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**EVOLIUCINĖ MEDICINA:
ŽMOGAUS RAIDOS PERSPEKTYVOS IR SVEIKATA
BESIKEIČIANČIOJE APLINKOJE**

**EVOLUTIONARY MEDICINE:
PERSPECTIVES ON HUMAN DEVELOPMENT AND HEALTH
CONSEQUENCES IN A CHANGING ENVIRONMENT**

Rengėjas:

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EVOLVED TO REFUSE? FOOD NEOPHOBIA AND THE ACCEPTANCE OF ALTERNATIVE PROTEINS AMONG LITHUANIAN CONSUMERS

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Humans evolved a protective wariness towards unfamiliar foods (food neophobia) that once shielded our ancestors from toxins and pathogens. In today's rapidly changing environment, this evolved trait may have become a mismatch: it stands between consumers and the dietary transition that a warming, resource-constrained planet increasingly demands. Alternative proteins, including plant-based meat substitutes, mycoprotein products and edible insects, are promoted as sustainable, health-compatible substitutes for conventional meat, yet their uptake depends on whether people are willing to overcome a deeply rooted aversion to novel foods.

This doctoral research examines how Lithuanian residents respond to such innovative foods. It pursues four aims: to assess attitudes towards alternative-protein products; to estimate the prevalence of their consumption; to identify the factors shaping trust and acceptance; and to determine consumers' willingness to pay. The work is grounded in the Theory of Planned Behaviour, the tricomponent attitude model and the validated Food Neophobia Scale, allowing evolved dispositions to be analysed alongside social and economic determinants of food choice.

A cross-sectional survey of Lithuanian adults will provide the data, analysed using the SPSS and R statistical software. By linking an evolved psychological mechanism to contemporary, environmentally driven dietary change, the study offers an evolutionary-medicine perspective on a pressing public-health question: how populations can adapt their diets quickly enough for a changing world, and what helps or hinders that adaptation. The findings are intended to inform public-health communication and policy supporting sustainable, acceptable protein transitions in Lithuania.

Keywords: alternative proteins, consumer behaviour, food neophobia, sustainable diet, willingness to pay