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1 Understanding the future meat consumers

- 2 Maria Font-i-Furnols* & Luis Guerrero
- 3 IRTA-Food Quality and Technology, Finca Camps i Armet, 17121 Monells (Girona), Spain
- 4 *Corresponding author: maria.font@irta.cat

Abstract

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- 7 Revered, desired, hated and even persecuted, meat leaves almost no one indifferent. It is a
- 8 fundamental element of our culture and traditions, and gives rise to numerous controversies,
- 9 trends and social movements. Currently, there are many dilemmas raised by its production and
- 10 consumption, from ethical and moral to environmental, economic and health. This paper
- 11 focuses on examining and analysing some of these dilemmas, related to ethical and socio-
- 12 cultural issues, animal welfare, sustainability and meat alternatives, from a consumer
- 13 perspective and their impact on current and future meat consumption. In the coming years,
- the meat sector will have to face many challenges to ensure its survival, particularly in terms of
- the ethical aspects of meat consumption and the environmental impact of meat production.
- 16 Listening to society's demands, adapting to them, and communicating progress in a truthful
- 17 and transparent manner are probably the keys to success and to the future of meat.
- 18 **Keywords:** socio-anthropological, pleasure, sustainability, animal welfare, cultured meat, meat
- 19 analogues

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21 1. Introduction

- 22 Meat is probably the most controversial food today and is subject to the greatest number of
- ethical and moral, health, environmental and even economic dilemmas (Macdiarmid et al.,
- 24 2016). Thus, we eat meat, but at the same time we care about animals and their welfare

(Bastian et al., 2012); it provides us with essential nutrients, although certain types of meat, consumed in excess, seem to increase the risk of suffering from certain diseases (Godfray et al., 2018); it generates sensory pleasure, identity, status (Piazza et al., 2015) and is closely linked to numerous traditions (Leroy & Praet, 2015), but its high consumption is environmentally unsustainable if advances in technology do not take place and/or if livestock practices do not change (Hedenus et al., 2014) which is unlikely since efforts are focussed on this issue (FAO, 2018; HLPE, 2016); finally, the global demand for meat generates economic and social benefits to communities worldwide, but uncontrolled production comes at a high cost to the planet (Capper, 2013). High quality animal-source food comes from livestock. Moreover, livestock has social, economic, and environmental benefits because it provides fertilizers, livelihood, rural and societal development, food and nutrition security, environmental resilience, wealth storage, conservation and use of diversity, among others (Capper, 2013; Dumont et al., 2019; FAO, 2018; Leroy et al., 2022). Consequently, a high reduction of livestock or even abolishment of it, due to sustainable concerns or implementation of veganism, would have important health, nutritional, social, economic and environmental consequences (Leroy et al., 2020; 2022). Attitudes and beliefs evolve throughout one's life influenced by the experiences, inclinations and knowledge acquired (Font-i-Furnols & Guerrero, 2014). Aspects such as healthiness and sustainability are becoming more and more important, thus shaping meat consumption habits. Accordingly, consumer demand for a more sustainable and more ethical meat production is increasing (European Commission, 2020). The livestock and meat processing sectors have made efforts to adapt to the societal demands regarding climate change, environmental impact, animal welfare, ethical issues, food security, safety and overall quality but still have challenges to face in terms of global sustainability (Broom, 2021; Capper, 2013; Simões et al., 2021).

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Many consumers, have reduced or intend to reduce their meat consumption, either for health, sustainability or ethical reasons (Hartmann & Siegrist, 2017; Sanchez-Sabate & Sabaté, 2019), but the benefits of consuming meat cannot be forgotten (Leroy et al., 2022). Although this reduction has taken place mainly in developed countries, where the meat consumption per capita is higher, an increase of meat consumption is expected in developing countries, thus, the global demand for meat will increase in the following decades. According to the FAO (Alexandratos & Bruinsma, 2012), global agricultural production will need to increase 1.1% per year until 2050 due to population growth and dietary changes. Similarly, livestock production will need to increase, either by increasing the number of animals or increasing productivity. However, it is essential to consider and control the possible harmful effects on the environment and the impact on animal welfare. Other possibilities are the use of alternative proteins, such as plant-based proteins, insects, mushrooms, pulses algae or cultured 'meat' (Anusha Siddiqui et al., 2022; Onwezen et al., 2021; Zhang et al., 2022) but not forgetting that meat is not only a source of protein but of other minerals, energy, fatty acids, vitamins and essential amino acids which plants do not provide or have low bioavailability (Leroy et al., 2022; Leroy & Barnard, 2020; Wood, 2017). In all cases, it is essential to explore consumer attitudes towards these new protein sources and to consider how best to inform consumers about the sustainability, safety and quality of the products that can be derived from them. Scientific publications are usually a reflection of topics of potential interest or concern to the population. To identify these, a brief literature review of recently published articles relating to meat and consumers has been carried out. Figure 1 shows the most frequent words appearing in the titles of reviews including the words "Meat" and "Consumer" from 1 January 2015 to 3 April 2022 in Web of Science (1173 articles in total). It is interesting to note that, of the total number of review papers found using these search criteria since 1942 (2219), 53% (1173) have been published in the last 7 years. These data indicate the importance that the perception of meat has acquired in the last decade which has focused mainly on aspects relating to health,

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sustainability in general and the environment in particular, animal welfare, meat analogues and other potential meat substitutes (Figure 1). Except for those health-related issues, this paper focuses on all these topics as well as including the ethical and socio-cultural aspects associated with meat consumption.

