

## **Plant-based and Alternative Products PDG**

**Attendees:** Aaron Pleitner (Chairperson), Lilt Yang (Vice Chairperson), Albert Kanaan, Aldo Xoxocotla Sánchez, Bennett Dzandu, Cierra Gadd, Deepa Thiagarajan, Elise Forward, Elisabetta Lambertini, Emil Joson, Fariha Chowdhury Meem, Harmeet Kaur, Juzhong Tan, Kristin Schill, Lauryn Strong, Linhui Zhou, Lucy Sokol, Markus Lacorn, Melissa Bohn, Nate Banner, Robert Price, Stevie Ward, Subash Shrestha, T.J. Fu, Yiwen Cheng, Yinqing Ma.

**Meeting Called to Order:** Sunday, July 27, 2025, 10:30 A.M.

Welcome: Chair, Vice-Chair Introductions, Student Liaison open role. Executive Board updates were shared with the PDG community, specifically around the number of attendees (2,900+) and the proposal acceptance rate (~36% overall but the PB and Alt Products PDG had a higher rate at 67%). Attendees reminded that webinars and *Journal of Food Protection* are also options for outreach on topics.

**Old Business:** Recap of 2024 IAFP Annual Meeting

Following the broader IAFP updates, the overall mission statement of the Plant-based and Alt products was reviewed and aligned to maintain current version.

Reviewed approved proposal submissions and reminder on the IAFP event app to attend. S14 (Monday 1:30 P.M.) Innovative Product Design for Quality and Food Safety: Creative approaches to Novel Plant-based Product Development. S36 (Tuesday 1:30 P.M.) Navigating Food Safety and Regulatory Considerations for New/Novel Ingredient Approval, RT20 (Tuesday 3:45 P.M.) Edibles and Drinkables: Food Safety Explorations at the Intersection of Food and Cannabis, S60 (Wednesday 1:30 P.M.) Novel Foods, Safety, Shelf Life and Rapid Methods.

**New Business:** Review 2025 sponsored symposia and roundtable submissions that were accepted/rejected. Highlight other related symposia, roundtable, technical sessions and posters related to PDG at 2025 meeting. Breakout sessions on sub-groups in PB & Alt Products: 2025–26 Hot Topics Discussion Groups: Plant-based novel innovation and formulation for FS & Quality risk, Alternative protein and products FS & Quality risk, Startup education for QFS, Supply chain challenges, Test methods (validation, accuracy, appropriateness), Regulatory landscape (Domestic and International), Recap from Break out groups and summarization of topics for potential 2026 meeting proposals and webinars. Review of prior proposals that were postponed in 2024 and 2025 and considered for either resubmission or webinar topics (most leaning towards webinar topics): Flexitarians – New Product Offerings Blending the Best of Both Worlds, Spilling the Tea on Trending Alternative Beverages – Are They Safe? Past, Present, and Future of Novel Proteins Governance/Regulatory Landscape, Novel Food Ingredients – Flavor, Taste, and Bioactivity, “What’s in a Name”, Consumer Outlooks and Perspectives of Alternative Proteins, Development in the Field of Plant Based Meat Analogue to Increase Its Safety and Quality, Balancing the Act for Companion Animal Food Safety.

Advertised the goal for 2025–2026 on the PDG is to host a bi-monthly webinar and bi-monthly hot topic roundtables (on alternating months).

Formed Breakout Sessions on the following topics and outcomes. Predictive Modeling: Data gap and how to get data via standardization before saying what to do with data, What to learn from other groups, ISO standard for cardinal values & study design, Roundtable – strains to use, Symposium on particular product that has already been launched as a case study, What to do in the future for data management, Standards on food safety criteria as a recommendation/opinion piece in *Food Protection Trends*, Webinar – results on dairy alternatives from Nizo, Toxin production in plant based products, Solid state fermentation. Product Development: Resubmitting Spilling the Tea on Kombucha (updated for 2026), Holding process

to increase, commercial sterility, Fermentation in plant based beverages via application of different strains. Alternative to thermal process (non-thermal process) e.g., HPP and approval from FDA as preventive control, Shelf- stable products thermal process, packaging, etc., Natural ingredients for preservations Culture and Start-Up Advising: Startups have great technologies but not an awareness of risk, Design of QFS Programs and Standards. What is the advice? *Food Protection Trends* and follow up webinar for topic. Chemical Hazards and Contaminants: Leading hazards, likelihood and contamination levels, Allergen handling (and cross-contamination on crops and MFG sites), Awareness and education, Trends in industry: Broad feedback from the entire PDG on topics, Impact and use of AI for novel and alternative products (potential avenue to partner with other PDGs), In following years, starting in 2026, lean more heavily on the 'Protection' considerations and less so on the pathogen considerations, Pathogens have been a major focus for our PDG proposal in the last 3 years. Open floor/call for remaining questions – None; all discussed in open Q&A in brainstorming groups.

Next Steps: Aaron Pleitner and Lily Yang to schedule 2026 proposal working session end of August 2025, Closing remarks.

**Recommendations to the Executive Board:** None.

**Next Meeting Date:** Sunday, July 27, New Orleans, LA.

**Meeting Adjourned:** 11:57 A.M. Sunday, July 27, 2025.

**Chairperson:** Aaron Pleitner.