



Plant-Based Proteins: Can Mexico Compete Globally?

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THE GLOBAL INDUSTRY

Plant-based proteins are food-grade ingredients derived from soy, peas, wheat, and other plant sources, which are processed into concentrates, isolates, and textured proteins for use in food, beverages, supplements, and functional nutrition (Technavio, 2024). Global demand continues to rise as consumers shift toward healthier and more sustainable diets. In 2024, the plant-based protein market reached US\$12.0441 billion and is projected to grow to US\$33.6416 billion by 2029 at a CAGR of 22.8% (Technavio, 2024).

Industry segmentation reflects strong performance across major categories. In 2024, concentrates accounted for 46.2%,

Image: Freepik, 2025.



The global industry is driven by health-focused consumption, sustainability priorities, and advances in extraction, fractionation, and extrusion technologies that position plant-based proteins as essential inputs in the modern food system.

isolates 32.2%, and textured proteins 21.6% of global demand, with concentrates growing fastest at a CAGR of 25.1% (Technavio, 2024). Demand remains diversified: beverages represented 33.2%, followed by meat analogues (26.0%), dairy alternatives (24.0%), and baked goods (12.2%), all projected to grow at a CAGR of 21%–24% through 2029 (Technavio, 2024). Soy continues to dominate the Textured Vegetable Protein (TVP) segment due to cost and performance

advantages, while pea protein is growing rapidly under clean-label demand (The Insight Partners, 2024a, 2024b).

Regional patterns reinforce the global expansion of plant proteins. North America accounted for 44.1% of consumption in 2024, Europe for 27.5%, and Asia-Pacific for 19.5%, with the latter emerging as the fastest-growing region thanks to raw-material availability and rising demand in China and India (Technavio, 2024). In Europe, soy-based TVP reached US\$57.90M in Germany, US\$51.67M in the United Kingdom, and US\$47.10M in France, while pea-based TVP totaled US\$7.27M, US\$7.57M, and US\$5.59M respectively (The Insight Partners, 2024c). Textured proteins are expected to add US\$4.37 billion in incremental global growth by 2029 (Technavio, 2024).

GLOBAL LEADERS

The plant-based protein industry is led by a small group of multinational suppliers such as Archer Daniels Midland, Cargill, Ingredion, Roquette, and IFF. Their vertically integrated operations and global sourcing networks enable large-scale production of soy, pea, and pulse-based proteins, with particularly strong leadership in the textured vegetable protein (TVP) segment across North America, Europe, Asia-Pacific, and Latin America (The Insight Partners, 2024a, 2024b).

Demand-driven growth is reinforcing their dominance. Expanding categories such as meat analogues, baked goods, ready-to-eat meals, gluten-free foods, and functional beverages continue to increase

Image: Aleksandarlittlewolf in Freepik, 2025.

Global leaders control the most advanced extraction, isolation, and texturization technologies.

reliance on upstream plant proteins (Arizton, 2024a). The plant-based meat segment—projected to grow at a CAGR of 12.36% through 2030—is driving steady demand for soy isolates, pea concentrates, and TVP as foundational ingredients (Arizton, 2024a). Retailers and quick-service restaurants are accelerating this trend by integrating plant-forward offerings into product lines and menus.

Shifting consumer preferences are adding momentum. The protein supplements market, expected to reach US\$41.34 billion

by 2030, is increasingly incorporating soy, pea, lentil, and hemp proteins in powders, ready-to-drink beverages, and functional blends that align with clean-label and personalized nutrition trends (Arizton, 2024b). In response, major suppliers are expanding R&D investments and diversifying portfolios into emerging areas such as plant-based chicken, seafood alternatives, and hybrid plant–animal formulations (Arizton, 2024b). These combined forces strengthen the central role of global suppliers and shape innovation pathways in the plant-based protein industry.

GLOBAL VALUE CHAIN

The plant-based protein value chain spans from upstream sourcing and extraction of soy, peas, lentils, chickpeas, and wheat —activities dominated by global suppliers such as ADM, Cargill, Ingredion, and Roquette— to midstream processing where technologies like wet extraction, dry fractionation, and extrusion convert these raw materials into functional ingredients such as textured vegetable protein (TVP), concentrates, and isolates (The Insight Partners, 2024a, 2024b; Grand View Research, 2024a).

Downstream, these ingredients become core inputs for meat analogues, protein supplements, snacks, baked goods, beverages, and convenience foods, with fast-growing segments such as plant-based meat (12.36% CAGR) and protein supplements (projected at USD 41.34 billion by 2030) relying heavily on TVP and functional plant proteins to meet consumer demand for high-protein, clean-label, and sustainable products (Arizton Advisory & Intelligence, 2024a, 2024b).

FOREIGN TRADE

In 2023, global trade of protein concentrates and textured protein substances (HS 210610) reached a multibillion-dollar scale, reflecting the growing use of plant-derived and functional proteins in food and nutrition industries (OEC, 2023).



Image. Freepik, 2025.

Trade is highly concentrated: the United States, China, and the Netherlands dominate global exports, while North America and Europe account for most global imports (OEC, 2023).



The United States was the world's top exporter in 2023, with shipments totaling US \$690 million, followed by China with US \$339 million and the Netherlands with US \$222 million (OEC, 2023). These countries are in the lead due to their processing capacity, technological infrastructure, and strong positions in supplying protein ingredients for functional foods, sports nutrition, and alternative protein products.

On the import side, the United States also ranked first, purchasing US \$225 million of protein concentrates and textured proteins, while the Netherlands imported US \$198 million, and Canada followed with US \$189 million (OEC, 2023). These markets concentrate demand from major producers of fortified foods, beverages, dairy alternatives, and meat analogues.

