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Plant-based convenience foods available from UK supermarkets - are they any better?

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Background/Objectives: More consumers are opting for plant-based (PB) products for health and environmental reasons. This has driven an increase in availability and variety of PB convenience foods⁽¹⁾. This study assesses whether PB products provide a nutritional and affordable alternative to standard (animal-based) products.

Methods: A comparison of the nutrient content and price of PB convenience foods and equivalent standard products was completed for ten UK supermarkets. Data was collected per 100 g for four categories; pizza, ready-meals, sausages and burgers.

Results: Overall, PB products were lower in energy (−53 kcal), fat (−3.5 g), saturated fat (−2.6 g) and protein (−8.2 g), but higher in carbohydrate (6.7 g), fibre (2.8 g) and cost (£ 0.27) than standard products. In contrast, the salt content was similar between (0.83 ± 0.70 g and 0.76 ± 0.44 g) products.

Discussion / Conclusion: The lower energy and saturated fat content of PB products, combined with greater quantities of fibre could be beneficial for management of obesity and non-communicable diseases⁽²⁾. Furthermore, replacing processed meat with PB alternatives containing fibre could potentially help reduce bowel cancer risk⁽³⁾, however PB products are currently less affordable. According to UK food labelling guidelines⁽⁴⁾, salt levels for both product types would be categorised as medium and therefore should be consumed in moderation.

References

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Disclosure of Interest

None Declared