

MEDIA RELEASE

Asia's Protein Buyers Still Trail Global Best Practice — But Momentum is Building, New ARE Benchmark Finds

19 February 2026, Singapore — Asia's largest food retailers, manufacturers, restaurant chains, and hospitality groups remain behind international better practice on sustainable and responsible protein sourcing, but progress is accelerating across the region, according to [*The Asian Protein Buyers 100: An Assessment of Responsible and Sustainable Sourcing*](#) released today by [Asia Research & Engagement \(ARE\)](#).

The APB100 is a benchmark based on investor-backed priorities - assessing how 100 of Asia's largest listed protein-buying companies — headquartered or operating across Hong Kong, India, Indonesia, Japan, Mainland China, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore, South Korea, Taiwan, Thailand and Vietnam — manage environmental, social, and governance risks embedded in meat, dairy, poultry, and seafood supply chains. Collectively, the companies assessed represent more than USD500 billion in market capitalisation and sit at the choke point of Asia's protein system, where procurement decisions shape production standards, risk management and food-system outcomes.

The companies assessed include some of Asia's most recognisable food and retail groups. These include **China Mengniu Dairy, Yili Group, Yonghui** and **Yum China (Mainland China)**; **AEON, Seven & I Holdings, Meiji, Nissin** and **NH Foods** (Japan); **CJ CheilJedang, Lotte** and **E-Mart** (South Korea); **Charoen Pokphand Foods** and **Thai Union** (Thailand); **Jollibee, Century Pacific Food** and **San Miguel Food & Beverage** (Philippines); **Vinamilk** (Vietnam); and **Hindustan Lever, Nestle India, Jubilant, Devyani, DMart, Westlife Foodworld (McDonald's India)** (India), among others.

Scores are improving, but the baseline remains low

Now in its second edition, the benchmark shows clear momentum since 2023 — but also highlights that most companies remain at an early stage of credible implementation.

The average overall score increased from 9% in 2023 to 16% in 2025, with around 80% of companies improving year-on-year. More than half of comparable companies moved up at least one performance tier.

However, no company reached the top two performance tiers, underscoring a persistent gap between sustainability commitments and on-the-ground execution.

A growing group of leaders is emerging

The number of companies in the leading Tier 3 group more than doubled from 10 in 2023 to 26 in 2025, while the lowest-scoring group halved from 44 to 21 companies.

Progress, however, remains uneven and concentrated among a subset of early movers and sustainability themes, while a significant minority of companies continues to disclose little or nothing across several material risk areas.

Climate, labour, and waste are moving fastest

Companies performed strongest on Water & Waste, Labour, and Climate Change, reflecting wider uptake of international disclosure frameworks and growing expectations around supply-chain due diligence.

Climate and labour show the fastest improvement since 2023, driven by emerging regulatory pressure and investor scrutiny, particularly around Scope 3 emissions and labour standards in supply chains.

Governance and protein diversification remain critical gaps

Several material risk areas continue to show weak performance. Governance in relation to protein sustainability, remains the lowest-scoring theme, averaging just 4.5%, with most companies scoring zero. Few have board-approved protein sustainability strategies, capital allocation plans, or accountability mechanisms.

Protein diversification also remains underdeveloped at 7.4%, indicating that most companies have yet to articulate how they will shift product portfolios toward truly low carbon plant proteins at scale.

Disclosures on deforestation and biodiversity, animal welfare, and antimicrobial resistance (AMR) also remain thin and rarely quantified. The intersection of climate and deforestation is still not being duly harnessed. Similarly, policies and procurement practices that strengthen animal welfare and enable antibiotic reduction remain a low point, with average animal welfare performance at just

14.1% and only one company aligned with recognised higher-welfare standards or independently certified disclosure.

Why this matters: Asia is the decisive region for global protein systems

Compared with innovative international peers, many of Asia’s protein buyers remain behind on deforestation-free sourcing, antibiotic stewardship, higher-welfare policies and procurement, plant-protein targets and science-based climate transition planning.

However, Asia now represents the most important opportunity for global leadership in responsible protein systems. And with less than five years to implement meaningful change towards various 2030 United Nations and related targets, the vision of a more responsible and sustainable food system is at risk.

“Asia is the world’s fastest-growing protein market, which means what happens here will determine the future of global food systems,” said Kate Blaszak, ARE Director, Protein Transition. “This APB100 shows that disclosure and awareness are improving and aims to trigger a shift from Policy to Practice. With a realm of better practice examples in the report to also assist companies, the next phase must focus on full supply-chain coverage, measurable targets, and annual progress with board-level accountability.”

Note to Editors:

For Modelling & Methodology – Refer to Annex (next page) for methodology and scope of assessment.

– Download the APB100 Report [HERE](#).

For media interviews and further enquiries, please contact:

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About Asia Research & Engagement (ARE)

ARE brings leading investors into dialogue with Asian-listed companies to address sustainable development challenges and help companies align with investor priorities. With decades of Asia experience, our cross-cultural team understands the region’s unique needs. Our high-quality independent research, robust investor network, and engagement expertise, provide corporate leaders and financial decision makers with insights leading to concrete action.

ANNEX 1: Methodology

Scope of assessment

1. Companies assessed

- 100 listed companies
- Headquartered or operating primarily in Asia
- Selected based on market capitalisation, scale of protein sourcing, and relevance to regional food systems
- The benchmark largely maintains continuity with the 2023 edition, with limited changes due to delistings, privatisations or material business shifts

2. Total of 12 markets covered

- Mainland China
- Hong Kong
- Indonesia
- India
- Japan
- South Korea
- Malaysia
- Philippines
- Singapore
- Taiwan
- Thailand
- Vietnam

3. Sectors covered

- Food manufacturing (meat, dairy, seafood, packaged foods)
- Retail (supermarkets, hypermarkets, convenience stores)
- Restaurants (QSR and casual dining chains)
- Hospitality (hotels and catering)

4. Assessment framework

Each company is assessed against a structured framework of 40 indicators across 10 material themes:

- Governance
- Traceability & Sourcing
- Labour & Just Transition
- Worker Health & Safety (WHS) & Antimicrobial Resistance (AMR)
- Animal Welfare
- Climate Change
- Deforestation & Biodiversity
- Seafood
- Water & Waste
- Protein Diversification

5. Tier classification

Companies are grouped into six performance tiers based on their overall percentage score:

- Tier 1 – Driving Transformation
- Tier 2 – Advancing Steadily
- Tier 3 – Evolving Strategically
- Tier 4 – Developing Efforts
- Tier 5 – Showing Awareness
- Tier 6 – At the Starting Block