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Cultured Meat: Shaping the Future of Foods

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The Singapore Food Agency (SFA), in December 2020, approved the world's first cultured chicken produced by Eat Just, Inc., signaling the start of the global regulatory approval process to clear cultured meat.

Cultured meat is meat produced by *in vitro* cell culture of animal cells, instead of from slaughtered animals. Typically, selected cell lines or stem cells are grown in a bioreactor with suitable growth media, and subsequently onto a "scaffold" to produce the cultured meat. This process involves relatively small amounts of land and labor in a climate-resilient and sustainable manner.

Given the novel nature of cultured meat, SFA reviewed the Eat Just's cultured chicken via a "novel food" petition. i.e., *Requirements for the Safety Assessment of Novel Foods*, under which the applicant is required to submit a list of materials to assess the safety of the novel food, including details about the manufacturing process, cell lines, culture media, scaffolding materials, toxicity, allergenicity, and dietary exposure, etc. SFA requires that cultured meat, when sold in Singapore, must be labeled with qualifying terms such as "mock" or "cultured" to indicate the true nature of the product.

While Singapore is the first country to grant approval for cultured meat, other countries have either embarked on a legislative discussion to develop a regulatory framework specifically for cultured meat or offered a regulatory pathway to clear the cell-based products. For example, in the U.S., the Department of Agriculture and Food and Drug Administration (FDA) announced a formal agreement in 2019 to regulate cell-cultured food products from cell lines of livestock and poultry. In the EU, cultured meat is governed by the existing Regulation (EU) 2015/2283 on novel foods under which one needs to file an application with the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) for a scientific assessment. In China, a petition process for approving "new food ingredients" also is available, which may be a possible route to obtain approval for cultured meat.

While industry will have to navigate different regulations throughout the world, and continue to wait patiently while most regulators decide how to regulate cultured meat, one thing is clear, SFA has opened the door, even if just a crack, to what will no doubt be an exciting new area of food

technology that will bring countless new options to the table.

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