

US paves way to get 'lab meat' on plates

17 November 2018, by Juliette Michel



"Lab meat"'s backers argue avoiding slaughtering animals will reduce both suffering and greenhouse emissions

US authorities on Friday agreed on how to regulate food products cultured from animal cells—paving the way to get so-called "lab meat" on American plates.

The Department of Agriculture and the Food and Drug Administration agreed to share regulation of cell-cultured food products, they said in a joint statement, following a public meeting in October.

While technical details have yet to be confirmed, the FDA would oversee the collection and differentiation of cells—when [stem cells](#) develop to specialized cells— while USDA would oversee production and labeling of food products.

"This [regulatory framework](#) will leverage both the FDA's experience regulating cell-culture technology and living biosystems and the USDA's expertise in regulating livestock and poultry products for human consumption," the statement said, adding that the agencies see no need for legislation on the matter.

The question of whether to approve cell-cultured [food products](#) has never really arisen in the US. In

fact, several niche "lab-meat" startups already exist, but production costs are very high and nobody has a product that is ready to sell yet.

Californian company Just, known for its eggless mayonnaise, has said previously it plans to sell cell-cultured meat by the end of this year—and told AFP it looked forward to working with the agencies.

Others such as Memphis Meats and Mosa Meat, in the Netherlands, are working to get production costs down—with some backing from the [agri-food](#) industry.

The backers of "lab meat" argue avoiding slaughtering animals will reduce both suffering and greenhouse emissions—and is a sustainable option to feed growing populations hungry for protein.

"American consumers deserve a wide array of healthy, humane, and sustainable choices," said Jessica Almy, policy director at The Good Food Institute.

But they are locked in disagreement with farming organizations about whether such products can indeed be called "meat."

The authorities have made no statement on that—but the US Cattlemen's Association welcomed the news.

"USDA is going to oversee labeling, which we are ecstatic about because the FDA does not require pre-market label approval... before the products hits the shelves," said spokeswoman Lia Biondo.

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APA citation: US paves way to get 'lab meat' on plates (2018, November 17) retrieved 16 January 2022 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2018-11-paves-lab-meat-plates.html>

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