2. The origin

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Meat is a key element of our evolutionary heritage (Smil, 2013) that is rooted in many cultural and social aspects today (Bulliet, 2005; deFrance, 2009; Leroy & Praet, 2015). It is difficult to understand the role of meat in our cultures if we do not first analyse its origin and evolution in human history. Many studies have shown the physiological and dietary importance of meat in the sustainability and development of our ancestors (Smil, 2002). Thus, the consumption of high-quality foods of animal origin may have facilitated the necessary bioenergetic transformations that allowed the development of the human brain, energetically favoured by the relative reduction of a metabolically costly intestinal system (Leroy & Praet, 2015). Notably, young children, with their rapidly expanding brains and high metabolic and nutritional demands relative to adults, would have benefitted from volumetrically concentrated, highquality foods such as meat (Siekmann et al., 2003). According to these authors, using animal foods primarily to meet essential nutrient needs other than energy, and using plant sources primarily for energy, is a dietary strategy compatible with human gut anatomy and digestive kinetics. From a more social perspective, it is worth highlighting the role of different strategies for meat provisioning, which inevitably led to hunting in groups, turning humans into obliged collaborators (Tomasello et al., 2012). Likewise, the perishable nature of meat may have stimulated various socialisation behaviours. Due to the unpredictability of hunting, being able to share meat decreased risks of shortage and provided less variation in its availability (Hawkes, 1991). As a result, the social interactions of exchanging goods and services and

establishing long-term relationships could have originated from a set of commodities exchangeable for meat, including sex, childcare, tool production and even support and protection between groups or tribes (Gomes & Boesch, 2011). Thus, social activities, originally aimed at stabilising the supply of meat, eventually led to more complex networks and collective activities. It is curious to think that the sharing of food, and meat in particular, served as a bonding mechanism (Bellasco, 2008), as well as an effective system of communication, the formation of shared values and the development of feelings of affiliation, hospitality, gratification and affection (Fiddes, 1991). Apart of the hunting society there are also the domestic and post-domestic societies (Bulliet, 2005; Leroy, 2019; Leroy & Praet, 2017). In the domestic societies, meat consumption is sporadic and related to special occasions. However, in the post-domestic societies, there is an abundant meat consumption though production is purchased or subcontracted to slaugherplants, and it is performed out of the cities and avoiding references to the live animal (Leroy & Praet, 2017). In this post-domestic society, aspects such as animal welfare, sustainability and meat alternatives, relative to meat consumption, become important, and tendencies to reduce or avoid meat seem to become fashion in some societies. It is also important to be aware of the proliferation of fake news relative to meat production and consumption consequences, that can confuse consumers and damage the different

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3. Ethical and socio-cultural role of meat

stakeholders of the meat sector.

Nowadays, unlike other foods, the procurement of meat and its preparation continue to have a markedly masculine character, especially on special occasions (Fiddes, 1991), where, curiously, cooking tends to be public and outdoors with the use of fire (Sobal, 2005). According to Graça et al. (2014), meat consumption continues to affirm a sense of belonging, enhancing

gastronomic traditions and collective identity. Meat remains a central part of various religious celebrations as well as local festivals (Smil, 2013). Indeed, the central place of meat in contemporary Western diets is thought to be largely due to its connotations of success and power (Bellasco, 2008) and, also, because it provides essential and high quality nutrients. Not surprisingly, many people do not consider a meal to be complete without the presence of animal protein (Sobal, 2005). Cultural predispositions and prescriptions will continue to be important factors in defining future meat consumption trends, although it is difficult to know whether meat will maintain its central role in Western diets as different attitudes and moral stances develop (Holm & Møhl, 2000), especially in certain population groups such as women and young people (Sanchez-Sabate & Sabaté, 2019). It is also difficult to know if meat will become part of the meal in societies were today it is not present, either for cultural or economic reasons. People's relationships with animals are very complex. Thus, although many people enjoy animals and spend large amounts of money each year on the care and maintenance of their pets, the majority of the population continues to consume animals (Herzog, 2010). People employ a range of strategies to overcome this apparent attitudinal and behavioural contradiction to deal with the 'meat paradox' (Herzog, 2010; Loughnan et al., 2014). Not wanting to harm animals and, at the same time, enjoying meat as a dietary staple causes an internal conflict or cognitive dissonance (Cooper, 2007), of which the magnitude depends on the number and relevance of the cognitions (Harmon-Jones & Mills, 2019). The resolution of this conflict can take two different routes: rejecting meat consumption and aligning behaviour with moral ideals; or aligning individual beliefs and attitudes with behaviour through various psychological mechanisms or changes in the organization of the society. The fact that most of the world's population continues to consume meat indicates that the latter pathway is the one more widely adopted. However, it is important to take into account that in the post-domestic societies, some activists and advocates of meat alternatives talk about the abolishment of

