

# Hollandbio comments to TRIS notification 2024/O394/HU - 'Draft act prohibiting the production and placing on the market of laboratory-grown meat'

The Hague, October 10<sup>th</sup> 2024

Hollandbio, the industry association of the Dutch biotech sector, welcomes the opportunity to provide comments to the Hungarian government's draft law that seeks to prohibit the production and sale of cultivated meat.

## Importance of Biotechnology in Europe

Biotechnology is rapidly becoming a key focus across Europe. Biotech is one of the key parts of the Strategic Technologies for Europe Platform (STEP), and the European Commission announced a set of targeted actions to stimulate this sector in its Initiative on Biotech & Biomanufacturing. The recently re-elected President of the European Commission, Ursula von der Leyen, has announced the forthcoming EU Biotech Act in 2025, which aims to strengthen the European biotech sector. This legislative push aligns with national strategies, including in the Netherlands, where the government has underscored biotechnology as a critical driver of innovation in various reports, including the [National Technology Strategy](#), [Growth Markets for the Netherlands](#), and the [Biotechnology Trend Analysis](#).

In the Netherlands, cultivated meat has been recognized as an important innovation. Since the world's first cultured hamburger was unveiled by Dutch scientist Mark Post in 2013, there have been continuous advancements, including the first tastings of cultivated meat this year. These developments are particularly relevant as global demand for protein increases.

## Single Market and Proportionality Concerns

By creating its own national restrictions on cultivated meat, Hungary risks distorting the EU Single Market. Cultivated meat falls under the Novel Foods Regulation (2015/2283), requiring approval from the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) before it can be marketed across the EU. Once EFSA approves a product, it should be free to circulate within all 27 Member States. Hungary's attempt to impose its own ban would undermine the free movement of goods, contrary to EU principles.

Moreover, Hungary's reliance on "presumed adverse effects" does not meet the legal standard set by the precautionary principle in the General Food Law. This principle only applies when a specific risk to human health is identified through scientific evidence. To date, no health risks have been associated with cultivated meat. In fact, safety authorities in Singapore and the U.S. have already approved these products, and a [2023 joint report](#) from the FAO and WHO concluded that cultivated meat is safe, with risks comparable to those found in conventional food production.

## Cultivated Meat as a Complement to Traditional Agriculture

The Hungarian draft law frames cultivated meat as a threat to traditional agriculture, but this perspective ignores the potential synergies between the two. Cultivated meat can complement traditional farming by diversifying protein sources and reducing land-use pressures. In 2024, Gourmey became the first company to apply for the approval of cultivated foie gras in the EU—a product rooted in French culinary heritage. This example shows that cultivated meat can exist alongside, and even enhance, traditional food practices and culture.

## Consumer Demand and Right to Choose

Surveys indicate that many Europeans are interested in trying cultivated meat, and they have the right to make informed choices. The Hungarian draft law undermines consumer freedom by denying them access to safe and innovative products. In fact, European consumers have expressed interest in novel food products, with a recent [survey](#) showing that more than half of respondents, including those from Hungary, would be willing to try cultivated meat at least once.



## Conclusion

In conclusion, the Hungarian draft law overlooks the potential benefits of cultivated meat, not only for sustainability and consumer choice but also for the EU's leadership in biotechnology. In addition, cultivated meat fits well within the EU's regulatory framework, which ensures food safety for consumers throughout the European Union. Denying access to such innovations would not only harm consumers, but also disrupt the functioning of the Single Market.

We urge the European Commission to consider these points carefully and to reject Hungary's proposal, ensuring that the entire EU can benefit from the opportunities presented by cultivated meat and biotechnology more broadly.