The most traded items within HS 210610 include soy protein concentrates, pea protein powders, textured vegetable protein (TVP), and multi-source functional protein blends, all widely used across food, beverage, and nutrition applications (OEC, 2023).



Image. Freepik, 2025.

INDUSTRY DRIVERS AND CHALLENGES

The global protein ingredients industry is expanding due to rising demand for high-protein foods, fortified beverages, and nutritionally enhanced products across major markets (Grand View Research, 2024b). Performance nutrition remains a major driver, with brands increasingly using protein isolates and concentrates to support muscle recovery, differentiation, and cleaner formulations (Grand View Research, 2024b). Sustainability considerations are also accelerating adoption, as manufacturers seek ingredients with lower environmental footprints and greater resource efficiency (Arizton Advisory & Intelligence, 2024a). Technological advances in extraction, enzymatic hydrolysis, filtration, and extrusion continue to improve solubility, functionality, and sensory performance,

enabling broader use in meat analogues, dairy alternatives, and functional beverages (Grand View Research, 2024b).

The industry, however, faces several structural challenges. Volatile agricultural inputs, particularly soy, peas, and wheat, expose producers to climate risks, supply disruptions, and raw-material price fluctuations (Grand View Research, 2024b). Allergen risks linked to soy and wheat require strict compliance, traceability, and contamination controls, raising operational and regulatory costs (Technavio, 2024). Consumer skepticism toward processed or unfamiliar proteins adds pressure to improve flavor, texture, and communication transparency (Arizton Advisory & Intelligence, 2024a). Finally, strong competition



Image: Freepik, 2025.

Plant-forward and flexitarian diets are further strengthening demand for soy, pea, wheat, and rice proteins as consumers prioritize clean-label and lower-impact options (Technavio, 2024).

among global suppliers heightens the need for innovation in functional performance, such as improved gelation, emulsification, and heat stability-to meet application-specific needs in sports nutrition, baked goods, beverages, and plant-based meats (The Insight Partners, 2024c).

THE INDUSTRY IN MEXICO

Mexico's protein ingredients industry centers on processing plant-based concentrates, isolates, and textured vegetable proteins for food and beverage applications (The Insight Partners, 2024c). The market reached US\$67.8 million in 2024 and is projected to grow to US\$102.5 million by 2031, driven mainly by soy and pea-based products (The Insight Partners, 2024c). Soy-based TVP remains the largest segment at US\$35.1 million in 2024 and is expected to reach US\$54.0 million by 2031, while pea-based TVP should reach US\$6.53 million (The Insight Partners, 2024b). Other TVP categories totaled US\$31.35 million in 2024 and are forecast to grow to US\$46.41 million, reflecting

expansion beyond soy (The Insight Partners, 2024b). Food and beverages represented 73–74% of national demand (The Insight Partners, 2024a).

Mexico remains highly dependent on imports of protein concentrates and textured proteins (HS210610). Imports rose from US\$71.7 million in 2019 to US\$86.8 million in 2022, led by the United States (US\$64.1M in 2019; US\$72.6M in 2022) and China (US\$4.2M in 2019; US\$11.6M in 2022) (WITS, 2019; 2022). In 2022, the U.S. supplied 19.1 thousand tons, compared with 3.6 thousand tons from China (WITS, 2022). By 2024, total imports reached US\$140 million, mostly from the United States (US\$104M), China (US\$15.9M), Brazil (US\$3.85M), the Netherlands (US\$2.83M), and Germany (US\$1.3M) (WITS, 2024; DataMéxico, 2024).

Image: Freepik, 2025.



Data confirms Mexico's function as a formulation hub that transforms imported inputs into value-added products (The Insight Partners, 2024c).

Exports remain small, reinforcing Mexico's role as a downstream processor rather than a major producer. In 2024, exports were limited to El Salvador (US\$1.06M), Guatemala (US\$0.892M), the United States (US\$0.258M), Canada (US\$0.251M), and Cuba (US\$0.166M) (WITS, 2024).

Several domestic companies are active in plant-based product innovation, including The Wild Foods, Taifelds, Evolution Real, Pronat, Heartbest, Benji, Plant Squad, and Better & Balance Foods.

THE STRATEGIC DECISION

Mexico has not yet translated its rising demand for plant-based proteins into a competitive global position, remaining heavily dependent on imported concentrates, isolates, and TVP (The Insight Partners, 2024c; DataMéxico, 2024). This reliance limits its ability to capture greater value within the expanding alternative-protein sector (WITS, 2024). The national protein-ingredient market is expected to grow from US\$67.8 million in 2024 to US\$102.5 million by 2031, driven by interest in healthier and plant-based foods (The Insight Partners, 2024c). Mexico's strategic opportunity lies in moving beyond a formulation-only role toward building domestic capabilities

in extrusion, blending, and specialized ingredient development (The Insight Partners, 2024a; WITS, 2024).

Achieving this shift requires strengthening processing technologies, quality systems, and certifications to support high-value applications such as clean-label TVP, allergen-free blends, and next-generation functional proteins (The Insight Partners, 2024c). Firms must also improve commercialization capabilities, marketing, e-commerce, and branding—while enhancing supply-chain integration to reduce exposure to global price volatility (DataMéxico, 2024; The Insight Partners, 2024a). Building stronger innovation ecosystems through partnerships with universities and food-tech accelerators will further support entry into higher-value niches (The Insight Partners, 2024c).

In this context, key strategic questions emerge:

1. What are the competitive advantages of the Mexican plant-based protein ingredients industry?
2. How competitive is Mexico within the global plant-based protein market, and which factors most strongly shape its competitive position?
3. What conditions and strategic capabilities would enable emerging Mexican firms to develop value-added plant-protein products —such as beverages, snacks, or meat analogues— and compete effectively in regional or global markets?

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