

Voluntary Report – Voluntary - Public Distribution

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Report Name: Israeli Chief Rabbi Rules Cultured Meat is Kosher

Country: Israel

Post: Tel Aviv

Report Category: Special Certification - Organic/Kosher/Halal

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Report Highlights:

Israel's chief rabbi affirms cultivated steak is kosher, which means it is permitted for consumption by Jews under religious law. This ruling opens the door for companies producing cultivated meat directly from laboratory grown cells to receive a kosher certification.

Background:

Cultivated meat is produced by growing animal cells in a laboratory instead of raising and slaughtering animals. It is a type of meat that is not harvested from live animals and aims to provide a more sustainable and ethical alternative to traditional livestock farming.

The process of cultivating meat uses the basic elements needed to build muscle and fat cells in live animals and occurs in a laboratory or production area under conditions that imitate the biological process inside an animal. At the cellular level, cultivated meat is identical to conventional meat. The process of cultivating meat uses different technologies and raw materials used for production of other plant based alternative proteins such as fermentation and is a more recent innovation.

The initial cells used to initiate the process are stem cells harvested from an animal or animal product (eggs), while trying to reduce animal harm, foodborne diseases, and environmental impacts. The stem cells are tested for viruses, bacteria and other diseases, taken into a laboratory, and are grown in petri dishes and test tubes until they are ready to be moved for commercial growth in reactors.

Plant-based meat is inefficient and has disruptive effects on the environment and attributes to climate change and is unaccepted by different animal welfare groups.

The cultivated meat industry has grown tremendously in recent years, and there are dozens of cultivated meat companies around the world, many of which are in the United States and Israel. The product is so innovative that there is no official terminology yet for laboratory grown meat; some of the terminology that is used today is “cultured meat,” “cultivated meat,” “synthetic meat,” “lab grown meat” and more.

Before cultivated meat is approved to be used in the Israeli market, a regulatory pathway must be in place. For Jews, there are additional kosher specific dietary laws related to meat. In general, there are different kosher laws for meat, dairy and other nonanimal based products. One of the most significant kosher laws is that meat cannot be consumed or served together with any dairy product.

As for its kosher status, it depends on interpretation and authority in Jewish law. Some experts argue that cultured meat could be considered kosher if it meets certain requirements and is produced under rabbinical supervision, while others argue that it cannot be considered kosher as it does not come from a slaughtered animal. There is no universal agreement, and it remains a subject of debate among Jewish scholars.

On January 2023, after visiting one of the cultured meat companies, Aleph Farms, Israel Chief Rabbi, David Lau, (Israel’s pre-eminent Jewish authority), declared that cultivated meat could be considered kosher. He explained that because the product does not come from a slaughtered animal and does not have blood, the product should be considered Kosher Parve (a product that is neither dairy nor meat and can be consumed either with dairy or meat) although it has a trace of stem cells from an animal source.

The actual kosher certification can be done only to a production facility by a certifying institution which will consider in their ruling the production methods, and raw materials used prior to approving a specific

product as kosher. None-the-less, the Chief Rabbi's ruling is an important step forward for the industry, as it is the first time that a religious leader has officially ruled on whether cultivated meat is acceptable for kosher dietary restrictions. The ruling could be used later by halal certifiers or observant Hindus when considering their religious certification.

Attachments:

No Attachments.