

Singapore Food Agency gives nod to sale of cell-cultured meat

01 December 2020 | News

The Singapore government's food regulation authority Singapore Food Agency (SFA) has approved the sale of meat cultivated from animal cells in the city-state. The approval, granted to global food technology company Eat Just, follows years of exploration in the alternative protein space and careful consideration of the best approach for regulating cultivated meat, poultry, and seafood products.



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Eat Just, which last month also revealed plans to jointly open their largest plant protein isolate production facility in Singapore, appears to be the first company to have secured such cultivated meat approval. Singapore currently imports over 90 percent of its food, but through investment in local production and innovation, the country is aiming to meet its "30 by 30" goal of producing 30 percent of its nutritional needs locally by 2030.

According to SFA, Eat Just's cultivated chicken was recently allowed to be sold in Singapore as an ingredient in the company's chicken bites. Other products reportedly in the pipeline include Indian-born Dr. Sandhya Sriram's company ShioK Meats' cultivated shrimp, and Ants Innovate's cultivated meat.

"The government of Singapore is at the vanguard of food innovation globally, and sees alternative proteins as a key piece of the nation's food security story" said Varun Deshpande, Managing Director, The Good Food Institute India. "Cultivated meat will enormously advance global efforts to create a food supply that is safe, secure, and sustainable, and Singapore is leading the way on this transition. It's critical for cultivated meat companies to be extra-careful and to go beyond public expectation in ensuring safety and consumer comfort with their products, and we are pleased to see the rigour that went into this science-forward approval process."

GFI India worked with the Centre for Cellular Molecular Biology (CCMB) and National Research Centre on Meat (NRCMeat) to secure 4.6cr in funding for cultivated meat research from the Government of India Department of Biotechnology in 2019, and also has an agreement with the Institute of Chemical Technology, Mumbai to set up a Centre of Excellence focused on advancing the sector. Delhi-based cultivated meat startup Clear Meat was formed from some of these early incubation activities, but with the industry growing rapidly globally, more investment will be needed to realise its potential in India.

“India stands to benefit immensely from these transformative technologies, with the promise of a highly sustainable, affordable supply of protein to target malnutrition, and the creation of a sunrise industry to support resilient, future-proof jobs. This is the 21st century space race. Just as India has shown our capabilities in innovating highly affordable, high-quality space technology, we can also be at the forefront of alternative proteins - but it will demand a forward-looking research and business environment to make this a reality,” added Deshpande.