

First lab-grown steak is here. Will lack of regulation stymie its race to the market?

Frequently plant-based products have been patties or processed nuggets — “everyday” foods easier for companies to produce — that aim to ease the climate effects of the worst offender: Americans eat nearly 50 billion burgers a year, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

Aleph Farms’ new 3-D bioprinting technology — which uses living animal cells as opposed to plant-based alternatives — allows for premium whole-muscle cuts to come to market, broadening the scope of alt-meat in what is expected to be a rich area of expansion for food companies.

Several other companies are sprinting to capture what is expected to be a robust appetite for what is often called “cultivated meat.”

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But the lack of a regulatory framework could stymie the companies’ race to market. In December, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu became the world’s first head of state to eat cultivated meat, and that same month Singapore became the first country in the world to grant regulatory approval for the sale of cultivated meat. It remains unclear when other countries will follow suit. In the United States, the Food and Drug Administration has not set a date for when it will rule on the matter.

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