

Novel Food's Brave New World?

The new European Regulation on novel foods, which was adopted on 25 November 2015, updated the definition of 'novel food' and clarified its scope.

While the text entered into force on the last day of 2015, most of the regulation provisions will only become applicable from 1 January 2018.

However, the Commission is in charge of enacting several implementing measures by the time the regulation becomes fully applicable, notably in respect of:

- the procedure for the determination of novel food status, in particular the consultation between food business operators and Member States, between Member States and the Commission and between the Member States amongst themselves;
- the administrative and scientific requirements for new novel food applications and for applications concerning traditional foods from third party countries; and
- a list of already approved novel foods.

Even though the regulation will only be effective as of 2018, food business operators need to be aware of some crucial changes which the regulation brings.

Definition of 'novel food'

The concept of novel food now explicitly encompasses whole insects and their parts, as well as food consisting of certain micelles or liposomes. Detailed categories are provided for in the regulation that include, for example, food with a new or intentionally modified molecular structure, food from cell or tissue cultures derived from animals, plants, microorganisms, fungi or algae, food from microorganisms, fungi or algae and food from material of mineral origin.

Furthermore, under the regulation, a food will be considered a novel food where it results from a production process not used for food production within the EU before 15 May 1997, which gives rise to significant changes in the composition or structure of the food, affecting its nutritional value, metabolism or level of undesirable substances. Such processes include, for example, nanotechnology.

Current approach to edible insects across Europe and the world

There are particular uncertainties relating to the approval of insect products under the new regulation. This is receiving a great deal of interest across Europe, both from the press and national regulators.

We have created a country-by-country guide to provide a comparison of the scope and national interpretation of current novel food regulation in Europe and the world.

Get in touch

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Please refer to the Contacts page at the other side of this document to find the details of food & beverage regulatory experts across our international offices.



UNITED KINGDOM



Whole insects considered out of scope of novel food legislation. Whole insects marketable subject to compliance with general food law and HACCP principles.



BELGIUM



Ten species of whole insects tolerated, subject to compliance with a.o. general food law and HACCP principles. Other whole insects must be authorized as novel food.



SPAIN



Whole insects as food not specifically regulated. Subject to compliance with a.o. general food law and HACCP principles.



ITALY



Whole insects considered as novel food. Marketing prohibited unless novel food authorisation is granted.



SWEDEN



Whole insects considered as novel food, and can be marketed subject to risk assessment and approval.



FINLAND



Whole insects considered as novel food. Import, selling, marketing or growing for use as food is forbidden until the history of use of the species within the EU has been established or food authorisation granted.



HUNGARY



Whole and comminuted insects considered as novel food by the Hungarian National Food Chain Safety Office.



DENMARK



Competent authority allows marketing of whole insects as food, subject to risk assessment and approval.



GERMANY



Whole insects are in a grey area. Case-by-case approach until entry into force of new novel food regulation.



THE NETHERLANDS



Three types of insects currently bred and sold in The Netherlands. They are subject to compliance with a.o. general food law and HACCP principles and are not considered as novel food.



SINGAPORE



Selling insects as food is prohibited.



UAE



Insects not considered as safe/prohibited as human food.



AUSTRALIA



Certain species of edible insects are not considered as novel food. They must comply with general food law requirements, including hygiene requirements.



CHINA



No express guidelines, but one application for a safety assessment of insects as a new food raw material has been accepted by the authorities.



HONG KONG



No legislation on novel food. Edible insects are subject to the general food regulations.

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