

‘Critical milestone’: FDA greenlights cellular chicken — first lab-grown meat — for US market

The Food and Drug Administration on [November 16] declared a lab-grown meat product developed by a California start-up to be safe for human consumption, paving the way for products derived from real animal cells — but that don’t require an animal to be slaughtered — to someday be available in U.S. grocery stores and restaurants.

Dozens of major food companies are jostling to debut cultivated meat to the American public. As of now, Singapore is the only country in which these products are legally sold to consumers. The FDA’s announcement that cultivated chicken from Emeryville-based Upside Foods is safe to eat is likely to open the floodgates in the United States in the coming months.

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[This] announcement takes cultivated meat, also called cell-cultured meat, a step closer to Americans’ dinner plates, but there are still hurdles to widespread availability. Upside’s chicken-production technology is transferrable to multiple animal species, [managing partner at Synthesis Capital Costa] Yiannoulis said, but each product will have to be approved by federal regulators before it can go to market. Upside estimates that upon approval from the Agriculture Department, it would still be months before its chicken could be on the market.

“It will have to be case by case, certainly for the first few. It won’t be boilerplate approval,” Yiannoulis said. Still, the approval signals that the agency may soon approve the products of several cultivated meat start-ups that have been seeking regulatory approval since 2018. he said.

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