# Students showcase innovative plant-based creations at ProVeg Food Innovation Challenge



The fifth edition of the ProVeg Food Innovation Challenge concluded recently, showcasing innovative student-led teams from across the Asia-Pacific region. This year's competition was marked by remarkable creations such as **self-heating vegan Hanwoo beef**, **plant-based octopus legs**, and **Beyond Lamb**, which caught the attention of global industry giants.

Participating in the challenge were major companies like **Unilever**, **Mars**, **Beyond Meat**, **CJ Foods**, **Charoen Pokphand Foods (CPF)**, **DaChan**, **Monde Nissin**, and **Thai Union**. These companies presented topics for innovation, prompting students to explore new solutions in the food sector. The challenge awarded cash prizes of $3,000 for the first place, $1,500 for the second, and $1,000 for third place.

The implications of this challenge extend beyond mere innovation. Experts point out that Asia is home to nearly half of the world’s population, projected to increase significantly by 2050. As the world's largest market, the region is a crucial player in global food consumption trends, particularly in beef and poultry. By the decade’s end, Asia is expected to account for **50% of the global rise** in beef and **70% of worldwide fish intake**. To meet this surge in demand, agricultural production in the region must escalate by approximately **60-70%**, a challenging task exacerbated by land use and emissions involved in traditional animal protein production.

Experts are advocating for **alternative proteins** as a viable solution to decarbonise Asia’s agricultural sector, alleviate land use pressure, and reduce resource consumption. Such innovations are also seen as pivotal in tackling food insecurity, which currently affects around **800 million people** in the Asia-Pacific.

Despite the promise of plant-based foods, research indicates a **knowledge gap** in Southeast Asia, as nearly **44%** of the populace has never heard of plant-based meat. However, potential exists if these products can prove to be more affordable, nutritious, and appealing compared to conventional meat. Notably, a survey revealed that **98% of respondents in China** would consider adding more vegan foods to their diets upon learning about their health benefits.

The Asia-Pacific region is home to over **200 alternative protein startups**. Younger consumers, particularly Generations Z and Alpha, are driving demand for low-carbon food options and may challenge traditional business models with innovative ideas. The ProVeg competition exemplifies the collaboration necessary to develop the future of the food economy, pairing students with established industry players.

Among the first prize winners was **Hanbap**, which partnered with CJ Foods, hailing from the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology and Wageningen University & Research. Their project involved a **self-heating lunch box** containing vegan Hanwoo beef, prepared with texturised pea protein and local vegetables, reflecting a commitment to health and local taste.

In second place, the team **Burstatic** from Institut Pertanian Bogor University in Indonesia created **Bomb Bites!**, a plant-based meal catered toward young urban consumers. They utilised a foundation of vegan seafood products from Thai Union.

**VegVenture**, comprised of students from AgroParisTech and two Australian universities, also earned second place with a **plant-based Peking Duck Wrap Kit** featuring a durian filling, catering to convenience store shoppers.

Another team, **VeggieAlgaeSeafusion Sauce**, collaborated with Unilever to develop a novel rice dressing that harnessed microalgae and savoury peptides from a seaweed source, winning a $1,500 award.

Three teams shared the third prize, including **Baa-yonders** from the National University of Singapore, who created a marbled plant-based lamb for Beyond Meat, and **Natugi**, who developed a convenient vegan sticky rice meal using Thai Union's fish-free tuna and shrimp.

Finally, the team **World Peacemakers** from Jiangnan University in China crafted plant-based octopus legs using **microalgae protein**, combining nutrition with innovative 3D-printing technology for a sustainable seafood alternative.

This year’s challenge not only highlights the creativity of students but also underscores the urgency for sustainable solutions in the food sector as global consumption patterns continue to evolve.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## References

* <https://proveg.org/highlights/q1-2024/> - This URL supports the announcement of winners in ProVeg's Food Innovation Challenge, highlighting innovative projects like plant-based shrimp and caviar.
* <https://vegconomist.com/fairs-events/self-heating-plant-based-beef-rice-box-wins-proveg-food-innovation-challenge/> - This article discusses the winners of the ProVeg Food Innovation Challenge, including a self-heating plant-based beef and rice box, and collaborations with major food companies.
* <https://proveg.org/press-release/self-heating-plant-based-hanwoo-beef-rice-box-wins-asia-pacific-food-innovation-contest/> - This press release provides details about the winning self-heating plant-based Hanwoo beef rice box and the involvement of major companies in the challenge.
* <https://www.unilever.com/> - This URL represents Unilever, one of the major companies participating in the ProVeg Food Innovation Challenge, supporting innovation in sustainable food solutions.
* <https://www.mars.com/> - Mars is another key company involved in the challenge, promoting plant-based innovations for health-conscious consumers.
* <https://www.beyondmeat.com/> - Beyond Meat participated in the challenge, encouraging the development of plant-based lamb and other sustainable meat alternatives.
* <https://www.cjfoods.com/> - CJ Foods challenged students to create a sustainable version of Hanwoo beef, leading to innovative plant-based solutions.
* <https://www.thaiunion.com/> - Thai Union supported the creation of plant-based seafood products, contributing to the challenge's focus on sustainable seafood alternatives.
* <https://www.cpfworldwide.com/> - Charoen Pokphand Foods (CPF) was involved in the challenge, promoting sustainable food innovations in the Asia-Pacific region.