Novel foods: Status of certain algae species

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EU confirms that 20 algae species may be sold without pre-market authorisation

EU Novel Food Status Catalogue

Update

Over 20 algae species have been included in the EU Novel Food Status Catalogue as "non-novel foods". This indicates that pre-market authorisation as novel foods is not required before they are sold on the EU market, either as food or specifically in food supplements. This should help the development of the sector by providing clarity on the legal status of these products and removing the considerable costs associated with novel food authorisations.

Impacted products

Algae

What is changing?

Food that was not on the EU market, and not consumed to a significant degree by humans in the EU before 1997, is considered a novel food and requires pre-market authorisation. This can include food which is or has been traditionally eaten outside the EU. Information on whether such foods, including algae species, are considered novel foods can be found in the EU Novel Food Status Catalogue.

The EU has updated the Catalogue to clarify that certain algae species are *not* considered novel foods and do not require pre-market authorisation:

- Erythroglossum laciniatum
- Gelidium amansii
- Gelidium corneum
- Laminaria hyperborea
- Neopyropia leucosticta
- Porphyra dioica
- Porphyra purpurea

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- Porphyra umbilicalis
- Pyropia yezoensis
- Saccharina japonica
- Sargassum fusiforme
- Ulva intestinalis.

Further algae species have been recognised as not novel when used in food supplements (but may require authorisation for other food uses), including:

- Alsidium helminthochorton
- Corallina officinalis
- Durvillaea antarctica
- Ecklonia cava
- Eucheuma denticulatum
- Eucheuma horridum
- Gracilaria gracilis
- Macrocystis pyrifera
- Mastocarpus stellatus

(EABA 2024).

In total, the catalogue includes more than 60 entries, covering microalgae and seaweed-derived products (e.g. extracts/oils). A full searchable database of the novel food status of individual algae can be consulted here.

Timeline

The EU Novel Food Status Catalogue is updated on a regular basis.

What are the major implications for exporting countries?

The process of authorising the algae species as novel foods would have cost an estimated €10 million. Confirmation of the legal status avoids this cost and is therefore considered to significantly facilitate the development of the sector (European Commission 2024).

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Background

Exporters uncertain about whether a product requires a novel food authorisation can consult the EU Novel Food Status Catalogue. This online database indicates whether certain foods are novel; not novel; not novel when specifically used in food supplements; authorised novel foods; or under consideration following a status consultation request. This catalogue is legally non-binding and does not provide definitive proof of novel food status. However, it is used as a reference point by EU Member States when assessing food.

For further information on novel foods, see Novel foods explained.

The EU's vision to support the development of the algae sector was set out in its November 2022 communication Towards a strong and sustainable EU algae sector. For a summary, see the AGRINFO report here.

Resources

European Commission (2024) More than 20 algae species can now be sold as food or food supplements in the EU. Press release. 26 February.

European Algae Biomass Association (EABA) (2024) Information Paper: EU Novel Food State-Of-The-Art 10 Years Later.

Sources

EU Novel Food Status Catalogue

Visit the AGRINFO website to view the latest AGRINFO Update newsletters and search the database.

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