

What's next for Vow on the path to regulatory approval in Australia?

Australian cultivated meat company, Vow recently made headlines as the first company to commence the regulatory approval process for their cultivated quail. So, you might be wondering - what happens now?

As the first cultivated meat application to Food Standards Australia and New Zealand (FSANZ), it is uncharted territory for Vow and FSANZ.



Vow's cultivated quail meat, "Morsel"

First, let's briefly look at the role of FSANZ, and the regulatory approval process.

FSANZ develops and amends food standards published in the Australia New Zealand Food Standards Code ('the Code') in accordance with specific objectives and procedures set out in the FSANZ Act. Importantly, all food sold in Australia and New Zealand must comply with the Code, however, only certain foods require approval.

Of particular relevance to this application is that Vow has sought approval of cultured quail as a novel food, which relates to Standard 1.5.1 of the Code.

So, what exactly is a novel food? Like the name suggests, novel foods are new or non-traditional foods or substances derived from foods without a history of human consumption.

Vow's successful submission to FSANZ is a major achievement in itself! A significant amount of work has gone into producing and having the application accepted, meaning FSANZ is satisfied that it meets the high-level requirements set out in the Application Handbook.

Vow's application will now undergo a formal assessment process - which FSANZ estimates to involve 1070 hours of work, and take 15 months to complete. Vow's application is considered a major procedure (as opposed to a general procedure), which is based on the time estimated to complete the assessment. Major procedures are generally undertaken when FSANZ deems the application as requiring significant scientific or technical assessment, and a higher degree of public consultation.

This is unsurprising given it is the first of its kind but something we hope to see change over time when the approval process for cultivated foods becomes lesser unknown.

Assessment will commence in late February, and will be followed by a public consultation period beginning in late August. FSANZ will publish a call for submissions that details their assessment and whether they intend to propose approving the application. This public consultation period will involve two calls for submissions, with each submission period lasting six weeks. Public comments are typically received from government enforcement agencies, industry and sometimes public health bodies and the public.

Assuming that FSANZ intends to approve cultivated quail for sale, FSANZ will then propose an amendment to the Code. This process is expected to begin in mid October, and following this, there will be the opportunity for further public comment in early December.

The preparation of a draft food regulation measure is expected to begin in mid October. Following this, there will be the opportunity for further public comment in early December. Finally, the application (assuming it is approved) is expected to receive Board approval in late Feb 2024 and from there, the Food Ministers' Meeting would be notified in early March.

If all goes well and no review is requested, Vow's cultivated quail could receive final approval in mid-May 2024.