A recent Riddet Institute study\textsuperscript{*} found that plant-based alternatives to milk compare poorly on nutritional profiles and are more expensive than cows’ milk. As they are often marketed as alternatives to cows’ milk, we wanted to test whether consumers really believe they are nutritionally interchangeable.

The profile of purchasing by our respondents indicates that two-thirds of households are regularly only buying cows’ milk, 6% are only buying plant-based alternatives and a fifth buy both.

While the majority identified that cows’ milk is better for nutritional value, a reasonably high proportion did think plant-based alternatives were the same (21%) and a smaller, but still notable proportion, thought they were better (12%).

The numbers were higher amongst purchasers so we can conclude that a reasonable proportion of consumers buying plant-based alternatives do believe they are nutritionally interchangeable.

Perceptions of environmental impact fall more positively for plant-based alternatives, again with purchasers being more likely to pick them as the winner.

For these two areas the question is how we move from perception to reality.

However, perceptions of value for money and which is perceived as better for the NZ economy show cows’ milk as the favourite and a clear conclusion that the products are not perceived to be economically interchangeable.

Think about \textit{cow’s milk} and \textit{plant-based alternatives}.

Rate which one you think is better in relation to each attribute

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textbf{Nutritional value:} Cows’ milk is better 66%\%
  \item \textbf{Better for the environment:} They’re the same 21%\%
  \item \textbf{Value for money:} Plant-based alternatives are better 51%\%
  \item \textbf{Better for the NZ economy:} Cows’ milk is better 78%\%
\end{itemize}

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textbf{Nutritional value:} Plant-based alternatives are better 12%\%
  \item \textbf{Better for the environment:} Cows’ milk is better 7%\%
  \item \textbf{Value for money:} They’re the same 28%\%
  \item \textbf{Better for the NZ economy:} Plant-based alternatives are better 10%\%
\end{itemize}

Research First is the rural and food and fibre insights specialist. If you’ve got a question you want to know the answer to get in touch with Liz: liz@researchfirst.co.nz

\textsuperscript{*} \url{https://www.riddet.ac.nz/study-finds-milk-substitutes-have-high-cost-and-low-benefits/}