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livestock and this could have important consequences from health, sustainability and ethical points of view (Leroy et al., 2022). One of the psychological mechanisms of self-protection is rationalisation, i.e. offering defensible reasons and arguments for one's actions when they are questioned or criticised (Kunda, 1990). This process is an essential part of human socialisation, as we normally live in close-knit social groups where it is very important to manage and defend one's actions to others (Ingram et al., 2009). Within these arguments, avoiding the humanisation of animals and denying that they have mental capacities such as the possibility of suffering or experiencing pleasure is a fairly common strategy (Rothgerber, 2014). This is in line with Descartes' theory about animals' being conscious automata and not being 'selfconscious' as humans (Smith, 1998). Harming animals is only problematic if animals are thought to have moral rights. Denying animals emotions is a subtle way of excluding them from moral concern. Classifying animals into different categories (e.g. food or pets) can have wide consequences for their treatment (Herzog, 2010). Simply considering an animal as food serves to suppress its moral rights (Loughnan et al., 2012). According to Piazza et al. (2015) the 4Ns (natural, normal, necessary, and nice) are a tool frequently used by consumers to dilute the sense of guilt experienced when consuming animal products. Of these, beliefs about the need to eat meat, and the pleasure derived from it, seem to be the least justifiable, while beliefs about the naturalness of eating meat are the most persistent and difficult to neutralise. According to these authors, people who use the 4Ns as a justification for their meat consumption are usually less concerned about ethical and moral issues related to animals or the environment. According to Rothgerber (2014), the three basic coping mechanisms for cognitive dissonance, applied to reduce the discomfort of eating animals, are: (1) hiding or avoiding the harm, possibly by making the victim invisible (i.e. avoidance of unpleasant thoughts, dissociation between animal and food, and perceived behavioural change); (2) denying one's own role or responsibility in causing the harm (i.e. denial animal pain, denial animal mind and pro-meat justifications); and (3) denigrating the victim (i.e. reduction of

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perceived choice and pro-meat justifications related to meat taste, animals hierarchy or religious justification). In this regard it is worth noting that most consumers do not think about the suffering of animals when they buy meat (Font-i-Furnols & Guerrero, 2014; Guerrero et al., 2013; Mayfield et al., 2007). This meat-animal dissociation strategy could explain why the more meat resembles the real animal (e.g. the redder, bloodier and fattier it is), the more repulsive it is to individuals (Kubberød et al., 2002). Exposure to live animals, their death or their carcasses are strong triggers of cognitive dissonance (Dowsett et al., 2018). Interestingly, dissociation can also be observed at the linguistic level, demonstrating its cultural embeddedness. For example, in English, animals that are consumed are referred to by different terms such as pork (not pig), beef (not cow) and veal (not calf) (Benningstad & Kunst, 2020). Introducing changes in consumer behaviour aimed at a more reasonable and sustainable consumption of meat does not seem a simple task as changing such deep-rooted and ancestral beliefs, habits and traditions requires well-planned and properly executed actions. As stated by Graça et al. (2015), there is a strong positive emotional attachment to meat that constitutes an important motivational barrier to its reduction in the diet. Many consumers find it difficult to control their meat intake when the majority of their family and friends consume meat, highlighting the role of the social pressure (Biermann & Rau, 2020). Also, as De Backer et al. (2020) state, eating practices based on male stereotypes do not help to reduce meat consumption. It should not be forgotten that the pleasure of eating meat, together with the belief that it contains important nutrients that cannot be substituted, are two additional barriers that also hinder a more reasonable consumption of meat (Corrin & Papadopoulos, 2017). In this regard, Michel et al. (2021) found that the most frequent association with meat was "delicious", highlighting its sensory value as an element of indulgence (Jahn et al., 2021). The process of cooking and eating is often deeply connected to social norms and rituals, and the underlying legacy of "meat traditions" provides a strong barrier to its reduction. For

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centuries, human society and meat have developed in parallel, giving rise to deep-rooted traditions and rituals around hunting, slaughtering, cooking and eating meat (Leroy & Praet, 2015). As Rothgerber (2014) mentions, negative campaigning about meat is often counterproductive, as it can ultimately increase cognitive dissonance, which is reduced by creating justifications that further stimulate meat consumption. However, other actions such as exposure to friendly animal characters (either companion, farm or wild animals) in movies, television, books, as well as through toys, stuffed animals, etc. (Figure 2), play a central role in children's early experiences (Melson, 2005) and, especially those related to farm animals, may have a positive effect in the medium to long term on the regulation of meat consumption. The study by Rothgerber and Mican (2014) showed that pet ownership in childhood increased the perception of human-animal similarities. When the humanization of animals are emphasised, our moral concern for their rights increases and our willingness to eat them decreases (Loughnan et al., 2012).

