

Consultation launched to bring clarity to British edible insect industry

The Food Standards Agency (FSA) has set out plans to allow edible insects to remain on the market while they go through the Novel Foods authorisation process to assess their safety.

The plans are detailed in a public consultation, launched today, with the FSA keen to bring forward the necessary legal changes as soon as possible depending on the responses received.

FSA Policy Director, Rebecca Sudworth, said:

“Our proposals will help businesses that have been affected by the uncertainty around insects for human consumption since the end of December 2020.

“When we left the EU, the transitional measures relating to novel foods including edible insects were not amended to require businesses to submit applications to Great British regulators.

“Edible insect products will need to pass through the full authorisation process in Great Britain to remain on the market, so we encourage businesses to talk to us about getting their applications in and the support we can provide through the process.

“We want anyone with an interest in edible insects, particularly trade organisations and food businesses, to have their voice heard through our consultation.”

In August 2021, the FSA issued a letter which stated that the transitional measures ended on 2 January 2020. This was incorrect and the FSA has now clarified with local authorities that the transitional provision continues to apply in Great Britain.

The proposals set out today would allow edible insects to remain on sale if they were marketed in the EU or the UK before 1 January 2018 and were the subject of an application to the EU for authorisation as a novel food by 1 January 2019.

Applications for authorisation of these insects must be made to the FSA or FSS by 31 December 2023 for the product to remain on the market while the application is assessed.

A generalised risk assessment conducted by the FSA and FSS to support the consultation has found that the safety risks associated with edible insect products are low, provided appropriate measures are in place. These include hygiene measures during rearing of the insects to avoid contamination, heat treatment, and labelling on allergy risks.

FSA research shows that consumers in the UK have an increased interest and demand for healthy, sustainable diets, with a focus on meat alternatives, and that over one quarter (26%) of UK consumers would be willing to try eating edible insects – with [environmental concerns or sustainability the most common reasons](#).

UK Edible Insect Association managing director, Dr Nick Rousseau, said:

"Our sector has been farming insects and developing exciting, innovative new food products in the UK for many years and the sector only continues to grow.

"Research from our members' extensive trials and user testing show that edible insect products, when professionally farmed and manufactured, offer the environmentally concerned consumer nutritious, tasty, and safe food products that can meet a significant proportion of their protein needs.

"The support of the FSA will make a huge difference to our ability to prove ourselves in the market."

More information and details on how to respond to the consultation are [available on the FSA website](#).