Like a PRO

Choice editing pilot

Making sustainable food choices easier



What was the choice editing pilot?

The choice editing pilot tested whether gradually reducing meat-based dishes and increasing the visibility of plant-based/alternative protein (AP) meals could increase their uptake in a real-world setting. The pilot took place took place at a university canteen. Red and white meat options were reduced step by step, while fish remained available as a transitional option. The aim was to make plant-forward meals easier and more attractive to choose without fully removing consumer choice.

What did consumers tell us?

1

Awareness of APs increased

Awareness rose from 55.6% at baseline to over 81% during the intervention weeks.

2

Plant-based choices increased

Around 71% of respondents ate at the canteen during the intervention weeks, and 51.4% of canteen users chose a plant-based meal in both weeks.

3

The food environment mattered

Attitudes and intentions towards APs remained mostly stable, suggesting that changes in behaviour were driven more by the availability and presentation of food than by changes in motivation.

4

Light-touch measures were most popular

Consumers were most supportive of green choice labels, information on taste and protein content, price incentives, and increased plant-based availability.

What concerns emerged?

Choice can feel restricted

42.9% felt moderately or strongly restricted, while 30.7% reported eating elsewhere because of the intervention.

Taste, quality, price and habit still matter

Sustainability awareness alone was not enough to overcome established eating patterns.

Stronger interventions created more resistance

Support was lower for measures perceived as more directive, such as plant-based defaults or stronger changes to the menu.

Photo: istock.com/ lavizzara



Photo: istock.com/ lavizzara

What did food service stakeholders observe?

Food service staff found the intervention smoother and more feasible than expected, with no major disruptions to procurement, preparation, service, costs or food waste. Stakeholders considered gradual meat reduction feasible and potentially scalable, especially when supported by clear communication, appealing dishes and repeated exposure.

What should practitioners consider?

1

Introduce changes gradually

Reduce meat availability step by step rather than removing familiar options abruptly.

2

Preserve choice

Offer varied, appealing alternatives rather than framing changes as restrictions.

3

Make APs easy to choose

Prioritise taste, quality, affordability and convenience. Information alone is not enough.

4

Communicate positively

Highlight everyday benefits such as taste, health and sustainability.

5

Adapt to the setting

Tailor interventions to the specific food environment.

6

Monitor resistance

Track perceived restriction, complaints, avoidance and displacement.

7

Involve food service stakeholders

Ensure interventions are practical, feasible and credible.

Download full report

Key Takeaway

Choice editing can shift short-term food choices, but long-term success depends on gradual change, appealing AP meals and preserving a sense of choice.

Xhelili, A., Schüürmann, J., Strube, R., Ziavras, S., Perrea, T., Chrysochou, P., Nystrand, B., Bye, I., Nystad, R., Vázquez-Araújo, L., Romeo-Arroyo, E., Vertriest, L., Willems, M., van der Waard, S. (2026). Driving Change with LIKE-A-PRO: Results and Lessons from Behavioural Intervention Pilots. LIKE-A-PRO project. Wuppertal, 2026; or simply click the Download full report button.

Funded by the European Union

This project is funded by the European Union under Grant Agreement No. 101083961. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or European Research Executive Agency. Neither the European Union nor the granting authority can be held responsible for them.

cscp innovarum

To know more about LIKE-A-PRO visit www.like-a-pro.eu