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Blue Horizon

Plant Futures Challenge Lab

Case Study

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Challenge Description

The challenge consisted of identifying the socio-geographic white spaces in alternative proteins – that is, identifying and analyzing the most impactful commercial meat replacement opportunities. Students worked to determine which plant-based meat, dairy, or egg products had the greatest potential for displacing their conventional counterparts in key, but underserved, markets with the highest levels and growth rates of animal product consumption.

Alternative proteins are a key solution to mitigating climate change, zoonotic disease, animal suffering, and human malnutrition. The industry is red-hot in wealthy countries like the US, Canada, Western Europe, and Australia, but lags in global population centers where meat demand is growing fastest, like Africa, Latin America, and Asia. Students worked with Blue Horizon to uncover culturally relevant and accessible products for those markets, in order to enable work with entrepreneurs and food companies to meet the hidden demand or opportunity.

Working with Blue Horizon Corporation, the leading investor and asset manager in alternative proteins, this challenge was based on the report “Accelerating Solutions for Alternative Proteins”, prepared by the Challenge Mentor as the former Startup Growth Specialist at the Good Food Institute (GFI), a non-profit accelerator for the alternative protein industry. Students leveraged a research framework that analyzed meat production data in 20+ countries to identify the markets with the greatest potential for impact.



Deliverables & Evaluation

- Students were given the option to create business plans, consumer research studies, a white paper, or presentation of findings as final deliverable.
- Students were evaluated on their analysis of product-market fit (whether specific plant-based products are likely to succeed in the select market), based on the specific student team's unique skill set and interests.

About the Plant Futures Challenge Lab



Our program welcomes undergraduate to PhD students from diverse disciplines who work collaboratively with selected partners from various for-profit and nonprofit companies. Students are paired with organizations based on their skills, passions, and experiences and work to address the real-time needs of these organizations while gaining invaluable real-world experience.

Through a careful application process, working closely with recommendation from faculty advisors and student ambassadors, Plant Futures invites the most talented and motivated cohort of students with a variety of skill sets, experiences, expertise, and the passion to work with our partners. Both students and Challenge Lab mentors consistently reported the interdisciplinary design of the course to be one of the most valuable components of their Challenge Lab experience.

The Plant Futures Challenge Lab is a unique university course that equips students with applied learning experiences in the plant-based food and agriculture sectors.

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