



Warsaw, 20 July 2022

**COMMENT BY THE GREEN REV INSTITUTE
TO MEP KRZYSZTOF JURGIEL'S PARLIAMENTARY QUESTION
ON PLANT-BASED MILK SUBSTITUTES**

It is with great shock that the Green REV Institute takes note of the contents of the parliamentary interpellation by Law and Justice MEP Krzysztof Jurgiel on plant-based milk substitutes, submitted on 7 July 2022.

The composite question included the following key quotes:

- *"ProVeg International, an organization promoting a vegan lifestyle, has launched an initiative to introduce plant-based drinks at the expense of cow's milk into the EU school program. The messages directed in the communications used by the initiative's creators are worrying and damaging, especially as they are run under the slogan schoolmilk.org, which clearly indicates school milk."*
- *"The campaign is based on the message that plant-based drinks can effectively replace valuable cow's milk in a child's diet".*
- *"Almost all plant-based drinks are complex and processed products (despite using reasonably natural substrates). The nutrients in unprocessed, natural substrates are lost irretrievably at each stage of the complex technological process."*
- *"Cow's milk is produced according to a long-known, unchanging and simple technology. Attempts to replace cow's milk with drinks such as soya are dangerous for children. The estrogen-like phytohormones (3 active compounds, including genistein) can cause early pubertal symptoms, especially in girls."*



The content of the enquiry and the theses it contains are contrary to scientific expertise, and the author himself does not cite any source to support the argument he presents. It is also biased and negative towards plant-based drinks.

In his opinion, the author points out that almost all plant-based drinks are complex and processed products and that at each stage of the complex technological process, nutrients present in unprocessed, natural substrates are certainly lost irreversibly. **However, he does not present any argument in support of this thesis.** It is shocking because it is possible, for example, to make plant-based milk at home - in contrast to the mass-produced, highly processed, industrially farmed product advertised as milk, which must go through complicated technological processes before it can be marketed, after which it is a product that is difficult for humans to digest¹. By contrast, plant-based milk is nothing more than an aqueous extract or decoction that is made from specific parts of plants, extracted by aqueous extraction of nuts and oil plants².

In the light of the above, it is incomprehensible to say that cow's milk is produced according to a long-established, unchanging, and simple technology. The image created in advertising and general communication is full of distortions and misleading - industrial production is based on robbery and animal suffering, from which a product of low nutritional value is created. Plant milk, on the other hand, contains, among other things, more calcium than cow's milk and has an incomparably lower environmental impact - production itself is sustainable³.

Nor does the author of the question provide any source according to which there are phytohormones of an estrogenic structure in plant-based milk, which would allegedly cause precocious pubertal symptoms, especially in girls. Furthermore, the author completely ignores

¹ <https://krytykapolityczna.pl/kraj/gawlik-skad-sie-bierze-mleko/>; <https://www.agropolska.pl/produkcja-zwierzeza/bydlo/rynek-mleka-w-2021-roku-eksperci-prognozuja-zmiany,1544.html>

² <https://cateromarket.pl/blog/jak-wybrac-mleko-roslinne>

³ <https://futurefood4climate.eu/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/Position-of-the-Academy-of-Nutrition-and-1.pdf>



that phytoestrogens are found in many cultivated plants, such as hop cones, dill, wheat germ, rice, spinach, lentils, or pulses - for these products, the position contains no criticism.

The phytoestrogens themselves are organic compounds with action up to several hundred times weaker than that of ovarian estrogens. At the same time, both compounds have several functions in the female body, such as acting on the endometrium to regulate the menstrual cycle and acting on the muscular membrane of the uterus and fallopian tube, respectively, and are therefore essential during sexual maturation⁴.

Green REV Institute points out that MEP Krzysztof Jurgiel's parliamentary question provided misleading information without any scientific basis, which is reprehensible practice. It contradicts scientific knowledge on the effects of balanced use of dairy substitutes on the health of human beings. It fuels belief in unverified information and consequently leads to discrimination against those who consume such substitutes. Such positions run counter to the policies pursued by the European Union, in particular the green transition and the EU Farm 2 Fork, which aims to make food systems just, healthy and environmentally friendly. Discouraging the production and consumption of plant-based drinks on the basis of inaccurate information undermines the aims of this policy and is an action which torpedoes the objectives set by the European Union. Civil society organisations and individuals from the scientific community, including Tomasz Jeżewski, M.D., Alicja Baska, Ph.D., Diana Wolańska-Buzalska, nutritionist, and Professor Marek Kochanowski, have expressed their opposition to the words of MEP Jurgiel.

⁴ Traczyk W. Z. Fizjologia człowieka w zarysie. Warszawa: PZWL: 2013.