4. (Un)Sustainable meat

Sustainable healthy diets are defined as 'dietary patterns that promote all dimensions of individuals' health and wellbeing; have low environmental pressure and impact; are accessible, affordable, safe and equitable, and culturally acceptable" (FAO & WHO, 2019). Traditionally, sustainability has been addressed from a tripartite approach, integrating environmental protection, social equity in terms of closing the gap between industrialised and developing countries, and economic viability (United Nations, 2005). Hanss and Böhm (2012) go a step further by defining five dimensions of sustainability: (i) an environmental dimension (preservation of natural resources); (ii) a social dimension (improvement of living conditions and equal opportunities for all); (iii) an economic dimension (economic viability and economic growth that guarantees human well-being); (iv) a temporal dimension considering the needs of current and future generations; and (v) a development dimension that allows sustainability to be achieved. According to these authors, these five dimensions play a fundamental role in

consumers' understanding of the concept of sustainability, albeit at different levels. However, it is worthwhile stating that, although most of the consumers have heard about sustainability, it is a very broad term that has many aspects often unknown to most of the consumers. In general, most people have a limited or biased knowledge of this concept, and mainly associate it with environmental issues and, to a lesser extent, with ethical or economic issues (Blanco-Penedo et al., 2021; Grunert et al., 2014; Hanss & Böhm, 2012). It is evident that the growth of the world population and the increase in income has favoured meat consumption (de Boer et al., 2014; Godfray et al., 2018). However, health, social and environmental issues associated with high levels of animal-based food consumption have increased concerns and brought about calls for a reduction in the amount of meat we eat (Apostolidis & McLeay, 2016), despite the fact that many consumers consider meat products to be an important source of nutrients and an indispensable traditional component of their diet (Verbeke et al., 2010). According to Hallström et al. (2014) meat products have an inefficient conversion rate (amount of feed vs. amount of protein obtained), generate high greenhouse gas emissions, promote deforestation, cause biodiversity loss and may even pose risks to food security. Even though all these negative effects depend on the characteristics of each production system and metric used to calculate them (van Eenennaam & Werth, 2021). However, as discussed above, reducing the amount of meat we consume requires a profound social transition (Apostolidis & McLeay, 2016) as meat has a fundamental socio-cultural role and is one of the most popular food products, valued not only for the pleasure of eating it but also because it is generally perceived as a healthy food (Font-i-Furnols & Guerrero, 2014). Additionally, consumers' preferences, behaviour and attitude towards sustainability are influenced by socio-demographic characteristics, culture and tradition, life values and a food related lifestyle (Grunert et al., 2014; Janssen et al., 2016; Verain et al., 2012). Other social aspects to be taken into consideration when talking about perception of sustainability by consumers are related to values and attitudes linked to human protection, preservation of

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cultural differences, and aspects related to bias in distribution of natural resources and goods, social welfare and fair trade (Hanss & Böhm, 2012). Some of these can also be linked to a perception of sustainability relating to meat production and consumption.

Although sustainability and environmental concerns have been around for many years, their

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impact on consumer decision-making regarding meat consumption has had very little influence (Jahn et al., 2021). One of the reasons for this, is the low awareness of the negative environmental impact associated with the production and excessive consumption of meat (Hartmann & Siegrist, 2017; Lentz et al., 2018), although in some countries this perception seems more important (Hocquette et al., 2022). Moreover, coupled with this lack of awareness, the perception that personal meat consumption plays a minimal role in the overall context of climate change, and resistance to the idea of reducing personal meat consumption, explains why meat consumption is not noticeably decreasing in some developed countries (Macdiarmid et al., 2016; Tonsor & Lusk, 2022; Dagevos & Verbeke, 2022). However, in other countries the decrease in meat consumption seems more important (Font-i-Furnols & Guerrero, 2022; Ngapo, 2022; Dagevos & Verbeke, 2022) or there have been changes in the type of meat consumed mainly due to price and health reasons (Realini et al., 2022; Hötzel & Vandresen, 2022). According to Macdiarmid et al. (2016), even consumers who are more or less aware of the relationship between meat consumption and environmental impact are rather sceptical about the existing scientific evidence, considering that changing non-food related behaviours are more acceptable and take priority in mitigating climate change. This sceptical position might have changed during the last years, at least for consumers who have increased their awareness of this relationship.

Assessing the real environmental impact of meat production compared to the production of other types of food is not easy, as it depends on the production system, whether or not it competes for resources that could be used in the production of other foods, and how the damage to the environment is measured (Godfray et al., 2018). According to Capper (2013),

the future of the meat sector necessarily involves the implementation of production improvements that reduce resource use and emissions, improve economic viability and maintain an affordable supply of animal-based foods for the consumer. Finally, regarding economic sustainability, we must not forget all the jobs that are involved in the production of food of animal origin, its economic weight in many regions of the planet and its role in maintaining rural life.

