

2413 RAYBURN HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING
WASHINGTON, DC 20515-0703
(202) 225-3661

59 ELM STREET
SECOND FLOOR
NEW HAVEN, CT 06510
(203) 562-3718

DURHAM / MIDDLEFIELD / MIDDLETOWN
(860) 344-1159

WEBSITE: [HTTP://DELAURO.HOUSE.GOV](http://delauro.house.gov)



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ROSA L. DeLAURO

3RD DISTRICT, CONNECTICUT

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AND RELATED AGENCIES

March 28, 2018

The Honorable Gene L. Dodaro
Comptroller General of the United States
United States Government Accountability Office
441 G Street, NW
Washington, DC 20548

Dear Mr. Dodaro:

I am writing to request that GAO investigate what regulatory framework, if any, exists for cell-cultured food products and how this framework compares to other international approaches. Cell-cultured food products include lab-grown meat (sometimes referred to as “cultured” or “clean” meat, derived from animal muscle cells) and animal-free milk (such as milk produced from fermented yeast and proteins found in cow’s milk).

According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), livestock and poultry account for over half of U.S. agricultural cash receipts, often exceeding \$125 billion per year. Additionally, the United States is the world’s largest producer of beef and poultry and a top producer and exporter of dairy products. Recent innovations in cell-cultured foods have caught the attention of producers, marketers, and venture capitalists alike. Over the past few years, some of the largest food companies in the United States have started to invest in cell-cultured technologies.

While not yet commercially available, the potential introduction of this new type of product into the nation’s food supply and economy raises many important questions. For example, the U.S. Cattlemen’s Association recently filed a petition with the USDA to exclude from the definition of meat any products not derived directly from animals. In addition, at least one dairy group has stated it believes use of the word “milk” for animal-free products creates confusion in the minds of consumers and thus should be limited only to products derived from animals. On the other hand, producers of cell-cultured foods argue that the products are safe and more efficiently produced than meat or milk products from live animals.

To date, it remains unclear exactly how cell-cultured food products should be regulated. Agencies within USDA are responsible for ensuring the nation’s domestic and imported commercial supply of meat, poultry, catfish, and egg products is safe, wholesome, and correctly labeled and packaged, providing scientific research to help ensure that the food supply is safe and secure, and that foods meet foreign and domestic regulatory requirements, among other responsibilities. FDA is responsible for ensuring that all domestic and imported foods, excluding

meat, poultry, catfish, and processed egg products, are safe, wholesome, sanitary, and properly labeled. The Federal Trade Commission is responsible for enforcing prohibitions against false advertising for, among other things, food products.

Other countries are also starting to focus on cell-cultured food products. For example, on January 1, 2018, the European Union's (EU) new framework regulation on "Novel Food" went into effect. The regulation covers foods that, among other things, have been not consumed to a significant degree in the EU before May 15, 1997.

More information is needed for Congress to address this emerging sector in the United States and to ensure it is properly overseen by the relevant executive agencies once these products are commercially available.

In light of the above, I would like to request that GAO conduct a comprehensive review of the following:

- What unique challenges, if any, exist in overseeing the safety of cell-cultured foods in the United States?
- What regulatory framework and labeling requirements, if any, exist in the United States to oversee cell-cultured food products, and to what extent, if any, have relevant agencies begun preparing for the commercialization of cell-cultured foods?
- How do other countries, such as Canada, the European Union, and/or Japan, oversee cell-cultured foods?

If you have any questions regarding this request, please contact Christian Lovell (christian.lovell@mail.house.gov) of my staff at (202) 225-3661. Thank you for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,



Representative Rosa L. DeLauro
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and
Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. House of Representatives