

Protein Intake: Did we get things wrong when focussing on animal proteins?

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There is little doubt that the minimum estimates of the need for dietary protein manifest in recommendations such as the RDA or RNI are incorrect for athletes and are definitely not optimal for supporting exercise adaptations. Much of the evidence supporting this notion has come from studies in which supplemental protein has been shown to support greater – albeit of a small magnitude – adaptations with supplemental protein from animal sources. The main plant-sourced protein that has been used, and sometimes compared to animal-source proteins, is soya protein. However, the plant-based protein market is expected to grow from \$42.1 billion in 2023 to \$52.1 billion in 2024, and the majority of this increase is fueled by plant-based products that are not soya-based but plant proteins from numerous sources. Of interest is whether the long-known difference in protein quality – regardless of the scoring systems used (Protein Digestibility-Corrected Amino Acid Score [PDCAAS] or Digestible Indispensable Amino Acid Score [DIAAS] – would be impactful on the adaptive advantage of greater protein intake or not? In this presentation, the aim is to review the evidence for plant versus animal-sourced proteins for athletes and present up-to-date evidence on the impact of protein sources on adaptation in athletes.