5. Welfare friendly meat

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There are several definitions of animal welfare (AW) and the majority take into account animal suffering and satisfaction. Animal welfare is one of the pillars of sustainability which, in meat production and consumption, is very important for consumers and society (European Commission, 2018; Grandin, 2014; Sonoda et al., 2018; Taylor & Signal, 2009). Different regulations and standards have been launched on this topic, although not all the countries have these nor do they cover the same aspects (Hild, 2019). Furthermore, AW is considered as a cross-cutting sustainable challenge for livestock in agricultural development (HLPE, 2016). Consumers concerns and awareness about animal well-being and welfare have increased considerably in the last years (European Commission, 2007, 2016; McKendree et al., 2014) and AW issues have been widely investigated. However, there is a regional bias in these scientific studies, since most of them have been performed in Europe, some in North and Central America and Oceania, a few in South America and Asia and almost none in Africa. Animal welfare, animal well-being, welfare friendly production or products, or similar, are concepts quite often used when discussing livestock and meat. Most of the concepts are related to societal concerns such as the suffering and stress of the animals, their natural state, the human-animal relation, and they vary within and between countries (Carnovale et al., 2021; Estévez-Moreno et al., 2021; European Commission, 2016; Prickett, 2010; Vargas-Bello-Pérez et al., 2021). Apart from the individual differences, results also depend on how the research was carried out (i.e. if information was previously provided and type of information provided)

and by whom (i.e. research institution, animal protectionist organization), the characteristics of the population sampled (i.e. region, age, studies, income), recent interventions or public information shown in the mass media (i.e. if there have been recent campaigns enhancing AW, viral videos, sometimes biased and out of context, showing the mistreatment of animals), etc. Consumer attitudes towards AW depend on socio-demographic variables (Kendall et al., 2006; Musto et al., 2014; Sonoda et al., 2018), on the previous individual experience or knowledge (Kendall et al., 2006) and the type of husbandry practice (Janssen et al., 2016). Furthermore, interventions appealing to AW seem effective (Mathur et al., 2021) and can shape consumers' attitudes and beliefs. Thus, it seems relevant to focus on more effective tools to inform consumers and to be more transparent (Grandin, 2014) to allow them to know about current practices rather than imagining them, enhancing positive aspects and sending realistic and beneficial messages. In the same vein, it is crucial to inform consumers about the practices and the actions carried out to improve livestock welfare in order to increase their overall understanding and to provide them with the appropriate tools to create a referenced and informed opinion on this topic and to identify and disregard possible fake news. From the economic perspective, applying EU welfare standards (regulations) leads to higher costs for livestock producers, which are around 2% of the value of the overall livestock sector output (DG-SANCO, 2010), although this percentage depends on the country and each particular case (Broom, 2021; CWF, 2014). Part of the cost can be offset by increasing productive benefits, higher quality and food safety, and greater profitability during processing (Belk et al., 2002). Thus, it would be important to economically motivate farmers to produce according to high welfare standards in order to prevent losses and, if possible, to gain benefits (Thorslund et al., 2017). When the cost of production increases, it is important to know whether consumers would be willing to pay a premium for products that were welfare friendly or welfare certified. The willingness to pay is normally higher in pro-welfare consumers (Cornish et al., 2020) and those concerned about AW (Miranda-de la Lama et al., 2019),

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334 although it depends on the species, the region, the socio-demographic characteristics, type of 335 populations, the methodology used to carry out the study (Clark et al., 2017), the information 336 provided to the consumer (Cornish et al., 2020) and the level of welfare compared with the 337 standard (Denver et al., 2017). 338 Animal welfare is one of the reasons for reducing or avoiding meat consumption, together 339 with environmental and health issues (Bryant & Sanctorum, 2021; Janssen et al., 2016; Mancini 340 & Antonioli, 2019). Concerns towards AW can be related to the welfare of the animals during 341 their life and at slaughtering. In this sense, the most important husbandry practices related to 342 AW were outdoor access, stocking density and floor type (Janssen et al., 2016). Other practices 343 have also been studied from the consumers point of view such as those related to animal 344 husbandry practices (i.e. teeth clipping, castration, dehorning, beak and toe trimming, tail 345 docking), gestation crates, early weaning, etc. (Heleski et al., 2004; McKendree et al., 2014). 346 Religious slaughtering cannot be forgotten since it has generated concerns due to its impact on 347 AW and many studies have been performed to try to find out a compromise between religious 348 demands and AW (Aghwan et al., 2016; Farouk, 2013; Jalil et al., 2018; Velarde et al., 2014). 349 Furthermore, AW concerns are also related to the right or not to kill animals to eat them due 350 to moral reasons. Leroy and Praet (2017) review the different theories that explain the moral 351 attitudes associated to this practice such as anthropomorphic, cognitive ethology, capacities 352 perspective, anthropocentric and essentialist. In general, the higher the concern about AW, 353 the higher the reduction of meat in the diet (De Backer & Hudders, 2015). Interventions that 354 focus on social norms, that take advantage of the identification of the victim or that provide 355 specific suggestions for meat reduction also seem to be effective (Mathur et al., 2021). The 356 relationship between AW and meat quality is also relevant from the economic point of view, 357 especially for consumers interested in quality products. In this sense, different aspects of 358 quality can be considered, two of which - ethical and sensory properties - are of greater 359 importance to the consumer. When talking about ethical quality, reference is made to the

quality due to the production aspects of the meat, independent of the perceived quality when eating or processing this meat. Nevertheless, some consumers link higher welfare to higher sensory quality (European Commission, 2007; Lai et al., 2018), and, depending on the welfare aspect considered, this can be true or false (Thorslund et al., 2017).

