

TITOLO: Agro-food system economic-management sustainability and consumer behaviour of alternative protein food

Progetto di ricerca

Alternative protein food products can be a viable substitution of conventional animal-based food. Alternative proteins are those obtained from sources other than conventional animal-based, i.e., from sources that are plant-based, microbe-based, ocean-based, fungus-based, and insect-based. Consumer growing pull for these products is the perfect ground for the European diets to become more sustainable & healthier (following the EAT Lanced commission's objectives) in line with the European Green Deal & Farm to Fork Strategy. However, to date, animal-based products are totally key in our diets, as 94% Europeans consume animal-based products on a daily basis.

There is need to facilitate and accelerate the protein shift. For unlocking the potential of alternative proteins to transform the food system, alternative sources of protein and products must be mainstreamed across all levels. The agro-food system should aim to facilitate sustainable and healthy diets by shifting promising alternative proteins and products from niche to mainstream - making them more available, accessible, and acceptable to all population groups (young people, adults, elderly, vulnerable groups - of low socio-economic status, ethnic minorities, living in rural locations) and everywhere (urban, peri-urban, and rural areas).

Thus, there is need to:

- identify the consumer behavioural determinants and the necessary agro-food environment governance frameworks that enable a higher uptake of alternative protein products
- empower the food system actors to make alternative protein products an easy and economically viable choice via their diversified & increased market supply and ensured favourable agro-food environment conditions
- ensure that the project developments in alternative protein products and agro-food environment will bring positive changes in terms of health and sustainability of the European food system.
- ensure that the developments are in line with the regulatory framework and ethical aspects.

The research fellow will support research activities aimed to:

- Data Collection and Analysis: Collect data on the production, consumption, and market trends of alternative protein foods; Analyze the environmental, economic, and social impacts of alternative protein production compared to traditional animal agriculture; Assess the nutritional and safety aspects of alternative protein products.
- Stakeholder Interviews: Conduct interviews with key stakeholders, including government officials, industry representatives, NGOs, and consumers, to gather insights on their perspectives regarding alternative protein policies and practices.
- Policy Mapping: Map out existing policies and regulations at the local, national, and international levels related to alternative protein production, labeling, and marketing; Identify gaps or inconsistencies in the current policy landscape.
- Policy Recommendations: Develop evidence-based policy recommendations for promoting sustainable and responsible production and consumption of alternative protein foods; Consider the economic and environmental implications of proposed policies.

- **Case Studies:** Analyse case studies of regions or countries that have successfully implemented policies to support the alternative protein industry; Highlight best practices and lessons learned.
- **Economic Analysis:** Analyze the economic feasibility of alternative protein production and its potential impact on the agro-food sector, including job creation and revenue generation.
- **Public Outreach and Education:** Develop educational materials and outreach programs to inform the public about the benefits of alternative protein foods and the policies supporting them.
- **Policy Advocacy:** Engage with policymakers, advocacy groups, and industry stakeholders to promote your research findings and policy recommendations; Participate in relevant conferences and meetings to share your insights.
- **Research Paper Writing:** Prepare research papers, reports, and policy briefs summarizing your findings and recommendations; Submit your work to academic journals, government agencies, and think tanks for dissemination.
- **Collaboration:** Collaborate with other researchers and institutions working on similar topics to ensure a coordinated and effective approach to policy research.

Piano di attività

The research fellow's activities aim to contribute to the analysis of food policy environment aimed at supporting the food supply chain management and economic dimensions of alternative protein products' promotion. In particular, he/she will focus on:

- (i) statistical-economic analysis of agri-food products in the European market for analysis along agri-food supply chains;
- (ii) literature review analysis and meta-reviews of sources useful for research activities;
- (iii) content analysis of focus groups transcriptions with specific software, such as NVIVO;
- (iv) organization of "living labs" as food environments in cooperation with local food chain stakeholders;
- (v) contributing to structuring and data collection through face-to-face interviews and focus groups with agri-food supply chain actors in Italian and English on business economic and financial issues;
- (vi) contributing to consumer data collection through interviews, surveys related to market dynamics and new consumer trends (equity, fair trade, eat local, food business models) and case study analysis;
- (vii) data processing through multivariate statistical techniques, including factor analysis, cluster analysis, regression.

The research activity will be conducted in English. The research fellow will work on Like-a-pro project, funded by Horizon Europe (Grant Agreement Project 101083961).

The listed activities will be carried out under the supervision of Prof. Antonella Samoggia, scientific project leader and mentor.