Blog Post

FDA Ponders Health and Safety of Lab-Grown Meat

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The hamburger of the future might be less Old MacDonald and more sci-fi – and it might be here sooner than you think. Several startups are working to scale up animal cell culture technology to grow meat tissue for human consumption. Proponents hail the nascent industry's potential to reduce foodborne illnesses such as E. coli, lessen the environmental impacts of conventional animal agriculture, and prevent animal suffering. As a result, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration is exploring how to regulate such products.

Regulatory questions abound. For example:

- What public health and safety hazards might be caused by cultured meat, and how do they differ from those caused by conventional, whole-animal meat?
- What manufacturing processes should be followed to keep these new products free from pathogens and other contaminants?
- What additives, preservatives, or other substances, if any, should be allowed in the production of meat from cell culture technology?
- How should the new products be labeled? Should labels disclose whether a product is grown from cell cultures?
- Should producers be allowed to call their products "meat", or should a separate term be

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used to distinguish conventional meat versus cultured meat?

The FDA announced a public meeting scheduled for July 12, 2018 to address these topics. FDA could choose to propose industry regulations in the near future. Any such regulations would need to be in concert with the USDA, which currently oversees the slaughter and manufacturing of conventional meat products.

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