alternatives. The pressure to offer climate-friendly products is growing. And so is the need for smart labeling and marketing. There's still a lot of room for improvement.

Is there consumer support in the Netherlands for the New Protein movement?

Is the new government pursuing a similar course to the German federal government, which recently gave the agriculture ministry more influence over the food industry?

Yes, the Netherlands is also on board. Science and government have created the conditions for this transition. For example, the Wageningen Research Center and the Dutch Food Valley. It's important that politicians and consumers understand: this is not about banning meat, but about offering alternatives. It's about freedom of choice, about reducing dependency on imports, and creating economic value.

Which innovations are coming from the Netherlands that German producers could adopt?

For example, the Dutch are ahead when it comes to Nutri-Score and sustainable sourcing. Or when it comes to new protein sources like PrimeJack® jackfruit from Africa – very interesting for hybrid products, because it has the same bite and structure as meat.