

QUICK THREE IMPORTANT UPDATES IN THE CELLULAR AGRICULTURE FIELD IN JAPAN

INTRO

Hi this is Megumi, the Representative Director of the Japan Association for Cellular Agriculture (JACA). I have a quick three important updates in the cellular agriculture field in Japan.

- Prime Minister of Japan agreed that cultivated food technology is important
- The official announcement of the vision of food-tech promotion and its roadmap by MAFF
- Cultivated food in Japanese term used during the diet and the official document of the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, and Fishery (MAFF)

PRIME MINISTER OF JAPAN AGREED THAT CULTIVATED FOOD TECHNOLOGY IS IMPORTANT

Norihiro Nakayama, a Member of the House of Representatives and the Executive Director of the Cellular Agriculture Parliamentary Group, and who has been a member of JACA as well, was on the podium at the Diet to ask questions about cellular agriculture to the Kishida administration. During the diet, there were positive comments on the potential of the industry, since Kishida Prime Minister agreed that cultivated food technology is important. His questions were also addressed to Katsunobu Kato (Minister of Health, Labour and Welfare), Taro Kono (Minister for Consumer Affairs and Food Safety), and the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries. These ministers and the Ministry are all important for the future of cellular agriculture products in Japan.

SO WHAT WAS ACTUALLY DISCUSSED?

Comments from Prime Minister

Mr. Nakayama mentioned that seed cells are necessary to produce cultivated foods and that existing livestock brands in Japan will be a "weapon" (it means that cells from branded food could be a new business potential for the Japanese economy) in this regard. In this context, he asked the Prime Minister about the prospects for the cultivated food industry and the market.

Prime Minister Kishida responded that cultivated food is one of the technologies in food tech, and he recognizes that it is an important technology from the perspective of realizing a sustainable food supply.

Comments from Prime Minister (cont'd)

Prime Minister Kishida also mentioned that, we must promote creating an environment for new market creation and foster Japan-originated food tech businesses, through open innovation and supporting startups, by the cooperation among relevant ministries and agencies such as MAFF, MHLW, and the Consumer Affairs Agency, as well as the arrangement of safety assurance measures and labeling rules. This is in order to support activities to solve food (supply) problems in Japan and around the world, as well as to develop the Japanese economy.

In response, Mr. Nakayama commented on the importance of Japan's involvement in international rules for cultivated foods.

Author's comment: Personally, I feel it is very important that the Prime Minister Kishida commented that, in addition to MAFF and the Consumer Affairs Agency, the Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare should also contribute to the creation of new markets. As I continue dialogue with Ministries, I have heard that the MHLW does not have the concept to promote the creation of new industries. I think it is important that Prime Minister Kishida himself encouraged them to do so.

Comments from Katsunobu Kato (Minister of Health, Labour and Welfare)

Mr. Nakayama asked the Minister of Health, Labor and Welfare about the concept of safety for foods that have no prior food consumption experience.

The Minister commented that the government would collect scientific knowledge on safety, keep an eye on international trends overseas, and consider what action is necessary in terms of food safety.

In response, Mr. Nakayama requested the Minister to make a commitment to the international standards to be discussed in the CODEX Committee and other bodies.

Comments from Taro Kono (Minister for Consumer Affairs and Food Safety)

Mr. Nakayama stated that easy-to-understand food labeling for consumers is necessary, and requested comments from Minister Kono on how cultivated foods should be labeled.

Minister Kono mentioned that cultivated foods are a technology with potential and that we need to consider labeling rules that are easy for consumers to understand.

Author's comment: Personally, I thought this conversation needed to be done a little more carefully. Because the Consumer Affairs Agency may be considering organizing the rules for cultivated food labeling under an interpretation within the scope of the current law, and in that case, emphasizing the need to create new rules may unnecessarily delay the domestic discussion

What the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries said

The spokesperson of the Ministry briefly introduced the "vision of food-tech promotion and its roadmap" (brief translation of the title by the author), which was approved by "Food-Tech public-private council", where JACA manages the secretariat of Cellular Agriculture Working Team, and announced by MAFF on 21 Feb 2022.

The spokesperson also commented that they will indicate some kind of timeline for the market launch rule arrangements for cultivated foods as soon as the safety, labeling, and other issues are coordinated.

Mr. Nakayama commented that the timeline should be decided, with the attention to actual progress in the development of cultivated food.

THE ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE VISION OF FOOD-TECH PROMOTION AND ITS ROADMAP, BY THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE, FORESTRY, AND FISHERY (MAFF)

MAFF announced on 21 Feb 2023 the vision of food-tech promotion and its roadmap, which includes cultivated food as a section. Actually the discussion in the diet introduced above was done because of the announcement of this roadmap and vision.

Although they haven't shown any clear timeline on by when they are to create the environment for this industry to start selling cultivated food in Japan, **at least we are confident that MAFF is positive about the promotion of cultivated food technology and its rule-making.**

We, JACA, have been helping MAFF to discuss the rule-making and the road map creation of cultivated food for the past several years, as we are the official secretariat of "Cellular Agriculture Working Team" under the "Food-Tech public-private council " hosted by MAFF, so we are glad about their announcement.



Photo taken at the Food-Tech public-private council hosted by MAFF. JACA was the official secretariat of "Cellular Agriculture Working Team and voted for the approval of the vision of food-tech promotion and its roadmap



CULTIVATED FOOD IN JAPANESE TERM USED DURING THE DIET AND THE OFFICIAL DOCUMENT OF THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE, FORESTRY, AND FISHERY (MAFF)

Last but not least, currently the Japanese term for cultivated meat in governmental documents such as the roadmap announced by MAFF and the term used during the discussion in the diet is 細胞性食品 (pronounced as "sai bou sei", cell-based).

In the industrial guideline and policy recommendation that JACA created and submitted to the government on 30 November 2022, we recommended not to use 培養肉 (pronounced as "bai yo niku", sounds like Bionic, cultivated food in Japanese term) and instead, use either "細胞性食品", "細胞農業食品"(cellular agriculture food), and "カルチャーフード食品" (cultured food in Katakana). We assume that MAFF respected our suggestion, and also the international discussion on the nomenclature usage by FAO and WHO.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, February 2023 will become one of the historic months for the cultivated food market in Japan! The author of this article is the Representative Director of JACA. JACA is an industrial organization in Japan to consider rules for cultivated food, helping the creation of social consensus of how Japan needs to face this high-potential new technology, Cellular Agriculture.