The relationship between AW and environmental issues is quite complex and some studies show that they are not always going in the same direction, i.e. production systems with high AW are not always good from the environmental point of view (Siegford et al., 2008) and, moreover, strategies to improve sustainability can be good or bad for AW (Llonch et al., 2017). In all cases, it is important to know the impact that strategies to improve AW have on the environment and sustainability, or the impact that strategies to improve sustainability have on AW. This would allow the consumers to understand the environmental cost of AW or the ethical cost of a well preserved environment, to have informed attitudes and beliefs and to add value to the welfare-friendly products, what, at the same time, could be a limitation for population with low purchasing ability.

6. Meat alternatives emphasizing on cultured 'meat'

Despite the previously mentioned importance of meat, meat alternatives such as cultured 'meat' (CM), plant-based products, and products with insects or sea-weed as a source of protein, are having more and more resonance. The promotion of meat alternatives has been based on 5 different types of promises: (1) healthier than animal-based products, (2) a way to secure food for the world, (3) more animal-friendly and environmentally-friendly, (4) better control of production, and (5) they taste like animal products (Sexton et al., 2019). But these statements need to be further analysed and verified (Munteanu et al., 2021) because improvements in technologies for their processing are still required (Lee et al., 2020) and the properties of the final product from the nutritional, health, safety, sustainability, structure, texture and sensory point of view still need to be explored (Chriki & Hocquette, 2020; Fraeye

et al., 2020; Munteanu et al., 2021). Moreover, encouraging the avoidance of meat consumption in order to improve sustainability and health might be harmful and dangerous because of the positive role of animal husbandry (e.g. food security, livelihoods, manure for fertilization, etc.), the nutritional value of meat in the diet, and as a distraction from what really needs to be considered in order to solve the problems of climate change, food security and malnutrition (Leroy et al., 2022; Leroy & Hite, 2020). Cultured 'meat' is also known, among others, as cell, synthetic, artificial, in vitro, laboratorygrown, factory-grown, clean and animal-free 'meat' (Bryant & Barnett, 2019; Chriki et al., 2020; Verbeke, Marcu, et al., 2015). A critical point is if the term 'meat' can be used for this product, since CM is muscle cells grown in a bioreactor, but meat includes also other tissues such as adipocytes, connective and vascular tissue (Warner, 2019) as well as other compounds of the muscles that come from animal feed components transformed by animal organs, which influence in the sensory and nutritional properties of the meat (Ong et al., 2020). It is also a point of discussion if 'meat product' or another (new) term would be more acceptable (Chriki et al., 2022; Ong et al., 2020). Moreover, the term used to name it varies depending on the interest of the users (i.e. advocates, CM companies, meat producers or consumers; Ong et al., 2020), influences CM acceptability by the consumer (Bryant & Barnett, 2019), and it can have legal and social implications e.g. by using the term 'clean meat' there is the risk of considering animal-based meat as a 'dirty' meat (Sexton et al., 2019). Likewise, the term chosen by consumers to designate this product could also indicate the perception of the consumers towards the product, e.g. low choice of the term 'cell meat' could indicate a low perception of CM as environmentally friendly in opposition of what it is claimed by its defenders (Hocquette et al., 2022). Cultured 'meat' is a new product that, except in Singapore, it is not yet available on the market. Probably because of this, consumers' knowledge of CM is low, with a high number of consumers who have never heard about it or are not familiar with it (Figure 3). However, as can be seen in Figure 3, the most recent studies seem to show a tendency of a

