

Meatless Farm on the Future of Plant-Based Food and the Shift to Ecommerce

ARTICLE |

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After debuting in more than 450 US Whole Foods locations—and partnering with New York City-based Italian restaurant Pomodoro Rosso last year—plant-based meat company The Meatless Farm Co. launched its own direct-to-consumer (D2C) site amid the pandemic.

We recently spoke with Kasper Vesth, general manager at Meatless Farm North America, about the site, shifts in consumer shopping behaviors, and the current and future state of the plant-based industry.

What was the idea behind launching a D2C site?

The strategy was to make this product available for more people and bring it straight to their doors, whenever they feel the need for it. It didn't take long for us to realize that it's something we needed to do, but [the pandemic] just accelerated it.

Seems like a good time to launch, especially as the shift to ecommerce is growing.

Yes, and I don't think it's going to go away. They say that it takes people six weeks to get into a new habit, right? And it's been more than six weeks.

Obviously, I hope that the pandemic is going to go away sooner rather than later, so we can all go back to socializing and shopping as we normally do. But I think a lot of people realize that there's also some convenience in just ordering online. We see more people shopping that way.

When D2C brands launch a site, it's often to gauge how consumers feel about their products. Then they tend to go the brick-and-mortar route, and either launch a full-fledged store or something smaller like a pop-up. Is that something you're looking to do?

We have talked about doing a pop-up store, and that's in trend with what to do these days. Obviously, now is not a good time. Our goal has always been to gain distribution through traditional channels.

How will you target consumers who are on the fence about plant-based foods?

I think people are curious and want to try plant-based diets for health reasons. But we still need to tell some consumers about the benefits [of plant-based products], such as their versatility and easiness, and that they actually taste good.

Where do you see the plant-based industry heading this year?

It's only going up, both this year and for many years. There's a need for it. There's an expectation from the health markets that plant-based products are going to meet around 10% of all retail in the next 10 years. Right now, we're just about 1%. There's nothing that I know that's going to contradict that.