

Groundbreaking sandbox programme for cell-cultivated products announced

The FSA, in collaboration with Food Standards Scotland (FSS), is delighted to be awarded £1.6 million in funding from the Government's Engineering Biology Sandbox Fund (EBSF) to launch an innovative sandbox programme for cell-cultivated products (CCPs).

CCPs are new foods made without using traditional farming methods such as rearing livestock or growing plants and grains. Using science and technology, cells from plants or animals are grown in a controlled environment to make a food product.

The UK is one of the largest potential markets for CCPs in Europe but currently, there aren't any approved for human consumption here. This is because CCPs are new, complex and unlike anything previously available in the UK. We need to learn more about these products and how they're made, to make sure they're safe for consumers to eat.

The sandbox programme will allow us to recruit a new team to work across the FSA and FSS. They will gather rigorous scientific evidence on CCPs and the technology used to make them. This information will enable us to make well-informed and more timely science and evidence-based recommendations about product safety and address questions that must be answered before any CCPs can enter the market. It will also allow us to better guide companies on how to make products in a safe way and how to demonstrate this to us.

Ensuring consumers can trust the safety of new foods is one of our most crucial responsibilities. The CCP sandbox programme will enable safe innovation and allow us to keep pace with new technologies being used by the food industry to ultimately provide consumers with a wider choice of safe foods.

Professor Robin May, FSA Chief Scientific Advisor

As part of the sandbox, we'll also be able to offer pre-application support to CCP companies and address key questions, for example around labelling.

The volume of evidence and expertise we'll have built up by the end of the two-year programme means that we'll be able to process CCP applications more swiftly and support businesses better in their applications. The sandbox will also help us develop assessment approaches that can be applied to other innovative foods, helping support innovation across the global food sector.