

Japan is Contemplating the Future of Cell-based Meats

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Alternative protein products, such as cell-based meat, are gaining attention given their unique advantages of offering additional sources of protein in the diet and their ability to promote a more sustainable food system. Supported by the Japanese Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (MAFF), a public-private partnership known as [Food Tech Research Group](#) was established in 2020 to develop strategies and policies regarding emerging food technologies; to no surprise, cell-based meat is on their agenda.

Currently, Japan has not promulgated any new food regulations or standards that explicitly address a regulatory framework for cell-based meat. However, the existing food legislation has stipulated some general requirements that are likely to apply. For instance, Article 3 of the Japanese [Food Sanitation Act](#) requires that a food business operator shall take necessary measures to ensure the safety of the food for sale for human consumption.

Article 7 further states that articles that have "not generally been served for human consumption" and "have not been proven to involve no risk to human health" or "articles including those articles having newly come to be sold or are going to be sold as food," may be prohibited from being sold as foods by the Minister of Health, Labour and Welfare when the authority finds it necessary to prevent food sanitation hazards. Applying these basic requirements, the food industry will no doubt be obligated to properly assess and confirm the safety of cell-based meat before launching a product, and if the authority disagrees, it may challenge such safety conclusion.

While there remains a lot to be seen in terms of the regulatory developments and requirements for cell-based meat in Japan, e.g., whether there will be an approval process like the one introduced by the Singaporean authority earlier this year, (See [Keller and Heckman Newsletter](#) for more details), the local authority appears to be open to engagement with stakeholders during the process of formulating the best approach to regulate cell-based products. Notably, MAFF has set forth a [plan](#) in

this regard, such as setting up working groups to draft regulations and standards for "food-tech" proteins (e.g., cell-based meat, algal proteins, and insects for foods). Thus, it will be critical for industry to participate in the rule-making process and let its voice be heard to help shape the future of the regulatory landscape in Japan. One way to engage is to join associations and coalitions that are starting to form in Asia. In fact, a new industry association is being established in Asia Pacific which focuses on promoting cell-based meat, poultry, and seafoods. If you are interested, please contact David Ettinger at the email address below.

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