-RESULTS-

The 2023 Protein Diversification Survey

ProteinData.Com

Introduction

Protein diversification refers to supplementing dairy, eggs, meat, poultry and seafood produced in agricultural settings with protein alternatives created from plants, fungi, and algae, or by food technology that enables animal protein to be produced from live cells or fermentation, without needing to breed, raise, transport or slaughter animals. Increasingly, sustainability benchmarks, reporting frameworks and disclosure standards are recommending that companies report information about their protein diversification activities.

Purpose

The purpose of the survey was to collect and publish information and data about protein diversification activities and strategies of publicly-traded companies involved in the protein supply chain for use by Environmental and Social Governance (ESG) providers, investors and other stakeholders when assessing the sustainability and profitability of companies.

Methodology

Approximately 3 weeks before the survey was due, emails with a 16-question multiple-choice survey were sent to the publicly-available email addresses of 250 companies from 39 countries representing 6 continents. Messages were sent to the investor relations, sustainability, corporate social responsibility, ESG, general corporate, headquarters and catering department email addresses. The email and survey were sent in English.

Business sectors of the companies surveyed included Airlines, Airline Services, Beverages, Casinos & Gaming, Consumer Goods Conglomerates, Department Stores, Discount Stores, Diversified Industrial Goods Wholesale, Drug Retailers, Fishing & Farming, Food Processing, Food Retail & Distribution, Hotels, Motels & Cruise Lines,

Leisure & Recreation, Oil & Gas, Other Specialty Retailers, Personal Products, and Restaurants & Bars. Companies were selected based on market cap and the likelihood that they produce, purchase or sell substantial amounts of protein ingredients, products or menu items.

125 of the companies received follow-up, reminder emails 1-3 days before the survey was due. Throughout the survey process, individuals working at food companies were also contacted via LinkedIn and/or sent requests to follow ProteinData.com's LinkedIn page, which housed the survey. A website for ProteinData.com was also created that provided access to the survey.

Date of survey:	*October 25 - November 15, 2023*
Length of survey:	*16 multiple-choice questions*
Estimated time to complete:	*30 minutes*
Companies contacted:	*250*
Total communications sent:	*375*

Results

Ultimately, very little data was collected, even though there appeared to be considerable interest in the survey and ProteinData.com by food companies based on data about accessing the survey, visitors to the website, and LinkedIn followers, despite a relatively short (3 weeks) survey collection period.

Website unique visits:	*281*
Survey unique visits:	*168*
Linkedin page followers gained:	*75*
Responses to communications:	*6*
Responses to survey:	*1*

The one company that responded - Japan's Meiji Holding Company, the 4th largest confectionery company in the world - reported that they purchased, produced and/or sold all forms of protein: conventional animal protein, alternative, plant-based and blended. Meiji also reported that they track data allowing a comparison of how much of each type of protein they purchase, produce and/or sell (The survey did not ask for such data, only whether companies actually collect the data).

<u>Discussion</u>

Though the survey did not accomplish the goal of collecting and publishing a meaningful amount of information about companies' protein diversification activities and strategies, valuable lessons can be learned about the survey process itself and how to create a data collection process that eventually yields a sizeable amount of actionable data about protein diversification that financial professionals and others can weave into their analysis.

The lack of response was not unexpected. There are other benchmarking and data collection initiatives that seek to collect and publish data about companies' protein diversification activities and strategies and response rates are very low, despite considerable time and resources spent attempting to collect data. For example, most of the existing initiatives devote the majority of the calendar year to researching and/or contacting companies in order to gather data. In general, the initiatives do not publish specific data about companies' protein diversification activities and strategies, but rather publish a score, based on the extent to which key performance indicators are met. This has value but arguably allows for too much interpretation of data by the data provider, as compared to providing raw data that data users can interpret for themselves, based on their own particular aims and preferences.

The lack of responses was likely also influenced by the main mode of communication: email. Approximately 15% of emails were returned based on companies' email and data security processes. Other emails may have ended up in Spam or Junk folders. To the extent possible, future surveys about protein diversification should rely significantly on in-person communications or more nuanced email communications to establish relationships with survey takers (e.g. companies) in order to create a context to explain the benefits of reporting. This requires significant time and resources but appears necessary. Finally, whatever means of communicating the benefits of reporting about protein diversification is used, the survey itself should be provided in multiple languages.

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