



EUROPEAN COMMISSION
Cabinet of Executive Vice-President Mr Frans Timmermans

Member of Cabinet

Brussels,
Ares (2021)7954490

Dear Mr Egberts,

Thank you for your email of 16 December 2021 addressed to Executive Vice-President Timmermans and myself. We have read your message with much interest and would like to thank you for your active participation in the Round Table of the Live Stock Voice, the additional explanations you provided on your comments regarding innovation, and your commitment to be part of the solution and contribute to the achievement of the targets of the Farm to Fork Strategy.

We share your view on the importance of innovation. New technologies and innovations in food production are of added value when they contribute to the reduction of environmental impacts, enhance food security and bring benefits, under the condition that a high level of consumer protection is ensured.

The general principles of EU food legislation¹ cover all essential elements that ensure its safety. The legislation on the provision of food information to consumers² guarantees that consumers are appropriately informed about the food they consume. Specific legislation is also in place for food improvement agents (food additives, enzymes and flavourings), novel foods or food contact materials, i.e. for the areas of food production that are highly innovative.

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¹ Regulation (EC) No 178/2002 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 28 January 2002 laying down the general principles and requirements of food law, establishing the European Food Safety Authority and laying down procedures in matters of food safety (OJ L 031 1.2.2002, p. 1)

² Regulation (EU) No 1169/2011 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 25 October 2011 on the provision of food information to consumers (OJ L 304 22.11.2011, p. 18).

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While there is always room to improve the implementation of the applicable legislation or to provide better guidance, we believe that the current food legislation appropriately captures the examples you mention.

For vegetable extracts, the legislation on food additives³, for example, may be relevant in case the extract and its intended use meet the definition of a food additive. For your information, an authorisation procedure is ongoing for ‘polyphenol-rich extract’ i.e. a natural extract containing polyphenols from tea and orange, to authorise its use as a new food additive prolonging shelf-life of foods by protecting them against deterioration caused by micro-organisms or growth of pathogenic micro-organisms. The authorisation under the food additive legislation, if granted, would guarantee that the substance or product does not pose a safety concern, that there is a reasonable technological need for its use, that its use does not mislead the consumer, that there are advantages and benefits for the consumer and that the consumer is appropriately informed on the presence and the function it has in foods.

Micro-cultures could be used as characteristic food ingredients (e.g. in salami, yoghurt or cheese), which may not require a premarket safety assessment and authorisation or, for example, as decontaminants⁴ or food additives to which specific legislation applies. This needs to be considered on a case-by-case basis depending on the characteristics of micro-cultures and their intended use.

I hope you find my reply useful and please rest assured that the Commission takes this matter seriously.

In case of further questions, please do not hesitate to contact colleagues from the Directorate-General for Health and Food Safety (email: sante-consult-e2@ec.europa.eu).

Yours sincerely,

[e-signed]
Lukas Visek

³ Regulation (EC) No 1333/2008 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 16 December 2008 on food additives (OJ L 354, 31.12.2008, p. 16).

⁴ Regulation (EC) No 853/2004 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 29 April 2004 laying down specific hygiene rules for food of animal origin (OJ L 139, 30.4.2004, p. 55).