

# Plant-based foods on the Portuguese market: a salutary alternative to animal-origin counterparts?

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## Background:

- ◆ The consumption of animal-origin products (AOP) has been linked to an increased risk of heart disease, diabetes and cancer and significant environmental issues;
- ◆ The growing interest and consumption of plant-based foods (PBF) have been raising important questions about their overall healthiness;

**This study aims to assess the nutritional quality of PBF available in the Portuguese market, evaluating if they are a salutary viable alternative to AOP.**

**The main goals are to contribute to the promotion of healthier and more sustainable food choices and to help inform public health policies.**

## Methods:

- ◆ Collection of the nutritional information of PBF and AOP burgers, sausages and breaded food products, available in the Portuguese market;
- ◆ PBF and AOP nutritional profiles comparison as well as with the nutrient reference values of the Portuguese Integrated Strategy for the Promotion of Healthy Eating (EIPAS) and of the Directorate-General of Health (DGS) Label Decoder.



## Results:

- ◆ A cross-sectional survey of nutrients was conducted on 207 PBF and 253 AOP equivalents. The main results are as follows:

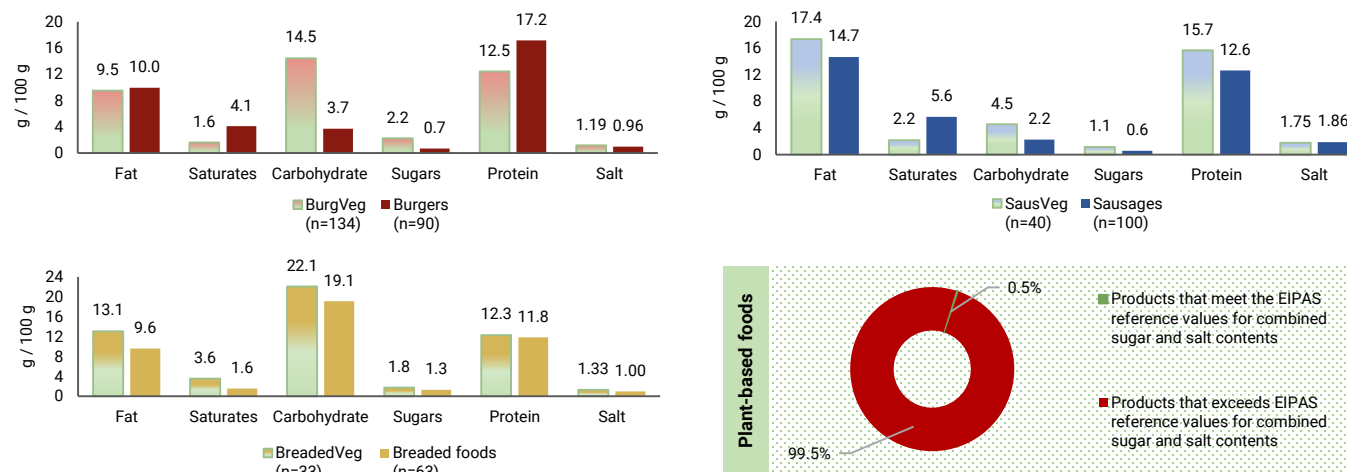


Fig. 2 – Average nutrient contents for the all the studied food products and agreement of the plant-based foods with the EIPAS reference values.

## Conclusions:

- ◆ The nutritional composition of the PBF studied vary widely;
- ◆ When compared to AOP equivalents, some PBF have a better nutrient profile but others are high in fat, sugars and salt;
- ◆ 99.5% of the PBF don't meet EIPAS sugars and salt reference values, when jointly evaluated;
- ◆ **Replacing certain food groups by PBF does not necessarily guarantee an equivalent or improved diet;**
- ◆ **Public health actions regarding the nutritional quality of PBF are needed, namely food literacy initiatives and legislative measures concerning the labeling and reformulation of PBF.**

Plant-based foods					
	Nutrient content	Fat	Saturates	Sugars	Salt
BurgVeg	High	3.0%	3.7%	0.0%	16.4%
	Medium	97.0%	28.4%	2.2%	82.8%
	Low	0.0%	67.9%	97.8%	0.8%
SausVeg	High	55.0%	2.5%	0.0%	62.5%
	Medium	45.0%	80.0%	2.5%	37.5%
	Low	0.0%	17.5%	97.5%	0.0%
BreadedVeg	High	12.1%	18.2%	0.0%	33.3%
	Medium	87.9%	36.4%	0.0%	66.7%
	Low	0.0%	45.5%	100.0%	0.0%

Fig. 3 – Distribution of the plant-based products by nutrient content, according to DGS label decoder.