

Why future of Plant-Based Foods may be Pea-Shaped

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In a market increasingly influenced by conscious consumers who demand transparency, nutrition, and effective functionality, Meala is emerging as a transformative force. Led by Hadar Ekhoiz Razmovich, CEO and Co-Founder, the company aims to reshape the food formulation landscape.

Meala's latest innovation, Vertis PB Pea, is a next-generation functional pea protein that eliminates the need for synthetic binders, effectively meeting clean-label and allergen-free requirements. In an exclusive interview with NUFFOODS Spectrum, Razmovich discusses the inspiration behind this innovation, the technological advancements that made it possible, and how Meala is setting new standards for simplicity, performance, and scalability in the plant-based protein sector.

She elaborates on the collaborative testing conducted with manufacturers and the complex challenges faced during commercialisation. Razmovich emphasises that Vertis PB Pea is not just a product; it's a platform for the future of sustainable and transparent food systems.

What was the inspiration behind the development of Vertis PB Pea, and what specific consumer or industry need is it designed to meet?

The inspiration stemmed from a clear and growing market demand: consumers are seeking foods with simpler ingredient lists and improved nutritional profiles, without sacrificing texture. This demand led us to develop a new generation of functional texturising proteins that enable food manufacturers to create superior products. Our Pea protein was specifically designed to bridge this gap, delivering a single, multifunctional protein that replaces synthetic binders while supporting clean-label positioning and high-protein claims

Could you elaborate on how Vertis PB Pea integrates the functionality of conventional binding systems? What distinguishes it from other pea protein products currently available?

What makes our Pea protein truly unique is its multifunctionality. We've unlocked the natural binding, gelling, and emulsifying powers of pea protein. It is thermostable, performs across hot and cold processes, and integrates seamlessly into production. Unlike other solutions or other plant-based proteins, PB pea replaces entire binding systems, while maintaining a clean "pea protein" label. That combination of performance and simplicity is rare in the market.

Given the growing importance of clean-label and allergen-free products, how does Vertis PB Pea assist manufacturers in achieving more transparent and cleaner labels?

Consumers are becoming much more ingredient-aware—they are reading labels, avoiding allergens, and looking for products that align with their health and sustainability values. At Meala, we're addressing this shift head-on by developing clean-label, allergen-free solutions like Vertis PB Pea. It replaces multiple additives with a single, natural ingredient that delivers both functionality and nutrition, helping brands meet evolving consumer expectations without compromising on performance.

What testing procedures were involved in the product development, and what kind of feedback have food manufacturers shared after working with it in practical formulations?

Over the past two years, we've tested Vertis PB Pea across dozens of real-world formulations—working closely with manufacturers on a variety of applications like: burgers, nuggets, sausages and more. Testing focused on evaluating how well it could replace binding systems across various applications, product performance and the results are amazing. The feedback that food manufacturers shared after working with Vertis PB Pea, has been overwhelmingly positive: customers consistently highlight the ingredient's ease of integration, clean-label appeal, and strong performance.

What were some of the main challenges your team encountered during the development and commercialisation of this biotechnology-driven ingredient, and how were those challenges addressed?

We set out to develop a natural, all-in-one protein that could match the performance of complex binder systems at an industrial scale. It was a real scientific challenge to achieve this level of functionality, but our technology made it possible. Scaling up is always a challenge—moving from lab scale to industrial scale is a critical step. Our partnership with DSM-Firmenich enabled strong validation of our protein in real-world applications with key industry players, accelerating our path to market and enhancing product performance.

Are there any plans to broaden the application of Vertis PB Pea beyond Europe, or into other plant-based or functional food sectors, shortly?

Absolutely. While Europe was our initial focus, global expansion is already in motion. At the same time, we're extending the platform beyond meat analogues. The long-term vision is to become a category-defining clean-label platform—empowering the next generation of food innovation across multiple sectors.

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