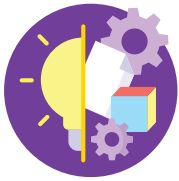


Name of Initiative

Pioneering a Facilitated Regulatory Approach for Novel Food

Agency

Singapore Food Agency



Could you share briefly on what was the impetus that eventually led to the initiative, and how did you motivate yourself/your team to pursue it?

Novel foods provide an opportunity for land-scarce Singapore to supplement its agricultural productivity, to support Singapore's strategy to 'Grow Local' under the Singapore Food Story. However, as novel foods do not have a history of consumption, they may pose unknown food safety risks.

Food safety is SFA's principal consideration. This thus prompted SFA to implement a novel food regulatory framework, which enables SFA to assess, manage and communicate risks in novel foods, while being enterprise and innovation friendly to encourage novel food companies to anchor their presence in Singapore.

Through this science-based risk management approach, novel food companies were able to better understand SFA's novel food regulations and engage with SFA proactively in their early stages of R&D. Under this framework, companies were directed to the available resources to develop their novel food product. At the same time, the framework allowed SFA to regulate novel foods based on rigorous science and the latest developments. Following a thorough scientific review of safety assessments submitted by a novel food company and guided by a multi-disciplinary expert working group, SFA gave the world's first regulatory approval of cultured meat in 2020. Investing in the belief of food innovations to bolster Singapore's food security and contribute to the national 30 by 30 target, the novel foods team is constantly motivated to refine the novel food regulatory framework alongside novel food developments to foster innovation while ensuring food safety.



What were the challenges that you/your team encountered, and how did you/your team overcome them?

Novel food companies are developing a variety of food products with different inputs and processes. Furthermore, R&D has been progressing at breakneck speed. To ensure that SFA's novel food regulations are up-to-date, the team actively engaged our alliances to keep abreast of the latest developments among the industry and regulators globally:

1

Proactively engaging novel food companies alongside their R&D journey: This allowed SFA to understand the company's inputs, processes and novel food at the earliest opportunity, enabling us to be updated on the company's R&D progress and expedite our subsequent safety evaluations.

2

Engaging overseas regulators: Although there is currently no international consensus on novel food regulations, the team seized the opportunity to boldly engage overseas regulators and stakeholders to stimulate discussions in this topic. For example, the team organised the inaugural half-day Regulator's Forum in November 2019 and will be organising the 2nd edition in November 2021 to connect with global novel food players. Moreover, SFA recently joined a multilateral collaboration with FAO to identify food safety hazards associated with cultured meat and highlight strategies that food safety regulators and the industry can take to address them.

3

Convening a Novel Food Safety Expert Panel: The panel comprised experts from many disciplines, who would review and provide comments on safety assessments submitted by companies, ensure scientific robustness of SFA's novel food regulatory framework and assist SFA in communicating the safety of novel foods to consumers.



What was the most memorable moment while working on this project?

Applying the novel food regulatory framework and engagement approach with Eat Just Inc (a San Francisco-based company) on their cultured chicken nugget product, the team facilitated the world's first approval of cultured meat by SFA. While the product had been deemed safe for consumption after rigorous scientific reviews, the team recognised that novel food may be subject to significant perceived risk from the public. We designed and executed a risk communication strategy comprising the following alongside SFA's public announcement to address these risks:

- Background briefing with media
- Publishing an alternative protein factsheet
- Op-ed articles by members of the Expert Working Group
- Monitoring media coverage and fielding SFA's Director-General/DCEO as a spokesperson

This world-first approval is memorable as it was testament to the success of SFA's novel food regulatory framework in being innovation-friendly while ensuring food safety. After this approval, there was increased interest among SFA's networks in A*STAR, ESG, EDB, Temasek Holdings and Novel Food Venture Capitalists. This benefitted novel food companies as various stakeholders could address the different needs of companies holistically, thereby encouraging companies to innovate and contribute to Singapore's 30 by 30 food security target. Singapore could also reap economic value through increasing our market share in the growing novel food industry and contribute to the Food Manufacturing Industry Transformation Map.

PEP-SBF Awards 2021

Pro-Enterprise Disruptor Award



<https://go.gov.sg/requirements-on-safety-assessment-of-novel-foods>



World's first cultured chicken nuggets available at restaurant in Singapore



Regulator's Forum 2019