

DEVELOPING AND SHARING KNOWLEDGE ON CULTURED MEAT AND SEAFOOD

Brussels, 26 March

SAFE is a partner of the [Horizon Europe project FEASTS](#), which is aimed at developing an unbiased knowledge base about cultured meat and seafood. On February 18, SAFE organised the General Assembly in Amsterdam, along with a webinar, to present preliminary results, one year into the project.

The webinar gathered academia, industry, farmers, experts from the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) and the European Commission; Secretary General Floriana Cimmarusti and Deputy Director Luigi Tozzi from SAFE; and SAFE members The Vegan Society and Vegan OK. A total of 70 participants joined the webinar online and offline.

SAFE does not have a position on cultivated meat and seafood (CM and CSF) and is currently trying to understand the impact on the food chain and consumers, especially its long-term effects.

A focus of the discussion was the impact assessment of foods from cultured meat and seafood, both in human health and in the environment. On the health aspect, an in-depth compositional analysis is necessary, including nutrient profile, contaminants, and considering microbiological aspects. Current studies are limited, with many research gaps and findings lacking comprehensive data. Regular monitoring procedures would have to be implemented as is the case for traditional meat production. The environmental impact must also be carefully assessed looking at the production processes, water and energy consumption, and other externalities.

At this point, no cultured meat is authorised in the EU, although two companies have requested authorisation for their food products: cultured *foie gras* and cultured beef fat. In the UK, cultured meat is authorised for animal feed.

SAFE's vegan members expressed their view that cultured meat cannot be considered vegan, pointing out that developments in plant-based proteins shouldn't be hindered by cultured meat and seafood.

SAFE's Deputy Director Luigi Tozzi argued that clear definitions and distinctions between traditional meat and CM should be developed and adopted in EU legislation. He reminded participants that FEASTS will also explore the use of these culture techniques on vegetables as a new source of plant-based products.

Fabrizio Fabbri, from Euro Coop, a consumers' cooperative active in the retail sector raised concerns about labelling, such as the potential overlapping of several logos, which would make it difficult for consumers to understand product information once products were authorised and marketed.

Another point raised has to do with the structure and concentration of food production in an environment where laboratories became a new centre of food production. Concerns were raised on whether for instance conventional farms would have the ability and economic incentives to produce cultivated meat.

Frederico Ferreira, from Instituto Superior Técnico in Lisbon, a partner of FEASTS, went through technological progress allowing for commercial-scale cultured meat and cultured seafood production. According to Ferreira, valuable knowledge has been already gathered and a comprehensive list of different cell types and standard operating procedures (SOPs) for cell culture has been completed.

The General Assembly provided many insights that will be further discussed and completed throughout the remaining duration of the project.