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reduction of the number of citizens that have never heard about CM, at least in some countries. This might be explained by the most frequent appearance of information in the press media. There are several steps in the production of CM as detailed in the review of Warner (2019). In brief, (stem) cell selection, followed by the proliferation, differentiation, and maturation of the cells in a growth media aided with biomechanical, biophysical and electrical stimulation. Then there is the scaling up to industrial production by finally harvesting and manufacturing meat products. Moreover, this production needs to be highly controlled, economically feasible, sustainable, with a high production rate in order to ensure food security, healthiness, and acceptability to consumers. A key point regarding the social view of CM and meat analogues is try to answer the question: why do these alternative products need to mimic meat or meat products? Firstly, because they are considered as meat substitutes. Furthermore, since visual appearance is a very important factor in consumer choice (Font-i-Furnols & Guerrero, 2014), the imitation should be good enough as to be accepted at first sight. Meat products belong to human culture, and the alternatives need to meet consumer demands (Leroy et al., 2022) and, moreover, the importance of meat consumption at social events (Smil, 2013; Sobal, 2005) could create the need to give the impression of eating meat when eating these alternatives. Furthermore, the term meat is convenient for the supporters of 'cultured meat' because it allows them to remove the negative aspects of meat keeping the positive ones and reinforcing this confusion (Chriki et al., 2022). Another option would be that these alternatives do not mimic meat, neither by appearance nor by taste or name, showing the novelty of the product and trying to include it in the diet as another source of protein. Socio-demographic characteristics influence acceptance of CM, these being, in general, that men, young and low-income consumers are more positive towards it as reviewed by Bryant & Barnett (2018). Nevertheless, different results were obtained in more recent works, which can

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be explained by the interaction between several characteristics such as gender, age, studies or

relation with animal production (Heidemann et al., 2020; Hocquette et al., 2022), or by the characteristics of the consumers included in the study (Heidemann et al., 2020). In fact, differences in studies regarding the characteristics of the sample evaluated, the description of CM provided, the familiarity with the concepts, cultural issues and meat consumption practices might be relevant (Bekker et al., 2017; Bryant & Barnett, 2018; Bryant & Dillard, 2019; Mancini & Antonioli, 2019; SmartProtein, 2021; Wilks et al., 2021). The perception of naturalness is very pertinent for CM (Hocquette et al., 2022) and meat analogues, since the higher the perception of this product as being unnatural, the lower its acceptability (Siegrist & Hartmann, 2020; SmartProtein, 2021; Weinrich et al., 2020; Wilks et al., 2021) and willingness to try (Hocquette et al., 2022). Naturalness has also been related to healthiness (Siegrist & Sütterlin, 2017), disgust (Rosenfeld & Tomiyama, 2022; Siegrist & Hartmann, 2020), and probably to the perception of inauthenticity of this meat alternative (Bryant & Sanctorum, 2021). Cultured 'meat' perception of healthiness and safety is influenced by the type of information provided (Bryant & Dillard, 2019) and care has to be taken not to believe the fake news that are spread through the mass media related to CM and other meat analogues, that normally shows their benefits without providing the real facts. Eating meat is a pleasure, and the sensory properties have a lot to do with this. Therefore, the major reasons why meat alternatives did not meet consumer needs were the fact that substitutes were perceived as not being tasty and did not have the same taste and texture as meat (Bryant & Sanctorum, 2021; Verbeke, Marcu, et al., 2015). In the case of CM, there are still a lot of challenges that need to be reached to have similar sensorial and nutritional properties as meat without compromising consumers' acceptability (Fraeye et al., 2020). There are other societal concerns with CM, such as its effect at social events where a meat dish is important, the loss of farm and livestock traditions and its effect on the biodiversity and countryside (see review from Bryant and Barnett (2019)). A recent study reports that negative impact of CM on territories and rural life and on local farmers jobs were important barriers to

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463 the willingness to try CM, although the expectation that CM would reduce the farming was low 464 (Hocquette et al., 2022). 465 Considering the economic perspective, cost of production is important and today could be a 466 barrier if the price of CM is not competitive enough compared with the price of conventional 467 meat (Bryant & Sanctorum, 2021; Weinrich et al., 2020). The cost of scale-up CM production 468 considering capital cost, production cost and fixed cost, analysed and discussed by Humbird 469 (2021), are high and could be a limitation in its production. 470 Information and images provided to consumers influence their attitudes and beliefs towards 471 CM. Providing information about the benefits of CM in addition to basic information about the 472 technology (Verbeke, Sans, et al., 2015) or using less technical wording in its definition (Bryant 473 & Dillard, 2019; Siegrist et al., 2018; Verbeke, Sans, et al., 2015) increases willingness to try, 474 purchase or pay. This is probably related to neophobia of novel technologies and products 475 (Siegrist & Hartmann, 2020; Wilks et al., 2019). Bryant (2020) reviewed the economic impact of 476 CM and also considered its effect on agricultural employment, on the fact that food production 477 could be consolidated into a smaller number of actors who would dominate the market and, 478 finally, on the possible inequality between consumers depending on their socio-economic 479 status, either if CM were more expensive or cheaper than conventional meat. 480 From the environmental point of view, a review by Munteanu et al. (2021) concludes that CM 481 production could be related mainly to 4 Sustainable Development Goals (SDG), SDG 2 (zero 482 hunger), 3 (good health and wellbeing), 13 (climate action) and 15 (life on land). And in fact, 483 consumers perceived CM as a meat that prevents animal suffering, as being better for the 484 environment, as a solution for the world food problem, and as having less risk of diseases and 485 with fewer additives (Bryant & Sanctorum, 2021). Considering meat alternatives in general, 486 they were also perceived as good for AW and for the environmental impact (Bryant & 487 Sanctorum, 2021) although, on the other hand, some consumers were concerned about the

environmental impact of CM production due to energy requirements (Verbeke, Marcu, et al., 2015). In fact, in a recent study, environmental footprint would be one of the barriers to try CM but, also, less environmental footprint would be one of the expectations of CM and the consideration of CM as an eco-friendly product, was one of the reasons consumers wanted to try it (Hocquette et al., 2022). Care for the environment is one of the reasons why some consumers avoid or reduce meat consumption, although following a vegan, vegetarian or flexitarian diet, allows only a reduction in the total footprint of 6%, 4% and 2%, respectively (Leroy et al., 2022). One of the main messages of CM is that it is environmentally friendly. Results of different studies show different outcomes regarding the environmental impact of CM due to the operational parameters considered for the calculation, the system boundaries or materials and processes included or not considered in the calculations, or the parameters of environmental impacts considered (Rodríguez Escobar et al., 2021; Van Eenennaam & Werth, 2021). Because of that, Rodríguez Escobar et al. (2021) proposed a process for life cycle assessment of CM. Considering the different published works, the review of Van Eenennaam and Werth (2021) show that CM has, on average, similar greenhouse gas emissions, land, water and energy use, eutrophication and acidification potential, to plant-based and insect-based 'meat', and that most of the animal source food protein except a specific type of ruminant meat, that has greater impact. Sinke and Odegard (2021) collected information for CM companies in the supply chain and concluded that CM has the potential to be highly sustainable meat product, only if there is a switch to sustainable energy. Furthermore, since there is still not enough knowledge about the effects of large-scale production of CM on the environment (and safety), the benefits need to be further analysed to be able to ensure that it is a more environmentally

6. Final remarks and conclusion

sustainable (and safe) alternative.

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Meat and its production have a marked social impact, so it is essential for the meat sector to be aware of and exploit advances in research and technology in order to meet society's demands. The sector must also take advantage of this knowledge to establish the best production strategy that will enable the sustainability of the entire value chain to be increased and to improve the communication strategy that will allow the actions being taken to be publicized and the value of the results obtained enhanced. The type of information provided and the way in which it is communicated are key aspects in the development of attitudes and preferences. Thus, it is essential to define the best way to provide a story using truthful and reliable information on sustainability, nutritional aspects, animal welfare, as well as on meat alternatives, while promoting a more rational meat consumption. The livestock and meat sector must develop a marketing strategy that emphasizes the benefits of meat, fighting against the fake news that circulates with great impunity on social networks, and playing with the tradition-progress binomial. The message should highlight the progress made in improving the sustainability of meat production and meat quality, highlighting the importance and attributes of traditional products, while admitting that there is still much to be done and that great efforts are being made to achieve this goal. Furthermore, these messages and the marketing strategy must reach the consumer, especially the younger and future generations, so in addition to the traditional channels, actions to be done must be adapted to the current and most popular communication channels.

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7. Author's contribution

Maria Font i Furnols & Luis Guerrero : Conceptualization, Writing - Original Draft, Writing - Review & Editing.

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8. Ethical statement

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549	11. Literature review
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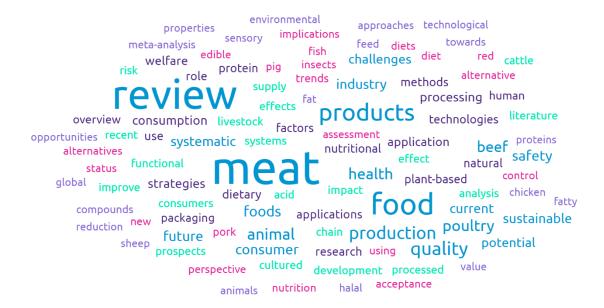
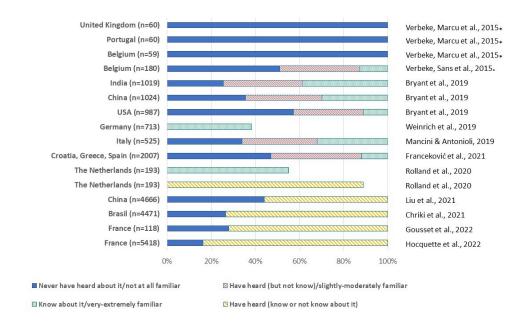


Figure 1. Aspects relevant to the scientific community in relation to meat and consumers (information retrieved from the titles of 1173 published reviews; the size is proportional to the frequency of appearance).



Figure 2. Humanisation of companion, farm and wild animals.



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Figure 3. Familiarity of cultured meat in several studies. * carried out before August 2012 when the first *in vitro* hamburger was presented by Mark Post.

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Highlights

- To deal with the contradiction between protecting animals and enjoying meat
- 997 Sustainability is a broad term with many aspects, some of which are unknown
 - Consumers concern about animal welfare depend on many factors
 - Many gaps remain on sustainability, safety and the nutritional and sensory quality of cultured meat
 - Communication by the meat sector needs to be transparent and reach out to society